Forest Conservation

Summary of Draft Legislation

Smart growth means protecting our forests from irresponsible development. Simply put, we cannot continue to bulldoze our forests in favor of asphlalt and expect to leave a better world for the next generation.

What does the legislation do?

- Decreases the amount of trees that can be removed without requiring replanting.
- Increases replanting requirements on sites that cut down too many trees.
- Sets a fee-in-lieu dollar amount that will cover replanting costs and is equal to the ecological services provided by a forest.
- Finally fulfills a recommendation from the approved 2002 Greenways Master Plan to add greater protections for large, contiguous tracts of forest, and forests within a mapped greenway.
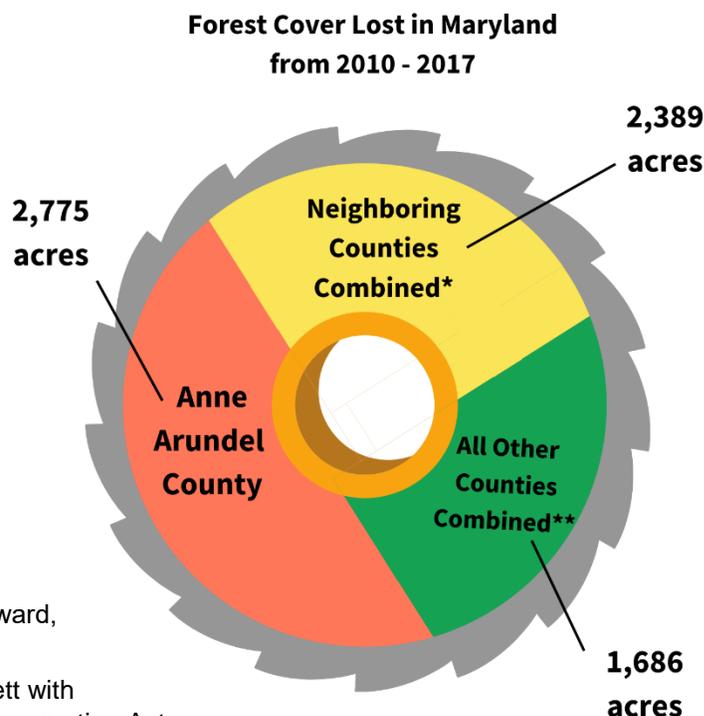
Why the current law isn't working:

Under Anne Arundel County's current law, **developers can legally cut down 68 acres of trees** from a 100-acre forested lot **for free.** Additionally, our **most important and largest forests** are **not guaranteed protection.**

The county currently requires developers to replant trees when a large number are cleared from a site. However, developers can forego replanting trees by paying a "fee-in-lieu." **Our current fee-in-lieu payment is so small it cannot cover the cost of the replanting requirements.**

We have a deforestation problem in our county:

Since 2010, Anne Arundel County has been responsible for about 40% of forest loss across Maryland. Our county has lost 2,775 acres of forest, the most of any county in Maryland, and more than all of our surrounding counties combined.[1]

Forest Cover Lost in Maryland from 2010 - 2017

2,775 acres — Anne Arundel County

2,389 acres — Neighboring Counties Combined*

1,686 acres — All Other Counties Combined**

*Prince George's, Calvert, Howard, Baltimore, and Baltimore City

**Excluding Allegany and Garrett with exemptions from the Forest Conservation Act

Under our current law, the Office of Planning and Zoning estimates that Anne Arundel County will continue to lose about 300 acres of forest to new development each year, with most of this loss occurring on large-scale development projects.

Anne Arundel County needs this legislation:

- **Forests are rainwater sponges.**

Forests can absorb 12.4 inches of rainwater every hour, reducing stormwater runoff and flooding concerns.

Turfgrass lawns can only absorb a third of the amount forests can, increasing runoff and flooding.[2]

- **Forests are the best pollution protection for the Chesapeake Bay.**

An acre of turfgrass lawn contributes six times as much nitrogen pollution to the Chesapeake Bay as an acre of forest.[3]

Forests along streams can remove up to 95% of nitrogen pollution from surrounding areas.[4]

- **Forests fight climate change.**

Forests can store about 70 tons of carbon per acre.[5]

Since 2010, our county has lost the ability to store about 181,000 tons of carbon, the equivalent of offsetting emissions from 38,000 cars.[6]

[1] US EPA. "Chesapeake Bay Program Chesapeake Assessment Scenario Tool."
[2] PennState Extension. "The Role of Trees and Forests in Healthy Watersheds." (August 17, 2015).
[3] US EPA Chesapeake Bay Program Chesapeake Assessment Scenario Tool
[4] Donald E. Weller, et al. "Effects of Riparian Buffers on Nitrate Concentrations in Watershed Discharges: New Models and Management Implications." (July 1, 2011).
[5] The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. "Land Use, Land-Use Change, and Forestry: Summary for Policymakers." Table 1, page 4. (2000).
[6] US EPA. "Greenhouse Gases Equivalencies Calculator – Calculations and References."