

**Nicole Hamilton, Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy,
Western Zoning Public Input Session
November 29, 2006**

My name is Nicole Hamilton and I'm the President of Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy. I represent citizens from across our county who care about and are concerned for the wildlife and habitat of Loudoun.

From an environmental perspective, the key to western zoning is the preservation of open space. In order to thrive, wildlife needs large tracts of land with diverse types of habitat. They need wetlands, hedgerows, farm fields, grasslands, forests and streams. In order to preserve open space, we need 4 key things:

- 1. Lower densities of development:** Lower densities of development enable provision of greater diversity of habitat and the space that animals need to survive. With higher density zoning, we subdivide land into smaller and smaller bits of territory. We replace fields and forests with pavement and lawns which are both environmental wastelands. Lower densities of development at least give wildlife a chance.
- 2. Development that is designed with nature:** If development is done in such a way that respects the natural topography, vegetation and hydrology, then migration corridors, food sources, nesting areas and protective habitats can be better maintained.
- 3. Protection of streams, stream corridors and associated floodplains and wetlands.** There should be buffers of at least 100 feet to protect our streams and at least 50 feet to protect our wetlands. These areas are not only important habitat but also are the source of our clean water.
- 4. Commitment to a Green Infrastructure:** We need to have a Green Infrastructure section in the Comprehensive Plan that truly protects natural resources – not something that merely pays lip service but something that puts our natural resources as a priority in our decision-making. The zoning needs to reflect this and be the means to ensure that our green infrastructure is protected.

In looking at the options, the old AR-1 and AR-2 zoning would have helped to protect habitat because of the low density of development and so our preference is for reenactment of the zoning approved by the last Board. However, if this Board is not going to pursue that option then Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy supports the Clem-Burton proposal as originally proposed, without grandfathering. We do not support the Staton proposal.