

**Nicole Hamilton, Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy,
Western Zoning Public Input Session
July 11, 2005**

My name is Nicole Hamilton. I live in Waterford and I'm the President of Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy. So, while I stand here as one person, I represent hundreds of our members from across the county who care about and are concerned for the wildlife of Loudoun and their habitat.

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.

Together, we are the stewards of this county and we are responsible for the future. We – all of the people of this county – not just the developers who are looking to pave our hills and fields - are responsible. We are responsible to all generations that follow us for what we save *and* what we destroy.

I like to think that we have evolved past money and profits being the prime driver of quality of life. There's something to be said for a long slow inhale of clean fresh air, for the soft churling songs of a spring warbler, for the flashes of fireflies that rise on a warm summer night from a hay field. Make no mistake – we will lose all things if we do not engage in zoning and resource planning that puts our natural resources, our clean water, our clean air, and diverse habitat at the forefront.

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, without that option available, Proposal 1 should be our starting point. If adopted it must include language that sufficiently supports our Green Infrastructure and protects our diverse habitats. Proposal 2 will not achieve the open space needed for good wildlife habitat and is not an option for us. As you make your decisions, and demonstrate what we will save and what we will destroy, we hope you will place the preservation of habitat and our natural resources at the forefront of what we will save since it is something that must endure but once developed, it is developed, and therefore, LOST to WILDLIFE and our future generations, forever!