Willow Springs Forest Conservation Easement Creation

This project has been prepared to acquire the creation of a 0.998 acre Forest Conservation Easement on Lot 10 of the Willow Highlands at Willow Springs property. Lot 10 is currently utilized as the Willow Springs Golf Course and is included in a development plan for the golf course and residential projects. The property is located on Howard County Road, Howard County, MD, and the Howard County Conservancy, Inc. A lot adjustment and amendment to the Zoning map and the adjointing Lots A-1 and B-1 has been proposed for the property. As part of the project, the property owner has agreed to create the proposed easement area (Lot 10) in perpetuity as an area of forested preservation. The property owner will take the necessary actions to maintain the preservation area and ensure its long-term viability.

The proposed easement area is part of a larger 80-acre forest community that extends onto several adjacent properties. The overall forested block has an irregular shape and is bordered by agricultural land. The proposed easement area is located within a mature forest community, which is part of the Cold Spring Creek watershed. The forest is characterized by a mix of native hardwoods and conifers, including oak, maple, and hemlock. The area contains several wetland depressions and vernal pools.

Field review of the 0.998 acres that is proposed for the Forest Conservation Easement has confirmed that the area is forested. The proposed FCE area is part of a larger 80-acre forest community that extends onto several adjacent properties. The overall forested block has an irregular shape and is bordered by agricultural land.

In the area of the proposed easement the forest community is dominated by oak, maple, and hemlock. Other common species include hickory, yellow birch, and basswood. The forest floor is littered with leaves and mixed hardwood and conifer needles. The shrub layer is variable with notable presence of viburnum, hawthorn, and spicebush. Blackberry shrubwood was also noted in the area. Coastal hickory and red oak are also present in the area. The understory consists of a mixture of native plants, including goldenrod, pokeweed, and wild geranium.

The project includes the establishment of a 3% slope, a 3% slope, and a 15% slope. The proposed easement area extends to the existing forested area and includes a mixture of conifer and hardwood trees. The area is approximately 4.5 acres in diameter, extending 100 feet from the property line. The proposed easement area is surrounded by existing forested areas.

No wetlands, streams, or buffers are present within the proposed easement area. The West Brook Survey shows the soils in the area to be Glacial till, 5 to 6 percent slopes.

The forest within the proposed FCE area would be considered a moderately protected area for retention on the basis of its age, diversity and position within a larger forested block.