



August 6, 2022

William Mackey
Director of Kent County Planning, Zoning and Housing
400 High St, Chestertown MD, 21620
wmackey@kentgov.org

Dear Mr. Mackey,

ShoreRivers submits this letter in support of the proposed text amendment to strengthen forest conservation provisions in Kent County's Land Use Ordinances. ShoreRivers is a regional nonprofit with over 2000 members. Our mission is to protect and restore Eastern Shore waterways - including the Chester River, Sassafras River, and the Bayside Creeks of Kent County – through science-based advocacy, restoration, and education.

Maryland loses about 3,000 acres of forest every year. Forest clearing leads to poor water quality, fragmentation and loss of wildlife habitat, reduced carbon sequestration, dirty air, increased temperatures, localized flooding, and lower property values. Development is the single largest driver of forest loss in the state. **On the Eastern Shore of Maryland, where over 60% of all land use is shaped by agricultural activities, the negative impacts of development on an already under forested landscape are more acute, as are the detriments to local water quality.**

Kent County's Comprehensive Plan acknowledges the "rich agricultural, natural, cultural, and human resources [that] provide the basis for the County's superior quality of life. Fertile soils, gentle topography, mild climate, **verdant woodlands**, the Chesapeake Bay with its productive tidal tributaries, wetlands, and marshes create an environment nearly unrivaled. These natural features enrich our economy and our lives." The plan goes on to specifically outline a no net loss strategy for tree preservation (Kent Comp Plan, pg. 76). **The proposed text amendments are aligned with the County's vision, and will help to strengthen protection for the natural features of our county while "embracing sufficient economic opportunities to provide for the economic well-being of [it's] citizens." (Kent Comp Plan, pg. 1)**

Trees and forest buffers are one of the most positive long-term investments that can be made to improve water quality in the Chesapeake Bay, and many of our trees are threatened by the ongoing effects of climate change, as well as development activities within our watersheds. Tree plantings are a cornerstone in ShoreRivers efforts to retrofit stormwater management practices, protect and restore streams, reduce nutrient runoff, sequester carbon, and shade impermeable surfaces. **Based on these benefits, ShoreRivers supports the proposed text amendments as a positive and realistic strategy to improve forest conservation in Kent County, and urges the Commissioners and the Planning Department to adopt a favorable report.**

Sincerely,

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