



April 11, 2022

Dear Commissioners,

The Corsica River Conservancy (CRC) has been pleased to be an active participant throughout the Comprehensive Plan Update process. This has been a substantial effort to address key challenges facing our county and to engage the public and staff experts in helping to determine how to best address them. Throughout the process, Amy Moredock and the Planning Department staff have been very responsive to questions and concerns that CRC and others have raised. The draft plan has effectively evolved over this extended process, despite the pandemic and other challenges. We believe the current version will do well to guide future planning and development over the next decade **if it is followed and effectively implemented.**

Throughout the past fifteen years, CRC has focused on restoring and preserving the health of the Corsica River and its surrounding watershed, as well as supporting the efforts of others working towards similar purposes. So we have been particularly pleased to see that the vision and aspirations stated in PlanQAC so clearly and repeatedly express the intent of the County to be an exemplary steward of its natural resources. The plan expressly recognizes the importance of the various watersheds that comprise those natural assets and so critically contribute to the character and quality of life in QAC and the legacy we leave for future generations..

Yet, we do not believe that the importance PlanQAC places on these natural resources is matched by guidelines that are strong enough to conserve and preserve them in the face of increasing pressure from development. The creep of development eastwards across our county is mirrored in the growth of the percent of impervious surface by watershed. The county should be closely monitoring the increases in impervious surface and using that as a proactive tool in helping to manage development on a watershed basis. Data on the percent of impervious surface in QAC's watersheds that are included in the plan show that several, especially those in the western area, are at or near levels that directly threaten water quality, habitat and aquatic productivity. That data is now seven years old and there has been no effort to update it. Inquiries to the Planning and Public Works departments indicate that their immediate focus on impervious surface control will be in the county's "urbanized" area around Kent Island - ironically, where it is probably already too late to be used effectively to halt habitat loss, even though it should help with stormwater control..

PlanQAC rightfully emphasizes that development needs to be concentrated in established growth areas in and around existing towns. This is a much preferred alternative to allowing development to sprawl onto irreplaceable agricultural lands. This policy, together with the County's excellent track record and commitment to agricultural preservation is commendable. At the same time, it needs to be recognized that our towns are located around headwaters that have high environmental sensitivity and that are increasingly affected by climate change. To better support this development direction, there needs to be more innovative practices for stormwater management and sufficiently funded enforcement of existing regulations in these sensitive areas. Our incorporated towns will need guidance and technical assistance to meet this challenge as well.. And while we need to preserve our agricultural lands for many reasons, we cannot lose sight of the need to continue to support programs that help farmers reduce nutrient pollution.

Lastly, please support preservation of our county's woodlands for the sake of our air and water quality, our wildlife and our quality of life. A policy of no net loss of forested lands would be a good action to implement to complement other commitments in PlanQAC..

Respectfully,

Frank DiGialleonardo  
President

Cc: Amy Moredock  
Stephanie Jones