



P.O. Box 15, Nanticoke, MD 21840-0015
www.friendsofthenanticoke.org

April 13, 2020

Attn: Mr. Jamie Whitehouse
Sussex County Planning & Zoning Office
PO Box 417
Georgetown, DE 19947

Dear Mr. Whitehouse,

The Friends of the Nanticoke River is a bi-state organization dedicated to conserving the Nanticoke River and its watershed. We strongly support the ordinance being developed by Sussex County Planning and Zoning to amend the Sussex County Code to protect both property and environmental resources by requiring increased natural buffers between new residential developments, wetlands, and tidal and non-tidal perennial waterways.

A high proportion (87%) of Sussex County's waterways are polluted; this not only adversely affects aquatic systems but also lowers their economic values. The loss and degradation of our wetlands contributes significantly to Sussex County's poor water quality. Homes concentrated in developments near sensitive wetlands and waterways degrade our natural resources, add more impervious surface, and escalate the risk of flooding. The benefits of adequate buffers are widely recognized, and current, minimal protections in Sussex County are not adequate. Buffers, while providing habitat and protection for wildlife, also mitigate flooding. Their economic benefits alone have been estimated at over \$10,000 per acre per year in the Delaware River Watershed, while the economic benefits of Delaware's wetlands are in the billions of dollars. In a soon-to-be-released study by the University of Delaware, water quality and supply in the Nanticoke River are valued at \$156.1 million per year.

We respectfully request the following change to the draft ordinance. The current draft requires that non-forested buffers be maintained as fields that can include non-native species and even fertilized lawns. Because the quality of stream side forested areas has been cited as the single most important factor in controlling runoff pollution, we request that the ordinance be modified to ensure water quality and wildlife habitat protection as well as optimized flood control; this would mean requiring that buffers either be planted with trees and shrubs or be allowed to undergo natural succession to forest, with controls in place for invasive species.

The health and well-being of Sussex County's citizens depends on our air, water, and land quality. We rely on our Council to give these priority in land use policy decisions. The proposed Sussex County buffer ordinance is crucial to a healthy environment and a healthy economy.

Thank you very much for your consideration of these comments, and please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

Jay Martin, President
410-873-2942
ubuubok@comcast.net

OUR MISSION:

To protect and preserve the unique natural, cultural, and recreational resources of the Nanticoke River watershed throughout its extent for the benefit of present and future generations.