

2025 Highlights



Since 2010, Conservation Montgomery has been an all-volunteer 501c3 nonprofit. Our working board of directors accomplishes the Conservation Montgomery mission with support from donations and volunteers. Tax-deductible financial support from donors allows us to continue activities like those outlined below.

Environmental education and awareness

We continued our Home Tree Care 101 classes this year and distributed the Spanish language version of ***Healthy Trees, Healthy Communities Guide to Tree Care in Montgomery County*** by working with our partners with the Silver Spring Regional Services Center, local businesses owned by members of the Latino community and the nonprofit, Defensores de la Cuenca.

The goal of our **Home Tree Care 101** (HTC 101) project is to show homeowners and business owners how to care for and preserve mature trees on their private property. HTC 101 complements free County tree planting programs like *Tree Montgomery* and *Reforest Montgomery*. We held HTC 101 spring and fall classes, primarily in sections of the county where tree canopy percentage is low. Certified arborists teach these hands-on classes to help homeowners learn about caring for trees. With proper maintenance, trees can live longer and be less hazardous in severe weather. Classes are held outdoors in neighborhoods throughout the county. We thank the Montgomery County Government and the Chesapeake Bay Trust for supporting this program.



Spring HTC 101 class for the Defensores de la Cuenca "Tree Ambassadors."



Spring Big Tree Tour. Joe Howard is at center, with the red jacket.

Conservation Montgomery also held a spring **Big Tree Tour**, led by Joe Howard, the founder of the Montgomery County Big Tree List, and botanical expert Carole Bergmann. Brookside Gardens was the location for the event. The park has been open since 1969 - long enough for trees first planted to become champions. Attendees for our spring Big Tree Tour were able to visit several champion trees including sweet bay magnolia, bald cypress, and paperbark maple. Two giant specimen trees over 15 feet in circumference are located at Brookside. One is a dawn redwood and the other a Norway spruce. The ground cover and understory plantings set off the trees perfectly for the tour. Mature gardens filled with azaleas, irises and peonies were in bloom. These tours are an important part of our advocacy mission. When county residents are introduced to special trees, it fosters a desire to protect them.

Advocacy, lending your voice to the environment

Our advocacy committee is happy to report several success stories this year. In February, the County Council passed the “bring your own bag bill.” Conservation Montgomery testified in support of this legislation. The bill effectively bans single-use plastic carryout bags. It also requires a ten cents fee for the use of each paper bag to incentivize customers to shop with reusable bags. Five cents of the ten cents charge will go to support water quality protection. The bill goes into effect January 1, 2026. This will reduce plastic bag litter and lead to cleaner waterways and streets. We thank Councilmember Kate Stewart for taking the lead on this issue.

This summer the County Council voted in favor of removing the northern section of the Mid-County Highway (M83) from all master plans. The five miles-long northern section was planned to run through multiple parklands. It would have destroyed and fragmented huge tracts of forest including areas recognized for their exceptional biodiversity and scenic values. Two of our board members testified before the planning board and to the county council in support of removing the highway from our master plans. We thank the *TAME Coalition* for leading the modern-day effort to kill this highway. Many individuals and organizations worked for decades to thwart this destructive highway proposal. Finally, the fight is over.



Decades of perseverance wins the day.

At left: Advocates spanning the generations celebrated the win on M-83 at the Council Office Building on July 29. Pictured with other activists are members of EcoMoco, A student-led 501(c)(3) non-profit environmental organization. EcoMoco and the Latin American Youth Center Conservation Corps program are the two recipients of the 2025 Joe Howard Environmental Award

Also, this summer we testified in support of Bill 26-25 of the Native Plant Protection Act. This bill would add native plants to the list of plants exempt from weed removal requirements. This is very important to county residents who pursue native plant gardening. In addition, the bill would ban the sale of invasive bamboo species. Council work sessions on Bill 26-25 are expected this fall. We thank Councilmember Evan Glass for taking the lead on this issue.

Our partners with *Friends of Ten Mile Creek* have been participating in the formulation of the Clarksburg Gateway Sector Plan since 2023. The goals have been the preservation of forests, protection of streams and wetlands, and safeguarding the water quality of Little Seneca Lake Reservoir, the region’s back-up drinking water supply. Conservation Montgomery participates in the MoCo Forest Coalition and signed on to support the Friends of Ten Mile Creek testimony on the sector plan.

Conservation Montgomery continues to be active with the *Montgomery County Forest Coalition*, a group of local and state environmental organizations working toward stronger forest protection in Montgomery County, with the goal of achieving a "net gain" (planting more trees than are removed) instead of just "no net loss." Separately, our advocacy committee has concerns about the accuracy of tree canopy data collected with an online *Tree Canopy Explorer* tool available through the Montgomery Planning Department. Glitches in the data and online tool make it difficult for the average county resident to use. We look forward to future improvements in the Tree Canopy Explorer.