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Notes

**\*Editor's note**—This Chapter is cited in Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission v. Mardirossian, 184 Md. App. 207, 964 A.2d 713 (2009).  
2021 L.M.C., ch. 1, § 2, states: Sec. 2. Transition. Section 1 of this Act must not apply to a county highway project if, prior to the effective date of the Act, construction funding has been appropriated for the project, and the project has been submitted to the Planning Board under mandatory referral.  
2010 L.M.C., ch. 6, § 2(b), states: Any amendment to County Code Chapter 22A made by Section 1 of this Act applies to any enforcement action that begins after this Act takes effect [ March 26, 2010] even if the alleged violation on which the enforcement action is based was committed before this Act took effect.  
2005 L.M.C., ch. 32, § 2, repeals 1992 L.M.C., ch. 4, § 2, set forth below.  
1992 L.M.C., ch. 4, §§ 2, 3, 4 and 5 read as follows (1992 L.M.C., ch. 4, § 3 was amended by 2013 L.M.C., ch. 4, § 2):  
Sec. 2. Setting of in lieu fees and maximum administrative civil penalty.  
Until altered by law or resolution, the fee in lieu of afforestation or reforestation is 30 cents per square foot of the area of required planting and the maximum administrative civil penalty authorized is \$1.00 per square foot of the area found to be in noncompliance.  
Sec. 3. Contingency on Commission resolution.  
Until express authority for Planning Board administration and enforcement of Article II, as enacted in Section 1 of this Act, is provided under State law, this Act is contingent on and does not become effective until the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission adopts a resolution under Section 20-207 of the Land Use Article of the Maryland Code allocating the functions provided under this Act to the Montgomery County Planning Board.  
Sec. 4. Administrative Actions.  
The Chief Administrative Officer is expressly authorized to initiate all necessary budgetary, personnel, and other administrative actions to implement this Act. Until a County Arborist is appointed, the responsibility of the Arborist under this Act to approve proposed commercial logging and timber harvesting operations, review proposed variances, and review certain reports, must be exercised by the Director of the Department of Environmental Protection or the Director's designee.  
Sec. 5. Effective Date; Delayed Provisions.  
Except as provided in Section 3 and this Section, this Act takes effect 91 days following the date that it becomes law, Section 22A-26 (Regulations) as enacted by Section 1 of this Act takes effect on that date. All other provisions of this Act take effect on July 1, 1992.  
These requirements by State law: 1992, ch. 643, and Park and Planning Resolution No. 92-07.

## **Article I. General.**

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### **Sec. 22A-1. Short title.**

This Chapter may be referred to as the Montgomery County Forest Conservation Law. (1992 L.M.C., ch. 4, § 1)

### **Sec. 22A-2. Findings and purpose.**

- (a) *Findings.* The County Council finds that trees and forest cover constitute an important natural resource. Trees filter groundwater, reduce surface runoff, help alleviate flooding, and supply necessary habitat for wildlife. They cleanse the air, offset the heat island effects of urban development, and reduce energy needs. They improve the quality of life in a community by providing for recreation, compatibility between different land uses, and aesthetic appeal. The Council finds that tree loss as a result of development and other land disturbing activities is a serious problem in the County.
- (b) *Purpose.* The purpose of this Chapter is to:
- (1) save, maintain, and plant trees and forested areas for the benefit of County residents and future generations;
  - (2) establish procedures, standards, and requirements to minimize tree loss as a result of development and to protect trees and forests during and after construction or other land disturbing activities;
  - (3) establish procedures, standards, and requirements for afforestation and reforestation of land subject to an application for development approval or a sediment control permit;
  - (4) establish a fund for future tree conservation projects, including afforestation and reforestation; and
  - (5) provide a focused and coordinated approach for County forest conservation activities. (1992 L.M.C., ch. 4, § 1)

### **Sec. 22A-3. Definitions.**

In this Chapter, the following terms have the meanings indicated:

*Administrative subdivision* means a plan for a proposed subdivision or resubdivision prepared and submitted for approval by the Planning Director under Division 50.6 of Chapter 50 before preparation of a subdivision plat.

*Afforestation* means the establishment of forest or tree cover in accordance with this Chapter on an area from which it has always or very long been absent, or the planting of open areas which are not in forest cover.

*Agricultural activity* means farming activities conducted as part of a recognized commercial enterprise, including: plowing, tillage, cropping, installation of best management practices, seeding, cultivating, and harvesting for production of food and fiber products (except commercial logging and timber harvesting operations), the grazing and raising of livestock, aquaculture, sod production,

and the cultivation of orchard, nursery, and other products.

*Agricultural and resource area* means an undeveloped area zoned for a density of less than or equal to one dwelling unit per 5 acres.

*Champion tree* means the largest tree of its species in the County, as designated by the County Forest Conservancy District Board or its designee.

*Commercial and industrial uses* means manufacturing operations, office complexes, shopping centers, and other similar uses and their associated storage areas, yards, and parking areas.

*Commercial logging or timber harvesting operation* means the cutting and removing of tree stems from a site for commercial purposes, leaving the root mass intact.

*Conditional use* means a use approved under Section 7.3.1 of Chapter 59.

*Declaration of intent* means a signed and notarized statement by a landowner that the cutting of trees on the landowner's property:

- (1) is for purposes exempted under this Chapter; and
- (2) will not circumvent the requirements of this Chapter.

*Developed area* means the portion of a property which has been altered from its natural state by the construction of a building, recreational facility, road or alley, rail line, athletic field, stormwater management facility, parking lot, utility or similar improvement.

*Developed property* means a property that contains a developed area.

*Development application* means an application, as described in Section 22A-4, filed with the Planning Board, Planning Director, Board of Appeals, Hearing Examiner, or Department of Permitting Services, for plan approval or sediment control permit.

*Development plan* means a plan or an amendment to a development plan approved under Section 7.7.1.B of Chapter 59 or a floating zone plan approved under Section 7.2.1 of Chapter 59 or referred to in Section 7.7.1.B of Chapter 59.

*Development project completion* means the date or event identified in the forest conservation plan agreement, but no later than the date on which the first use-and-occupancy permit is issued for the development (or activity) subject to the preliminary plan of subdivision or sediment control permit or, if a use-and-occupancy permit is not required, the date on which the final building inspection or sediment control inspection (for activities not involving building) is conducted by the Department of Permitting Services. A staged development may have more than one completion date.

*District Council* means the County Council in its capacity, under Division II of the Land Use Article of the Maryland Code, to act on planning and zoning for the Maryland-Washington Regional District.

*Equestrian Facility*: Any building, structure, or land area that is primarily used for the care, breeding, boarding, rental, riding, sport eventing, or training of horses or ponies, the teaching of equestrian skills, or competitive equestrian events.

*Floodplain (100-year)* means an area along or adjacent to a stream or body of water, except tidal waters, that is capable of storing or conveying floodwaters during a 100-year frequency storm event, or a 100-year flood.

*Forest* means a biological community dominated by trees and other woody plants (including plant communities, the understory, and forest floor) covering a land area which is 10,000 square feet or greater and at least 50 feet wide. However, minor portions of a forest stand which otherwise meet this definition may be less than 50 feet wide if they exhibit the same character and composition as the overall stand. *Forest* includes:

- (1) areas that have at least 100 live trees per acre with at least 50 percent of those trees having a 2 inch or greater diameter at 4.5 feet above the ground; and
- (2) forest areas that have been cut but not cleared.

*Forest* does not include an orchard.

*Forest conservation* means the retention of existing forest or the creation of new forest at the levels set by the Planning Board or Planning Director.

*Forest conservation fund* means a special fund maintained by the County to be used for purposes specified in Section 22A-27.

*Forest conservation plan* means a plan approved under Article II.

*Forest conservation threshold* means the percentage of the net tract area at which the reforestation requirement changes from a ratio of  $\frac{1}{4}$  acre planted for every one acre removed to a ratio of 2 acres planted for every one acre removed.

*Forest cover* means the area of a site meeting the definition of forest.

*Forest edge* means the transition zone from an area of forest to fields, meadows, yards, or other open spaces. *Forest edge* includes forest that was previously interior forest, but has become forest edge due to clearing.

*Forest mitigation banking* means the intentional preservation, restoration, or creation of forests undertaken expressly to provide credits for afforestation or reforestation requirements.

*Forest stand delineation* means the evaluation of existing vegetation in relation to the natural resources on a site proposed for development or land disturbing activities.

*High-density residential area* means an area zoned for densities greater than one dwelling unit per 40,000 square feet, including both existing and planned development and their associated infrastructure, such as roads, utilities, and water and sewer service.

*Institutional development area* means land occupied by uses such as schools, colleges and universities, military installations, transportation facilities, utility and sewer projects, government offices and facilities, fire stations, golf courses, recreation areas, parks, cemeteries, and religious institutions.

*Land disturbing activities:*

- (1) has the same meaning as in Chapter 19 and
- (2) means cutting, clearing, or grading of more than 5,000 square feet of forest.

*Linear project* means a project whose configuration is elongated with nearly parallel sides and used to transport a utility product or public service not otherwise to be constructed or improved as part of an application for subdivision approval, such as electricity, gas, water, sewer, communications, trains, pedestrians, and vehicles. A linear project may traverse fee simple properties through defined boundaries or through easement rights.

*Lot* means for the purpose of this Chapter a tract of land, the boundaries of which have been established as a result of a deed or previous subdivision of a larger parcel, and which will not be the subject of further subdivision, as defined under Chapter 50, without an approved forest stand delineation and forest conservation plan.

*Mandatory referral* means the required review by the Planning Board of projects or activities to be undertaken by government agencies and private and public utilities under Section 20-301 of the Land Use Article of the Maryland Code.

*Medium-density residential area* means an area zoned for a density greater than one dwelling unit per 5 acres and less than or equal to one dwelling unit per 40,000 square feet, including both existing and planned development and their associated infrastructure, such as roads, utilities, and water and sewer service.

*Minor subdivision* means a plan for a proposed subdivision or resubdivision prepared and submitted for approval by the Planning Director under Division 50.7 of Chapter 50.

*Mixed-use development* means a single, relatively high-density development project, usually commercial in nature, which includes 2 or more types of uses.

*Municipal corporation* means a municipality without planning and zoning authority or which has assigned its responsibilities under Section 5-1603(a) of the Natural Resources Article of the Maryland Code to the County.

*Natural regeneration* means the natural establishment of trees and other vegetation with at least 400 woody, free-to-grow seedlings per acre, which are capable of reaching a height of at least 20 feet at maturity.

*Net tract area* means the total area of a tract, including both forested and unforested areas, to the nearest 1/10 acre, reduced by road or utility rights-of-way which will not be improved as part of the development application. However, in agriculture and resource areas, *net tract area* is the portion of the total tract for which land use will be changed or will no longer be used for primarily agricultural activities. For a linear project, *net tract area* is the area of a right-of-way width or the limits of disturbance as shown on the development application, whichever is greater.

*Obligee* means a person obligated under a financial security instrument to meet certain regulatory requirements under Article II.

*Park development plan* means an application submitted by the Montgomery County Parks Department for the construction and development of a specific park.

*Person* means:

- (1) the federal government, the state, any county, municipal corporation, or other political subdivision of the state, or any of their units,
- (2) an individual, receiver, trustee, guardian, executor, administrator, fiduciary, or representative of any kind,
- (3) any partnership, firm, common ownership community or other homeowners' association, public or private corporation or any of their affiliates or subsidiaries, or
- (4) any other entity.

*Planned unit development* means a development comprised of a combination of land uses or varying intensities of the same land use, having at least 20% of the land permanently dedicated to green area, and under an integrated plan that provides flexibility in land use design approved by the Planning Board under Section 7.2.1 of Chapter 59 or referred to in Section 7.7.1.B of Chapter 59.

*Planning Board* means the County Planning Board of the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission.

*Planning Director* means the Director of the Montgomery County Park and Planning Department, or the Director's designee.

*Preliminary plan of subdivision* means a plan for a proposed subdivision or resubdivision prepared and submitted for approval by the Planning Board under Division 50.4 of Chapter 50 before preparation of a subdivision plat.

*Project plan* means a plan or an amendment to a project plan referred to in Section 7.7.1.B of Chapter 59 or a sketch plan approved under Section 7.3.3 of Chapter 59.

*Public utility* means any:

- (1) transmission line or electric generating station; or
- (2) water, sewer, electric, gas, telephone, and cable service line.

*Reforestation* or *reforested* means the creation of a biological community dominated by trees and other woody plants (including plant communities, the understory, and forest floor) which is at least 10,000 square feet in area and 50 feet wide, and containing at least 100 live trees per acre, with at least 50 percent of those trees having the potential of attaining a 2 inch or greater diameter measured at 4.5 feet above the ground within 7 years. *Reforestation* for a linear project which involves overhead transmission lines may consist of a biological community dominated by trees and woody shrubs with no minimum height or diameter criteria.

*Restoration plan* means a plan prepared in response to a violation of this Chapter.

*Retention* means the deliberate holding and protecting of existing trees and other plants on the site.

*Sediment control permit* means a permit required to be obtained for certain land disturbing activities:

- (1) under Chapter 19, Article I;
- (2) from the Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission for major utility construction as defined under regulations of the Commission; or
- (3) from a municipal corporation.

*Significant tree* means a tree of any species that is 24 inches or greater in diameter at 4.5 feet above the ground.

*Site plan* means a plan or an amendment to a site plan approved under Section 7.3.4 of Chapter 59 or referred to in Section 7.7.1.B of Chapter 59.

*Sketch plan* means a plan or amendment to a sketch plan approved under Chapter 59.7.3.3.

*Special exception* means a use approved as a conditional use under Section 7.3.1 or Section 7.7.1.B of Chapter 59 or referred to in Section 7.7.1.B of Chapter 59.

*Special Protection Area (SPA)* means a geographic area designated by the County Council under Section 19-62(a).

*Stream Restoration Project* means an activity that:

- (1) is designed to stabilize stream banks or enhance stream function or habitat located in an existing stream, waterway, or floodplain;
- (2) avoids and minimizes impacts to forests and provides for replanting on-site an equivalent number of trees to the number removed by the project;
- (3) may be performed under a municipal separate storm sewer system permit, a watershed implementation plan growth offset, or another plan administered by the State or local government to achieve or maintain water quality standards; and
- (4) is not performed to satisfy stormwater management, wetlands mitigation, or any other regulatory requirement associated with a development application.

*Subdivision* has the same meaning as stated in Chapter 50.

*Technical Manual* means a detailed guidance document used for administration of this Chapter that is adopted by the Planning Board under Section 22A-26.

*Timber harvesting* means a tree cutting operation affecting one or more acres of forest or developed woodland within a one year period that disturbs 5,000 square feet or more of forest floor. Timber harvesting does not include grubbing and clearing of root mass.

*Tract* means:

- (1) the property subject to a development application or a sediment control permit, the boundaries of which are described by deed or record plat;
- (2) the entire property subject to a development application or a sediment control permit if it is developed as a single project; or
- (3) the length and width of the right-of-way or the limits of disturbance, whichever is greater, for a linear project.

*Tree* means a large, woody plant having one or several self-supporting stems or trunks and numerous branches that reach a height of at least 20 feet at maturity.

*Tree cover* means the combined area, in square feet, of the crowns of all trees on a tract. For replanting purposes, *tree cover* is the typical crown area for the specific tree at 20 years.

*Tree save plan* means a plan prepared in conjunction with a development application indicating where trees are to be retained or planted, including the establishment of conservation areas.

*Variance* means relief from this Chapter. *Variance* does not mean a subdivision or zoning variance.

*Watershed* means any area delineated as a watershed in the Montgomery County Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4)

Permit Implementation Program, (delineated by the State of Maryland as an 8-digit watershed), and any smaller area within the watershed that is delineated by the State of Maryland as a 12-Digit watershed.

*Wetland* means an area that is inundated or saturated by surface water or groundwater at a frequency and duration sufficient to support, and under normal circumstances does support, a prevalence of vegetation typically adapted for life in saturated soil conditions, commonly known as hydrophytic vegetation. (1992 L.M.C., ch. 4, § 1; 1996 L.M.C., ch. 20, § 1; 1998 L.M.C., ch. 12, § 1; [2001 L.M.C., ch. 14](#), § 1; [2001 L.M.C., ch. 19](#), § 1; [2002 L.M.C., ch. 16](#), § 2; [2004 L.M.C., ch. 20](#), § 1; [2006 L.M.C., ch. 35](#), § 1; [2007 L.M.C., ch. 10](#), § 1; [2013 L.M.C., ch. 4](#), § 1; [2014 L.M.C., ch. 25](#), § 1; [2016 L.M.C., ch. 8](#), § 1; [2017 L.M.C., ch. 34](#), § 1; [2018 L.M.C., ch. 14](#), § 1; [2018 L.M.C., ch. 27](#), § 1; [2019 L.M.C., ch. 23](#), § 1; 2021 L.M.C., ch. 1, § 1.)

**Editor's note**—2001 L.M.C., ch. 19, § 2, reads as follows:

Transition. Any amendment to Chapter 22A, inserted by Section 1 of this Act, does not apply to:

- (a) a preliminary or final forest conservation plan approved before this Act took effect [November 5, 2001], or
- (b) a county highway project individually listed in the County Capital Improvements Program and submitted to the Planning Board under mandatory referral review before this Act took effect [November 5, 2001].

#### **Sec. 22A-4. Applicability.**

Except as otherwise expressly provided in this Chapter, this Chapter applies to:

- (a) a person required by law to obtain an approval or amendment to a development plan, diagrammatic plan, project plan, floating zone plan, sketch plan, preliminary plan of subdivision, administrative subdivision, minor subdivision, or site plan;
- (b) a person required by law to obtain approval of a special exception or a conditional use, or a sediment control permit on a tract of land 40,000 square feet or larger, and who is not otherwise required to obtain an approval under subsection (a);
- (c) a person who performs any cutting or clearing, or any other land disturbing activity that would directly threaten the viability of, any champion tree, wherever located;
- (d) a government entity subject to mandatory referral or a park development plan on a tract of land 40,000 square feet or larger which is not exempt under subsection 22A-5(f);
- (e) highway construction not exempt under subsections 22A-5 (e) or (p);
- (f) a public utility not exempt under subsections 22A-5 (g), (o)(1) and (2), or (p); and
- (g) clearing or grading conducted on two or more platted contiguous lots:
  - (1) that collectively total 40,000 square feet or larger;
  - (2) that are graded at the same time; and
  - (3) where sediment control is required.

Any person who expects to cut, clear, or grade more than 5000 square feet of forest or any champion tree, and who believes that the cutting, clearing, or grading is exempt under Section 22A-5, 22A-6, 22A-7, or 22A-8, must notify the Planning Director in writing before performing any cutting, clearing, or grading and seek confirmation from the Director that the cutting, clearing, or grading is in fact exempt from Article II. Failing to notify the Director as required by this Section, or performing any cutting, clearing, or grading before the Director confirms that an exemption applies, is a violation of this Chapter.

The Planning Director must notify the Department of Permitting Services if this Chapter would apply to any cutting, clearing, or grading of which the Department would otherwise not be notified. (1992 L.M.C., ch. 4, § 1; [2001 L.M.C., ch. 19](#), § 1; [2006 L.M.C., ch. 35](#), § 1; [2014 L.M.C., ch. 25](#), § 1; [2016 L.M.C., ch. 8](#), § 1; [2017 L.M.C., ch. 34](#), § 1; 2021 L.M.C., ch. 1, § 1.)

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Transition. Any amendment to Chapter 22A, inserted by Section 1 of this Act, does not apply to:

- (a) a preliminary or final forest conservation plan approved before this Act took effect [November 5, 2001], or
- (b) a county highway project individually listed in the County Capital Improvements Program and submitted to the Planning Board under mandatory referral review before this Act took effect [November 5, 2001].

#### **Sec. 22A-5. Exemptions.**

The requirements of Article II do not apply to:

- (a) an activity conducted on an existing single lot of any size that is required to construct a dwelling house or accessory structure (such as a pool, tennis court, or shed) intended for the use of the owner, if the activity:
  - (1) does not require a special exception;
  - (2) does not result in the cutting, clearing, or grading of:
    - (A) more than a total of 20,000 square feet of forest;

- (B) any forest in a stream buffer,
  - (C) any forest on property located in a special protection area which must submit a water quality plan,
  - (D) any specimen or champion tree, or
  - (E) any trees or forest that are subject to a previously approved forest conservation plan or tree save plan; and
- (3) is subject to a declaration of intent filed with the Planning Director stating that the lot will not be the subject of additional regulated activities under this Chapter within 5 years of the cutting, clearing, or grading of forest;
- (b) an agricultural activity if:
- (1) the activity is exempt from the requirements to obtain a sediment control permit under Section 19-2(b)(2). Agricultural support buildings and related activities are exempt only if built using best management practices;
  - (2) the activity is subject to a declaration of intent filed with the Planning Director stating that the agricultural areas will remain in commercial agriculture; and
  - (3) agricultural
- (c) a tree nursery;
- (d) (1) a commercial logging and timber harvesting operation, including any harvesting conducted under the forest conservation and management program under Section 8-211 of the Tax-Property Article of the Maryland Code that:
- (A) is completed before July 1, 1991, or is completed on or after July 1, 1991, and the property on which the cutting or clearing is conducted is not the subject of an application for development within 5 years after the sediment control permit has been issued;
  - (B) has received approval from the County Arborist or designee that the logging or timber harvesting plan is not inconsistent with County forest management objectives and is otherwise appropriate; and
  - (C) has received a sediment control permit from the Department of Permitting Services and posted the required financial security under Chapter 19.
- (2) The Department of Permitting Services must send the Planning Director a copy of all sediment control permits issued for commercial logging and timber harvesting operations.
- (3) The requirements of this subsection apply to commercial logging and timber harvesting operations on agricultural land;
- (e) a State, County, or municipal highway construction activity that is subject to Section 5-103 of the Natural Resources Article of the Maryland Code, or Section 22A-9. All requirements of an exemption for a County or municipal highway construction activity are detailed in Section 22A-6(d) and Section 22A-9;
- (f) a governmental project reviewed for forest conservation purposes by the State Department of Natural Resources under the Code of Maryland Regulations;
- (g) except for the clearing of access roads, routine maintenance of public utility easements and rights-of-way;
- (h) utility or other work that is of an emergency nature;
- (i) noncoal surface mining regulated under Subtitle 8 of Title 15 of the Environment Article of the Maryland Code;
- (j) a sediment control permit approved before July 1, 1991, or if amended after that date at the initiation of the permittee, that does not result in the cutting of more than 5,000 additional square feet of forest;
- (k) any lot covered by a preliminary plan of subdivision or site plan that did not receive a sediment control permit before July 1, 1991, and for which the preliminary plan of subdivision or site plan:
- (1) was approved before July 1, 1984, and has less than 40,000 square feet of forest cover; or
  - (2) was approved or extended between July 1, 1984 and July 1, 1991, and
  - (3) the construction will not result in the cutting, clearing, or grading of:
    - (A) any forest in a stream buffer, or
    - (B) any forest on property located in a special protection area which must submit a water quality plan.

A preliminary plan of subdivision or site plan approved before July 1, 1991, that is revised after that date at the initiative of the applicant and which results in the cutting of more than 5,000 additional square feet of forest is not exempt. Development or redevelopment of a property which requires resubdivision is not exempt. This subsection does not apply to a planned unit development subject to subsection (l);

- (l) any planned unit development for which a development plan was approved by the District Council or for which a project plan was approved by the Planning Board before January 1, 1992, and which has received site plan approval before July 1, 1992 for the tract. However, even if site plan approval has not been obtained before July 1, 1992, for the tract, the planned unit development is exempt if it is 75% or more complete on January 1, 1992, as measured by the total acreage subject to the planned unit development that has received site plan approval. A development plan or project plan amendment approved after January 1, 1992, is not exempt if it results

in the cutting of more than 5,000 additional square feet of forest;

(m) a real estate transfer to provide a security, leasehold, or other legal or equitable interest in a portion of a lot or parcel, if;

(1) the transfer does not involve a change in land use, or new development or redevelopment, with associated land disturbing activities; and

(2) both the grantor and grantee file a declaration of intent;

(n) any minor subdivision under Division 50.7 of Chapter 50 if:

(1) the only development located on the resulting lot is a single family dwelling unit or an accessory structure (such as a pool, tennis court, or shed); and development does not result in the cutting, clearing, or grading of:

(A) more than a total of 20,000 square feet of forest;

(B) any forest in a stream buffer;

(C) any forest on property located in a special protection area which must submit a water quality plan;

(D) any specimen or champion tree; or

(E) any tree or forest that is subject to the requirements of a previously approved forest conservation plan or tree save plan; or

(2) there is no proposed land disturbance and a declaration of intent is filed with the Planning Director stating that the lot will not be the subject of additional regulated activities under this Chapter within 5 years of the approval of the minor subdivision.

(o) The cutting or clearing of public utility rights-of-way or land for electric generating stations licensed under Sections 7-205 and 7-207 or 7-208 of the Public Utility Companies Article of the Maryland Code, if:

(1) any required certificates of public convenience and necessity have been issued in accordance with Section 5-1603(f) of the Natural Resources Article of the Maryland Code; and

(2) the cutting or clearing of the forest is conducted so as to minimize the loss of forest.

(p) the construction of a public utility or highway in a utility right-of-way not exempt under subsection (o), or a highway right-of-way not exempt under subsection (e), if:

(1) the right-of-way existed before July 1, 1992;

(2) forest clearing will not exceed a total of 20,000 square feet and

(3) the construction will not result in the cutting, clearing, or grading of:

(A) any forest in a stream buffer,

(B) any forest on property located in a special protection area which must submit a water quality plan,

(C) any specimen or champion tree, or

(D) any tree or forest that is subject to a previously approved forest conservation or tree save plan;

(q) a special exception, or conditional use, application if:

(1) the application is for an existing structure and the proposed use will not result in clearing of existing forest or trees;

(2) the application modifies an existing special exception use which was approved before July 1, 1991, and the revision will not result in the clearing of more than a total of 5,000 additional square feet of forest or any specimen or champion tree; or

(3) the total disturbance area for the proposed special exception use, or conditional use, will not exceed 10,000 square feet, and clearing will not exceed a total of 5,000 square feet of forest or include any specimen or champion tree;

(r) an equestrian facility located in an agricultural zone that is exempt from platting requirements under Section 50-9, whether or not a sediment control permit is obtained under Section 19-2. Article II does not apply to any equestrian support building or related activity only if the building is built using best management practices. However, Section 22A-6(a) applies if any specimen or champion tree would be cleared. This exemption does not permit any forest or tree that was preserved under a previously-approved forest conservation plan or tree save plan to be cut, cleared, or graded unless the previously-approved plan is amended to allow that activity. This exemption does not apply if:

(1) any forest was cleared during an agricultural activity, as defined in subsection (b), during the 5 years before any exemption under this subsection is claimed;

(2) any forest or tree located in a stream valley buffer would be cleared;

(3) on-site forest retention does not equal at least 25% of the tract area or all forest existing when the exemption is claimed, whichever is less; or

(4) on-site forest retention does not equal at least 50% of any net tract area when more than 50% of that tract is existing forest.

A conservation easement is not required for any equestrian facility, whether or not the exemption in this subsection applies.

However, another type of long-term protection may be required under Section 22A-12(h)(2) if the facility includes any forest retention area. The Planning Director must monitor any facility that is exempt under this subsection to confirm that the applicant and any successor in interest continue to comply with all conditions of the exemption;

- (s) (1) an activity occurring on a tract of land less than 1.5 acres with no existing forest, or existing specimen or champion tree, and the afforestation requirements would not exceed 10,000 square feet; or
- (2) an activity occurring on a tract less than 1 acre that will not result in the clearing of more than a total of 20,000 square feet of existing forest, or any existing specimen or champion tree, and reforestation requirements would not exceed 10,000 square feet. Forest in any priority area on-site must be preserved; and
- (t) a modification to a:
  - (1) non-residential developed property if:
    - (A) no more than 5,000 square feet of forest is ever cleared at one time or cumulatively after an exemption is issued;
    - (B) the modification does not result in the cutting, clearing, or grading of any forest in a stream buffer or forest located on property in a special protection area which must submit a water quality plan;
    - (C) the modification does not require approval of a preliminary plan, administrative subdivision plan, or conditional use/special exception;
    - (D) the modification does not increase the developed area by more than 50%, and any existing principal building, as defined in Chapter 59, is retained; and
    - (E) the pending development application does not propose any residential uses; or
  - (2) residential developed property if:
    - (A) forest is not impacted or cleared;
    - (B) the modification is not located in a stream buffer;
    - (C) the modification does not require approval of a preliminary plan, administrative subdivision plan, or conditional use/special exception;
    - (D) the modification does not increase the developed area by more than 50%;
    - (E) the existing structure is not modified; and
    - (F) the pending development application does not propose any new buildings or parking facilities.
- (u) maintaining or retrofitting an existing stormwater management structure if:
  - (1) the clearing of vegetation or removal and trimming of trees is for the maintenance or retrofitting of the structure and in the original limits of disturbance for construction of the existing facility, or within any maintenance easement for access to the facility; and
  - (2) the tract is not included in a previously approved forest conservation plan;
- (v) a stream restoration project for which the applicant for a sediment control permit has:
  - (1) agreed to replace every tree removed and plant the new trees before the end of the first planting season after final stabilization;
  - (2) confirmed that the tract is not included in a previously approved forest conservation plan; and
  - (3) executed a binding maintenance agreement for planting and maintenance of mitigation trees for at least 5 years with the affected property owner or owners, or with the Maryland National-Capital Park and Planning Commission if the applicant is performing a stream restoration project on their own property. If an applicant is performing a stream restoration project on their own property, financial security is required under Section 22A-12(i).
- (w) cutting or clearing any tree by an existing airport operating with all applicable permits to comply with applicable provisions of any federal law or regulation governing the obstruction of navigable airspace if the Federal Aviation Administration has determined that the tree creates a hazard to aviation; and
- (x) the project is for the demolition of an existing structure if:
  - (1) there is no proposed future development and existing impervious surfaces are substantially removed from the tract of land;
  - (2) the site is returned to natural topography;
  - (3) the property will not be used for a parking lot, material or equipment storage, or used as a recreational playing field;
  - (4) trees and groundcover will be planted so that all disturbed areas are immediately stabilized;
  - (5) no forest or specimen trees are removed;
  - (6) a tree save plan is submitted to protect existing forest and trees;
  - (7) the property is not already subject to Article II of this Chapter; and

(8) a Declaration of Intent is filed with the Planning Director stating that the property will not be the subject of additional development activities under this Chapter within 5 years of demolition of the existing structure.

(1992 L.M.C., ch. 4, § 1; 1996 L.M.C., ch. 20, § 1; 1998 L.M.C., ch. 12, § 1; [2001 L.M.C., ch. 14](#), § 1; [2001 L.M.C., ch 19](#), § 1; [2002 L.M.C., ch. 16](#), § 2; [2004 L.M.C., ch. 20](#), §1; [2010 L.M.C., ch. 55](#), § 1; [2014 L.M.C., ch. 25](#), § 1; [2017 L.M.C., ch. 34](#), §1; [2018 L.M.C., ch. 27](#), § 1; 2021 L.M.C., ch. 1, § 1.)

**Editor's note**—Section 22A-5 is cited and interpreted in *Miller v. Montgomery County*, 2011 U.S. App. LEXIS 25088 (filed December 19, 2011) (unpublished).

2001 L.M.C., ch. 19, § 2, reads as follows:

Transition. Any amendment to Chapter 22A, inserted by Section 1 of this Act, does not apply to:

- (a) a preliminary or final forest conservation plan approved before this Act took effect [November 5, 2001], or
- (b) a county highway project individually listed in the County Capital Improvements Program and submitted to the Planning Board under mandatory referral review before this Act took effect [November 5, 2001].

#### **Sec. 22A-6. Special provisions — Exemptions; tree save plans; and highway projects.**

- (a) An activity or development that would be exempt under Section 22A-5, and that would impact a significant, specimen, or champion tree, requires the approval of a tree save plan, which may require tree preservation or mitigation for loss of individual trees. The plan requirements must be based on the size and character of the trees to be cleared. If trees to be cleared are part of an existing scenic buffer between public parkland and a proposed development, trees which are smaller than specimen size may be included in the plan.
- (b) *Exemption expiration.* A confirmed exemption that has not started any authorized land disturbance within 5 years from the date of approval of the exemption is expired, unless the confirmed exemption pertains to a subdivision with a validity period of more than 5 years. If the subdivision has a validity period of more than 5 years, the confirmed exemption does not expire until the end of the subdivision validity period.
- (c) *Tree save plan violations.* A violation of any requirement of a tree save plan or similar condition of approval may be enforced using any remedy provided under this Chapter.
- (d) *Highway projects.* The provisions of Article III apply to County and municipal highway projects exempt from Article II under Section 22A-5(e). (1992 L.M.C., ch. 4, § 1; [2001 L.M.C., ch 19](#), § 1; 2021 L.M.C., ch. 1, § 1.)

**Editor's note**—2001 L.M.C., ch. 19, § 2, reads as follows:

Transition. Any amendment to Chapter 22A, inserted by Section 1 of this Act, does not apply to:

- (a) a preliminary or final forest conservation plan approved before this Act took effect [November 5, 2001], or
- (b) a county highway project individually listed in the County Capital Improvements Program and submitted to the Planning Board under mandatory referral review before this Act took effect [November 5, 2001].

#### **Sec. 22A-7. Activities or development not exempt under Section 22A-5--Special transition provision.**

- (a) An activity or development not exempted under Section 22A-5 and which received preliminary plan of subdivision approval, site plan approval, project plan approval, or development plan approval, including any amendments, between July 1, 1991 and July 1, 1992 is exempt from the requirements of Article II at the time of a subsequent sediment control permit application if:
  - (1) final plat approval has been obtained by July 1, 1992; or
  - (2) a substantively complete application for final plat approval under Section 50-36 has been filed by July 1, 1992. If all other requirements are met, the Planning Board must consider an application to be substantively complete if the Board determines that:
    - (A) any required approval or permit that has not been obtained from another governmental agency is not available solely because of the inaction by the other governmental agency; and
    - (B) the applicant has used best efforts to obtain the permit or approval.
- (b) If final plat approval will not be required under subsection (a) of this Section because the development is on a recorded lot or for other reasons, the development will be subject to the requirements of this Chapter at the time of any subsequent application for a sediment control permit.
- (c) If the Planning Board finds that a development approval between July 1, 1991 and July 1, 1992 was consistent with the retention, afforestation, or reforestation standards of this Chapter but is not exempt under this Section, the Board may waive additional submission requirements at the time of any later sediment control permit application. However, the Board must not waive the provisions of Section 22A-12(g) and (h) requiring certain agreements and financial security.
- (d) An amendment to a sediment control permit approved between July 1, 1991 and July 1, 1992 is subject to the requirements of Article II if the activity is not otherwise exempt and it will result in the cutting of an additional 5,000 square feet of forest. (1992 L.M.C., ch. 4, § 1; [2001 L.M.C., ch 19](#), § 1.)

**Editor's note**—2001 L.M.C., ch. 19, § 2, reads as follows:

Transition. Any amendment to Chapter 22A, inserted by Section 1 of this Act, does not apply to:

- (a) a preliminary or final forest conservation plan approved before this Act took effect [November 5, 2001], or
- (b) a county highway project individually listed in the County Capital Improvements Program and submitted to the Planning Board under mandatory referral review before this Act took effect [November 5, 2001].

#### **Sec. 22A-8. Utility lines.**

(a) *General.*

- (1) Except as provided in paragraph (2) of this subsection, this Section applies to a proposed land disturbing activity requiring a sediment control permit for the construction, reconstruction, or replacement of public utility lines (except water and sewer lines) within a public right-of-way, public utility easement, or a public utility right-of-way owned by the utility.
- (2) This Section does not apply if a public utility easement will be located on the property of a development subject to Article II of this Chapter. Satisfaction of the regulatory requirements of that Article applicable to activities on the easement is the responsibility of the owner of the property.

(b) *Calculation Rules; Exemption.*

- (1) To determine the applicability of this Chapter under Section 22A-4 to proposed activities within a public right-of-way or public utility easement, the calculation of land area must be based on the limits of disturbance as shown on the sediment control permit.
- (2) A public right-of-way, public utility easement, or privately owned utility right-of-way is considered to be exempt under Section 22A-5(o) if the proposed activity and any future stages of the work on the utility line will not result in the cumulative cutting, clearing, or grading of more than 20,000 square feet of forest or the cutting, clearing, or grading of any specimen or champion tree, or trees or forest that are subject to a previously approved forest conservation or tree save plan. Any later stages of the work must be identified at the time of the initial sediment control permit application.
- (3) If the exemption does not apply, afforestation or reforestation requirements must be calculated using the net tract area applicable to the entire proposed utility line without regard to project segments subject to a specific sediment control permit. The property boundaries of the privately owned utility right-of-way, public utility easement, or public right-of-way (to the extent of the utility work) must be used in calculating the area of the tract. The net tract area should reflect any reduction in land area that will continue to be used for agricultural activities.

Any requirement for mitigation for loss of any specimen or champion tree must be based on the size and character of the tree. (1992 L.M.C., ch. 4, § 1; [2001 L.M.C., ch 19](#), § 1; [2010 L.M.C., ch. 55](#), § 1.)

**Editor's note**—2001 L.M.C., ch. 19, § 2, reads as follows:

Transition. Any amendment to Chapter 22A, inserted by Section 1 of this Act, does not apply to:

- (a) a preliminary or final forest conservation plan approved before this Act took effect [November 5, 2001], or
- (b) a county highway project individually listed in the County Capital Improvements Program and submitted to the Planning Board under mandatory referral review before this Act took effect [November 5, 2001].

#### **Sec. 22A-9. County and Municipal Highway Projects.**

(a) *General.*

- (1) This Section applies to construction of a highway by the County or a municipality as part of an approved Capital Improvements Program project.
- (2) The construction should minimize forest removal, land disturbance, and loss of specimen or champion trees to the extent possible while balancing other design, construction, and environmental standards. The constructing agency must make a reasonable effort to minimize land disturbance to avoid the cutting or clearing of trees and other woody plants.
- (b) If the forest to be cut or cleared for a County highway project equals or exceeds 20,000 square feet, the constructing agency must reforest a suitable area at the rate of one acre of reforestation for each acre of forest cleared.
- (c) Reforestation for County highway projects must meet the standards in subsections 22A-12(e), (g) and (h).
- (d) Any mitigation requirement for loss of specimen or champion trees must be based on the size and character of the tree. ( [2001 L.M.C., ch 19](#), § 1; [2010 L.M.C., ch. 55](#), § 1; [2017 L.M.C., ch. 34](#), §1; 2021 L.M.C., ch. 1, § 1.)

**Editor's note**—2001 L.M.C., ch. 19, § 2, reads as follows:

Transition. Any amendment to Chapter 22A, inserted by Section 1 of this Act, does not apply to:

- (a) a preliminary or final forest conservation plan approved before this Act took effect [November 5, 2001], or
- (b) a county highway project individually listed in the County Capital Improvements Program and submitted to the Planning Board under mandatory referral review before this Act took effect [November 5, 2001].

## **Article II. Forest Stand Delineations and Forest Conservation Plans.**

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## Sec. 22A-10. General.

(a) *Approval required.* A person who is subject to this Article must submit a forest stand delineation and forest conservation plan for regulatory approval.

(b) *Forest stand delineation.*

(1) A forest stand delineation must be used during the preliminary review process to find the most suitable and practical areas for tree and forest conservation. A forest stand delineation must contain topographic, hydrographic, soils and geologic, and qualitative and quantitative information on trees and forest cover, and other information or requirements specified in the regulations or technical manual.

(2) A simplified forest stand delineation may replace the forest stand delineation required by paragraph (1) if:

(A) there is no forest on the site;

(B) no forest on the site would be cut, cleared, or graded for the proposed use, and all forest on the site would be subject to a long-term protective agreement; or

(C) the on-site forest is located on a portion of the tract which is exempt from this Article, such as areas remaining in agricultural use as part of a subdivision.

(3) The Planning Director may waive any requirement for information that is unnecessary for a specific site.

(4) An approved forest stand delineation is not valid after 2 years unless:

(A) a forest conservation plan or a plan under Section 22A-9 has been accepted as complete; or

(B) the delineation has been recertified by the preparer.

(c) *Forest conservation plan.*

(1) A forest conservation plan is intended to govern conservation, maintenance, and any afforestation or reforestation requirements which apply to the site. A forest conservation plan must contain information on the extent and characteristics of the trees and forested area to be retained or planted, proposed locations for on-site and off-site reforestation, scheduling, protective measures, a binding maintenance agreement effective for at least 5 years, a binding agreement to protect forest conservation areas, and other information or requirements specified in the regulations or technical manual.

(2) A forest conservation plan may include protective measures designed to conserve significant and mature trees on adjacent property from adverse impacts that may be caused by the development or land disturbing activities proposed for the tract.

(3) A forest conservation plan may be reviewed in 2 stages with the submission of a preliminary and a final forest conservation plan as specified under Section 22A-11.

(d) *Qualifications of preparer.* The forest stand delineation and forest conservation plan must be prepared by a licensed forester, licensed landscape architect or other qualified professional approved by the Planning Director. In determining if a person is qualified, the person must meet all applicable requirements under the Code of Maryland Regulations, 08.19.06.01. (1992 L.M.C., ch. 4, § 1; [2001 L.M.C., ch 19](#), § 1; 2021 L.M.C., ch. 1, § 1.)

**Editor's note**—2001 L.M.C., ch. 19, § 2, reads as follows:

Transition. Any amendment to Chapter 22A, inserted by Section 1 of this Act, does not apply to:

(a) a preliminary or final forest conservation plan approved before this Act took effect [November 5, 2001], or

(b) a county highway project individually listed in the County Capital Improvements Program and submitted to the Planning Board under mandatory referral review before this Act took effect [November 5, 2001].

## Sec. 22A-11. Application, review, and approval procedures.

(a) General.

(1) Coordinated with project review. The forest stand delineation and forest conservation plan must be submitted and reviewed in conjunction with the review process for a development plan, floating zone plan, project plan, sketch plan, subdivision plan, site plan, special exception, conditional use, mandatory referral, park development plan, or sediment control permit under this Section. The Planning Director must coordinate review of the forest conservation plan with the Director of Environmental Protection, the Director of Permitting Services, the Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission, other relevant regulatory agencies, and entities that will provide public utilities to the tract, to promote consistency between the objectives of this Chapter and other development requirements. To the extent practicable, entities providing public utilities should design facilities that will serve a tract in a manner that avoids identified conservation areas and minimizes tree loss.

(2) Modification to an approved plan. The Planning Director may approve modifications to an approved forest conservation plan that are consistent with this Chapter if:

(A) field inspections or other evaluation reveals minor inadequacies of the plan; or

(B) each modification is minor and does not impact any forest in a priority area (such as substituting an on-site conservation area for an equal or greater on-site area of similar character, or substituting a marginal on-site conservation area for equal or greater

amount of off-site priority area); or

(C) action is otherwise required in an emergency situation.

Any other modification must be approved by the agency that approved the forest conservation plan.

(3) Notice. Public posting and written notice of forest conservation plan applications must be provided by applicants as specified in regulation.

(b) *Project requiring development plan, floating zone plan, project plan, sketch plan, preliminary plan of subdivision, or site plan approval.*

(1) Forest stand delineation. The applicant must submit to the Planning Director a forest stand delineation with the application for a development plan, floating zone plan, project plan, sketch plan, preliminary plan of subdivision, or site plan, whichever comes first. Within 30 days of receipt, the Planning Director must notify the applicant whether the forest stand delineation is complete and correct. If the Planning Director fails to notify the applicant within 30 days, the delineation will be treated as complete and correct. The Planning Director may require further information or provide for one extension of this deadline for an additional 15 days for extenuating circumstances. The applicant must submit revised drawings to address comments within 90 days from the date the Planning Director sends comments to the applicant. If the applicant fails to submit revised drawings, the application is deemed withdrawn. The Planning Director may provide for one extension of this deadline for extenuating circumstances.

(2) Forest conservation plan.

(A) Application. After being notified that the forest stand delineation is complete and correct, the applicant must submit a forest conservation plan to the Planning Director. If the development proposal will require more than one of the approvals subject to this subsection, the applicant must submit a preliminary forest conservation plan to the Planning Director in conjunction with the first approval and a final forest conservation plan in conjunction with the last approval. If only one approval subject to this subsection is required, an applicant must submit a preliminary forest conservation plan and a final forest conservation plan at the time of the development application.

(B) Review. Within 45 days from receipt of a final forest conservation plan, including a plan that is not reviewed in 2 stages, the Planning Director must notify the applicant whether the forest conservation plan is complete and approved for submission to the Planning Board as part of the development application. If the applicant is not notified within 45 days, the plan will be treated as complete and approved for submission. The Planning Director may require further information or provide for one extension of this deadline for an additional 15 days for extenuating circumstances. In addition, at the request of the applicant, the Director may extend this deadline for extenuating circumstances.

(C) Approval. The Planning Board must review and act on the forest conservation plan concurrently with the development plan, floating zone plan, project plan, sketch plan, preliminary plan of subdivision, or site plan, as appropriate. Compliance with the preliminary forest conservation plan, as amended by the Board, must be made a condition of any approval of the first applicable development application. Compliance with the final forest conservation plan, as amended by the Board, must be made a condition of any approval of the last development application. For a development plan or a floating zone plan, a Planning Board recommendation to the District Council on the preliminary forest conservation plan must be made under Section 59-7.2.1. A final forest conservation plan must be approved by the Planning Board or Planning Director, as appropriate, before the Planning Board approves a record plat.

(c) *Project requiring special exception or conditional use approval.*

(1) Forest stand delineation. If a special exception or conditional use proposal is subject to the requirements of this Chapter, the applicant must submit a forest stand delineation to the Planning Director before the Board of Appeals may consider the application for the special exception. The deadlines for reviewing a forest stand delineation are the same as in paragraph (b)(1) of this Section.

(2) Forest conservation plan. Upon notification that the forest stand delineation is complete and correct, the applicant must submit a preliminary forest conservation plan to the Planning Director. The Board of Appeals must consider the preliminary forest conservation plan when approving the special exception or conditional use application and must not approve a special exception or conditional use application that conflicts with the preliminary forest conservation plan. A final forest conservation plan must be submitted before obtaining a sediment control permit, or at the time of preliminary plan of subdivision or site plan application, if required. The deadlines for reviewing a final forest conservation plan are the same as in paragraph (d)(2) of this Section.

(d) *Project requiring a sediment control permit only.*

(1) Forest stand delineation. If an application for a sediment control permit may be subject to the requirements of this Chapter, the applicable sediment control permit issuing authority must direct the applicant to the Planning Director for a determination. If the Planning Director finds the sediment control permit application to be subject to this Chapter, the applicant must submit a forest stand delineation to the Planning Director for review. The deadlines for reviewing a forest stand delineation are the same as in paragraph (b)(1) of this Section.

(2) Forest conservation plan. Upon notification that the forest stand delineation is complete and correct, the applicant must submit to the Planning Director a forest conservation plan. Within 45 days from receipt of the forest conservation plan, the Planning Director must notify the applicant if the forest conservation plan is complete and approved. If the applicant is not notified within 45 days, the plan will be treated as complete and approved. The Director may require further information or provide for an extension of this deadline for an additional 15 days for extenuating circumstances. In addition, at the request of the applicant, the Director may extend this deadline for extenuating circumstances.

(3) Issuance of sediment control permit. A sediment control permit must not be issued to a person who must comply with this

Article until a final forest conservation plan, if required, is approved.

(e) *Project requiring mandatory referral or park development plan.*

(1) Forest stand delineation. A person seeking mandatory referral or a park development plan for a project that is subject to the requirements of this Chapter must first submit a forest stand delineation to the Planning Director for review. The deadlines for reviewing a forest stand delineation are the same as in paragraph (b)(1) of this Section.

(2) Forest conservation plan. Upon notification that the forest stand delineation is complete and correct, the applicant must submit to the Planning Director a final forest conservation plan. The Planning Board must consider the final forest conservation plan when reviewing the mandatory referral application or the park development plan.

(3) Issuance of a sediment control permit. Issuance of a sediment control permit is subject to the conditions specified in paragraph (d)(3) of this Section.

(f) *Project requiring sketch plan approval.*

(1) Forest stand delineation. For any sketch plan application filed on or after November 14, 2017, the applicant must submit to the Planning Director, for approval, a forest stand delineation reviewed concurrently with the sketch plan application. The deadlines for reviewing a forest stand delineation are the same as in paragraph (b)(1) of this Section. The forest stand delineation must be approved prior to Planning Board approval of the sketch plan.

(2) Forest conservation plan. Upon notification that the forest stand delineation is complete and correct, the applicant must submit a preliminary forest conservation plan to the Planning Director with the first development application after approval of the sketch plan. The deadlines for reviewing a preliminary and final forest conservation plan are the same as in paragraph (b)(2)(B) and (b)(2)(C) of this Section.

(g) *Project requiring administrative subdivision approval.*

(1) Forest stand delineation. The applicant must submit to the Planning Director a forest stand delineation before the administrative subdivision application. The deadlines for reviewing a forest stand delineation are the same as in paragraph (b)(1) of this Section.

(2) Forest conservation plan. Upon notification that the forest stand delineation is complete and correct, the applicant must submit a preliminary forest conservation plan to the Planning Director. The Planning Director must consider the preliminary forest conservation plan when approving the administrative subdivision application and must not approve an administrative subdivision application that conflicts with the preliminary forest conservation plan. A final forest conservation plan must be submitted and approved before obtaining a sediment control permit, or record plat, whichever comes first. The deadlines for reviewing a final forest conservation plan are the same as in paragraph (d)(2) of this Section. If the Director defers the approval of an administrative subdivision to the Planning Board, the Planning Board must review and act on the preliminary forest conservation plan with the administrative subdivision plan. The deadlines for reviewing a final forest conservation are the same as in paragraph (b)(2)(C) of this Section. (1992 L.M.C., ch. 4, § 1; 1996 L.M.C., ch. 20, § 1; 1998 L.M.C., ch. 12, § 1; [2001 L.M.C., ch. 14](#), § 1; [2001 L.M.C., ch. 19](#), § 1; [2002 L.M.C., ch. 16](#), § 2; [2014 L.M.C., ch. 25](#), § 1; [2016 L.M.C., ch. 8](#), § 1; [2017 L.M.C., ch. 34](#), §1; 2021 L.M.C., ch. 1, § 1.)

**Editor's note**—2001 L.M.C., ch. 19, § 2, reads as follows:

Transition. Any amendment to Chapter 22A, inserted by Section 1 of this Act, does not apply to:

- (a) a preliminary or final forest conservation plan approved before this Act took effect [November 5, 2001], or
- (b) a county highway project individually listed in the County Capital Improvements Program and submitted to the Planning Board under mandatory referral review before this Act took effect [November 5, 2001].

**Sec. 22A-12. Retention, afforestation, and reforestation requirements.**

(a) *Table.*

<i>Forest Conservation Threshold and Required Afforestation as a Percentage of Net Tract Area</i>		
<i>Land Use Category</i>	<i>Forest Conservation Threshold</i>	<i>Required Afforestation</i>
Agricultural and resource areas	50%	20%
Medium-density residential areas	25%	20%
Institutional development areas	20%	15%
High-density residential areas	20%	15%

Mixed-use development areas	20%	15%
Planned unit development areas	20%	15%
Commercial and industrial use areas	15%	15%

(b) *Retention.*

(1) The primary objective of the forest conservation plan should be to retain existing forest and trees and avoid reforestation in accordance with this Chapter. The forest conservation plan must retain certain vegetation and specific areas in an undisturbed condition unless the Planning Director finds that:

- (A) the development would make maximum use of any available planning and zoning options that would result in the greatest possible forest retention;
- (B) reasonable efforts have been made to protect the specific areas and vegetation listed in the plan; and
- (C) the development proposal cannot be reasonably altered.

(2) In general, areas protected under this subsection include:

- (A) floodplains, stream buffers, steep slopes, and critical habitats;
- (B) contiguous forests;
- (C) rare, threatened, and endangered species;
- (D) trees connected to an historic site;
- (E) champion trees and other exceptionally large trees; and
- (F) areas designated as priority save areas in a master plan or functional plan.

(3) The following trees, shrubs, plants, and specific areas are priority for retention and protection and must be left in an undisturbed condition unless the Planning Board or Planning Director, as appropriate, finds that the applicant qualifies for a variance under Section 22A-21:

- (A) Any tree, shrub, or plant that is rare, threatened, or endangered under:
  - (i) the Federal Endangered Species Act of 1973 in 16 U.S.C. Sections 1531 — 1544 and in 50 CFR 17;
  - (ii) the Maryland Nongame and Endangered Species Conservation Act, Title 10, Subtitle 2A of the Natural Resources Article of the Maryland Code; or
  - (iii) COMAR 08.03.08;
- (B) Any tree that is:
  - (i) part of a historic site,
  - (ii) associated with a historic structure, or
  - (iii) designated by the State or County as a national, State, or County champion tree; or
- (C) Any tree with a diameter, measured at 4.5 feet above the ground, of:
  - (i) 30 inches or more; or
  - (ii) 75% or more of the diameter, measured at 4.5 feet above ground, of the current State champion tree of that species.

(c) *Reforestation.* The forest conservation plan must provide for reforestation as follows:

- (1) For all existing forest cover measured to the nearest 1/10 acre cleared on the net tract area below the applicable forest conservation threshold, the area of forest removed must be reforested at a ratio of 2 acres planted for every one acre removed.
- (2) For all existing forest cover measured to the nearest 1/10 acre cleared on the net tract area above the applicable forest conservation threshold, the area of forest removed must be reforested at a ratio of ¼ acre planted for every one acre removed.
- (3) Each acre of forest retained on the net tract area above the applicable forest conservation threshold must be credited against the total number of acres required to be reforested.
- (4) A regulated activity under this Chapter within the net tract area that occurs wholly or partly in areas regulated as nontidal wetlands is subject to both the nontidal wetland regulatory requirements and the requirements of this Chapter. However, any area of forest within the net tract area that is retained, including forest in nontidal wetlands, must be counted towards forest conservation requirements under this Chapter.

(d) *Afforestation.*

(1) A site with less than 20 percent of the net tract area in forest cover must be afforested in accordance with the required afforestation percentages shown on the table in subsection (a) of this Section.

(2) Afforestation should be accomplished by the planting of forest cover. However, if the applicant demonstrates to the satisfaction of the Planning Board or Planning Director, as the case may be, that afforestation using forest cover is inappropriate for a site because of its location in an urban setting, redevelopment context, high-density residential, commercial, industrial, planned unit development, or institutional area (as defined in Section 22A-3), or similar reason, afforestation requirements may be satisfied by tree cover.

(e) *Standards for reforestation and afforestation.*

(A) enhancement of existing forest through on-site selective clearing, supplemental planting, or both; acquiring credit(s) from an off-site forest mitigation bank; paying a fee in-lieu; and landscaping with an approved plan

(B) Governmental considerations. The sequence provided in subparagraph (A) of this paragraph may be modified for a specific project if the applicant demonstrates to the satisfaction of the Planning Board or the Planning Director, as the case may be, that a different sequence is necessary:

(i) to achieve the objectives of a master or sector plan or other County land use policies or to take advantage of opportunities to consolidate forest conservation efforts;

(ii) for public sites acquired or required to be dedicated before July 1, 1991, to ensure that the site can be used for its intended purpose without major design changes; or

(iii) for educational, recreational, and public safety facilities, to ensure that public safety is not compromised.

(C) Public Utility Considerations. The sequence provided in subparagraph (A) of this paragraph for public utility projects may be modified to reflect applicable electrical or other safety codes, or right-of-way constraints.

(2) Off-site afforestation and reforestation. In addition to the use of other sites proposed by an applicant and approved by the County, off-site afforestation or reforestation may also include:

(A) Forest mitigation banks designated in advance by the County.

(B) Protection of existing off-site forest. Acquisition of an off-site protective easement for existing forested areas not currently protected in perpetuity is an acceptable mitigation technique instead of off-site afforestation or reforestation planting, but the forest cover protected must be 2 times the afforestation and reforestation requirements.

(C) For sites located in existing population centers, use of street trees which meet landscape or streetscape goals identified in an applicable master plan.

(3) Priority areas and plantings. Afforestation and reforestation should be directed to stream buffer areas, connections between and additions to forested areas, critical habitat areas, topographically unstable areas, and land use and road buffers. The use of native plant materials is preferred.

(4) Location requirements. Required reforestation or afforestation must occur in both the county and watershed in which the project is located, except that if it cannot be reasonably accomplished in the same county and watershed in which the project is located, then the reforestation or afforestation may occur anywhere in either the county or watershed in which the project is located.

(5) Deadline for plant installation. The afforestation and reforestation requirements under this subsection must be accomplished within one year or 2 growing seasons after a development project is complete.

(6) Planned Unit Developments; Other Staged Development. Notwithstanding any other provision of this Section, the Planning Board may allow any afforestation or reforestation requirement for a planned unit development to be calculated and satisfied within the total area covered by the development plan, floating zone plan, sketch plan, or project plan instead of the net tract area. Similarly, the Planning Board may allow any afforestation or reforestation requirement applicable to a staged development subject to a single preliminary plan of subdivision but with separate site plan reviews for each stage to be calculated and satisfied using the total area covered by the preliminary plan of subdivision.

(f) *Special provisions for minimum retention, reforestation and afforestation.*

(1) General. Any site developed in an agricultural and resource area, any planned unit development, any site developed under a cluster or other optional method of development in a one-family residential zone, and any waiver from a zoning requirement for environmental reasons, must include a minimum amount of forest on-site as part of meeting its total forest conservation requirement.

(2) Retention, reforestation and afforestation. Forest retention should be maximized where possible on each site listed in this subsection. At a minimum, on-site forest retention, and in some cases reforestation and afforestation, must be required as follows:

(A) In an agricultural and resource area, on-site forest retention must equal 25% of the net tract area.

(B) In a planned development or a site development using a cluster or other optional method of development in a one-family residential zone, on-site forest retention must equal the applicable conservation threshold in subsection (a). This requirement also applies to any site seeking a waiver or variance from base zone standards under Sections 59.4.4.5.D, 59.4.4.6.D, 59.4.4.7.C, 59.4.4.8.C, 59.4.4.9.C, 59.4.4.10.C, 59.8.3.2, 59.4.9.16.B, and 59.5.2 if as a condition of the waiver or variance the Planning Board or County Council must find that the resulting development is environmentally more desirable.

(C) On a site covered by this subsection, if existing forest is less than the minimum required retention, all existing forest must be

retained and on-site afforestation up to the minimum standard must be provided. If existing forest is less than the applicable afforestation threshold in subsection (a), the afforestation threshold is the minimum on-site forest requirement.

(D) If a site covered by this subsection is unforested, on-site afforestation must equal the applicable afforestation threshold.

(3) If the Planning Board or Planning Director, as appropriate, finds that forest retention required in this subsection is not possible, the applicant must provide the maximum possible on-site retention in combination with on-site reforestation and afforestation, not including landscaping.

(4) Retention, reforestation, and afforestation must adhere to the priorities and sequence established in subsections (b) and (e).

(g) *In lieu fee.* A person contributing money to the forest conservation fund as an in lieu fee must do so at a rate specified by law or Council resolution, but not less than the rate required under Section 5-1610 of the Natural Resources Article of the Maryland Code. Any in lieu fee payment must be made before any land disturbing activity, as defined in Section 22A-3, occurs on a section of the tract subject to the forest conservation plan. A person may make an in lieu fee payment to the forest conservation fund only if the person satisfactorily demonstrates that:

(1) (A) the requirements for reforestation or afforestation on-site or off-site cannot reasonably be accomplished;

(B) appropriate credits generated by a forest mitigation bank in the same watershed within the County are not available; and

(C) if appropriate credits generated by a forest mitigation bank in the same watershed within the County are not available, appropriate credits generated by a forest mitigation bank in the County are not available; or

(2) the off-site reforestation and afforestation requirements are less than 0.5 acre, and the Planning Board or Planning Director, as appropriate, finds that:

(A) no on-site priority planting area is present; and

(B) no other appropriate on-site planting area is available.

(h) *Agreements.*

(1) *Maintenance agreement.* A forest conservation plan must include a 5-year binding agreement for maintenance of conservation areas. A person subject to the binding agreement may request that the binding agreement be reduced to 3 years if the forest conservation inspector finds that the agreement has been fulfilled, unless the forest conservation plan is within a special protection area. If the forest conservation plan is within a special protection area, the binding maintenance agreement must be for a minimum of 5 years and may not be reduced. The binding maintenance agreement may include watering (as practical), feeding, non-native invasive control, and replanting of areas to be afforested or reforested. A maintenance agreement may also be required for non-native invasive control of forest edge. The binding agreement for maintenance starts upon satisfactory inspection of the plantings required under the forest conservation plan. A staged project may have more than one agreement.

(2) *Long-term protective measures.* A forest conservation plan must include appropriate measures for the protection of conservation areas; limitations on the use of these areas consistent with conservation and management practices; and legal instruments such as conservation easements, deed restrictions, covenants, and other agreements, as necessary.

(i) *Financial Security.*

(1) *Security required.* Except as provided in paragraph (8) of this subsection, an approved financial security instrument must be required to ensure:

(A) compliance with all requirements of an approved forest conservation plan including afforestation, reforestation, mitigation trees, and maintenance; or

(B) full payment of funds to be paid instead of afforestation or reforestation, if required under subsection (g).

(2) *Preferred form.* The preferred financial security instruments are an irrevocable letter of credit or a cash bond for a minimum of 5 years that may be reduced to 3 years upon request by the person subject to the binding maintenance agreement if the forest conservation inspector finds that the binding maintenance agreement has been fulfilled, unless the forest conservation plan is within a special protection area. If the forest conservation plan is within a special protection area, the financial security must be for a minimum of 5 years and may not be reduced. The letter of credit must expressly state that the total sum is guaranteed to be available and payable on demand directly to the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission in the event of forfeiture. A certificate of guarantee or a surety bond may also be used, including a bond payable to the Commission and County that additionally guarantees completion of public improvements associated with the proposed development. The financial security instrument must be made payable to the Commission and must be of a form and content satisfactory to the Commission and its legal counsel.

(3) *When required.* The financial security instrument must be provided prior to any land disturbing activity, as defined in Section 22A-3, occurring on a section of the tract subject to the forest conservation plan.

(4) *Amount required.*

(A) If financial security is required under subparagraph (1)(A), the security instrument must be in an amount equal to the estimated cost of afforestation, reforestation, and maintenance applicable to the section of the tract subject to the land disturbing activity. If the applicant sells an individual lot before providing the required financial security, the Planning Director may allow the new lot owner to provide a financial security that applies to the requirements specific to the development of that lot. The instrument must include a provision for adjusting the amount based on actual costs. The financial security instrument must be submitted to the

Planning Director before any land disturbing activity occurs on the tract. The Planning Director must notify the obligee of any proposed adjustment and provide the opportunity for an informal conference.

(B) If the financial security is required under subparagraph (1)(B) of this subsection, the security instrument must be in an amount equal to the in lieu payment.

(5) Release. The financial security instrument must be in effect until all requirements have been fulfilled to the satisfaction of the Planning Director. The instrument may provide for the partial release or return of the instrument based on successful implementation of phases of the forest conservation plan.

(6) Events of forfeiture. The financial security instrument may be subject to forfeiture on:

(A) failure of the obligee to perform the work under the forest conservation plan in accordance with the required schedule; or

(B) failure of the obligee to pay a required in lieu fee in a timely manner.

(7) Forfeiture proceedings.

(A) The Planning Director must notify the obligee, by certified mail, of the intention of the Commission to initiate forfeiture proceedings.

(B) The obligee has 30 days from the receipt of the notice of forfeiture to show cause why the financial security should not be forfeited.

(C) If the obligee fails to show cause, the financial security instrument must be forfeited.

(8) Exception. This subsection does not apply to governmental entities. (1992 L.M.C., ch. 4, § 1; [2001 L.M.C., ch. 19](#), § 1; [2006 L.M.C., ch. 35](#), § 1; [2007 L.M.C., ch. 10](#), § 1; [2010 L.M.C., ch. 55](#), § 1; [2014 L.M.C., ch. 25](#), § 1; [2016 L.M.C., ch. 8](#), § 1; [2017 L.M.C., ch. 34](#), §1; [2018 L.M.C., ch. 14](#), §1; 2021 L.M.C., ch. 1, § 1.)

**Editor's note**—2001 L.M.C., ch. 19, § 2, reads as follows:

Transition. Any amendment to Chapter 22A, inserted by Section 1 of this Act, does not apply to:

(a) a preliminary or final forest conservation plan approved before this Act took effect [November 5, 2001], or

(b) a county highway project individually listed in the County Capital Improvements Program and submitted to the Planning Board under mandatory referral review before this Act took effect [November 5, 2001].

### **Secs. 22A-13. Forest mitigation banks.**

(a) *Creating a forest mitigation bank.* A person may create a forest mitigation bank from which applicants may buy credits.

(b) The area of land included in the bank must be at least 1 acre.

(c) A forest mitigation bank must have native plants.

(d) A person proposing to create a forest mitigation bank must submit a plan to the Planning Director for review and approval.

(e) The forest mitigation bank plan must include:

(1) a maintenance agreement which meets the standards in subsection 22A-12(h)(1);

(2) all information required by subsection 22A-10(c) for a forest conservation plan; and

(3) draft easements, covenants, or deed restrictions for the area included in the forest mitigation bank.

(4) the number of forest mitigation bank credits available for sale as either existing forest credits or planted forest credits, where 1 acre of forest mitigation bank credit equals 1 acre of planted forest, or 2 acres of existing forest.

(f) Forest mitigation banks must be established in priority areas described in subsection 22A-12(e)(3), or in areas identified in a master plan or functional plan.

(g) *Purchasing and selling forest mitigation bank credits.*

(1) Before selling forest mitigation bank credits:

(A) the forest mitigation bank plan must be approved by the Planning Director; and

(B) easements, covenants, or deed restrictions which assure the area of land within the mitigation bank remains a forest in perpetuity must be conveyed to the Planning Board or its assignee, and the applicant must show that credits are available and the applicant has the right to debit them.

(2) Credits must not be debited from a portion of a forest mitigation bank where forest planting is required until:

(A) all trees have been planted and accepted by the Planning Director; and

(B) either a financial security which meets the standards in subsection 22A-12(i) has been provided, or the Planning Director has found that a sufficient number of trees have successfully survived for 2 years after planting.

(3) Forest mitigation bank credits must be acquired from a forest mitigation bank within the same 8-digit watershed, as delineated by the State of Maryland, as where the development activity is located. If forest mitigation bank credits are not available within the same 8-digit watershed within the County, applicants may acquire forest mitigation bank credits from any approved forest mitigation bank within the County.

(4) The forest mitigation bank credits acquired must be equal to the applicant's off-site reforestation or afforestation requirements under the approved forest conservation plan. ([2001 L.M.C., ch 19](#), § 1; 2021 L.M.C., ch. 1, § 1.)

**Editor's note**—2001 L.M.C., ch. 19, § 2, reads as follows:

Transition. Any amendment to Chapter 22A, inserted by Section 1 of this Act, does not apply to:

- (a) a preliminary or final forest conservation plan approved before this Act took effect [November 5, 2001], or
- (b) a county highway project individually listed in the County Capital Improvements Program and submitted to the Planning Board under mandatory referral review before this Act took effect [November 5, 2001].

**22A-14. Reserved.**

## **Article III. Enforcement, Appeals, and Variances.**

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### **Sec. 22A-15. Inspections and notification.**

(a) *Permission to gain access.* Representatives authorized by the Planning Director may enter properties subject to this Chapter for the purpose of inspection, review, and enforcement.

(b) *Plan to be on site; field markings.* A copy of the approved forest conservation plan must be available on the site for inspection by representatives authorized by the Planning Director. Field markings must exist on site before and during installation of all protective devices, construction, or other land disturbing activities.

(c) *Required inspections.*

(1) The Planning Department must conduct the 7 field inspections specified in this subsection at each site.

(2) The Planning Director must inspect each site that is subject to an approved forest conservation plan:

(A) after the limits of disturbance have been staked and flagged, but before any clearing or grading begins;

(B) after necessary stress reduction measures have been completed and the protection measures have been installed, but before any clearing or grading begins;

(C) after all construction activities are completed, to determine the level of compliance with the approved plan;

(D) before any required reforestation and afforestation planting is started;

(E) after required reforestation and afforestation have been completed, to verify the planting is acceptable and begin the maintenance and management period;

(F) 2 years after reforestation and afforestation have been completed, to determine survival and assess necessary maintenance activities for the remaining duration of the maintenance and management period; and

(G) at the end of the maintenance and management period, to determine the level of compliance with the planting plan and, if appropriate, authorize release of financial security.

(3) The Planning Director must conduct inspections under subparagraphs (A) through (C) of paragraph (2) of this subsection for a confirmed exemption from submitting a forest conservation plan.

(4) The Planning Director must conduct inspections under subparagraphs (A) through (G) of paragraph (2) of this subsection for a plan approved under Section 22A-9.

(d) *Other inspections.* The Planning Director may authorize additional inspections or meetings as necessary to administer this Chapter, including an inspection to confirm a natural resource inventory and forest stand delineation.

(e) *Scheduling requirements for forest conservation and tree save plan inspections.* A person must request an inspection by the Planning Director at least 7 days before the required date of the inspection under subsection (c).

(f) *Coordination.* The Planning Department must coordinate its inspections, and any pre-construction conferences, with the Department of Permitting Services to avoid inconsistent activities relating to the forest conservation plan and sediment control reviews. (1992 L.M.C., ch. 4, § 1; 1996 L.M.C., ch. 20, § 1; 1998 L.M.C., ch. 12, § 1; [2001 L.M.C., ch. 14](#), § 1; [2002 L.M.C., ch. 16](#), § 2; [2010 L.M.C., ch. 6](#), § 1; 2021 L.M.C., ch. 1, § 1.)

**Editor's note**—See County Attorney Opinion dated 9/24/08 regarding enforcement of the forest conservation law.

2010 L.M.C., ch. 6, § 2, states in part: Applicability. (b) Any amendment to County Code Chapter 22A made by Section 1 of this Act applies to any enforcement action that begins after this Act takes effect even if the alleged violation on which the enforcement action is based was committed before this Act took effect.

## Sec. 22A-16. Penalties and other remedies.

- (a) *Class A violation.* Any violation of this Chapter or any regulations adopted under it is a Class A civil violation. The maximum civil fine is \$1,000. Each day a violation continues may be treated as a separate violation under this Chapter.
- (b) *Enforcement authority.* The Planning Board has primary enforcement authority under this Chapter. The Board's enforcement authority includes holding enforcement hearings, imposing administrative civil penalties, ordering corrective actions, ordering the payment of civil fines, ordering compliance with corrective action orders, and any other action authorized by law. The Planning Director may initiate an administrative enforcement action under this Article.
- (c) *Civil actions.* The Board may bring any civil action authorized by law that the County may bring under Section 1-18, 1-19, or 1-20 to enforce this Chapter or any regulation adopted under it. The Board may also bring a civil action to enforce:
- (1) a forest conservation plan and any associated agreement or restriction, including any easement; or
  - (2) an administrative order.

These remedies are in addition to any remedy that the Board or the County may initiate under state or County law to enforce the terms of a regulatory approval which incorporates a forest conservation plan.

- (d) *Administrative civil penalty.*
- (1) In addition to any other remedy under this Article, a person who violates this Chapter, any regulation adopted under it, a forest conservation plan, or any associated agreement or restriction, including any easement, is liable for an administrative civil penalty imposed by the Planning Board. This administrative civil penalty must not exceed the rate set by the County Council by law or resolution, except as provided in paragraph (3), but must not be less than the amount specified in Section 5-1608(c) of the Natural Resources Article of the Maryland Code. Each day a violation is not corrected is a separate violation.
  - (2) In determining the amount of the administrative civil penalty, or the extent of an administrative order issued by the Planning Director under Section 22A-17, the Planning Board or Planning Director must consider:
    - (A) the willfulness of the violations;
    - (B) the damage or injury to tree resources;
    - (C) the cost of corrective action or restoration;
    - (D) any adverse impact on water quality;
    - (E) the extent to which the current violation is part of a recurrent pattern of the same or similar type of violation committed by the violator;
    - (F) any economic benefit that accrued to the violator or any other person as a result of the violation; and
    - (G) any other relevant factors.

The Board or Director may treat any forest clearing in a stream buffer, wetland, or special protection area as creating a rebuttable presumption that the clearing had an adverse impact on water quality.

- (3) In addition to any amount set under paragraph (1), an administrative civil penalty imposed under this Section may also include an amount that equals the fair market value of any conservation easement needed to enforce any mitigation or restoration requirement under this Chapter in the area of the violation. The Planning Board may specify the acceptable methods of calculating the fair market value of a conservation easement by a regulation adopted under Section 22A-26(a).
  - (4) The Planning Board must include the reasons for imposing an administrative civil penalty in its resolution adopting the administrative order.
- (e) *Enforcement Notices.* The Planning Director may issue one or more of the following notices to enforce any provision of this Chapter. The issuance of a notice under this subsection does not require the previous issuance of any other notice.

- (1) *Notice of Violation.*
  - (A) The Director may issue a notice of violation to a person who the Director believes has violated or is violating this Chapter. The Director must retain a copy of each notice.
  - (B) A notice of violation issued under this Article must be served on the alleged violator personally, on the alleged violator's agent at the activity site, or by certified mail to the alleged violator's last known address.
  - (C) The notice of violation must contain at least the following information:
    - (i) the name and address of the person charged with a violation;
    - (ii) the nature of the violation;
    - (iii) the place where and the approximate date when the violation occurred;
    - (iv) a statement advising the recipient of the corrective or remedial action to be taken, which may include a meeting with Planning staff to develop a compliance plan, and the date by which any corrective or remedial action must be completed; and

(v) a statement advising the recipient of the right to a hearing before the Planning Board or the Board's designee.

(2) *Administrative Citation.*

(A) The Director may issue an administrative citation to a person who the Director believes has violated or is violating this Chapter. The Director may use any citation consistent with this Section, including the State of Maryland Uniform Civil Citation form. The Director must certify the truth of the allegations in the citation. The Director must retain a copy of each citation.

(B) An administrative citation issued under this Article must be served on the alleged violator personally, on the alleged violator's agent at the activity site, or by certified mail to the alleged violator's last known address.

(C) The administrative citation must contain at least the following information:

- (i) the name and address of the person charged with a violation;
- (ii) the nature of the violation;
- (iii) the place where and the approximate date when the violation occurred;
- (iv) the amount of the fine assessed;
- (v) how, when, where, and to whom the fine may be paid; and
- (vi) a statement advising the recipient of the right to a hearing before the Planning Board or the Board's designee.

(3) *Notice of Hearing.*

(A) The Director may issue an administrative notice which informs an alleged violator of an enforcement hearing to be held by the Planning Board or the Board's designee to address an alleged violation.

(B) A notice of hearing issued under this Article must be served on the alleged violator personally, on the alleged violator's agent at the activity site, or by certified mail to the alleged violator's last known address.

(C) The notice of hearing must contain at least the following information:

- (i) the name and address of the person charged with a violation;
- (ii) the nature of the violation;
- (iii) the place where and the approximate date when the violation occurred; and
- (iv) a statement advising the recipient of the date, time, and location of the hearing.

(f) *Fund.* Money collected under this Section must be deposited into the forest conservation fund. (1992 L.M.C., ch. 4, § 1; [2001 L.M.C., ch. 19, § 1](#); [2005 L.M.C., ch. 32, § 1](#); [2006 L.M.C., ch. 33, § 1](#); [2010 L.M.C., ch. 6, § 1](#); [2013 L.M.C., ch. 23, § 1](#); [2018 L.M.C., ch. 27, § 1](#).)

**Editor's note**—See County Attorney Opinion dated [9/24/08](#) regarding enforcement of the forest conservation law.

[2013 L.M.C., ch. 23, § 2](#), states in part: (b) Any amendment to County Code Chapter 22A made by Section 1 of this Act applies to any enforcement action that the Planning Board takes after this Act takes effect, regardless of whether the alleged violation to which the enforcement action applies was committed before or after this Act took effect.

2010 L.M.C., ch. 6, § 2, states in part: Applicability. (b) Any amendment to County Code Chapter 22A made by Section 1 of this Act applies to any enforcement action that begins after this Act takes effect even if the alleged violation on which the enforcement action is based was committed before this Act took effect.

2001 L.M.C., ch. 19, § 2, reads as follows:

Transition. Any amendment to Chapter 22A, inserted by Section 1 of this Act, does not apply to:

- (a) a preliminary or final forest conservation plan approved before this Act took effect [November 5, 2001], or
- (b) a county highway project individually listed in the County Capital Improvements Program and submitted to the Planning Board under mandatory referral review before this Act took effect [November 5, 2001].

**Sec. 22A-17. Corrective actions.**

(a) *Administrative order.* At any time, including during an enforcement action, the Planning Director may issue an administrative order requiring the violator to take one or more of the following actions within a certain time period specified by the Planning Director:

- (1) stop the violation;
- (2) stabilize the site to comply with a reforestation plan;
- (3) stop all work at the site;
- (4) restore or reforest unlawfully cleared areas;
- (5) submit a restoration plan or forest conservation plan for the property;

(6) place forested or reforested land under long-term protection by a conservation easement, deed restriction, covenant, or other appropriate legal instrument; or

(7) submit a written report or plan concerning the violation.

(b) *Effectiveness of order.* An order issued under this Section is effective according to its terms, when it is served. (1992 L.M.C., ch. 4, § 1; [2001 L.M.C., ch 19](#), § 1; [2010 L.M.C., ch. 6](#), § 1; 2021 L.M.C., ch. 1, § 1.)

**Editor's note**—2010 L.M.C., ch. 6, § 2, states in part: Applicability. (b) Any amendment to County Code Chapter 22A made by Section 1 of this Act applies to any enforcement action that begins after this Act takes effect even if the alleged violation on which the enforcement action is based was committed before this Act took effect.

2001 L.M.C., ch. 19, § 2, reads as follows:

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- (a) a preliminary or final forest conservation plan approved before this Act took effect [November 5, 2001], or
- (b) a county highway project individually listed in the County Capital Improvements Program and submitted to the Planning Board under mandatory referral review before this Act took effect [November 5, 2001].

#### **Sec. 22A-18. Plan suspension and revocation.**

*Grounds for action.* After notice to the violator and opportunity for a hearing has been provided under Section 22A-20(d), the Planning Board may suspend or revoke a forest conservation plan if it determines that any of the following has occurred:

- (a) failure of a violator to post or maintain the financial security instrument required under Subsection 22A-12;
- (b) failure to comply with the requirements of an administrative action or order issued under this Chapter;
- (c) misrepresentation in the application process or failure to disclose a relevant or material fact; or
- (d) violation of a requirement of a forest conservation plan or associated legal instrument. (1992 L.M.C., ch. 4, § 1)

#### **Sec. 22A-19. Noncompliance with conditions of exemption.**

(a) *Determination of noncompliance.* A person who receives an exemption subject to a declaration of intent or for commercial logging and timber harvesting operations is in noncompliance if:

- (1) within 5 years, an application for a development or other approval regulated by this Chapter is submitted for the tract or lot covered by the exemption; or
- (2) the person otherwise violates this Chapter or the declaration of intent.

(b) *Penalties for noncompliance.* In addition to any other remedy under this Chapter, the Planning Board may require a person in noncompliance to:

- (1) prepare, submit, and implement a forest conservation plan;
- (2) pay an administrative civil penalty under Section 22A-16(d) for the area of forest cut or cleared under the exemption; or
- (3) both. (1992 L.M.C., ch. 4, § 1; [2010 L.M.C., ch. 6](#), § 1.)

#### **Sec. 22A-20. Hearings and appeals.**

(a) *General.* Except as provided under subsections (c) and (d) of this Section, the requirements for notice, public hearing, and administrative decision-making for the associated development approval must be followed when reviewing a forest stand delineation or forest conservation plan.

(b) *Forest conservation plans and variances approved by the Planning Board.* A person aggrieved by the decision of the Planning Board on the approval, denial, or modification of a forest conservation plan (including a request for a variance) may seek judicial review of the decision in the Circuit Court under the applicable Maryland Rules of Procedure governing judicial review of administrative agency decisions. A party aggrieved by the decision of the Circuit Court may appeal that decision to the Court of Special Appeals.

(c) *Forest stand delineations, exemptions from Article II, and forest conservation plans reviewed by the Planning Director.*

- (1) *Appeal to Planning Board.* After the Planning Director issues a written decision on a natural resource inventory/forest stand delineation, exemption from Article II, or forest conservation plan, an applicant may appeal the decision to the Planning Board within 30 days.
  - (2) *Hearing; decision.* The Planning Board must hold a de novo hearing on the appeal. The Board must adopt a written resolution explaining its decision. For purposes of judicial review, the decision of the Planning Board is the final agency action.
  - (3) *Appeal.* After receiving the Planning Board's decision, an applicant may seek judicial review of the decision in the Circuit Court under the applicable Maryland Rules of Procedure governing judicial review of administrative agency decisions. A party aggrieved by the decision of the Circuit Court may appeal that decision to the Court of Special Appeals.
- (d) *Administrative enforcement process.*

(1) *Notice.* A citation, notice of violation, or other administrative notice issued by the Planning Director under Section 22A-16(e) or an order issued under Section 22A-17 must give the recipient the right to request, within 15 days after receiving the notice, a hearing before the Planning Board or the Board's designee.

(2) *Hearing.*

(A) If the recipient of a notice or order requests an opportunity for a hearing, the Board or its designee must promptly schedule a hearing unless the recipient consents to a delay. The filing of a request for a hearing does not stay an administrative order to stop work, stabilized a site, or stop a violation.

(B) If the Planning Board or the Board's designee holds a hearing under this Article, the Board or its designee must issue a notice of the hearing date.

(C) The Planning Board may designate a hearing officer, including a Hearing Examiner from the Office of Zoning and Administrative Hearings, to conduct a hearing and submit a report and recommendation on any alleged violation of this Chapter. The hearing officer must submit the required report and recommendation to the Board not later than 30 days after the hearing record closes. The hearing officer may extend the time to file the report by notifying all parties.

(3) *Decision.* The Planning Board must inform the recipient in writing of its decision on an administrative enforcement action. The Board's decision is the final agency action for all purposes.

(4) *Appeal.* After receiving the Planning Board's decision, an aggrieved person may seek judicial review of the decision in the Circuit Court under the applicable Maryland Rules of Procedure governing judicial review of administrative decisions. A party aggrieved by the decision of the Circuit Court may appeal that decision to the Court of Special Appeals. (1992 L.M.C., ch. 4, § 1; [2010 L.M.C., ch. 6](#), § 1; [2013 L.M.C., ch. 23](#), § 1; [2014 L.M.C., ch. 25](#), § 1.)

**Editor's note**—2013 L.M.C., ch. 23, § 2, states: (a) The Council declares that this legislation is necessary for the immediate protection of the public interest. This Act takes effect on the date when it becomes law. (b) Any amendment to County Code Chapter 22A made by Section 1 of this Act applies to any enforcement action that the Planning Board takes after this Act takes effect, regardless of whether the alleged violation to which the enforcement action applies was committed before or after this Act took effect.

2010 L.M.C., ch. 6, § 2, states in part: Applicability. (b) Any amendment to County Code Chapter 22A made by Section 1 of this Act applies to any enforcement action that begins after this Act takes effect even if the alleged violation on which the enforcement action is based was committed before this Act took effect.

#### **Sec. 22A-21. Variance.**

(a) *Written request.* An applicant may request in writing a variance from this Chapter or any regulation adopted under it if the applicant shows that enforcement would result in unwarranted hardship. A request for a variance suspends the time requirements in Section 22A-11 until the Planning Board or Planning Director acts on the request.

(b) *Application requirements.* An applicant for a variance must:

- (1) describe the special conditions peculiar to the property or other conditions which would cause the unwarranted hardship;
- (2) describe how enforcement of this Chapter will deprive the landowner of rights commonly enjoyed by others in similar areas;
- (3) verify that State water quality standards will not be violated and that a measurable degradation in water quality will not occur as a result of granting the variance; and
- (4) provide any other information appropriate to support the request.

(c) *Referral to other agencies.*

- (1) The Planning Director must send a copy of each variance request related to Section 22A-12(b)(3)(A) or (B) to the County Arborist and any other appropriate agency for a written recommendation before the Board acts on the request.
- (2) The Planning Director may send a copy of each variance request related to Section 22A-12(b)(3)(C) to the County Arborist and any other appropriate agency for a written recommendation before the Board acts on the request.
- (3) If a recommendation on the variance is not submitted to the Planning Board, or Planning Director, as appropriate, within 10 days after the referral, the recommendation must be presumed to be favorable.

(d) *Minimum criteria.* A variance may only be granted if it meets the criteria in subsection (a). However, a variance must not be granted if granting the request:

- (1) will confer on the applicant a special privilege that would be denied to other applicants;
- (2) is based on conditions or circumstances which result from the actions by the applicant;
- (3) is based on a condition relating to land or building use, either permitted or nonconforming, on a neighboring property; or
- (4) will violate State water quality standards or cause measurable degradation in water quality.

(e) *Approval procedures; Conditions.* The Planning Board must find that the applicant has met all requirements of this Section before granting a variance. However, the Planning Director may grant a variance if the Director is authorized to approve the forest conservation plan and the applicant meets all requirements of this Section. The Board or Director may impose appropriate conditions

to promote the objectives of this Chapter and protect the public interest.

(f) *Notice to State Department of Natural Resources; Right to initiate or intervene in proceedings.*

(1) Notice of a pending variance request must be given to the Department of Natural Resources within 15 days of receipt of a request for a variance.

(2) The Department of Natural Resources may initiate or intervene in an administrative, judicial or other original proceeding or appeal in the State concerning an approval of a variance. (1992 L.M.C., ch. 4, § 1; [2010 L.M.C., ch. 6, § 1](#); [2010 L.M.C., ch. 55, § 1](#); [2017 L.M.C., ch. 34, § 1](#); 2021 L.M.C., ch. 1, § 1.)

**Editor's note**—2010 L.M.C., ch. 6, § 2, states in part: Applicability. (b) Any amendment to County Code Chapter 22A made by Section 1 of this Act applies to any enforcement action that begins after this Act takes effect even if the alleged violation on which the enforcement action is based was committed before this Act took effect.

**Secs. 22A-22--22A-25. Reserved.**

## **Article IV. Administration.**

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**Sec. 22A-26. Regulations.**

(a) *Adoption.* The Planning Board must adopt regulations, including necessary procedures, to administer this Chapter. In adopting the regulations, the Board must follow the adoption procedures for a Method (2) regulation under Section 2A-15 and any requirements applicable under State law. However, a proposed regulation of a procedural nature or that would implement changes in State law or regulation, may be adopted under Method (3) if it is consistent with this Chapter. The regulations must include procedures to amend a forest conservation plan and a declaration of intent.

(b) *Technical manual.* The technical manual must include guidance and methodologies for:

(1) preparing and evaluating a forest stand delineation and natural resource inventory;

(2) preparing and evaluating a forest conservation plan, including priorities for forest retention, reforestation, and afforestation, and a recommended tree species list;

(3) providing forest or tree protective measures during and after clearing or construction, including planting, tree relocation, and maintenance;

(4) monitoring and enforcement of forest conservation plans; and

(5) other appropriate guidance for program requirements consistent with this Chapter and the regulations.

(c) *Development agreements; Conservation easements.* The Planning Board may in the regulations require developer agreements, conservation easements, land trusts, covenants, and deed restrictions as part of an approved forest conservation plan.

(d) *Administrative fee.* The Planning Board must charge a fee to cover at least partially the costs of administering this Chapter, including review of submittals and field inspections. The fee schedule must be set by the Planning Board as part of the development application process. Different fees may be set based on the size of the tract or other relevant factors.

(e) *Additional regulations.* Notwithstanding any other provision of this Chapter, the Planning Board may, by regulation adopted under Method (3), require preapplication submissions for a forest stand delineation and allow modified application submissions or procedures for development projects of a minor scale or public utility projects.

(f) *Reports.* The Planning Board must make all reports on the County forest conservation program to the General Assembly and State Department of Natural Resources that are required under State law or regulation. The reports should be reviewed by the County Arborist for comment, and copies of all final reports must be transmitted to the County Council and County Executive.

(g) *List of Off-Site Property for Mitigation.* The Planning Director should develop and maintain a list of properties that may be suitable for off-site mitigation required under forest conservation plans. The Planning Director should develop the list in coordination with the County Arborist, the Department of Environmental Protection, the Department of Transportation, the Department of General Services, the Department of Economic Development, the Soil Conservation District, and other appropriate agencies.

(h) *Sediment Control Permit Applications.* The Planning Director and the Director of the Department of Environmental Protection should develop administrative procedures to prevent, to the extent possible, circumvention of this Chapter by a person who obtains a sediment control permit for land disturbing activities on less than 40,000 sq. ft. of land and who later seeks preliminary plan of subdivision approval for the same land. These procedures may include requiring an applicant for a sediment control permit to submit a declaration of intent enforceable under Section 22A-19. (1992 L.M.C., ch. 4, § 1; 1996 L.M.C., ch. 4, § 1; 1996 L.M.C., ch. 14, § 1; [2001 L.M.C., ch 19, § 1](#); [2008 L.M.C., ch. 5, § 1](#).)

**Editor's note**—[2008 L.M.C., ch. 5, § 3](#), states: Sec. 3. Any regulation in effect when this Act takes effect that implements a function transferred to another Department or Office under Section 1 of this Act continues in effect, but any reference in any regulation to the Department from which the function was transferred must be treated as referring to the Department to which the function is transferred. The transfer of a function under this Act does not affect any right of a party to any legal proceeding begun before this Act took effect.

2001 L.M.C., ch. 19, § 2, reads as follows: Transition. Any amendment to Chapter 22A, inserted by Section 1 of this Act, does not apply to:

- (a) a preliminary or final forest conservation plan approved before this Act took effect [November 5, 2001], or
- (b) a county highway project individually listed in the County Capital Improvements Program and submitted to the Planning Board under mandatory referral review before this Act took effect [November 5, 2001].

#### **Sec. 22A-27. Forest Conservation Fund.**

There is a County Forest Conservation Fund. Money deposited into the Fund must be used in accordance with the adopted County budget and this Section:

- (a) *In lieu fees.* Money deposited in the Forest Conservation Fund must be spent on the reforestation and afforestation for which the money is deposited, including costs directly related to site identification, acquisition, design, preparation, or maintenance of existing forests, and achieving urban canopy goals, and must not revert to the General Fund. The permanent preservation of priority forests, including identification and acquisition of a site, may be substituted for reforestation and afforestation at a rate of 2 acres of forest preservation for each acre of planting required. Funds remaining after all reforestation and afforestation requirements are satisfied may be spent on any other tree conservation activity, including street tree planting.
- (b) *Penalties.* Money collected for noncompliance with a forest conservation plan or the associated 5-year maintenance agreement must be deposited in a separate account in the forest conservation fund. Money deposited in this fund may be used to administer this Chapter. (1992 L.M.C., ch. 4, § 1; [2001 L.M.C., ch 19](#), § 1; [2010 L.M.C., ch. 55](#), § 1; 2021 L.M.C., ch. 1, § 1.)

**Editor’s note**—2001 L.M.C., ch. 19, § 2, reads as follows:

Transition. Any amendment to Chapter 22A, inserted by Section 1 of this Act, does not apply to:

- (a) a preliminary or final forest conservation plan approved before this Act took effect [November 5, 2001], or
- (b) a county highway project individually listed in the County Capital Improvements Program and submitted to the Planning Board under mandatory referral review before this Act took effect [November 5, 2001].

#### **Secs. 22A-28, 22A-29. Reserved.**

## **Article V. County Arborist.**

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#### **Sec. 22A-30. County Arborist.**

- (a) *Appointment.* The Director of the Department of Environmental Protection must appoint a person to serve as County Arborist. The County Arborist functions within the Department of Environmental Protection.
- (b) *Qualifications.* The County Arborist must have relevant experience and an advanced degree in horticulture, forestry, forest ecology, plant pathology, landscape architecture, or other related field, or an equivalent combination of education and experience. The County Arborist should be licensed as a tree expert under State law.
- (c) *Duties.* The County Arborist has the following functions related to resource management and protection of forest and trees in the County:
  - (1) develop a comprehensive County conservation and management strategy, including programs designed to promote afforestation and reforestation in the County, and the survival of historic trees and any endangered tree species;
  - (2) advise the County Executive and County Council on the effectiveness of County programs for controlling tree pests and diseases;
  - (3) review and approve proposed commercial logging and timber harvesting operations under Article II;
  - (4) review variance requests and reports under Article II, but not including those under 22A-12(b)(3);
  - (5) provide liaison with citizens and businesses on forest and tree conservation issues and develop appropriate mechanisms for public input on conservation strategies; and
  - (6) any other duties required by law or assigned by the County Executive. (1992 L.M.C., ch. 4, § 1; [2017 L.M.C., ch. 34](#), §1; 2021 L.M.C., ch. 1, § 1.)

#### **Sec. 22A-31. Forest Conservation Advisory Committee.**

- (a) *Definition.* In this section “Committee” means the Forest Conservation Advisory Committee.
- (b) *Established.* The County Executive must appoint, subject to confirmation by the County Council, a Forest Conservation Advisory Committee.
- (c) *Composition and terms of members.*
  - (1) The Committee has 9 public members. The public members should include:
    - (A) landscape architects;
    - (B) arborists and urban foresters;

- (C) horticulturists and representatives from the nursery industry;
  - (D) persons directly engaged in agriculture;
  - (E) persons directly involved in the building industry;
  - (F) members of citizen groups;
  - (G) members of environmental and conservation organizations;
  - (H) representatives of public utility companies; and
  - (I) persons who own a forest stand of at least 2 acres.
- (2) The Executive must designate a staff member from each of the following departments to serve as an ex officio member:
- (A) Agricultural Services Agricultural Services;
  - (B) Environmental Protection;
  - (C) Transportation; and
  - (D) Permitting Services.
- (3) The Executive must invite a representative from each of the following agencies to serve as an ex officio member:
- (A) the County Planning Board; and
  - (B) the Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission.
- (4) The term of each member is 3 years and expires on December 31. After an appointment to fill a vacancy before a term expires, the successor serves the rest of the unexpired term.
- (d) *Voting, officers, meetings, and compensation.*
- (1) All members of the Committee are voting members.
  - (2) Each January, the Executive may designate a chair and vice-chair from among the Committee's public members to serve a 1-year term. If the County Executive does not designate a chair or vice-chair by February 15, the Committee members must select a chair and vice-chair.
  - (3) The Committee meets at the call of the Chair. The Committee must meet as often as necessary to perform its duties, but not less than 6 times each year.
  - (4) A member must serve without compensation. However, a member may request reimbursement for mileage and dependent care costs at rates established by the County.
- (e) *Duties.* The Committee must:
- (1) advise the Executive, Council, Planning Board, and any other relevant agency, on forestry policy issues;
  - (2) propose to the Executive, Council, Planning Board, and any other relevant agency, proactive forestry policies, laws, and guidelines;
  - (3) recommend a comprehensive approach to urban forestry;
  - (4) advise on a tree inventory;
  - (5) review and comment on policies and programs related to forestry;
  - (6) promote and seek funding for a sustained forestry program;
  - (7) promote and foster a strong sense of community through urban forestry;
  - (8) communicate with other boards, agencies, and community residents about forestry issues; and
  - (9) promote volunteerism and act as a general information resource.
- (f) *Annual Report.* By October 1 each year, the Committee must submit to the Executive, Council, Planning Board, and any other relevant agency, an annual report on its functions, activities, accomplishments, and plans and objectives.
- (g) *Advocacy.* The Committee must not engage in any advocacy activity at the State or federal levels unless that activity is approved by the Office of Intergovernmental Relations.
- (h) *Staff.* The Chief Administrative Officer must provide appropriate staff to the Committee. ([2006 L.M.C., ch. 30](#), § 1; [2008 L.M.C., ch. 14](#), § 1; [2008 L.M.C., ch. 5](#), § 1; [2017 L.M.C., ch. 34](#), §1; 2021 L.M.C., ch. 1, § 1.)

**Editor's note**—[2008 L.M.C., ch. 5](#), § 3, states: Sec. 3. Any regulation in effect when this Act takes effect that implements a function transferred to another Department or Office under Section 1 of this Act continues in effect, but any reference in any regulation to the Department from which the function was transferred must be treated as referring to the Department to which the function is transferred. The transfer of a function under this Act does not affect any right of a party to any legal proceeding begun before this Act took effect.

2006 L.M.C., ch. 30, § 2, states: Transition. The County Executive must stagger the terms of the members initially appointed under Section 22A-31(c)(1) so that approximately one-third of the terms of these members expire each year.