CHAPTER 4: SENSITIVE AREAS & MINERAL RESOURCES

INTRODUCTION

The City of Salisbury is rather unique given its natural environment that contains parklands, woodlands, wetlands, and water resources, which are some of the City's greatest assets. The focus of this chapter is to identify lands which have a high ecological value and are in need of some form of protection from urban development. Some of these areas, such as wetlands, offer not only environmental value like helping to filter water, but also offer protection against devastating floods by absorbing and holding the excess water that can occur during severe weather events.

These areas also offer ample opportunities for recreational activities like hiking, camping, kayaking and many others. With the developmental restrictions already in place in many of these areas, it is beneficial to both the environment and prospective developers that the areas be clearly identified. It is imperative that this natural environment be protected to the fullest extent possible to help the City of Salisbury facilitate future development and environmental challenges.

GOAL

Protect the natural environment through the conservation of significant ecological systems that naturally work to enhance the quality of life for residents.

OBJECTIVES

- Protect water quality, wildlife, and preserve natural features.
- Develop local regulations which ensure the landscape is preserved in its natural state by minimizing tree and soil removal.
- Maintain and expand the forest canopy within the City.
- Strengthen connectivity among various parts of the City, especially downtown via bike and pedestrian trails/walkways.
- Enhance public access and use of the Wicomico River and its tributaries for recreational purposes.
- Ensure that all new development and redevelopment in the City minimizes pollutant loadings and runoff through the implementation of erosion, sediment and stormwater control plans.
- Consider the creation of community gardens as a high priority use of open space resources as a means of preserving green space and encouraging community involvement.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

- Map existing parks, greenways, trails, wildlife habitat, and open space to develop a system that integrates floodplain management and preserves open space along the rivers, creeks, and wooded areas to increase water absorption.
- Encourage planted buffers along waterways and maintain a "greenway" along the streams to connect the zoo, hospital, and downtown center.
- Support the efforts of the Wicomico River Keepers Program in an effort to encourage local residents and business to monitor the water quality of the Wicomico River and its tributaries.
- Coordinate with the Maryland Department of Natural Resources to enhance the identification of Wetlands of Special State Concern.
- Codify the State's Wetlands of Special State Concern regulations into the City Code.

- Update the City's Floodplain Ordinance to minimize any adverse impacts of development within the floodplain.
- ✓ Encourage the use of Best Management Practices (BMPs) to help reduce flooding.
- Promote the development of an inter-connected green space network throughout the City of Salisbury with parks and open space throughout that will provide connections between neighborhoods.
- ✓ Update and implement the City's Stormwater Management Ordinance to reflect recent and future revisions to the State stormwater regulations.
- ✓ Encourage the use of more efficient stormwater management (SWM) practices such as smaller SWM ponds scattered throughout a greenway versus one large SWM pond within a development, as well as the use of rain gardens instead of traditional raised islands typically found in parking lots in an effort to reduce run-off and improve water quality.
- Priority consideration should be given to conducting a technical study to determine cost-effective measures and best management practices to significantly reduce the amount of debris deposited in the Wicomico River and its tributaries from the stormwater system.
- ✓ Educate the public on the benefits of incorporating pervious materials in construction applications to improve water quality and reduce the potential for flooding.
- Encourage the hiring of a City Arborist or the creation of a volunteer-based citizens group to educate residents about the importance of our urban forest, as well as prepare an educational campaign to alert residents about the harmful effects of invasive plants in forested areas.
- ✓ Research and implement an Urban Tree Canopy program.
- Support farmers markets in the City to provide an outlet for farmers from the City and neighboring communities to sell produce.
- Encourage property owners of vacant and/or underdeveloped land to consider creating small-scale, hand-tended gardens as an interim use of the property.

ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY TASK FORCE

In 2008, an Environmental Policy Task Force was established to assist the City of Salisbury in developing policies to guide its actions, both internally and externally, as they relate to the environment. The Task Force met for six months between 2008 and 2009 and prepared a series of recommendations for consideration by the Mayor and City Council intended to reduce the environmental impact of the City and its residents. Based upon an early recommendation of the Task Force, the City joined the U.S. Mayors' Climate Protection Agreement, also known as the Cool Cities Initiative. The Task Force recommendations included:

- Purchasing hybrid and electric vehicles when appropriate, using green cleaning supplies, bulk purchasing of electricity from sustainable sources, applying LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) standards to new facilities and promoting citizen education programs to stimulate citizens to take actions, such as reducing water usage, within their households and businesses.
- Establishing a stormwater utility to provide a dedicated funding source that could support staff and equipment, street cleaning, and a trash reduction education program.
- Creating a new position, Director of Sustainability, to focus on expanding public open space, including a trail system, developing a green infrastructure plan, and protecting and enhancing the tree canopy.