

ST. MARY'S COUNTY GOVERNMENT  
COMMISSION ON THE ENVIRONMENT

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November 20, 2009

St. Mary's Board of County Commissioners  
PO Box 653  
Leonardtown, MD 20650

Subject: Preservation of 80 acres in McIntosh Run watershed


Dear Commissioners,

As the county government's representatives on environmental issues, the Commission on the Environment strongly urges the Board of County Commissioners to act in unison in the preservation of some of the most environmentally important land in St. Mary's County. The *Breton Bay Watershed Restoration Action Strategy* prepared for St. Mary's County and the Town of Leonardtown in 2003 identified the Breton Bay watershed as among the "most ecologically diverse and sensitive biological communities in the Chesapeake region." Foremost among the sub watersheds is McIntosh Run. McIntosh Run is the largest tributary in the watershed and one of the few remaining viable habitats for a number of endangered, rare, and threatened aquatic and terrestrial species. McIntosh Run is designated a Natural Heritage Area by the State of Maryland. The National Conservancy has identified McIntosh Run as a significant forest block in the region. The 80 acres (the Rowland property) mentioned above occupies a critical place in the McIntosh Run watershed. The property is within an area where a number of lesser tributaries such as Brooks Run, Upper McIntosh Run, and Lower Burnt Mill Creek converge. The Rowland property is near the Leonardtown Development District. Maintaining and having any hope of improving the water quality of Breton Bay in the future requires that every effort be made to preserve forest buffer and wetlands in their natural state. The Department of Natural Resources has ranked this property as among the most important to preserve in the State of Maryland.

Watershed management and planning is ultimately the responsibility of local government. We need the Board of County Commissioners to demonstrate their foresight, as they have on other issues, in the efficient and effective preservation of our county's resources. We understand that federal and state agencies are providing the resources necessary to acquire this environmentally critical property with no additional funding from St. Mary's County. Further, the Recreation & Parks Department has told us that future management of the property, if it were

deeded to the County, would be accomplished with minimal budgetary impact. On behalf of all the citizens who volunteer their time, expertise, and energy in caring for the natural beauty of St. Mary's County, the Commission urges you to take an active role in helping transfer this property into public conservancy.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John B. Wheeler". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

John B. Wheeler, Chairman

St. Mary's County Commission on the Environment