

LOUDOUN SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT FOCUS GROUP NOTES – May 2, 2020

MEETING DATE	COMMUNITY GROUP/ADVISORY BODY	COMMENT
5/5/2020	Loudoun Soil and Water Conservation District	LSWCD assists Applicant's once they start their uses. Preserving prime soils is important and key as those are the most feasible for farm production.
5/5/2020	Loudoun Soil and Water Conservation District	Mapping of floodplain/FOD should distinguish between floodway and flood fringe, which is the approach used by other/adjacent jurisdictions (e.g. rather than a single/unified "major floodplain"). County's FOD and mapped boundary creates concerns/issues with planting in the floodplain without a FPAL. Plantings in the floodplain is an important conservation practice and shouldn't involve additional procedural requirements/costs. Similarly, need to clarify FOD to allow fences for livestock to be consistent with other entities.
5/5/2020	Loudoun Soil and Water Conservation District	FOD is confusing regarding permitted uses. Does not say you cannot plant trees or put up a fence. Clarification regarding treatment of these items is needed. To promote conservation and agricultural practices, trees and livestock fences should be clearly identified as a permitted use/structure.
5/5/2020	Loudoun Soil and Water Conservation District	FOD allows agricultural structures up to 840 square feet as well as reconstruction of existing structures in the floodplain. That said, the current language is confusing and clarification of these types of uses/activities is necessary.
5/5/2020	Loudoun Soil and Water Conservation District	Conservation practices help the floodplain.
5/5/2020	Loudoun Soil and Water Conservation District	The Zoning Ordinance permits certain uses as long as there is a plan on file with LSWCD. Such uses/situations need to be reviewed and coordinated with County staff to ensure shared understanding/expectations. Also need the Zoning Ordinance to clearly allow agricultural fences and conservation practices as by right activities. These allowances are different/distinct from typical development standards and regulations.
5/5/2020	Loudoun Soil and Water Conservation District	Issues involving importing/stockpiling of fill material are being addressed by County processes, but the Zoning Ordinance needs to be strong enough to expressly prohibit the taking of fill in rural areas without relying on interpretation/process. Regarding role of farm plans, LSWCD and County staff should work together with property owners to make sure there is a difference between fill materials to establish a legitimate agricultural use versus simply bringing in yards and yards of fill.
5/5/2020	Loudoun Soil and Water Conservation District	Regarding areas within MDOD and steep slopes that include prime agricultural conditions, LSWCD does not want to prohibit agriculture in these areas, but also do not want to enable clearing of a forested area for pasture or just for a view. Example of clearing for cattle protection versus not clearing b/c of the type of species. Not sure how we can balance both, but need to consider that there are legitimate reasons to clear MDOD and/or steep slopes for agriculture.

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5/5/2020	Loudoun Soil and Water Conservation District	Conservation easements in the Transition Policy Area/Transition zoning districts. Concerns with Villages and Towns annexing land around them to grow. LSWCD wants farms around these areas to be protected. Not sure if this can be addressed in the Zoning Ordinance Rewrite. Create mechanisms to protect prime agricultural soils, perhaps via some potential overlay area, or continued use of agricultural districts, albeit with more protections/benefits to encourage voluntary participation.
5/5/2020	Loudoun Soil and Water Conservation District	Loss of prime agricultural soils means less acreage to meet certain state and federal mandates for pollution reduction in streams and the Chesapeake Bay. Easier to achieve conservation targets on farms versus development in the suburban environment due to constraints (e.g. infrastructure, area limitations, cost). Larger scale conservation is better and more cost effective for many reasons.
5/5/2020	Loudoun Soil and Water Conservation District	Agricultural and forestal districts. In Loudoun County, it is sometimes difficult to explain the costs/benefits of voluntarily joining and/or remaining in such a district. Like to see agricultural districts expanded and encourage property owners to do so. Need to emphasize Right to Farm aspect/role of these districts, which provide protection when eminent domain issues arise or HOA issues arise. Consider strengthening/enhancing benefits to property owners who join/remain in agricultural and forestal districts.
5/5/2020	Loudoun Soil and Water Conservation District	Requiring an agriculture disclosure form for home buyers in and adjacent to agricultural and forestal districts may be a good idea to reinforce/build awareness that Loudoun County is a Right to Farm jurisdiction and active agriculture is supported/promoted by the County.