



County of Fairfax, Virginia

Supervisor Pat Herryty
Jointly with Chairman McKay, Supervisor Kathy Smith and Supervisor Dan Storck
Board Matter
November 1, 2022
Reaffirmation of Commitment to Downzoning of Occoquan Watershed

Background: On July 26, 1982, the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors downzoned approximately 41,000 acres in the Occoquan Basin to a maximum density of one house per five acres and imposed water supply protection controls on approximately 64,500 acres. This action was taken to protect the Occoquan Watershed and the Occoquan Reservoir that supplied drinking water to 600,000 people in Northern Virginia from the effects of non-point source pollution. The decision was challenged and upheld by the Fairfax County Circuit Court in 1985, preserving the zoning that helps protect the reservoir and reinforcing the ability of local governments in Virginia to implement comprehensive plans and effectively plan for the future.

In 2002, the Board celebrated the 20th anniversary of the downzoning decision and proclaimed 2002 as the Occoquan Watershed Year. Since then, Fairfax County has continued to protect and restore this vital natural resource through the implementation of stormwater management projects. Additionally, the Board of Supervisors has welcomed the diversity of agritourism uses that are in keeping with the tradition and heritage of the area and at the same time continues to preserve the downzoning and protect the water quality of our streams.

In 2016, we asked our Board to reaffirm its commitment to the downzoning of the Occoquan Watershed, a 1982 decision that downzoned approximately 41,000 acres in the Occoquan Basin to a maximum density of one house per five acres and imposed water supply protection controls on approximately 64,500 acres. The reaffirmation motion, jointly proposed with Supervisors Smith and Storck and former Chairman Bulova passed unanimously and promoted long-term resource planning and improved the capabilities of local governance to protect the water quality of our streams. Actions by this Supervisor and the Board since the 2016 reaffirmation have continued to demonstrate our goal of protecting this important watershed. We, as a Board, and Fairfax Water have made critical investments, including conversion of part of the Vulcan quarry, in the Occoquan watershed to provide drinking water for the region well into the future.

Today, the Occoquan Reservoir provides safe drinking water for over one million Northern Virginia residents. Concerns from Fairfax Water on increased salinization and sediments that may impact the watershed make it crucial for our Board to officially reaffirm our stance as leaders and stewards of this watershed. The current Board has four members who were not on the Board in 2016. I believe it is important for this Board to reaffirm our commitment to the protection of the Occoquan watershed.

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Motion: Therefore, Mister Chairman, I move that the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors, on behalf of all citizens of Fairfax County, reaffirm its commitment to the continued efforts by the county, related agencies, and residents to protect and preserve this critical natural resource for future generations just as the previous Board did in 2016.