

ATTACHMENT B

Part IV: Narrative Description of Activities

The Little Falls Watershed Alliance, Inc. (LFWA), is dedicated to improving the environmental health and well-being of the Little Falls Watershed. Before discussing the activities of the LFWA, we offer a brief description of the watershed and the problems facing it.

Description of the Little Falls Watershed

The Little Falls Watershed is located in the southwest corner of Montgomery County in Bethesda and Chevy Chase, MD, and in a portion of the northwest section of the District of Columbia. The waterways of the watershed consist of the Willet, Little Falls and Minnehaha Branches (sometimes referred to below as creeks), several smaller tributaries, and an extensive system of urban/suburban storm sewers that feed into them. The Willet Branch flows into the Little Falls Branch, which continues to the Potomac River. The Minnehaha Branch flows into the Potomac to the north of the Little Falls Branch.

Within the watershed are the commercial districts of the Bethesda Central Business District, Friendship Heights, Westwood Centers I and II, and stores along River Road near the Kenwood neighborhood. Two country clubs, Kenwood and Chevy Chase, are located in the watershed with the latter containing one of the headwaters that flows into the Little Falls Branch. In the Montgomery County portion of the watershed is the Little Falls Stream Valley Park, which is under the jurisdiction of the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC). With the exception of some much smaller parks, schools, and houses of worship, the remainder of the watershed consists of residential housing, including high-rise and low-rise buildings and single family houses. Development began in earnest in the late 1940s. The trees and shrubbery in these neighborhoods are typically old and dense.

The property within the watershed has become ever more valuable due to good schools, the proximity to shopping and entertainment facilities, and the presence of subway stations along the red line of the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority's railway system. In an effort to encourage the use of mass transit, Montgomery County has designated much of the watershed for high-density development. New construction of high-rise commercial and residential buildings has grown apace. Many older, single-family homes have been supplanted by larger houses.

Problems facing the Little Falls Watershed

Storm-water runoff and pollution

Because of inadequately controlled runoff and occasional pollution events, watershed resource conditions generally are poor. In-fill building and the increasing density has caused the watershed to become progressively more covered with paved areas. Because of the large runoff from these impervious surfaces, less water is percolating into the ground; instead, it is diverted directly into storm drains. During heavy rain storms, torrents of water cascade into the watershed's branches via the storm drains or directly from the streets, causing major erosion and damage to plants and wildlife.

In an effort to control the erosion and prevent flooding, much of the watershed's original headwaters and tributaries were piped or contained in concrete channels, developments that occurred without due regard for maintaining the health of the watershed. Channelized and piped areas throughout the watershed deliver flows into downstream channels at accelerated velocities and often with very high temperatures after flowing through open concrete channels or across paved surfaces warmed by the summer sun. These storm flows adversely affect the remaining natural channels downstream.

Several major pollution events during the past 50 years have had a devastating impact on the wildlife in the watershed. Although there have not been any major spills recently, the effects of these earlier events linger. Also, intermittent, illicit discharges of pollution into the watershed's storm sewers continue to threaten the health of the habitat. Herbicides, pesticides, and silt washed from the land, and particles like salt running off the streets also are a major threat to the watershed.

Wildlife and plant degradation

For many years, the Little Falls Stream Valley Park has suffered from a paucity of wildlife and a degradation of its native plant species. This is a result of the storm-water runoff and pollution problems just discussed, and from a continuing influx of exotic plants. Non-native, invasive plants crowd out native plants and native wildlife, the latter (including many insects) by depriving them of food and nesting areas, contributing to the failure of entire webs of life. The invasive plants also can cause chemical changes in the soil and allow for the spread of these plants to outlying areas. Invasive vines can strangle and kill trees, potentially destroying the entire forest.

Trash load

The branches of the watershed are burdened by heavy concentrations of trash that cling to their rocky banks and vegetation until the trash is washed farther downstream into the Potomac

River and the Chesapeake Bay. Trash destroys wetlands by interfering with the establishment of emergent aquatic plants, is hazardous to wildlife through ingestion and entanglement in floating debris, and impairs the public's use and enjoyment of the Little Falls Stream Valley Park. Because the watershed is located in an urban/suburban setting, most of the trash in the branches originates as litter on the parking lots, streets and sidewalks of the nearby commercial areas, and is washed by rainwater, untreated and unfiltered, through the storm sewers into the branches.

Activities of the LFWA

A. What are the activities?

Because the LFWA is a new organization, its present activities are fairly limited and its plans for future activities are a work in progress.

Committee-Based Activities

The main activities of the LFWA will be conducted under the direction of its committees. Committees have been established in four areas of interest related to the health and enjoyment of the Little Falls watershed -- natural history, invasive plant control, storm water management and water quality, and trash abatement. The specific activities to be conducted, in varying degrees, by these committees fall into the following categories:

1. Inventory and Monitoring

The Natural History Committee will identify and catalog the plants and animals resident in the watershed under the direction of a certified naturalist volunteer, establish baselines for comparisons over time, and determine the health of the plants through a survey in selected areas of the watershed.

Using the information gathered by the Natural History Committee, the Invasive Plant Control Committee will identify and map the location of the native species and the non-native, invasive species.

The Storm Water Management and Water Quality Committee will use established data-collection standards and techniques to conduct macro-invertebrate testing and pollution testing. It also will attempt to identify and document the sources of pollution, the extent and location of erosion, and run-off points of entry into the branches. The committee will gather information from appropriate authorities to identify watershed drainage patterns by neighborhood and to identify areas with direct flows into the branches.

Volunteers called stewards will be assigned specific segments of the watershed for the regular monitoring of conditions relating to growth of invasive plants, erosion, pollution, and trash load. The stewards will report these conditions to the appropriate committee and, as warranted, to MNCPPC officials directly.

2. Restoration and Conservation

Using the information gathered through the inventory and monitoring activities, the Invasive Plant Control Committee will prioritize plans for the removal of invasive species based on the threat that they pose to the native species, and plans for the planting of native species. The committee will seek volunteers to remove invasive species, make sure they are supervised and trained to recognize and remove such species, and assign leaders to coordinate invasive plant removal events with the spraying program of the M-NCPPC. The committee also will identify locations for planting native species, secure necessary funding to purchase them, ensure that volunteers are trained to plant, and sponsor planting events.

The Storm Water Management and Water Quality Committee will work with homeowners, businesses, and government to reduce the amount of in-flowing pollutants, suggesting use of alternative, non-polluting substances, as appropriate; informing homeowners and businesses of their responsibilities under applicable laws; and notifying government authorities when violations occur. The committee will experiment with techniques to reduce the quantity of water running off residential and business properties and evaluate these techniques. The committee also will collaborate with M-NCPPC staff and other consultants, as needed, to explore technically feasible ways to stabilize the banks of the creek and to obtain funding for ameliorative projects. The committee will have demonstrations on using rain barrels, rain gardens, and other techniques to control storm water at its source.

The Trash Abatement Committee will deal proactively with the trash problem by concentrating on efforts to stop trash from entering the creeks at all, rather than removing it later. Apart from impairing the health and enjoyment of the watershed and downstream waterways, litter/trash is a blight upon the entire community, raises health and safety concerns, attracts more serious crime, and adversely affects property values. The committee's objective is to bring the trash/litter problem under control by all reasonable means.

The Trash Abatement Committee has established a network of volunteers, and is seeking more, to weekly patrol, monitor, and remove litter from the more than ten miles of main streets and sidewalks where most of the litter is deposited. The committee also has contacted local businesses to get them engaged in the effort by informing them of their responsibilities under local laws to remove litter from their properties and the adjacent public spaces (e.g., sidewalks and street gutters). The committee will be seeking funding from private and government sources, as well as donations, to hire individuals to assist in litter-removal efforts, because the amount of litter deposited here every day is more than volunteers alone can handle. The committee also will be pressing the police to step up enforcement of anti-litter laws, and marshaling the public behind this effort. A representative of the committee coordinates with other organizations attempting to deal with this problem, including the Alice Ferguson Foundation, sponsor of the annual Potomac River Watershed cleanup, and the Keep Montgomery County Beautiful Task Force.

3. Public Education and Outreach

The LFWA will strive to build local public awareness and to engage homeowner/community action in support of the health of the Little Falls watershed by educating the public on the environmental threats to the watershed and on the need to change harmful practices. Each committee will undertake these activities in its area of interest.

Key educational activities will include: Building and maintaining a website as an educational tool (e.g., containing pictures of invasive and native plant species, pictures of native animal species, data on pollution levels and trash load, informative articles); Planning and presenting regular (at least six times a year) educational program meetings, often featuring expert guest speakers; Sponsoring educational creek-side walks and field trips; Preparing and distributing targeted, educational handouts (e.g., on topics such as storm-water control, pet waste disposal, toxic dumping, litter) and other resource materials to homeowners, businesses, and the government with an eye toward changing harmful practices through the identification of specific alternatives to those practices; and Working with teachers in local schools to incorporate species monitoring and conservation activities in the Little Falls Watershed into science and ecology curricula.

Key outreach activities will include: Developing and maintaining a current website calendar; Providing regular communications via newsletters and annual reports; Incorporating LFWA information into local civic association newsletters; Distributing LFWA information and fliers at local events, park kiosks, store bulletin boards, and community centers; Collaborating with other watershed restoration groups; and Placing LFWA event announcements and articles in local newspapers and other publications.

4. Advocacy

The LFWA will keep abreast of government, civic, and commercial developments that affect the health of the watershed and will advocate in these arenas for the health of the watershed. Each committee will undertake these activities in its area of interest.

Key advocacy activities will include: Monitoring upcoming public policy issues, legislation, and agency activities that may affect the watershed; Reviewing land use plans in search of opportunities to stop unwise development, preserve undeveloped land, increase forest cover, and decrease impermeable surface within the watershed; Communicating with politicians, agency staff, and other decision-makers about issues of concern, including by oral and written testimony on pending legislation (a completed Form 5768, Election to Make Expenditures to Influence Legislation, is attached); Writing letters to the press on issues of concern as they arise; and Developing and sustaining relationships with governmental and non-governmental officials, organizations, and natural resource management staff.

Other Activities

1. Membership and Community Involvement

The LFWA will recruit and retain members and volunteers to participate in restoring and maintaining the health of the watershed. To accomplish this, we envision: Providing energizing and welcoming program meetings and creek-side events; Building alliances with schools, youth groups (e.g., Boy/Girl Scouts), senior centers, faith communities, businesses, civic/homeowner associations, and other organizations who have an interest in the health of the watershed; Maintaining membership and volunteer records; Formatting and distributing contact information needed by those working together; and Recognizing and celebrating accomplishments of the LFWA at meetings and in the press.

2. Organizational Focus and Development

The LFWA will establish and maintain an organizational structure and an ongoing planning process to guide focused, effective, sustainable work. As discussed above, we have formed committees to implement our objectives. We will build a sectional stewardship structure for the watershed. We will establish and maintain sound and effective record-keeping and financial practices. We will secure funding necessary to support events, programs, and other operational costs by soliciting donations and submitting grant applications, as appropriate. LFWA also will secure some funding by selling t-shirts and other items that have an environmental theme and that bear the LFWA logo.

B. Who conducts the activities?

Committee-Based Activities

1. Inventory and Monitoring

These activities will be conducted by volunteers consisting of the LFWA's members and nonmembers under the direction of the appropriate committee.

2. Restoration and Conservation

Except for individuals paid to assist with litter-removal efforts under the auspices of the Trash Abatement Committee (discussed in response to question A, above), these activities are being, and will be, conducted by volunteers consisting of the LFWA's members and non-members under the direction of the appropriate committee.

3. Public Education and Outreach

These activities will be conducted by volunteers consisting of the LFWA's members and nonmembers under the direction of the appropriate committee.

4. Advocacy

These activities will be conducted by volunteers consisting of the LFWA's officers and directors with guidance from the appropriate committee.

Other Activities

1. Membership and Community Involvement

These activities will be conducted by volunteers consisting of the LFWA's members and nonmembers with the guidance of the LFWA's officers and directors.

2. Organizational Focus and Development

These activities will be conducted by volunteers consisting of the LFWA's officers and directors.

C. When are the activities conducted?

The vast majority of the LFWA's activities will be conducted by volunteers on their own time, when they have the time. This means that most of the activities will occur on weekends or on weekdays before or after regular business hours. The outdoor activities, such as identifying plant and animal species, monitoring watershed conditions, removal of invasive plant species, trash patrols, and creekside walks, necessarily will be confined to daylight hours. Invasive plant removal clinics currently are planned for every second and fourth Saturday each month, and began on June 14, 2008. Trash patrols are out on the streets in the watershed almost every day. Educational program meetings usually will be scheduled in the evening hours. Contacts with governmental and non-governmental officials will depend on their availability, and likely will occur during regular business hours.

D. Where are the activities conducted?

The LFWA's activities will be conducted in the state of Maryland and the District of Columbia.

E. How do the activities further the LFWA's exempt purposes?

Committee-Based Activities

1. Inventory and Monitoring

These activities further the LFWA's environmental/charitable purpose by gathering the information necessary to gauge the health of the watershed, to establish benchmarks from which improvements can be measured, and to mitigate the effects of harmful events when they occur. These activities also serve the LFWA's educational purpose by providing data about the watershed that are basic to understanding why and how it needs to be protected.

2. Restoration and Conservation

These are the LFWA's core environmental/charitable activities. All are designed to diminish the environmental threats to the watershed and to improve its health.

3. Public Education and Outreach

These activities serve the LFWA's educational and environmental/charitable purposes by building public awareness about the value of the watershed to the community, about the environmental threats facing it, and about what each person can do to help protect it.

4. Advocacy

These activities further the LFWA's environmental/charitable purpose by promoting the health and well-being of the watershed through the encouragement of beneficial governmental and nongovernmental actions.

Other Activities

1. Leadership and Community Involvement

These activities indirectly serve the LFWA's exempt purposes by providing it with the human resources necessary to undertake the activities that will restore and maintain the health of the watershed.

2. Organizational Focus and Development

These activities indirectly serve the LFWA's exempt purposes by giving it the organizational foundation necessary to undertake the activities that will restore and maintain the health of the watershed.

F. What percentage of the LFWA's total time is allocated to each activity?

Present Activities

Committee-Based Activities (50 %)

1. Inventory and Monitoring (2 %)
2. Restoration and Conservation (45 %)
3. Public Education and Outreach (2 %)
4. Advocacy (1 %)

Other Activities (50 %)

1. Membership and Community Involvement (5 %)
2. Organizational Focus and Development (45 %)

Planned Activities

Committee-Based Activities (85 %)

1. Inventory and Monitoring (7 %)
2. Restoration and Conservation (60 %)
3. Public Education and Outreach (15 %)
4. Advocacy (3 %)

Other Activities (15 %)

1. Membership and Community Involvement (13 %)
2. Organizational Focus and Development (2 %)

G. How are the activities funded?

The LFWA's present, limited activities are conducted entirely by volunteers without any funding. Organizational costs for filing the articles of incorporation, the fee for this Form 1023 application, and the initiation fee for a website were funded from the few donations that the LFWA has received.

The vast majority of the LFWA's future activities also will be conducted by volunteers with no funding. Funding for certain operational costs (e.g., for equipment needed to remove invasive plants, for replacement native plants, and for persons hired to assist in litter removal efforts), and to support events and programs will come from donations and grants. The LFWA also will secure some funding by selling t-shirts and other items that have an environmental theme and that bear the LFWA logo.

H. List any alternate names under which the LFWA operates

There are none.