

# Natural Environment

One of the characteristics of the City that makes it a desirable and healthy place in which to live is the extent, diversity, and quality of its environmental resources. The City's main environmental resources include wetlands, ponds, streams, public parks, open space, and urban forests. As the City continues to grow and redevelop, these resources are at risk of being impaired. Growth and development often cause pollution to the water, air, and soil; degradation to ecosystems; and loss of natural areas that contribute to residents' quality of life. Continuing to preserve and restore our environmental resources ensures a healthy environment by providing access to clean air, clean water, healthy ecosystems, and high quality recreation areas. The City is also at risk from impacts caused by natural and man-made hazards. Reducing threats to the community and environment from these hazards will foster a safer and healthier community.

## Guiding Principle:

In 2035, Fairfax is a city with... a healthy ecosystem of naturally flowing streams, native plants, wildlife, contiguous natural habitat areas, and a healthy tree population.



# Natural Environment Goal 1

Preserve, promote, and enhance a healthy environment.

The local environment will be preserved and protected through insightful policies and programs that improve the quality of the City's natural resources. Managing the stormwater that runs off land surfaces is a fundamental practice to mitigate the adverse effects of urban development by reducing flow velocities and enhancing water quality. Several federal, state, and local regulations and the City's adoption of the Chesapeake Bay Preservation Ordinance are enacted to protect the region's water resources.

The City has the opportunity to protect and increase the tree canopy by identifying the greatest challenges facing the urban forest (e.g. development, disease, etc.) and developing and implementing an urban forest management plan that includes detailed strategies for attaining a diverse, well-managed urban forest.

**OUTCOME NE1.1:** Clean and protected water resources and watersheds in the City.

**ACTION NE1.1.1** Reaffirm and implement the City's Chesapeake Bay Preservation Plan (Appendix A) and zoning regulations.

**ACTION NE1.1.2** Enhance zoning regulations and support initiatives that encourage the use of green stormwater infrastructure on private and public property.

**ACTION NE1.1.3** Retain and acquire riparian areas as open space or parkland.

**OUTCOME NE1.2:** Clean, healthy air that supports plant, animal, aquatic, and human life.

**ACTION NE1.2.1** Develop and implement a Climate and Energy Action Plan to achieve regional greenhouse gas emissions reduction goals (20% reduction from 2005 level by 2020, 80% reduction from 2005 level by 2050) as committed to in the Greater Washington 2050 Compact.

**ACTION NE1.2.2** Identify and implement strategies to reduce airborne pollutants known to cause health problems.

**OUTCOME NE1.3:** A diverse, well-managed urban forest dominated by native species.

**ACTION NE1.3.1** Develop and implement an urban forest management plan to protect the City's urban forest and increase the quantity, density, and diversity of trees on public and private land.

**ACTION NE1.3.2** Support incentives, provide education, and partner with public and private groups to encourage native tree planting and preservation by private property owners.

# Natural Environment Goal 1



**ACTION NE1.3.3** Update zoning regulations and public facilities manual for tree preservation, removal, and planting of preferred species of trees located along streets, parking lots, and riparian areas.

**OUTCOME NE1.4:** A diverse population of native vegetation protected from invasive plants.

**ACTION NE1.4.1** Develop a strategy to control invasive species including identifying and mapping areas impacted by invasive plants.

**ACTION NE1.4.2** Support the development of community and habitat gardens on underutilized parcels and public lands.

**ACTION NE1.4.3** Provide education and partner with public and private groups to promote the preservation and planting of native plants, sustainable landscaping techniques, and management of invasive plants.

**OUTCOME NE1.5:** Restored and preserved natural open spaces and contiguous greenway corridors that provide natural habitats for plants and wildlife.

**ACTION NE1.5.1** Restore disturbed areas along streams and in conservation easements with native species.

**ACTION NE1.5.2** Pursue opportunities to purchase and preserve in perpetuity privately-owned open space.

**ACTION NE1.5.3** Encourage new development that protects and preserves environmentally-sensitive areas and natural features, such as tree cover (especially significant stands of trees and healthy, mature trees), native vegetation, streams, wildlife habitat, and natural topography.

# Natural Environment Goal 2

## Prepare for the impacts from natural and man-made hazards.

Extreme weather events such as prolonged heat, hurricanes, and flash flooding have contributed to negative health impacts, damaged homes and businesses, destroyed critical infrastructure, and to interruptions in the region's economic activity. These types of weather events are projected to increase in frequency and magnitude. There is also a risk that the community could be exposed to a variety of pollutants and hazardous chemicals, which may have negative effects on human health and the environment. The City should take steps to prepare for and mitigate these hazards.

**OUTCOME NE2.1:** Reduced risk and improved preparedness to meet the challenges associated with natural and man-made hazards.

**ACTION NE2.1.1** Participate in the National Flood Insurance Program's (NFIP) Community Rating System, a voluntary incentive program that recognizes and encourages community floodplain management activities that exceed the minimum NFIP requirements.

**ACTION NE2.1.2** Develop a resiliency plan to set priorities and allocate resources to manage risks associated with natural and man-made hazards.

**ACTION NE2.1.3** Continue to work with the Northern Virginia Hazard Mitigation Advisory Committee to regularly update the Northern Virginia Hazard Mitigation Plan.

**OUTCOME NE2.2:** Reduced exposure to pollutants and hazardous chemicals in the environment.

**ACTION NE2.2.1** Enhance exterior lighting standards and pursue certification as an International Dark Sky Community to reduce light pollution and protect nighttime skies.

**ACTION NE2.2.2** Continue to enforce noise standards.

**ACTION NE2.2.3** Promote the proper disposal or recycling of household hazardous waste.

**ACTION NE2.2.4** Educate on the identification, risks, and remediation of hazardous materials in buildings, including but not limited to radon, asbestos and volatile organic compounds.

**ACTION NE2.2.5** Develop integrated pest management and nutrient management plans.

**ACTION NE2.2.6** Promote the responsible use of pesticides and fertilizers.