



SUBMISSION FORM

All submission forms must include the following information. Separate submission forms must be turned in for each eligible program. **Deadline: July 1, 2023.** Please include this submission form with the electronic entry. If you do not receive an email confirming receipt of your entry within 3 days of submission, please contact [Gage Harter](#).

PROGRAM INFORMATION

County: Montgomery County
Program Title: Wetland Mitigation Project – Crab Creek
Program Category: Environmental

CONTACT INFORMATION

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SIGNATURE OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR OR DEPUTY/ASSISTANT COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

Name: Angela M. Hill
Title: Deputy County Administrator/CFO
Signature: 

VACo Achievement Award Nomination: Wetland Mitigation Project – Crab Creek

Award Category: Environmental

Executive Summary (1 page):

In 2021, Montgomery County was approached with a proposal to create a wetland mitigation bank project. This mitigation bank would be the first such project in the New River Watershed. Unfortunately, this use was not defined in the County's Zoning Ordinance. Staff began to perform substantial research on how other localities throughout Virginia regulated wetland mitigation bank projects. Eventually, an amendment to the Zoning Ordinance allowing mitigation bank use in the County was presented to the local governing body.

Following the amendment approval in the spring of 2021, staff began working with an applicant on a wetland mitigation project in 2022. The request was to expand an existing mitigation bank to include an additional five acres and to restore 4,000 linear feet of Crab Creek. In doing so, an increased number of tax credits would be available for sale throughout the watershed and the area would be protected in perpetuity. Once the application was ready for review, the Board of Supervisors followed the recommendation of staff and the Planning Commission and approved the special use permit by a unanimous vote. Following the approval, a site plan was reviewed and approved, allowing the mitigation work to begin.

This is a great example of how collaboration and good private-public relationships can bring about significant change and a positive community impact. The benefits to Crab Creek were substantial. Natural habitats were restored; flood hazards were mitigated; and there is now a guaranteed preserved open space in the community through Deed of Restrictions – all without providing additional traffic, noise, lighting, or safety impacts to surrounding properties. Without the combined efforts of everyone involved this restoration would not have become a reality. This is an illustration of how a well-planned and guided project can benefit an entire community while protecting/enhancing an area's natural resources.

Brief Overview (2-3 paragraphs):

In 2021, Montgomery County was approached with a proposal to create a wetland mitigation bank project. This mitigation bank would be the first such project in the New River Watershed. Unfortunately, this use was not defined in the County's Zoning Ordinance. Staff began to perform substantial research on how other localities throughout Virginia regulated wetland mitigation bank projects. Eventually, an amendment to the Zoning Ordinance allowing mitigation bank use in the County was presented to the local governing body.

Following the amendment approval in the spring of 2021, staff began working with an applicant on a wetland mitigation project in 2022. The request was to expand an existing mitigation bank to include an additional five acres and to restore 4,000 linear feet of Crab Creek. In doing so, an increased number of tax credits would be available for sale throughout the watershed and the area would be protected in perpetuity. Not only did this particular applicant benefit from an approved application, future developers and businesses have the potential to also benefit from available tax credits should their application be approved. These credits are vital to area developers as Montgomery County is one of the fastest growing localities in Virginia.

The benefits to Crab Creek were substantial. Natural habitats were restored; flood hazards were mitigated; and there is now a guaranteed preserved open space in the community through Deed of Restrictions – all without providing additional traffic, noise, lighting, or safety impacts to surrounding properties. Without the combined efforts of everyone involved this restoration would not have become a reality. This is an illustration of how a well-planned and guided project can benefit an entire community while protecting/enhancing an area's natural resources.

The Challenge:

Upon discovering that there was nothing in Montgomery County's Zoning Ordinance related to wetland mitigation bank projects, staff in the Planning and GIS office began taking steps to facilitate a text amendment. This discovery was made following a proposal for a wetland mitigation project. This mitigation bank project proposal would be the first such project in the New River Watershed. It would provide the opportunity to offset development impacts throughout the larger region. The Planning staff performed substantial research on how other localities throughout Virginia regulated wetland mitigation bank projects in their jurisdictions. Staff communicated with localities across the state, worked with the Planning Commission's Development Committee, and the Planning Commission to draft a series of amendments to the Zoning Ordinance. The amendment was approved in the spring of 2021.

The Solution:

Gathering the information and creating and receiving approval on a text amendment to Montgomery County's Zoning Ordinance was only the first step in the approach to evaluating the wetland mitigation bank proposal. The request was to expand an existing mitigation bank to include an additional five acres and to restore 4,000 linear feet of Crab Creek, as well as surrounding buffer area. In doing so, an increased number of tax credits would be available for sale throughout the watershed and the area would be protected in perpetuity.

The next step involved Planning staff reviewing land use impacts. After reviewing the land use impacts, staff recommended the application be approved due to the positive impact it would have on the local creek. During their evaluation, staff determined traffic impact would be minimal. They also determined the environmental impact was profound given the resulting restoration of Crab Creek, which would reduce sediment and nutrient inputs; restore native grasses, shrubs, and trees; enhance existing aquatic and wildlife habitats; and introduce additional nutrients into soil along the creek bank. In addition, the proposed plans mitigated flood hazards because the property surrounding Crab Creek lies in FEMA Flood Zone A. The costs of protecting the wetlands would be offset by allowing the local property owner to generate income through the sale of credits.

The Board of Supervisors followed the recommendation of the staff and the Planning Commission and approved the special use permit by a unanimous vote. Following the approval, a site plan was reviewed and approved, allowing the mitigation work to begin.

The final step involved Planning and Environmental Services staff working with the Public Information Department to obtain drone footage, which assisted in inspections and provide footage of the finalized project.

Program Cost:

The only cost to Montgomery County associated with this project was the cost related to the time it took Planning staff to research and provide recommendations. In essence, it was the cost associated with them doing their job. Even though this project was more challenging it led to a great return on their time investment.

The Results:

The benefits to Crab Creek were substantial. Natural habitats were restored; flood hazards were mitigated; and there is now a guaranteed preserved open space in the community through Deed of Restrictions – all without providing additional traffic, noise, lighting, or safety impacts to surrounding properties. Without the combined efforts of everyone involved this restoration would not have become a reality. This is an illustration of how a well-planned and guided project can benefit an entire community while protecting/enhancing an area’s natural resources.

Samples of content created:

Link to content on Google Drive: <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1JjegdVOen2ePk7FENIGf-KWYsjpxDD1R?usp=sharing>

