

LAND USE

External

Frederick County

At 664 square miles, Frederick County is the largest county in Maryland. 98.5 % of Catoctin Mountain Park's 9 square miles (5,577 acres), is located in Frederick County. Frederick is among the fastest growing counties in the Washington Standard Metropolitan Area. From 1990 to 2000, Frederick County was the fastest growing county in Maryland and population growth outpaced state and national averages. Frederick County experienced a 30% increase in population while the State of Maryland's total population increased by 10.8% during the same time period. The population is expected to increase from 220,743 in 2005 to 243,220 people in 2010, exceeding the Census 2000 projections.

One of the many positive results of this favorable living and business environment is that the median household income for Frederick County in 2005 was estimated by the MD Dept. of Planning at \$78,500, which is a 28% increase from 1999 US Census information. Frederick County's median household income is 21% greater than the State of Maryland's estimated 2005 median household income of \$64,300.

Planning and Zoning

Land use in Frederick County is basically divided into five categories:

<u>Type</u>	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Acreage</u>	<u>Sq. Miles</u>
Resource Conservation	29	125,082	194.1
Rural/Agricultural	60	256,226	400
Forested	15.6	9,442	8.1
Residential	8.6	5,205	7.6
Commercial/Industrial	1.9	1,150	1.7
TOTAL	100	414,960	664

An analysis in 2006 of land use zoning within one half mile of the park boundary reveals that:

- 36.2% is Resource Conservation (RC)
- 36.6% is Agricultural (A)
- 27 % is Residential (R-1)
- 1 % is Village Center (VC)

Frederick County currently has 32,187 acres of public parkland. 62% of this acreage is state and federal land. Frederick County uses a parkland acreage standard that includes the state and federal acreage at 30 acres per 1,000 population. The county is recommending acquiring 200 acres of parkland per year in the future based upon a per acre cost of \$10,000 per acre for a 15 year expenditure of \$10.5M.

Foxville is a small unincorporated community on the southwest boundary that contains approximately 50 dwellings with residential zoning (R-1). One building site currently holds commercial zoning, Village Center (VC), that could impact the headwaters and aquifer recharge areas of Big Hunting Creek, a major trout stream in the State of Maryland.

NPS believes that the Frederick County has done a very good job of buffering the park from development but is concerned over the Residential and Village Center zoning which threatens the headwaters of Big Hunting Creek. We also remain concerned over lands within our viewshed (Piney Mountain, Harbaugh Valley, and Sabillasville) that could sustain future visually intrusive development. Foxville is a small unincorporated community on the southwest boundary that contains approximately 50 dwellings with residential zoning (R-1). One building site currently holds commercial zoning, Village Center (VC) that impacts the headwaters and aquifer recharge areas of Big Hunting Creek, a major trout stream in the State of Maryland.

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Gateway Communities

In Frederick County, the population center closest to the park is Thurmont. Thurmont is a community of 5,588 (2000 Census) that shares a portion of the park's eastern boundary. Catoctin Mountain Park is an attraction that generates economic development for the town of Thurmont and other gateway communities. Currently, Catoctin's two million dollar annual budget generates through economic multipliers an indirect effect of \$26 million dollars for the surrounding area. Tourism industry standards (Brooks, 2004) suggest that for every hour of travel there should be attractions that will keep visitors touring the area for about 4 times as long as it took to travel to the destination. Therefore we are in support of tourism initiatives that would expand visitor support services such as fuel, food, lodging, and equipment outfitters within the town.

While most of the development around the park continues to be single family homes on large acreages this development has presented issues such as timber trespass, loss of aquifer recharge and headwaters areas, and sedimentation in the creeks that flow through the park.

We remain concerned that the western town boundary which abuts the park with agricultural and low density residential lands could be converted to more intensive residential development. This could increase land use impacts such as wildlife habitat fragmentation and the potential for wildland fire interface. Compact settlement patterns around designated growth centers is also encouraged by the county comprehensive plan. We are also concerned that development is following the Rte. 15 in a linear fashion. We encourage the development of corridor management plans for both the Rte. 15 and Rte. 77 National and State Scenic Byways that establish voluntary design guidelines and develop trail connections and appropriate scenic overlooks.

Washington County

232 acres of Catoctin Mountain Park is located in Washington County. Most of the zoning on lands surrounding the park is Rural-Agricultural. Major issues for the NPS in Washington County are the need to develop a connection between the 26 mile long Catoctin Trail which traverses four federal, state, and local parks and the Appalachian National Scenic Trail which is a little more than a mile to the west. To gain this trail connection will require trail easement acquisition over either private lands or through the Hagerstown Watershed.

Gateway Communities

Smithsburg, a village of 2,146 persons, located six miles west of Catoctin Mountain Park on Maryland Route 77, has experienced a growth rate of 33.2% over the last ten years.

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State of Maryland

Maryland Park Service

One of the challenges the park faces originates from when the Catoctin Mountain Recreation Demonstration Area of the 1930s was split into Cunningham Falls State Park and Catoctin Mountain Park in 1954. This separation of the Recreation Demonstration Area into a state park and a federal park has caused confusion to many of the parks' visitors, causing the staff of both parks to explain to visitors that:

- The two parks are separate and distinct
- The state park and the federal park have different missions and regulations
- There are operational differences in recreational activities, fees, and camping.

High density day use of Hunting Creek Lake beach area during summer weekends often causes closure of the state park to visitors with the resultant overflow placing a strain on adjacent federal facilities. Parking along Route 77 causes traffic congestion and generates overflow parking at the Catoctin Visitor Center.

Some Maryland Department of Natural Resources Police (NRP) were formally Maryland State Park Rangers. They are assigned a geographic area which includes more land than just Cunningham Falls State Park. Catoctin rangers interface with NRP on poaching incidents and search and rescues. The park also has a cooperative agreement with NRP to enforce fishing regulations on Big Hunting Creek.

Maryland Office of Tourism Development

We continue to work with the Maryland Office of Tourism Development on many issues including a change in unit designation to National Recreation Area for the park to increase its identity with visitors to the area. We continue to provide technical assistance in visitor center design efforts at several locations in the Route 15 corridor.

LAND USE

EXTERNAL

Lands of Interest

Today, Catoctin Mountain Park is authorized at 5,810 acres to purchase real property under its enabling legislation. The original land acquisition target for Catoctin Mountain Park was 12,456 acres. Original acquisition ceased at 10,333 acres. In 1954, 4,445 acres were transferred to the State of Maryland to establish Cunningham Falls State Park. Our current policy is to purchase lands only from willing sellers who are contiguous to the park boundary. Purchase of lands requiring eminent domain is not anticipated. Lands which the National Park Service is interested in protecting are bounded roughly by Route 550 and Buck Lantz Road on the north, Route 15 on the east, Route 77 on the south, and Quirauk School Road and Route 491 on the west. These lands comprise approximately 2,860 acres on 126 land parcels. Such purchases would be designed to protect the aquatic resources and water quality of the Big Hunting Creek and Owens Creek watersheds and meet other resource objectives such as viewshed protection, habitat conservation, and trail corridor connections between the 26 mile long Catoctin Trail and the 2,176 mile Appalachian Trail which is currently less than two miles from the Catoctin boundary.

High priorities for acquisition would include any sensitive habitat or water quality area, lands with road frontage that would allow additional recreational access, and lands proposed for subdivision or commercial uses. Low priorities for acquisition would include current agricultural and resource conservation lands or those with low intensity uses such as recreational, institutional, or large lot residential.

Full acquisition costs for these lands could be between \$15-50million dollars if all purchases were conducted as fee simple acquisitions by the NPS. However many of these land protection measures such as riparian buffers, floodplain and headwaters protection could be undertaken by state and local governments and through conservation easements to non-profit land trusts and would significantly reduce NPS costs and protection responsibilities. Even if fully funded immediately this process would take many years to complete since appraisals and site evaluations are required prior to any offer of purchase from the NPS and many properties would not be available for sale for many years into the future.

Lands of Interest

