

June 1, 2026

Honorable Matt de Ferranti
Chair, Arlington County Board
Ellen M. Bozman Government Center
2100 Clarendon Blvd, Suite 300
Arlington, VA 22201

Re: Support for Natural Resiliency Program in CIP

Dear Chair de Ferranti,

The Forestry and Natural Resources Commission (FNRC) received two presentations at the May 28, 2026 meeting on both the FY27-36 Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) and the County's invasive species management program. The FNRC strongly supports the County Manager's recommendation in the CIP to make a long-term investment in our natural capital through the Natural Resiliency Program.

As noted in the FNRC letters dated July 25, 2025 and December 19, 2025 the Commission has long been concerned about the inadequate and inconsistent funding of the County's invasive species management program. The presentations at our May meeting highlighted the critical need for a long-term commitment for effective management of invasive species and habitat restoration in reclaiming and building resilience into the natural lands remaining in Arlington. To be successful, invasive species must be consistently managed. This entails active management, which is an initial suppression for about three years by highly trained contractors licensed to use select application of herbicides, followed by much less intensive maintenance treatments thereafter. Of the 543 acres of remaining natural lands in Arlington, 109 acres are in active management (suppression) and 382 acres are in maintenance. As the program expands to successfully treat more land, ongoing funding will be needed to maintain these lands.

Failure to manage invasive species and take a long-term view of habitat restoration will result in acres of previously treated natural land reverting to a severely degraded state that will diminish our tree canopy, urban forests biodiversity and natural habitats. Invasive species also pose a significant risk to climate resilience. By disrupting ecosystem structure and function, they weaken that capacity of natural systems to adapt to climate change. Committed, long-term management of invasive species helps to restore a healthy tree canopy and a healthy ecosystem that are more resistant to drought, floods and urban heat islands.

The commission strongly supports the recognition that Arlington's tree canopy, natural areas and biophilic spaces in the built environment are long-term assets that need to be funded over the long term. Just as other capital investments need to be protected and managed, natural capital comprises long-term assets necessary for a healthy ecosystem and resilient community and likewise needs to be protected and managed.

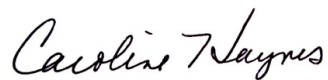
Commission Members

Caroline Haynes, Chair
Bob Benson
Bill Browning
John Carey
Elizabeth Gearin
Connor Goolsby
Josh Handler
Noreen Hannigan
Jennifer Hazen
David Howell
Neal Hunter
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Lisa Marcellus
Alex Sanders
Stephen Sockwell

The Forestry and Natural Resources Plan (FNRP, SD 4.5.1) specifically calls for pursuing “support of urban forestry and natural resources management through the Capital Improvement Plan”, and (FNRP, SD 4.5.2) “identify activities that would benefit from longer-term consistent funding”. The FNRP also notes: “Trees, natural areas, wildlife and plants are invaluable County capital assets and should be funded and planned for as such...Economic and social value multiplies as natural assets mature, and care must be taken to conserve the services they provide over their lifecycle.” (FNRP, p. 121)

In summation, the FNRC urges the County Board to support the County Manager’s recommendation in the CIP on the Natural Resiliency Program.

Sincerely,



Caroline Haynes, Chair
Forestry and Natural Resources Commission

cc: Members, Arlington County Board
Mark Schwartz, Arlington County Manager
Jane Rudolph, Director, Department of Parks and Recreation