

Plan Concepts

- Continuity
- Additional Park Acquisition/Public Use Easements
- Interpretation
- Stewardship
- Trail Accessibility
- Relationship to Other Plans & Policies

Continuity

This Plan proposes a continuous 25-mile greenway corridor that will one day feature a natural surface trail its entire length.

The proposed Rachel Carson Greenway Corridor varies in width and exact trail locations in certain areas will await more detailed fieldwork. The intent of this Plan is to assure the greenway corridor is wide enough to accommodate a natural surface trail and to assure trail connectivity along the entire length of the greenway corridor will be possible.

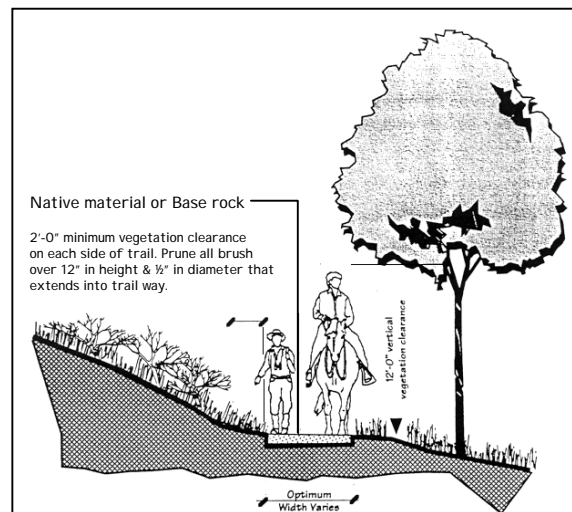
This Plan designates one trail as the main Rachel Carson Greenway trail. Other trails in the greenway may provide connections to nearby communities or provide “loop” trails off the main Rachel Carson Greenway trail. Only one trail, however, will be designated as the Rachel Carson Greenway Trail and this is the trail that will extend the entire length of the greenway.

In keeping with the interpretive and historic character of the greenway, trails in the greenway will be predominantly natural surface and permitted trail uses will include hiking, walking and horseback riding. Some trail sections are proposed as hiking only to avoid damage from horse hooves in wet, low lying areas or because the trail serves as pedestrian access between community facilities. In these areas, alternative equestrian routes have been proposed.

Trail users will be encouraged to read interpretive material as they walk, spend time observing natural and historic features and participate in guided interpretive tours. Bicycle traffic would detract from these activities. For this reason cycling will generally not be permitted in key interpretive areas.

The trail design guidelines for a natural surface trail are shown at right.

Only one section of the greenway features a hard surface hiker-biker trail. Located in the extreme southern portion of the corridor, the Northwest Branch hiker biker trail extends into Prince George’s County and is part of the Anacostia Trail system.



Shared Natural Surface Trail Typical Cross-Section.

Interpretation

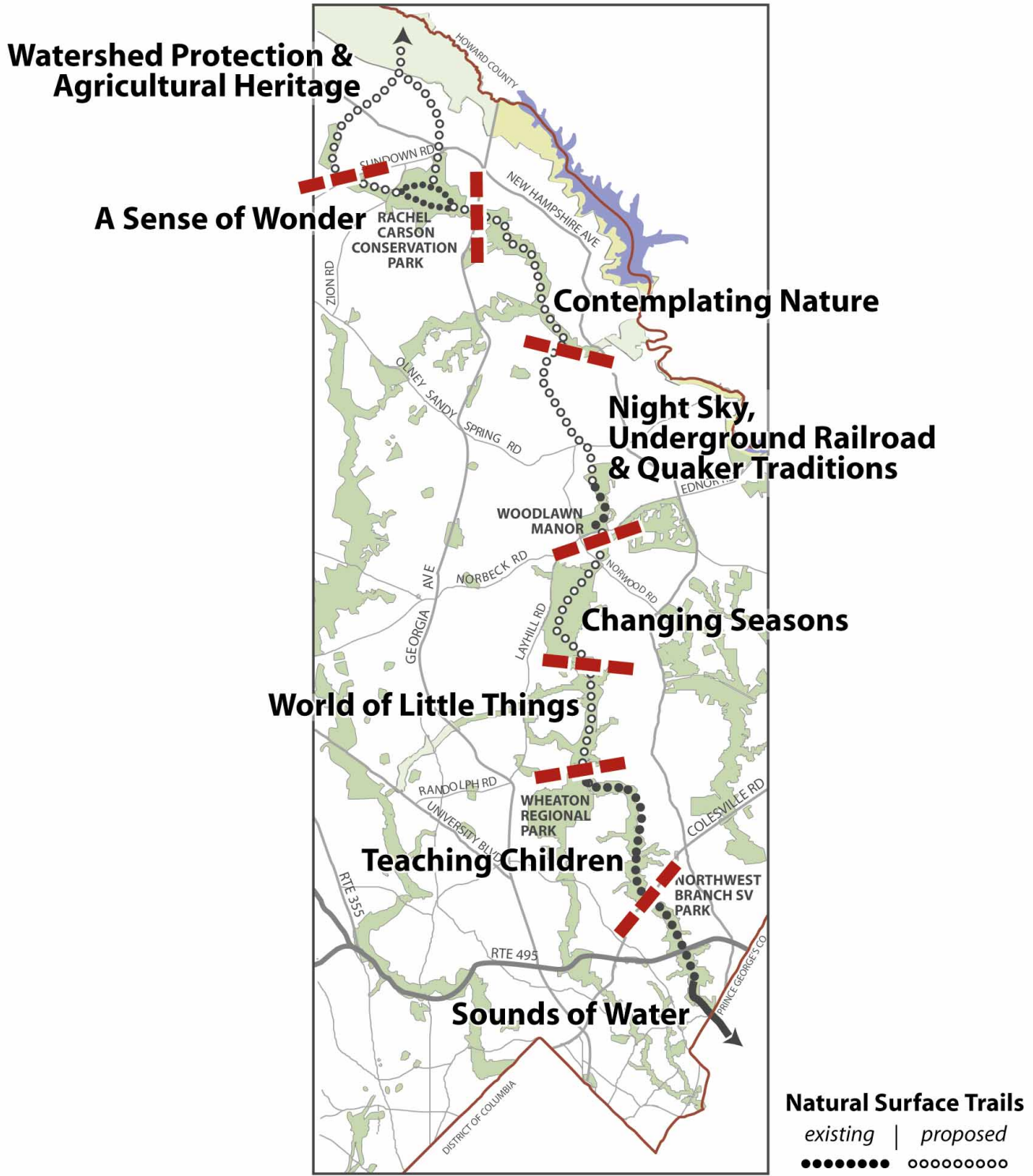
This plan recommends development of signage and thematic programs focusing on appreciation of the natural world and interpretation of county history, culture and archeology.

In addition to being a “through” trail that will be part of a larger 50-mile greenway system, the Rachel Carson Greenway trail will also be an interpretive trail. Different segments of the trail will feature opportunities to learn about the natural world and different aspects of the county’s history. The interplay of natural features and historic sites weave a story about the past of Montgomery County that people can see, touch and remember as they hike along the Greenway, taking with them an unexpected new knowledge about the place where they live and the people in whose steps they walk.

Interpreting the natural world. The Rachel Carson Greenway features many beautiful and interesting natural features. This rich array of natural resources is located in a very populated portion of the county; over 40,000 people live within a quarter-mile of the trail corridor. This blend of population and natural setting offer a perfect opportunity for teaching many people to appreciate nature. As shown on the following page, the Plan proposes interpreting different segments of the trail based upon the writings of Rachel Carson.

Interpreting the County’s history. The **Rural Legacy Trail**, opened in November 2001, commemorates the role of Montgomery County in the Underground Railroad and honors the Quaker heritage of Sandy Spring. The 1.7-mile trail has been included in the National Network of Trails To Freedom and is part of the Montgomery County Heritage Area Management Plan (November 2002). A key planning issue is whether the current trail should be extended to include more interpretive opportunities related to the Underground Railroad experience and the Quaker Heritage of Sandy Spring.

Other historic and cultural interpretive opportunities available within the Rachel Carson Greenway include sites and resources related to the County’s Industrial Heritage and early Indian cultures. The Rachel Carson Greenway contains a number of opportunities to interpret the importance of 18th and 19th century milling industries along the Northwest Branch and other parts of the trail alignment, i.e., Burnt Mills and Kemp Mill. There are also numerous opportunities to understand how prehistoric Indian cultures as far back as 12,000 B.C. used our Park stream valleys for seasonal resource camps and quarrying activities.



Creating a thematic Interpretation of our County’s Resources based on “Sense of Wonder” by Rachel Carson (see implementation chapter).

Interpretive Themes Chart.

Each theme is based on a quote from **The Sense of Wonder** by Rachel Carson.

Segments	Themes	Key Interpretive elements
1: Sounds of Water	<i>Hearing can be a source of...exquisite pleasure... Take time to listen and talk about the voices of the earth and what they mean—the majestic voice of thunder, the winds, the sound of surf or flowing streams.</i>	Hearing the different sounds of the Northwest Branch stream at different locations; enjoying the abundant native Rhododendrons; the positive effects of stream restoration projects; learning about Teddy Roosevelt’s visit to this section of the greenway.
2: Teaching Children	<i>...If a child is to keep alive his inborn sense of wonder...he needs the companionship of at least one adult who can share it, rediscovering with him the joy, excitement and mystery of the world we live in....</i>	Explain the structure of the forest and the types of trees, highlight efforts of Commission and citizens to clean-up Anacostia River, explain about plants that grow on the rocks, talk about use of rock shelters by prehistoric people.
3: World of Little Things	<i>Some of nature’s most exquisite handiwork is on a miniature scale... [with] a magnifying [lens]... we can escape the limitations of the human size scale.</i>	Talk about wetlands and vernal pools; teach about insects, soils and plants associated with these features; the importance of wetlands to overall water quality. Create vernal pool near school along greenway.
4: Changing Seasons	<i>Even if you are a city dweller... you can still look up at the sky... you can listen to the wind... you can still feel the rain on your face... you can find some place, perhaps a park or a golf course, where you can observe the mysterious migrations of the birds and the changing seasons...</i>	Use meadow plants to highlight changing seasons; explain importance of meadows for birds and other wildlife, how meadows are maintained in nature and by humans, why they are disappearing. Talk about meadow restoration. Attract bluebirds with bluebird nest boxes; Initiate a Bat Conservation program to help manage insects at golf courses to reduce reliance on chemicals.
5: Night Sky, the Underground Railroad, Quaker Traditions	<i>It was a clear night without a moon... we lay and looked up at the sky and the millions of stars that blazed in darkness.... You can still drink in the beauty, and think and wonder at the meaning of what you see...</i>	Explain how the night sky and stars helped guide escaping slaves to freedom; identify the North Star; discuss how Native Americans interpreted the sky. Describe the type of birds and wildlife that come out at night. Identify the watershed divide between the Northwest Branch of the Anacostia River and the Hawlings River. Identify any differences in terrain, flora and fauna between watersheds.
6: Contemplating Nature	<i>Those who contemplate the beauty of the earth find reserves of strength that will endure as long as life lasts.... There is something infinitely healing in the repeated refrains of nature, the assurance that dawn comes after night, and spring after the winter.</i>	Show how beaver can change the way a stream valley looks and functions. Talk about what happens when beaver cut down all the trees, allowing non-native species to move in. Focus on vernal pools and show amphibians and other species that depend on these unique types of wetlands. Explain history of area, point out quarry and other features that hint to past activities.

Segments	Themes	Key Interpretive elements
7: A Sense of Wonder	<i>If I had influence with the good fairy who is supposed to preside over the christening of all children I should ask that her gift to each child in the world be a sense of wonder so indestructible that it would last throughout life, as an unfailing antidote against the boredom and disenchantments of later years</i>	<p>Explain how greenways help plants and animals.</p> <p>Describe what different oak trees look like, the part they play in the life cycle of animals. Explain what happens when deer populations get too high</p> <p>Discuss natural vs. man-made pond; value and attractiveness to wildlife: mink, river otter, muskrat, beaver, great blue heron.</p> <p>Interpret remains of the head race and dam at Greenwood Mill</p>
8: Watershed Protection and Agricultural Heritage	<i>Awareness of ecological relationships is—or should be—the basis of modern conservation programs...</i>	<p>Feature the importance of farming to Montgomery County, explain how the county's agricultural preservation program has helped protect agricultural land, highlight how modern farming practices and environmental policies have helped address Rachel Carson's concerns about over-use of pesticides.</p>

Stewardship

This Plan supports trail locations that ensure the right balance between stewardship of natural and cultural resources and public access and interpretation.

Completing an environmental inventory was the first step in the Trail Corridor Plan process. A preliminary inventory has been completed for the Rachel Carson Greenway Corridor based on existing data, including steep slopes, floodplains, wetlands, stream valley buffers, historic and cultural features and documented rare, threatened and endangered plant species. The key environmental features are illustrated on the Environmental Resources Map in the Appendix.

As trails are implemented over time, the location and construction process will be guided by the Department's commitment to sustainable trails. Sustainable trails protect the environment, meet the needs of users, require little maintenance and minimize conflicts between user groups.

Trail Accessibility

This Plan identifies needed improvement to provide better access to the trail and to provide safer road crossings.

The Rachel Carson Greenway is 25 miles in length. The Plan identifies trail access points that include parking at different locations along the greenway so people can hike shorter sections of the trail. The trail traverses many roads, including Colesville Road, Bonifant Road, Ednor Road, Georgia Avenue and Norwood Road. Developing ways to allow trail users to safely cross these streets is important.

This Plan supports making portions of the trail accessible to people with limited mobility. Finding areas in the greenway where people with limited mobility can enjoy key interpretative elements is an important plan objective. The proposed Rachel Carson Greenway trail will be

natural surface and will traverse some challenging topography. This Plan recommends making some portions of the trail and some interpretative areas available to people with disabilities to help assure universal enjoyment of the trail experience.

Relationship to Other Plans & Policies

Plans and policies that relate to the Rachel Carson Greenway are summarized in Table 1 on page 46 of the appendix.

Many of the plans affecting the Rachel Carson Greenway refer to the corridor as the Northwest Branch Trail Corridor. This was the name of the trail corridor before the Planning Board officially re-named the greenway to honor Rachel Carson at a trail celebration on March 20, 2004.