

Wallace D. Loh

President, University of Maryland

1101 Main Administration Building

College Park, MD 20742-6105

Dear President Loh,

We are writing to express our concerns about a repurposing proposal that will have a major impact on the University of Maryland Golf Course. The University hosted a meeting for Friends and Members on July 24, 2018 to discuss this proposal. The meeting was chaired by the Vice President for Administration and Finance, Mr. Carlo Colella. Our understanding is that the University's current repurposing proposal affects four holes, numbers 1, 9, 10, and 18. Those sites will be used for a track and field complex, five recreational fields, and a surface parking lot with 600 spaces.

In 2013 we wrote to express our concerns about a proposal to develop the Golf Course for commercial and residential use, and to build an access road to west campus that ran through the Golf Course. The concerns we expressed in that letter are also relevant to the current repurposing proposal.

Our first concern is that a proposal that would have such significant environmental impacts has not been the subject of any public input at all. No plans have been distributed, no public meetings have been held. Our only description of the proposal comes orally from members and Friends of the course who attended the above meeting and from press reports.

We are Anacostia restoration advocates who are working in partnership with government and business leaders at all levels. We are helping to implement the \$2 billion Anacostia Restoration Plan, a ten year effort to restore the Anacostia River and its watershed. We welcome the University

of Maryland's partnership in the Anacostia's revitalization, and we ask you to begin with the environmental Hippocratic oath: "first do no harm" to your own existing open spaces.

In restoring an ailing urban river to a state of improved health, a key step is valuing and saving important existing open spaces. These include forests, farms, and sustainably-managed golf courses that harbor wetlands and woodlands. The Anacostia has a dearth of these open spaces—and we must sustain such large and carefully managed ones such as this one. Paint Branch watershed overall is only 26% covered with forest, whereas the target is to have at least 40% overall forest cover. About 40% of the 175-acre University of Maryland golf course area is covered with trees. Without this open space, the eastern "buffer zone" of the University area would be lost, and particularly in larger storms, millions of gallons of stormwater now absorbed by the golf course's groves and greenswards would be funneled into Paint Branch and the Anacostia.

The University of Maryland golf course is a successful, popular recreational and open space amenity that is crucial to hundreds of thousands of people in our region. The course won Golf Inc.'s Renovation of the Year Award in 2011 for design and construction excellence in the \$3.5 million renovation project. Residents of College Park, Adelphi, Hyattsville, University Park, and other local communities value the golf course as open space in the midst of the concrete and asphalt of the surrounding urban region.

The University of Maryland golf course is certified by Audubon International and is known to the region's birdwatchers as a top spot for viewing redtailed hawks, blue herons and many other species. According to a 2003 survey that led to the course's certification, it harbors 25 species of birds, 13 mammals, amphibians and reptiles, and more than 25 varieties of trees. There are also butterflies, wildflowers and wetland grasses. Though we are not making any categorical statements about golf course water quality and stormwater impacts, we have learned that for this specific golf course, on about two-thirds—(25 out of the 35 acres) of the course's intensively managed turf areas (Fairways, Greens and Tees), the use of Bermuda Grass has enabled the reduction of chemical use by roughly 95%. Once a forest and other open space is covered with parking lots and impervious playing fields, engineered stormwater

devices can mitigate but not fully prevent downstream pollution, particularly from larger storms. While we are avid supporters and installers of “Environmental Site Design” (ESD) devices as restoration technologies for existing imperviousness, these devices cannot fully replace the functions of woodlands and openspaces. We view sound land use decisionmaking as a prerequisite to the optimal effectiveness of ESD in aiding the restoration and protection of our urban waters.

We also have a concern that leveling the significant hills, ridges and forest areas in contemplation would result in harmful silt and debris runoff into some of the most environmentally sensitive areas of the golf course—the large wetland and the pond through which almost all of the water runoff from the course is filtered and which are immediately adjacent to the projected site. It is also true that the golf course has become a significant monarch butterfly migration waystation, due to the planting of large tracts of milkweed, as part of the Monarchs in the Rough program. One of the largest of these tracts would be destroyed by the proposal since it lies between holes number 10 and 18.

The success of the monumental Anacostia Restoration Plan depends upon the involvement and commitment of all partners who own and control land in the Anacostia Watershed. As a major landowner, stormwater permit holder and opinion leader, the University of Maryland is poised to play a leading role in the Anacostia’s restoration.

We submit that the University’s role in the river’s restoration begins with a visible commitment to maintain in perpetuity—and continuously improve the stewardship of—your remaining open spaces. If we lose these places—including significant areas of this golf course—we cannot get them back. We respectfully request that you reject proposals to diminish or destroy the University’s golf course, and we would welcome the chance to meet with you to discuss this matter in greater detail.

Yours for clean water and green, healthy communities,