

# Preserve a Pomonkey forest with spawning-stream headwaters

## Threatened site rich in natural resources deserves preservation

The site at Bryans Road, Maryland, is deeply forested and laced with streams, is rich in natural resources, and contributes to adjacent Chapman State Park (Chapman Forest). But it is threatened by a proposed industrial park that could be sited more beneficially elsewhere.

### The site's attributes and context include:

➤ 277 forested acres with high habitat values. Lies within a Dept. of Natural Resources *Stronghold Watershed* valuable to Mattawoman Creek and within a *Priority Conservation Area*, and includes *Green Infrastructure hub* forest.

➤ Adjacent to an elementary and middle school:

- Provides ideal assets for environmental education.
- Inappropriate explosives manufacturing proposed for the “tech park” on site.

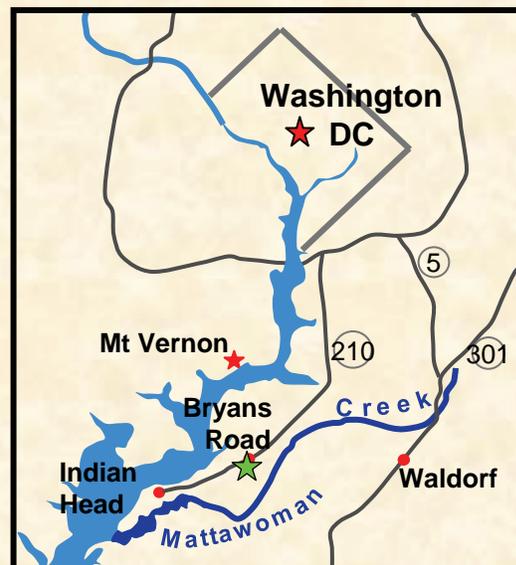
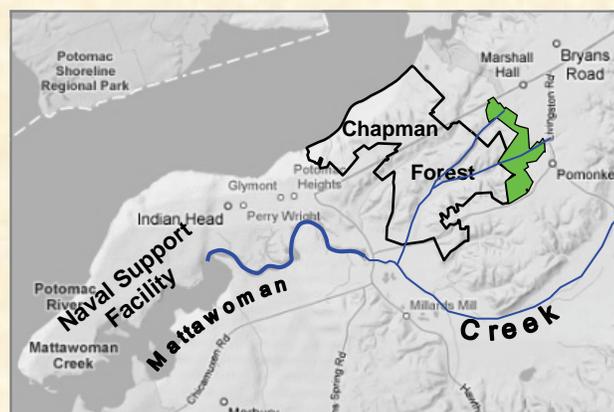
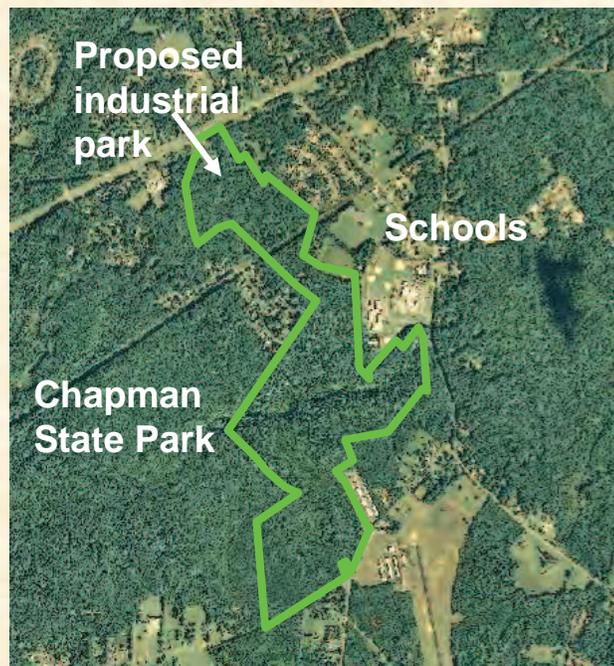
➤ Contains prehistoric and historic archeological assets, with moderate to high potential for “significant deposits.” Northern portion is within the Mt. Vernon viewshed.

➤ ~70% of site provides forest-interior-dwelling habitat, and buffers FID habitat in adjacent Chapman State Park, an Audubon Important Bird Area and site of dozens of Maryland rare, threatened & endangered species.

➤ Nearly half of site comprises Mattawoman stream valley, with extremely deep and steep ravines. Mattawoman, until recently the Bay's best nursery and spawning ground for anadromous fish, is now declining from overdevelopment.

➤ Protects both headwater branches of one of Mattawoman's finest tributaries that supports anadromous River Herring and Hickory Shad downstream, and scores highly for benthic macro-invertebrates. Mature American eel observed on site.

➤ Extensive wetlands on site, including a *Wetland of Special State Concern* and Sweetbay Magnolia seepage swamps.



Hickory Shad

2.2 mi downstream



Blueback Herring

1.9 mi downstream



American Eel

On site

For more information: contact Bonnie Bick, Mattawoman Watershed Society 301-752-9612

[www.mattawomanwatershed.org](http://www.mattawomanwatershed.org)



Sweetbay Magnolia

**Present status and threat:** In 2008, the previous Charles County Board of Commissioners entered into a controversial public-private partnership with two developers to convert this Bryans Road site into the “Indian Head Science and Technology Park.” Pursuant to this agreement, the county rezoned the property to allow use of energetic materials (pyrotechnics and explosives), applied a Planned Employment Park overlay, and agreed to supply new water and sewer infrastructure.

The stated purpose of the project is to manufacture pyrotechnic devices and provide space for contractor services in support of the Naval Support Facility six miles away in the town of Indian Head. The proposed location has been questioned on environmental and economic grounds. Charles County has at least two “tech park” sites near Waldorf with significant vacancies, and the town of Indian Head is characterized by vacant commercial buildings. Controversy also surrounds placing energetic materials near schools and an airport, when the naval facility provides a secure location with “underutilized” land. A county wide analysis for an ongoing comprehensive-plan revision found that undeveloped land identified for commercial/employment use exceeds the anticipated need out to 2040 by 250%.

Preserving this site would ensure the integrity of one of Mattawoman’s finest tributaries, keep potentially valuable archeological resources in place, buffer Chapman State Park—preserved for its remarkable nature & history—and is consistent with the revised comprehensive plan’s intention to treat Bryans Road as a village. It is also consistent with smart growth—where tech parks would be sited where infrastructure already exists.

### Turning preservation investment on its head.

The 277 acre tech park proposal grew from a 50 acre parcel—about the only flat land on the site—that was transferred to the county in 2005 by the state of Maryland as compensation for the state’s 1998 purchase of Chapman Forest, now Chapman State Park. The purchase ended the contentious plan for the Chapman’s Landing mega-development. Funds were provided by the state open space program (\$25.3 million) and the Richard King Mellon foundation (via the Conservation Fund; \$3.2 million).

Prior to the transfer of the 50 acres in 2005, and before the community was aware of plans for expansion, the county signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Chapman Forest Foundation, the principal local organization in the Campaign to Save Chapman Forest. In exchange for supporting the transfer, the Foundation was promised exceptional stormwater management for the 50 acre site due to its drainage to an extremely valuable Mattawoman tributary.

The 50-acre site is now used for justification of the 277 acre site blanketing both headwater branches of the same stream.



For the specific subwatershed encompassing the site, the Army Corps of Engineers’ *Mattawoman Creek Watershed Management Plan* recommends “maintaining the quality of the stream valley...by preventing additional encroachment within [it].” The left panel shows the valley in dark green. The right panel shows a development concept plan with roads and parking lots.

Successional beaver meadow on especially high-quality stream draining the site. For more information, see *Tale of Two Streams* at website below.

