



COUNTY OF PRINCE WILLIAM

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Corey A. Stewart
Occoquan District

July 21, 2005

Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation
Attn: Virginia Land Conservation Foundation
203 Governor Street, Suite 326
Richmond, VA 23219

To Whom it May Concern:

I am writing you to express my strong support for the preservation of Merrimac Farm. Preservation of this property for public use would bring manifold benefits to Prince William County and its citizens, from outdoor recreation space to watershed protection for our vital drinking water source, the Occoquan Reservoir. The strong growth in Prince William County has translated into both a great need for open space and a similar increase in the value and therefore price of this undisturbed space.

With over a mile of shoreline across Cedar Run Merrimac Farm lies at the headwaters of the troubled Occoquan Reservoir. The 100 acres of wetlands on the property filters pollutants before they can get into our public drinking water supply. Additionally, the property exists on a major groundwater recharge site, which is particularly important considering the large proportion of residences with wells in the rural crescent.

The benefit to our communities is equally invaluable. Very few, if any, sites with this natural beauty are left to preserve in Northern Virginia and this despite growing demand for more open space and park land. The variety of different habitats that exists within such a relatively small space is sure to attract the many people that are flocking to our outdoor places. Merrimac Farm can be a key part of this public resource, bringing together hunters and avid bird watchers with more casual nature enthusiasts.

These features of Merrimac Farm are made all the more valuable because of their location, close to the citizens that need them. There are few if any undeveloped properties of the quality of Merrimac Farm remaining to be saved anywhere in Northern Virginia. Preservation of Merrimac Farm strongly supports Prince William County's Comprehensive Plan, including goals to preserve 39% of county lands as open space, safeguard wetlands and forestland, and protect the Occoquan Reservoir. If we let this one slip through our fingers we may not get a second chance. I feel that this will support the Prince William County "open space" goals that are included in the current County Comprehensive Plan.

Sincerely,

Corey A. Stewart
Occoquan District Supervisor