

BOARD OF DIRECTORS
John W. Peterson, *Chairman*
Gerald O. "Jerry" Peters, Jr., *Vice Chairman*
Christopher E. "Chris" Koerner, *Treasurer*
Monica A. Billger, *Secretary*
Adria C. Bordas, *Extension*

Willie Woode, *Acting Executive Director*



Phone: 703-324-1460
Fax: 703-324-1421
E-mail: conservationdistrict@fairfaxcounty.gov
Website: www.fairfaxcounty.gov/nvswcd

COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

Northern Virginia Soil and Water Conservation District

12055 Government Center Parkway • Suite 905 • Fairfax, VA 22035-5512

09 FEB 2022

The Honorable Jeffrey C. McKay, Chairman
Fairfax County Board of Supervisors
Fairfax County Government Center
12000 Government Center Parkway, Suite 530
Fairfax, VA 22035-0079

Email: Chairman@fairfaxcounty.gov

Dear Chairman McKay,

The Northern Virginia Soil and Water Conservation District (NVSWCD) promotes sustainable urban and suburban activities and stewardship to conserve our soil, water, air, plant, and animal resources in Fairfax County. These are vital components of the Chesapeake Bay Watershed. We achieve our goals through effective leadership, technical assistance, and outreach programs in partnership with government, industry, non-profit organizations, and the public. The NVSWCD has long valued our excellent relationship with the people of Fairfax County, the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors, and County agencies.

The invasive plant running bamboo is sold in Virginia as a fast-growing privacy screen. Unfortunately, it spreads rapidly across property lines where it can emerge many feet away to damage driveways, masonry, or landscaping of neighboring properties. It is very difficult and expensive to control. These costs, often in the thousands of dollars, are typically and unfairly borne by a landowner who did not plant the bamboo. Running bamboo on private property also encroaches on county roads, parks, and utility rights-of-way, where Fairfax County taxpayers ultimately bear the burden of controlling it. In natural areas it degrades conservation values by crowding out native vegetation which birds, pollinators, and other native wildlife depend.

In this context, we are pleased to share with you the NVSWCD position on the proposed ordinances and information sheet concerning bamboo. Ideally, invasive plants should not be sold when there are native plant alternatives to meet the same landscaping need.

The NVSWCD generally supports the concept and approach proposed in the draft ordinance, with the following recommended changes and considerations:

- Change containment to management
- Incorporate the definition of running bamboo from the state enabling legislation.

-Providing Conservation Leadership in Fairfax County, since 1945-



- Make sure there are no changes to the definition of grass or lawn areas to ensure that conservation landscaping practices such as pollinator gardens and rain gardens are not unintentionally discouraged.

Our suggested changes to the information sheet are as follows:

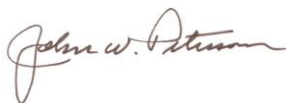
- In the Definition section, change running bamboo to running bamboos. This will focus on the behavior of the plant and its morphology instead of a specific species.
- Combine the maintenance and removal sections. The measures to contain bamboo are the same as the strategies to remove bamboo.
 - The most effective maintenance or removal method is to establish a minimum 10-foot barrier and mow it monthly from March through June. Mow and apply herbicide to remove the sprouts.

Other considerations:

- The property owner must manage their bamboo consistently every year to prevent spread.
- Specify where and what to cut – cut shoots around the bamboo.
- Remove the containment section since containment is not as effective as mowing and spraying. A barrier could discourage a homeowner from remaining vigilant for indications that bamboo is spreading.
- Add a section on maintenance costs, per 1,000 square feet. As a benchmark, the Fairfax County Park Authority has a 3-year agreement with a contractor costing \$12,000 per acre which includes heavy cutting and herbicide application. This equates to \$4000 per acre per year, and \$92 per 1000 square feet per year. Removing the bamboo root system usually requires a backhoe which would be an additional expense.
- Provide replacement/alternative plant considerations that are evergreen, provide screening, and grow fast. Suggestions include Eastern Red Cedar, Leyland Cypress, and Arborvitae.
 - Add contact information for the Fairfax County Master Gardeners program for advice to homeowners on native, non-invasive alternatives to bamboo.

Thank you for considering a Fairfax County ordinance to control running bamboo as another important step to protect the County's natural environment and homeowner values.

Yours in conservation,



John W. Peterson, Chairman
Northern Virginia Soil & Water Conservation District (No. VA SWCD) Board of Directors
9304 Lundy Court



Burke, VA 22015-3431

Tel. 703-455-4387, Cell. 703-505-1782. Fax. 703-455-6888. Email. jwpeterson083@gmail.com.

Cc: Peters, Koerner, Billger, Bordas, Woode, Gagnon. Glasgow, Hoffman, Campblin, McGovern, Cameron, NVSWCD.

Bcc: Graves, Davis, Boring, Wells, Tyree, Meeks, Rash, Frantz, VASWCD; Stovall, Glover, Cross, DCR.

