

Harford settles on purchase of 32 acres of Perryman Forest



Perryman Forest preservation partners hold a commemorative sign which will soon be installed on the property. (Courtesy Ruben Pereida)

By **Aegis staff**

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The Harford Land Trust has completed the purchase of a 32-acre parcel known as Perryman Forest for nearly \$1 million, thanks to contributions from Aberdeen Proving Ground, the county and nearby residents.

The local land preservation nonprofit had pursued the Perryman-area property for 12 years for its significant environmental value, proximity to the Bush River and connectivity with other open space.

Perryman Forest is adjacent to the first property the Harford Land Trust acquired for preservation in the early 1990s, the 100-acre Forest Greens Lake Preserve. That land has since been conveyed to Harford County government, which uses it as a park. The land trust will manage the Perryman Forest as an extension of the Lake Preserve and hopes to work with the county to join the two properties at some point in the future.

Aberdeen Proving Ground provided \$850,000 of the \$935,000 purchase price through its Army Compatible Use Buffer Program (ACUB), which serves to protect high-value habitat and reduce incompatible development

around the installation. APG also reimbursed the Harford Land Trust approximately \$100,000 for due diligence, staff and transaction costs as well as a portion of long-term monitoring and management costs, without which the organization could not have protected the property.

"We are pleased to hear that years of dedication and effort have come to a 'closing,'" Col. Robert Phillips III, APG garrison commander, said. "Closing the deal on the Perryman Forest parcel is the prime example of how the community, the county, our ACUB partners and the Army can come together to achieve many goals. Preserving open space in a tight-knit community, protecting valuable Chesapeake Bay natural resources and providing direct support to research and development military missions have all been accomplished through this endeavor. Furthermore, establishing this buffer will enhance the resiliency of the Bush River shoreline, which in turn helps maintain the continuity of operations at APG and the surrounding community. We are proud to be part of a program that provides a lasting legacy of open space, protects the Chesapeake Bay and supports our warfighters."

Harford County government contributed \$74,204 for the purchase.

"I am proud of our partnership with the Harford Land Trust and APG to preserve the Perryman Forest property for the benefit of the community," Harford County Executive Barry Glassman said. "Harford County's share of the funding for this purchase came solely from stormwater mitigation fees, paid by developers in other areas of the county, which will help us improve the health of local streams and the Chesapeake Bay. Prior to my administration, this land was planned for the development of 21 residential lots. Now it will serve our citizens as a passive park and remain in a natural state forever."

In November 2017, the Harford Land Trust began a campaign to raise the remainder of funds needed to buy the property from Riverwalk Development Phase Two LLC. The Forest Greens-Perryman Community Association joined the land trust's efforts by mailing more than 300 flyers to area residents requesting financial support for the purchase. The combined efforts from the community and the land trust resulted in \$19,185 in generous donors.

"The strong community support for this project only made us more determined to preserve the Perryman Forest," Harford Land Trust Executive Director Kristin Kirkwood said. "We are so thankful for our loyal HLT members and the many new supporters that contributed to the effort."

Preservation of Perryman's open space is vital to maintaining intact Coastal Plain habitat in Harford County. The 32-acre Perryman Forest is characterized by upland forest and wetlands, also known as "tree swamps," and vernal pools, also known as "flatwoods." The woods are important habitat for bird, reptile and amphibian species. The tidal and non-tidal wetlands on the site are hydrologically connected through surface and subsurface flow to the Bush River and subsequently to the Chesapeake Bay, benefiting water quality by retaining nutrients and sediment.

The Harford Land Trust works with landowners, private and public, to conserve land and protect its natural resources, scenic beauty, rural character and promote a healthy quality of life in Harford County. The

organization has directly preserved more than 1,300 acres of farmland, forest and watershed since its founding including Kilgore Falls and parts of Eden Mill and the Anita C. Leight Estuary Center. Visit www.harfordlandtrust.org for more information, to donate or to become a member.

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