

April 30, 2024

**An Open Letter to the Wicomico County Council, Wicomico County Executive, Salisbury City Council and Salisbury Mayor
From the Lower Eastern Shore Group, Sierra Club MD Chapter**

To Whom It May Concern:

We write on behalf of the Lower Eastern Shore Group of the Sierra Club Maryland Chapter regarding a proposed use of the Connelly Mills Park in Salisbury MD slated for Saturday, May 4th and Sunday, May 5th. This use – an event labeled “Safari at the Quarry” – is a “4 x 4” vehicles event that its website describes as “the ultimate off-road park experience.” It claims to feature “multiple trails and an obstacle course for all levels.” (<https://www.safariatthequarry.com/>). The Park was donated to Wicomico County in 2017 for the purpose of offering to the public low-impact, passive enjoyment of the 234-acre natural surroundings. According to publicly available information, the event is legitimized by a memo of understanding between Wicomico County Executive Julie Giordano and a private, for-profit business.

Local residents oppose this use and say members of the Salisbury City Council and Mayor, the Wicomico County Sheriff, and the County’s Natural Resources Citizens Advisory Committee agree with them. They allege that uses such as those touted by the event organizers would rip up the ground, contaminate the soil and otherwise damage the area severely and permanently. Opponents claim such disruptive treatment of the Park ecosystem threatens the all-important “Paleochannel” that runs directly beneath the contested area and supplies water to thousands of Salisbury residents. They contend that the “Safari” will cordon off large swaths of the Park to any but paying participants in the “Safari” event, in contravention of the intended use(s) of the property when it was donated and accepted. Finally, they claim the proposed use violates the applicable Salisbury zoning ordinance.

Publicly available information indicates that the determination of this dispute lies in whether the City of Salisbury's zoning ordinance overrides Wicomico County's right to allow this event. The Lower Eastern Shore Group of the Maryland Sierra Club, of course, defers to that legal process. We do, nonetheless, strongly urge the parties involved to resolve this matter in a way that preserves the natural surroundings of the contested property, that respects the urgent need in our urban communities to protect what land remains undeveloped, and that elevates the interests of the residents of Wicomico County, who are the intended beneficiaries of the donation of this property, over any claim that any private entity makes to profit from and disrupt this property at the same time.

Respectfully,

Lower Eastern Shore Group
Sierra Club Maryland Chapter

by: Christina Hulslander, Chair
Jacky Grindrod, Vice Chair