

Montgomery Countryside Alliance Releases State and Local Candidate Survey on Data Centers, Water Protection, Farms

MCA released unedited responses from local and state candidates in MoCo races. Questions focused on data centers, water protection and support for local farms.

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Montgomery Countryside Alliance (MCA) is an award winning nonprofit organization charged with protecting Montgomery County's 93,000 acre

Agricultural Reserve, home to 550+ farms and responsible for \$250 Million in revenues each year while employing 10,000 people.



Montgomery Countryside Alliance Logo

Each local election year since 2014 MCA has conducted a survey of candidates running to represent Montgomery County at the local and state level.

“

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Caroline Taylor

These unedited responses are shared with the public through MCA's website, social media and email newsletters. [The 2026 survey results have just been released.](#)

This year, 10 questions were asked of each candidate. In March, MCA polled supporters to hear what questions should be asked. The top three questions were about data centers, groundwater and the health of the Potomac River.

“It's no wonder these issues are top of mind for voters right now,” said Abby Mann, Groundwater Program Coordinator (MoCoGroundwater.org) for MCA, “the sewage spill was in the news, then we have ongoing drought and concerns about data centers have been steadily building. It all comes back to how we steward our water.”

Recently, the Potomac was classified as [“the nation’s most endangered river”](#) by the national advocacy group American Rivers. The proliferation of data centers in Virginia seeking millions of gallons from the river each day and the aging infrastructure that led to the sewage spill were both cited in the reasoning.

Montgomery County’s Ag Reserve sits entirely outside the WSSC water/sewer service area to prevent large-scale development. Residents rely exclusively on groundwater wells for all uses - including agriculture. Studies have shown groundwater levels are even more susceptible to drought than surface water and because of the area’s fractured geology, contaminants can spread quickly over miles, with no other viable water source available. “Groundwater is not a niche issue, this is directly impacting tens of thousands of MoCo residents,” says Abby Mann.

Data Centers have become a hot topic in Montgomery County with the proposal for 5 data centers along the river in Dickerson on the site of the shuttered Pepco coal power plant abutting Ag Reserve land. [There are now three proposals from various Councilmembers](#), one to create zoning allowing data centers on all industrial land in the county (over 2000 acres) and two proposals for moratoriums, a 6 month and 2 year pause on permitting for data centers while the issue is further studied.

MCA sent the questionnaire through email to all candidates running for: County Executive, At-Large Council, and all 7 Council Districts at the local level.

The questionnaire was also sent to all candidates running for state senate and delegate positions in districts 9A, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20 and 39. Candidates had over a month to respond to the questions with frequent reminders.

“We want to have as many candidates respond as possible,” said Caroline Taylor, Executive Director of MCA, “ environmental issues get very little air time in elections - that goes double for farm issues in our mostly suburban county - but they are critically important. This is our rare chance to ask these questions. There are so many candidates running, this is a great opportunity for them to engage with our wide network of supporters and stand out from the pack. We’ve had a number of voters tell us this resource helped them make up their mind.”

A new feature in this year’s candidate survey is labeling which candidates in local races are using the public financing system. MCA added this feature in response to feedback from supporters.

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