

## HISTORY AND ECOLOGY IN REDESIGNED FOREST EDGES OF THE BALTIMORE-WASHINGTON PARKWAY

**KELSCH, PAUL**

Virginia Tech, pkelsch@vt.edu

### 1 **ABSTRACT**

*This paper presents a proposal for forest edges along the Baltimore-Washington Parkway. It derives from a Cultural Landscape Report for the parkway and draws upon historical precedents as a means of addressing issues of traffic safety and forest vulnerability to colonization by invasive plant species. The Baltimore-Washington Parkway is historically significant for its role in regional forest conservation with forests comprising the dominant vegetation of the parkway landscape and shaping the experience of driving through it. In order to increase driver safety, the National Park Service is cutting forest edges back farther from the roadway, increasing sunlight into the forest interior and inviting competition from invasive species. But it also offers appealing views into the forest interior for passing drivers. This results in an intriguing challenge: is it possible to protect the forest from colonization by invasive species while maintaining the more engaging spatial experience created by the cleared edge? The parkway was studied using historic documents and present-day imagery combined with field observation and investigative design. The proposed design draws the forest edge back from the front line of trees, creating a new zone of seasonally mowed grasses where ample sunshine would favor invasive species. Behind this zone, where shade predominates, a new line of shade tolerant forest species is proposed where they can compete more effectively against the invasive plants. This composite edge is more spatially diverse and consistent with the picturesque traditions of the region's parkways.*

#### 1.1 **Keywords:**

Baltimore-Washington Parkway, highway landscapes, cultural landscapes, historic preservation, forest edge management

---

The authors are solely responsible for the content of this technical presentation. The technical presentation does not necessarily reflect the official position of the Council of Educators in Landscape Architecture (CELA), and its printing and distribution does not constitute an endorsement of views which may be expressed. Citation of this work should state that it is from a CELA conference paper. EXAMPLE: Author's Last Name, Initials. 2021. Title of Paper. Virtual: CELA. For information about securing permission to reprint or reproduce this paper, please contact CELA at [staff@thecela.org](mailto:staff@thecela.org)

---