

# The Capital

## Top Stories

### EPA reportedly halting Wal-Mart

By JOSHUA STEWART, Staff Writer

The Environmental Protection Agency is slowly pulling the curtains on a controversial Wal-Mart proposed for Crofton, a senior aide for state Sen. Janet Greenip told area residents last night.

"We have knowledge that the EPA is slowing it down to a halt. At this point it looks like it's not going to happen," Justin Ready, the Crofton Republican's chief of staff, said at a meeting of the Greater Crofton Council.

The EPA has control over Wal-Mart's quest for a non-tidal wetlands permit, an authorization that is needed for construction to begin.

Wal-Mart wants to build a 121,473-square-foot store with 616 parking spaces. It would sit on a 20-acre lot on the west side of Route 3 in Crofton, just north of the Anne Arundel and Prince George's county line. The land for the store is owned by Crofton resident William Berkshire, who also owns the Crofton Country Club.

Officials at the EPA, Wal-Mart and Mr. Berkshire did not return calls seeking comment last night or this morning.

The proposed Wal-Mart has been met with nearly unanimous opposition in the Crofton area, and Mr. Ready's news last night was well received.

"That's what we've been looking for. Our big beef has been the environmental sensitivity of the project," said Madonna Brennan, co-chairman of Crofton First, a grassroots organization that advocates "smart growth" developments along the Route 3 corridor.

If the proposed Wal-Mart dies a slow death at the hands of EPA, that's fine with Ms. Brennan as long as it isn't built.

"Going away is a good no matter what happens, as long as it goes away," she said.

The Maryland Department of the Environment also is currently reviewing an application from Wal-Mart to put a parking lot on non-tidal wetlands on the lot. The department held a public hearing about the wetlands permit on Nov. 14 and is still determining if the permit should be granted.

The proposed development would fill slightly less than one acre of wetlands and is near the Patuxent and Little Patuxent rivers.

Several federal agencies including the EPA have a say in whether Wal-Mart will receive the coveted wetlands permit, said Gary Setzer, program administrator for the department.

Because of the large amount of interest in the case it could still take months for the MDE to release a final decision on the permit's status, said Robert Ballinger, a spokesman for the agency.

*Published January 10, 2007, The Capital, Annapolis, Md.  
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