

HAL Observatory Site Selection Committee

Alpha Ridge

Advantages

- Infrastructure (Spot-A-Pots, parking, picnic area) already in place
- Accessible and convenient
- Public already aware of location for star parties
- Additional storage already in container at Alpha Ridge
- Good horizon
- Public can come early for star party since gate not locked until park closed
- More secure than other sites - gated with lock for times park is closed; frequently patrolled by police and park employees
- Smoking permitted if a private star party
- Restroom with storage facility in Rec. and Park's plans
- Gary Arthur noted the possibility of adding onto restroom/storage facility to build observatory at the same time; therefore, more cost sharing with County is probable
- No ball field lights in the future (only future lights will be at "regional parks")

Disadvantages

- Currently the most light polluted of sites we're considering, especially to the east, and likely to get worse over the years
- More lights in future from parking lot and security lights when roller rink is covered (although Gary Arthur has said more than once that a switch can be installed for our use)
- High traffic from "disinterested" people – unknown, but probably higher potential for vandalism

Carrs Mill

Advantages

- It's ours alone – no other user of park
- Good horizon
- Least light polluted location of our choices, though likely to get worse over the years
- Gated with lock (also a disadvantage since not always accessible to members or public who want to come early for a star party)
- No further road development required by us or county

Disadvantages

- Lack of infrastructure as a whole; therefore, greater overall cost to build an observatory which will be usable for public events

- No smoking (although Gary Arthur said law now states that no smoking at any public event so this is important only for HAL private star parties)
- Pay for Spot-A-Pots
- Lights from Western Regional Park a possible annoyance
- Hard to find for the public; less convenient for most people than other sites
- Probable higher fees for Site Development Plan due to landfill site
- Possible higher insurance costs due to landfill issues
- Potentially unstable ground
- Unknown increased maintenance costs, e.g., lawn mowing
- Unknown implications of hazardous waste below the ground
- Not frequently patrolled by police or park employees

West Friendship

Advantages

- Accessible and convenient
- Partnership with Howard County Antique Farm Equipment Club for help in site development and with exposure to public through their activities on site
- Good horizon with right site chosen
- Similar light pollution to Carrs Mill
- Up and coming regional park in the future of Howard County
- Conservation area
- Surrounded by over 1500 acres of land under Howard County Agricultural Preservation in perpetuity

Disadvantages

- Lack of infrastructure as a whole; therefore, greater overall cost to build an observatory which will be usable for public events
- Unknown future development, i.e., ball fields with lights since West Friendship is a “regional park” and golf course with possible lighted driving range
- More hoops to jump through to get County approval for public star parties, e.g., road improvement back to dairy barn/one room schoolhouse area
- Pay for Spot-A-Pots
- Not gated with lock as of now (although may be considered an advantage since public or members could arrive early for star parties)
- Not frequently patrolled by police or park employees; may change as HCAFEC gets established