

# Baltimore Yearly Meeting

*of the Religious Society of Friends*  
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Steve Coleman  
Friends Meeting of Washington  
2111 Florida Avenue NW  
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Dear Steve and FMW Friends,

Thank you for taking the lead in presenting BYM's funding request for the Shiloh pond to FMW's Meeting for Business this Sunday. The Meeting is fortunate to have someone so experienced in property and parks issues to explore the topic and make the presentation! This note responds to the questions you sent via email, incorporating information I've received from BYM Camp staff.

Because there is a lot of information to absorb here and in the proposal document, I want to answer your question about the value of the BYM Camps first:

## *What is the value of Shiloh to BYM and FMW?*

All of the BYM Quaker Camps are an expression of the spiritual life of our Yearly Meeting. They are among the most longstanding and effective witnesses taken up by collectively by Friends in our region. The Camp experience serves people of all ages, including those who participate as committee members, parents and volunteers. The Camps also serve as outreach, introducing new children and families to Quakerism in a meaningful way. Our Camp properties preserve green space in environmentally sensitive areas, and campers learn to respect and delight in the natural world.

BYM camps embody and teach Quaker values such as simplicity and cooperation, and teach Quaker processes such as reaching "sense of the meeting." They model a culture of self-confidence and supportive community. They offer safe ways for kids to let go of having to be "cool" and to set aside electronic gadgets in favor of making their own fun. In an increasingly urbanized and electronically-virtualized world, the experience of a loving, creative, joyful camp community is a gift Friends offer.

## *What is the current attendance and booking rate at Shiloh?*

Current attendance at Shiloh for this summer is averaging 45 campers per two-week session, and we are continuing to receive registrations. Shiloh can accommodate up to 74 campers per session. Last year Shiloh had 61 campers per session, which was an especially good year.

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As noted in the proposal document, it is not uncommon for Shiloh registrations to be lower than optimal. This is due to a number of factors, some of which are beyond our control (demographics, cultural trends) and some on which we can have some effect (marketing, site improvement). Generations of BYM campers have great enthusiasm for the BYM Camp experience, and the programming across our Camp locations is similar; therefore we conclude that the lack of a swimming place at Shiloh is a significant factor in its lower number of registrations. It is not a stretch to imagine that swimming is a very desirable activity at a summer camp located in Virginia!

The cost of camp is the same at Shiloh as it is at BYM's other residential camps: \$700 for one week, \$1,200 for two weeks, and \$2,400 for four weeks. In an effort to balance the Camp budget, our Camps discontinued the practice of offering a reduced rate to Quaker campers; now the base rate is the same for everyone, though we are as generous as possible with financial aid.

Property rental rates for outside groups are lower at Shiloh than at Catoctin, and higher than at Opequon. Like the Catoctin pond (the 'goon), the Shiloh pond would not be a certified bathing beach except during the Camp season; however, renters may make use of the ponds for boating, and water is always a draw for any children who attend non-Camp events. Kids like to skip stones, look for turtles and frogs, etc. The pond would make Shiloh a more attractive rental property.

*How many people from the DC area currently attend Shiloh Camps in either programs or retreats?*

So far this year there are 52 total Camp registrants from the District of Columbia. Of those, 22 are at Shiloh, 3 are at Opequon, 13 at Catoctin, 8 at Teen Adventure, and 3 at Teen Adventure Bike. Of the 11 Teen Adventure campers, 7 attended Shiloh as their residential camp.

*Is there a vision or plan for how the pond will connect into the natural environment of the site?*

The potential sites on the Shiloh property are very limited. The site we have located is one of the few that we have found where the soil has a high clay content (clay is necessary to keep the pond from leaking). The site takes advantages of natural drainage areas, is centrally located, will be as shady as practical, and will be visible from the fire circle where Meeting for Worship often happens.

*What is the expected impact of the pond on attendance, bookings, and finances?*

Impacts are difficult to predict, but our expectation is that adding a pond to Shiloh will significantly improve all of the above. The property value would likely increase, but the most important effects would be programmatic: the addition of a pond would allow for much more built-in programming, reducing staff fatigue and stress because they don't have to organize as many structured games and activities. By cooling off the staff, volunteers and campers, a pond would make the Shiloh environment more comfortable, allowing everyone to have a better time and thus *more likely to come back and stay longer*. The anticipated increase in camper and staff retention would enhance the bottom line of BYM.

*Is there a vision or plan for the larger direction and goals and objectives of Shiloh, and how the pond will help this?*

We have already said a lot about why the pond will be important to Shiloh from a programmatic perspective. It will also help the Yearly Meeting financially. The vision or plan is, primarily, to maintain the property as a safe, simple, well-maintained site for our camping programs and for the enjoyment of BYM region Friends. A pond will move us closer to this vision and these goals.

*How might the pond enhance the relationship of Shiloh to both FMW and the innercity communities we serve?*

We have comparable numbers of diverse campers at all of our camps. A lot of the kids from the DC area come from the Washington area Friends Meetings. Also, several former and current camp staff work in public schools in DC, and they help recruit campers for us. They also do a great job of bringing what they learned working at our Quaker Camps into the DC public schools as teachers.

Catoctin is BYM's longest-running camp location with a large and devoted following, so Catoctin tends to fill up very quickly when camp registration opens, sometimes to the disappointment of some campers and parents. We want to ensure that the camp experience is open to all who wish to participate, and that Shiloh will be just as desirable a summer location as Catoctin.

*How many other meetings are being asked for the \$5,000 level of support?*

As I responded via email, six other Meetings in our region have been asked for gifts of \$5,000, and another four Meetings have been asked for gifts of \$10,000. Because of the time-sensitive nature of this project, the fundraising is broad-based. We are asking ALL Monthly Meetings in BYM for significant gifts this year, and we are appealing to Quaker and non-Quaker households as well. It is worth noting that when the Catoctin pond had to be rebuilt several years ago, Friends and Meetings from across BYM supported that campaign effort.

*Could a portion of the proposed Meeting contribution be returned if the funds raised exceed the pond cost?*

This question has not come up before, to my knowledge. A gift contingency such as this would be a policy matter taken up by the BYM Development Committee. Should we be so fortunate to surpass our goal for the Shiloh pond, excess funds will likely be applied to future Camp capital projects slated for 2012 and beyond.

I hope this information is helpful to FMW Friends as they consider the Yearly Meeting's request. Please let me know how else I may be helpful.

Best,

Robinne Gray  
BYM Development Director (and FMW attender)

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