

Certification of County Agricultural Land Preservation Programs
Re-Certification Request – Anne Arundel County
(Summary of Certification Letter dated April 15, 2005)

This letter is to advise you that Anne Arundel County's Agricultural Land Preservation Program is recertified for the period July 1, 2005 through June 30, 2007. Recertification is based on our review of the County's Recertification Report of October 2004, which covered fiscal years 2003 and 2004.

Just recently the County Council eliminated family conveyances. The removal of this obstacle to program success figured prominently in our decision to recertify. This improvement will support the other strong elements of the County's preservation program: a rate of easement acquisition that far exceeds the rate of land conversion, strong financial commitment to easement purchases (\$3.3 million non-ag-transfer-tax spent in both FY 2003 and FY 2004), and a wide range of preservation tools at work (MALPF, Rural Legacy, local easement purchase, protective base zoning, tax credits, agricultural marketing).

As you know from our ongoing discussions, however, Anne Arundel's land preservation program still faces challenges: relatively few acres preserved (lowest preserved-to-developed ratio in the state: .32), high easement costs, high fragmentation of the resource base due to subdivision (although, with the end of family conveyances, the pace of subdivision should slow). We were dismayed to learn that the County was no longer considering a TDR program. In addition, we have not yet evaluated the many other proposed zoning amendments that came before the Council, and their potential for subdividing and developing rural land. We will review the final zoning amendments and revisit our findings in subsequent certification reviews.

We have enclosed the checklist used to review the County's annual report. The checklist itemizes each of the reporting requirements and our comments on the information provided in the report. We ask that you review the checklist and our comments, and advise us if you have any questions, or if we have misunderstood your program in any way.

The next annual report is due on October 1, 2005. This is the shorter interim report.