

Anne Arundel County – February 2007

Certification of County Agricultural Land Preservation Programs
Re-Certification Request – Anne Arundel County
(Report Summary dated February 27, 2007)

COUNTY AGRICULTURAL PRESERVATION GOALS

- Anne Arundel County's goal is to preserve 20,000 acres by 2010.
- To date, the County has permanently preserved 12,000 acres of farmland using MALPF, Rural Legacy, Program Open Space, and the County IPA program.
- During the reporting period, 303 acres were preserved using Rural Legacy funds and 61 acres were preserved using the County IPA program funding.
- Through June 30, 2006, the County has settled 43 MALPF easements covering 4,318 acres.
- Through June 30, 2006, the County has established 53 MALPF districts covering 3,208 acres that have not yet sold easements.
- There were no applications for MALPF easements during the reporting period.

ATTRIBUTES OF LOCAL PROGRAM

- The County has eliminated the family conveyance option.
- Effective 2005, there has been a significant change to subdivision and zoning regulations.
- Newly adopted density is 1:20 (base density).
- The County has expanded the definition of "farming" to include "primary agricultural processing."
- Anne Arundel County provides property tax credits for properties in MALPF districts and easements (\$177,859 during the reporting period).

QUALIFYING EXPENDITURES AND USE OF CERTIFICATION FUNDS

- The County meets/exceeds the certification requirements for qualifying expenditures and use of certification funds and has provided a record of revenues and expenditures.
- Agricultural transfer tax revenues over the reporting period have been used for the purchase of easements (County IPA program).

PROGRAM ACCOMPLISHMENTS DURING THE REPORTING PERIOD

- Effective November 7, 2004, Anne Arundel has adopted a Right-to-Farm ordinance.
- Effective May 12, 2005, permitted uses under "farming" allows primary processing of farm products.
- Modifications to the Easement Priority Ranking system include placing highest priority on length of family farm ownership and family-operated farms have been drafted.
- Effective May 12, 2005, the family conveyance lots have been eliminated from the RA zoning district, while the 1:20 acre density has been retained.
- Agricultural lands in Anne Arundel County continue to be designated "no public service" (for water and sewer) on the County's Master Plan.
- There are currently six (6) farmers markets operating within the County.

EVALUATION OF COUNTY'S ANNUAL REPORT

- During the reporting period, FY 2005-2006, the County did not permanently preserve any farmland or woodland through MALPF.
- The amount of land converted to non-agricultural use continues to far outpace the amount of land permanently preserved.
- A newly created "agricultural preservation subdivision" right, which was created to ease County residents from the family lot conveyances, provides for:
 - Lots which are exempt from the Adequate Public Facilities ordinance (and which will be attractive to developers);
 - The ability to flip lots conveyed to children (five year restriction has been removed);

- Lots reserved on a parcel entering the local program do not have to be for the landowners children.

PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

A. Evaluation

- *Strengths:*
 - Ongoing strong financial commitment to the County's IPA program.
 - The County offers a tax credit on farmland and woodland in MALPF districts and easements.
 - The areas of Harwood, Lothian and West River have contiguous blocks of protected land ranging from 1,000 to 1,500 acres.
 - The County has a Right-to-Farm Ordinance.
- *Weaknesses:*
 - The County does not participate and, therefore, loses its funding in the MALPF program.
 - There is a lack of aggressive pursuit and dissemination of accurate funding and program information to the farming community.

B. Description of Updated Program Development Strategy

- Achieving objectives depends on the following:
 - Improving the agricultural land preservation tool kit;
 - Increasing program funding and support at the County and State level;
 - Increasing landowner participation in preservation programs.

COUNTY'S FOCUS ON PRESERVING AGRICULTURAL LAND

- The County has sought to protect agricultural land through appropriate zoning.
- The County has politically supported MDA in obtaining continuous funding for MALPF.
- The County has revised program regulations to assist family farms through higher priority ranking for family-owned and operated farms and allowing additional uses on agricultural property.

FOUNDATION STAFF RECOMMENDATION

- The County program continues to appear to be likely to succeed in supporting viable agricultural operations and preserving agricultural land in perpetuity. Foundation staff recommends approval of recertification for another two-year period.