

**Certification of County Agricultural Land Preservation Programs**  
**Re-Certification Request – Calvert County**  
**(Summary of Certification Letter dated February 13, 2003)**

The Maryland Department of Planning and the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation would like to thank you for submitting Calvert County's 2001 and 2002 annual reports for the Agricultural Certification Program and are pleased to say that the County's agricultural land preservation program has been recertified for the period from July 1, 2003 through June 30, 2005. The County's annual reports indicated that its farmland preservation program continues to improve, registering many accomplishments during the past year:

- Thanks in large part to an increase in the recordation fee; the County was able to allocate over \$4.4 million toward land preservation, in addition to transfer tax revenue.
- The numerous programs at work in the County preserved almost 4,500 acres during the certification period.
- The County's new Leverage and Retire program has been well received by landowners.
- The County has achieved 40% of its overall presentation goal, and 80% in two targeted watersheds.
- The County is exceeding its goal of preserving 1,275 acres per year.
- The number of lots developed outside development areas appears to be declining, although the acreage involved (mostly open space remainders) is high, given the number of lots.

The impending end of a building moratorium is a concern to the County program. We look forward to an update on this issue in the next annual report.

We recognize the numerous and creative steps Calvert County has taken in the last ten years to reduce build out and support County and State preservation goals. Their effectiveness is demonstrated by the County's accomplishments. However, we also see some reasons for continued concern. The rate of fragmentation and the percentage of agricultural land lost to recent development are among the highest in the State, while the percentage of unprotected agricultural land consisting of large parcels is among the lowest (the latter is due in part to the fact that a large percentage of agriculturally zoned land has already been protected). It is also true that the high cost of MALPF easements is offset by the low cost of PARs and the fact that purchase of one right protects the whole property. In addition, we expect that some measures will look better in the future as the County's smart growth and preservation efforts gain traction.

Based on the measures of performance at our disposal, it appears that more may be needed to successfully limit continuing development impacts on agricultural land and the industry. Another possibility is that more time will be required to see the effects of planning and zoning advances, made in the 1990s, in our statistical measures. During the next certification period, we would like to know the County's perspective on potential remaining weaknesses in the ability of the program to effectively limit subdivision and development commensurate with State and County Preservation goals. We would also like to know what you believe the future potential for agriculture to be in your County, once you weigh the preservation effort against the effects of past and future development. We hope discussion of these issues will help the County achieve its goals, and help us discharge effectively our responsibility under the Certification Program to evaluate and certify effective programs.