

*Queen Anne's County – July 2002*

**Certification of County Agricultural Land Preservation Programs**  
**Re-Certification Request – Queen Anne's County**  
**(Report Summary dated June 19, 2002)**

Queen Anne's County has submitted an application for Re-certification of a local Agricultural Land Preservation Program and is requesting Foundation approval. Staff has reviewed the report that addresses general operations of the program, qualifying expenditures and program development strategies. Below are some highlights:

- The County has a goal of preserving 30,000 acres by 2010, 50,000 by 2020. The County uses MALPF, FPP, Rural Legacy, MET, TDRs, and private conservation organizations such as The Eastern Shore Land Conservancy, The Conservation Fund, and the Nature Conservancy.
- In FY 2001, ten (10) new districts, totaling 1,503.5 acres, and fourteen (14) properties received and accepted a MALPF offer totaling 2,137 acres. A total of 24 easements were created in the last two fiscal years, and those properties have been immediately adjacent to existing preserved lands, thereby creating larger contiguous blocks.

The total permanently protected acreage as of 2001 was 54,813 acres or 23% of the County's total acreage, which includes 85% of deed restricted open space required by cluster subdivisions. Publicly owned lands account for an additional 6,900 acres or 3% of the County's total acreage.

MALPF Easements .....	19,114 acres
Rural Legacy Easements .....	5,013 acres
MALPF Districts .....	12,970 acres
Private Conservation Easements .....	1,378 acres
MALPF Greenprint .....	222 acres
TDR Program Easements .....	2,471 acres
MET Easements.....	6,774 acres
Deed restricted Open Space.....	19,841 acres

An easement on over 5,000 acres of Chino Farms – the largest Rural Legacy acquisition to date – was settled in early FY 2002. Over \$5 million in State funds went towards that easement.

The County is probably within a month of adopting its 2002 Comprehensive Plan Update. Preservation of agricultural lands is one of the two overarching themes of the draft Plan. Within the proposed policies and implementation strategies, Agricultural land preservation is a major component.

Proposed changes include:

- Increase County funding for preservation easements through MALPF program and consider any changes necessary to maximize available funds.
- Consider implementing a purchase of development rights program to protect highly productive agricultural lands from being developed.
- Complete a periodic review of the "right to farm" language.
- Protect and promote rural character and landscapes within non-Growth areas throughout the County.

While the County does not have a target area for easements, its "Conservation Map" shows that there are several portions of the county where consolidated areas of preserved farmland are forming.

The County has one of the lowest farmland conversion rates in the state, low development pressure, a TDR program, commitment of county funds beyond transfer tax and Certification match (1% of total tax dollars generated from agriculturally assessed properties to the preservation of agricultural land thru MALPF certification), success in keeping new development out of rural areas, good analysis of development, and good GIS capabilities.

The Foundation staff recommends that Queen Anne's County be re-certified because the County's local program continues to be successful in supporting viable agricultural operations and preserving agricultural land in perpetuity.