

Certification of County Agricultural Land Preservation Programs
Re-Certification Request – Talbot County
(Summary of Certification Letter Dated March 10, 2006)

The Maryland Department of Planning and the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation would like to thank you for submitting Talbot County's annual report for the Agricultural Certification Program, covering the FY 2002-2004 period. We are pleased to say that the County's agricultural land preservation program has been recertified for the period from July 1, 2005 through June 30, 2007. Since we are well into the certification period, the County may skip the interim report and submit just the recertification report, which is due on October 30, 2006.

The report contained much good news, as summarized below, but first let us mention our major concerns:

- We notice that these excellent proposed programs and policies to protect resource land apply to the western portion of the County and farmland around growth areas. However, we are concerned that the proposed zoning enhancement that will protect these areas will not apply to the eastern half of the County, where the bulk of the County's better farmland (including several MALPF easement properties) is located.
- One sentence in your certification report gave us pause: "The achievement of preserving more farmland than was lost to development will be difficult to duplicate in future years." We assume, from the context, that this difficulty would exist only if State funding remained scarce and that the situation will resolve itself when funding returns to historic levels. If our inference is wrong, and the County's preservation program faces other obstacles that would cause development to outstrip preservation, please let us know.

In the recertification report, please discuss how the County program will address these concerns.

Talbot County's annual report indicated that its farmland preservation program continues to make strides:

- The County preserved over 2,100 acres during the reporting period, at a time when funding was limited. (Indications are that County easement acquisition through MALPF in FY 2005 will be better because of increased funding.)
- The shrinking of growth areas and creation of Countryside Preservation Areas are innovative and important tools for supporting land preservation.
- The County has budgeted funds to study the creation of a PDR program, which will probably be necessary to implement the Countryside Preservation Areas.
- The County approved the draft Green Print Plan to strategically identify critical farmland and natural resource land for easement acquisition.
- New zoning will be created for Countryside Preservation Areas and the Western Rural Conservation Areas that will be more protective than existing agricultural zoning.

Thank you very much for submitting your annual report and for your hard work to preserve farmland in Talbot County. We look forward to working with you in the future.