

Talbot County – January 2003

Certification of County Agricultural Land Preservation Programs
Re-Certification Request – Talbot County
(Report Summary dated January 28, 2003)

ATTRIBUTES OF LOCAL PROGRAM

- The County maintains restrictive zoning to protect agricultural land from random urban development.
- The County participates in the MALPF Matching Funds Program.

QUALIFYING EXPENDITURES AND USE OF CERTIFICATION FUNDS

- The County meets the certification requirements for qualifying expenditures and use of certification funds and has provided a record of revenues and expenditures.

PROGRAM ACCOMPLISHMENTS DURING THE REPORTING PERIOD

- The County reports its Geographic Information System (GIS) is operating and an inventory of protected land in Talbot County has been completed.
- Talbot County is nearing completion of the updated Comprehensive Plan (expected in early summer 2003). The Rural Agricultural Conservation and Land Use elements of the Plan are currently being reviewed with recommended changes anticipated in a draft document by Spring 2003.

EVALUATION OF COUNTY'S ANNUAL REPORT

- Talbot County's Certified Agricultural Land Preservation Program was approved by the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation and the Maryland Department of Planning as of March 1, 1999.
- Talbot County's first two Rural Legacy Easements settled last year for a total 551 acres.
- Talbot County has a total of 95 districts totaling 14,523 acres.
- Talbot County has a total of 49 easements, totaling 8,100 acres.
- Through the use of all of the preservation efforts listed above, Talbot County has preserved 27,375 acres.

UPDATED PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

- The next interim report will include an update of the redrafted Comprehensive Plan. The County outlined several proactive steps to help plan Talbot County's growth and ensure success of the County's land preservation strategies: Growth Area Boundary Reduction, Green Belt, Inter-Jurisdictional TDR, New Zoning Classification. In addition, the County may consider focusing MALPF's easement priorities in the eastern half of the County where the best agricultural soils and best concentration of the most productive farmland are located.
- The County Council recently approved a "Green Print Plan" specifically tailored to Talbot County, which will be developed in conjunction with the County's comprehensive plan. The goal of the plan is to strategically identify land for easement acquisition for both farmland and natural resource/environmental protection.

COUNTY'S FOCUS ON PRESERVING AGRICULTURAL LAND

- Talbot County has a goal of preserving 40,000 acres by 2020.
- Talbot County does not purchase its own easements, but works through the MALPF Program. The County has a prioritization formula and prioritizes land for easement sale.
- Together, the Rural Agricultural Conservation Zone (RAC) and Rural Conservation (RC), zoning classifications encompass nearly 89% of Talbot County's land area of which mostly is prime and productive agricultural land.
- Active private land trusts and conservation groups have preserved approximately 14,804 acres in Talbot County (Eastern Shore Land Conservancy, Nature Conservancy, Chesapeake

Audubon Society, Knapp Foundation, Chesapeake Bay Foundation, Maryland Ornithological Society McManus Institute, Izaak Walton League, and Warner Wildlife Sanctuary). Note: Of that acreage, the Maryland Environmental Trust is responsible for 10,728 acres through the Eastern Shore Land Conservancy.

FOUNDATION STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

- The County program appears likely to be successful in supporting viable agricultural operations and preserving agricultural land in perpetuity. The County has taken great strides in its efforts to preserve land since initial certification in 1999. Staff recommends approval of re-certification for another two-year term.