

## Strong Interest in Agricultural Preservation

Twenty applications that would protect farms totaling more than 2,000 acres were submitted this month for a popular Agricultural Preservation Program, the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation (MALPF) program. The strong response this year is encouraging. Tim Blaser, Frederick County's Administrator for Agricultural Preservation Programs, reported that successful applicants will receive offers during the spring. A second round of applications will compete against funding available state wide early next summer.

Frederick County's rich heritage and current economic health is rooted in agriculture. To help protect agricultural land from development, the state MALPF land preservation program was started in 1980 ([MALPF](#)). The [MALPF](#) Program was created to preserve prime farmland for future food and fiber production by paying farmers to extinguish their development rights, thereby keeping the farm in agricultural use. MALPF has been highly successful in Frederick County and elsewhere in Maryland. Over 16,900 acres of prime farmland have been permanently protected in Frederick County with 108 easements. \$5 million is budgeted for MALPF in FY 2007.

Over the years, other land preservation programs have been developed including Maryland's Rural Legacy Program, Frederick County's [Critical Farms](#) Program and Frederick County's Installment Purchase Program ([IPP](#)). The [Rural Legacy](#) Program is a joint state/county program that works within certain areas of the county know as "Rural Legacy Areas". There are two official Rural Legacy Areas in Frederick County, one in the Burkittsville region and the other in the Adamstown area. Rural Legacy areas are chosen based on agricultural productivity, natural resources, and cultural resources. Over 3,000 acres have been permanently preserved in Frederick County through the Rural Legacy Program. The 2006 Rural Legacy Grant for the County is \$700,000. Escalating land prices are triggering a change in the evaluation ranking system for the Rural Legacy program.

In 1994, Frederick County started the Critical Farms Program. This program is specifically designed to assist full-time farmers in buying new farmland. A total of 15 farmers have been assisted through the Critical Farms Program allowing them to compete with others who have various non-farming interests for county land. Currently, 7 farms are under option in the Critical Farms program incorporating over 1,000 acres. Action is anticipated to help with the purchase of a 131-acre farm in the Walkersville area later this month.

In 2002, Frederick County began the Installment Purchase Program. The IPP program works through installment purchase agreements that pay the farmer **tax-free** interest over a period of 10-20 years with a balloon lump sum principle payment at the end of the term. Over 9,300 acres have been preserved through the IPP Program in 60 farms. Another 18 applications are in the pipeline.

Frederick County also offers a property tax credit for properties entering the state or county land preservation programs.

Frederick County also assists landowners who are interest in other land preservation programs such as the Maryland Environment Trust <http://www.dnr.state.md.us/met/> and the Federal Farmland Protection Program <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/frpp/>.

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