



The Rural Maryland Council Celebrates 10 Years of Service to Maryland's Rural Communities

The Rural Maryland Council (RMC) is proud to celebrate 10 years of service to Maryland's rural communities and industries. Since 1994, the RMC has brought together citizens, community-based organizations, federal, state, county and municipal government officials as well as representatives of the for-profit and nonprofit sectors to collectively address the needs of rural Maryland communities.

The RMC functions as the State's rural development council under the National Rural Development Partnership Program. In this role the Council provides a unique venue for members of agricultural and natural resource-based industries, health care facilities, educational institutions, economic and community development organizations, for-profit and nonprofit corporations, and government agencies to cross traditional boundaries, share information, and address in a more holistic way the special needs and opportunities in Rural Maryland.

The overarching vision of the RMC is the ultimate realization that citizens living in rural communities are achieving success in education and employment, have access to affordable, quality health care and other vital public services, and live in an environment where natural and cultural resources are being sustained for future generations.

As a collaborative partnership, the RMC operates under the direction of a 40-member executive board in a nonpartisan and nondiscriminatory manner in helping rural communities and businesses across the State to flourish. This publication commemorates the work and achievement of the Council and its many partners over the past decade in the noble effort to improve the quality of life for all rural Marylanders.



Pictured above are FORVM for Rural Maryland Chairman Duane Yoder and Executive Director Steve McHenry receiving a resolution celebrating "Stand Up for Rural Maryland Day" passed by the Maryland State Senate from Senate President Pro Tem Norman Stone on March 5, 1999. Many rural and rural-supporting legislators participated in the festivities that day.

Providing a Collective Voice for Rural Maryland

Message From the Chairman

In 2004, the Rural Maryland Council (RMC) celebrates its 10th Anniversary. Over the years, the RMC has worked diligently to establish partnerships that have lead to more effective public policy and more efficient service delivery in rural areas. Because the Council works through inclusion and collaboration, and makes decisions by means of consensus, the RMC truly is able to provide a collective voice for rural Maryland.

Approximately 1.4 million people live in Maryland's 18 rural counties located in the State's western, southern and eastern shore regions. Rural communities in Maryland continue to face a variety of challenges relating to changing economic conditions, an aging population and an out-migration of youth, inadequate access to quality health care and other services, and a deteriorating or inadequate physical infrastructure. Local governments, educational and health care institutions, and private service providers in rural areas have struggled to respond to all of these challenges but have made considerable gains in recent years.

The mission of the Council is to promote economic opportunity in our State's rural areas while helping to preserve the pastoral heritage of these working open spaces and adjacent small cities and towns. The RMC has focused attention broadly in such areas as agriculture, broadband communications, health care, economic development, infrastructure improvement, housing and community development, and resource based industry. By addressing a myriad of issues of concern, and identifying resources and providing rural representation at the State and federal levels, the Council has worked successfully to help improve the quality of life in rural communities.

In closing, I want to extend my heartfelt appreciation to the Council's partners, stakeholders and many rural – and urban – supporters, in both the public and private sectors. I also especially want to commend the RMC's dedicated board members, as well as the Council's very able staff, who have given so much of themselves over the years to help make rural Maryland a better place to live. I am very proud of the work of the RMC over the past decade, and very much look forward to the next 10 years.

-Phyllis Kilby, RMC Chair



Pictured left is Rural Maryland Council Chair, Phyllis Kilby, addressing attendees during the Rural Awards Luncheon held during the 7th Annual Rural Summit in Solomons, November 2004.



Pictured at left are FORVM for Rural Maryland Chairs Bill Eckman and Duane Yoder with Executive Director Steve McHenry, during a passing of the gavel ceremony held during the Annual Meeting in Ocean City, November 1999.

Representation

"The Rural Maryland Council has become a major force in helping rural communities and businesses to get their needs known to policy-makers. The RMC works hard to bring all the affected parties together in a neutral and constructive manner to address difficult challenges, and afterwards facilitates very successful follow-on efforts that have greatly helped rural areas. The Council in its role as a strong effective advocate for rural needs and through its coordination of services performs a unique and vital service that really benefits the entire State."

-Senator Thomas "Mac" Middleton

History of the Rural Maryland Council

The origins of the Rural Maryland Council date back to late 1993 when an Executive Order was signed by Governor William Donald Schaefer establishing the Maryland Rural Development Council (under the auspices of President George H.W. Bush's Presidential Initiative on Rural America). The Council began formal operations a few months later. In 1995, the Maryland General Assembly's "Rural Caucus" was formed, and one of its first legislative efforts was to have the Council established as an independent state agency. As a result of the successful enactment of this legislation, the Council was also renamed the FORVM for Rural Maryland and its offices were co-located with the Maryland Department of Business and Economic Development in Baltimore.

In 2003, the Legislative Rural Caucus again introduced legislation, this time expanding the size of the Council's governing board and renaming it the Rural Maryland Council. That year, the Council relocated its offices to Annapolis in order to become more accessible to both State policy-makers and rural stakeholders. The Council

today has its offices in the headquarters building of the Maryland Department of Agriculture.

The RMC is now one of 40 state rural development councils operating around the country that, together with the National Rural Development Council, comprise the National Rural Development Partnership (coordinated through USDA Rural Development). The RMC performs two essential roles for rural communities: 1) the "convening, facilitation, and neutral brokering" role; and 2) the "rural voice" role. The RMC provides a venue for rural stakeholders to cross traditional boundaries, share information, and address in a more holistic way the special needs of rural Marylanders. The Council has been nationally recognized for its work in rural policy and program coordination twice, having received Rural Impact Awards in 2001 and 2004 from USDA for distinguished achievement in service to rural America.

The Council has had just two executive directors during its history. Bill Walker, then a program manager with the Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development, did a masterful job in helping to set up the Council in 1993-94 (with many collaborators), and stayed in the post until late 1997. Mr. Walker served under Council chairs Gary Hodge of Southern Maryland and Duane Yoder of Western Maryland. It was during Mr. Yoder's tenure that Stephen McHenry was hired in 1998 after a nationwide search. Mr. McHenry remains with the Council to this day, and has served under three board chairs: Duane Yoder (President of Garrett Community Action), William Eckman (Mayor of the Town of LaPlata), and Phyllis Kilby (Cecil County Commission Vice President and dairy farmer).



Pictured above are legislators and founding board members at a bill signing ceremony for legislation establishing the FORVM for Rural Maryland, May 1995.

Achievement

In 2001 and 2004, the RMC was honored by the National Rural Development Partnership (USDA) with "Rural Impact Awards" for notable work in the area of rural policy and program coordination in Maryland.



Pictured to the left are FORVM Chairman Duane Yoder, Vice Chairman Nan Booth and Garrett County Commissioner Fred Holiday during Stand Up for Rural Maryland Day, March 1999.

Inside the Rural Maryland Council

Since its inception in 1994, the Rural Maryland Council has been working to advance the interests of rural Marylanders across the State. In 1995, the Council (then known as the FORVM for Rural Maryland) conducted an "Ears to Rural Maryland Tour," making visits and holding town meetings in a half-dozen rural communities located throughout the State. The tour helped the Council identify key issues of importance to the traditionally under-served parts of Maryland such as job retention and creation, value-added agricultural development, broadband communications deployment, and microenterprise development.

To help draw statewide attention to these important issues, the Council held a very successful "Stand Up for Rural Maryland Day" in Annapolis during the 1999 Maryland General Assembly Session. The following year, landmark legislation was passed establishing the Maryland Agricultural Education and Rural Development Assistance Fund (a program which is now administered by the Council with the assistance of MDA, DBED, DHCD, DHMH, and DNR).

As the Council has grown over the years, the Executive Board has grown to encompass the widest possible range of rural stakeholders. The 40-member Board represents each rural region from across the State, the rural for-profit and nonprofit communities, elected officials from the State and local levels, and federal, state and local government agencies. The program and policy development work of the Council is primarily coordinated through one of five "working committees." The committees include: Agriculture and Natural Resources, Broadband Communications, Health Care, Housing and Community Development, and Infrastructure.



Pictured above is RMC Executive Director Steve McHenry discussing a rural issue with Joe Getty, Director of Policy for the Ehrlich Administration, during the 6th Annual Rural Summit, November 2003.



Pictured left are members of the Council's Executive Board listening to a presentation being made during a day-long strategic planning retreat held in Annapolis, October 2002.



Pictured above are new Council board members receiving an orientation from Chair Duane Yoder. From left: Fred Holiday (Garrett County Commissioner), Nan Booth (Maryland Cooperative Extension), Dave Wilson (Eastern Shore RC&D Council), Linda Bambarly (Administrator, Town of Berlin), Senator Alex Mooney (Frederick and Washington Counties), Tim Hann (Western Maryland RC&D Council) and Duane Yoder (Garrett Community Action), May 2001.

Collaboration

"Through an unwavering commitment to collaboration and consensus building, the Rural Maryland Council has been able to achieve great success by often bringing together a wide range of divergent stakeholders to find a common solution or approach to a problem."

-Commissioner Robert Hutcheson, Allegany County

Inside the Rural Maryland Council



Pictured above are House Speaker Cas Taylor with members of the FORVM For Rural Maryland Executive Board on the occasion of the Maryland House of Delegates passing a resolution commemorating the FORVM and Stand Up for Rural Maryland Day, March 5, 1999.



Pictured above are FORVM for Rural Maryland Foundation President Mary Mallery receiving some well-deserved recognition from FORVM Chair Bill Eckman, May 1999.



Pictured at right is Governor Robert L. Ehrlich, Jr. speaking during the 7th Annual Rural Summit in Solomons, November 2004; and at left is Donna Mennitto, ag land preservation expert, addressing a Council meeting, October 2000.



Pictured below are members of the Council's Agriculture and Natural Resources Working Committee discussing regulatory issues and proposed legislation, June 2000.



Pictured above are members of the rural health community speaking to an urban legislator on Stand Up for Rural Maryland Day, March 1999.



Rural Summits Through the Years

The Rural Maryland Council initially partnered with the State Office of Rural Health and the Maryland Rural Health Association in 1998 to host the first Annual Maryland Rural Summit at Rocky Gap in Allegany County. Since the event's inception, the Annual Rural Summit has provided a unique opportunity for public and private sector leaders to get together to learn about issues and trends in rural development and health care. Each year, the Summit has addressed critical concerns of rural communities such as economic and community development, access to health care, rural broadband deployment, infrastructure improvement, changing demographics, and other issues.

The Summits have been well-attended by State legislators, elected and appointed county and municipal officials, representatives from the nonprofit and for-profit communities, health care professionals, and economic and community developers. A major highlight of the Summits has been the presentation of the Annual Rural Awards, to honor those individuals and organizations that have provided outstanding leadership or service on behalf of rural Maryland.



The Annual Rural Summit

"The Annual Rural Summit not only offers a variety of very informative educational sessions each year, but it provides a great venue for discussing emerging rural policy issues and for networking with policy-makers and opinion-shapers from around the State. Because of this, the Rural Summit has grown in popularity every year since 1998."

- Delegate Richard B. Weldon, Jr.



Pictured from above left (clockwise): FORVM Chair Duane Yoder listens to the 2nd Annual Summit keynote speaker Chuck Fluharty, Director of the Rural Policy Research Institute, November 1999. Workshop session attendees listen to a presentation during the 4th Annual Rural Summit, November 2001. Delegate John Wood (St. Mary's County) speaks during a Rural Town Hall Meeting in Solomons, November 2000. Legislative leaders offer comments at a Rural Legislative Forum during the 7th Annual Rural Summit in Solomons, November 2004 (From left: Delegate Page Elmore, Lower Shore; Delegate George Edwards, Mountain Maryland; Senator Mac Middleton, Charles County; and Senator David Brinkley, Carroll and Frederick Counties.)

Rural Summits Through the Years



Rural Awards

"Receiving the Outstanding Legislator Award at the 2004 Annual Rural Summit was truly one of the highlights of my career in public service. To be recognized by the Rural Maryland Council and its partners was a great honor."

-Senator Donald F. Munson



Pictured from above left clockwise: Rural physician Dr. Andrea Allen receives the Outstanding Rural Health Practitioner Award at the 6th Annual Rural Summit, November 2002. Talbot County Councilwoman Hilary Spence poses a question to legislators during the Rural Town Hall Meeting in Ocean City, November 2003. Eastern Shore grain farmer Bobby Hutchison receives the Rural Volunteer of the Year Award during the 6th Annual Rural Summit, November 2003. Delegate Rudy Cane receives the Rural Legislator Award from Governor Robert Ehrlich and RMC and MRHA leaders during the 7th Annual Summit, November 2004. Senator Thomas Mac Middleton receives the Rural Legislator Award from MRHA President Jake Frego and FORVM Chair Bill Eckman during the 3rd Annual Summit held in Solomons, November 2000.

Agriculture and Resource Based Industries

The RMC has worked extensively over the years to help shape policy and programs that affect agriculture and other resource based industries in order to help them survive and prosper. Maryland's farming, forestry and seafood businesses have struggled for several decades because of adverse natural environmental forces as well as global economic and land development pressures. In particular, the Council has sustained a concerted effort to promote enhanced economic development support for the State's farm, forestry and seafood industries with good success.

After much work in the late 1990's by the Council's Agriculture and Natural Resources Working Committee, legislation was initiated and passed to create a 17-member Task Force on Resource Based Industry in Maryland to study the economic development needs of Maryland's traditional rural businesses. The Task Force labored for two years and devoted considerable attention on the need to create a publicly-supported agricultural financing authority in the State.

In 2003, the Council put together landmark legislation to assist rural communities and businesses on several fronts through the "2020 Rural Maryland Prosperity Investment Act." Included in this proposal was the establishment of a state agricultural development authority. During the 2004 General Assembly Session, the Legislative Rural Caucus introduced this legislation which was widely supported by rural interests as well as by the Administration. On May 26, 2004, Governor Robert Ehrlich signed Senate Bill 589 into law which establishes the Maryland Agricultural and Resource Based Industry Development Corporation (MARBIDCO), a quasi-public development organization designed to promote the viability and profitability of Maryland's agriculture, aquaculture, forestry, and seafood industries through the provision enhanced economic development assistance opportunities.

The Council has also provided support over the years to the State and county agricultural marketing specialists, and has worked with Maryland Cooperative Extension, MDA, DNR, DBED, USDA and others to improve service-delivery programs and regulatory schemes to enable farmers and producers to engage in value-added processing activities to increase opportunities for profitability. In addition, the RMC has collaborated with the Maryland Energy Administration and others to bring renewable energy technologies to farmers at affordable costs.



Pictured above (standing) are several rural legislators with representatives from the Rural Maryland Council, the Maryland Department of Agriculture, and the Maryland Farm Bureau, during a bill signing ceremony for Senate Bill 589 which authorized the establishment of MARBIDCO, May 2004.

Pictured below are members of the Council's Agriculture and Natural Resources Working Committee listening to presentations from Steve Koehn (Director, Maryland Forest Service) and Buddy Bowling (Director, Maryland Agriculture Commission), June 1999.



MARBIDCO

"Maryland will benefit greatly from having an entity in place that focuses exclusively on providing developmental assistance to our agricultural and resource-based businesses."

-Lewis R. Riley, Secretary of Agriculture

Rural Health Care and Education

The provision of adequate and affordable health care is vitally important to rural Marylanders. Moreover, the impact that health facilities and occupations have on rural economies is substantial, but increasingly at risk of being lost in the new managed care environment. The RMC's Health Care Working Committee has worked closely with the Maryland Rural Health Association, and others with a stake in the health of rural Marylanders over the years, to examine policy issues, raise awareness, and make recommendations to policy-makers. For example, in 2004, the Council examined how the Medicare Modernization Act of 2003 will affect rural Marylanders through wide-reaching changes to Maryland's pharmaceutical drug programs.

The Council has also played a role in helping to improve educational opportunity and leadership development in rural communities. In 1998, the Council assisted in the effort that led to the doubling of State financial support for the rural regional library centers. In 2000, the Council, with the leadership of the Rural Caucus, initiated the creation of the Maryland Agricultural Education and Rural development Assistance Fund (MAERDAF) to provide small grants to rural-serving non-profit organizations and community colleges to support agricultural education, leadership development and small business development. Over \$1.4 million in grants have been made to 26 deserving non-profit organizations and community colleges during the five years that MAERDAF has been in existence.



Pictured above is Dr. Georges Benjamin, Secretary of Health and Mental Hygiene, speaking during a plenary session at the 2nd Annual Rural Summit, November 1999.

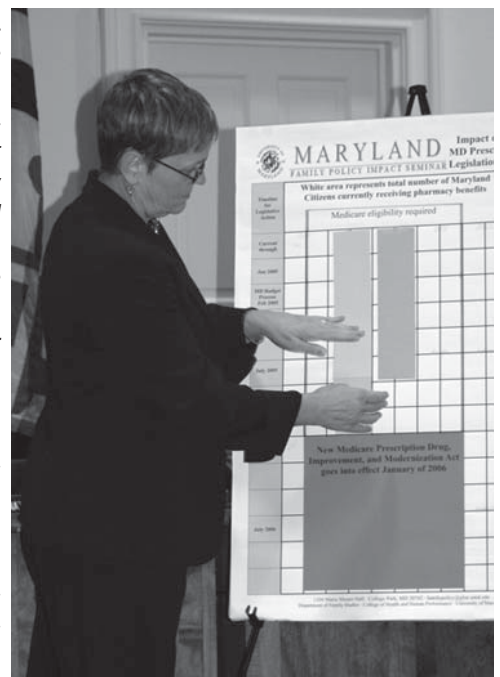
Rural Health Care Access

"Over the years, the Rural Maryland Council has worked in partnership with the Maryland Rural Health Association and others with a stake in health of rural Marylanders to develop effective public policy and more efficient delivery of health care services to our rural communities."

-Annie Kronk, Rural Maryland Council Board Member and Health Care Working Committee Chair

Pictured at right is Dr. Bonnie Braun, Associate Professor and Extension Family Policy Specialist, explaining how different populations previously served by Maryland State pharmacy plans will be affected by the Medicare Modernization Act of 2003, November 2004.

Pictured at left are members of the Council's Health Care Working Committee discussing the problem of rural access to prescription medicines, September 2004.



Business and Economic Development

From the beginning, rural business and economic development has been a top area of concern of the RMC. In 1999, the Council focused attention on entrepreneurship and microenterprise development issues by hosting a statewide conference at Chesapeake College. Following this conference, the Council facilitated the development of a statewide microenterprise development program to serve both urban and rural Maryland. In 2000, the Microenterprise Council of Maryland (MCM) was established with essential support from the Council. RMC Executive Director Stephen McHenry served as the facilitator of this project for two years and later became the MCM's first chairman.

In addition to focusing on small business development issues, the RMC has been a strong advocate of regional planning and development. In 2000, the Council assisted the State Task Force on Eastern Shore Economic Development. In 2001, the Council was instrumental in the passage of legislation to create the Tri-County Council for the Lower Eastern Shore and the Mid Shore Regional Council to serve as counterparts to the existing Tri-County Councils in Western and Southern Maryland. The Upper Shore Regional Council was established in 2003 with support from the RMC, and to this day the Council continues to provide support for all five rural regional councils.

To address the larger picture of economic prosperity in rural Maryland, in 2003 the RMC began work on the "2020 Rural Prosperity Investment Plan," to provide a long-term strategy to promote economic prosperity in Maryland's traditionally underserved rural communities and industries. In addition, the Council produced a "Rural Progress Index," to track the overall quality of life in rural areas. The RPI provides a time-series review of selected key indicators of rural health and prosperity in Maryland's six distinct rural and semi-rural regions covering 18 counties in Western Maryland, Southern Maryland, and on the Eastern Shore.



Pictured above is Kevin Morse, Executive Director of the Mid-Shore Regional Council, during a panel discussion on the deployment of rural broadband communication access at the 5th Annual Rural Summit in Annapolis, November 2002.



Pictured at left is RMC Executive Board Member Danny Mayer (Charles County Commissioner) chatting with DBED Assistant Secretaries Dennis Castleman and Bob Hannon prior to a Council meeting, November 2003.

Rural Regional Councils

"The Rural Maryland Council played an important role in facilitating the establishment of regional councils on the Eastern Shore, and continues to be a great resource and advocate for all five rural planning and development councils in Maryland."

-Kevin Morse, Mid-Shore Regional Council

Infrastructure and Community Development

The RMC has worked on a number of issues relating to rural infrastructure improvement and community development over the past 10 years. The Council has worked to identify, study, and promote solutions to problems in rural areas related to human and community needs, and has also considered the physical and utility service infrastructure needs of rural Maryland and developed strategies to enhance both.

In 2000, the Council's Infrastructure Working Committee worked closely with the Maryland Municipal League and the Governor's Task Force on Upgrading Sewerage Treatment Systems to examine small community wastewater needs. The RMC helped to later secure \$1 million in State capital funds to pay for small community wastewater system and utility rate studies in 2002.

In 2001, the Housing and Community Development Working Committee collaborated with legislative leaders and the Department of Housing and Community Development to appropriately amend State regulations that prohibited all use of federal and State housing funds in less populated rural areas.

More recently, in 2004, the RMC was called upon to provide important leadership to the State's Interagency Wastewater Technical Assistance Advisory Committee, as well as to play a critical role in supporting the work of the Maryland Task Force on Broadband Communications Deployment in Underserved Rural Areas.



Pictured above is Patricia Payne, Secretary of Housing and Community Development, speaking at the FORVM's "Shining the Lights on Rural Maryland" Conference in Hagerstown, May 1998.



Pictured above are current Rural Maryland Foundation President Bob Agee (a leader in the aggregates industry) and Hurlock Mayor Don Bradley engaging in conversation just prior to the start of a FORVM Infrastructure Working Committee meeting, April 2001. Pictured right are Foundation Treasurer Kevin Brooks and President Mary Mallery presenting an educational scholarship to Cheryl DeBerry (center), Agricultural Marketing Specialist with Garrett County's Department of Economic Development, November 2002.

Infrastructure Development

"Small communities throughout Maryland are facing huge challenges with aging wastewater facilities and problems associated with inflow and infiltration. In 2002, the Council was instrumental in initiating legislation to secure \$1 million to fund vitally important wastewater collection system and utility rates studies. This is the first step in helping small communities located in rural areas to get the resources that they will need to improve these facilities."

-Hurlock Mayor Don Bradley, Chair, RMC Infrastructure Working Committee





Mission

The mission of the Rural Maryland Council is to build a bright future for rural Maryland by helping to address its unique concerns. The RMC works toward achieving effective solutions by bringing together the diverse partnerships necessary to collectively work to improve the quality of life for rural Maryland.

Goals

The goals of the Rural Maryland Council are to:

- Enable citizens in rural communities to achieve success in employment and have access to quality, affordable health care, and other services;
- Preserve agriculture and other natural resource-based industry as an integral part of Maryland's rural economy and culture;
- Advocate for a manageable regulatory process and reasonable and effective compliance; and
- Address the impact of changing conditions on the environment, heritage and economic well-being of rural Maryland.

Statement of Principles

As a collaborative partnership, the RMC shall be established and operated in a nonpartisan and nondiscriminatory manner. Policy-makers and managers from stakeholding agencies and organizations at all levels of government and the private sector are valued participants in RMC activities. Where practical, the decision-making undertaken by the RMC will ordinarily be made by reaching consensus.



1994



1995



2003

Over the Years: The Council was established in 1993/4 under Governor William Donald Schaefer, as the Maryland Rural Development Council. In 1995, the Rural Caucus introduced legislation to establish the Council as an independent State agency and re-named it the FORVM for Rural Maryland. Finally, in 2003, the composition of the Council Board was expanded, and the name was changed to the Rural Maryland Council.

Providing a Collective Voice for Rural Maryland