



Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation

FY 2024 Annual Report

**Preserved
Farm**

This land is in the
MD Agricultural
Land Preservation
Foundation Program



A Message from the Executive Director

Dear Stakeholders,

This past year saw major accomplishments for Maryland land preservation as a whole, and for the MALPF Program specifically. As of January 1, 2024, Maryland achieved its goal of conserving 30% of the entire state, six years before the 2030 goal established by the Maryland the Beautiful Act (enacted in 2023). MALPF was a significant contributor in meeting that goal and will play an important role in reaching the even more ambitious goal of conserving 40% of the state by 2040.



By fall 2024, MALPF settled 85 of the 88 offers to purchase agricultural easements in the FY22 application cycle; settled 90 of the 110 offers to purchase agricultural easements in the FY23 application cycle; and entered into 145 contracts to purchase agricultural easements in the FY24 application cycle. The continuous acquisition of MALPF easements speaks to the Program's success in bolstering the agricultural industry by providing an influx of funds to landowners of newly MALPF-eased farms. The ongoing dedication and commitment of the MALPF Board of Trustees, staff, attorneys, appraisers, and all our county partners ensures that the MALPF program will continue to protect Maryland's farmland well into the future.

At the end of FY24, MALPF has preserved 2,757 farms across Maryland, totaling over 370,000 acres of land, at a public investment of over \$972 million. Due to the reduction in the FY25 MALPF budget, the MALPF Board of Trustees decided to combine the funds of FY25 and FY26 into a single application cycle, accepting applications in July 2024. MALPF received 218 new applications for the FY25/26 application cycle to sell an easement to the State through the MALPF program, of which 192 were accepted by MALPF and forwarded to the Maryland Department of General Services for appraisal.

It continues to be my honor to serve as MALPF's Executive Director. I remain unceasingly amazed by MALPF's continued growth and unwavering commitment to recognize and respond to the needs of Maryland's ever-changing agricultural industry.

Sincerely,

Michelle Cable

Michelle Cable
Executive Director



What is the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation (MALPF)?

The primary purpose of **MALPF** is to preserve sufficient agricultural land to maintain a viable local base of food and fiber production for the citizens of Maryland. The state program purchases development rights on farms and restricts them to only agricultural uses by using perpetual agricultural conservation easements, which are recorded in the land records. In other words, the program pays landowners to continue what they have done for years, decades, or sometimes a century or more — farm their land.

MALPF easements allow for all types of agricultural operations to be conducted on the farm. The easement defines agriculture/agricultural uses as “any use of the easement property which directly contributes to the production, conversion, processing, storage, or sale of agricultural products generated on the easement property and/or management of products such as livestock, horses, poultry, crops, trees, shrubs, plants, other vegetation, and aquaculture.” It is important that the terms of the easement allow for owners to grow and evolve as the agricultural industry changes through the years.

Established in 1977, and has since grown into one of the most successful programs of its kind in the country.



Frederick County Farm

Eligibility and Criteria

SIZE: The minimum easement size is 50 contiguous acres. If a property is less than 50 acres, a landowner may still be eligible to apply and should visit our website to review Fact Sheet 12, "Small Properties in the Agricultural Land Preservation Program," or confer with the local program administrator.

If a property is contiguous to an existing easement, the landowner may apply to sell an easement regardless of the acreage.

PRODUCTIVITY: An easement is purchased on land that is either currently being used for producing food or fiber or has the capability to do so. Woodland management and harvesting operations are eligible to join this program. The productivity of the soil as measured by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Soil Conservation Service Land Classification System is a major criterion. Soil requirements for the property to qualify to participate in the program are:

- At least 50% of the land is classified as Class I, II, or III soils; - or -
- If the land is wooded, 50% of the land is classified as Woodland Group 1 or 2 soils; - or -
- If the reason the land could not meet the above conditions was because of flood-plain or wetland soils, those areas could be excluded as a percentage of land; - or -
- If there is an insufficient percentage of Class I, II, or III soils alone and there is an insufficient percentage of Woodland Groups 1 and 2 soils alone, the land would qualify if the combination of the two exceeded 60%; - or -
- Land with lower soil capabilities may qualify under certain conditions.

LOCATION: Land that lies within the boundaries of a 10-year water and sewer service area plan is generally ineligible unless it has extraordinary productive capability and is of significant size.

DEVELOPMENT RIGHTS: A property must have at least one unused development right associated with the property to sell an easement.

LOCAL CRITERIA: The criteria listed above are the minimum eligibility standards set by the state. The program is administered jointly by the county and state. The county may impose criteria which could be in addition to or more stringent than the state. The county also ranks the applications in order of priority and may be limited by MALPF in the number of applications that are forwarded to MALPF in an application cycle.

2024 Legislative Update

SB 777/HB 918 – State Treasurer – Membership Responsibilities

This legislation removed the State Treasurer (or his/her representative) as an ex officio member of the MALPF Board (as well as other state boards and commissions). This will reduce the MALPF Board of Trustees from thirteen, to twelve members, which will create the possibility of a tie vote, which is effectively a “no” vote, since a majority vote is required to approve any motion, etc. The law became effective June 1, 2024.

SB 969/ HB 1165- Watershed, Stream, and Floodplain Restoration - Chesapeake and Atlantic Coastal Bays Restoration and Stream and Floodplain Restoration Funding_(Whole Watershed Act)

The Whole Watershed Act (the “Act”) passed into law with an effective date of July 1, 2024. Among other things, the Act creates a Whole Watershed Restoration Partnership and Fund under the Department of Natural Resources to accelerate restoration of the Chesapeake Bay and Atlantic Coastal Bays and their watershed. The Act will be funded from multiple existing programs and agencies, including MALPF (as well as the Maryland Agricultural Cost Share Program – MACS), to pay for the projects under the Whole Watershed Restoration Partnership.

The Maryland Department of Agriculture has a representative on the State Management Team that provides guidance on the creation and administration of the Act. The Act does not include any specifics on the amount or timing of funds that could be diverted from MALPF into the Whole Watershed Restoration Partnership projects. The details of implementing the Act will be developed over the next year.



Frederick County Farm



FY24 Report on the Certification of Local Agricultural Land Preservation Programs

Maryland's Certification of Local Agricultural Preservation Programs, known as the Certification Program, was created in 1990. The goals of the program are to:

- Preserve the important role agriculture plays in maintaining the state's high environmental quality;
- Encourage development of county agricultural preservation programs, which complement the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation's (MALPF) preservation efforts; and
- Employ agricultural land preservation as a tool to manage growth.

Counties able to demonstrate they have an effective program to preserve productive farmland and forests are eligible to participate in the Certification Program. Local preservation programs consist of a combination of preservation tools such as low-density agricultural zoning, purchase or transfer of development rights programs, right-to-farm policies, support for agricultural businesses, and the designation of agriculture as the best use of certain lands.

To qualify for and retain certified status, counties are required to designate a Priority Preservation Area (PPA). Counties concentrate their preservation efforts and program funding into their PPAs in order to preserve large contiguous blocks of agricultural and wooded land.

Participation in the Certification Program by interested counties is voluntary. Certified counties enjoy the benefit of retaining 75% of their locally generated agricultural transfer tax revenue, while non-certified counties retain 33%. All retained revenue must be spent or encumbered for qualifying land preservation expenditures within six years of collection, otherwise those collected funds revert to MALPF. The increase in participating counties' share of the agricultural land transfer tax helps to support and enhance their preservation programs in ways that best meet local goals and needs.

In FY24, Charles County submitted its recertification report for joint action by the Maryland Department of Planning (MDP) and the MALPF Board. To determine eligibility for recertification, MDP reviews each county request against the Certification Program's regulatory requirements, and then makes a recommendation to the Secretary of Planning and the MALPF Board.

As of June 30, 2024, 17 of the 23 counties are now certified. Recertification reports were due on October 1, 2024 for Harford, Prince George's, Talbot and Washington counties, whose certification periods end on June 30, 2025 (extensions are available). Interim certification reports are due from Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Calvert, Caroline, Carroll, Cecil, Frederick, Kent, Montgomery, Queen Anne's, St. Mary's and Worcester counties.

A 5-year recertification period is required by law for county farmland preservation programs that MDP and the MALPF Board determine to be consistently effective in achieving preservation goals.

MALPF Board of Trustees Field Trip

MALPF Board of Trustees ("Board") continues to hold its monthly meetings virtually, with the Board, MALPF staff, county partners, landowners, and other interested parties participating either through their computers, or by phone. The virtual Board meetings have been efficient and successful, with the Board electing to maintain meeting virtually rather than returning to in person meetings.

The MALPF field trips are not Board meetings, but learning opportunities, as well as an avenue for Board members in attendance to interact with each other and MALPF staff.

Through field trips, Board members and staff have an opportunity to meet the landowners, learn about their farms, and to continue learning about different types of agricultural operations (including forestry) throughout Maryland. This year, MALPF staff organized an Eastern Shore field trip, to learn more about the forestry industry in Maryland.



The field trip made three stops, each focusing on different aspects of the forest industry. The day started by visiting an easement property in Queen Anne's County owned by the Rhodes family. This easement is actually held by the Eastern Shore Land Conservancy, which provided an opportunity to discuss how the various easement programs work collaboratively. The Rhodes incorporate timber harvesting into the management of their farm, and there was a good discussion regarding a recent timber harvest, where they worked with professional foresters to ensure that the family's objectives were met, and the harvest was conducted using best management practices both during and after it was completed.

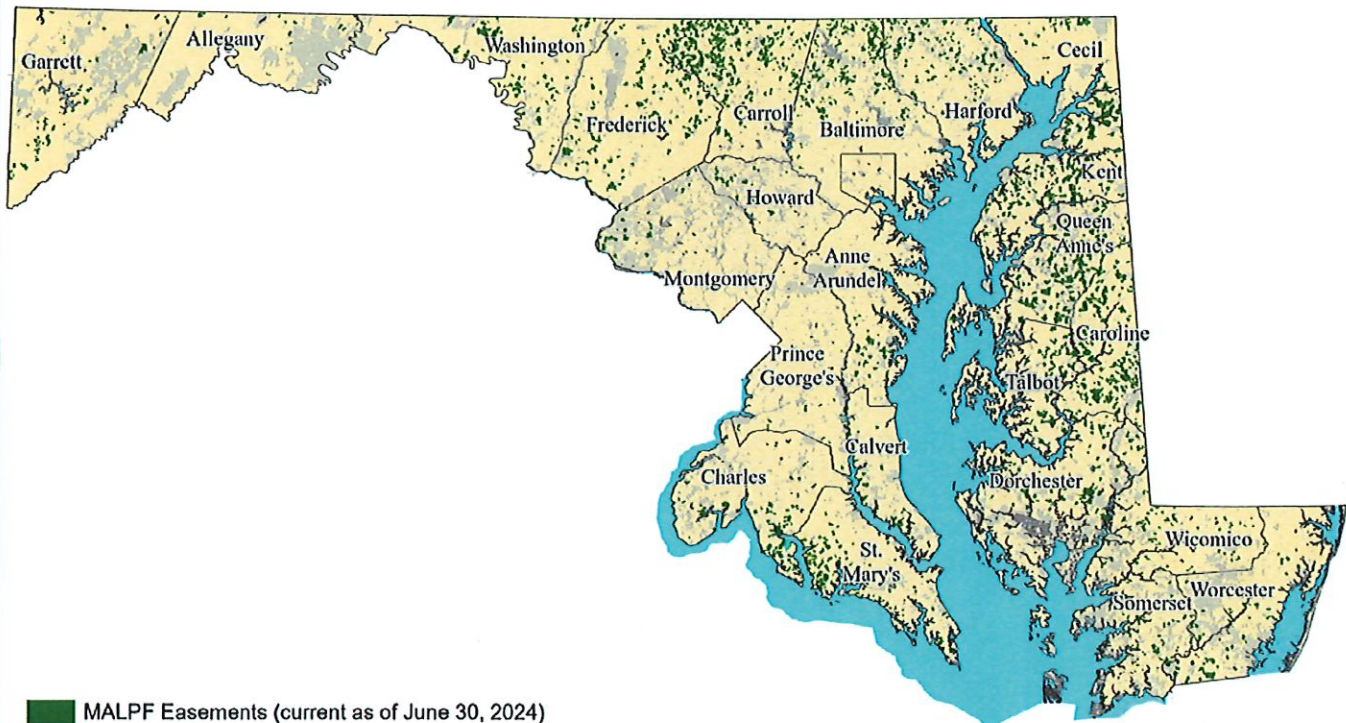




After the property visit, the group visited Hardwood Mills and saw firsthand how logs are turned into lumber. It was fascinating to watch the operators work (not to mention very loud). The final stop of the day was to Cypress Branch State Park, a Department of Natural Resources owned property. The group was shown a recently installed wood heating system (a wood chip boiler) that is used to heat structures at the State Park. This system shows how wood can help meet Maryland's green energy goals, while also supporting the forestry industry. The Board and staff learned a great deal about Maryland's forestry industry, and how forest management and harvests on easement properties can be part of the process.

The Board looks forward to field trips continuing in 2025. Getting out and meeting the farm owners, and seeing the farms in person, provides both Board members and staff opportunities to see the impact that the MALPF program has made around the State.

MALPF Statewide Easement Map

Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation Easements



 MALPF Easements (current as of June 30, 2024)
 Other Protected Land



0 12.5 25 50 Miles



Easement Settlements in FY24

COUNTY	NUMBER OF EASEMENTS	TOTAL NUMBER OF ACRES	ACQUISITION COST		AVERAGE FARM SIZE IN ACRES
			AVERAGE PER ACRE	TOTAL	
Allegany					
Anne Arundel	1	105	\$10,901	\$1,147,500	105
Baltimore	2	223	\$7,089	\$1,584,100	112
Calvert					
Caroline	8	1,445	\$3,112	\$4,496,092	181
Carroll	8	601	\$7,111	\$4,274,609	75
Cecil	1	136	\$5,733	\$782,340	136
Charles	13	1,394	\$3,850	\$5,366,372	107
Dorchester	7	682	\$3,497	\$2,384,386	97
Frederick	10	1,572	\$6,541	\$10,281,228	157
Garrett	1	173	\$2,100	\$362,550	173
Harford	8	593	\$6,912	\$4,096,159	74
Howard	1	14	\$12,093	\$173,654	14
Kent	8	1,745	\$4,091	\$7,139,955	218
Montgomery	1	293	\$6,996	\$2,051,635	293
Prince George's					
Queen Anne's	8	1,807	\$3,569	\$6,451,501	226
St. Mary's	5	634	\$7,875	\$4,990,305	127
Somerset	3	535	\$2,376	1,270,921	178
Talbot	3	350	\$4,527	\$1,585,732	117
Washington	6	801	\$4,704	\$3,766,527	133
Wicomico	4	432	\$3,248	\$1,401,484	108
Worcester	4	476	\$1,605	\$764,454	119
TOTALS	102	14,012	\$4,594	\$64,371,504	137

Easement Acquisition Costs in FY24

As of June 30, 2024			
FISCAL YEAR	NO. OF FARMS	ACQUISITION COST	ACRES
FY77 - FY06	1,708	\$342,578,700	236,259
FY07	70	\$40,297,919	9,592
FY08	106	\$78,270,208	13,810
FY09	79	\$68,588,962	9,787
FY10	68	\$52,814,641	8,816
FY11	14	\$6,783,740	1,527
FY12	41	\$21,217,570	4,692
FY13	16	\$7,925,597	1,773
FY14	52	\$26,302,733	6,117
FY15	33	\$19,569,931	4,324
FY16	31	\$17,719,957	4,219
FY17	28	\$17,062,423	4,481
FY18	56	\$29,561,084	7,402
FY19	46	\$23,838,120	5,530
FY20	65	\$31,486,292	8,335
FY21	91	\$43,127,680	10,656
FY22*	82	\$47,777,257	11,240
FY23*	69	\$32,873,695	7,448
FY24	102	\$64,371,504	14,012

*Corrections made to previous year's reporting.

Total Easements Acquired through 2024

County	Total Easements Acquired			PERCENT OF TOTAL
	Number	Acreage	Cost	
Allegany	18	2,010	\$4,100,079	0.54%
Anne Arundel	47	5,807	\$25,383,314	1.57%
Baltimore	268	26,927	\$105,113,299	7.28%
Calvert	35	4,715	\$12,267,678	1.27%
Caroline	250	36,344	\$44,129,820	9.82%
Carroll	411	46,748	\$111,445,344	12.63%
Cecil	108	16,087	\$41,245,305	4.35%
Charles	115	16,097	\$54,415,859	4.35%
Dorchester	111	16,875	\$26,054,158	4.56%
Frederick	180	27,347	\$81,987,734	7.39%
Garrett	63	7,893	\$12,118,036	2.13%
Harford	169	17,686	\$64,651,709	4.78%
Howard	34	4,098	\$8,355,364	1.11%
Kent	133	25,403	\$62,542,103	6.87%
Montgomery	37	5,646	\$24,490,338	1.53%
Prince George's	20	1,972	\$15,524,196	0.53%
Queen Anne's	214	36,861	\$77,892,540	9.96%
St. Mary's	149	15,304	\$67,664,053	4.14%
Somerset	64	7,266	\$12,845,550	1.96%
Talbot	91	13,923	\$38,446,069	3.76%
Washington	100	16,012	\$45,696,521	4.33%
Wicomico	70	8,370	\$16,460,534	2.26%
Worcester	70	10,614	\$19,767,037	2.87%
TOTALS	2,757	370,005	972,596,640	100.00%

****Chart was inadvertently omitted from FY2023 Annual Report****

MALPF Board and Staff

Appointed Board Members

William Allen, Chair, Member At-Large
Cricket Goodall, Vice Chair, Maryland Farm Bureau Representative
Gilbert O. Bowling, Jr., Member At-Large
Catherine Cosgrove, Member At-Large
Gary Dell, Member At-Large
Elizabeth Hill, Maryland Agricultural Commission Representative
Joseph W. Wood, Member At-Large
J. Bruce Yerkes, Maryland Grange Representative
Vacant, Young Farmer Representative

Ex-Officio Board Members

Honorable Brooke E. Lierman, Maryland Comptroller
Honorable Kevin Atticks, Maryland Secretary of Agriculture
Honorable Rebecca Flora, Maryland Secretary of Planning

Foundation Staff

Michelle Cable, Executive Director
Chana Turner, Lead Administrator
Elizabeth Beales, Administrator
Rama Dilip, Administrator
Erin Lueders, Administrator
Kim Hoxter, Administrative Officer
Amanda Massoni, Fiscal Specialist



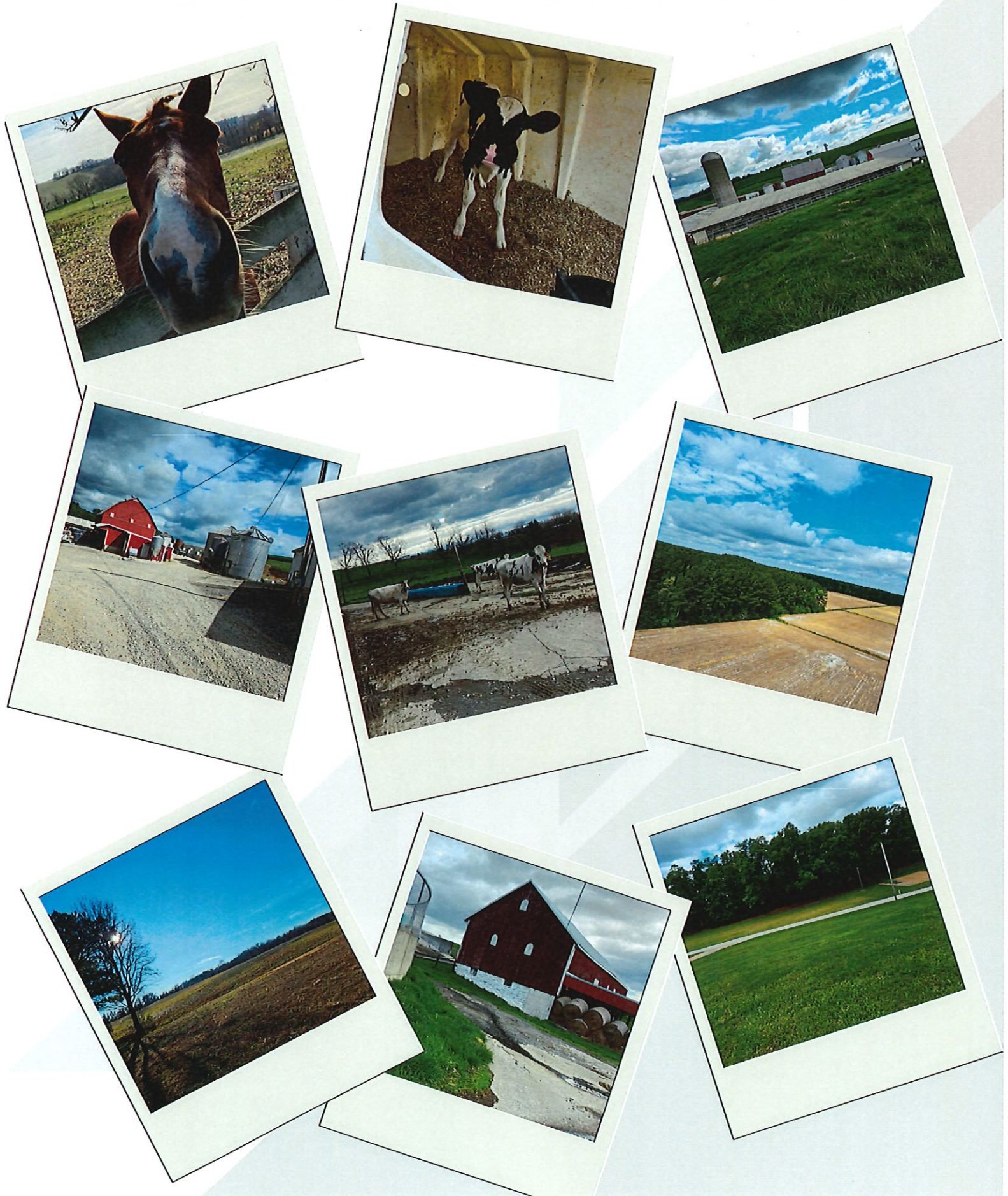
County Program Contacts

CONTACT INFORMATION

(Chair of County Agricultural Advisory Boards listed in *italics*)

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ANNE ARUNDEL Jane Cox (acting) Dept. of Planning & Zoning 2664 Riva Rd. 4 th Floor Annapolis, MD 21401 (410) 222-7444 <i>Chair: Steve Hopkins</i>	FREDERICK Shannon O'Neil Office of Agriculture 118 N. Market St. Frederick, MD 21701 (301) 600-1411 <i>Chair: Sandra Tucker</i>	ST. MARY'S Priscilla Leitch Dept. of Econ. & Com. Dev. P.O. Box 653 26737 Radio Station Way, Suite E-1 Leonardtown, MD 20650 (240) 309-4022 <i>Chair: Jow Wood</i>
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CECIL William Goldman, Planning & Zoning wgoldman@ccgov.org 200 Chesapeake Blvd., Suite 2300 Elkton, MD 21921 (410) 996-5220 <i>Chair: Paul Drummond</i> Vice Chair: Brandon Van Bibben	MONTGOMERY Mike Weyand 18410 Muncaster Road Derwood, MD 20850 (301) 590-2856 <i>Chair: Randy Stabler</i>	WORCESTER Katherine Munson Natural Resources Division Worcester County EP 1 West Market Street, Room 1302 Snow Hill, MD 21863-1070 (410) 632-1220 X1302 <i>Chair: vacant</i>
CHARLES Charles Rice, Dept. of Planning & Growth Management ricec@charlescountymd.gov 200 Baltimore St. La Plata, MD 20646 (301) 645-0651 <i>Chair: Charles E. Bowling</i>	PRINCE GEORGE'S Jeanine Nutter Soil Conservation District Field Service Center 5301 Marlboro Race Track Road Upper Marlboro, MD 20772 (301) 574-5162 X3 <i>Chair: Phil Hutton</i>	

MALPF Farms Around the State



**Maryland Agricultural Land
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**Governor Wes Moore
Lt. Governor Aruna Miller
Secretary Kevin Atticks
Dep. Secretary Steven A. Connelly**

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MDA staff and County Administrators**

