

## AM I ELIGIBLE?

Eligibility for the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Program is based upon the size of the parcel, productivity of the soils and the location of the property.

- **SIZE** - The minimum district size is 100 contiguous acres. If you do not own 100 acres, you can join your neighbors as long as there is a collective total of 100 contiguous acres. In addition, smaller sized farms with significant capability and specialized uses may also qualify. If your property abuts an existing agricultural district you may petition to establish a district regardless of the acreage in your parcel.

- **PRODUCTIVITY** - The productivity of the soil, measured by the USDA Soil Conservation Service Land Classification System, is a major part of the eligibility criteria and requires the following conditions:

1. At least 50% of the land must be classified as Class I, II or III soils.

2. If there is an insufficient percentage of Class I, II or III soils, then Woodland Group 1 and 2 soils are considered, but the combination of the two must exceed 60%.

3. If the land cannot meet the above conditions, it may still qualify if it can be proven to be productive by the nature of the operation and its management. Your local program administrator will help you to determine if your land qualifies.

- **LOCATION** - Land located in the AC, Agricultural Conservation or RC, Rural Conservation Zones is eligible to petition to establish an Agricultural Land Preservation District. Staff will assist you in determining if the location of your property is consistent with the program requirements.

## WHAT IS MY COMMITMENT?

To establish an Agricultural Preservation District, you must agree to the following conditions:

- The land will be kept in agricultural use for a minimum of 5 years.
- The subdivision and development of the district property for residential, commercial or industrial purposes is restricted for five years.
- You must sign a district agreement which contains the conditions listed above. The agreement must be notarized and recorded in the land records.

## FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, CONTACT:

Charles Rice, Agricultural Land Use Specialist  
Charles County Government Building  
Post Office Box 2150  
La Plata, Maryland 20646  
(301) 645-0651  
<[ricec@govt.co.charles.md.us](mailto:ricec@govt.co.charles.md.us)>

### Charles County Vision Statement

Charles County is a place where ...

- \* Private initiative is rewarded and businesses grow and prosper, while the preservation of our heritage is paramount,
- \* Government services have reached the highest level of excellence, and
- \* The quality of life is felt by its citizens to be the best in the region and its government is recognized as a leader in support of these expectations. . . . .

### Charles County Mission Statement

The mission of the Charles County Government is to provide our citizens the highest quality service possible in a timely, efficient, and courteous manner. To achieve this goal, government must be operated in an open and accessible atmosphere, be based on comprehensive long and short term planning, and have an appropriate managerial organization tempered by fiscal responsibility.

# MARYLAND AGRICULTURAL LAND PRESERVATION PROGRAM

IN CHARLES COUNTY, MARYLAND



CHARLES COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING  
AND GROWTH MANAGEMENT  
LA PLATA, MARYLAND

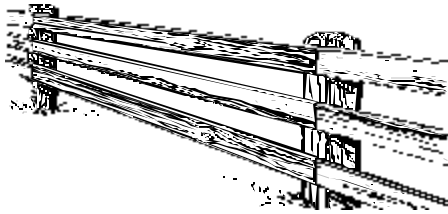
SEPTEMBER 2000

## INTRODUCTION

Agriculture is a significant part of Charles County, both as an industry and as a contributor to the County's character. Serious efforts are underway to protect our agricultural lands and rural character.

The Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Program has been in existence since 1977 and provides a unique opportunity to assure that agriculture will remain in Charles County. It is one of the most successful programs of its kind in the country. Its primary purpose is to preserve sufficient agricultural land in order to maintain a viable local base of food and fiber production for the present and future citizens of Maryland. The program is comprised of two basic elements:

1. The establishment of an Agricultural Preservation District;
2. The option to sell a Perpetual Agricultural Land Preservation Easement or participate in the County's Transferrable Development Rights (TDR) Program, once a district is formed.



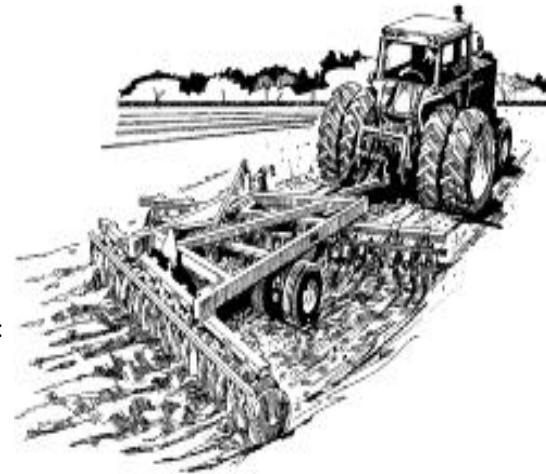
## WHAT IS AN AGRICULTURAL LAND PRESERVATION DISTRICT?

An Agricultural Land Preservation District is a parcel of land, or portion thereof, usually consisting of 100 contiguous acres or more, that is either currently being used for producing food and/or fiber or has the capability of doing so. Cropland, woodland, pasture and idle land may all be considered for establishing an agricultural district. Once an agricultural district is established, the land must remain in agricultural use for a minimum of 5 years. This will provide the security of knowing that the land and any nearby districts are protected from encroaching development.

## WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS?

There are many benefits to a landowner who establishes an Agricultural Preservation District. New ideas for incentives and benefits are being introduced all the time, but as of May 2000, they include the following:

- Farmers who establish an Agricultural Preservation District will receive a 100% property tax break on the land, barns and other buildings involved in the farming operation, excluding the main dwelling and one surrounding acre. This is a significant incentive for establishing an agricultural district.
- An official acknowledgment from the Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation and from the County, that agriculture is the preferred land use. This may provide useful evidence if you are ever involved in defending yourself against a nuisance complaint filed by your neighbors.
- Maintenance of the rural character of an area or community and the knowledge that the land in nearby districts is protected from encroaching development.
- Farmers who are committed to long term agriculture help retain the critical mass of farms and farmers needed to maintain agricultural support services. Farm implement dealers, seed and feed dealers, as well as grain elevators depend on a minimum level of business generated by area farms. Therefore, as long as viable agricultural operations exist, these farm support services are likely to remain in the area.
- Once an Agricultural Preservation District is established, you have the option to sell an Agricultural Land Preservation easement to the State for a one-time, cash payment. Lots may be designated before the sale of the easement, for members of the family, based on the amount of acreage that is involved. The State will make an offer to buy the development rights easement based on the difference between the fair market value (that which a developer might pay) and the agricultural value (that which a farmer might pay). For more information on selling an agricultural land preservation easement or on the County's TDR Program, contact your local program administrator as shown on the back of this publication.



Dear Agricultural Administrator,

Yes, I am interested in finding out more information about the following programs:

Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Program in Charles County  
Charles County Transfer of Development Rights Program

Please mail this information to:

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For further information, you may contact the Agricultural Administrator at (301) 645-0651 or e-mail  
<[ricec@govt.co.charles.md.us](mailto:ricec@govt.co.charles.md.us)>