

FARMING AT METRO'S EDGE

INTRODUCTION

Of the 316,800 acres in Montgomery County, 67,613 acres are in farmland. The 2007 United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) census reported 561 farms in the county averaging 121 acres, more than 350 horticultural businesses and more than 10,000 horses. The Agricultural Reserve contains approximately 106,000 acres and includes parklands and municipalities as well as many of the county's farms. Cash grain farms are the predominant agricultural use in the county covering more than 48,000 acres; however, 38% of the farms produce some table food crop - products for direct human consumption: 44 farms produce vegetables and melons, 34 farms produce fruits and nuts, 80 farms raise beef cattle, and 59 farms produce poultry and eggs.

LAND PRESERVATION PROGRAMS

Transfer of Development Rights

In the late 1970s farmland was disappearing at a rapid rate. Montgomery County stepped up to this problem by adopting a Functional Master Plan for the Preservation of Agriculture and Rural Open Space in October 1980. One of the provisions of this plan called for the creation of a rural density transfer zone, called the Agricultural Reserve, in which the land was downzoned from one dwelling per five acres to one dwelling per 25 acres. To compensate the landowners for the loss of development density, a program of transferable development rights (TDR) was created with one development right for each five acres of land.

As master plans were developed for various sections of the county, land that could support more density than was permitted by zoning was identified as a TDR receiving area with a specific amount of additional residential density allowed. A developer could buy a development right from a landowner in the Agricultural Reserve and utilize it to increase density in the residential receiving area. The cost of a TDR has varied from about \$6,000 to \$20,000. When a development right is sold, the county places an easement on the seller's property indicating the number of development rights sold and the number remaining with that property. In 2007 the county added a restriction via the zoning code limiting the non-agricultural uses of properties with TDR easements.

Building Lot Termination

To reduce the amount of development in the Agricultural Reserve, the county adopted an additional transfer program with a Building Lot Termination (BLT) easement in 2009. This program recognizes a building lot as being a portion of the land with demonstrated capability to meet the requirements for installing an approved septic system to support a dwelling, including the back-up locations required. The easement covers the entire property. It identifies the septic location and terminates the utilization of the septic site for each lot and allows TDRs to be retained only for future residential dwellings approved by the Agricultural Preservation Advisory Board. When a BLT right is sold, the landowner is compensated by a percentage of the cost of a building lot in the area, an amount determined annually by the Department of Economic Development, currently about \$200,000. The county, using criteria including type of soil, size of the parcel and number of BLTs offered, can purchase BLT rights. The number is limited by available financing. A public market for the rights has been created through the county zoning ordinance, which identifies mixed-use zones in which the BLT can be utilized for additional density and specifies the rate of square feet per BLT.

Current League Position

Since 1999, the Montgomery County League has had an ongoing study of agricultural issues. With regard to transferable development rights, the League consensus position with language updated to reflect changes made to the county code via zoning text amendments is:

ORGANIZATIONS AND INDIVIDUALS ARE INVITED TO DUPLICATE THIS FACT SHEET WITH ATTRIBUTION GIVEN TO LWVMC. BEFORE REPRODUCING, PLEASE CONTACT THE LEAGUE OFFICE AT 301-984-9585 OR LWVMC@EROLS.COM FOR CORRECTIONS OR UPDATED INFORMATION, OR CHECK OUR WEBSITE, MONT.LWVMD.ORG, FOR THE MOST UP-TO-DATE VERSION.

Support for policies to ensure the viability of agriculture in Montgomery County including: (2004)

Agriculture and rural open space preservation programs: the Transferable Development Rights (TDR) and the Building Lot Termination (BLT) programs with their goals of conserving farmland, compensating rural landowners for down-zoning and consolidating growth (2002) through

- 1) Easement restrictions on non-agricultural uses (2006)
- 2) Utilizing intensive review in Master Plan development for determining potential receiving areas (2003)
- 3) Encouragement of TDR and BLT use in the commercial/residential zones (2003)
- 4) Requiring the use of TDRs for increased residential density in other mixed use zones (2006)
- 5) Adopting a planning goal of no net loss of receiving areas (2003)
- 6) A comprehensive system for tracking the TDR and BLT easement generating and utilization processes (2003)
- 7) On-site reforestation for residential TDR receiving areas – opposing off-site alternatives in such areas (2003)

Agricultural Uses Affected by the Zoning Rewrite

Our current consensus includes support for the restrictions and uses permitted in the Agricultural Reserve as of 2002. As the years-long effort to rewrite the zoning code nears completion, the Planning Board Draft renames the rural density transfer zone Agricultural Reserve, reduces the number of zones and incorporates many graphics for clarity. Three categories of use are defined: permitted - can be exercised in accordance with the basic definition of the zone, limited—additional standards are spelled out for the use, and conditional – particular standards are spelled out and approval by the Hearing Examiner or the Board of Appeals is required. The Draft combines some uses with others and eliminates some uses. The Planning Board has reviewed uses potentially to be added or modified. The combined uses include the various farm tenant dwelling categories, various day care centers, and residential care facilities. Uses removed include blacksmith (a service likely to occur in a mobile fashion), boathouse (accommodated as an accessory use), private educational facilities (with the restriction currently in the code can be a home occupation), guest house (should be licensed as an accessory apartment), heliport (currently only a Federal installation operates; otherwise an airstrip is an accessory use and must be associated with farming), hunting and fishing cabin (becomes an accessory use) and parking of motor vehicles (removed except for parking of commercial vehicles in an historic district).

Uses which have been discussed as additions or modifications to those currently permitted in the Agricultural Reserve include:

Agricultural Education/Tourism: Agricultural and accessory activities conducted as part of a farm's regular operations with emphasis on hands-on experiences that foster increased knowledge of farming, including low-impact cultivation methods, humane animal care, water conservation, Maryland's farming history, the importance of eating healthy, locally grown foods, teamwork and personal responsibility, and other outdoor experiences and events on farms; includes corn mazes, hayrides, and educational tours, classes, and workshops.

This was suggested as a limited use with the following standards:

1. The minimum property size is 50 acres.
2. A minimum of 90% of the property is maintained in agricultural cultivation, pasture land, woodland, or natural features.
3. Impervious area is a maximum of 5% of the property.

The use was suggested by the Agriculture Advisory Committee to allow farmers to promote local agriculture and the Agricultural Reserve to the general public. Objectors have raised concern that the scope of the activity might allow day camps with a non-agricultural focus to be established and include such activities as paint ball shooting. Struggles with an existing non-conforming day camp were pointed out.

Farm Supply or Machinery Sales, Storage, and Service: The use of any building, structure, or land for the sales, storage, or service of machinery used in farming for agricultural purposes. Does not include sales, storage, or service of vehicles and other machinery not associated with farming.

This use is suggested as a conditional use, which may be permitted by the Board of Appeals. The following standards are recommended:

1. The minimum area of the lot is 5 acres. The Board of Appeals may require a larger area if warranted by the size and characteristics of the inventory.
2. The minimum setback from any property line for parking, buildings, or inventory storage is 75 feet, except that the minimum setback from the street may be reduced to 50 feet if the Board of Appeals finds that the confronting site is in an Agricultural or Rural Residential zone; and the smaller setback would be compatible with surrounding uses.

This use is currently prohibited on land with a TDR easement. There is only one implement dealer currently located in Montgomery County and farmers may have to travel some distance for the servicing of equipment. As a special exception use, the existing implement dealer located on a parcel with a TDR easement. This was at a time before the restriction on the use of land with TDR easements was put in place. There is concern about that operation's ability to expand. The planning board has voted to eliminate the TDR restriction for this use. Objections were raised to allowing such a commercial use in the Agricultural Reserve when land just outside the Reserve may be available. There is some support for the TDR restriction among the planning staff since many acres of land without TDR easements exist in the Agricultural Reserve.

Slaughterhouse: Any building, place, or establishment where livestock raised off-site are slaughtered for commercial purposes. This would be a conditional use, which may be permitted by the board of appeals subject to the following standards:

1. The minimum area of the lot is 20 acres.
2. The minimum setback from any property line is 75 feet.
3. The property must front on and have direct access to a road built to primary residential or higher standards.

Facility requirements for slaughtering and the licensing of the operation with limitations on the number of animals processed are under the jurisdiction of the Maryland Department of Animal Hygiene for fowl and rabbits and by the USDA for red meat. This type of operation is permitted under the current zoning. A clarification being incorporated in the current code is to permit on-site slaughtering of the farmer's own animals as an accessory use.

FARMING AT METRO'S EDGE CONFERENCE

In January of this year members of the farming communities of Montgomery and Frederick Counties and members of community, environmental and government organizations met to develop information and ideas that can be used to advance productive and profitable agriculture and strong farm communities in Montgomery and Frederick Counties for the next generation. Participants gained an appreciation of the economic and environmental challenges and opportunities the diverse farming operations in our region will confront in coming decades, discovered common interests, and recommended actions that the various stakeholders could take to help achieve the goal of a vibrant agricultural industry integrated into the broader life of our metropolitan region.

The participants expressed major concerns about new state nutrient management regulations; the need for technical and economic support to implement conservation measures; the ability of farmers to effectively market their crops; and the ability of younger persons to enter farming occupations. There were also concerns that the metropolitan populations do not understand the challenges facing farmers.

Nutrient Management Regulations

First authorized in 1998 by the Water Quality Improvement Act, the stated intent of Maryland's Nutrient Management Program is to protect water quality in the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries by ensuring that farmers and urban land managers apply fertilizers and animal wastes in an environmentally sound way. All agricultural operations grossing \$2500 a year or more or livestock producers with 8,000 pounds or more of live animal weight (approximately six cows or horses) are required to obtain and follow nutrient management plans when fertilizing crops and managing animal wastes and to file annual implementation reports with the Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA). MDA began making inspections to verify compliance with the plans in 2003. Violators face fines and penalties of up to \$2000 a year and loss of MDA cost-share grants. By the end of 2012, 99.6% of Maryland's 5,433 regulated farmers had submitted plans.

The six Bay states and DC have agreed to a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL), which is the maximum amount of nitrogen, phosphorus and sediment the Bay can accept and still meet water quality standards. Other pollutants such as pesticides and pharmaceuticals are not included in the TMDL analysis. Each state has developed a Watershed Implementation Plan (WIP) with milestones to meet the TMDL goals. Maryland's plan was presented to the Environmental Protection Agency in December 2010. A new law requires that all new construction that uncovers soil be recovered by thick mulch within seven days of initial clearance. By 45 days 95% of the exposed soil must be covered by grass. The Urban Nutrient Management Program regulates about 700 non-agricultural applicators, including lawn care companies, commercial landscapers, golf course managers, and public groundskeepers. They must test the soil, keep fertilizer records, and follow the University of Maryland guidelines when applying nutrients. The MDA reviews these records, and may impose fines for violations. The Fertilizer Use Act of 2011 affects both lawn care professionals and homeowners and requires the lawn care professionals to become certified. .

In 2012 the Nutrient Management Regulations were revised and are being phased in over the next few years as a step toward meeting the TMDL goals. Except for winter nutrient applications, all are to be enforced by January 2014. The nutrient management plans current as of October 15, 2012 remain in force and new plans will be developed as the current ones expire. At the Farming at Metro's Edge conference farmers complained that they were not included in developing these new regulations. Lonnie Luther, President of Montgomery County Farm Bureau, commented in its October 2012 newsletter, "My take on MDA's proposed Nutrient Management Regulations is that animal agriculture has been given a death sentence in the state of Maryland. Why do strangers feel they have a right to instruct farmers how to farm?"

The nutrient management plans under the new regulations are very detailed. Factors include: the type of crop being planted and yield goals, soil tests for phosphorus and potassium, the timing and method of application, and the use of tillage or no-tillage. Fields near surface water or streams have a no application zone of 10 to 35 feet. Organic fertilizers must be incorporated into the soil within 48 hours of application. If an organic nutrient is applied in the fall, a cover crop must be planted. No fertilizer application is allowed from November to March. Because of their complexity, these nutrient management plans must be prepared by a certified University of Maryland extension specialist, a certified private consultant, or a farmer who is trained and certified by MDA to prepare plans. The university has developed a computer program called NuManPro to assist agents with the planning process. Farmers must keep substantial records based upon the plan regarding the amount and type of fertilizer applied by crop.

Commercial fertilizers' nutrients: nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium, must be registered with the MDA State Chemist and labeled according to the law. The user must be credentialed and must keep records of what was used, how much, when and method of application. Both urban users and farmers who apply any type of fertilizer to an area of ten acres or more must obtain a Nutrient Applicator Voucher good for three years. A voucher is given for attending a free two-hour training session on fertilizer application offered by University of Maryland Extension and has continuing education requirement to maintain the license. The MDA requires those who apply pesticides and herbicides to be trained and pass an exam to get an applicator license. Enforcement of these laws rests with MDA with the state Departments of Environment and Natural Resources enforcing regulations on pollutants in the Bay. They can take legal action and levy fines and penalties and take administrative actions, providing a time line to correct the problem. The Office of Administrative Hearings can refer violators to civil or criminal court.

The University of Maryland conducts research on numerous topics ranging from food, nutrition and health to crops, farm animals and nutrient management and shares this knowledge with Maryland farmers and other residents through University of Maryland Extension. Recent budget cuts have reduced research personnel and limited the number of field agents. Many farmers look to University of Maryland Extension for technical advice and are finding agents less available. Reductions in staffacerbate the time demands of paper work versus field work and the priority setting of class instruction versus individual assistance.

Soil Conservation and Water Quality Plans

The Soil Conservation Districts are political subdivisions of the state that employ agents to educate and assist landowners in implementing soil conservation practices and techniques. A board of five supervisors and three assistant supervisors who are all engaged in agriculture in Montgomery County governs the Montgomery Soil Conservation District. A staff of eight employees funded by the county, state and federal governments supports the district. Services are provided to farmers who voluntarily seek their assistance to develop Soil Conservation and Water Quality Plans or advice on conservation practices. Conservation measures in the urban sector of the county are generally under the purview of the Department of Environmental Protection. The Montgomery

County zoning ordinance requires an equine operation with more than ten horses to have a Soil Conservation and Water Quality Plan, but many operations may not be aware of this requirement even though the Soil Conservation District staff recommends such plans. An operation of that size is required to also have a nutrient management plan.

Funding for some 30 conservation practices is provided through the Maryland Agricultural Water Quality Cost-Share (MACS) Program. Grants may cover up to 87.5% of the cost to install conservation measures. One pays landowners to take sensitive cropland out of production for 10 to 15 years. The cost of qualifying conservation equipment can be reduced by low interest loans (3-4% below market rates) and by Maryland income tax deductions. The farmer must make the investment in the project, agree to maintain it and then receive reimbursement from the state. Most grants are funded through general obligation bonds, but some practices such as cover crops, nutrient management services and manure transport are financed through special funds including the Chesapeake Bay Restoration Fund, the Chesapeake Bay 2010 Trust Fund and general fund allocations. This past year three Montgomery County projects, a watering facility, a waste storage structure and a roof runoff system, received reimbursements totaling \$26,949. The state provided a total of \$557,017 through 37 contracts for cover crops on 13,116 acres of Montgomery County farmland in the 2011-2012 season.

The USDA also provides a variety of cost-share funding for the implementation of conservation best management practices that benefit water quality, protect soil and enhance other natural resources. The Environmental Quality Incentive Program, which is administered by the USDA- Natural Resource Conservation Service, provides millions of dollars per year for conservation practices in Maryland. This program provides funding for many of the same practices covered under the MACS, administered by MDA. In some cases, a combination of both programs may be used to cover different aspects of conservation projects on a farm. This can allow a farmer to install more practices to improve water quality.

Another program frequently used for planting riparian forest and grass buffers is the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program, which is administered by the USDA- Farm Services Agency. The goal of this program is to fence off sensitive streamside areas and encourage the establishment of grass or forest cover along waterways. The Montgomery Soil Conservation District works in concert with all the agricultural agencies to provide landowners with the best technical advice and cost-share options to ensure that conservation practices become an integral part of farming operations.

A Soil Conservation and Water Quality Plan developed for a farmer has a ten-year life and addresses a range of resource concerns for the entire farm operation. During the life of the plan a staff person visits the farm to encourage implementation and assist with problems or questions the landowner may have. The state's WIP program has set conservation milestones for the state and each district. This has led to more outreach effort from the staff and the development of more plans. Because of budget cuts, the engineering staff has been reduced and this has slowed down the implementation of some plans. However, in the period from July 2011 to January 2013 there were 36,901.3 acres covered by plans in Montgomery County. The best management practices being implemented as part of the effort to achieve water quality objectives in Montgomery County are described in the table below. The table also indicates the achievements and milestones for WIP during this period. Those practices preceded by \$\$ are eligible for cost sharing from the state or federal government.

Conservation Practice/ Best Management Practice	Benefit	WIP - 2011-2012	2013 Milestone
\$\$ Cover Crop- Implemented annually A small grain crop planted in the fall to recover unused plant nutrients from the root zone, control soil erosion and improve the soil.	Ties up nutrients that are left over from the previous crop, reduces leaching of nutrients to surface and ground water supplies; protects soil from wind and water erosion, improves soil health, increases water retention and reduces weeds and pests; may reduce fertilizer requirements in the spring.	13116A	9208.A
\$\$ Critical Area Planting Planting grass or other vegetation to protect area from soil erosion.	Reduces soil erosion, improves water quality by reducing the amount of sediment, nutrients and pesticides running off farmland. Protects areas such as dams or gullied area. Land retired from crop use for conservation improvements	341.6A	

\$\$ Riparian Buffers Trees, shrubs or grasses planted next to waterways including rivers, streams and drainage ditches to filter runoff.	Prevents contaminants from entering waterway and provides shade, food and habitat for wildlife, fish and other aquatic life; helps to stabilize streams. Grass buffers meeting federal standards Forest buffers meeting federal standards	11.8A 4 A	8.1 A 2.9 A
\$\$ Grassed Waterway Shaping and establishing grass in a natural drainageway to prevent gullies from forming and control soil erosion.	Grass cover protects the drainageway from gully erosion; vegetation may act as a filter, absorbing some of the pesticides and nutrients in runoff water; provides cover for wildlife.	42.8 A	15.8A
\$\$ Heavy Use Area Protection Stabilizing areas that are disturbed because of frequent and intensive use by livestock or farm equipment.	Reduces soil erosion by covering the area with permanent cover – tough grasses, gravel or concrete; improve water quality by providing an area for manure to be scraped up and managed; provides firm footing for livestock; reduces dust	0.5 A	1.3A
\$\$ Livestock Watering System A system of troughs and water lines to provide livestock with water from a spring, pond, well or other source.	Provides a clean, reliable, easily accessible water supply for animals; allows farmers to divide large pastures into smaller units to rotate livestock to maintain good forage quality; can reduce erosion by controlling access to water; reduce mastitis or hoof problems. Off-stream watering without fencing	100 A	42.9A
\$\$ Manure Storage Structure A structure to store manure produced by poultry or livestock until conditions are right for field application or transport.	Protects water quality, allows for animal waste application in accordance with a nutrient management plan. Cuts fertilizer costs by reducing nutrient losses; protects manure designated for transport. Waste storage projects	5	3
\$\$ Roof Runoff System A system for collecting, controlling and directing runoff water from non-residential farm buildings.	Improves water quality, reduces soil erosion, increases infiltration, protects buildings and other structures. For nursery acres For greenhouse	2.0A 4	56.6A 9
\$\$ Stream Protection Protecting a stream by excluding livestock through fencing and crossings; stabilizing the stream channel with plantings or riprap and establishing a vegetative buffer zone	Reduces erosion, improves fish habitat. Decreases stream migration and improves flood attenuation; reduces amount of nutrients in stream; riparian buffer zones provide wildlife habitat; trees reduce stream temperatures and increase food and cover to support aquatic resources. Stream access control with fencing	2.4A	10.1A
\$\$ Wetland Restoration Restoring the water and plant community in a former or degraded wetland.	Intercepting surface runoff, trapping sediment, processing nutrients and organic waste; allowing water to percolate slowly into the ground or be absorbed by roots to reduce peak water flows after storms; providing habitat for waterfowl and other wild species.		0.3A
Crop Residue Management Leaving residue from the previous crop on the soil surface for a specific period of time by reducing tillage.	Ground cover prevents soil erosion; residue improves soil tilth; fewer trips across the field and less tillage reduce soil compaction and save time, energy and labor.		
Crop Rotation Changing the crops grown in a field on a regular basis.	Adds plant diversity, may reduce pesticide costs; rotation of grains with legumes reduces fertilizer needs; crops that grow close together can reduce soil erosion dramatically.		
\$\$ Nutrient Management - Implemented annually Applying the correct amount and form of plant nutrients to achieve realistic crop goals while minimizing the movement of nutrients into surface waters and groundwater.	Reduces fertilizer costs, protects water quality; correct application on all fields may improve soil tilth and organic matter content. Decision management is a fine-grained approach to this process required by the WIP. Enhanced nutrient management on pasture Dairy manure incorporated (Pending model efficiency)	40,382.8A 4,153.7A 498 A	35072A 8,480A 71.4A

Conservation Tillage An almost universal practice of not disturbing the ground to plant crops	Reduces runoff; prevents soil compaction; saves on fuel costs	17,510.4A	28,485
\$\$ Rotational Grazing Managing pasture grazing by moving livestock from one area to another at the proper time to maintain high quality forage.	Improves vegetative cover, protects soil from erosion and improves water quality; helps ensure adequate high quality forage throughout the grazing season; distributes manure in pastures; improves habitat for birds and other wildlife. Prescribed grazing Horse pasture management (Pending model efficiency)	151.3A 44.4A	71.3A 38.3A
Cropland Irrigation Management Using measurements of water and efficient application, or water in combination with nutrients	(Pending model efficiency) Reduces the amount of water utilized for crop production	485.5A	1280A

Marketing Local Produce

Local produce is marketed in Montgomery County in three different ways: pick your own, farmers markets and community supported agriculture (CSA) contracts. The three major pick your own farms: Butlers Orchard, Lewis Orchard, and Homestead Farm operate on a seasonal basis. They open in late May or June with the strawberry season and continue into the fall, usually through Thanksgiving, although some reopen to sell Christmas trees. These facilities may have special events or offer hayrides and other complementary activities. They may also sell produce that is ready for sale as well as processed goods such as fruit jellies or pies, not necessarily produced from the farm.

There are 23 farmers markets in Montgomery County licensed by the Department of Economic Development to sell whole or uncut fruits and vegetables, unflavored honey, unhazardous baked goods, eggs, acidic fruit jams and jellies. To sell prepared foods at a farmers market or onsite farm market, the producer must get a license from the Department of Health and Human Services. Products requiring such a license include cut fruits and vegetables, fruit butters, meat and poultry, including cured meats. The county health department defines baked goods including pies, cream pies, pastries and cupcakes as potentially hazardous. Kitchens producing these foods must be inspected and be separated from the home food preparation. Poultry and rabbits must be slaughtered to MDA certification and red meat to USDA standards for process and facility. Maryland also licenses a Mobile Farmers Market Unit (\$100 fee) with the license valid statewide. This is for a refrigerator truck or vehicle with coolers and gel packs that maintain refrigerated or frozen temperatures throughout the event. The county enforces the rules and assesses fines for non-compliance.

The number of farmers markets has been growing in the county driven in part by the diversity of the population. Farmers prefer to market on a retail basis rather than selling to grocery stores or institutions at a discount. Hub marketing was discussed at the farming conference, but County farmers have not been enthusiastic about the concept, partly because they are able to sell at retail prices through the farmers markets and do not want to reduce prices. Some residents, however, are resistant to the higher prices charged at farmers markets. Because of the number of market locations, some farmers have found it necessary to be present at more than one location to effectively market their crops. Some markets report an abundance of providers, but too few customers and seek contributions for advertising.

Community supported agriculture is a relationship between a grower and consumers who have pledged to support one or more local farms, sharing the risks and benefits of local food production. CSA subscribers pay at the onset of the growing season for a share of the anticipated harvest; once harvesting begins, they receive weekly shares of vegetables and fruit, and also sometimes herbs, cut flowers, and honey. The consumer goes to the farm or to an agreed upon delivery site to pick up a portion of the crop every week and receives what is in season. Four farms in Montgomery County with various special characteristics – organic, heirloom, broad-based -- offer CSA subscriptions.

New Farmer Pilot Program

The New Farmer Pilot Project was created to fill in the gaps that inhibit small, sustainable-practice farmers and horticulturalists from starting new businesses in Montgomery County. The goals of the pilot program created by the County's Department of Economic Development are to provide new entrepreneurs with technical/business training and assistance, mentors and access to land. In developing the pilot, the County benefited from several advisors, including Woody Woodroof, Caroline Taylor and Wade Butler, and staff from the Intervale Center and the New Entry Sustainable

Farming Program. Program management for the New Farmer Pilot Project is supported, in part, from a Federal earmark from the Small Business Administration, which was secured to enhance the growth of local green businesses.

The New Farmer Pilot Project expresses its commitment to sustainable agriculture through the following land use goals:

1. Encouraging the use of cover crops and rotating crops
2. Using annual soil tests taken in the fall as a guide to determine the compost needs for each field
3. Discouraging the use of chemical substances to control weeds unless the products are organic
4. Encouraging the use of current organic methods of insect control
5. Discouraging the use of chemicals, fungicides or bactericides. Acceptable controls include: crop rotation, organic fungicides, diseased plant removal and disposal, tool sanitation, restriction of foot traffic, cleanliness. Black plastic mulch use and/or drip irrigation or watering at ground level is preferred.

The project relies on partnerships to achieve its goals. Five local landowners provided the foundation for the project by agreeing to lease a portion of their properties to new farm businesses for a minimum of five years. The County released a public solicitation last fall to existing local farmers to serve as mentors and is currently in the process of matching interested mentors with the new farmers. Through a partnership, the University of Maryland Extension implemented an eight-week training program for all applicants, which included topics like selecting farm enterprises (what to grow), creating farm business plans, using season-extending technologies and exploring value added offerings. The kick-off for the training was a panel discussion with representatives from Mixed Greens Kitchen, Whole Foods, MOMs and One Acre Farm to discuss trends in local demand and how to get products to market.

As of March 1 of this year, the New Farmer Pilot Project was halfway through its 12-month term. The pilot had 18 applicants, eight of whom were invited to share their proposals with landowners to determine if their proposed enterprises were a good match for the land. Three of those eight are now in negotiations with land owners for leases, which will range from five to seven years and cover from two to five acres. The County was able to open up the training program to interested parties who had not applied to the pilot. The training averaged 25 participants each week.

Acronym List:

BLT – Building Lot Termination	TMDL – Total Maximum Daily Load
MACS – Maryland Agricultural Water Quality Cost-Share	USDA – United States Department of Agriculture
MDA – Maryland Department of Agriculture	WIP – Watershed Implementation Plan
TDR – Transferable Development Right	

Consensus Questions:

1. Should we support including uses not currently permitted in the Agricultural Reserve, but considered by the planning board for inclusion as the code is rewritten: a. Agricultural tourism, b. Farm supply or machinery sales, storage, and service on land with TDR easements, c. On-site slaughtering of livestock, d. Other
2. Should Soil Conservation and Water Quality Plans be promoted for: a. All farms, b. Farms above some minimum size, c. Only some types of farms
3. What actions should be taken to meet the water quality standards for the health of the Bay: a. Increase staffing by extension agents/soil conservation district personnel to see that more conservation practices are implemented, b. Utilize volunteers with the organic farming expertise to teach how to reduce pollutants in farming, c. Demand good conservation practices from the non-farm community, d. Other
4. Should a continuing new farmer program emphasize: a. Sustainable agricultural practices, b. Currently accepted soil and water conservation practices c. Specialty crops for local markets d. Other

The committee thanks the following persons for their assistance in the preparation of this Fact Sheet:

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