

**FINAL REPORT FROM THE AD HOC
COMMITTEE ON RURAL LEGACY/CONSERVATION**

ISSUE:

Rural Legacy/Conservation

Maryland's Rural Legacy Program was created in 1997, however the preservation and conservation of the bountiful Natural Resources located on the lower Back River Neck Peninsula can trace its roots back much farther. In the late 1950's when plans were introduced to create Port related industries on lower Back River Neck, citizens rallied together to stop the destruction of hundreds of acres of pristine forests and wetlands, thereby creating the modern day preservation movement on the peninsula.

Through the use of a variety of programs such as Program Open Space, MD Agricultural Land Preservation, the Chesapeake Bay Critical Areas Program, Resource Conservation zoning, Growth Management Legislation, Forest Restoration Programs, Land Trusts, Recreation & Parks purchases, Conservation Easements, Habitat Protection, Mitigation, the Rural Legacy Program, and more; the citizens of the lower Back River Neck have had a great deal of success in preserving the natural splendor of the peninsula.

We (the citizens of the lower Back River Neck), were the champions in the establishment of the Chesapeake Bay Critical Area Program. We were the creators of the Growth Management legislation. We led the crusade for conservation easements long before the Rural Legacy Program was established. We were at the forefront in the creation of conservation zoning. We have planted literally thousands of trees. Our dedication to preservation and conservation in Baltimore County is second to none.

Although our successes have protected large contiguous blocks of forest and wetlands as well as smaller individual tracts, there still remain more than 800 acres of large tracts (10 or more acres) in private ownership on the peninsula which are under the threat of residential or commercial development.

We strongly request the following course of action in reference to Rural Legacy and Conservation on the lower Back River Neck Peninsula.

Recommendations

- No sale of government land for development without a referendum.
- Identify large unprotected parcels (10 or more acres) within our planning area and aggressively pursue the preservation of the same.
- Government use of Rural Legacy, Open Space, or Recreation & Parks lands to obtain community input at earliest concept planning stage.
- No change in zoning in parcels adjacent to protected lands.
- Identify dedicated funding source to purchase land for Rural Legacy.
- Dedicated funding source for Rural Legacy purchases could be a Special Surcharge on the property tax rate within the planning area, (perhaps 2 cents) subject to age and income restrictions already in Property Tax Code.