Carroll County Agricultural Land Preservation Program

Program Purpose: To preserve agricultural land for the future by paying willing landowners to permanently retire the development potential of their land. This is accomplished through agreement with the landowner on terms of a Deed of Conservation Easement and recording the easement in the Carroll County Land Records.

Type of Easement: Agricultural conservation easement in perpetuity held by Carroll County Commissioners.

Payment Options: The Carroll County Agr Land Preservation Program offers two payment options to better serve our farm community:

1. Installment Purchase Agreement (IPA) – offer is 40% of a formula-derived fair market value, due at end of 20-year term during which the IPA pays twice yearly five percent (5%) tax-free interest which in effect doubles the offer amount. At end of term owner receives balloon payment of full offer purchase price;

2. Lump-sum – offer is seventy percent (70%) of formula-derived fair market value, paid in full at settlement.

Eligibility Factors and Criteria:

1. A minimum of 60 acres is required, or, if fewer than 60 acres, must be more than 30 acres, AND: a.) be adjacent to a preserved farm; b.) have a minimum of 4 lot rights; and c.) may not request to retain any lot right. Properties of fewer than 30 acres are not eligible unless adjacent to preserved land of same owner.

2. Properties must have at least 50% USDA Class I, II or III soil capability.

3. All properties must have subdivision potential.

4. All applications must be approved by the Carroll County Ag Preservation Advisory Board and by the Board of County Commissioners.

5. All properties will be ranked by qualifications including soil quality and location.

Limitations on Development: No development for non-agricultural uses. Retaining a future residential lot is discouraged and will result in a reduced easement offer price unless property has no dwelling, in which case a nonsubdividable dwelling is allowed. Requests considered on a case by case basis.

Conservation practices: Seller agrees to periodic inspections of the property and to establish stream buffers, obtain a Forest Stewardship Plan within two years; conservation plan implementation required.

For More Information: Call Carroll County Agricultural Land Preservation, 410 386-2214.

Carroll County Critical Farms Program

Program Purpose: To boost our local agricultural economy as well as the County’s land preservation effort by assisting farmers in the purchase of valuable farmland. The Critical Farms Program provides more than half of the purchase price or value at settlement to a contract purchaser of a farm.

Type of Easement: Purchase assistance obligates the purchaser of a farm.

Eligibility Factors and Criteria:

1. Property should be comprised of at least 75 acres.

2. At least 50% of soils must be USDA Class I, II or III.

3. Property must have development potential.

4. Purchase process begins with determining eligibility and purchaser presenting a copy of a contract of sale. Purchase Assistance: Purchase assistance will be 52.5% of the purchase price or appraised fair market value, whichever is lower.

Stewardship: Seller agrees to allow periodic inspections of the property and to implement a soil and water conservation plan and where applicable, a forest stewardship plan. Other requirements in the easement may apply.

For More Information: Call Deborah Bowers, Program Manager, at 410 386-2214.

Maryland Rural Legacy Program

Program Purpose: To preserve farmland, forestland and environmentally sensitive land for agricultural uses as well as permanent critical habitat protection.

Type of Easement: While funded through grants to the County from the Maryland Department of Natural Resources, Rural Legacy easements are held by the County Commissioners and administered by the County.
Eligibility Factors and Criteria:

1. Properties must be located within a designated Rural Legacy Area (RLA). There are two approved Rural Legacy Areas in Carroll County: Little Pipe Creek RLA in the west/northwest portion of the County and the Upper Patapsco RLA in the east/northeast portion. Call our office to determine eligibility.

2. Properties must have development potential. Preference is given to properties over 30 acres, however, in some cases smaller properties may be considered.

Limitations on Development:

Other than agriculture, uses related to agriculture may be approved, and home based businesses. Requests for future dwellings, for example, for family members, are considered on a case by case basis.

Conservation practices: Seller agrees to periodic inspections of the property and to implement conservation practices including forest stewardship.

For More Information:

Call Carroll County Agricultural Land Preservation, 410 386-2214.

Carroll County Land Trust and Maryland Environmental Trust

If your property does not meet the qualifications of any programs offered, you may be able to donate or sell a conservation easement to a nonprofit conservation organization called a land trust. If your land has conservation value and at least one building right to retire, creating a conservation easement can provide tax benefits in addition to protecting the environmental attributes of the land. The Maryland Environmental Trust (MET) or the Carroll County Land Trust (CCLT) will work with you to complete the necessary documentation. In addition to potential income tax benefits at the state and federal level, a local Carroll County property tax credit is available for donated easements. Contact the Carroll County Land Trust or MET through their websites or call the CCLT at 410 848-8247.