**Land Protection Strategies in Worcester County, MD**

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**Overview**
- County Land Use/Natural Resources
- 2006 Comprehensive Plan
- Comprehensive Re-zoning, 2009
- Protected Lands/Achievements
- Agricultural Zoning
- Priority Preservation Area
- Land Protection Programs

**Land Cover**
- 303,000 acres
- 112,000 acres in farming
- 158,000 acres in forest
- 40 miles of ocean beach
- 407 miles of shoreline
- 19% is prime farmland

**Natural Resources**
- Pocomoke River—globally important forest habitat for 172 bird spp; northernmost bald cypress swamp
- Over 350 bird spp recorded county-wide
- Highest “herp” diversity of all MD counties—60 spp
- Coastal Bay estuary of national significance

**2006 Land Use Plan**
Land Protection Achievements

- From 1999 to 2008, 1,125 acres were protected annually on average (11,245 acres)

- From 1999 to 2008, 597 new residential lots were created in the A-1 zone. This involved 3,606.74 acres

Zoning

- A-1—66% of the county
- A-2—less than 2%
- RP—32%

- Only five (5) lots may be created from what was an entire parcel of land in 1967; in the “A-1” (agricultural) zone; six (6) lots, only where rural clustering is accomplished. The estimated build-out density in the “A-1” zone is 1:20.

Priority Preservation Area

- Adopted 1/5/2010
- PPA is 195,000 acres, 64% of the county’s total area.
- Includes the majority of the county’s prime farmland
- 98% undeveloped

- Long-term goal is to protect at least 100,000 acres through agricultural and conservation easements and zoning. Emphasis on protection of farming/forestry.

- In the next ten years, the county’s goal is to protect at least 800 acres annually in the PPA.
**Land Protection Programs/Resources**

- Coastal Bays RLA
- Dividing Creek RLA
- MALPF
- CREP Permanent Easement Program
- Lower Shore Land Trust/MET
- Farm and Ranchland Protection Program (FRPP)
- Coastal Estuarine Land Conservation Program (CELCP)
- USFWS Coastal Wetlands Grant Program

**MALPF**

- Certified since FY04
- 5,664 acres protected;
- ¾ of this since 2004

**CREP Permanent Easement Program**

- Available to landowners participating in CREP/CRP contracts in 9 MD counties this year
- Purchases permanent easement on contract land + "matching" land (1:1)

**LSLT/MET Donated Easements**

- 1,000 acres +/-
- Opportunity to "match" donation with purchase

**Matching Funds**

- Farm and Ranchland Protection Program (FRPP)
- Coastal Estuarine Land Conservation Program (CELCP)
- USFWS Coastal Wetlands Grant Program
Summary

• Worcester’s history of appropriate zoning, modeled on “smart growth” principals, has maintained the integrity of the county’s agricultural and natural resources
• Targeting important contiguous lands through the Rural Legacy program and more recently the PPA will help ensure the most important resources are prioritized for long-term protection
• Certification, local matching funds and federal matching funds have maximized use of state funds for land protection and make the goal of 800 acres/yr doable
• Viability of farming and forestry industry will continue to be challenge