

## **MARYLAND AGRICULTURAL LAND PRESERVATION PROGRAM**

Washington County's effort to preserve valuable farmland via the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Program (MALPP) began in April 1978 and has continued to date. The program was established and is regulated by Agricultural Article, Sections 2-501 through 2-515 of the Annotated Code of Maryland. The Washington County Agricultural Land Preservation Advisory Board, the County Commissioners and the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation (MALPF) of the Maryland Department of Agriculture administer the program through a Planning and Zoning staff member.

The program encourages landowners to voluntarily enter into an Agricultural Land Preservation District in which it is agreed that the land will not be developed for a period of at least ten years and commit to agricultural use only (tax credits are given for this commitment). In return for the restriction, the landowner receives protection from nuisance complaints and becomes eligible to sell a Development Rights Easement. A landowner may exercise the option of selling a Development Rights Easement to the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation provided that his offer to sell is recommended by the County's Advisory Board and the County Commissioners. At the local level, the Agricultural Advisory Board reviews and ranks easement applications, assigning point value to such items as farm size, soil quality and development pressure indicators on its easement checklist. If purchased by the State of Maryland, the easement will remain effective in perpetuity.

Through FY 18, total acreage in the program increased to 32,907 acres with a total of 250 agricultural districts. Under the MALPP easement purchase program, the total of easement properties in the program is 83 equaling 13,586 acres. In addition, on-going Federal, State and private conservation easements around Antietam Battlefield effectively preserve an additional 8,900 acres of agricultural land in perpetuity.