

C H A P T E R N I N E

AGRICULTURAL LAND PRESERVATION



9.1 Introduction

Baltimore County is currently certified for agricultural land preservation by the Maryland Department of Planning (MDP) and the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation (MALPF). The certification was initially set to expire on June 30, 2021, but was extended to June 30, 2023 based on changes made through HB620 in the 2018 legislative session. Baltimore County was found to be "consistently effective in achieving preservation goals." To maintain certification, the County submits interim reports each year, along with a plan every five years.

Baltimore County utilizes a variety of land preservation programs to meet the needs of its landowners and to advance a successful preservation effort. The programs are described below.

The first easements in the County were donations to the Maryland Environmental Trust (MET) in 1975. The MET seeks to preserve lands through accepting donated conservation easements. Many easements are co-held with Local Land Trusts which also act as sponsors to Rural Legacy Areas. MET holds more easements in Baltimore County than in any other jurisdiction in Maryland.

The Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation (MALPF) Program was established in 1980. This program has been the core of Baltimore County's agricultural land preservation program. It provides for the opportunity for the County to match State funds and thus increase the number of acres preserved.

In 1994, Baltimore County created an independent Agricultural Land Preservation Program so that the County could augment the State program and be able to run its own program in the event the State program was not operational. The County added to this an Imminent Threat Component that permits the County to fast track the preservation of a farm in cases where the owner may be in financial difficulty or the farm is of such high value that it is desirable to preserve it immediately. From 2007, the County enhanced the success of the program by using an Optimization selection technique that provides for the ranking of farms based on the best quality farm at the best easement price.

In all, over 100 square miles are under conservation and agricultural easements, which is about 17% of the County's total land area. This includes almost 25,000 acres protected by the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation and almost 12,000 by the Rural Legacy Program.

Table 11. Preserved Land Acreage Summary

Site Type	Acres	Square Miles	Percent of County Land
County Park	8,311	13.0	2.1%
School Recreation Center	3,721	5.8	1.0%
County Open Space	3,548	5.5	0.9%
Other County-Owned Green Spaces	2,365	3.7	0.6%
Reservoir	14,679	22.9	3.8%
State Parks	22,175	34.6	5.7%
National Parks	61	0.1	0.0%
Privately Owned Open Space	1,679	2.6	0.4%
Agricultural and Conservation Easements	67,801	105.9	17.4%
Totals	124,340	194.3	32%

Preserved Land in Baltimore County

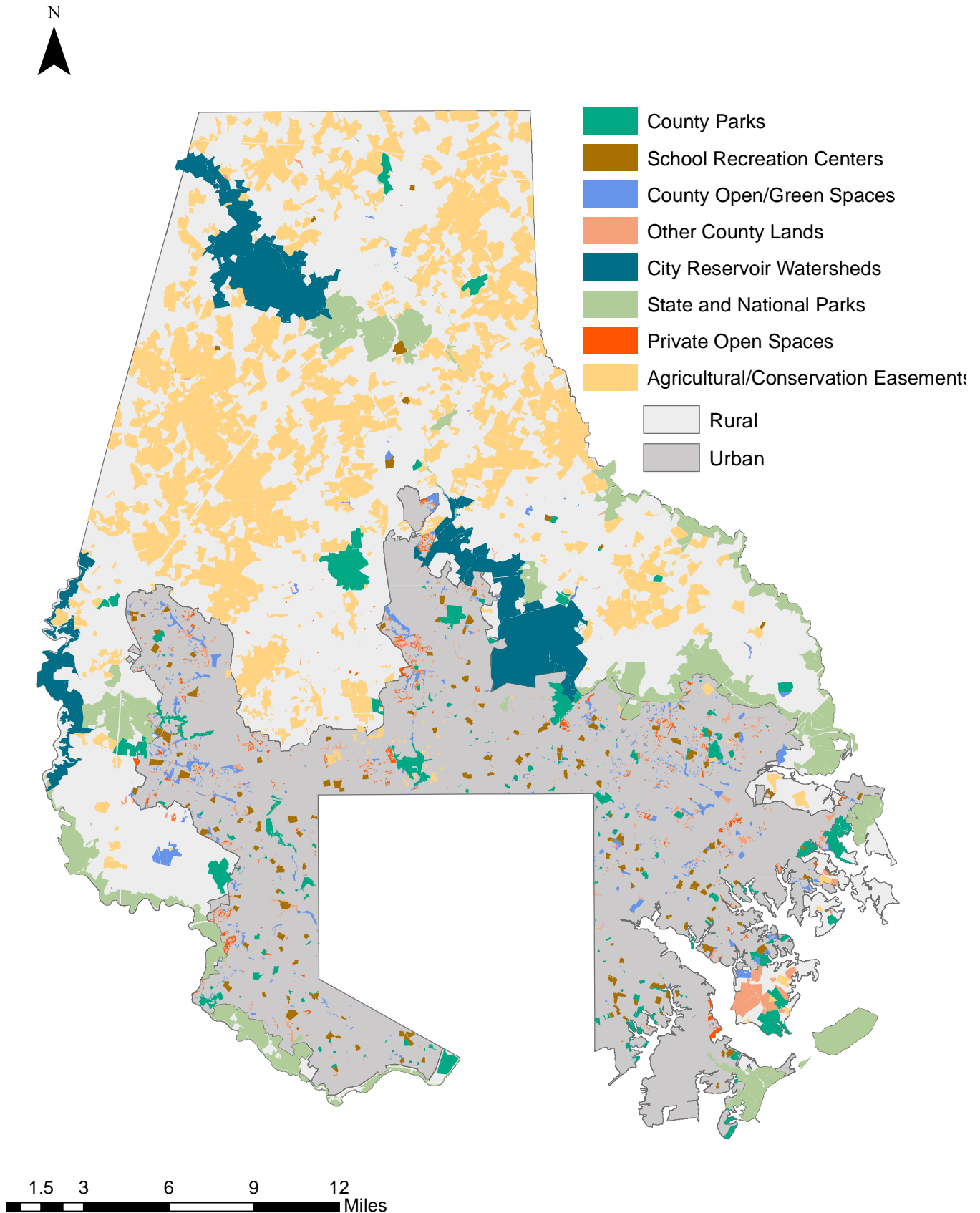


Figure 124. Preserved Land including Agricultural/Conservation Easements
BALTIMORE COUNTY LPPRP 2022

9.2 Inventory of Preserved Agricultural Land

Baltimore County has adopted Priority Preservation Areas (PPA) for agriculture. These are largely in the northern section of the county and all outside of the URDL.

Of the easements for conservation and agriculture, 62,251 acres, or 91.8% are located within the PPA. For the two major agricultural preservation programs, 24,557 acres, or 98.7%, of MALPF land is located in a PPA and 10,677 acres, or 89.7%, of Rural Legacy land is located within the PPA. These lands exist alongside lands classified by the Maryland Protected Lands Dashboard as local protected lands- protected open space, Maryland Environmental Trust easements, private conservation lands, and purchase development rights properties.

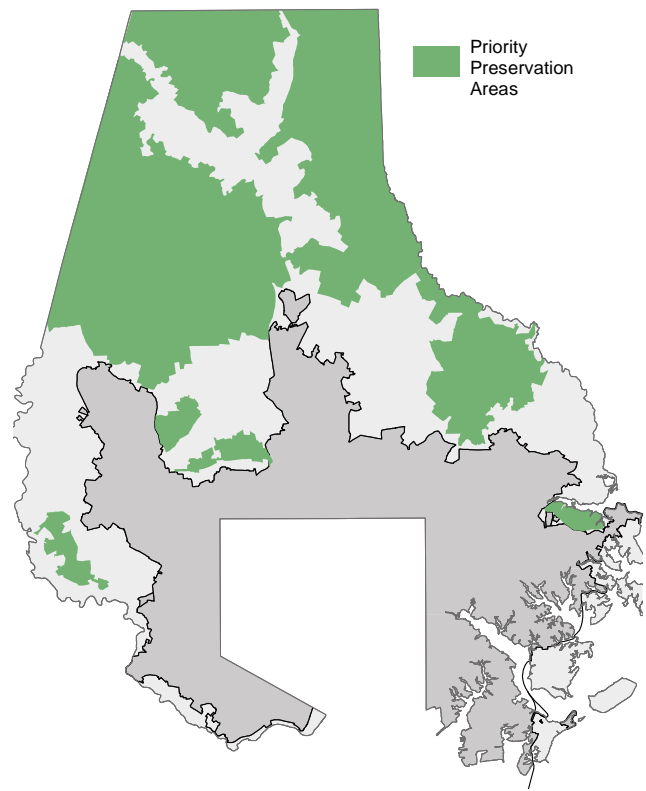


Figure 125. Priority Preservation Areas for Agriculture

Table 12. Protected Land inside the Priority Preservation Area

Maryland Protected Lands Category	Acres in PPA	Total Acres	Percent in PPA
Local Protected Lands - Protected Open Spaces	2,442	3,873	63.1%
Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation	24,557	24,871	98.7%
Maryland Environmental Trust	13,379	14,993	89.2%
Purchase Development Rights	6,437	6,519	98.7%
Private	4,759	5,637	84.4%
Rural Legacy Program	10,677	11,909	89.7%
Sum	62,251	67,801	91.8%

Easements in Baltimore County

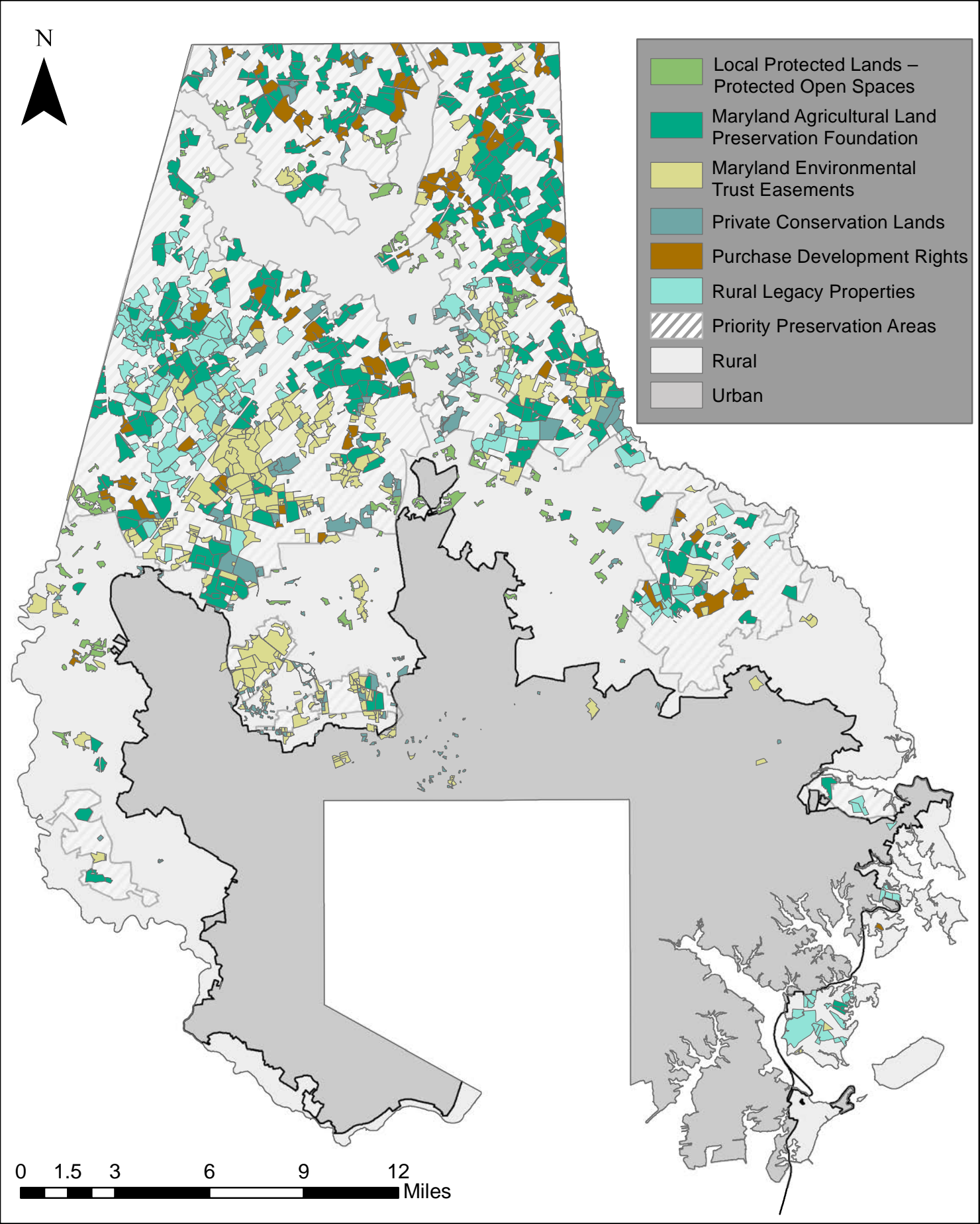


Figure 126.Easements in Baltimore County
BALTIMORE COUNTY LPPRP 2022

9.3 County Goals and Associated Progress

The agricultural preservation goals of the LPPRP are derived from the County's existing agricultural program development strategy, and are therefore aligned. The goals presented in the 2017 plan and their associated progress are below: There has been continued progress toward all the non-completed goals set forth in the 2017 plan. The 2017 plan provided an update that the County had completed its goal of performing a study to determine how to reach the goal of 80,000 preserved acres of agricultural land.

Preserve Sufficient Land to Protect Agricultural Resources for Future Generations

Baltimore County has an overall goal of preserving at least 80,000 acres. Currently, there are 67,801 acres permanently protected through conservation easement, which is an increase of 4,046 acres from 2017, when the last LPPRP was submitted. The average number of acres preserved annually during this time was approximately 800 acres/year. This rate lower than anticipated; however, the rate is expected to rise given an increase in funding for State programs as well as County funding towards preservation which helped to re-engage the County Agricultural and County Rural Legacy programs to a level that has not been seen for several years.

Table 13. Preserved Land by Restriction Type, 2017 and 2022

Restriction Type	Count per Type - 2022	Acres - 2017	Acres - 2022	Change in Acreage
Baltimore County Agricultural Land	61	5,018	5,165	146
Federal Farm and Ranch Protection	22	2,505	2,517	12
Local Land Trust	273	3,994	5,637	1643
Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation	241	21,466	23,129	1663
Maryland Environmental Trust	302	14,736	14,993	257
RC 4	89	4,022	3,843	-179
RC 6 Primary	2	13	13	0
RC 6 Secondary	2	17	17	0
Rural Legacy Program	153	11,405	11,909	504
Transportation Enhancement Program	4	579	579	0
Sum		63,755	67,801	4,046

Incorporate Stewardship into All Aspects of Land Preservation Programs

All land preservation easements are monitored and inspected but at different intervals by different organizations. The County maintains records of the inspections on all County co-held easements. The County monitors and inspects all Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation (MALPF) on a 10 year interval in coordination with MALPF staff. All Federal easements are inspected annually with records kept by the County. The County inspects and monitors all County easements on a three year interval. The Land Trusts monitor and inspect all County Rural Legacy easements in coordination with the County. The inspections confirm that the conditions of the easements are being maintained including having a Soil Conservation and Water Quality Plan and/or Forest Stewardship Plan for the management of soil and forest resources.

Use Land Management Tools to Ensure Temporary Protection of Lands not Under Permanent Protection

The Agricultural Priority Preservation Area (APPA) is approximately 141,480 acres within the 2/3 of the County that is outside the PFA (URDL). If this area was to receive its share of single family detached (SFD) dwellings as determined strictly by percentage of the land area in the County, it would have had 38% of occupancy permits. In the five years between November 2016 and November 2021 only 9% of new SFD occupancy permits were in the APPA (205 out of a Countywide total of 2,263). While this is a slight increase from the 6% figure reported in the 2017 LPPRP, it is still well below 38% and shows slower development in areas designated for agricultural preservation. In that same time period, 75% of new unit active permits were in the URDL, which is only 1/3 of the County's land area, demonstrating that development is largely being carried out in areas that are designated as urban.

Foster the Agricultural Industry

The Department of Recreation and Parks operates the Baltimore County Center for Maryland Agriculture and Farm Park, which consolidates many of the support services for the agricultural community, promotes the future sustainability of the agricultural industry, serves as an educational resource center and field destination for school children and adults, and provides open space benefits of walking and equestrian trail riding. The Center is designed to look and feel like a farm from the architectural design of the buildings to the presence of field and livestock operations. The Agriculture Center's mission is to connect our diverse population with their food, land and natural environment through educational opportunities, interactive demonstrations and authentic agricultural experiences.

Through the Department of Economic Development and Workforce Development, the County is establishing an Agricultural Advisory Council as part of the Economic Development Advisory Board. The Agricultural Advisory Council will be working to address agricultural sector challenges and needs from an economic perspective and working on strategies to support and sustain the County's agricultural industry.

Foster Regional Cooperation for Agriculture

Efforts continued to work with land preservation administrators in Carroll and Harford County to preserve properties that were adjacent to those counties.

9.3 Summary of Deficiencies

Baltimore County has not yet reached its goal of 80,000 acres preserved for agriculture, and therefore will continue to utilize County, State, and Federal Programs to advance toward that goal.