

An aerial photograph of a farm complex. On the left is a large, long barn with a red roof and weathered white siding. To its right are several smaller buildings, including another barn with a red roof and a smaller white structure. The farm is situated in a green field, with a dense forest of tall trees behind it. In the background, a large body of blue water stretches to the horizon under a clear sky.

# Impact of SMADC's Agricultural Preservation Programs

**January, 2015  
By Jamie Tiralla**

"Conservation means harmony between men and land.  
When the land does well for its owner, and the owner does well by his land, when both  
end up better by reason of their partnership,  
we have conservation. When one or the other grows poorer, we do not." – *Aldo Leopold*  
(1939)



This report is produced by the Southern Maryland Agricultural Development Commission (SMADC).

Through a layered and multifaceted strategy, SMADC seeks to preserve environmental resources while keeping the region's farmland productive and the agricultural economy vibrant.

SMADC's mission is to develop and enhance a market-driven and sustainable farming future.

SMADC's goals are:

- 1) thriving, market-driven farms that have the resources they need to be profitable,
- 2) a Maryland where farmland preservation and environmental stewardship positively impact the quality of our air and water and protect one of our greatest assets, the Chesapeake Bay, and
- 3) a future where profitable farms play an integral role in the health and quality of life of our community.

To learn more about additional programs and resources, contact SMADC or visit the website.

Christine L. Bergmark, PhD, Executive Director  
Southern Maryland Agricultural Development Commission  
(SMADC)

P.O. Box 745 / 15045 Burnt Store Road / Hughesville, MD 20637  
Tel: 301-274-1922 / FAX: 301-274-1924 / [info@smadc.com](mailto:info@smadc.com)  
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Commission

## MARYLAND'S TOBACCO BUYOUT

For more than 350 years, Southern Maryland's primary crop was tobacco. And while raising tobacco was extremely labor intensive, it thrived in Maryland soil and became a way for families to generate enough income to sustain a farm. Good years with tobacco meant farmers could afford to send their kids to college, purchase new equipment, acquire more land and pay down debt. By the 1980s, though, declining public favor for tobacco, decreased market prices and urban sprawl threatened tobacco farmers. The region's centuries-old, heavy dependence on the cash crop left other agricultural sectors poorly developed. And so, at the cusp of the 21st century, it became clear that there would be little or no future for tobacco in the region.

Then came an innovative idea—the Tobacco Buyout. It was the first program of its kind in the country and in just a few short years, it radically changed the landscape of agriculture in Southern Maryland.

In 1998, Maryland, along with 45 other states and U.S. Territories, signed the Master Settlement Agreement (MSA) with six major tobacco companies<sup>1</sup>, who committed to pay up to \$206 billion dollars over 25 years. The Maryland legislature placed its share of the settlement (estimated at \$4.5 to \$9 billion) into the Cigarette Restitution Fund (CRF).

With a bulk of the CRF going towards anti-smoking campaigns, Medicaid, cancer research and other health-related initiatives, 5 percent was earmarked for the Southern Maryland Regional Strategy for Agriculture. Governor Parris N. Glendenning (1995 - 2003) hailed the so-called Tobacco Buyout, saying, "We are taking aggressive action to close the book on Maryland's tobacco heritage and improve the health and quality of life for all Marylanders."

The program was voluntary. During the five year sign up period, 854 farmers agreed to permanently quit growing tobacco. That number represented 83 percent of the eligible producers. In exchange, they were paid \$1 per pound, annually for ten years. The payment amount was based on the growers' average verified production crop in years 1996 through 1998 as documented in sales records. Farmers also agreed to not assist in the growing of tobacco on other farms and to keep their own farm in agriculture for at least 10 years.

The goal of the Tobacco Buyout, however, wasn't to simply pay farmers to stop growing the crop. A three-pronged approach was laid out by Governor Glendenning's Tobacco Crop Conversion Task Force to ultimately help "transition Maryland farmers out of tobacco production into more profitable and life-sustaining crops, while preserving rural agriculture in Southern

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<sup>1</sup>The Tobacco Master Settlement Agreement (MSA) was signed on November 23, 1998 by the attorneys general of 46 states, the District of Columbia and five U.S. territories with the major cigarette manufacturers. The MSA required annual payments totaling approximately \$206 billion through 2025 and imposed restrictions on advertising, marketing and promotion of tobacco. The MSA follows earlier individual settlements with four states—Mississippi, Florida, Texas and Minnesota—totaling more than \$40 billion over the first 25 years. (Redhead 1999)

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"We are ending tobacco growing, but beginning a new and vital era of farming that will produce new, life-sustaining crops while also strengthening our agricultural land preservation efforts."

— Governor Parris Glendenning, hailing the success of the Tobacco Buyout Program to the *Baltimore Sun* on July 31, 2001

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"It has been a real challenge. As land values go up, easement prices go up. We've always tried to strike a balance between what's fair and equitable to pay the landowner for an easement and what's going to be helpful for the next generation."

"The land preservation component of the buyout was added knowing that even after ten years, there would be an enormous pressure on farmers to sell their land. We offered the additional incentive to try and get more farms into a permanent preservation program."

— Earl "Buddy" Hance, Maryland Secretary of Agriculture (2009 - 2015)

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“It wasn’t just about the buyout. We were looking forward for ways to help farmers find an alternative, knowing there wasn’t going to be a silver bullet. It was vitally important to provide a mechanism that would help farmers transition into whatever it was that would work best on their farm.”

*Earl “Buddy” Hance, Maryland Secretary of Agriculture (2009 - 2015) and original member of the Tobacco Crop Conversion Task Force (1999)*

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“SMADC funding is not coming out of the pockets of taxpayers or the state. Money is being distributed from a settlement with cigarette manufacturers.”

*Veronica Cristo, Rural Planner, Calvert County Community Planning & Building and SMADC board member*

Maryland.” Three priorities were outlined: 1) buyout and transition; 2) land preservation and 3) infrastructure development.

## **SOUTHERN MARYLAND AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION (SMADC)**

Since its inception, the Southern Maryland Agricultural Development Commission (SMADC) has been a visionary and guiding force for the new face of food and agriculture in Southern Maryland. Created by the Governor’s Task Force to administer the Tobacco Buyout and the region’s economic transition, SMADC is guided by a board made up of a broad spectrum of members. The commission’s operating budget comes from the Cigarette Restitution Fund and is appropriated annually through the Maryland Department of Agriculture to the Tri-County Council for Southern Maryland to go towards SMADC programs.

SMADC recruited and administered the buyout program. In the first year, 559 farmers signed contracts to cease all tobacco production. By the end of the 5-year sign up period, an additional 295 farmers joined the buyout.

Immediately, SMADC began working to develop and support new forms of agriculture in Southern Maryland. A variety of workshops were offered and grants were awarded to farmers to assist in the transition into alternative crops.

Beginning in 2002, SMADC began to administer funds to each county to be used towards land preservation programs. Tobacco farmers who enrolled in the buyout and were in good standing, qualified for a ten percent increase in easement valuation for county and state preservation programs.

While its primary focus has been on the five Southern Maryland counties of Anne Arundel, Calvert, Charles, Prince George’s and St. Mary’s, many of SMADC’s initiatives have had a statewide impact. In 2014, SMADC received the Maryland Sustainable Growth Commission Award from the Maryland Department of Planning for Leadership and Service for accomplishments that “advance public appreciation, understanding and promote smart growth.”

### **SMADC’S 2012 STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS ARE:**

- to create a market-driven and sustainable farming future,
- to preserve Maryland farmland and promote environmental stewardship that positively impacts the quality of our air and water, and
- to cultivate awareness among consumers and leaders of the vital role our farms play in a balanced community, safe and nutritious food supply and a cleaner and healthier environment.



## **URBAN SPRAWL: THREAT TO FARMS...**

One of the greatest threats to agricultural land is urbanization. Land in Maryland, particularly in Southern Maryland, has developed at a rapid rate. In 1910, nearly 80 percent of Maryland's 6.3 million acres was farmland. By 2012, the number of acres devoted to agriculture declined to 2 million (32 percent of land mass). Between 1920 and 2012, Anne Arundel, Calvert, Charles, Prince George's and St. Mary's Counties collectively lost 75 percent of their farmland. According to the 2012 Census of Agriculture, there were a recorded number of 2,011 farms in Southern Maryland and approximately 207,000 acres of farmland.

Historically, the value of land in Southern Maryland has been three or more times higher than the national average. High market value creates a two-fold problem for agriculture. First, high cost per acre generally makes land too expensive for farmers looking to purchase new land to expand their operations. Second, high sales prices are attractive to aging farmers who are facing retirement with little optimism for the future of agriculture.

## **...AND AN OPPORTUNITY**

While proximity to urban areas is one of the greatest threats to farmland, it is also one of the greatest opportunities. Southern Maryland is well positioned to serve the 4th largest metropolitan area in the nation, whose food budget is estimated to be 26 billion dollars.

Land preservation efforts have helped to secure a land base for new agricultural industries and marketing opportunities. Since 2002, SMADC has made investments in farmers' markets, greenhouses, vineyards/wineries, pick your own produce operations, local meats and more. Increasing the supply and sale of local agricultural products strengthens the local economy and increases food security for the mid-Atlantic region.

The timing of the Tobacco Buyout was critical in that it helped to slow the rate of rural development while the local food movement was gaining momentum. In the past 15 years, the demand for locally sourced food has increased dramatically. Where the future once appeared bleak for agriculture in Southern Maryland, it now seems bright. Farmers who took the voluntary buyout agreed to stop growing tobacco forever and to keep their farm in

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"Maryland started its land preservation program in 1977. My father felt strongly that especially around urban areas, it was important to preserve farmland. The reason was two-fold. One, to try and keep urban sprawl from eating up prime farmland. But also, he felt it was important for people in all areas of the country to be able to grow their own food."

*Susie Hance-Wells, daughter of Young Duke "Y.D." Hance, Maryland's first Secretary of Agriculture and current owner of Taney Place Farm, one of the first three farms to be placed in Calvert County's Land Preservation Program*

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"Southern Maryland is the fastest growing region in the entire state. There's a big demand for land. So having farmers feel that they can continue farming profitably is helping us to preserve and maintain a lot of farmland and here in Southern Maryland. And if it weren't for SMADC, I don't think we'd be there."

*Maryland State Senator Thomas "Mac" Middleton District 28, Charles County*



David Hancock, Sr. with brother, Wayne Hancock and nephews

## HANCOCK FAMILY FARMS

Bel Alton, MD, Charles County

The Hancock brothers farm 1,500 acres in Charles County raising corn, soybeans, wheat and sorghum (milo). They purchased 400 acres in 2011, placed 222 in land preservation. Plans are in place to put the other parcel into preservation once family building lots are recorded.

*“Land preservation programs help to level the playing field. They make it possible for a farmer to compete against land speculators.”*

*“The tobacco buyout has helped to keep agriculture viable in Southern Maryland. For me personally? I don’t miss tobacco. I tell people the buyout saved my life.” - David Hancock, Sr.*

*“We had leased land from the family who owned this property. They approached us when they started thinking about selling and asked how much of the land we’d be interested in. When I said ‘all of it’, Wayne just about fell out. But, I said ‘this is a once in a lifetime opportunity’.”  
- David Hancock, Sr.*



agricultural production for at least 10 years. Not only were farmers able to experiment with new forms of agriculture, they retained a sense of community that has helped to foster a new farmer movement.

## A GOAL OF 35 THOUSAND ACRES

There were 2,483 farms and 249,537 acres of farmland recorded in Southern Maryland in the 1997 Census of Agriculture. Between 1997 and 2012, those numbers decreased by more than 15 percent. According to the most recent report (2012 Census of Agriculture), there are now 2,011 farms and 207,364 acres of farmland in the five-county region.<sup>2</sup>

The Governor’s Tobacco Crop Conversion Task Force originally outlined a goal of preserving 35,000 acres of farmland in Southern Maryland. Between 2002, when funding for land preservation began, and 2014, SMADC helped protect 31,635 acres of agricultural lands in the five counties (which includes provisions for maintaining forests and wetlands) at an investment of \$23.3 million. Considering the pressure and financial incentives from developers seeking high quality farmland, this is a remarkable achievement.

## FUNDING FOR LAND PRESERVATION PROGRAMS CAN’T SATISFY DEMAND

For years, the demand from farmers wishing to sell conservation easements has far outpaced the available resources from county and state land preservation programs. There are a total of 62 farms with open land preservation applications in Southern Maryland for the 2015 cycle. These farms represent a total of 6,440 acres with an estimated easement cost of \$36.6 million. Only a handful of these farms will receive offers.

While the state and counties have a strong desire to preserve farmland, funding for conservation easement purchases has been inconsistent. The Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Fund (MALPF), for example, saw dramatic fluctuation in funding between 2002 and 2012 ranging from a low of \$7 million (in 2004) to a high of \$92 million (in

<sup>2</sup>Reference Table 1 for historical Census of Agriculture data

2007). At the same time, land values increased quite dramatically. In 2002, the average cost per acre for the MALPF program statewide was \$1,958. Values increase sharply until 2009 when they reached a peak of \$6,880 per acre. As of the most recent report (2013), MALPF lists the average acquisition cost per acre to be \$4,463. It is noteworthy that the acquisition costs per acre in Southern Maryland counties are commonly 1.5 to 2 times higher than the state average.

Though SMADC was established in 2000, it did not receive funding for land preservation efforts until 2002. Between 2002 and 2014, SMADC received full or partial funding for land preservation in all but one year (2012). This source of funding has helped the counties in Southern Maryland to leverage more acres than they would have been able to otherwise. Without SMADC's land preservation efforts, far fewer farms would have been preserved.

### **FLEXIBLE SOLUTIONS HELP MAXIMIZE EFFORTS**

Land preservation funding through SMADC is allocated based on a formula that considers how many tobacco growers each county had participating in the Buyout program. St. Mary's county receives the largest share (40 percent), followed by Calvert and Charles counties (20 percent each), and lastly by Anne Arundel and Prince George's counties (10 percent each). SMADC provides matching funds that land preservation program administrators apply for and use towards purchasing and/or leveraging conservation easements. County program administrators agree that this model affords them flexibility to make the best decisions in how to apply the funds for farmers who wish to place conservation easements on their property.

SMADC does not require land preservation funds to be used on tobacco farms, however those properties are given special consideration. A point should be made that virtually all farms in Southern Maryland were, at one point, tobacco farms. Former tobacco growers were given an incentive to place permanent conservation easements on their property beyond the 10 year requirement of the buyout contract. Enrolled farms, in good standing, qualified for a 10 percent increase in easement valuation for county and state preservation programs.

Between 2002 and 2011, sixty farms received bonus payments, for a total investment of \$3 million. That bonus was in addition to funds allocated by SMADC to leverage the state and local conservation easement offers.<sup>3</sup> With few qualifying farms left and a strong desire to maximize the land preservation efforts, the SMADC board voted to end the bonus payment in 2014.

### **CHALLENGES FACING LAND PRESERVATION PROGRAMS**

The Maryland Department of Agriculture states that to date, more than half a million acres have been preserved for agriculture. Despite the achievement,

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<sup>3</sup>Reference Table 2 for SMADC Land Preservation Funding Allocation

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“If it had happened ten years sooner, there would have been a lot fewer farmers signing up. Had it been ten years later, many of the farms would have already disappeared.”

*Earl “Buddy” Hance, Maryland Secretary of Agriculture (2009 - 2015) and original member of the Tobacco Crop Conversion Task Force (1999)*

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“Yes, you want to preserve the land. But you also want to preserve the farmer. So, you want to give them economic opportunities to stay profitable.”

*Donna Sasscer, Agriculture and Seafood Manager for St. Mary's County and SMADC board member*



Judy Leavitt with her son Jason Leavitt

## WILSON DOWELL FARMS

Owings, MD, Calvert County

Wilson Dowell farms specializes in grass fed beef. The Leavitts (owners) also run a horse boarding stable, Double J Stables, on an adjacent (not preserved) property.

Wilson Dowell Farms has 214 acres in Rural Legacy on Chaneyville Road.

*"I'm not sure my dad would have done it. People who do what we do don't like other people telling them what to do. But, overall, the state was very cooperative. We were able to tailor the easement the way we wanted."*

- Judy Leavitt



there have been a number of concerns raised about both the need for and viability of land preservation programs in the future.

## SUSTAINABLE GROWTH AND AGRICULTURAL PRESERVATION ACT OF 2012

Under the administration of Governor Martin O'Malley, the Maryland legislature enacted a number of zoning regulations as part of the "smart growth" plan. One of the most important laws passed into effect was The Sustainable Growth and Agricultural Preservation Act of 2012. The goal of the law is to limit the impact of subdivisions serviced by individual septic systems. Legislation requires all local jurisdictions to adopt a Growth Tier system with four tiers to identify where major and minor residential subdivisions may be located in a jurisdiction and what type of sewage system may serve them.

Landowners are concerned that the law effectively takes away development potential and some go so far as to accuse the law of decreasing land values. Despite concerns, however, the number of applications to state and local land preservation programs continues to increase. There are currently more than 60 farms in Southern Maryland on a waiting list hoping to sell conservation easements. Due to limited funding and strong demand from other parts of the state, only a few will receive offers.

## FINDING RELIABLE SOURCES OF REVENUE

Maryland was one of the first states in the nation to adopt a land preservation program. Since 1977, 500,000 acres (8 percent of the state's land mass and 25 percent of the state's agricultural land), has been preserved through state and local programs including Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation (MALPF), Rural Legacy, Greenprint and individual county programs. Each has its own unique set of benefits and the range of programs gives landowners the flexibility to choose which is best for their individual needs and goals.

Land preservation programs at both the state and local levels are funded through a variety of ways, but primarily through the agricultural transfer tax, which is collected when farmland is sold and converted to another land use. Generally, MALPF collects



two-thirds of the Agricultural Tax and the remaining one-third goes to the local jurisdiction for local land preservation. However, counties may retain up to 75 percent of the Agricultural Tax if their local agricultural land preservation program is certified by MALPF and the Maryland Department of Planning.

Funding for agricultural land preservation programs has not always been consistent. Revenue from the state real estate tax and agricultural transfer tax is dependent upon land being sold and developed. Under recent economic conditions, less land is being sold and so there is less tax revenue coming in.

Land values in Southern Maryland have also been very volatile. The acquisition cost per acre for a conservation easement has gone up and down over the past ten years. As a result, some landowners are less willing to accept what are perceived to be low offers. Increased acquisition cost has also made it difficult to preserve additional acres without increased funding. SMADC's funding has helped counties stretch thin budgets and leverage funding from state programs. In some cases, program administrators have used SMADC funds to supplement weak offers or preserve additional farms that would not have been funded otherwise.

## **ADAPTING TO THE NEEDS OF SOUTHERN MARYLAND**

The structure of SMADC and its position as a regional entity has enabled the organization to be extremely nimble and responsive to the needs of the agricultural community. As farms seek to innovate and develop new business ventures to maintain and/or enhance profitability, they are often met with layers of regulation and red tape. SMADC has been able to respond quickly to the needs of the community to streamline processes and/or seek change to existing policies to make them more relevant for modern farm operations.

One of the first things that SMADC did to promote broader success of land preservation in Southern Maryland was to help reduce the acreage requirement for the MALPF program. When it was first created in 1977, the minimum requirement for a conservation easement on agricultural land was 100 acres.

Even in the 1970s, the average farm in the state of Maryland was less than 150 acres. In Southern Maryland that number was even smaller. According to the 1978 Census of Agriculture, the average farm size between Anne Arundel, Calvert, Charles, Prince George's and St. Mary's counties was 101.6 acres. Today, the average size farm in Southern Maryland is 89.4 acres.

Responding to the call from Southern Maryland farmers, SMADC worked with the Southern Maryland Delegation to reduce the size requirement. In October 2001, a bill passed the Maryland legislature to reduce the size requirement from 100 acres to 50 acres.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>Maryland Agriculture Land Preservation Program - Inclusion of Smaller Farms, Md. Code § 2-509 (d)(2) of the Agriculture Article (2001)

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“A lot of landowners want to preserve their property. Land preservation programs have given a viable option where development was previously the only choice. We've been able to take SMADC money and leverage that with the state program to help it go farther.”

There is a lot of thought from the general public and even farmers that tier mapping has taken away land values and development rights. But these are temporary zoning tools that can change over time. Land easements are permanent.”

*Charles Rice, Program Manager for Environmental Programs with Charles County Department of Planning and Growth Management and SMADC board chairman.*

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“SMADC funds have allowed us to preserve more farms in Prince George's County. It has afforded us the opportunity to maximize offers from state land preservation programs.”

*Jeannie Nutter, Prince George's County Agland Preservation Administrator*



## ROACHE FARM MEATS

Mechanicsville, MD, St. Mary's County

J. Barry Roache, his brother Dr. John W. Roache and sister Wanda Valiante inherited the farm from their father, who co-owned it with a business partner. The 147-acre farm was placed into the Rural Legacy Program in January 2014.

While Roache wanted to preserve the property as a farm, it was also essential that he and his siblings have access to the capital necessary to "buy out" the unrelated landowner so that they could be free to pursue farming operations and achieve a sense of security in landownership.

*"If you had asked me 20 years ago if I would still be here [farming], I'd say no. All the dominoes just sort of lined up and made it possible.*

*We didn't take the tobacco buyout right away. We weren't a large producer and so, it took me a while to make up my mind. I think we made right decision, though. At that time, if you were a small producer, there wasn't much else out there.*

*For us, it (putting the farm in Rural Legacy) was a no-brainer. It was an opportunity to gain full ownership and to secure a future for the family."*  
- Barry Roache

SMADC has also worked with the MALPF board to push for changes to policies. During its tenure, SMADC has also seen acceptance of a number of additional uses that complement the existing agriculture or forestry operation such as agritourism, educational tours, landscaping business, commercial equine recreational activities and winery and vineyards.

In addition, SMADC has worked with individual counties to strengthen and/or create land preservation programs. In Prince George's county, for example, SMADC helped establish the county's Historic Agricultural Resource Preservation Program (HARPP).

## PROTECTING THE ENVIRONMENT THROUGH LAND PRESERVATION

Investments in agriculture are one of the most cost-effective ways that local and state jurisdictions respond to environmental challenges such as water quality and soil erosion. As we lose more farmland to urban sprawl, we increase impervious surfaces and place greater burdens on groundwater and sewage system. Farmers must be good stewards of the land in order to achieve a sustainable economic return. And Maryland farmers have been leaders in the nation, adopting numerous conservation practices to improve the water quality and eco-system of the Chesapeake Bay.

SMADC's wider environmental focus fits well with its land preservation efforts. Preserving farmland from over-development helps to protect the local waterways and reduce the cost of Chesapeake Bay cleanup. In addition to land preservation, other SMADC programs reinforce the notion of protecting farmland. It is required, for example, that grant recipients under SMADC's Farm Viability Enhancement Program agree to land preservation covenants, guaranteeing that the land may not be sold for development during the duration of the grant.

## CONNECTING FARMERS TO FARMLAND

While growing new farmland may not be possible, growing new farmers is. Currently, the average age

of a U.S. farmer is 58<sup>5</sup>. Farmers under 35 make up only six percent of the principle farm owners in the United States. It is estimated that 25 percent of all farmers will retire in the next 20 years. In Maryland, that means much of the farmland will change hands in the coming decades. Many farmers find their children choosing career paths other than farming. As Maryland recovers from the housing recession, aging farmers coupled with poor future prospects for farming, make selling land a tempting option. While land preservation programs are important, they often aren't enough to ensure the long term agricultural future of a property.

In tandem with its land preservation program, SMADC has created an initiative called Maryland FarmLink, which helps aspiring farmers locate farmland and connects them to local mentors and business partners.

SMADC has identified a number of challenges with respect to new farmers and the acquisition of land. First, land values in Maryland continue to be three times the national average, making it difficult for new farmers to purchase land and/or qualify for loans. Second, landowners are apparently reluctant to lease land to new farmers, which is the preferred option for beginning farmers. And third, most farmland offered for sale is sold through a real estate agent, yet most real estate agents are inexperienced when it comes to agricultural land issues.

Maryland FarmLINK is a progressive initiative created by SMADC. Since its launch in 2012, Maryland FarmLINK has grown into a one-stop, on-line resource for the agricultural community. As of January 2015, the site has 1,550 registered members. On average, the website receives 206 unique visits per day.

The most popular section of the Maryland FarmLINK website is the Property Exchange. Here users can find property across the state listed for sale and for lease. At the start of 2015, there were 82 properties listed for sale or for lease. Another popular section is the Farm Forum, a place for facilitating on line conversations about farming techniques and agricultural issues. Maryland FarmLINK is building a mentor match program to connect new farmers with experienced farmers. In addition, the website has a listing of the farm share equipment available across the state, tutorials and an events calendar. There are 1,231 subscribers to the website's Weekly Roundup newsletter.

In 2014, SMADC helped to facilitate several real estate agent training classes throughout Maryland. Offered jointly by Maryland FarmLINK, the Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA) and the University of Maryland, Realtor Training: Selling or Leasing Farmland in Maryland equips real estate agents with the tools and information necessary to help their clients identify, analyze and purchase or lease farmland in Maryland. As of October 2014, 111 agents from 16 counties successfully completed the course. California Farmlink and Land For Good (New England) have both indicated that they wish to replicate SMADC's program and resources in their own states.

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<sup>5</sup>USDA Census of Agriculture (2012) U.S. Summary and State Data.

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"You didn't need a lot of land to farm tobacco. So, it's important, especially in Southern Maryland, to have options for preserving smaller farms."

— Earl "Buddy" Hance, Maryland Secretary of Agriculture (2009 - 2015) and original member of the Tobacco Crop Conversion Task Force (1999)

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"Yes, there are restrictions. In some areas, they've come a long way, like with agritourism. But there are still hurdles. And that's been difficult for some farms who've already committed to the program. Generally speaking, though, the state has been open to looking at more favorable uses."

— Donna Sasscer, Agriculture & Seafood Manager for St. Mary's County and SMADC board member

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"Zoning is not perpetual. It's constantly evolving and changing. While it can provide some stability to the land base, it is absolutely not the same as preservation."

— Veronica Cristo, Rural Planner, Calvert County Community Planning & Building and SMADC board member



## THE VINEYARDS AT DODEN FARM

Davidsonville, MD, Anne Arundel County

Polly Pittman is the eighth generation to live on this 550-acre farm that dates back to 1725. It's one of the oldest and largest working farms in Anne Arundel County. The Vineyards at Dodon Farm was a recipient of SMADC Farm Viability Grant.

*"We were not brought up to think of the farm as a monetary asset but a historical and emotional asset. We all consider ourselves to be custodians of the farm. This is my father's legacy."*

*What my dad did was really visionary. He put the funds from the sale of the easement into a trust to ensure future generations would be able to maintain the farm. We don't use that money on any individual business here - it is just used for general upkeep."*

*- Polly Pittman*



## FUTURE OF LAND PRESERVATION IN MARYLAND

It is widely believed that land preservation is still an important pursuit for the state of Maryland. In a 2001 report by the MALPF Task Force, an ambitious goal was put forward of preserving 1.1 million acres by the year 2020. That number represents half of the farmland in the state.

Over its 12 year history in Southern Maryland, SMADC has helped to preserve nearly 35,000 acres—15 percent of the farmland in the region. There has not yet been a decline in new applications for local and state land preservation programs. Limited funding is cited as one of the most significant challenges for farmers seeking conservation easements. Matching funds from SMADC have, and can continue to, help prioritize prime agricultural land in Southern Maryland to promote and protect economic and environmental opportunities for future generations.

"Most people don't realize how difficult it is to hold onto land through multiple generations," said former Maryland Secretary of Agriculture, Earl "Buddy" Hance. Land preservation has been an integral part of SMADC's mission and will remain an important theme in the future. The only way to ensure the long term future of agriculture in Southern Maryland is to ensure that there is farmland available for future generations. The best way to do that is through continued investments in land preservation

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"We don't just preserve land because it looks pretty. Preservation is something we should do for ourselves because it benefits all of us. Agriculture can be a vital component to the economic future of a community."

*- Veronica Cristo, Rural Planner, Calvert County Community Planning & Building and SMADC board member*

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Christine L. Bergmark, PHd, Executive Director  
Southern Maryland Agricultural Development Commission (SMADC)

P.O. Box 745 / 15045 Burnt Store Road / Hughesville, MD 20637  
Tel: 301-274-1922 / FAX: 301-274-1924 / [info@smadc.com](mailto:info@smadc.com)  
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