

RURAL LEGACY PROGRAM (RLP) INFORMATION

Purpose of Program: RLP seeks to protect farmland and open space which contains significant agricultural, environmental and cultural/historic features. The Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) funds the program and protects land mainly with the use of permanent easements. However, the Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) of Washington County is the holder of RLP easements.

Easement Valuations: The price paid for permanent easements is determined using a valuation worksheet. The more of the above listed features on the property, the higher the easement values.

Priority of Properties: As with most programs of this sort, there is a chronic shortage of funds available. Therefore, properties that are contiguous to existing permanently protected land are given priority. Other priorities include: prime agricultural lands; prime woodland (CREP is encouraged); land with environmental features needing protection such as endangered species, streams, sinkholes, and properties with historic value such as Antietam Battlefield area.

Processing of Applications: Each year, Washington County applies to DNR for RLP funding. Negotiations then begin with landowners who have expressed interest in the program. There are many steps until easement settlement occurs and the process takes about a year to complete once properties are chosen for processing. After the BOCC approves the applications, the State Board of Public Works makes final selections for funding.

For More Information: Contact Eric Seifarth, Rural Preservation Administrator at 240-313-2430 or by e-mail: eseifarth@washco-md.net.