



Maryland Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program

Customer Focus

In 1998, Larry Swift's family farm in Monkton in northeastern Baltimore County was enrolled in USDA's Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRPP). Swift put his family's 153-acre grain farm under a permanent conservation easement. Funding provided by FRPP and Baltimore County's farmland preservation program prevented the Swift farm from being converted to non-agricultural uses.

"Without FRPP and the county's ag preservation program, I would have had no choice. I would have had to leave farming and sell my land to developers. Now, I know that my land will remain as farmland even as the rest of the area develops around us. FRPP helped me save the family farm," says Mr. Swift.

The protection of the Swift farm provides economic, aesthetic, and environmental benefits to both the family and the surrounding area. The property is located near the Gunpowder River, a tributary of the Chesapeake Bay. Conservation on the farm helps decrease soil erosion and improve water quality. Additional benefits provided through the preservation of the Swift farm include enhanced wildlife habitat and the maintenance of recreational bicycle trails in the area.

This property also protects historical resources. The farm is in the vicinity of "My Lady's Manor," a 10,000-acre land grant deeded from the King of England to Lord Baltimore III and his wife in 1718.

Overview:

The USDA Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRPP) helps farmers and ranchers keep their productive land in agriculture. The program partners with States, Tribes, local governments and non-profit organizations to purchase conservation easements for the purpose of protecting topsoil by limiting non-agricultural uses of the land. NRCS provides up to 50% of the fair market value of the easement to the cooperating entity, which acquires, manages, and enforces the easement. Landowners participate voluntarily, and protected farms remain in private ownership.

Conservation plans are developed on all highly erodible cropland. Nationally, over \$101.3 million have been obligated to state and local entities since establishment of the program in 1996. The 2002 Farm Bill produced some changes in the program, including the addition of a provision providing for the protection of historical and archaeological resources on farm and ranchlands, and the inclusion of nongovernmental organizations as eligible entities. The Farm Bill also significantly increased the amount of financial assistance available under FRPP, authorizing nearly \$600 million through Fiscal Year 2007. Sixty-seven million dollars was allocated to states to purchase easements in FY 2003.

Accomplishments:

Cooperating entities' proposals are selected through a competitive process designed to protect parcels that will help accomplish FRPP and local land use goals. FRPP easements protect entire working farms, woodlands, wetlands, important natural areas, and historical and cultural resources. Through FY 2002, \$6.78 million in FRPP funds have been awarded to purchase easements on approximately 19,909 acres of valuable agricultural land in Maryland.

Due to increasing development pressure throughout the state, requests for FRPP funds have increased dramatically in recent years, far outpacing the program's funding capacity. In FY 2003, partners in Maryland requested \$15,137,885 in FRPP funds. This request represents 23 percent of the total amount of FRPP funds available nationwide in FY 2003. Maryland was allocated \$3,892,000 to purchase conservation easements in FY 2003.

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Outlook:

Although agriculture remains Maryland's top industry, with approximately one-third of the state's 6.8 million acres used for farming and livestock operations, development pressure is intense as urban sprawl increases within the Baltimore-Washington corridor and along the Chesapeake Bay waterfront. According to an economic study being conducted by the University of Maryland, it is projected that 5,900 farm acres will be converted to non-agricultural uses each year due to development pressures. Between 1997 and 2020, it is expected that six percent of the state's farmland will be lost. Farmland that remains will likely be centered primarily on the Eastern Shore (Kent, Queen Anne's, Talbot, and Caroline Counties) and in Western Maryland (Frederick and Carroll Counties).

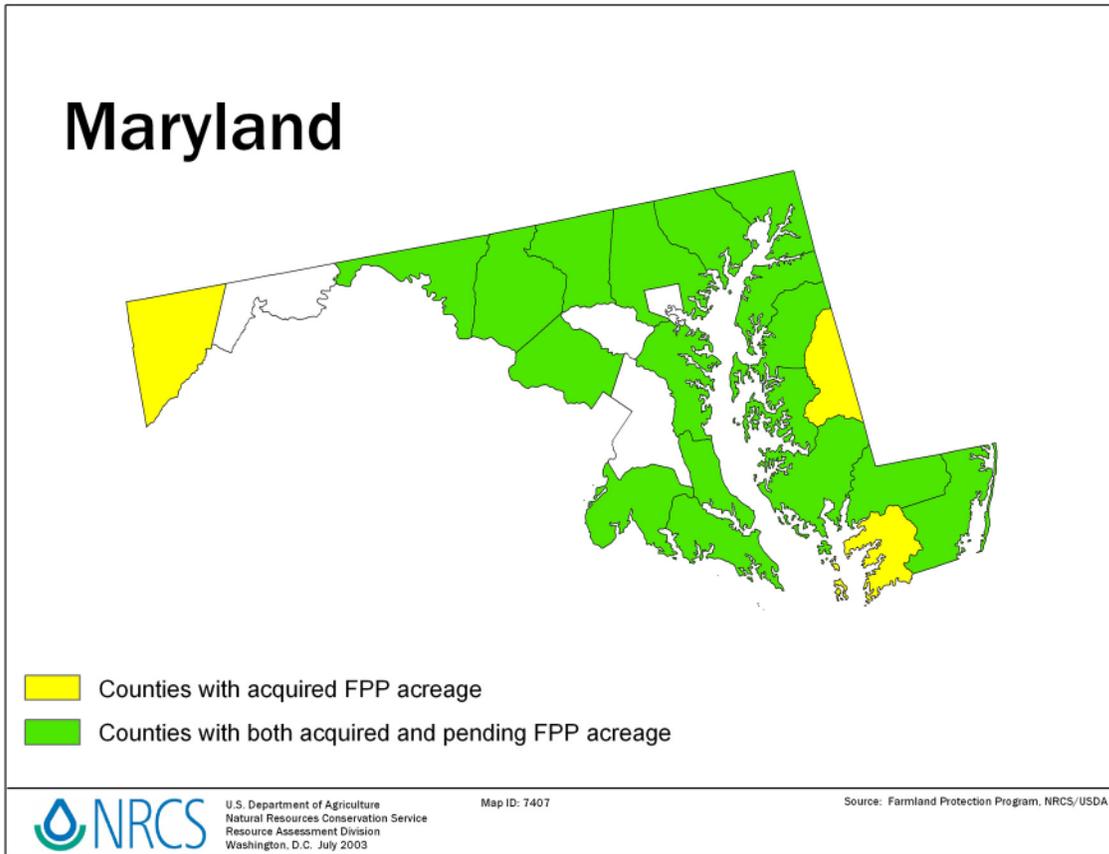
**Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program - Maryland Easements
as of June 2003
Number, Acres, Easement Costs by County**

Maryland					
County	Acres	Easement Cost		Federal Payment	
		Total (\$)	Avg. (\$/acre)	\$	%
Anne Arundel	471	1,789,660	3,800	230,410	13%
Baltimore	433	1,455,328	3,361	230,409	16%
Calvert	931	867,558	932	177,778	20%
Caroline	622	456,794	734	180,734	40%
Carroll	813	1,541,361	1,896	446,412	29%
Cecil	727	1,014,300	1,395	111,709	11%
Charles	232	324,524	1,399	77,778	24%
Dorchester	301	216,050	718	52,632	24%
Frederick	585	865,929	1,480	271,984	31%
Garrett	103	153,435	1,490	52,632	34%
Harford	126	278,300	2,209	139,150	50%
Kent	396	656,087	1,657	176,770	27%
Montgomery	564	1,909,534	3,386	177,777	9%
Queen Anne's	1,237	973,428	787	353,867	36%
Somerset	433	206,590	477	84,049	41%
St. Marys	434	738,728	1,702	198,674	27%
Talbot	755	793,466	1,051	215,450	27%
Washington	432	796,797	1,844	180,736	23%
Wicomico	245	203,635	831	52,632	26%
Worcester	127	113,967	897	52,632	46%
Total*	9,967	15,355,471	1,541	3,464,215	23%
*Totals do not include FY 2002 pending easements					

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Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program - Maryland Easements as of June 2003

Counties with Acquired and Pending FRPP Easements



Trends in Population by County - Maryland 1990 to 2000 (Census Data)

