

**ST. MARY’S COUNTY
AGRICULTURE, SEAFOOD & FORESTRY BOARD
2022 ANNUAL REPORT**

INTRODUCTION: PURPOSE OF THE GROUP

The St. Mary’s County Agricultural, Seafood and Forestry Board members shall be appointed by the Commissioners for St. Mary’s County, to meet statutory requirements, to include:

- at least three (3) members from the agricultural community (owner-operators of commercial farms who earn fifty (50) percent or more of their income from farming);
- at least one (1) member from the forestry community;
- at least one (1) member from the real estate community and
- at least one (1) member from the community not actively engaged in agriculture.

Each member of the Board shall be appointed for a term of office of five years with no member serving for more than two consecutive full terms. Members of the St. Mary's County Agricultural, Seafood and Forestry Board during 2022 are as follows:

<u>Member</u>	<u>Position</u>	<u>Expiration Date</u>
Scott Bacon	Forestry	12/31/2025
Bonnie Brown	Citizen Member	12/31/2024
Phil Dorsey	Real Estate	12/31/2024
Kaitlin Fraer	Citizen Member	6/30/2024
Phil Langley	Waterman	12/31/2025
Charles Mattingly	Citizen Member	12/31/2023
James “Bubby” Norris	Farmer	6/30/2025
Alan Polk	Forestry	12/31/2024
Stephen Reeves	Chair, Farmer	12/31/2025
Michael Sirk	Forestry	06/30/2026
Joseph Wood	Vice Chair, Farmer	06/30/2026

The following shall be ex-officio members:

- one (1) member from the University of Maryland Extension – St. Mary’s County,
- one (1) member from the St. Mary’s Soil Conservation District, and
- one (1) member from the St. Mary’s County Department of Economic Development.

SIGNIFICANT ACTIVITIES FOR THE PAST YEAR

Agriculture, Seafood, and Forestry Board:

- The Board hosted the opening of the Barns at New Market on April 6, 2022. The Board is pleased with the success of both the Seasonal Market and the Holiday Market that was held in the Value-Added Building at the Barns at New Market. There were 14 vendors in the Seasonal Market Building and 26 vendors in the Value-Added Building.
- The Board voted to support Section 5 (Agriculture Land Preservation) of the Land Preservation Parks and Recreation Plan that is updated every 5 years.

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- The Board has worked with the Southern Maryland Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) and the Patuxent Tidewater Land Trust (PTLT) to ensure the success of the Rural Legacy Program in St. Mary's County. At the request of the Maryland Department of Natural Resources, RC&D is now the land trust representing the Mattapany Rural Legacy Area and PTLT represents the Huntersville Rural Legacy Area.
- The Board is pleased to have submitted 10 applications to the Maryland Agriculture Land Preservation Foundation (MALPF) for consideration of easement purchase for the FY2023 funding cycle.
- The Board assisted in demonstrations at two local public schools during Farm to School Week. The program aims to bring locally-produced foods into schools, provide hands-on experiential learning to students, and integrate food-related education while promoting the benefits of local, nutritious foods.

Subcommittees

Agriculture Land Preservation Advisory Board

The duties of the Agricultural Land Preservation Advisory Board are:

- (1) To advise the county governing body with respect to the establishment of agricultural districts and the approval of purchases of easements by MALPF within the county;
 - (2) To assist the county governing body in reviewing the status of agricultural districts and land under easement;
 - (3) To advise MALPF concerning county priorities for agricultural preservation;
 - (4) To approve or disapprove an application by the county for certification;
 - (5) To promote preservation of agriculture within the county by offering information and assistance to farmers with respect to establishment of districts and purchase of easements;
 - (6) To meet at least annually with forest conservation district boards in order to work cooperatively to encourage the promotion and retention of farmland and woodland in their respective jurisdictions; and
 - (7) To perform any other duties as assigned by the county governing body.
- The Agriculture Land Preservation Advisory Board approved a transfer of land to cure a violation on an Easement Property, 4 Child Lot Release Requests, 1 Owner's Lot Release Request, and 1 Pre-Existing Dwelling Release Request. All requests were forwarded to the State MALPF Board for consideration.

Program	Acres Preserved in 2022	Total Acres Preserved To Date
MALPF	532.81	14,420.12
Rural Legacy	727.71	7,717.46
MARBIDCO SANG	19.22	19.22
TDRs	280.00	4,794.24
Total	1,559.74	26,951.04

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Farmers Market

The duty of the Farmers Market Subcommittee is to address issues facing farmers markets administered by DED throughout the County.

- The Home Grown Farm Market is located at 21078 Three Notch Road in Lexington Park. The Home Grown Farm Market was open Saturdays January 8 through December 17 from 9 am until 1 pm. The Home Grown Farm Market had thirty-three (33) vendors in 2022.
- The California Farmers Market is located at the BAE Systems parking lot at the corner of Town Creek Drive and Route 235. The California Farmers Market was open Saturday from 9 am until 1 pm April 30 through November 19. The California Farmers Market had seventeen (17) vendors in 2022.
- The Barns at New Market is located at 29133 Thompson Corner Rd, Charlotte Hall, MD 20659. The Barns at New Market Seasonal Market was open Monday through Saturday April through November. The Barns at New Market Seasonal Building had sixteen (16) vendors in 2022. A Holiday Market was hosted at the Barns at New Market Value-Added Building on Saturdays from 9 am until 4 pm November 5 through December 17. The Holiday Market had twenty-six (26) vendors in 2022.

Agriculture Reconciliation Committee

The Agricultural Reconciliation Committee arbitrates and mediates disputes involving agricultural operations conducted on agricultural lands. The Committee issues opinions on whether such operations conform with generally accepted agricultural management practices.

- No activity for this committee was required in 2022.

PROBLEMS AND CHALLENGES

- Attendance. Member attendance at Board meetings continues to be a challenge. The Board modified its schedule for 2022 to meet bi-monthly however attendance was still an issue.
- Identify management structure/entity for the Barns at New Market.
- Farmland Conservation Easements. Year after year there is interest to participate in the MALPF program from landowners however there is a shortfall of funding for the program.
 - The Agriculture Land Preservation Advisory Board continues to be concerned over the quality of appraisals used to determine easement values for the Maryland Agriculture Land Preservation Foundation easement offers. It is the opinion of the Board that the appraisers used by the State are not familiar with the area and therefore determine lower than realistic property values for St. Mary's County. In addition, on multiple instances, the two appraisers had widely varying assessments of the properties.
- St. Mary's County Metropolitan Commission (MetCom) Sanitary Sewer Overflow
 - George Erichsen, Director, MetCom, spoke to the Board in February about METCOM Sanitary Sewer Overflow situations due to recent tidal surges.

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METCOM implemented a process to pump the affected area using trucks to transport waste directly to the Marley Taylor Plant, however there were issues with waste water being leaked into the watershed area. Recently the Maryland Attorney General, on behalf of the Maryland Department of the Environment, filed a civil complaint in the Circuit Court for St. Mary’s County against the St. Mary’s County MetCom to request civil penalties and an injunction ordering MetCom to cease sewage overflows from its sanitary sewer system and to perform necessary corrective action.

- Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance Amendments for new uses Solar, Major and Solar, Minor
 - The Board sent letter to the Commissioners of St. Mary’s County on both February 10th and October 12th requesting Solar Major, Utility-scale solar generating systems, we request that the use designation for the Rural Preservation District (RPD) be classified as a “conditional” use (C), rather than as a “permitted” (P) one. A conditional use designation requires final approval by our board of appeals, and therefore allows authorities additional leverage in directing commercial solar utilities toward preferred areas and away from our prime agricultural soils and from Priority Preservation Areas as designated by the St. Mary’s County Comprehensive Plan.
- On Farm Events
 - The Board continues to work with Visit St. Mary's organization who has been tasked with collecting complaints received by the County and is currently entering them in a database and quarterly reports are being submitted to the Commissioners of St. Mary's. July marked an entire year since complaints have officially been tracked. County regulations state that for 50+ acres are allowed to have 20 events per year, properties less than 50 acres must apply for a permit for each event.
- Agriculture Tax Assessments
 - The Board continues to have concerns over the assessment of agriculture land and buildings where perceived commercial activities are taking place.
- Lothian Grain Elevator
 - Perdue Farms has announced plans to close the Lothian Grain Elevator in Southern Anne Arundel County. This will have a major impact on all Southern Maryland grain producers.

PLANS FOR THE CURRENT YEAR

- The Board will continue to meet the second Thursday of every other month

*2023 Meeting Calendar

February 9, 2023	August 10, 2023
April 13, 2023	October 12, 2023
June 8, 2023	December 14, 2023

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*Commissioner and citizen attendance is always welcomed.

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ONGOING ACTIVITIES

- The Board will continue to promote and discuss initiatives, projects and programs as they relate to the implementation and update of the St. Mary's County Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy.