

**Proposed
Goals, Concepts and Guidelines
and
Public Participation Program
for the
***Priority Preservation Area (PPA)
Functional Master Plan***
for
Prince George's County**



June 2010

Priority Preservation Area (PPA) Functional Master Plan

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The approved FY 2010 Planning Department Work Program requires the preparation of a Priority Preservation Area (PPA) Functional Master Plan as a strategy to achieve certification of the agricultural preservation program and to satisfy the goals, policies, and guidelines relating to the Rural Tier from the General Plan, 2002. The PPA Plan will establish goals, policies, and strategies to stabilize and preserve critical agricultural land in Prince George's County.

INTRODUCTION

Overview

The Agricultural Stewardship Act of 2006 (HB 2) requires a county to include a Priority Preservation Area (PPA) Element in their comprehensive plan, in order to be eligible for certification of their agricultural land preservation program. HB 2 prohibits certification of such programs unless the Maryland Department of Planning and the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation concur that the criteria have been met for certification.

Prince George's County is fulfilling this requirement through the Priority Preservation Area Functional Master Plan, which will amend the General Plan. Pursuant to HB 2, Section 3.05(a)(6)(ii)(8) of Article 66B in accordance with Section 2-518 of the Agricultural Article of the Annotated Code of Maryland states that a PPA shall:

- Contain productive agricultural or forest soils;
- Be capable of supporting profitable agricultural and forestry enterprises where productive soils are lacking;
- Be governed by local policies that stabilize the agricultural and forest land base so that development does not convert or compromise agricultural or forest resources; and
- Be large enough to support the kind of agricultural operations that the county seeks to preserve, as represented in its adopted comprehensive plan.

This document contains the **Goals, Concepts, Guidelines and Public Participation Program** for the preparation of the Priority Preservation Area Functional Master Plan. It summarizes the key issues and priorities that have come to light during the pre-planning phase of development. This Goals, Concepts, Guidelines document is based on the requirements included in HB 2, the vision, policies, and strategies for the Rural Tier as described in the General Plan, 2002, and input received from interviews of key stakeholders. It addresses related priorities that are drawn from the 2009 *Adopted Subregion 6 Master Plan and Sectional Map Amendment*, the 2009 *Adopted Subregion 5 Master Plan and Sectional Map Amendment*, the 2005 *Countywide Green Infrastructure Plan*, and the 2010 *Water Resources Functional Master Plan*. In addition, this Goals, Concepts, and Guidelines document considers the priorities and guidelines from relevant state plans.

Current Status of Agriculture in Prince George's County

Trends over the period from 1987 to 2007 for agriculture in Prince George's County indicate the greatest percentage decline in number of farms and in total farm acres of any county in the state. These trends reflect a pattern that is characteristic of a county undergoing urbanization and suburbanization in a region with dynamic growth in population. However, Prince George's County has embarked on an aggressive, strategic program for strengthening its agricultural sector. According to the 2007 Census of Agriculture, Prince George's County's top crops by acreage include corn for grain, hay, soybeans, wheat, and vegetables, and the market value of crops sold amounted to \$17.1 million. The top livestock inventory items were cattle and calves, hens (layers), chickens (for consumption), horses, and goats. The market value of livestock sales totaled \$1.48 million, with a market value of both crops and livestock products sold totaling \$18.6 million, a 53 percent increase over market value in 2002. The 2007 statistics represent an 84 percent increase over average market value of products sold per farm in 2002. As of 2007, there were 375 farms in the county, approximately 37,005 acres in farms, and the average size of farm was 99 acres. Farms 10 to 49 acres in size constituted the largest percentage group. The average age of principal operators of farms in the county was 60 years, and 57 percent of these farmers had a primary occupation other than farming.

To date, Prince George's County has designated portions of three subregions as part of the Priority Preservation Area (PPA) for the county. Approximately 70 percent of Subregion 6 is in the Rural Tier, and efforts are underway to preserve more than half of that area in order to preserve the connectivity and environmental integrity of those agricultural and natural resource lands. Nearly 30 percent of Subregion 5 is in the Rural Tier, and the designated PPA within this subregion covers nearly three-quarters of that area. The county seeks to preserve existing agricultural and natural resource land in Subregion 1 where the Beltsville Agricultural Research Center and the Patuxent Research Refuge, both identified as special conservation areas in the Countywide Green Infrastructure Plan, are recommended to be part of the PPA for the county.

The success of agricultural pursuits in Prince George's County is linked to the improvement of the economic outlook of this sector. Generally the ability to operate profitable farm and forest enterprises is hampered by factual economic conditions including the cost and availability of land, labor and housing, the harsh realities of balancing revenues and expenses to make a profit, less than favorable natural environment, and a strict federal, state and county regulatory framework. Overcoming these obstacles to satisfy the demand for locally grown agricultural products will be critical to improving the state of agriculture in the county.

Purpose

Two of the purposes of HB 2 are to authorize counties to include a Priority Preservation Area (PPA) element in their comprehensive plan, and to modify the process for certification of county agricultural land preservation programs to include the designation of Priority Preservation Area (PPA). HB 2 prohibits certification of such programs unless the Maryland Department of Planning and the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation concur that the criteria have been met for certification.

The purposes of the PPA Functional Master Plan are to:

- Identify the area(s) that the county seeks to preserve for agricultural¹ and forest enterprise use
- Preserve the agricultural and forest land base that is required to sustain the agricultural and forestry sectors of the economy of the county for future generations
- Establish goals, policies, and strategies that will help implement the preservation of farms and forest lands
- Specify the various preservation tools and programs that will be employed to preserve farms and forest lands
- Establish an acreage goal that is equal to at least 80 percent of the remaining undeveloped land in the PPA.

Timeframe

The 18-month schedule planned for this functional master plan is in compliance with CB-39-2005, an ordinance concerning master plan and sector plan procedures. Following initiation of the PPA Plan in June 2010 by the Prince George's County Planning Board, the County Council will review the initiation in July. Subsequently, the project team will conduct a public brainstorming workshop as well as other community outreach events outlined in the Public Participation Program portion of this document. Drafting of the plan with goals, policies, and strategies will take place in the fall and winter of 2010. The draft plan will undergo M-NCPPC review in early 2011, and will be printed in time for a joint public hearing in September 2011. The process runs through March 2012 or until June 2012 if the District Council sets a second public hearing.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Mission Statement

The mission of the PPA Plan for Prince George's County is to establish goals, policies, and strategies that address requirements of the Agricultural Stewardship Act of 2006, HB 2, to preserve agricultural and natural resource lands and to maximize the profitability of farm and forest enterprises, thereby enhancing the agricultural sector of the economy. The mission includes:

- Improving and sustaining the profitability of agricultural pursuits in order to attract new farmers
- Changing the land use paradigm to raise the awareness and appreciation of the intrinsic value of our farms, forested areas, and other natural resources

¹For the purposes of this plan, agriculture includes enterprises focused on the production of food, fuel, fiber, and forest products. Growing food for human and animal consumption has met with competition for growing products for other uses, including as fuel. Ethanol fuel production has increased as of 2009 to a yield of 19.5 billion gallons worldwide. Most cars in the U.S. can use fuel blends with up to 10 percent ethanol. Corn and other agricultural feedstocks can be grown for production of bioethanol, a renewable energy source used as fuel for vehicles (www.futurecars.com). Fiber production has escalated as well, with worldwide cotton production, as an example, reaching 26 million metric tons in 2007 (www.worldchanging.com). Farm forestry can reap economic rewards through a variety of enterprises, such as growing trees for retail markets, herbs for medicinal use, and mushrooms for their culinary and nutritional value. Forested land can also be used for recreational purposes such as hunting and camping (www.agroforestry.net).

- Enhancing the dialogue among all levels of government with the grassroots agricultural community
- Implementing best management practices to enhance the environmental stewardship of agriculture in Prince George's County, which includes protecting, enhancing, and restoring the quality of the soils, water, and air

Approved Plans and Policies

There are several state and approved local plans that are precursors of the Priority Preservation Area (PPA) Plan in their intended impact. These plans are strengthened by an effective and well-implemented PPA Plan, which supports the achievement of their already established goals. Each of these county plans addresses the need for agricultural land preservation and control of sprawl development.

The 2002 *Prince George's County Approved General Plan* includes farmland preservation as a priority, and the following goals for the Rural Tier:

- Preserve environmentally sensitive features
- Retain sustainable agricultural land
- Maintain rural character
- Allow large-lot estate residences
- Limit nonagricultural land uses
- Protect landowners' equity in their land
- Maintain the integrity of a rural transportation system

One of the development pattern objectives of the General Plan is to:

- Protect a countywide average of 1,500 acres per year of agricultural, strategic forest, or other sensitive lands through the use of the Rural Legacy Program, county-funded acquisitions, and other conservation programs.

The General Plan policies for the Rural Tier are:

- Retain or enhance environmentally sensitive features and agricultural resources
- Design future development to retain and enhance rural character
- Provide for a Rural Tier transportation system that protects open space, rural character, and environmental features and resources
- Public funds should not encourage further development in the Rural Tier

The 2009 *Approved Subregion 6 Master Plan and Sectional Map Amendment* has designated a PPA in the subregion, and includes among its goals the preservation of irreplaceable agricultural and natural resource lands. The portion of this subregion that is in the Rural Tier includes the Croom-Aquasco subarea and represents the largest contiguous block of rural lands in the county. This area is characterized by farms and forest land as well as other valuable natural resource land that need governing policies and regulations aimed at protecting them from encroaching development. The Subregion 6 plan calls for implementing a variety of preservation mechanisms and land use policies that allow the agricultural industry to flourish in a region where land is needed for food and energy production, as well as for mitigation against development and its associated pollution.

The 2009 *Approved Subregion 5 Master Plan and Sectional Map Amendment* has designated a PPA in the subregion, and seeks to preserve the agricultural and forested areas in and around the Piscataway Creek and Mattawoman subareas. The land use pattern of farms, forests, and open space in Accokeek and other Rural Tier parts of the subregion helps protect the tributaries of the Piscataway Creek and the Potomac River. Natural resource lands in this subregion consist of agriculture, forest (representing over half of the natural resource lands), extractive/barren land, and wetlands, together encompassing 73 percent of all land in the subregion.

Although not currently approved, the 2010 *Adopted Subregion 1 Master Plan and Endorsed Sectional Map Amendment* has designated a PPA in the subregion, and has as its vision in the Rural Tier to protect the rural land base for agriculture, wooded wildlife habitat, and recreational endeavors. Much of the rural portion of this subregion is publicly owned. The 7,000-acre Beltsville Agricultural Research Center is under the authority of the United States Department of Agriculture and is the largest agricultural research facility in the world. The Patuxent Research Refuge, administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service of the U.S. Department of the Interior, is the world's largest land and water network devoted to the protection and study of wildlife and their habitat.

The goals for the Rural Tier in the 2006 *Approved Master Plan for Bowie and Vicinity and Sectional Map Amendment* include retaining agricultural land, maintaining rural character, protecting property owners' land equity, preserving environmentally sensitive features and protecting scenic vistas along rural roadways. The Bowie plan was completed before the PPA legislation and did not designate a PPA, but it includes discussion of agricultural preservation in the Rural Tier portion of the plan area, which consists of 17 square miles along the western shore of the Patuxent River, and it added nine parcels totaling 926.93 acres to the Rural Tier.

The 2005 *Approved Countywide Green Infrastructure Plan* recognizes that agricultural and natural resource lands are an important part of the green infrastructure. Policy 4 of the Green Infrastructure Plan is to promote environmental stewardship as an important element to the overall success of this plan, recognizing the value of diverse land uses that maintain the natural landscape, including working farmland. This plan encourages the Planning Department to work closely with other agencies to promote land stewardship programs. Both the Beltsville Agricultural Research Center and the Patuxent Wildlife Refuge Area are recognized as Special Conservation Areas, and acknowledges that the fields and meadows associated with these areas serve as important ecological hubs and wildlife corridors.

The 1998 *Approved Countywide Map Amendment for the Reserved Open Space (R-O-S) Zone in Prince George's County* reclassified certain large tracts of properties owned by public agencies from O-S, R-R, R-A, and R-L Zones, into the R-O-S Zone. The purposes of the R-O-S Zone include preservation of large areas of agricultural, open space, and forested land, providing for a limited range of public, recreational and agricultural uses, and protecting scenic and environmentally sensitive areas.

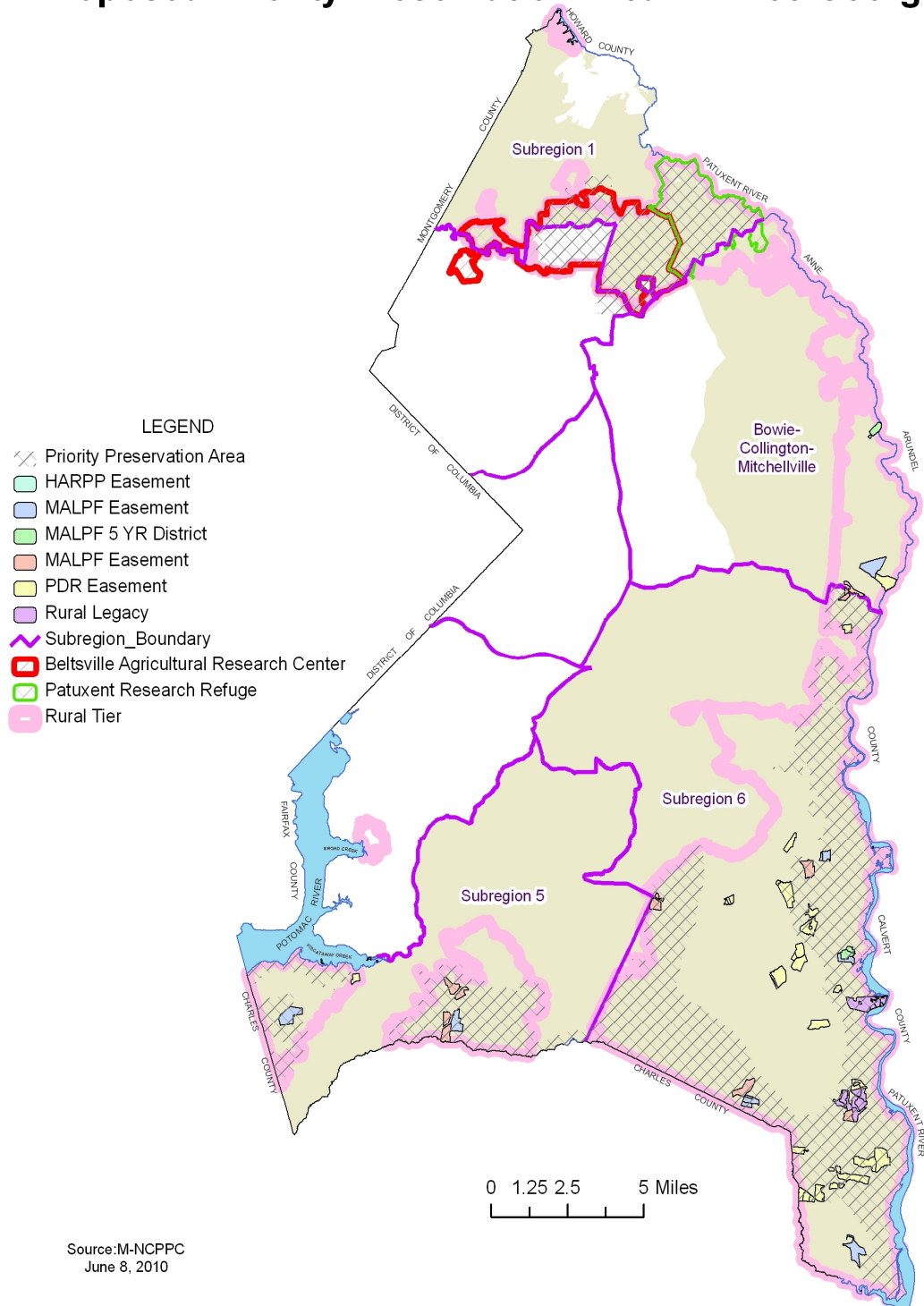
The 2010 *Prince George's County Approved Water Resources Functional Master Plan* was developed to fulfill the State's HB 1141 Water Resources Element (WRE) requirements and to provide comprehensive planning guidance and technical support for current and future county planning recommendations. In addition, HB 1141 2006 requires that agricultural and forest lands slated for resource protection or conservation be planned for as sensitive areas element of county comprehensive plans. These lands are discussed in the Water Resources Functional Master Plan and the Countywide Green Infrastructure Plan as noted above.

The 2009 *Maryland Land Preservation, Parks and Recreation Plan*, Maryland Department of Planning, includes recommendations intended to ensure long-term return on public investment in agricultural land preservation. It calls for concentrating funds in county PPAs, increasing funding, reducing acquisition cost, and modifying the easement valuation formula so that farms with fertile soils and farms in rural areas can effectively compete for limited funding.

Priority Preservation Area

The plan will consist of a map of the Priority Preservation Area (PPA), criteria used for its designation, and reference to the legislation—HB 2—and planning documents that guide its development and implementation. Included below is a working map of the PPA showing areas of the county that have been designated as part of the PPA, and other parts of the Rural Tier that have potential to be included in the PPA. While a map of the PPA boundaries will be a part of this plan, not every parcel within the PPA is expected to be preserved. The HB 2 legislation states that the county's acreage goal for land to be preserved through easements and zoning shall be at least 80 percent of the remaining undeveloped land in the PPA, according to a calculation at the time of application for state certification. It is within the individual rights of the landowner to voluntarily participate in agricultural easement programs, work with land trusts, or donate their property to organizations seeking to preserve land for agricultural uses. This document outlines the procedure that is proposed for development of the PPA Plan. It will be produced as a functional master plan according to the methodology described below. It is a countywide plan, although its impact will be as a guiding document for agricultural preservation primarily in the Rural Tier and areas contiguous to it. Stakeholders will have access to the plan development process at multiple milestones. The Department is using a community immersion methodology that is intensive, interactive, and makes possible community ownership of the time-restricted planning process.

Proposed Priority Preservation Area - Prince George's County



Source: M-NCPPC
June 8, 2010

PRELIMINARY GOALS, CONCEPTS, AND GUIDELINES

The Goals, Concepts, Guidelines, and Public Participation Program, is based on the General Plan's recommendations. The goal of the Priority Preservation Area Plan is to preserve the agricultural land base that is required to sustain the agricultural and forestry sectors of the county's economy for future generations.

Following the Planning Board's approval of the Goals, Concepts, Guidelines and Public Participation Program, the Planning Board may proceed with the initiation of this functional master plan with the written concurrence of the District Council.

The goals of the PPA Plan are to:

- Increase the pace of land preservation and the clustering effect in order to capture the most valuable farmland for agriculture and related uses
- Protect agricultural lands through appropriate zoning and land use policies
- Maintain property values for land in the PPA and protect landowner equity
- Create viable economic opportunities for young and seasoned farmers in various agricultural industry sectors
- Create and maintain links to local buyers to improve the market for county farm products
- Increase awareness of agricultural opportunities for farm and forest landowners
- Provide opportunities to enhance agriculture support services and facilities

The principal concept that defines agricultural land preservation is the protection, enhancement, and economic vitality of farm and forest enterprises. All Maryland counties that intend to have a certified agricultural land preservation program must include a PPA element in their comprehensive plan. To meet this requirement, Prince George's County has elected to incorporate the PPA into its planning process by establishing a Priority Preservation Area Functional Master Plan, which will amend the General Plan of 2002. The identification of a PPA will bring the county closer to a comprehensive approach toward preserving farm and forest lands for future generations.

Priority Preservation Area Plan Issues

The planning process will undertake the following issues, and recommend planning strategies to obtain the goals prescribed by HB 2 and the General Plan goals and strategies for agricultural preservation:

1. *How are agriculture and agriculture-related enterprises defined?*

Other jurisdictions have defined agriculture generally as the business, science and art of cultivating and managing the soil, composting, growing, harvesting, and selling crops and livestock, and the products of forestry, horticulture and hydroponics, breeding, raising, or managing livestock, including horses, poultry, fish, game, and fur-bearing animals, dairying, beekeeping and similar activities, and equestrian events and activities. Agriculture includes processing on the farm of an agricultural product in the course of preparing the product for market, and may or may not cause a change in the natural form or state of the product. The Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments recognizes a farm as an establishment selling \$1,000 or more per year of agricultural products.

Agriculture includes farm, forest, fuel, and fiber industries. Agriculture-related enterprises include farm equipment repair, veterinary services, and properly sited slaughterhouses and farm produce processing facilities, well within the confines of the traditionally agricultural community, where the Right-to-Farm Law applies.

2. *What categories of protected lands deal with agriculture, and what is the status of preservation efforts of these lands in Prince George's County, and in coordination with other counties?*

The priority is on protecting the agricultural land base, and then keeping agriculture profitable (or preferably doing both functions simultaneously). The 2007 Census of Agriculture states that while small farms are increasing, farm acreage is declining. In particular, there is a decline in livestock, with dairy cow farms declining drastically in the Metropolitan Washington region. Will pick-your-own farm enterprises be able to return to Prince George's County? What is needed to boost the growth of vineyards and wine sales as a part of the agricultural economy beyond recent county legislation? There has been an increase in small plots of forested lands—one to nine acres in size—owned by private landowners. County planners are embarking on efforts to keep better geographic information system data on all kinds of protected lands, and those efforts are progressing. It is necessary to be more proactive in coordinating with other counties to compile and maintain regional agricultural data in order to capture and analyze current conditions and trends, and maintain the farm land base.

3. *What types of zoning and other land use policies need to be in place to protect and sustain profitable farm and forest enterprises?*

One task of the PPA Plan is to research best practices from a national and regional perspective that will provide direction to draft an agricultural zone and identify appropriate agricultural-related uses in existing zones that can be implemented in the county.

4. *How can we overcome some of the challenges of operating a farm, so that existing farming communities can become more economically viable, and able to be preserved and prosper in the future?*

The challenges of labor shortages, advancing age of farmers, transportation access within the farming community and to their markets, and the high cost of equipment and health care are just some of the disadvantages that farms face now. If these challenges can be surmounted, then farms can become more profitable and less vulnerable to developers. For each dollar generated or person employed in agriculture, there is a corresponding effect of increasing income and jobs in the county and region, known as the "multiplier effect." The multiplier effect of the agricultural economy can be increased if the agricultural sector becomes more efficient and effective in turning a profit. Programs that link young farmers with plots of arable land, and that provide training will be helpful. One strategy to consider is to emphasize the economic viability of farm and forest enterprises as a vital part of the county's overall economic development strategy.

5. *How can more preservation options besides easements and sale of development rights be made available to fund the preservation of farm and forest lands? Where are the funds that will help conserve agricultural land?*

There is a need for more consistent funding from more sources than the State of Maryland. In order to increase funding from 33 percent to 67 percent of the county's agricultural land transfer taxes collected, the county must have its agricultural land preservation program certified. Without certification, the county sends 67 percent of transfer tax revenue to the state and retains only 33 percent. Each year the Soil Conservation District is granted authority by the County Executive to commit the funds to matching programs such as the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation (MALPF), and other programs for purchase of land preservation easements. In addition, sources of funds from programs authorized or reauthorized in the 2008 Farm Bill should be tapped. In particular, the conservation programs under Title II of the bill, such as the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP), Grasslands Reserve Program (GRP), the Farmland Protection Program (FPP), the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), and the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP). County easement programs, such as the Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) or the Historic Agricultural Resources Preservation Program (HARPP) funds can be evaluated so that the process can be simplified and expedited.

6. *How will the implementation of the Priority Preservation Area (PPA) Plan be coordinated with other functional master plans, ordinances, and regulations in the county, and with plans and policies of the State of Maryland?*

Farm and forest lands are part of the green infrastructure of the county and region. It is important that these lands remain as a natural resource for environmental reasons in order to protect our air and water quality. It is critical that the PPA Plan is implemented in conjunction and coordination with the *Approved Countywide Green Infrastructure Plan* and the *Approved Water Resources Functional Master Plan*. The PPA Plan should focus on issues that are not being currently addressed, and identify the responsible agencies that would be engaged early on in the plan development and implementation process. In addition, as a county seeking certification of its agricultural land preservation program, the Prince George's County PPA Plan should be consistent with guidelines of the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation (MALPF) and the Maryland Plan for Land Preservation, Parks and Recreation.

7. *As part of a rapidly growing and vibrant metropolitan region, how can the county cope with increased development pressure on farm and forest land, and seize new opportunities to meet the demand for a variety of locally grown farm products?*

There is an increasing need to prevent fragmentation in the agricultural community. Instead of fostering development, valuable parcels in the Rural Tier should be preserved for farm and farming-related services and facilities. There is a need to appreciate agricultural and natural resource land for what it is, while recognizing its intrinsic value for supporting the farming industry and combating environmental degradation. Agriculture is essential for realizing the aesthetic, environmental, scenic and historic value of a farming community. Agriculture depends on maintaining a strong rural economy. Local government decisions must support the growth of the agricultural economy, and should recognize the growing population base as an opportunity to increase the market potential of farm products.

PROPOSED PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PROCESS

The Priority Preservation Area Functional Master Plan process for public participation will be similar to the process that was used to develop the 2002 *Prince George's County Approved General Plan* and various other functional master plans and community plans to solicit major issues regarding agricultural preservation from the public. The General Plan identifies meaningful public participation as one of its guiding principles, and the General Plan process involved in receiving input from public hearings, focus group meetings, regional forums, and other venues.

The PPA plan process will also benefit from the public participation processes used in developing the 2009 *Subregion 5 Master Plan and Proposed Sectional Map Amendment*, and the 2009 *Subregion 6 Master Plan and Proposed Sectional Map Amendment* in terms of the methods used to reach out to Rural Tier communities. In addition, it will incorporate some features of a “Community Immersion Approach to Public Involvement,” an approach promoted by the American Planning Association.

Effective public participation is important in this planning process for the PPA Plan because it gives the plan validity and standing in the eyes of the citizen farmers, agriculture-related business owners, municipalities, agriculture and forestry groups, environmental advocacy groups, and residents of the Rural Tier and beyond who are interested in the future of their farming communities.

A public participation program explains the techniques to facilitate committed public involvement in the preparation of the plan. During the pre-planning process staff has identified a large number of stakeholders, and will continue to build on that database. The public participation program includes techniques to keep the larger affected community informed and contains a timetable explaining the length of time for the preparation of the preliminary plan. Public forums will be held in order to gather input from the public regarding agricultural land preservation.

Public participation elements of the plan-making process include:

- **Individual Stakeholder Interviews:** Individual interviews have been held and more will be scheduled to address specific concerns or topics.
- **Priority Preservation Area Functional Master Plan Public Forums:** During at least three geographically targeted public forums, the attendees will be informed of the PPA Plan effort, the state requirements of HB 2, and the interrelationship of this plan to other county plans, and the effect that this plan’s policies will have on the county’s farming communities.

Staff expects to receive input from attendees concerning the issues identified by the county or raised by the public. The public forums will be open to all citizens, business operations, property owners and interested parties.

- **Focus Groups:** Representatives of the stakeholder groups will be invited to take part in exploratory work sessions to discuss issues, opportunities and potentially innovative strategies. Focus groups can consider new ideas coming to light as a result of recent emphasis in our region on the availability of locally grown produce. The importance of knowing where food comes from is central to the rationale behind agricultural preservation in the county and the region.

Identified focus groups are: citizens at large, elected officials, the agriculture industry that includes farm and forest enterprises and businesses that support those entities, environmental advocacy groups, farm bureaus and commissions, municipalities, Chambers of Commerce, and agriculture and forestry boards/groups.

For the focus groups, staff will make a presentation at scheduled meetings and request that participants in the focus group identify their affiliation and area of interest. The identified participants will then be convened to specifically discuss the Priority Preservation Area Functional Master Plan.

- **Plan Review Groups:** The purpose of these work sessions will be to bring together the various focus group participants to discuss the draft concept, policy and strategy recommendations for the plan. Based on input from this work session, staff will develop a draft preliminary plan. A final work session will be held to present this information to the combined focus groups and to discuss any modifications to the draft preliminary plan prior to its completion and submission to the Planning Board and District Council for a joint public hearing.
- **Joint Planning Board/County Council Public Hearing:** This will be the formal opportunity for the public to address the Planning Board and County Council on the Preliminary Priority Preservation Area Functional Master Plan. The Planning Board and Council will determine whether to amend, adopt and/or approve the preliminary plan. If needed, an additional public hearing may be held by the County Council after Planning Board adoption.
- **Information Distribution Methods:** Throughout the Public Forums, Focus Group sessions, Plan Review Group sessions, and the preparation of the Priority Preservation Area Functional Master Plan, the Planning Department's web site will contain up-to-date information regarding dates of meetings, meeting agendas, meeting summaries and other relevant information. Mailing lists compiled from the public forum and focus groups will also be used to distribute information as appropriate. E-mail and the inclusion of meeting notices and other material in the Farm Bureau newsletters and other media outlets will be used whenever possible, to minimize paper and mailing costs. Throughout the plan development process staff will also be available for personal contacts with stakeholders as needed.
- **Community Immersion Methods:** Other events such as walking or riding tours of the areas proposed to be designated for priority preservation, open houses, educational forums, farm visits, and front porch talks will be used to determine what it is like to live and/or work in the proposed PPA.

It is anticipated that throughout the public participation process, the milestone events noted above will be publicized in a variety of ways (website, e-mail, newspaper advertisement, etc.) until it is adopted by the Planning Board and approved by the District Council by June 2012, if a second public hearing is held.

SCHEDULE

1.	Pre-Planning	January – June 2010
2.	Planning Board Initiation	June 2010
3.	District Council Authorization	July 2010
4.	Public Participation	January – October 2010
5.	Prepare Plan	November 2010 – January 2011
6.	Permission To Print	May 2011
7.	First Joint Public Hearing	September 2011
8.	Planning Board Adoption and Endorsement	December 2011
9.	Plan Transmittal To District Council	January 2012
10.	District Council Takes Action or Sets Second Public Hearing (if required)	March 2012
11.	Second Joint Public Hearing (if required)	May 2012
12.	District Council Approval	June 2012