

THE
RURAL
LEGACY
PROGRAM



Annual Report Fiscal Year 2023
(July 1, 2022 thru June 30, 2023)



RURAL LEGACY PROGRAM– FISCAL YEAR 2023 ANNUAL REPORT

Legislative Requirement for the Annual Report

This is the 25th Annual Report¹ on the progress of the Maryland Rural Legacy Program (Program) pursuant to Section 5-9A-07(g) of the Natural Resources Article of the Maryland Annotated Code. This report covers the time period from July 1, 2022 through June 30, 2023 (FY 2023), and includes the 25th cycle of grant applications that were submitted for FY 2023. The Rural Legacy Board (RLB) is required to report annually to the Governor of Maryland and the Maryland General Assembly on: (1) the financial status of the Program for the preceding fiscal year, including the amount of grants encumbered and disbursed; (2) the number of applications received; (3) the number and location of Rural Legacy Areas (RLAs) designated, and (4) the Program's progress in contributing to land preservation efforts. This report is intended to satisfy these requirements based on the Program statistics for FY 2023, and the grants applied for that fiscal year.

Background

The Program was established in 1997 to protect the state's natural resources, farms, forests, and other sensitive environmental areas, while maintaining the viability of resource-based economies, and the proper management of tillable and wooded areas. The Program provides grants to local governments and land trusts to purchase conservation easements and property in fee simple in designated RLAs. The Program is focused on a community-up approach to land preservation, stressing partnerships among federal, state, and local governments, and nonprofit land trusts. Counties are encouraged to initiate other land conservation measures to build upon the land preservation accomplishments achieved through Program funds.

Rural Legacy Program Criteria

The Program is a strategic land conservation program based on private, local, state, and federal government partnerships. The statutory criteria, which is the basis for designation of RLAs and funding awards, includes analysis of a wide range of natural and cultural resources, availability of a variety of tools to implement conservation measures, strength of public and private partnerships, and support of land use mechanisms.

Program staff and sponsors continue to ensure adherence to the Program's statute. The Program has encouraged local land conservation and preservation initiatives by promoting partnerships between state and local governments with nonprofit land trust organizations.

RLAs represent a targeted strategy of land conservation through local and state partnerships. Creation of RLAs involves a combined effort by county governments, land trusts, and landowners to protect what is collectively regarded as the best of Maryland's concentrated natural, cultural and

¹ The 1998-99 fiscal years were combined into one grant cycle and one annual report.

agricultural resources. Communities and local governments desiring to protect working farms and forests, support the local resource-based economy, and conserve natural resources and open space are able to do so through Program grants.

Strategic Conservation

Conservation under the Program meets the standards set for land conservation policy, including:

- A focus on the most strategic lands to protect the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries as well as the most significant natural and agricultural resources.

The Program was established to enhance natural resource, agricultural, forestry, and environmental protection while maintaining the viability of resource-based land usage and proper management of tillable and wooded areas through accepted agricultural and silvicultural practices for farm production and timber harvests. The emphasis on resource protection in the Program's statutory criteria, combined with the Program sponsors' grassroots knowledge of regionally significant areas throughout the state, ensures that RLAs and acquisitions represent strategic conservation of resources. Easement requirements include soil conservation and water quality plans, forest management plans, and riparian buffers, which ensure water quality benefits and protect the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries.

- Application of the best scientific information and technology to identify resource lands that are important, the potential threats to these lands, and the areas in which preservation goals can be maximized.

Proposed RLAs and applications for grant funding are reviewed under the Green Infrastructure Assessment to evaluate the value of ecologically important lands, including data on rare species habitat, aquatic life hotspots, and water quality protection. In addition, applications are evaluated in relation to the prevalence of working farms and forests, as well as planning and land use categories including degree of fragmentation of rural resource lands, development capacity based on zoning, and degree of threat of development.

- Establish a process for collaboration and coordination among state and local land conservation programs to identify geographic and natural resource areas.

Proposed applications for designation and funding are reviewed by state agencies involved in land conservation and preservation, including the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR), Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA) and Maryland Department of Planning (MDP). The Rural Legacy Advisory Committee (RLAC), an 11-member multi-disciplinary committee appointed by the Governor, and the RLB (Secretaries of DNR, MDA, and MDP), represent a coordinated and collaborative approach to review and propose RLAs for designation and grant recommendations.

- Establish an Easement Valuation System (EVS), which is a points-based method to determine the value of a perpetual conservation easement.

In 1999, DNR, in conjunction with MDP, developed the Program’s model EVS. In turn, each of the Program’s sponsors used this model to develop their own EVS; as authorized in the Program’s statute and regulations. *See Natural Resources Article Sec. 5-9A-05; and COMAR 08.05.01.07.* (All sponsor EVSs must be approved by DNR, MDP, and MDA staff (as designees of the RLB)).

Rural Legacy Program Advisory Committee and Board

The RLAC members and their area of representation when the FY 2023 RLAC met on August 10, 2022 were:

Mary E. “Cricket” Goodall, Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation (Chair)
 Mary Burke, Ph.D., Maryland Environmental Trust
 Elizabeth Carter, Environmental Organization
 Robert “Bob” Cissell, Agricultural Industry
 Steve Kline, Land Conservation
 Anthony H. DiPaolo, Forest Industry
 Gregory Clinton Sterling, Jr., County Parks and Recreation
 Michael Calkins, Business
 Jane Griffith Evans, Private Land Owner
 Kyle Murray, Mineral Resource Industry
 The Honorable David Jenkins, Municipal Corporation

The RLB members when the FY 2023 RLB met on September 16, 2022 were:

Secretary Jeannie Haddaway-Riccio, DNR, Chair
 Secretary Robert S. McCord, MDP
 Secretary Joseph Bartenfelder, MDA

Program Progress and Accomplishments in FY 2023

The Program supports the goals of strategic conservation through focused land preservation in designated RLAs where it will make the greatest difference in enhancing the state’s green infrastructure in order to improve the health of the Chesapeake Bay, and protect the state’s agricultural and natural resources. The Program’s conservation easements require the appropriate best management practices and management plans, as well as establishing and maintaining riparian buffers on the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries. In order to derive even greater benefits to Maryland’s waterways, Program sponsors are encouraged, whenever possible, to negotiate a minimum of 100-foot riparian buffers into easement terms.

In FY 2023, the Program preserved 5,436.93 acres within RLAs throughout Maryland. Since inception, the Program has preserved 120,885 acres of the state’s most scenic landscapes and critical natural resources that support resource-based industries.

Stewardship of easements is a priority of the Program. In order to protect the state’s fiscal investment, Program sponsors are required to monitor Program properties to ensure compliance with the terms and conditions of conservation easements. Site visits must be performed at a minimum of once every 3 years. Monitoring reports are submitted to the Program, and any violations are documented and corrective actions are taken. In FY 2023, 100% of the Program easements in the cycle due for monitoring were monitored by June 2023 to ensure that conservation practices are being followed and maintained.

The Financial Status of the Program

Since the Program’s inception, a total of \$430.786 million has been appropriated to the Program, including \$26,387,542 authorized in the FY23 budget.

In addition, the RLAC and the RLB voted to redirect \$712,935 in unused prior year funding to the FY23 grant awards from the following areas:

Anne Arundel South (Anne Arundel County)	\$ 5,281.97
Nanticoke (Dorchester County)	\$ 707,653.85

Thus, a total of \$27,100,477 in annual grant awards were available for distribution by the Program in FY 2023. These funds were awarded by the RLB and approved by the Board of Public Works (BPW) as grants to Program sponsors.

FY 2023 Grant Applications Received

Applications are submitted on a yearly basis by Program sponsors. Applications include requests for grant funding, RLA boundary expansions, and proposed new RLA designations. In February 2022, there were 28 applications submitted, requesting \$102,134,214 for FY 2023 grants.

FY 2023 Grant Applications Reviewed

The RLAC’s recommendations for funding distribution were based on a review of the applications, and the use of an objective scoring matrix which ranked various criteria based on DNR, MDP and MDA information. The criteria included: natural and working resources, planning and land use, leveraging, ability to administer, and other factors such as stewardship, need for funding, and unique circumstances that would enhance or hinder an RLA’s ability to spend grant funding. In addition, bonus points were given under the categories of enlarged stream buffers, public access, and social benefits. The RLAC gave additional consideration to RLAs with projects ready for implementation, and in need of immediate funding.

FY 2023 Recommendations and Approval

Based on the review of the grant applications submitted and informed by the objective scoring approach, the RLAC made recommendations to the RLB to approve six RLA boundary changes and recommended grant awards and reallocations totaling \$27,100,477. The grant award amount represents the total FY 2023 Program budget appropriation and reallocations. The RLB, chaired by (former) DNR Secretary Haddaway-Riccio, accepted these recommendations, and the BPW approved the six RLA boundary changes along with the FY23 grant awards as outlined below on October 12, 2022, as Agenda Item 15A on the DNR Real Property Agenda.

1. Agricultural Security Corridor - Eastern Shore Heartland Rural Legacy Area: *Caroline, Dorchester, and Talbot Counties*

Grant: of \$1,634,912 to acquire conservation easements to protect a range of resources that includes forests, farmlands, wetlands, historic sites, and endangered species habitat in the Agricultural Security Corridor in three counties on the Eastern Shore. Conservation of property in this area will support the local resource-based economy, including agricultural production of grains, hay, dairy, beef and poultry operations. The board approved the designation of the Agricultural Security Corridor Rural Legacy Area encompassing five counties in 1998 and split it into three separate and distinct RLAs in January of 2020.

2. Agricultural Security Corridor - Harvest Crescent Rural Legacy Area: *Cecil and Kent Counties*

Grant: of \$1,373,178 to acquire conservation easements to protect a range of resources that includes forests, farmlands, wetlands, historic sites, and endangered species habitat in the Agricultural Security Corridor in two counties on the Eastern Shore. Conservation of property in this area will support the local resource-based economy, including agricultural production of grains, hay, dairy, beef and poultry operations. The board approved the designation of the Agricultural Security Corridor Rural Legacy Area encompassing five counties in 1998 and split it into three separate and distinct RLAs in January of 2020.

3. Agricultural Security Corridor - Tuckahoe Rural Legacy Area: *Caroline and Talbot Counties*

Grant: of \$183,845 to acquire conservation easements to protect a range of resources that include forests, farmlands, wetlands, historic sites, and endangered species habitat in the Agricultural Security Corridor in two counties on the Eastern Shore. Conservation of property in this area will support the local resource-based economy, including agricultural production of grains, hay, dairy, beef and poultry operations. The board approved the designation of the Agricultural Security Corridor Rural Legacy Area encompassing five counties in 1998 and split it into three separate and distinct RLAs in January of 2020.

4. **Baltimore Coastal Rural Legacy Area:** *Baltimore County*

Grant: of \$2,081,689 to acquire conservation easements to protect a range of resources, including forests, farmlands, and water quality. Coastal resiliency benefits include riparian buffers and restrictions on structures in flood and surge zones to protect important ecosystem functions.

Boundary Adjustments: for a net expansion of 862 acres such that the resulting area will be 14,831 acres. The adjustments to the boundary include expansion of 2,280 acres and reduction/removal of 1,418 acres. The boundary updates remove developed areas and/or areas slated for imminent development in order to maintain rural integrity of the RLA, accompanied by adding undeveloped areas identified by the community to expand opportunities for preservation.

5. **Bear Creek Rural Legacy Areas:** *Garrett County*

Grant: of \$573,881 to acquire conservation easements to protect the county's most productive working farms, standing timber, scenic views from the Cove overlook, natural habitats, wetlands, and waterways in the Bear Creek drainage basin. Conservation within the Area will provide water quality benefits to the Youghiogheny River, the state's only designated Wild and Scenic River. The Board approved designation of the Bear Creek Rural Legacy Area in 2002.

6. **Calvert Creeks Rural Legacy Area:** *Calvert County*

Grant: of \$1,062,012 to acquire conservation easements on historic farmland, forests and significant natural areas in the Patuxent River and Chesapeake Bay watersheds. The board approved the designation of the Calvert Creeks Rural Legacy Area, formerly known as the Battle Creek/Parkers Creek Rural Legacy Area, in 1998.

Expansion: of 15,817 acres to cover a significant portion of the Patuxent River shoreline as well as large parts of the Hunting Creek watershed, which is a conservation focus area for the County. Part of the expanded boundary creates a green corridor along the length of the County and nearly connects the North Calvert RLA and the Calvert Creeks RLA from Dunkirk to Solomons. Another expansion south of Prince Frederick further protects Parkers Creek watershed and lands owned and managed by American Chestnut Land Trust, as well as the Battle Creek watershed.

7. **Coastal Bays Rural Legacy Area:** *Worcester County*

Grant: of \$701,879 to acquire conservation easements to protect forest, agricultural, natural areas and shoreline in Worcester County's coastal bays. This Area includes important tidal marshland areas, forests, and farmland, which provides one of the most ecologically diverse and outstanding wildlife habitat in

the state. The Board approved the designation of the Coastal Bays Rural Legacy Area in 1998.

8. Deer Creek Rural Legacy Area: *Harford County*

Grant: of \$1,295,664 to acquire conservation easements within the watershed of Deer Creek River, a state-designated Scenic River, and adjacent to Rocks and Susquehanna State Park to protect historic farmland, forests, natural and cultural areas. This area is located within the Lower Susquehanna Heritage Greenway, a certified Maryland Heritage Area. The board approved the designation of the Lower Deer Creek Rural Legacy Area in 1999.

9. Dividing Creek Rural Legacy Area: *Somerset and Worcester Counties*

Grant: of \$600,000 to acquire conservation easements to protect significant woodland, farmland and wetlands. The Area includes one of the most pristine and ecologically significant watershed basins on the mid-Atlantic. It includes exemplary plant and wildlife habitat, prime farmland and large blocks of working forests and over 10 miles of shoreline along Dividing Creek. The Board approved the designation of the Dividing Creek Rural Legacy Area in 2008.

10. Fair Hill Rural Legacy Area: *Cecil County*

Grant: of \$528,710 to acquire conservation easements to protect farmland, forests, natural areas and historic sites in the northeast corner of Cecil County contiguous to the Fair Hill Natural Resources Management Area. Conservation of property in this Area will support the local resource-based economy, including equestrian activities. The board approved the designation of the Fair Hill Rural Legacy Area in 1999.

11. Foreman Branch/Lands End Rural Legacy Areas: *Queen Anne's County*

Grant: of \$1,307,452 to acquire conservation easements to protect environmentally significant tributaries of the Chester and Corsica Rivers, including farmland, forest land, wetlands and wildlife habitat. The board approved the designation of the Foreman Branch and Lands End Rural Legacy Areas in 1998.

12. Gunpowder Rural Legacy Area: *Baltimore County*

Grant: of \$235,467 to acquire conservation easements and fee simple interests to protect historic farmland, forests and natural and cultural areas on both sides of the Gunpowder River and the Northern Central Railroad Trail in Baltimore County. Conservation within the Area will provide water quality benefits to the Prettyboy and Loch Raven Reservoirs. The board approved the designation of the Gunpowder River Rural Legacy Area in 1999.

Expansion: of 989 acres to extend the RLA from Quaker Bottom Road on the South to I-83 on the West and to a line just South of Ensor Mill Road on the North; and join the existing RLA on the West. The expansion will provide significant view-shed protection from I-83.

13. Harriet Tubman Rural Legacy Area: *Dorchester County*

Grant: of \$481,598 to acquire conservation easements to protect farmland, woodland, natural and historic landscapes associated with the legacy of Harriet Tubman and the history of the Underground Railroad. The board approved the designation of the Harriet Tubman Rural Legacy Area in 2018.

14. Huntersville Rural Legacy Area: *St. Mary's County*

Grant: of \$852,262 for partnership with the U.S. Navy's Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration (REPI) funds to acquire conservation easements to protect forests, natural and archeological areas, farmland, and historic sites. Portions of the area are designated by the Smithsonian Center for Natural Areas as critical wildlife habitat in need of protection. The board approved the designation of the Huntersville Rural Legacy Area in 1998.

15. Little Pipe Creek /Upper Patapsco Rural Legacy Areas: *Carroll County*

Grant: of \$320,720 to acquire conservation easements to protect farmland, woodland, natural and cultural land within the Little Pipe Creek and upper Monocacy River Watersheds. Conservation within the area will provide water quality benefits not only for the two watersheds, but also for the underground aquifers that supply many residents with drinking water. The Board approved the designation of the Little Pipe Creek Rural Legacy Area in 1998 and Upper Patapsco Rural Legacy Area in 2004.

16. Long Green Valley Rural Legacy Area: *Baltimore County*

Grant: of \$994,001 to acquire conservation easements and fee simple interests to protect woodland, farmland and significant habitat and wildlife corridors, including lands within or directly contiguous to the Long Green Valley National Register Historic District. Conservation within the area will provide water quality benefits for the Little and Big Gunpowder Rivers and the Loch Raven Reservoir. The board approved the designation of the Long Green Valley Rural Legacy Area in 1999.

Expansion: of 126 acres that will add land to the northwestern portion of the RLA south of Sweet Air Road from a parcel line down to Manor Road that will increase contiguous areas of existing protected lands.

17. Manor Rural Legacy Area: *Baltimore and Harford Counties*

Grant: of \$666,611 to acquire conservation easements to protect farmland, woodlands and significant natural and cultural resources in My Lady's Manor National Historic District and along the Little Gunpowder Falls, a Class Three Trout Stream. The board approved the designation of the Manor Rural Legacy Area in 2000.

18. Mattapany Rural Legacy Area: *St. Mary's County*

Grant: of \$493,984 to match the U.S. Navy's Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration (REPI) funds to acquire conservation easements to protect the Area's rich farmland, forests, wetlands, historic sites, and wildlife habitat. Conservation within the area will provide water quality benefits to the Chesapeake Bay and the St. Mary's River watershed. The board approved the designation of the Mattapany Rural Legacy Area in 2006.

Expansion: of 17,065 acres that is designed to include environmentally significant land bordering the St. Mary's and Potomac Rivers, as well as around the Naval Air Station Patuxent River's Webster Outlying Field. The entire expansion area is eligible for Navy REPI funding.

19. Mid-Maryland Frederick/Carrollton Manor Rural Legacy Areas: *Frederick County*

Grant: of \$1,883,000 to acquire conservation easements to protect farmland, forestland, Civil War historic sites and a greenbelt around the historic Town of Burkittsville. Conservation of property in the area will protect the view surrounding the Appalachian Trail and South Mountain Battlefield State Park, which are nationally significant natural and cultural resources. The board approved the designation of the Mid-Maryland Frederick Rural Legacy Area in 1998 and the Carrollton Manor Rural Legacy Area in 2004.

20. Mid-Maryland Montgomery/Upper Patuxent Rural Legacy Areas: *Montgomery County*

Grant: of \$1,305,703 to acquire conservation easements and fee simple interests to protect farmland, open space, and natural areas. The area protects farmland, open space and natural resources located within the heart of the County's Agricultural Reserve. The area contains large contiguous tracts of rural lands, numerous agricultural operations, and forest resources rich in both aquatic and terrestrial wildlife. Conservation within the area provides water quality benefits to the Potomac River, a Maryland designated Scenic River. The board approved the designation of Mid-Maryland Montgomery Rural Legacy Area in 1998.

21. Mid-Maryland Washington Rural Legacy Area: *Washington County*

Grant: of \$1,550,000 to acquire conservation easements to protect farmland, forests and Civil War sites within view of Washington Monument State Park, South Mountain Battlefield State Park, Antietam National Battlefield and its approaches. Conservation within the area will provide water quality benefits to the Potomac River, a Maryland designated Scenic River. The board approved the designation of the Mid-Maryland Washington Rural Legacy Area in 1998.

22. Mountain Ridge Rural Legacy Area: *Allegheny County*

Grant: of \$1,838,592 to acquire conservation easements of significant woodland, farmland and wetlands. Situated within the Ridge and Valley Physiographic Province where it meets the Allegheny Front, the area includes large blocks of unbroken forest, pristine ecologically significant areas and historic sites. The area includes an important migration corridor and the most significant golden eagle flyway in the state. The board approved the designation of Mountain Ridge Rural Legacy Area in 2010.

23. Nanjemoy – Mattawoman Forest: *Charles County*

Grant: of \$1,166,098 to acquire conservation easements to protect farmland, forests, natural areas, and historic properties within the Nanjemoy and Mattawoman watersheds. The resources protected in this RLA include the fisheries of the Mattawoman Creek – one of the steadiest and busiest recreational fishing destinations in Maryland. This area includes properties on the Potomac River, Mallows Bay, Nanjemoy Creek, and Mattawoman Creek, and is within the U.S. Navy’s Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration (REPI) preservation boundary. The Board approved the designation of Nanjemoy-Mattawoman Rural Legacy Area in 2021.

24. North Calvert Rural Legacy Area: *Calvert County*

Grant: of \$1,371,909 to acquire conservation easements to protect farmland and forests, and provide habitat for resident and migrating species. The area forms a greenway along the Patuxent River, a State Scenic River. Riparian buffers will protect the sensitive wetlands and forests of four watersheds. The area is also historically significant, including the historic town of Lower Marlboro that was active in the War of 1812 and was also an important port town until the 1930’s. Conservation of property in this area will support the local resource-based economy. The Board approved the designation of the North Calvert Rural Legacy Area in 2004.

Expansion: of 1,747 acres in three separate locations – one along the border with Anne Arundel County; another along Lower Marlboro Road (Rte. 262); and a third to the south of the existing RLA in Huntingtown. These expansions are intended

to add greater protection for Hall Creek, and other smaller tributaries of the Patuxent River, and will increase the size of the green corridor in northern Calvert County and extend to almost connect to the Calvert Creeks RLA in the southern part of the county.

25. Piney Run Rural Legacy Area: *Baltimore County*

Grant: of \$1,597,310 to acquire conservation easements to protect farmland, forests, natural areas and historic properties within and near National Register Historic Districts. Conservation within the area will provide water quality benefits to the Prettyboy and Loch Raven Reservoirs, two of the drinking supply reservoirs for the Baltimore Metropolitan Area. The board approved the designation of the Piney Run Rural Legacy Area in 1998.

26. Quantico Creek Rural Legacy Area: *Wicomico County*

Grant: of \$1,000,000 to acquire conservation easements to protect forests, farmland, and wintering waterfowl habitat and historic villages. Conservation within the area will provide water quality benefits to Quantico Creek, part of the Nanticoke Watershed Greenway. The board approved the designation of the Quantico Creek Rural Legacy Area in 2000.

Designated Rural Legacy Areas

RLAs are located in all of Maryland's 23 counties. The existing RLAs cover approximately 1,322,444 acres of Maryland's most significant natural resource, agricultural, open, and scenic lands.

To date, there are 35 designated RLAs in Maryland:

Rural Legacy Area	Counties	Sponsor
Agricultural Security Corridor - Eastern Shore Heartland*	Caroline, Dorchester, and Talbot	Eastern Shore Land Conservancy
Agricultural Security Corridor - Harvest Crescent*	Cecil and Kent	Eastern Shore Land Conservancy
Agricultural Security Corridor – Tuckahoe*	Caroline and Talbot	Eastern Shore Land Conservancy
Anne Arundel South	Anne Arundel	Anne Arundel County
Baltimore Coastal	Baltimore	Baltimore County, Gunpowder Valley Conservancy
Bear Creek	Garrett	Garrett County
Calvert Creeks	Calvert	Calvert County
Carrollton Manor	Frederick	Frederick County
Coastal Bays	Worcester	Worcester County
Deer Creek (formerly Lower Deer Creek)	Harford	Harford County
Dividing Creek	Somerset and Worcester	Somerset County, Worcester County, Lower Shore Land Trust
Fair Hill	Cecil	Cecil Land Trust
Foreman Branch (formerly Chino Farms)	Queen Anne’s	Queen Anne’s County
Gunpowder	Baltimore	Gunpowder Valley Conservancy
Harriet Tubman	Dorchester	The Conservation Fund
Huntersville	St. Mary’s	Patuxent Tidewater Land Trust, St. Mary’s County
Lands End	Queen Anne’s	Queen Anne’s County
Little Pipe Creek	Carroll	Carroll County
Long Green Valley	Baltimore	Long Green Valley Land Trust
Manor	Baltimore and Harford	The Manor Conservancy
Mattapany	St. Mary’s	Southern Maryland Resources Conservation & Development Board, Inc., St. Mary’s County
Mid-Maryland Frederick	Frederick	Frederick County
Mid-Maryland Montgomery	Montgomery	Montgomery County Agricultural Preservation Advisory Board
Mid-Maryland Washington	Washington	Washington County
Mountain Ridge	Allegany	Allegany County
Nanjemoy-Mattawoman Forest	Charles	Charles County
Nanticoke	Dorchester	The Nature Conservancy, The Conservation Fund
North Calvert	Calvert	Calvert County
Patuxent – Prince George’s	Prince George’s	Prince George’s Soil Conservation District
Piney Run	Baltimore	The Land Preservation Trust, Inc.
Quantico Creek	Wicomico	Lower Shore Land Trust, Wicomico County
Upper Patapsco	Carroll	Carroll County
Upper Patuxent - Howard	Howard	Howard County
Upper Patuxent - Montgomery	Montgomery	Montgomery County Agricultural Preservation Advisory Board
Zekiah Watershed	Charles	Charles County

*Note that Agricultural Security Corridor RLA, which was previously one area with sub-focus areas, split into three separate RLAs.

Summary

Strong interest in the Program continues, as shown by the amount of funds requested for the FY 2023 grant cycle. Over the 25 application cycles (FY98/99 through FY 2023), requests for grant funds have totaled almost \$2.4 billion for \$430.786 million in available funding. In the FY 2023 grant cycle, this trend continued; DNR received applications totaling over \$102.134 million for \$26,387,542 in FY 2023 funding. The FY 2023 budget provided full funding for land conservation, preservation and recreation programs, including the Program, through the distribution of state transfer tax revenues.

At the end of FY23, the Program had permanently conserved 120,885 acres. Sustained funding will be needed to support local governments and land trusts to meet the goal of conserving the RLAs throughout the state. This partnership of local government, land trusts, landowners, and the state of Maryland continues to make a substantial commitment to supporting the conservation and preservation of the state's most valuable agricultural, natural, open space resources and scenic landscapes.

Acknowledgements:

Program staff of DNR would like to acknowledge the RLA sponsors, the members of the RLAC, the RLB, and the staff of MDP and MDA for their dedicated work on behalf of the Program. It is through the Program's targeted objectives that the state's open space land is conserved and preserved, the health of the Chesapeake Bay and water quality to our waterways is improved, our resource-based economies thrive, and our wildlife, cultural heritage and natural resources are protected; a legacy to be passed on to all Maryland citizens and future generations to come.

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