

# FRONT PAGE

Newsletter of the *Carroll County  
Land Trust*; January 2012 edition.  
*Edmund R. "Ned" Cueman*, Editor

## AG PRESERVATION PROGRAM REAFFIRMED !

Last March, *Front Page* reported the County had reached the 60,211 acres permanently preserved mark and that there were 15 easements pending final approval by the new Board of County Commissioner totaling 1,582 acres. These easements were subsequently approved by the County Commissioners in April, 2011. However, before continuing on with processing additional easements, the Board created a Task Force to review and study the County's Agricultural Land Preservation Program to assess the protection efforts to date, analyze the program's funding sources and strategy, and examine additional techniques to protect agricultural land in Carroll County. The 11 member Task Force completed a thorough study and review in December, filed its written Report and Recommendations with the Board, and subsequently presented highlights of its findings to the Board in open public meeting session on December 10, 2011. (Representatives of the Carroll County Land Trust Board attended the session). The Report is very positive and reaffirms the current overall program; specifically the (IPA) Installment Purchase Agreement

Program, Critical Farms Program, Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation Program (MALPF), and Rural Legacy Program. The Task Force carefully considered but *did not* recommend the County undertake and invest in a Term (non-permanent) Easements Program for a variety of financial reasons determined not advantageous to the landowner or the County. The Task Force did suggest there may be some application for a very limited TDR (Transfer of Development Rights) Program tied to dealing with existing "Remainder Parcels" in the Agricultural Zoning District. To consider this further would require further careful study either by another Task Force effort or by staff to determine feasibility and insure against unintended consequences. The TDR challenge is the difficulty in arranging and designating receiving area(s) for transferred development rights.

At the conclusion of the public session, the Chairman (Commissioner Howard, on behalf of and speaking for the entire Board of County Commissioners), directed Ralph Robertson, Carroll County's Agricultural Land Preservation Administrator to proceed "full steam ahead". This reaffirmation and endorsement of the current Ag Preservation Program by the Board will enable continued utilization of the tools to secure additional permanent easements on farmland as the County pursues its long standing goal of permanently preserving 100,000 acres of agricultural land.

It goes without saying, but it must be said: The Carroll County Land Trust is most supportive of the County Commissioners reaffirmation and endorsement of the Ag Preservation Program as well as the findings and recommendations of the Task Force.

## **IPA--- A GREAT FIT FOR BOTH COUNTY & FARMLAND OWNERS**

As reported in the last issue of *Front Page*, the **Installment Purchase Agreement (IPA)**, was designed by the County for Carroll County farmland owners. It enables the county to:

1. leverage available funds for the Ag Preservation Program (benefiting the general taxpayer)
2. minimize county expenses for the purchase of easements (benefiting the general taxpayer)
3. increase the amount of easement acres that could otherwise have been purchased (benefitting all inhabitants of Carroll County whether taxpayers or not)
4. recognize and honor landowner equity
5. minimize landowner capital gains taxes
6. maintain the necessary pace to reach the County's 100,000 acre goal that all Boards of County Commissioners have been steadfastly faithful since the program began in 1980.

Just as the County's innovative Critical Farm Program became a successful and recognized model through-out the nation, this particular innovative County approach for financing land preservation has now become a model for other counties to follow.

### **USDA Federal Farm and Ranchland Protection Program Update**

The Carroll County Land Trust plans to revisit and consider whether to apply for easement funds from USDA's Federal Farm and Ranchland Protection Program administered by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). In the distant past, the Trust was successful in securing grant funds from USDA in excess of \$1.5 million dollars to match and leverage available county funds for the purchase of

farm preservation easements in Carroll County. Issues that precluded the Trust from continuing to participate in this program appear to be resolved and as a result the Trust will pursue eligibility, any available funding and then determine appropriate action.

### **SHORTALL DEED OF CONSERVATION EASEMENT RECORDED December 8, 2011**

The Carroll County Land Trust is delighted to recognize **Dr. and Mrs. Shortall** for their generous donation and commitment to land preservation in Carroll County. The Shortalls have donated a Conservation Easement on their 157 acre Bachman Valley farm to the Maryland Environmental Trust and the Carroll County Land Trust, who as grantees will jointly hold this donated easement. The Shortall Farm will add significantly to the growing critical mass of permanently preserved land in the Bachman Valley as well as contribute to the County's 100,000 acre farmland preservation goal. The donation will qualify the farm for federal and state income tax credits and a County property tax credit. The Carroll County Land Trust also wishes to recognize **Megan Sines** of the MET staff whose guidance and legwork enabled this easement to become a reality.

### ***BEQUESTS***

For those who wish to remember the Carroll County Land Trust in their wills, the following form is suggested: *I give and bequest to the Carroll County Land Trust, Inc., for its general purpose the sum of \$\_\_\_\_\_.*

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***Contact Information***  
***Carroll County Land Trust, Inc.***  
***P.O. Box 2137 Westminister, MD 21158***  
***Phone: 410-848-8247***