

Land Preservation Through Conservation Easements

Maryland's Rural Legacy Program

Southern Maryland Resource Conservation & Development
Presentation for Landowners in the Mattapany Rural Legacy Area



What is the Rural Legacy Program?

- ▶ Maryland's Rural Legacy Program provides funding to:
 - ▶ Preserve large, contiguous tracts of land;
 - ▶ Enhance natural resource, agricultural, forestry, and environmental protection; and
 - ▶ Support a sustainable land base for natural resource-based industries.
- ▶ The program encourages local governments and land trusts to work with landowners to protect vital working landscapes that are critical to our economy, environment, and quality of life through the use of conservation easements.
- ▶ Land conservation investments are targeted to protect the most ecologically valuable properties.



What are the benefits?

- ▶ Landowner benefits
 - ▶ Preserves prime farmland and forest
 - ▶ Keeps farmers farming
 - ▶ Protects land for future generations
 - ▶ Provides compensation
- ▶ Conservation benefits
 - ▶ Enhances water quality in the Chesapeake Bay, St. Mary's River, and Potomac River
 - ▶ Protects important wildlife habitat and endangered/threatened species
- ▶ St. Mary's County benefits
 - ▶ Preserves rural character and scenic views
 - ▶ Promotes tourism
 - ▶ Boosts the local economy
- ▶ National security benefits
 - ▶ Minimizes conflicts between development and military operations at NAS Patuxent River and Webster Field, and allows the Navy to continue its mission



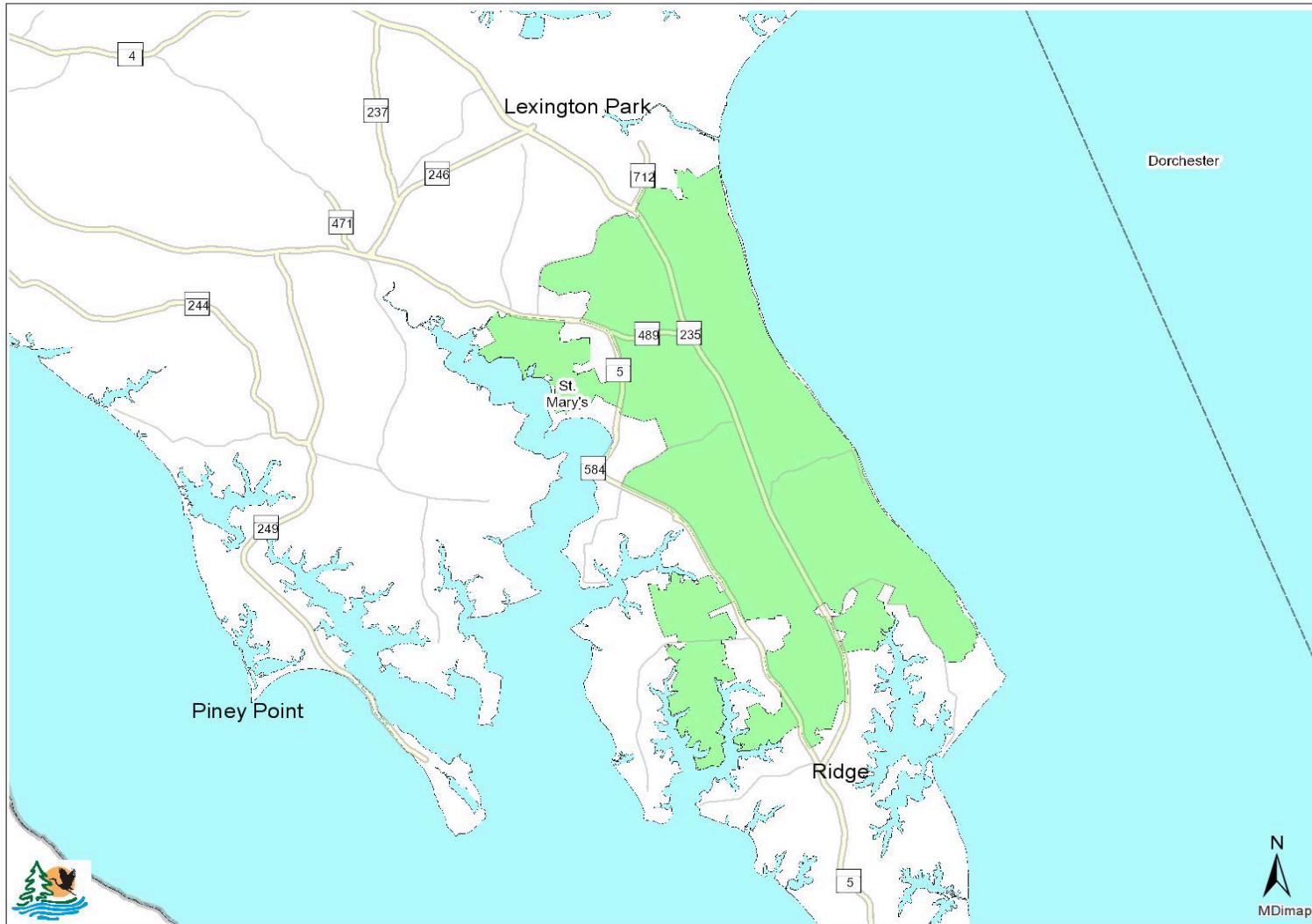
St. Mary's County Rural Legacy Program

Local partnership among:

- ▶ Landowners
- ▶ Land Trusts
 - ▶ Southern Maryland Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) Board, Inc.
 - ▶ Mattapany Rural Legacy Area
 - ▶ Patuxent Tidewater Land Trust
 - ▶ Huntersville Rural Legacy Area
- ▶ Commissioners of St. Mary's County
 - ▶ Department of Economic Development
 - ▶ Department of Land Use and Growth Management
- ▶ Maryland Department of Natural Resources
- ▶ Department of the Navy
 - ▶ Naval Air Station (NAS) Patuxent River



Mattapan Rural Legacy Area



Map Production Date: January 2019



Rural Legacy Conservation Easement Process

- ▶ Landowners apply to place land in an easement
- ▶ Land must meet minimum criteria and funding must be available
- ▶ Various surveys and studies of the property will be required
- ▶ Value paid to owner will be based on a per-acre formula
- ▶ If the property is accepted into the Program and an easement is finalized, the owner and all future owners will be bound by the terms of the easement
- ▶ The Land Trust (RC&D) will hold the easement with one of the Government partners and be responsible for ensuring compliance



Conservation Easement Restrictions

- ▶ **Easements will not:**
 - ▶ Take away ownership or any right not expressly relinquished in the easement document signed by the owner
 - ▶ Restrict farming activities
 - ▶ Give the public access to the land unless that is what the owner desires
- ▶ **Easements will:**
 - ▶ Reduce overall development on the parcel
 - ▶ Require conservation practices to manage and protect farm, forest, and water resources
 - ▶ Restrict certain activities that could harm the conservation value of the property
 - ▶ Impose light and height restrictions to protect military activities
 - ▶ Grant RC&D the right of inspection (with notice) to ensure easement compliance
 - ▶ Be FOREVER



Conservation Easement Donation

- ▶ Landowners may offer easements in exchange for:
 - ▶ Payment for value of easement based on per-acre formula;
 - ▶ Income tax credit for value of easement donated; or
 - ▶ Some combination of payment and tax credit for donation.



Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP)

- ▶ CREP is a Maryland program that offers landowners monetary incentives and assistance for voluntarily establishing stream buffers and wetlands, installing fencing, or using other best management practices (BMPs) to protect local waterways.
- ▶ The St. Mary's Soil Conservation District can guide landowners through the enrollment process.
- ▶ The Rural Legacy Program does not require landowners to enroll in CREP, but they are encouraged to do so.

Wetland Mitigation

- ▶ Some landowners may be eligible to receive additional compensation for allowing wetland mitigation on their property.
- ▶ Suitable properties will have “prior converted cropland” - previous wetlands that were drained/filled and converted to cropland.
- ▶ The Navy would install and maintain the wetlands.

Questions?

- ▶ Contact Southern Maryland RC&D:
 - ▶ Caroline King, Rural Legacy Program Manager
 - ▶ caroline.king@somdrccd.org
 - ▶ 240-577-6419
 - ▶ www.somdrccd.org
 - ▶ Facebook: Southern MD Resource Conservation & Development