AGRICULTURAL LAND PRESERVATION

Many land preservation efforts revolve around farmland. Development has expanded the urban and suburbanized areas in Maryland and throughout the nation. Predominately, this increase in developed areas is often at the expense of once productive farmland. In an effort to preserve the rural landscape and the agricultural industry, the State of Maryland and Wicomico County have developed and implemented programs designed to promote the sustainability of conserving farmland. The following chapter presents State and County programs, as well as discusses the effectiveness of these preservation programs.

INTRODUCTION

Land preservation is a priority for public and private organizations and all levels of government. Programs at the Federal, State, and County levels offer vehicles such as conservation easements and tax incentives / advantages to entice property owners to consider preservation as another viable alternative to development. Land trusts and conservancies also offer advantages of land preservation.

Chapter 5 of the 2017 Wicomico County Land Preservation, Parks, and Recreation Plan identifies and compares the goals of the State and County programs and evaluate the effectiveness of the agricultural preservation efforts in Wicomico County. The information in Chapter 5 will provide the background for recommendations regarding agricultural preservation contained in Chapter 7.

BACKGROUND AND GOALS

Agriculture is the major industry in Wicomico County; therefore, emphasis on preservation of farmland is an integral component to the concept of sustainability. According to the 2012 Census of Agriculture, 510 farms encompassing 83,739 acres (or 35 percent of the total land area) are located in Wicomico County. From 1978 to 2012, the market value of agricultural products produced in Wicomico County increased by roughly $128 billion or 119 percent from $108 million to $236 million, respectively (Table 5-1).

Traditionally, urbanization and suburbanization have caused a decline in the supply of agricultural land within Wicomico County. From 1978 to 2012, the total acreage of farmland has decreased by 23,363 acres of 22 percent. During the same time frame, the number of farms has declined from 920 to 510, which represents a decrease of 410 farms or 45 percent. In contrast, the average farm size increased from 116 acres in 1978 to 164 acres in 2012, which is an increase of 48 acres per farm or 41 percent.

The 1998 Comprehensive Plan recommended the Agricultural-Rural (A-1) Zoning District be revised to eliminate incompatible uses, as well as reduce the residential development density. In June 1998, the Wicomico County Zoning Code was revised to permit a base density of one equivalent dwelling unit (EDU) per 15 acres or under a cluster provision, a density of one EDU
per three acres. Both of types of residential subdivision require a minimum of at least 50 percent of the parcel to be set aside for preserving open space. Prior to the County Zoning Code amendment to the A-1 Zoning District, residential development density was one equivalent dwelling unit per 20,000 square feet subject to meeting the Wicomico County Health Department regulations for septic systems. As part of the 2004 amendments to the County Zoning Code, incompatible non-agriculture related commercial and industrial uses were removed from the permitted uses of the A-1 Zoning District.

Table 5.1

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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Acres of farmland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avg. farm size (ac.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Market value of products ($000)</td>
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<td>Average market value of products per farm (dollars)</td>
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Source: United States Department of Agriculture, 2012 Census of Agriculture

The County recognized another crucial component to preserving farmland was to provide flexibility for agricultural related uses permitted in the A-1 Zoning District in an effort to maintain and / or increase a farmer’s income potential. In addition, The County adopted a Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) program in 2004 for the purpose of protecting farmland by permitting the transfer of development potential from a location in the A-1 Zoning District to one in a receiving district ideally located in an area where growth is encouraged.

The County also created the Quantico Creek Rural Legacy Area as a primary agricultural preservation area. Since the inception of this Rural Legacy Area in 2000, 12 easements totaling 4,156 acres have been preserved in perpetuity using Rural Legacy funding from the State’s Program Open Space, as well as other funding sources.

The need to preserve the Quantico Creek Rural Legacy Area was for the following reasons:

- Large tracts being farmed;
- The lack of large-scale development;
- Soils well-suited for agriculture; and
- Several properties participating in the County or State agricultural preservation program.

The County Plan contains recommendations for local actions to preserve agricultural land and encourages local participation in State programs, as well.
Statewide, the Maryland General Assembly passed a resolution in 2002 that established a statewide goal of preserving 1,030,000 acres of productive farmland by 2022, roughly the amount of land necessary to “support a reasonable diversity of agricultural production” throughout the State. According to the Maryland Department of Planning, approximately 386,883 acres or 38 percent of the goal has been permanently preserved in the State (87,649 Rural Legacy and 299,234 MALPF). Therefore, an additional 643,117 acres or 62 percent of the goal will need to be preserved in the next five years to achieve the state-wide goal through a variety of preservation programs. The State goals for agricultural land preservation are:

- Permanently preserve agricultural land capable of supporting a reasonable diversity of agricultural production.
- Protect natural, forestry, and historic resources and the rural character of the landscape associated with Maryland’s farmland.
- To the greatest degree possible, concentrate preserved land in large, relatively contiguous blocks to effectively support long-term protection of resources and resource-based industries.
- Limit the intrusion of development and its impacts on rural resources and resource-based industries.
- Preserve approximately 1,030,000 acres of productive agricultural land by 2022.
- Ensure good return on public investment by concentrating State agricultural land preservation funds in areas where the investment is reasonable well supported by both local investment and land use management programs.
- Work with local governments to:
  - Establish preservation areas, goals, and strategies through local comprehensive planning processes that address and complement State goals.
  - In each area designated for preservation, develop a shared understanding of goals and the strategy to achieve them among rural landowners, the public-at-large, and State and local government officials.
  - Protect the equity interests of rural landowners in preservation areas by ensuring sufficient public commitment and investment in preservation through easement acquisition and incentive programs.
  - Use local land use management authority effectively to protect public investment in preservation by managing development in rural preservation areas.
  - Establish effective measures to support profitable agriculture, including assistance in production, marketing, and the practice of stewardship, so that farming remains a desirable way of life for both the farmer and the public-at-large.

At the local level, agricultural land preservation activities in Wicomico are based on three critical elements:

- Public commitment to investment in land preservation indicated by the local legislation and the availability of State and local funding to support the County’s Agricultural Land Preservation Program to purchase easements;
- Supportive local plans, zoning, regulations, and procedures, such as the Wicomico County Comprehensive Plan, Wicomico County Zoning Code, Wicomico County Comprehensive Water and Sewerage Plan, and agricultural preservation initiatives; and
- Community support for the preservation strategy, indicated by a property owner’s voluntary willingness to sell development rights consistent with the requirements and intent of the County’s Transfer of Development Rights Program.
The Wicomico County Comprehensive Plan contains goals, objectives, and policies pertaining to many topics pertinent to County planning. The Plan begins with two major goals that apply generally to the entire County:\footnote{1998 Wicomico County Comprehensive Plan, PP. 21}

- “To promote high quality development in the County supporting it as a regional economic center, in a manner that best preserves and enhances the County’s existing character while protecting its natural resources and accommodating the diverse needs of existing and future residents.

- “To direct more dense growth into existing and pre-planned growth areas and less dense growth outside the Metro Core; so that, the public services and facilities necessary to meet existing and future growth can be provided and protect natural and agricultural areas are protected, consistent with the human and fiscal resources of the County.”

The Plan also includes objectives for public actions necessary to accomplish the broad goals. One of the objectives is to “Promote the conservation of large portions of the County with existing natural resources, prime agricultural land and natural limitations on development”.\footnote{1998 Wicomico County Comprehensive Plan, PP. 22}

Finally, the Plan includes six policies that apply specifically to the areas targeted for agricultural preservation, termed “Agricultural/Resource Areas”:\footnote{1998 Wicomico County Comprehensive Plan, PP. 30}

- “Support agriculture, forestry and related activities as a predominant use in these areas through land development regulations.

- “Afford agricultural and forestry uses maximum protection and freedom from nuisance complaints in zoning regulations and through ‘right to farm’ ordinances.

- “Give priority to public improvements directed toward agricultural, forestry and related uses.

- “Accommodate resource based and other industrial uses in accordance with strict performance standards.

- “Establish land development regulations which will accommodate residential developments in a manner which will least disrupt agricultural uses.

- “Cluster development is the preferred form of land subdivision to avoid land use conflicts and maintain or enhance rural character.”

Goals, objectives, and policies of the Wicomico County agricultural preservation effort are consistent with applicable State goals. Both sets of directives focus on preserving land, protecting resources, delineating priority preservation areas for the purpose of purchasing easements, and minimizing the impacts of residential uses on agricultural uses. The County guidance is necessarily more precise and deals with specific programs and tools. State goals are more general and frame the primary roles of the State as guidance, policy directives, and assistance.
Contrary to State goals, the County goals do not include a numerical target for preserved acreage. However, in subsequent applications to the State after the adoption of the County Comprehensive Plan, the County established the following two objectives:

- Preserve 1,000 acres of farmland within five (5) years (200 acres per year).
- Preserve 3,000 acres of farmland within fifteen (15) years (200 acres per year).

The two aforementioned measurable objectives pertain only to the County’s local agricultural preservation program. As a result of the economic downturn and a decrease in funding from the agricultural transfer tax, the ability to meet the preservation objectives is challenged. Agricultural land in Wicomico County is preserved through other means including, but not limited to the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation (MALPF), Rural Legacy Program, and through the County’s land development regulations. In addition to the preservation objectives of the County’s Agricultural Preservation Program, the following objective represents the County’s Rural Legacy Area preservation target of the approximately 2,665 acres remaining within the Quantico Creek RLA that has no level of protection:

- Preserve 2,665 acres in the Quantico Creek Rural Legacy Area with the next eight years (350 acres per year).

Based on the measurable and identified objectives for the County’s local agricultural land preservation program and the Rural Legacy Program, Wicomico County is attempting to preserve 550 acres of undeveloped land and productive farmland annually. Establishing an objective for the amount of land to be preserved through Wicomico County’s land development regulations (and more specifically, the cluster regulations for residential development in the A-1 Zoning District) is more challenging and lacks certainty since the effectiveness of the regulations depends on the size and number of subdivision requests received, which is difficult to predict.

The State does not allocate the goal for the statewide farmland preservation program by county. However, using the State goal of preserving 128,624 acres annually to meet the objective of preserving 1,030,000 acres statewide by 2022, and based on Wicomico County’s percentage of the State’s land area (3.9%), and assuming further the County would preserve a similar proportion of land, then Wicomico County would meet a proportional share of the State objective if 2,510 acres were preserved over the next five years. In an effort to preserve 502 acres annually, the County will utilize funding from the following four programs/mechanisms:

- MALPF;
- Rural Legacy;
- Wicomico County’s Agricultural Preservation Program; and
- Wicomico County’s development regulations.

Using an estimate of $4,000 per acre, based on the cost of purchasing easements in the County through local and State programs in the past six years, preserving an average of 550 acres per year (County preservation and Quantico Creek Rural Legacy Area goals) would cost an average of more than $2.2 million per year. As a result of declining program funding, the land preservation goal for Wicomico County should be studied in more detail.
CURRENT IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM

Wicomico County uses many tools to preserve agricultural land, as discussed above. Combined, the programs preserve land throughout the rural areas of the County (Map 5.1). The following section describes the various elements of the County’s agricultural land preservation effort.

Preservation Areas

The Wicomico County Zoning Code\(^4\) identifies most land outside of the County’s Metro Core designated growth area as being contained within the Agriculture-Rural (A-1) Zoning District. Also, the areas immediately adjacent to towns or rural villages are County designated growth areas, which are zoned Village Conservation or Town Transition. The County Comprehensive Plan and supporting ordinances direct and encourage new development into these designated growth areas. Policies in the A-1 Zoning District support the creation of agricultural districts and the preservation of farmland through purchase of development rights.

In evaluating applications for agricultural districts, the County gives preference to parcels adjacent to a current ag district in an effort to create large and unfragmented areas of preserved farmland or forests. As part of the County Comprehensive Plan update the entirety of the A-1 Zoning District has been proposed as the Priority Preservation Area (PPA), which the PPA consists of approximately 185,000 acres (Map 5.1).

Easement Acquisition Mechanisms

Four preservation programs are currently used to acquire conservation easements in Wicomico County:

- Wicomico County agricultural preservation program – County program;
- Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation (MALPF) – State program;
- Maryland Environmental Trust (MET) – State program; and
- Rural Legacy – State program.

In addition, the Lower Shore Land Trust (LSLT) is a private, non-profit organization dedicated to land preservation in the Lower Shore counties of Somerset, Wicomico, and Worcester. LSLT provides advice on land preservation techniques and helps interested landowners apply for conservation easements.

Wicomico County Agricultural Land Preservation Program

The Wicomico County’s agricultural land preservation program preserves farmland in two ways:

- **Agricultural Districts** – The County’s agricultural district program was established concurrent with the easement program in 1999. To participate in the district program, a farm must:

Be at least fifty (50) acres in size;
- Have at least 50% of the land in prime agricultural soils (Class I, II, and III) or woodlands (Group I and II); and
- Be located in the A-1 Zoning District.

Property owners placing land in the district program receive a 50 percent credit toward the County portion of annual real estate taxes on the property for up to ten (10) years. Currently, there are 21 agricultural districts encompassing approximately 2,953 acres in Wicomico County.

- **Agricultural Easements** – In 1999, Wicomico County adopted an easement purchase program to promote farmers to sell the development rights on farms established as agricultural districts, as described above. The Program is an alternative for farmers who prefer working with local program administrators rather than State administration. County funds for the program come from the State agricultural transfer tax, which is collected when farmland is sold and converted to another land use. If Wicomico County had a State-certified local program, the County would be able to retain 75% of the tax collected, instead of only 33% because the County does not have a local program. To obtain certification from MALPF, the State requires a county to include a Priority Preservation Area Element in their Comprehensive Plan, which the 2016 *Wicomico County Comprehensive Plan* has met the requirement.

Interested farm owners submit an application to the County. Applications are ranked on seven factors:

- Soil capability;
- Size;
- Contiguity to other agricultural districts;
- Agricultural use;
- Consistency with the County Comprehensive Plan;
- Owner-operation; and
- Rural Legacy Area designation.

The first easements acquired under the County program were settled in 2004. The easements affected three properties and totaled 286.13 acres with a value of $434,200, or about $1,520 per acre. Additional easements were purchased in 2006, 2007, and 2008 totaling approximately 497 acres at a cost of $2,074,326, or an average cost of $4,174 per acre. Although participation in the County program is entirely voluntary on the part of landowners, the County has adopted a goal of preserving an average of 200 acres per year. The cost of achieving the goal depends on many factors, including the criteria listed above, property location, and market forces, but a conservative estimate to achieve the goal is $800,000 annually, based on preserving 200 acres annually with an easement value of $4,000 per acre. Since the inception of the program, the County has acquired 7 easements totaling 782.8 acres of land.

The County provided initial funding for the program through the sale of $400,000 in General Obligation bonds in 1997. The initial funding has been exhausted and, with the
adoption of the revenue cap in 2000, the sale of bonds will probably not be utilized for future funding.

Funding for the program is currently dependent on the amount of agricultural transfer tax received by the County. During the last six fiscal years (FY 2011 – FY 2016), the County has retained an average of approximately $10,114 annually to be used for agricultural preservation efforts. The funding retained annually by the agricultural transfer tax can preserve roughly 2 acres per year. Therefore, since the estimate above cites $800,000 annually to meet the goal, the proceeds of the agricultural transfer tax are not sufficient to meet the goal of preserving 200 acres annually under the County program. As a result of decreased funding levels from the agricultural transfer tax, alternative sources of funding should be explored to ensure the County’s annual preservation goal is achieved.

**Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation**

The Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation (MALPF) was established in 1978 to provide funds as an incentive to preserve private farmland. Individual farmers sell an easement to MALPF, which in doing so restricts development of the property. The Governor and General Assembly allocate MALPF funds from the State transfer tax and agricultural transfer tax revenues. MALPF allocations are divided into two parts. The first part of the allocation consists of 50% of all available MALPF funds and is divided evenly among the 23 counties. The second part of the allocation consists of the remaining 50% of total available funds is used to match County funds. State MALPF funds from the matching allocation can be used for up to 60 percent of total project cost, with a maximum of $1 million. Any funds unencumbered from the allocation procedures are used on a statewide basis according to the ratio of asking price to easement value.

Enrollment applications are submitted to a County coordinator, who forwards the application and recommendations of the local advisory board to the State. Easement values are established by appraisal, and property owners are encouraged to voluntarily discount the easement value (i.e., accept a lower amount of compensation than the appraisal indicates) in return for potential tax benefits.

Since the inception of the MALPF Program, 7,412 acres have been preserved in perpetuity in Wicomico County.

**Maryland Rural Legacy Program**

The State of Maryland established the Rural Legacy Program in 1997 to encourage local governments and private land trusts to identify specific Rural Legacy Areas and competitively apply for funds to complement existing land preservation efforts or to develop new ones. Easements or fee estate purchases are sought from willing landowners in order to protect areas vulnerable to sprawl development that can weaken an area’s natural resources, thereby reducing the economic value of farming, forestry, recreation, and tourism. Rural Legacy Areas help to preserve contiguous parcels, including forested and meadow areas, as well as farmlands. The Maryland General Assembly allocates funding annually for the Rural Legacy Program.

In 2000, the Quantico Creek Rural Legacy Area (RLA) was established. At the time of this publication, the Quantico Creek Rural Legacy Area encompasses 14,687 acres or approximately
23.0 square miles in the western part of the County on both sides of Quantico Creek, which is tributary of the Nanticoke River (Map 5.1). The Quantico Creek area is known for its rural character, abundant open lands, cultural significance, natural wildlife habitat, and water quality impact on the Nanticoke River Watershed. Approximately 4,500 acres in the RLA are developed and an additional 7,074 acres have some level of protection (i.e. Chesapeake Bay Critical Area, tidal wetlands, protective easement, or private protection measures). Wicomico County has identified the remaining 2,665 acres as unprotected and targeted for preservation efforts. The County estimates preserving the remaining 2,665 acres within the next eight years assuming the preservation rate of 350 acres per year in the Rural Legacy Area. The cost to preserve the remaining unprotected land is estimated at $10.7 million (2,665 acres at $4,000 per acre). The entire Quantico Creek Rural Legacy Area is included within the Priority Preservation Area, as well as identified on the Growth Tier Map as Tier IV consistent with the mapping expectations outlined in the State’s Sustainable Growth and Agricultural Preservation Act of 2012.

From FY 2000 through FY 2016, Wicomico County spent about $9.3 million in funding (Rural legacy, Wicomico Forest Conservation, CREP, County Ag. Preservation program, and U.S. Navy’s Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration Program) to purchase easements on 4,156 acres in the Quantico Creek RLA.

Based on the vast natural resources and the need to sustain the vibrant agricultural industry from increased development pressure, consideration should be given to expand the existing Quantico Creek Rural Legacy Area. Moreover, consideration should be given to expanding the Rural Legacy Area in Wicomico County. The need to concentrate efforts to preserve large contiguous tracts of land is the best approach to protect our natural resources and preserve our rural quality of life. To assist in targeting and prioritizing land acquisition and easement sites, the High Value Natural Areas map will serve as a road map to guide future preservation efforts. See Map 6.3. At the time of this publication, the State-wide allocation to the Rural Legacy Program in FY 2017 was $17,663,385. Since the inception of this program in 1997, over 87,649 acres of valuable farmland, forest, and natural areas have been preserved across the State.

Maryland Environmental Trust

Land preservation efforts in Maryland began in the 1970s when the Maryland Environmental Trust (MET) was established. MET accepts conservation easement donations from property owners. Donations are strictly voluntary and are utilized by landowners to protect natural resources and preserve scenic open space. The landowner who gives an easement limits the right to develop and subdivide the land, now and in the future, but still remains the owner. Easements are binding on future owners. Therefore, an easement assures that the land will never be used in a way contrary to the current owner’s intent. Financial benefits in the form of tax deductions are also associated with easements. Easements often facilitate transferring land to family members without paying large estate taxes. MET may accept conservation easements on farmland as well as environmentally sensitive areas. Since 1987, MET has assembled 11 easements (donated or purchased) encompassing 2,447 acres in Wicomico County.

Funding for Easement Acquisition

Wicomico County dedicates the portion of the revenue retained from the State agricultural transfer tax to the local agricultural preservation program. State certification of the County program would entitle the County to receive 75% of the total amount of the agricultural transfer tax collected in
the County. As a result of losing certification, the County receives 33 percent of the agricultural transfer tax.

The amount of funding received depends on the number and size of agricultural properties in the A-1 Zoning District being sold and converted to a different land use. Between FY 2006 and FY 2007, the County portion of the agricultural transfer tax was $923,377. Between FY 2011 through FY 2016, the County portion of the agricultural transfer tax was $60,684 or roughly $1 annually. As a result, preservation efforts have been significantly impacted and the number of acres preserved each year is declining.

Additional revenue for easement acquisition comes from the State in the MALPF and Rural Legacy programs. MALPF funding for easement purchases is difficult to anticipate by county because the allocation and program is statewide. Funding for the Rural Legacy Program is also statewide and is obtained through a competitive process, with requests for funding submitted annually. To date, Wicomico County has received $8.5 million from the Rural Legacy Program to purchase easements.

**Land Use Management Authority**

Wicomico County uses a full complement of land use management tools for farmland preservation, including:
### Table 5.2
**Preserved Land by Program, 1987–2016**

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Source: Salisbury-Wicomico Department of Planning, Zoning, and Community Development and the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation

- The **Wicomico County Comprehensive Plan** establishes policies related to agricultural preservation.

- The **Wicomico County Zoning Code** includes regulations for the A-1 Zoning District. Recent changes to the code (September 2004) added some home-based business uses that maintain the character of the district and expand opportunities to supplement farmers’ income. The Code revisions also deleted a number of uses in the A-1 district that were incompatible with agriculture, such as industrial and non-agricultural commercial uses.

- Clustering provisions, which are available in both the Zoning and Subdivision sections of the Code allow for higher density development in contrast to the density requirement of a
non-cluster subdivision, which is one equivalent dwelling unit per 15 acres. Both conventional and cluster types of residential subdivision require a minimum 50 percent open space set aside of the total acreage of the tract. In addition to the disparity in densities between the two aforementioned types of subdivisions permitted in the A-1 Zoning District, another distinction is how the open space is platted. Conventional subdivisions can include the 50 percent open space set aside on the deeded lots when there is no interior infrastructure (roads) or on an individual parcel if interior infrastructure exists. In contrast, cluster subdivisions require the open space set aside be deeded as a separate parcel.

• Clustering is allowed in several zoning districts, but clustering in the A-1 zone requires the largest amount of open space: 50% of the tract. Within the A-1 zone, maximum density without clustering is 1 unit per 15 acres, while maximum density with clustering is 1 unit per 3 acres. Prior to 1998, when the code changes were enacted, residential development in the A-1 district could occur at a density of two units per acre. The open space portion of the site must be recorded on the plat/deed and, therefore, remain open in perpetuity.

• The changes to the zoning code (September 2004) include provisions for transferring development rights (TDR)\(^5\). Rights can be sent from agricultural districts to either a designated growth area (town, village, or Metro Core) at a rate of one dwelling unit in the receiving area for every two (2) acres preserved in the sending area or to another parcel in the A-1 district at a rate of one dwelling unit in the receiving area for every six (6) acres preserved in the sending area. As part of this Plan and the Wicomico County Comprehensive Plan, it is strongly recommended to evaluate the effectiveness of the existing TDR Program, as well as modifying the allocation rate for A-1 to A-1 transfers at one TDR (deemed to be a buildable lot) per equivalent dwelling unit. Additionally, provisions should be consistent amongst this Plan, County Comp Plan, and County Water and Sewerage Plan for the use of TDR in support of new residential subdivisions located in the unincorporated portion of the County and connected to a public, community, or shared waste water treatment plant.

As part of the update to the Wicomico County Comprehensive Plan, consideration should be given to identify opportunities to protect ag related industries areas from experiencing potential adverse effects associated with residential development within the A-1 Zoning District. For example, the development of rural design standards establishing maximum residential lot sizes in the Agricultural-Rural (A-1) Zoning District is an opportunity to preserve farmland, forest, and natural areas. In addition, the County should consider evaluating open space requirements for residential subdivisions in the A-1 Zoning District to determine if existing standards are achieving the desired result. Implementation of the aforementioned land use management tools will assist in reducing adverse impacts associated with residential development within rural areas of the County.

Farming Assistance Programs

For agriculture to remain a viable business in Wicomico County, land preservation efforts must be coupled with services, “state of the art” farming opportunities, and other mechanisms. The Mary-

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\(^5\) Wicomico County Zoning Code, Section 225-58, “Part III Transfer of Development Rights”
land Cooperative Extension Service (MCES) provides services and programs in support of agricultural and horticultural activities in Wicomico. MCES offerings in support of crops, livestock, and nurseries include:

- Small Farm Institute;
- Commodity Marketing;
- Maryland Forages Program;
- Nutrient Management for Maryland; and
- Agricultural Nutrient Management Program.

**IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM EVALUATION**

According to the Maryland Department of Agriculture, productive and profitable farming is the best method of agricultural land preservation. Therefore, a successful program should provide farmers with the opportunity to be both productive and profitable. The components of Wicomico County’s agricultural land preservation program provide landowners with options from which to choose the most appropriate means to retain land for agricultural uses while receiving a reasonable return. The following sections offer insights into the program strategy, funding, land use management tools, program performance, effects of potential development on land markets, and farming assistance.

**Funding**

From 1987 through 2015, the major land preservation programs in use in Wicomico County (MALPF, County program, Rural Legacy, and MET) have preserved more than 14,798 acres at a total cost of $24.1 million. Approximately 12,350 acres of agricultural land have been preserved through the State and County programs. Revenues from the State agricultural transfer tax provide the funds for the County program, which provides balance between conversion of farmland to residential uses and the preservation of farms. The County program also provides an opportunity for landowners to work with local officials to preserve land. The State transfer tax revenues that fund MALPF and the Rural Legacy Program are also intended as a dedicated revenue source for land preservation. However, State law permits transfer tax revenue to be diverted into the General Fund during the annual budget process. After several years of lower annual MALPF funding and some (2006, 2009, and 2011) with no funding at all, the program provided higher levels of funding in 2007, 2008, and 2010.

**Land Use Management Tools**

The current land use management tools in Wicomico County are helpful in preserving agricultural land. Farming remains a viable land use within the A-1 zoning district, which encompasses much of the land outside of designated growth areas and incorporated jurisdictions. This Plan encourages the County’s implementation of land use management tools for land preservation including, but not limited to the following:

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6 More information about MCES programs is available at: http://www.agnr.umd.edu/MCE.
• Aggressively identify lands targeted for preservation for agricultural and other purposes. (Map 5.1). The degree of protection will depend on the program through which the land is protected and the specific method of protection; and

• Focus development in the Metro Core, incorporated jurisdictions, and county-designated growth areas (Map 2.4).

• Partner with federal, State, adjacent county, local governments, or non-governmental organizations owning or managing land for purposes such as recreation (e.g., State parks, County parks) or natural resource conservation (e.g., State forests) or agricultural preservation efforts including fee-simple acquisition and easement purchases.

• Strategically target large areas of unprotected and unfragmented rural areas for agricultural preservation and potentially expand the Quantico Creek RLA and/or establish a new Rural Legacy Area.

• Target acquisition of parcels located within Sensitive Species Project Review Areas (SSPRA) where plant and/or animal species are listed as threatened or endangered by either the Federal or State government.

Program Performance

The four major land preservation programs in use in Wicomico County (MALPF, County program, Rural Legacy, and MET) have preserved a total of more than 14,798 acres since 1987 (Table 5.2). Two of the programs, MALPF and Wicomico County agricultural preservation, have financed easements on roughly 8,194 acres, which represents 10.2 percent of the County’s total farmland identified in the 2012 Census of Agriculture.

As farmland has been lost to development in recent decades, the amount of preserved farmland has increased. If current funding levels persist, it is unlikely the County’s agricultural preservation program goal of 3,000 acres will be achieved by 2028. Additionally, the ability to achieve preserving the remaining 2,665 acres of unprotected land in the Quantico Creek Rural Legacy Area will depend on the amount of State Program Open Space funds allocated to the County. Achieving the goal of preserving 350 acres annually, the 2,665 acres could be preserved in less than eight years at a total estimated cost of $10.6 million. From 2003 through 2016, the County received $8.5 million in Rural Legacy funding, which roughly translates to a yearly average of $761,429 from Program Open Space for preserving land in the Quantico Creek Rural Legacy Area.

Although not a “program” per se, Wicomico County is also preserving land through the County’s zoning regulations that include two land preservation requirements:

- Fifty percent (50%) of the land in a cluster subdivision must be set aside in a separate parcel as open space and maintained by a homeowners’ association.

- Fifty percent (50%) of the land in a conventional subdivision must be maintained in open space as part of the lots.
Since the 1998 zoning code amendments to the A-1 Agricultural-Rural Zoning District took effect, 23 new subdivisions (three or more lots) containing 376 lots have been approved. The 23 approved subdivisions account for 2,576.5 acres, which 55 percent or 1,407 acres is preserved as open space.

The County also supplements the land development codes (e.g., existing zoning and subdivision ordinances) by imposing specific regulations for the retention of forests, reforestation, and afforestation of land uses within Wicomico County. As a result of the Forest Conservation Act, over 2,301.6 acres of land have been preserved in perpetuity as easements within the A-1 Zoning District in Wicomico County.

Effects of Potential Development on Land Markets

The current zoning and development procedures in Wicomico County help to focus development in and around the designated growth areas and municipalities.

One of the results of increased development pressure is the rising price of land, not only for development, but for preservation, as well. The cost per easement acre fluctuates, depending on a variety of circumstances, including agricultural yield, availability of vacant land, and individual landowner circumstances. Since 2000, the cost of conservation easements through the MALPF program has ranged from $345 to $6,865 per acre. The analysis used in the 2017 Wicomico County Land Preservation, Parks, and Recreation Plan assumes an average cost of $4,000 per acre to achieve the County’s preservation goal. A higher cost will greatly reduce the County’s “buying power” and will reduce the amount of agricultural land that the County can preserve.

Farming Assistance

Several local sources of assistance support the County’s agricultural community with a variety of services, including the following:

- The Wicomico County Zoning Code has been modified to increase the allowable ancillary uses on agricultural property, thus allowing farmers more opportunities to supplement farm income and maintain the farm during less profitable years. Future land use policies for the rural areas of the County should be sensitive to the effects that “downzoning” or limiting the use of individual septic systems serving residential development may have on the ability of farmers to use land equity to maintain farming operations.

- The Natural Resources Conservation Service is the arm of the United States Department of Agriculture that assists property owners in conserving soil, water, and other natural resources. The service provides technical assistance as well as cost-sharing and financial incentives. Most work is done with local partners, such as local conservation districts.

- The University of Maryland Cooperative Extension, an agency of the university, provides educational and information resources from the university to the Maryland citizens. Information and programs are available in a broad range of topics, including crops, livestock, and nursery; 4H and Youth volunteers; lawn, garden, and home; family life and community; natural resources and water quality; and food, nutrition, and health.
• The Maryland Department of Agriculture is the agency of State government charged with providing leadership and support to agriculture and the citizens of Maryland by conducting regulatory, service, and educational activities that assure consumer confidence, protect the environment, and promote agriculture.

Summary

Wicomico County’s strategy for agricultural land preservation includes several components. The County enacted an easement acquisition program to offer landowners a local alternative to the State easement acquisition program. The strengths of the local program are speed and flexibility. Preservation actions can take place relatively quickly.

Public services are subject to a constant pressure to provide more services with fewer resources. The Wicomico agricultural preservation program must learn to compete with the development industry for the landowner’s interest. Easement value alone may not provide an adequate level of compensation for certain landowners compared to development value of the property. County staff should help local landowners make the decision to preserve land by illustrating the total value of preservation, including:

• Direct payment;
• Tax deductions for reduced value donation;
• Property tax credit;
• Continued ownership and use;
• Land resale;
• Future owner/family lots; and
• Peace of mind.
NATURAL RESOURCE CONSERVATION

In the late 1990s, the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) began an effort to address landscape fragmentation and to identify the most ecologically important lands in the state. In the effort, termed “Maryland’s Green Infrastructure Assessment”, DNR mapped key parcels of land throughout the state to target for preservation from development. In 2011, DNR revised and updated the ecological ranking of Green Infrastructure hubs and corridors to establish priorities for conservation and guide open space acquisition efforts and funding. The ranking was based on a variety of criteria that the department weighted on the basis of importance.

In addition to Green Infrastructure, DNR has similarly identified and mapped water-based natural assets, referred to as Blue Infrastructure. Both green infrastructure (GI) and blue infrastructure (BI) are discussed below.

Agricultural lands are also critically important to the character and economy of Wicomico County. Wicomico is the most agriculturally productive county in the entire State of Maryland. Many of the parcels identified as Green Infrastructure are, in fact, agricultural. The previous chapter was devoted to a discussion of preserving agricultural land, including agricultural easements. Other elements of preserved land (Map 6.1) in the county include:

- Land or permanent easements owned by preservation organizations, such as the Maryland Environmental Trust, the Nature Conservancy, and the Maryland Department of Natural Resources;
- Natural areas;
- Regulated or restricted areas, such as Chesapeake Bay Critical Areas;
- County and municipal parks; and
- Transmission lines and utility corridors.

Many elements of the GI system in Wicomico County have a specific significance in other areas of the 2017 Wicomico County Land Preservation, Parks, and Recreation Plan. The following chapter reviews the GI system in Wicomico County and contains the following information:

1. Definition — What is GI?
2. Purpose — Why is GI valuable? What are the benefits of protecting GI?
3. Priorities — What are the threats to GI? How important is each threat?
4. Location — Where is GI located in Wicomico County? Which parcels are in the greatest danger of development and/or have the highest priority for conservation?
5. Best Practices — What are the best ways to conserve GI?

Definition — What is Green Infrastructure (GI)?

DNR defines Green Infrastructure as “an interconnected network of natural lands and other open spaces that conserves natural ecosystem values and functions, sustains clean air and water, and provides a wide array of benefits to people and wildlife.” Several principles discussed in the Conservation Leadership Network’s Green Infrastructure Handbook represent the guiding factors
used by Wicomico County and the State of Maryland to develop GI planning, including preservation from development, linkage, solid underlying science and planning, benefits for everyone in the community, high priority/critical public investment, and diverse stakeholders.

Purpose — Why is GI valuable? What are the benefits of protecting GI?

GI systems are composed of hubs and corridors. Hubs are large expanses of natural land vital to the unique ecology of a region, such as forests, wetlands, riparian corridors, existing parks and conservation, and other natural lands that provide many services to the ecosystem. Hubs provide Ecological Goods and Services (EGS), which include:

- Clean the air
- Filter and cool water
- Filter and trap sediment runoff
- Store/cycle nutrients
- Conserve/generate soils
- Pollinate crops/other plants
- Regulate climate
- Sequester carbon
- Protect areas against storm/flood damage
- Protect/recharge aquifers
- Provide native animal and plant habitat

Corridors are the connections that turn a pattern of hubs into a system. Corridors may include greenways, trails, streams, riparian corridors, aquatic areas, parks, abandoned rail easements, and conservation lands. Corridors help to:

- Link native plants and animals;
- Protect greenways, trails, or historic sites;
- Link wildlife areas; and
- Provide recreational opportunities.

Corridors, in the form of greenways, can also define areas appropriate for future growth and areas that are ecologically sensitive and should be preserved.

Within Wicomico County, DNR has identified 23 hubs (Map 6.2, Table 6.1). Of the 23 hubs, five (5) hubs—414, 452, 461, 523, and 525—have a composite ecological score below 10 indicating high ecological sensitivity. Green Infrastructure is the primary physical mechanism for enhancing EGS. Green Infrastructure offers landscapes to promote human health through biking, walking, birding, hunting, and fishing. Combining GI with other preserved land (Map 6.3) illustrates the large amount of land in Wicomico County with some type of protection from development pressure.

Priorities — What are the threats to GI? How important is each threat?

Perhaps the greatest threat to GI is excessive development that fragments natural, sensitive areas. Green Infrastructure is founded on the principle of conserving hubs of sufficient size and connecting corridors to act as effective transit ways and habitat for sensitive species. Physical separation/degradation of sensitive areas permanently
### Table 6.1

#### Green Infrastructure Hub Characteristics

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Source: Maryland Department of Natural Resources (2013)

**NOTES:**

1. Lies in Wicomico, Dorchester, and Sussex Counties
2. Lies in Wicomico and Sussex Counties
3. Lies in Wicomico, Somerset, Worcester, and Sussex Counties
4. Lies in Wicomico and Somerset Counties
5. Lies in Wicomico and Worcester Counties
compromise the effectiveness of the entire ecosystem. Low-density sprawl development is particularly concerning because it does damage to the largest amount of sensitive lands for the benefit of the fewest number of people. Other serious challenges to establishing and protecting a viable GI network include:

- Brownfields that remain unmitigated;
- Lack of available funding;
- Fragmentation of valuable hubs with isolation of wildlife and plants leading to loss of endangered species and/or probable extinction in the area;
- Development that encroach on or are in close proximity to sensitive areas and that can result in a loss of wildlife, disturbance of breeding and raising young, loss of food supplies, and introduction of domestic animals that prey on wildlife;
- Weak stewardship over parcels within the GI framework; and
- Lack of public education and outreach emphasizing the benefits of conserving forested areas within Wicomico County.

Where are Green Infrastructure parcels in Wicomico County?

In 2009, the County established the Wicomico County Natural Resources Conservation Advisory Committee. The purpose of the Committee is to develop a comprehensive Green Infrastructure Plan with strategies to implement Green Infrastructure conservation and advise the County on decisions that may affect the County’s GI.

Wicomico County utilized DNR’s recently revised and updated statewide green infrastructure assessment in delineating the Green Infrastructure network for the county (Map 6.2). In the most recent update of Wicomico County’s Green Infrastructure network (Version 6.0), DNR omitted some parcels that were identified in the previous version (5.1). The DNR omissions are represented in the Wicomico County Green Infrastructure Network as “Auxiliary GI”.

What are the “Best Practices” for preserving Green Infrastructure?

Wicomico County has identified three primary strategies for conserving GI hubs and corridors. The strategies are designed to:

1. Manage risk and reduce vulnerability by providing guidelines for integrating human activities and land uses; and
2. Restore and enhance the Green Infrastructure network where gaps exist and degradation has occurred.
Each of the three strategies is further discussed below.

**Strategy 1: Protect and conserve the most sensitive areas through conservation easements and fee simple purchases whenever possible.**

The County’s principal strategy for implementing the GI portions of the 2017 Wicomico County Land Preservation, Parks, and Recreation Plan is to protect the most sensitive areas in the green infrastructure system through targeted conservation easements, fee simple purchases, restoration, environmentally sensitive design, and best management practices (BMPs). In addition to County agencies, the County will enlist the participation of many departments and organizations, including:

**Public Programs for Donated or Purchased Easements**

- Rural Legacy Program
- Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation (MALPF)
- Farm & Ranch Land Protection Program (FRPP)
- Coastal and Estuarine Land Conservation Program (CELCP)
- Program Open Space (POS)
- U.S. Navy’s Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration Program

**Public Programs for Restoration and BMPs**

- Conservation Reserve [Enhancement] Program (CRP/CREP)
- Wetland Reserve Program (WRP)
- Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)
- Agricultural Management Assistance Program (AMA)

**Private and Public Organizations**

- Ducks Unlimited
- The Nature Conservancy (TNC)
- Lower Shore Land Trust
- The Conservation Fund
- Maryland Department of Natural Resources
- Maryland Environmental Trust

**Strategy 2: Manage Risk & Vulnerability.**

The principal strategy for the County itself will be to conserve and enhance GI, when possible, through conservation easements and fee simple purchases of lands that the County can manage. However, the strategy can conserve only a small fraction of the ecologically important lands in the County. Therefore, the second strategy is to manage the risk of adverse effects in GI areas and to reduce vulnerability, where possible.

Examples of possible county tasks to help maintain the GI include:
1) Publicly acknowledging Green Infrastructure and the principles that act as a guide for landowners, farmers, developers, and anyone making property decisions that might affect Green Infrastructure.

2) Ensuring that the Wicomico County Council, Parks and Recreation Commission, and Planning Commission are aware that Green Infrastructure principles and design concepts provide useful guidance regarding proposed activities over which the County may act to approve, deny, direct, advise, or otherwise have influence.

The Advisory Committee will work with the County Executive, County Council, Salisbury-Wicomico County Planning & Zoning Commission, Wicomico County Department of Recreation, Parks and Tourism, Salisbury-Wicomico County Department of Planning, Zoning and Community Development, and the agricultural, forestry and conservation communities to preserve the natural resources located in Wicomico County.

**Strategy 3: Restore & Enhance Green Infrastructure.**

In addition to protecting Green Infrastructure, efforts should be made to maintain, restore, and enhance the GI network. However, maintenance, restoration, and enhancement is a tertiary strategy, given the context of limited public funding. Nevertheless, the strategy remains important to maintain awareness of restoration and maintenance, even in places where the GI is protected or carefully integrated with other land uses.

**Green Infrastructure and the Effects of Rising Sea Level**

In 2013, the Maryland Climate Change Commission projected that sea level in the Wicomico region will rise two (2) feet by 2050. Even if the projection is accurate to only ± 25% (for instance), which is a very large margin of error, the resultant rise of 1.5—2.5 feet would result in a large loss of land that threatens both the natural and built environments in Wicomico County. Property damage, coupled with a loss of shoreline, trails, agricultural land, and GI, poses a risk to the livelihood of county residents.

Green Infrastructure serves as the first line of defense against flooding. Inundation caused by a rise in sea level also causes groundwater levels to increase. Marshes and riverine beaches especially need to have inland areas protected for times when inundation causes up-slope migration. In 2012, Wicomico County experienced heavy flooding and rains from Hurricane Sandy. GI was adversely affected by the storm, resulting in sediment erosion, damaged forests, and destroyed animal habitats. The damage from Sandy is an example of potential future consequences as sea level continues to rise. Conserving natural areas and adjacent buffers will help protect against flooding and associated impacts of sea level rise. Protection from further fragmentation is vital because the current level of degradation makes sensitive areas even more vulnerable. Development and deterioration of GI may adversely affect the Ecological Goods and Services that protect against sea-level rise. Without GI to protect against flooding, sensitive lands in the community remain at risk.

Preservation of GI can be accomplished by directing development away from sensitive areas, as well as developing guidelines to encourage compatibility thereby reducing impacts. Encouraging infill development in areas with existing services, and managing development near shorelines to minimize catastrophic losses can help prepare for changing flood conditions. Allowing
compatible uses will support the landscape of GI and reduce fragmentation. Furthermore, combining conservation tools and recreation opportunities, where possible, may build public support for recreation projects. In addition to planning, partnering with non-governmental organizations to provide public outreach and education about environmental stewardship and the relationship to sea-level rise is important.

A study to explore the implications of sea-level rise in Wicomico County should be prepared. The results of the study will aid in future planning and prioritized acquisition of sensitive areas needed to protect the health, safety, and welfare of Wicomico County’s citizens. Without valid direction detailing the possible effects of sea-level rise, the County cannot effectively implement safeguards to protect the livelihood of Wicomico County.

**Green Infrastructure Integration with Compatible Land Cover Types and Uses**

Activities and approaches to preserving GI can vary depending on the type, location, and condition of the specific land. The following section discusses various types of sensitive land and the importance of Green Infrastructure to each.

**Farmland**

According to the 2012 Agricultural Census, Wicomico was the 2nd most agriculturally productive county in the State of Maryland in overall commodity of agricultural goods. Farming is likely to be more compatible with G.I. than is development. Therefore, retaining farming activities within conservation easements is an opportunity to reduce risk to G.I., as are other measures to retain farmland and farming within the County.

**Forest Land**

Most of Wicomico County’s Green Infrastructure is forest land. For generations, woodlands and forest products have been providing landowners with income and generating jobs and significant economic benefits for the County. Working forests provide not only sustainable economic contributions, but water and air quality protection, a diversity of plant and animal habitats, open space, scenic beauty, and an array of recreational opportunities for our citizens.

Today, forest harvesting and silvicultural operations in Maryland are restricted by regulations on of Critical Areas, non-tidal wetlands, endangered species, and erosion/sediment control. The Wicomico County Forestry Board provides important local professional oversight. With sound, professionally prepared forest stewardship plans, timber harvesting is a compatible use on most of the green infrastructure. In fact, forest harvesting exists today because landowners had a financial incentive to manage the land and retain ownership.

**Recreation**

Recreational land uses present an opportunity to integrate community activities with open space and habitat. Recreation can be either active or passive in nature. The following discussion presents the acquisition and design/management considerations for various types of recreation.
Active Recreation

Active recreation includes sports, playgrounds activities, swimming, skateboarding, motorized vehicle use (e.g. 4-wheelers, motor boats, jet skis), other vehicle use (e.g. bicycles, canoes, kayaks), and equestrian activities, among others. Trails and corridors also encourage walking and other forms of active recreation.

Acquisition

When feasible, consideration should be given to locate potentially incompatible active recreation sites outside of vulnerable or highly sensitive areas of the GI network.

Design and Management

Infrastructure may include impervious or compacted road and trails, restrooms, lighting, etc. Such high-impact design features should be located in, and should direct users to, less vulnerable areas within the site. In addition, educational efforts should be included, to enhance awareness and stewardship of the more sensitive areas within the site. Design should also focus maximizing conservation (e.g., limiting paving to pervious materials and reducing or effectively shielding lighting that interferes with wildlife).

Extractive Recreation

Activities such as hunting, fishing and trapping are examples of extractive recreation. The County should evaluate the need to create guidelines to manage the use of motorized and non-motorized vehicles on publicly-owned environmentally sensitive areas, including, but not limited to wetlands of special state concern, targeted ecological areas, and other highly sensitive GI areas.

Acquisition

Extractive recreation sites will frequently be associated with GI hubs and/or corridors due to the presence of target wildlife and other resources. Public support for site acquisition may be less of a problem than for active sites, because surrounding properties may have similar uses.

Design and Management

In areas used for natural resource extraction, the impact of public access (roadways, launch sites, docks, etc.) is an important issue because these access points are in direct contact with sensitive areas such as wetland margins or stream banks. Extractive recreation sites should be designed to mitigate or avoid such impacts. When feasible, infrastructure should be limited to unpaved roadways and low-impact boat launches, with lighting designs that minimize impacts on wildlife.

Resource management such as thinning timber or establishing waterfowl blind areas has consequences for G.I. as well. Where suitable, such sites may be appropriate for acquisition through easement programs or fee-simple purchase by federal, state, or local government agencies in an effort to limit extractive uses and activities in highly sensitive GI areas.
Passive Recreation

Examples of passive recreation include nature hikes, heritage tourism, nature or outdoor-based education, wildlife observation, photography, painting, and wild lands experience. Passive activities may incorporate non-motorized vehicle use.

Acquisition

The acquisition of passive recreation sites should target areas with high value for education and low-impact activities, such as birding, photography, and painting. Public support is often easier to obtain for passive recreation sites than for higher-impact sites.

Design and Management

Managing passive recreation sites should emphasize education and low-impact uses, such as birding. For example, Pemberton Park is primarily a passive recreation site that has considerable public access and use, especially for educational purposes. Infrastructure, including trails, observation platforms, boardwalks, restoration of historical buildings, and similar items should be designed and located to minimize impacts on sensitive features of the area. Design should balance providing access to wildlife and natural features with the negative impacts that such access causes.

Sensitive Areas and Wildlife Conservation

Natural lands that perform useful community functions should be protected from all but minimal, very low-impact activity. These sensitive ecosystems include wetlands (especially Delmarva bays), floodplains, mature forests, sensitive areas, and areas of Special State Concern. Additionally, sensitive features in areas not broadly identified as sensitive should also be afforded protection from intense recreation. Examples include rare orchids, carnivorous plants, and other endangered/threatened species.

Acquisition

Sensitive areas/wildlife conservation sites should be targeted for acquisition. If possible, partnering with appropriate organizations, such as The Nature Conservancy, should maximize County resources. Public support for site acquisition is often strong because of the often-increased values of surrounding properties.

Design and Management

Sensitive sites are selected and put in public trust to conserve natural attributes. Some may be designed with limited public infrastructure, such as trails. Other sites may be too sensitive for any infrastructure. Management of sensitive areas will incorporate some degree of access but should not open for continual use.
High Value Natural Areas

Maryland’s Green Infrastructure program (version 6), identifies the major part of Wicomico County’s Green Infrastructure (GI) lands. However, several important areas included in previous versions of the state’s GI included in previous versions of the state’s GI maps had been omitted from version 6. Therefore, the Natural Resources Conservation Advisory Committee was tasked with preparing an assessment and mapping at-risk/vulnerable and sensitive land to be acquired for conservation and recreational purposes. The methodology developed for delineating High Value Natural Areas is based in science and consists of a three-tier ranking system that will guide the county in land acquisition efforts.

The High Value Natural Areas have been delineated and are considered priority areas for conservation and recreation investments. The designated areas encompass GI hubs and corridors, targeted ecological areas, and sensitive habitats, and threatened areas to close perceived holes in the GI network.

Prior to compiling the information noted above, relevant GIS data (environmental, soils, and development pattern) was collected and analyzed to identify and establish priorities for future acquisition. Furthermore, the county considered the effects and integration of compatible and incompatible recreational activities and human-dominated features on the High Value Natural Areas. (Map 6.4)

The methodology used to evaluate and rank the High Value Natural Areas included the following items:

- Threat to development and future demand based on population and housing unit projections;
- Land use / land cover;
- Soil suitability to support onsite individual sewage disposal systems;
- Forest interior dwelling species and sensitive species project review areas;
- Wetlands of Special State Concern;
- Water Quality (Tier II waterbodies) and natural drainage systems;
- Current conservation and protection efforts in nearby or adjacent areas; and
- Green Infrastructure Composite Ecological Index.

Identifying and securing funding for the future acquisition of vulnerable High Value Natural Areas is paramount to the sustainability of the land preservation effort. The ability to leverage funding from Federal, State, and local programs, as well as the continued coordination with environmental and conservation groups is imperative to successfully enhance conservation and recreational opportunities in Wicomico County. In addition, the Natural Resources Conservation Advisory Committee will have an integral role in the continued update of the High Value Natural Areas, as well as tracking progress and recommending land use management techniques to achieve the desired outcomes.
LAND PRESERVATION, PARKS, AND RECREATION PLAN

The 2017 Wicomico County Land Preservation, Parks, and Recreation Plan illustrates the strong link between 1) the public need for parkland and other sites for leisure activity and 2) the importance of preserving significant areas of land from development, specifically farmland and natural resources. The final chapter of the Plan provides the guidance, in the form of both policy recommendations and capital improvements, to pursue the goals of increased land preservation and an enhanced recreation system in Wicomico County.

PLAN ORGANIZATION

The 2017 Wicomico County Land Preservation and Recreation Plan contains recommendations that affect County policy as well as recommendations for specific capital improvements. The Plan is organized as follows:

- **The County Perspective** includes the Plan map and a discussion of how the land preservation, parks, and recreation elements combine to form a tool to further the goals of land preservation and recreation services in Wicomico County.

- **Policy/Program Recommendations** pertain to all three areas of the plan: parks/recreation, agricultural preservation, and natural resources conservation. Policy/program recommendations are actions that do not involve major capital expenses and do not pertain to a specific planning area.

- **Capital Recommendations and Planning Areas** involve capital expenses for parkland or open space acquisition and/or development at a specific site or within a specific planning area. The capital recommendations section is presented by planning area, including a more focused discussion and plan map for each planning area.

COUNTY PERSPECTIVE

The 2017 Wicomico County Land Preservation, Parks, and Recreation Plan (Map 7.1) illustrates the effects of recent land preservation and recreation efforts in Wicomico County and provides guidance for future initiatives. Recreation, agricultural heritage, and natural resource conservation all share the common characteristic of preserving land from development. Specific discussion of the Plan in each planning area is found in the Capital Recommendations section.

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1 Map 7.1 illustrates the plan elements for the entire County. Portions of the plan map, each at a larger and more readable scale than Map 7.1, are included in the discussion of each planning area later in the report.
The Green Infrastructure (GI) system discussed in Chapter 6 helps identify land for potential preservation in Wicomico County. In addition to GI, the system of bikeways in Wicomico also identifies areas where land should be preserved. The Plan map (Map 7.1) illustrates bike routes promoted through the Department’s Tourism office. Previous land preservation plans chronicled Department efforts to create a bikeway system throughout the County. Bikeways identified as “potential” linkages on the Plan map were identified in previous plans, but have not yet been formally recognized or promoted.

**Policy/Program Recommendations**

Policy/program recommendations of the *2017 Wicomico County Land Preservation, Parks, and Recreation Plan* relate to all three elements of the Plan:

- Recreation and Parks;
- Agricultural Preservation; and
- Natural Resource Conservation.

**Recreation and Parks**

**RP-1  Continue to address capital rehabilitation funding in order to keep the County Parks system safe and functional.**

One of the key themes of the *2017 Wicomico County Land Preservation, Parks, and Recreation Plan* is the restoration of park facilities. The parks developed in response to significant population growth from the mid-1980s through the 1990s are nearing the end of the expected life cycle, and rehabilitation is a key factor in keeping older parks safe and useful. The Department should continue to look for opportunities to obtain additional park restoration funding, particularly for expensive items, such as the future restoration at Cedar Hill Harbor and the Henry Parker Athletic Complex. The County should also continue to update depreciation schedules for each facility to address the funding required to restore and modernize capital items as needed. The County should support the Department by:

- Assuring an adequate annual operating budget appropriation to:
  - Maintain equipment, park land, and tennis & basketball courts; and
  - Restore parking lots, buildings, lighting systems, courts, etc.

- Assuring appropriations match State and Federal grants to develop and improve park properties.

- Funding a systematic approach to replace vehicles and equipment nearing their expected life-cycle.
RP-2 Work with DNR, MDP, MDOT, and local agencies/stakeholders to develop trail systems within the County and increase connectivity to State-owned lands.

Examples of potential actions include:
- Connecting State-owned forested parcels to the County trail network, including equestrian trails in the Chesapeake Forest;
- Developing public access to waterways through state lands;
- Explore acquisition of boat launch on the west side of the Wicomico River;
- Linking state lands with public trails for biking, photography, birding and other recreational opportunities; and
- Coordinating with federal, state and local government agencies and non-governmental organizations to identify potential resources to plan and implement trail projects.

RP-3 Develop recreational programming and leisure opportunities for citizens and tourists to enjoy low impact eco-tourism activities such as hiking, biking, equestrian, and non-motorized water sports.

Examples of potential actions include:
- Developing trail guides and features that explore and enhance the natural and historic features of the County;
- Connecting, by water and over land, interesting sites to one another and to major population and activity centers in the County; and
- Working with stakeholders and policy makers to identify existing & future bike routes and developing methods to protect and enhance routes for both recreational and utility cyclists.

RP-4 Explore the potential to transfer the maintenance of existing neighborhood greens to a homeowners association.

RP-5 Coordinate with developers to identify opportunities to establish pedestrian/bicycle paths consistent with locally adopted plans or studies.

Pedestrian/bicycle paths in the areas of the County customarily follow environmentally sensitive areas or are shared use facilities with existing roadways. The Plan recommends that locating, constructing, and maintaining sustainable trails be a top priority for Wicomico County.

Consideration should be given to implement the following recommendations:
- In new developments with proposed pedestrian or bike paths, connections should be incorporated into the design to provide connections to existing or proposed facilities extending outside of the community or connecting neighborhoods; and
- Evaluate the potential of incorporating bike lanes and / or signage when resurfacing roadways (as identified in the Hiker and Biker Plan). Also, if possible, the bike lanes should connect to existing bike lanes to enhance the local bike network.

RP-6 Ensure that County trails are compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).
The ADA ensures that public recreation facilities are accessible to those with physical disabilities. All new Wicomico County trails should comply with the requirements of the ADA.

**RP-7 Continue to evaluate older playgrounds to ensure compliance with the U. S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) guidelines.**

Playground safety is paramount for any recreation and park system. Wicomico County has always assessed playground equipment against CPSC guidelines. With the aging of County facilities and the rehabilitation theme of the 2017 Plan, playground safety issues become even more important as the county works to make the best, continued use of many current facilities.

**RP-8 Continue to enhance the comprehensive parks maintenance management program to ensure safe and attractive parks and to replace older equipment and vehicles.**

Maintenance is the most important practice in prolonging the life of parks and recreation facilities. Wicomico County has adopted a comprehensive maintenance management program that is a major reason the County system has become a showcase for small counties nationwide. The Department should continue to enhance maintenance management practices, incorporating past experience and adapting practices to the needs of individual parks and facilities.

Replacement of vehicles and equipment based on life-cycle is a crucial element of the program. The revenue cap has severely restricted County tax support of capital improvements, particularly vehicle and equipment replacement. Deferred replacement and maintenance practices inevitably lead to increased cost and unreliability. The Department should work closely with Federal, State, and local governments to identify potential funding sources for capital programming expenses, including, but not limited to, replacement of vehicles and equipment.

**RP-9 Complete facility improvements outlined in the 20-year lease agreement with the Delmarva Shorebirds to include restoration and modernization of Arthur W. Perdue Stadium.**

The Delmarva Shorebirds are the minor league (South Atlantic League) baseball affiliate of the major league Baltimore Orioles. The Shorebirds play all home games at Arthur W. Perdue Stadium in Salisbury. Minor league baseball is a fun way for families and friends to spend an afternoon or evening together. The Shorebirds provide an excellent attraction and significant revenue for Wicomico County. The team has played at Perdue Stadium since the structure opened in 1996, averaging an attendance of more than 250,000 per year. The Stadium is in need of a significant renovation. The County should complete restoration and modernization as outlined in the 20-year lease agreement with the Shorebirds.

**RP-10 Work collaboratively with the Board of Education to make public facilities reasonably available and affordable for programming needs.**

The Board of Education and the Wicomico County Department of Recreation, Parks, and Tourism serve the same market: the citizens of Wicomico County. The general public will benefit from programs offered by either organization. The two agencies should work together to make facilities
available for joint usage and to eliminate, or at least minimize, the cost of hosting public programs at both Board of Education and County-owned facilities.

**RP-11 Continue to bring visitors and dollars into the County by leveraging the County’s outstanding recreation and parks system, Board of Education facilities, and facilities operated by private entities.**

The County should continue to leverage its parks and recreation facilities to support amateur sports tournaments and signature special events. Examples of specific potential actions include:

- The Henry S. Parker Athletic Complex, Perdue Stadium, and the Wicomico Youth & Civic Center should be maintained, modernized and marketed as the potential site for as many regional and national sporting and entertainment events as possible.

- The Department should continue to use Winterplace and Pemberton Park to stage Pork in the Park, and the Beer and Wine Festivals and other tourism events.

- Bike routes used for recreation and utility purposes should be evaluated to ensure safe and comfortable experiences. Marketing these routes for local and tourism use should be continued through department websites (www.wicomicorecandparks.org and www.wicomicotourism.org).

- Expand the reach of tourism marketing to promote Wicomico County as a base for amateur sports tournaments, signature special events, meeting & conventions and transient visits to those residing within a 6-hour drive.

- Market the County as a one-day or weekend destination. Highlight specific County attractions, in essence “sharing” local resources with tourists, including:
  - Scenic bike routes;
  - Outstanding fishing and boating opportunities;
  - Water trails for non-motorized water sports such as kayaking and canoeing;
  - Natural and heritage areas;
  - Abundant flat land, particularly for low-impact outdoor fitness programs which appeal to the senior population; and
  - Signature special events, such as Pork in the Park, Good Beer Festival and the Autumn Wine Festival.

- Establish training programs for visitor counselors and tourism-related businesses to increase knowledge of tourist attractions and further the County’s reputation for 1st-class hospitality.

**RP-12 Expand facilities required to attract and expand amateur tournaments.**

Contingent upon available funding, the Henry Parker Athletic Complex should be expanded to include eight (8) ball fields to accommodate anticipated demand. Tournaments hosted in Salisbury are a significant source of tourism revenue for the County.
RP-13 Continue to strengthen recreation council & stakeholder relationships to support programs and park operations.

Recreation councils are a contributor to leisure services in Wicomico County. They lift up their constituent’s needs and undertake ways and means to reduce local tax subsidy for recreation programs and park operations. The County should continue to reach out to recreation councils, supporting and encouraging efforts to help meet leisure needs.

RP-14 Continue to review the County fee structure for possible modifications to increase participation.

The fiscal challenges caused by increasing costs to operate programs, including minimum wage increases, makes it difficult to keep programs affordable. Many residents face hardship to afford the program fees. The recreation staff should continue to monitor the fee structure for all programs and seek creative means to maintain or lower them to gain participation.

RP-15 Continue to support the endowment to fund scholarships and programs for the County’s at-risk populations.

One method of continuing to reach the county’s at-risk populations, such as low-income youth and seniors, in the face of fiscal austerity is to provide scholarships and targeted programs funded through endowments—money set aside to draw interest and dividends, which are then used for a specific purpose. The Department has helped to establish a scholarship fund with the Community Foundation and hold events annually to grow the fund to perpetuate the award of scholarships to register in its programs. The earnings from the fund’s $160,000 principal is awarded in scholarships annually.

RP-16 Consider developing recreation programs that address the leisure needs of the County’s continually diversifying population.

Wicomico County has a relatively diverse population. Minorities and seniors represent growing segments of the population with unique leisure service needs. The Department should consider creative ways to meet the leisure service needs of various population segments with minimal increases in department costs.

Agricultural Preservation

A-1 Evaluate the minimum acreage requirement for participation in the County easement program.

The requirement of a minimum 50 acres potentially excludes willing property owners from participation in the County agricultural easement program. The County has a goal of encouraging participation in the program, and smaller farms adjacent to current agricultural preservation districts would help the County’s goal of assembling larger areas of land that is at least temporarily preserved. If desired, the County could make larger parcels a higher priority for easement purchase.
A-2  Develop alternative methods of compensation for easements to meet a variety of financial needs of farm families.

The financial tools used and timing for disbursement of funds can have a significant effect on the attractiveness of preservation as an alternative to selling farmland for development. Each landowner has a unique set of financial circumstances and goals. A land preservation deal includes many other benefits than simply a single check at closing (Table 7.1). Wicomico County should continue to offer assistance to landowners to help promote land preservation as a financially viable alternative to development.

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A-3  Continue preservation efforts designed to achieve the preservation goals contained in this Plan.

Natural Resource Conservation

N-1  Consideration should be given to expanding the existing Quantico Creek Rural Legacy Area.

N-2  Preserve open space and improve the quality of the Chesapeake Bay tributaries.

The County should continue efforts to preserve open space, as a function of subdivision regulations and purchase of conservation easements from voluntary landowners. Additionally, continue implementation of stormwater retrofit practices associated with the Chesapeake Bay Pollution Diet. At the time of this publication, the County has completed eight projects on highly-visible publicly owned land. The designs and 100 percent engineering have been completed for the next round of projects, which includes approximately 11 improvements. To meet State-mandated nutrient targets for the Wicomico, the County should continue to explore alternatives to connect existing residential areas with failing septic systems to public waste water treatment plants.

N-3  Continue discussions between representatives of environmental organizations and county officials to discuss and assess important environmental issues in the County.
As noted above, many environmental groups in Wicomico County work to preserve our natural resources. A working group of representatives from environmental organizations meets periodically with County representatives to establish communication and address important environmental issues.

**N-4 Consider land banking and other voluntary mechanisms to preserve land along Wicomico County waterways.**

The vast majority—some estimate as much as 95%—of the land along the Wicomico River is already developed. Wetlands line much of the Nanticoke River. In situations where much land is simply unavailable, for any number of reasons, land banking is an acceptable consideration. Wicomico County may wish to begin land banking—the practice of purchasing and holding land for future use (or preservation)—along county waterways. Many options are available to help structure acceptable arrangements between the county and a willing landowner, such as deferred compensation, life estate, bargain sale, and many others. The County should be aware of and consider all opportunities to conserve land along county waterways.

**N-5 Foster a strong working relationship between the County and the State in areas of mutual interest.**

Wicomico County and the State of Maryland have many common land preservation goals and targets. The county—through the Wicomico County Department of Recreation, Parks, and Tourism and the Salisbury-Wicomico Department of Planning, Zoning, and Community Development—and the State—through the Maryland Departments of Planning and Natural Resources—should work closely to strengthen efforts in areas of mutual concern, such as:

- Rural Legacy;
- Sustainable forestry;
- State land acquisition;
- Forest protection;
- Conservation funds; and
- Wetland protection.

**N-6 Consider coupling agricultural preservation easement purchases with initiatives to protect Green Infrastructure hubs and corridors.**

Easement purchases have successfully preserved agricultural land throughout Wicomico County. Combining agricultural easement purchases with initiatives to protect GI hubs and corridors may benefit the preservation of both agricultural land and areas of Green Infrastructure.

**N-7 Research and identify viable alternative methods of compensation for easements; i.e., tax-free interest payments, tax donation deductions, property tax credit, etc.**

Every landowner’s financial circumstances are unique. The compensation arrangement structured for one owner might be detrimental to others. In order to appeal to the greatest number of landowners, the County should research potential compensation arrangements. Allowing flexibility in compensation will offer the best chance for the County to obtain each easement.
N-8  Seek statewide Program Open Space funding to acquire lands within targeted high priority Green Infrastructure hubs and corridors.

The 2017 Wicomico County Land Preservation, Parks, and Recreation Plan identifies GI hubs and corridors and establishes a priority for each (Map 6.2). The highest priority areas in each Maryland county should be considered Statewide priorities. Wicomico County should work with the State to obtain statewide Program Open Space funding to acquire lands, through easement or purchase, within the high priority GI hubs and corridors.

CAPITAL RECOMMENDATIONS

The capital recommendations of the 2017 Wicomico County Land Preservation, Parks, and Recreation Plan are presented by planning area. Each section includes a larger-scale version of the plan map and a discussion of the effect of the plan on the planning area. Planning area discussions are presented in the following order: Tri-Town, West Side, North, Central, South, and the East.

The 2017 Wicomico County Land Preservation, Parks, and Recreation Plan proposes a total of 34 capital projects at an estimated cost of more than $10.7 million (Table 7.2). Highlights of the plan include:

- Acquiring 42.14 acres of land; of which 20.0 acres will be used to expand the Henry S. Parker Athletic Complex; 7.0 acre expansion at Winterplace Park; 6.0 acre park expansion at Hebron Park; 2.14 acre expansion at Mason Dixon Sports Complex; 4.0 acres to accommodate parking demand at Fruitland Recreation Area; and 3.0 acres to accommodate parking demand at Eastside Sports Complex.

- Developing & expanding parks to meet recreation needs of areas experiencing or expected to experience significant growth:
  - Expand Henry S. Parker Athletic Complex to increase inventory to 8 ball fields.
  - Develop a master plan for Pirates Wharf to include passive recreation opportunities for the general public and tourists.

- A total of $4.315 million—40.3% of total estimated cost—is devoted to rehabilitation of existing facilities, in response to the plan’s emphasis on park and facility rehabilitation.
## Table 7.2
### Summary of Capital Recommendations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Planning Area</th>
<th>Number of Projects</th>
<th>Est. Total Cost ($000s)</th>
<th>Acres to be Acquired</th>
<th>Estimated Costs ($000s)</th>
<th>Acq.</th>
<th>Dev.</th>
<th>Reh.</th>
<th>Acq.</th>
<th>Dev.</th>
<th>Reh.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Immediate (2017-2022)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mid-Range (2023-2027)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tri-Town</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>6.00</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>240</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Side</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2,845</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>550</td>
<td>1,510</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>785</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3,455</td>
<td>22.14</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>2,800</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>3,846</td>
<td>7.00</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>1,110</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2,415</td>
<td>150</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>34</strong></td>
<td><strong>10,716</strong></td>
<td><strong>42.14</strong></td>
<td><strong>315</strong></td>
<td><strong>3,446</strong></td>
<td><strong>3,040</strong></td>
<td><strong>225</strong></td>
<td><strong>2,415</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,275</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Wicomico County Department of Recreation, Parks, and Tourism

The following sections discuss the capital proposals by planning area within the County.
Tri-Town Planning Area

The County completed projects to replace ballfield lights at Cope Bennett Park and Hebron since the adoption of the 2013 Plan.

The 2017 Wicomico County Land Preservation, Parks and Recreation Plan proposes 4 capital projects, estimated to cost $400,000, in the Tri-Town Planning Area (Map 7.2, Table 7.3). One of the projects is the acquisition of an additional 6.0 acres at Hebron Park to meet the needs of future residents. The acquisition is carried over from the 2013 plan.

Table 7.3
Proposed Capital Improvements, Tri-Town Planning Area

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Project Description</th>
<th>Est.</th>
<th>Acres</th>
<th>Estimated Costs ($000s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Total to be Acquired</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Immediate (2017-2022)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mid-Range (2023-2027)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hebron Park</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Park Extension</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharptown</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Replace bulkhead @ fishing area</td>
<td>200</td>
<td></td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mardela Park</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Playground Module</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>40</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cope Bennett</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Playground Module</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>40</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total (4 projects)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>400</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>40 120 240</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Wicomico County Department of Recreation, Parks, and Tourism
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West Side Planning Area

As part of the 2013 Plan, Wicomico County completed restoration of Nanticoke Harbor, including, replacement of bulkhead, piles, catwalks, and court resurfacing at Cedar Hill Park. The 2017 *Wicomico County Land Preservation, Parks, and Recreation Plan* proposes $2.845 million of improvements in the West Side (Map 7.3, Table 7.4), including development of Pirate’s Wharf Park consistent with recommendations contained in a site master plan. Major improvements are slated for Cedar Hill Park including: $975,000 for rehabilitation of the bulkhead, piles, and catwalks; $150,000 for replacing a boat ramp; and $80,000 for construction of a bathhouse facility. Improvements at Cedar Hill and Nanticoke Harbor will total approximately $1.295 million. A shoreline restoration project should be considered at Roaring Point to address beach erosion that threatens future accessibility to the beach. The 2017 *Wicomico County Land Preservation, Parks, and Recreation Plan* does not envision any additional recreational land requirements in the West Side.

### Table 7.4

**Proposed Capital Improvements, West Side Planning Area**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site</th>
<th>No. (Map 7.4)</th>
<th>Project Description</th>
<th>Est. Total Cost ($000s)</th>
<th>Acres to be Acquired</th>
<th>Estimated Costs ($000s)</th>
<th>Immediate (2017-2022)</th>
<th>Mid-Range (2023-2027)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nanticoke Harbor</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>Replace boat ramp</td>
<td>90</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>90</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pirate’s Wharf Park</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>Develop master plan/park development</td>
<td>550</td>
<td></td>
<td>550</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cedar Hill Park</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>Replace boat ramp</td>
<td>150</td>
<td></td>
<td>150</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cedar Hill Park</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>Replace bulkhead, piles, catwalks</td>
<td>975</td>
<td></td>
<td>430</td>
<td>545</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cedar Hill Park</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>Bathhouse facility</td>
<td>80</td>
<td></td>
<td>80</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roaring Point</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>Shoreline restoration</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td></td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total (6 projects)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>2,845</strong></td>
<td>0</td>
<td><strong>1,510</strong></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Wicomico County Department of Recreation, Parks, and Tourism
North Planning Area

The 2017 *Wicomico County Land Preservation, Parks, and Recreation Plan* proposes major improvements to the Henry S. Parker Athletic Complex and Naylor Mill Park (Map 7.4, Table 7.5). Additional projects in the North Planning Area will include equipment restoration at the Mason Dixon Sports Complex and Gordy Park in Delmar. The total anticipated costs for the North Planning area are expected to be $3.455 million.

### Table 7.5
Proposed Capital Improvements, North Planning Area

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site</th>
<th>No. (Map 7.5)</th>
<th>Project Description</th>
<th>Est. Total Cost ($000s)</th>
<th>Acres to be Acquired</th>
<th>Estimated Costs ($000s)</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Immediate</strong></td>
<td><strong>Mid-Range</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>(2017-2022)</strong></td>
<td><strong>(2023-2027)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henry Parker Athletic Complex</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Expansion; Additional 8 fields, expand bathroom, parking &amp; storage areas</td>
<td>3,150</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>2,800</td>
<td>200</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gordy Park</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Replace pavilion; restore contact bldg.</td>
<td>60</td>
<td></td>
<td>60</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mason Dixon Sports Complex</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Replace playground equip</td>
<td>40</td>
<td></td>
<td>40</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mason Dixon Sports Complex</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Acquire land</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>2.14</td>
<td>105</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mason Dixon Sports Complex</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Fences, roofs, dugouts, bleachers</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Total (5 projects)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>3,455</td>
<td>22.14</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>2,800</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Wicomico County Department of Recreation, Parks, and Tourism
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Central Planning Area

As part of the 2013 Plan, the County resurfaced courts and replaced playground modules at Crooked Oak, Centennial Village, and Billy Gene Jackson Park.

The *2017 Wicomico County Land Preservation, Parks, and Recreation Plan* proposes 14 capital improvements in the Central Planning Area, at a cost of approximately $3.846 million (Map 7.5, Table 7.6). The Plan includes construction of a soft launch site at Billy Gene Jackson Park, rehabilitation of the Pemberton Park Heritage Center, possible remodel of the interior of the Carriage House, and establishment of water/sewer connections at the Wicomico Equestrian Center.

### Table 7.6
**Proposed Capital Improvements, Central Planning Area**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site</th>
<th>No. (Map 7.6)</th>
<th>Project Description</th>
<th>Est. Total Cost ($000s)</th>
<th>Acres to be Acquired</th>
<th>Estimated Costs ($000s)</th>
<th>Immediate (2017-2022)</th>
<th>Mid-Range (2023-2027)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Billy Gene Jackson Park</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>Well for irrigation on ballfields</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>25</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Billy Gene Jackson Park</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>Install ADA accessible soft launch ramp</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>28</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pemberton Historical Park</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>Construct outbuildings</td>
<td>200</td>
<td></td>
<td>200</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pemberton Historical Park</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>Rehabilitation Heritage Center</td>
<td>70</td>
<td></td>
<td>70</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Metro Park</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>Develop master plan for facility</td>
<td>40</td>
<td></td>
<td>40</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winterplace Park</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>Carriage House water/sewer connection</td>
<td>200</td>
<td></td>
<td>200</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winterplace Park</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>Carriage House interior rehabilitation</td>
<td>1,400</td>
<td></td>
<td>1,400</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winterplace Park</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>Acquire land</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Equestrian Center at Winterplace</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>Water/Sewer Connection/Restrooms</td>
<td>400</td>
<td></td>
<td>400</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Waterside Playground</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>Replace playground equipment</td>
<td>150</td>
<td></td>
<td>150</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Riverwalk Park</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>Extension of Riverwalk</td>
<td>175</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>175</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Emerson Holloway Park</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>Pavilion and playground</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>50</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Emerson Holloway Park</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>Replace perimeter fencing</td>
<td>90</td>
<td></td>
<td>90</td>
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<td>A.W. Perdue Stadium</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>Replace flat roof</td>
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<td>900</td>
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<td>Total (14 projects)</td>
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<td>3,846</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>1,110</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Wicomico County Department of Recreation, Parks, and Tourism
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South Planning Area

The 2017 Wicomico County Land Preservation, Parks, and Recreation Plan includes one capital project to acquire land for additional parking to accommodate increasing demand at the Fruitland Recreation Complex. The total estimated cost for the aforementioned project is $40,000. (Map 7.6, Table 7.7). The County should continue to monitor growth in the South Planning Area and consider additional recreational parks/areas to accommodate anticipated long-term needs.

Table 7.7
Proposed Capital Improvements, South Planning Area

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site</th>
<th>No. (Map 7.7)</th>
<th>Project Description</th>
<th>Est. Total Cost ($000s)</th>
<th>Acres to be Acquired</th>
<th>Estimated Costs ($000s)</th>
<th>Immediate (2017-2022)</th>
<th>Mid-Range (2023-2027)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Fruitland Recreation Park</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>Acquire land for additional parking</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total (1 project)</td>
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<td>40</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Wicomico County Department of Recreation, Parks, and Tourism
East Planning Area

The 2017 Wicomico County Land Preservation, Parks, and Recreation Plan contains four projects carried over from the 2005 plan. The four projects in the East Planning Area, with an estimated total cost of $130,000, (Map 7.7, Table 7.8) include improvements to Willards Park and Adkins Mill Park.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site</th>
<th>No. (Map 7.7)</th>
<th>Project Description</th>
<th>Est. Total Cost ($000s)</th>
<th>Acres to be Acquired</th>
<th>Estimated Costs ($000s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Immediate (2017-2022)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willards Park</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>Replace basketball court</td>
<td>40</td>
<td></td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adkins Mill Park</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>Construct gazebo/boardwalk improvements</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastside Sports Cpx</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>Acquire land for additional parking</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willards Park</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>Add playground module</td>
<td>40</td>
<td></td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total (4 projects)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>130</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>25</td>
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</table>

Source: Wicomico County Department of Recreation, Parks, and Tourism