

Maryland Environmental Trust



Maryland Planning Directors'
Roundtable Presentation

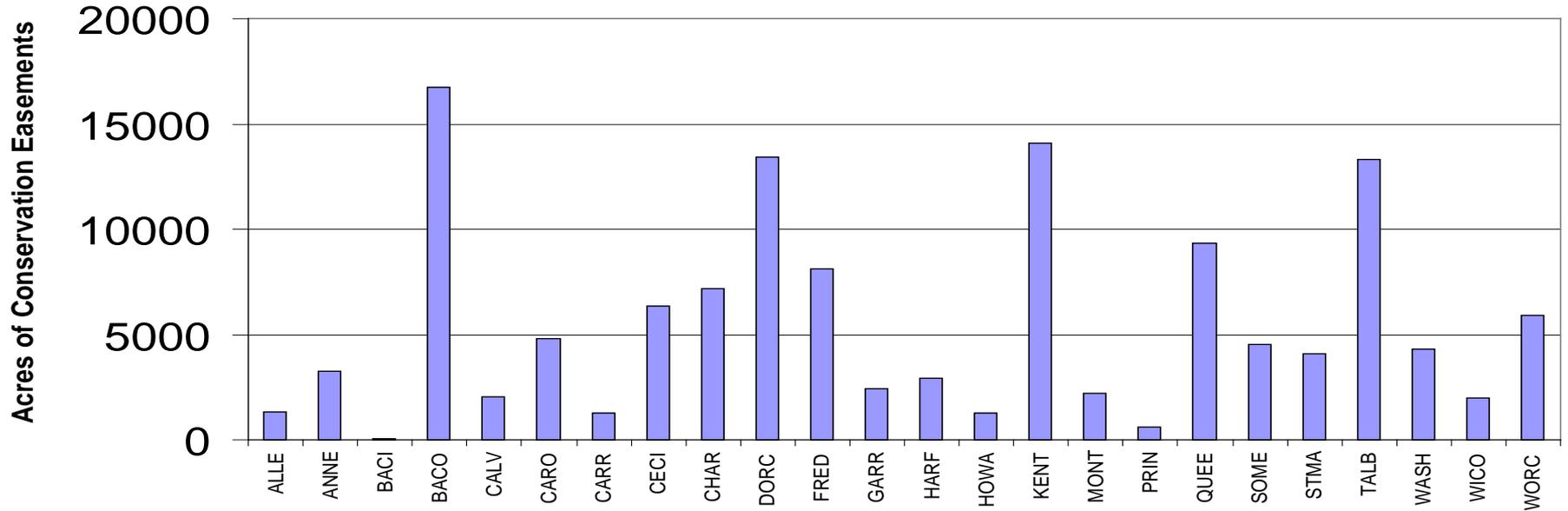
March 11, 2014

- Established in 1967, accepted first easement donation in 1972
- Statewide land trust governed by a citizen Board of Trustees
- To date, MET has protected over 131,000 acres on more than 1,070 easement properties state-wide
- One of the largest land trusts in country
- A unit of DNR – component of Land Resources Division

The logo for the Maryland Environmental Trust is a green oval with a white border. Inside the oval, the words "Maryland Environmental Trust" are written in white, bold, serif font, stacked in three lines.

**Maryland
Environmental
Trust**

MET Conservation Easements as of March 2014 - Acres



Tools Used to Preserve Land

- Zoning
- Preferential Tax Assessments
- Comprehensive Planning, Water, Sewer, etc.
- TDR- Transfer of Development Rights
- PDR- Purchase of Development Rights
- Purchased Easements
- DONATED EASEMENTS

MET Easement Program

- Voluntary Program
 - A cost-effective land preservation program
 - Flexible easement terms
 - Easements are perpetual (forever!)
 - Allows landowners to continue to own, use, and manage their property, and sell it or pass it on to their heirs
 - Partner with local land trusts where active
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What is a Conservation Easement?

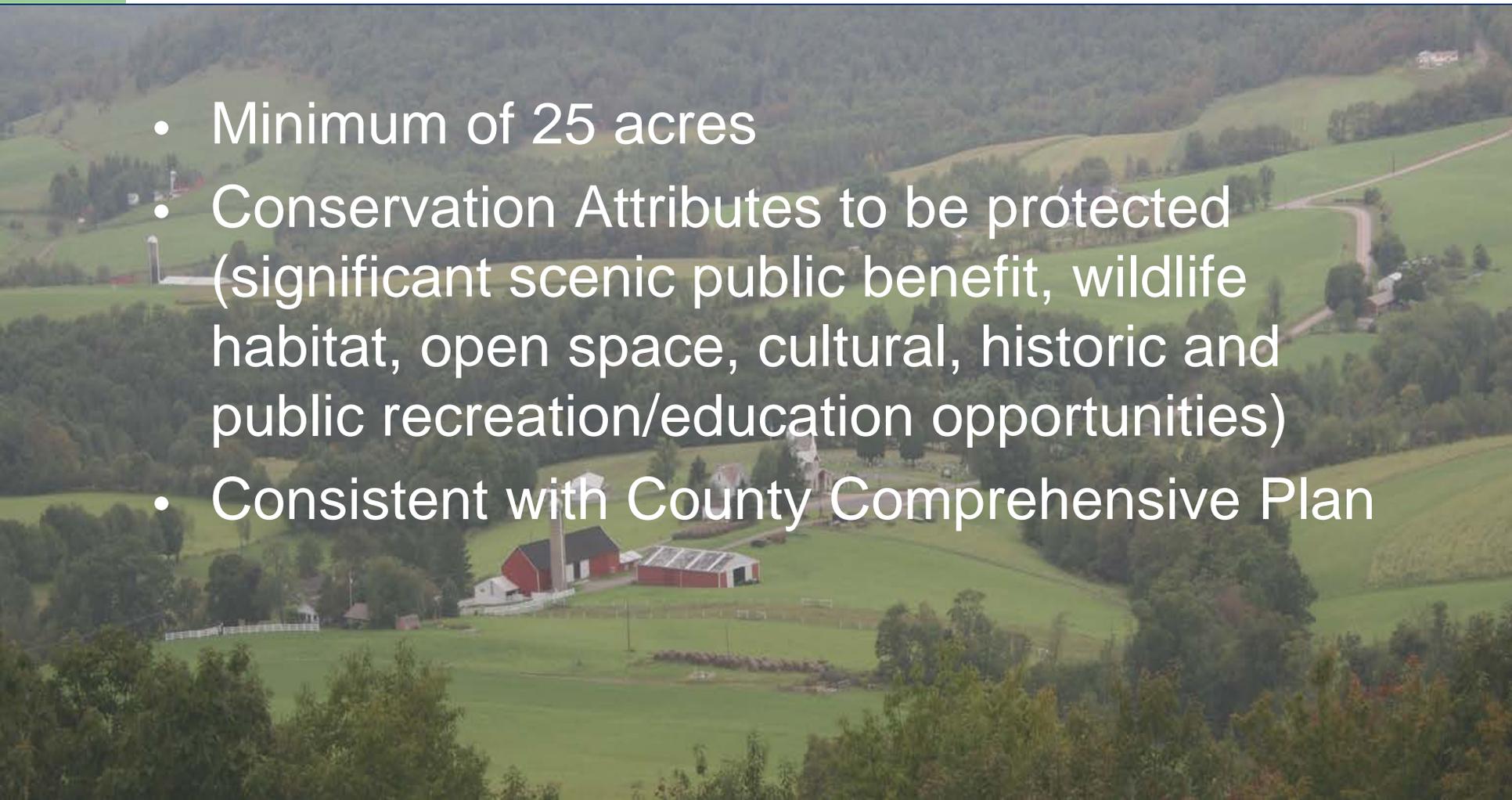
- A legal agreement between a landowner and a nonprofit land trust and/or government entity that permanently limits the uses of the land in order to protect specified conservation attributes.

Conservation Attributes

- Scenic viewshed protection from public roads and waterways
 - Protection of wildlife habitat
 - Protection of water quality
 - Preservation of significant historical and cultural sites
 - Protection of productive agricultural land
 - Protection of forested land
 - Shoreline and riparian protection
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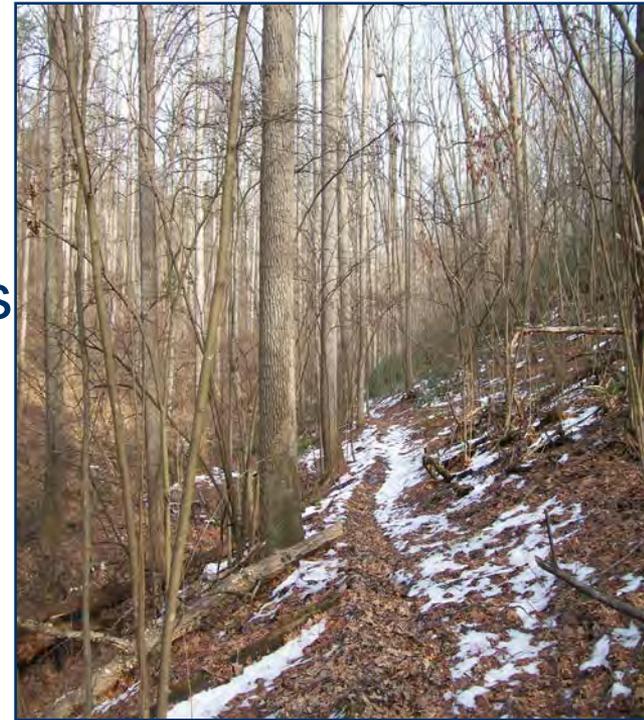
Easement Program Criteria

- Minimum of 25 acres
- Conservation Attributes to be protected (significant scenic public benefit, wildlife habitat, open space, cultural, historic and public recreation/education opportunities)
- Consistent with County Comprehensive Plan



Terms and Provisions of a Typical Conservation Easement

- Dwelling Units
- Subdivision (common ownership)
- Dumping
- Industrial and commercial activities
- Forest Stewardship Plan
- Buffers around water bodies
- Billboards/signs
- Excavation/changes in topography



Tax Incentives for Easement Donors

- Federal Income Tax Deduction
- State Income Tax Credit
- Federal Estate Tax Benefit
- MD Property Tax Credit
- County Tax Credits

Legislation

- **HB 789/ SB 709** would...
 - Expand credit to corporations
 - Maintain same level of credits available, but create a transferable tax credit (i.e. saleable)
 - Set a cap of \$2 million in credit issued (claimed) per year across MD.
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MET Collaboration with Counties

- MET easements can be promoted in county comprehensive plans
 - Assist in reviewing and commenting on plans
 - MET can help meet PPA & LLPRP goals
 - Mapping – MET can provide annual updates of Conservation Easements
 - Natural Resource Article 1-404 (subdivision requests)
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MET's Urban Easement Policy

- Adopted in 2012
 - Significant properties in urban corridors
 - Public access typically
 - Local Land Trust collaboration
 - 3 properties accepted to date
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Stewardship Program

- Monitor the property on a regular basis to ensure all terms are being met (in perpetuity)
- Respond to any questions, concerns, or requests of the landowners
- Maintain contact and good relationships with landowners
- When necessary, enforce the terms of the easement



Local Land Trust Assistance?

- Support local land trusts via training, grants, publicity
 - MD Land Trust Conference (Apr 3-4)
 - Keep MD Beautiful – grants to non-profit groups, communities & schools for environmental projects
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Questions?

