

Balancing Land Preservation

Keeping track of remaining development capacity and targeting growth to the appropriate areas are essential steps in sound land use planning. It is equally important, however, to promote and plan for an adequate level of land preservation and to have strong policies in place to protect preservation areas from development pressures that will increase as the available development capacity is drawn down.

According to analysis completed in 2006 for the County's updated *Land Preservation, Parks and Recreation Plan*, there were 61,673 acres of protected land in the County, as summarized in Table 3-3. Protected land includes State, County and Municipal recreation land; land in agricultural easements and managed forest land; and natural resources land that is protected under public ownership, under State land trust easements, or under Open Space zoning regulations. This total represents approximately 23% of the total land area in the County. In actuality, the number is somewhat higher because land under forest conservation easements was not included in the analysis. The County does not have a complete inventory of all forest conservation easements at this time.

Table 3-3 Protected Land Summary

| Category | Acres |
|------------------------|--------|
| Park Land | |
| Local | 7,985 |
| State | 862 |
| Total | 8,847 |
| Agricultural Land | 11,475 |
| Natural Resources Land | 41,352 |
| Total Protected Land | 61,673 |

Source: Anne Arundel County 2006 Land Preservation, Parks and Recreation Plan

The Land Preservation, Parks and Recreation Plan established a goal of acquiring an additional 2,850 acres of recreation, open space, and natural resource land and an additional 8,500 acres of land under agricultural easements over the 15-year planning horizon (2005 – 2020). Based on recent land preservation accomplishments, the 2009 GDP increases the recreation, open space, and natural resource land preservation goal from 2,850 to 4,000 acres, of which 850 acres would be planned for active recreation and 3,150 acres for open space and natural resource protection. If this goal is achieved, the total amount of protected land in the County will increase to 74,173 acres, or 28% of total land area. This would be a significant achievement for a jurisdiction located between two major metropolitan areas in one of the fastest growing regions in the nation. It is also an achievement that, to be realized, will likely require stronger land preservation policies be established, stronger incentives be developed for private property owners to preserve land, and new funding sources or revenue strategies be created to allow additional land acquisition for preservation.

The County currently has mechanisms in place to help prioritize where these preservation efforts should be targeted. The *Greenways Master Plan* proposes a network of protected corridors of woodland and open space, and to date approximately 49% of the proposed network is not yet permanently protected. In addition, the County's Rural Legacy Area as well as the proposed Priority Preservation Area (see Chapter 8) are targeted areas for preservation.

This GDP includes strategies to increase and enhance preservation efforts in these areas in order to achieve the "28% protected land" goal. Goals, policies and actions to accomplish this are listed below as well as in Chapter 5 (Environmental Stewardship).

Goal: Increase the amount of protected land in the County in order to preserve open space and rural areas and protect natural resources.

Policy 1: Acquire approximately 3,150 additional acres of land for open space and natural resource land protection by year 2020

Actions:

- ⊕ In accordance with the 2006 *Land Preservation, Parks and Recreation Plan*, pursue the acquisition of additional land for preservation. Target properties in the Greenways network, the Rural Legacy Area, in subwatersheds identified as high priority for preservation in a Watershed Management Plan, and in other areas suitable for passive recreation or natural resource protection.
- ⊕ Offset future land use and zoning intensifications by acquiring or otherwise retaining additional land for preservation where feasible.
- ⊕ Partner with local land trusts to increase promotion and marketing of preservation mechanisms such as conservation easements.

