

Worcester County

Agricultural Land Preservation News



Newsletter for Landowners - Fall 2025

Sharp Reduction in MALPF Funding for FY25 to FY29

The FY25 and FY26 MALPF (Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation) capital budget for statewide purchase of conservation easements was combined into one cycle due to reduced funds available in the FY25 MALPF budget. MALPF is funded from the state real estate and agricultural transfer tax revenue. Many counties, including Worcester, provide a general fund cash match annually as well.

This year (FY26), the state land conservation programs were at risk of losing 100% of funding. The outcome was not as dire as anticipated but the State of Maryland has diverted \$25 million a year, through FY29, from land conservation programs including MALPF. Funding for land conservation in Maryland will continue to be at risk in the coming years. Despite these challenges Worcester County maintains its commitment to working with landowners to preserve prime farm and forest land across the county.

Each county's FY25/26 MALPF allocation was \$678,558, with matching state and county funds bringing Worcester County's total to \$985,095. Three applications for FY25/FY26 easement sale were accepted by Worcester County in spring of 2024, the applicants owning a total of 371.7 acres. Two landowners received offers. FY27 applications to sell an easement to MALPF will be accepted from January to May 2026.

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73

MALPF Easements

54

MALPF Landowners

14%

of Worcester's land in conservation easements

27

MALPF Easements Inspected in 2025

MALPF Easement Inspections Will be More Frequent

Last year, Worcester County's Department of Environmental Programs added a new position. This has allowed the county to complete more than the State-required minimum number of annual inspections. In 2025 over a third of Worcester County's MALPF easements were inspected. More frequent monitoring allows the county to better support landowners.

Before your property under easement is inspected you will receive a letter with a time frame for the inspection. Landowners are welcome to accompany staff on the inspection; if the dates provided are not convenient another time can be arranged.

When the weather allows, a drone may be used to take aerial images of the property under easement. The county is happy to share drone images taken with landowners.

Landowners are welcome to call or email Lily Wagner (see contact information on last page) at any time with questions about MALPF easement inspections.

Violations Can be Avoided

In many cases, MALPF easement violations are due to mistakes or misunderstandings on the part of the landowner. Correcting violations can be costly, so it is important for participating landowners to be aware of all provisions in their deed of easement. If in doubt, please seek legal counsel, and/or contact the county program administrator, or the MALPF office, before making a decision about a land use change.

Dumping is the most common violation that is documented in Worcester County. Some common examples of dumping include discarded and improperly stored chemical containers, tires, untagged vehicles, and piles of trash or discarded materials. No dumping of any sort is allowed on a MALPF easement.

Alternative Energy

Most **commercial** uses of alternative energy are not allowed on a MALPF easement; this includes commercial solar farms.

Article continues on next page



2025 "Selfie" taken by Lily while flying the drone for a baseline inspection.

New Employee Spotlight

Lily Wagner was hired as an intern in early 2024 after graduating from West Virginia University with a degree in Environmental Soil and Water Science. In July 2024 she was hired as an Environmental Planner and recently completed her first year in the position.

Lily is responsible for conservation easement inspections for the county. Her favorite part of the job is meeting landowners and visiting the beautiful agricultural lands of Worcester County. Since starting she has logged more than 50 property visits.

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Uses that are associated directly with production on the farm and that are limited in scope may be allowed through an application and review process.

MALPF has previously approved the use of solar energy to support agricultural facilities on certain easements in Worcester County.

Residential and agricultural uses of alternative energy are allowed provided that the energy generated does not exceed 125% of the energy used on an annual basis.

Please contact the Program Administrator if you plan any use of alternative energy.

Agricultural Subdivision

Any transfer of any portion of a property under MALPF easement requires board review and approval. Whether the land is made up of two or more parcels of land, is divided by a road, or the subdivision would be allowed by zoning, permission must first be obtained. While some deeds of easement permit subdivision for creation of a new lot (or lots), there is an application and review process. Please contact the program administrator for assistance.

Right-of-Ways (ROWs)

Granting a new ROW may conflict with a MALPF deed of easement. Prior to granting a new ROW, please contact the program administrator.

How Do I Apply to Sell an Easement to MALPF?

Applications to sell an easement to MALPF in FY27 will be accepted January through May 2026.

The property must meet minimum soils requirements set by the Worcester County agricultural land preservation board, and the property must have residential subdivision rights available to extinguish.

As part of the competitive application process, each landowner submits a bid—the payment per acre they are willing to accept to sell the easement. Applicants should consider their bid carefully because it can determine if they will receive an offer.

Average payment per acre in Worcester County in recent application cycles:

FY22: \$2,333/acre

FY23:\$2,200/acre

FY 24:\$2,406/acre

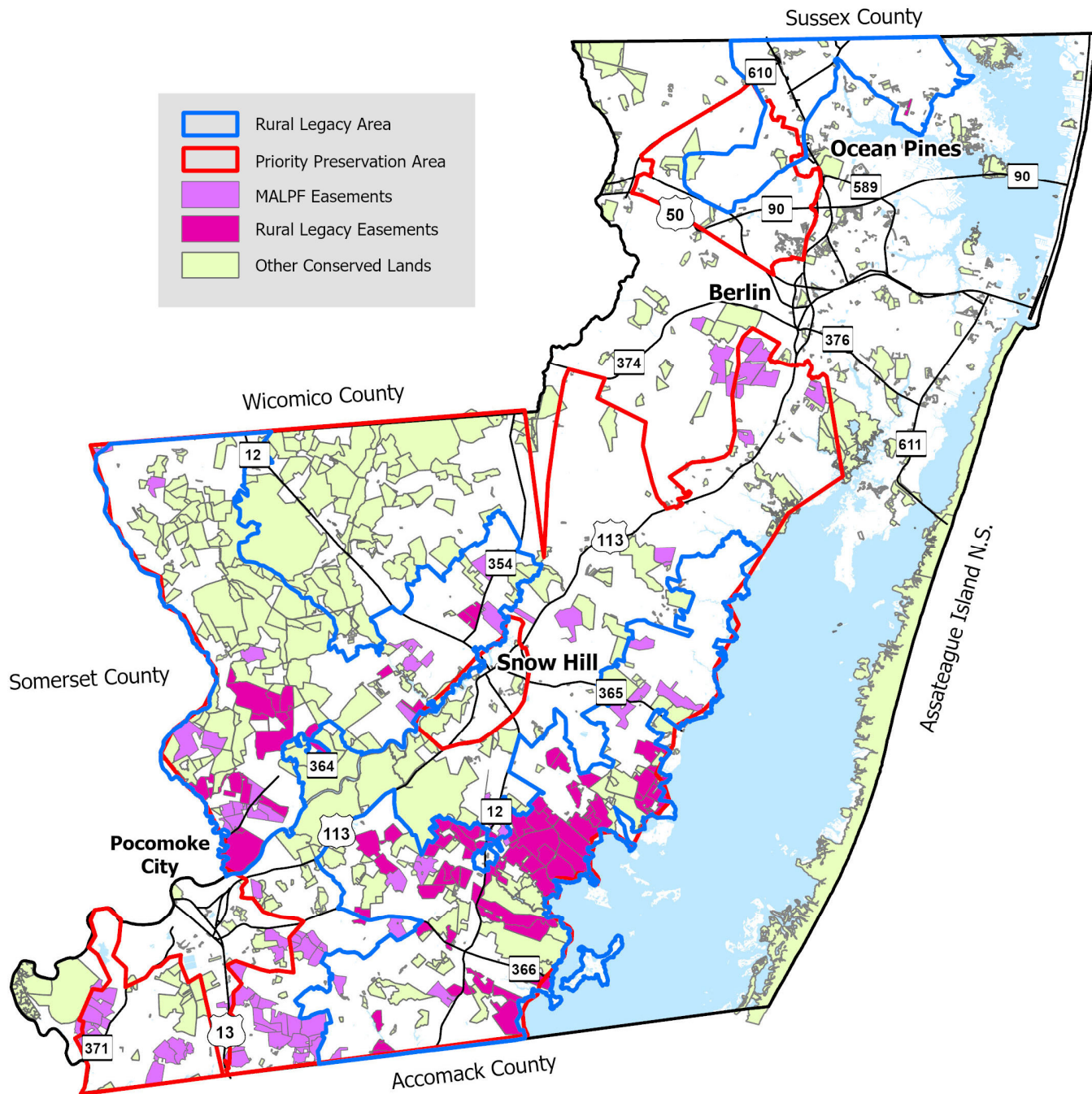
FY25/26: \$3,123/acre



Aerial image taken for a baseline report in Summer 2025

MALPF Easements Acquired on the Lower Eastern Shore as of June 2024

County	Total Easements	Acreage	Percent of Total Statewide
Worcester	70	10,614	2.87%
Wicomico	70	8,370	2.26%
Somerset	64	7,266	1.96%
Dorchester	111	16,875	4.56%



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