

Baltimore County

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dustry and for future generations," said Dan Calhoun, chair of the Baltimore County Agricultural Board.

Clarence, George, and Charles Mielke, owners of Trenton Mill Farms in the Piney Run Rural Legacy Area, recently sold the development rights to their farm, bringing the county's total number of preserved acres to 40,000. "These boys have farm blood in them, and the land was passed down to them from their parents. They grew up on the land and have farmed it their whole lives. To see a crop of townhouses would be devastating to them," said Rhoda Mielke, George Mielke's wife.

Trenton Mills Farms is considered one of the most significant agricultural operations in Baltimore County. Working more than 3,000 acres and providing grain services to another 7,000 acres of farmland, this farming operation represents more than 25 percent of the grain production in Baltimore County. Preserving this vital and scenic farm, through the state's Rural Legacy program, perpetuates the watershed protection provided by the farm's 3,200 feet of stream buffers.

In 1985, Drew and Joan Norman took over the family farm in White Hall and converted it into an organic vegetable farm. Growing to become one of the largest farms of its kind in the state, they needed more land to expand. In 1998, Drew's sister, Helen Elmore, sold an easement on their farm to the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation, and used the proceeds to purchase more land, which they lease to the Normans for organic vegetable production. "Without the sale of that easement, we would not have been able to do it," Elmore said.

Boordy Vineyards, a nationally recognized local winery, sits on more than 200 acres of preserved land in the Long Green Valley. The DeFord family, who has owned the farm for generations, donated an easement over the entire farm in

2001. This donation was a major event in securing the protection of a critical mass of land in the Long Green Valley. Now, more than 2,000 acres, or more than 30 percent of this scenic 7,000-acre agricultural valley are protected.

"Our decision, as a family, to preserve the farm was part of long-term planning to create the stability for planting a vineyard and for our grandchildren," Rob Deford said. "It is difficult to describe the relationship one has with the land one grows up on. The decision to preserve was easy once we found the right mechanism to use."

Baltimore County is nationally recognized for its strong local land use and preservation policies, with a thirty-year history of active preservation efforts. The first preservation easement in the county was in 1974. Shortly afterward, the county created the Urban Rural Demarcation Line, which established a clear boundary between the urban and suburban areas serviced by public water and sewer, and the area destined to retain its rural flavor. In 1975, the county created Rural Conservation Zones, including an Agricultural Preservation Zone to protect rural resources. Smith, when he served as third District County Councilman, sponsored legislation to make the Agricultural Zone more protective. This protective zone has proven to be a firm foundation upon which preservation programs could build.

The county's preserved lands, combined with its extensive system of parkland, creates a remarkable green network that stretches from the Chesapeake Bay to the Piedmont border with Pennsylvania. "These green expanses are a quality of life asset that few jurisdictions can claim," Smith said. "Reaching this 40,000 acre milestone, and striving to protect 80,000 acres demonstrates our commitment to ensuring this legacy of the land for future generations."



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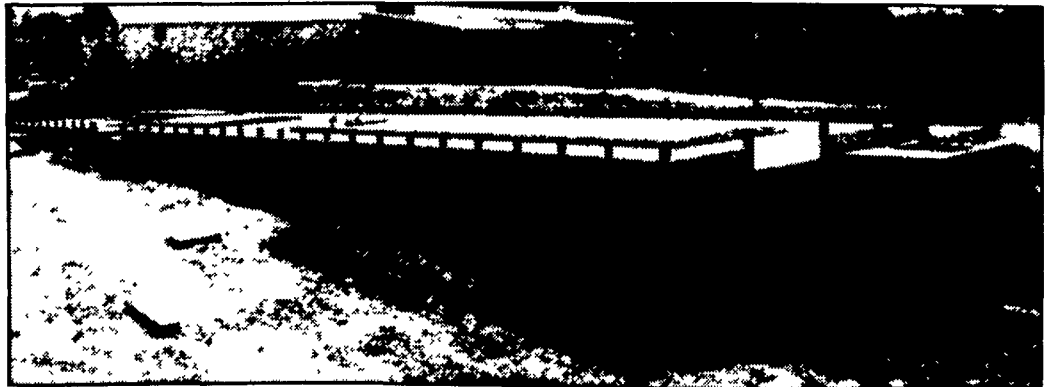
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