

Land Trusts

1. What is a Land Trust?

Land Trusts permanently protect natural areas by land purchase, conservation easements, and land leases. Land trusts work with landowners to achieve common goals of protecting natural areas, open space, farmland, historic sites, scenic views, and other valuable resources. Often, the primary motivation is a desire to conserve the special qualities of their land—for example, productive farm soils, scenic beauty, or valuable wildlife habitat. For some families, the estate tax advantages of conservation allow them pass on their land to the next generation. The land is preserved in perpetuity. Decisions about whether to protect a piece of private property lie with the landowners. Tax incentives and conservation programs create options that a landowner can choose to exercise.

2. What are the opportunities and requirements for land preservation in Calvert County and Maryland, what land trusts currently exist in Calvert County, and who are the contacts for more information?

County Agricultural Land Preservation Easement Programs:

The County Agricultural Land Preservation Program was established in 1978. Owners of farmland voluntarily apply for an Agricultural Preservation District (APD) designation on their property to “certify” the number of development rights they have. The benefits to the property owner are to sell the “development rights” and retain the “residual or farm value” of land, which usually includes the ability to have a farm house, and up to three lots, depending on farm size. Once a development right has been sold or subdivided, the property is locked into the APD and the owner cannot opt out. The “development rights value” plus “the residual value” can meet or exceed the market value of the land. Farmland enrolled in the county’s Agricultural Preservation District receive varied degrees of legal protection against development and often offer incentives to participating landowners for dedicating land to continue in agricultural use into the future. As of 2019 there were in total 23,972 acres of agricultural land preserved in Calvert County programs. Details about these programs can be found at the following website: [Agricultural Preservation | Calvert County, MD - Official Website](#)

Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation (MALPF) is a State-County partnership program.

MALPF’s primary purpose is to preserve productive agricultural lands and woodlands in Maryland to provide for the continuing production of food and fiber for the citizens of Maryland. The location must be outside of a 10-year water and sewer service area and must be 50 acres or larger or, if smaller, located contiguous to already preserved property. It must also have 50% or more Class I, II, and/or III soils (USA soils classification) or Woodland Group 1 and/or 2.

The Maryland Department of Agriculture, which manages this program, notes that MALPF was one of the first and leading agricultural land preservation program of its kind nationally. This program was created 1977. As of June 2016, MALPF had preserved 300,916 acres statewide, 29 percent of the

programs goal to preserve 1,030,000 acres of agricultural land by 2020. In Calvert County, 4,581 acres of farmland were preserved through MALPF as of 2019.

For more information, contact:

Maryland Agricultural Land

Preservation Foundation Program

(410-841-5860), [Maryland Ag Land Preservation](#)

Maryland Environmental Trust (MET)

The Maryland Environmental Trust (MET) is a quasi-public entity created in 1967 that is administered by the Maryland Department of Natural Resources and governed by a private Board of Directors. According to the implementing statute for MET, it was established to, “conserve, improve, stimulate, and perpetuate the aesthetic, natural, health, and welfare, scenic, and cultural qualities of the environment, including, but not limited to land, water, air, wildlife, scenic qualities, and open spaces.” The owner donates a perpetual conservation easement. A conservation easement is a legally-binding agreement that protects the land from changes that would adversely affect its conservation value, such as development like a new subdivision. The owner retains the land while relinquishing specific rights to make changes to it. The property may be transferred and sold freely, but subsequent owners are bound by the easement restrictions. Easements can be crafted to meet the mutual objectives of the landowner and the land trust. A conservation easement does not in itself give public access rights to the land. One of the most important functions of a land trust is to monitor compliance with conservation easements, making sure that the terms of the easement are met by the owner and subsequent owners, by visiting the site regularly, notifying owners if there are deviations, and if necessary, enforcing the easement in court. The benefits of this program are the owner gets a tax deduction and for estate planning. There is no deadline; however, if owner wants to donate in a particular year, they must submit by September of that year. As of December 2016, MET reported preserving 134,517 acres statewide. In Calvert County, 1,106 acres of farmland were preserved through MET as of 2019. To apply, contact MET Staff.

For more information, contact: Maryland Environmental Trust, 877-514-7900.

[Home - Maryland Environmental Trust](#)

Rural Legacy: A Partnership among State, County and local land trusts:

The Rural Legacy program was launched in 1997 and is managed by the Maryland Department of Natural Resources to provide funding to preserve large, contiguous tracts of land significant for natural resource conservation, agriculture, forestry, and environmental protection, while preserving the land base needed to support sustainable natural resource-based industries. Rural Legacy functions by creating public-private partnerships with local governments and land trusts to target the preservation of ecologically valuable properties, with focus on lands that directly impact the Chesapeake Bay and water quality of local streams and rivers. As of 2016, the State had worked

with local partners to conserve land in at least one Rural Legacy Area in every Maryland county, preserving a total of 920,694 acres. In Calvert County, 2,324 acres of farmland were preserved through the Rural Legacy Program as of 2019.

For more information on Maryland's Rural Legacy Program, call 410-260-8478, or click on this link

[Rural Legacy Home \(maryland.gov\)](#)

Local Land Trusts:

- The American Chestnut Land Trust (*founded 1986*) is a local not-for-profit 501(c)(3) organization promoting land conservation that provides environmentally sustainable public access to preserved properties for educational, scientific, recreational and cultural purposes. The American Chestnut Land Trust protects the natural and cultural resources of the Parkers Creek and Governors Run watersheds.

For information, contact:

American Chestnut Land Trust (ACLT)

P.O. Box 2363

Prince Frederick, MD 20678

Phone: 410-414-3400

Fax: 410-414-3402

info@acltweb.org

- Battle Creek Nature Education Society (*incorporated in 1985, renamed Calvert Nature Society in 2014*) is dedicated to the protection and preservation of Calvert County's natural heritage and the creation of an environmentally literate and aware community. They provide opportunities for appreciation and understanding of our natural world through their outreach initiatives and in support of the mission of the Calvert County Natural Resources Division. The Society is a 501(c)3 organization (Copyright Calvert Nature Society).

For information, contact:

Battle Creek Nature Education Society

PO Box 122

Port Republic, MD 20676.

Email: CypressSwamp@co.cal.md.us

410-535-5327

info@calvertparks.org

<http://www.calvertparks.org/>

- Cove Point Natural Heritage Trust (*founded in 1994*) is a non-profit trust in Calvert County, comprised of three member groups: the Sierra Club, the Maryland Conservation Council, and

Dominion Cove Point LNG (one of the nation's largest liquefied natural gas (LNG) plants). The Trust's mission is to preserve and protect ecologically sensitive sites in southern Maryland through land conservation and acquisition, research, and environmental education.

For information, contact:

Cove Point Natural Heritage Trust
11785 Clifton Drive
P.O. Box 336
Lusby, MD 20657
410-394-1300

cpnht@comcast.net and www.covepoint-trust.org

- Southern Calvert Land Trust (*founded 2001*) is located in southern Calvert County and was organized and registered based on residents' concerns about the rapid pace of development in that area of the county. The Trust's mission is to acquire large or small parcels of land to preserve ecologically important open space and wetlands. As of 2017, SCLT had preserved more than 130 properties, totaling 52 acres. Most of the properties are small unbuildable lots which were donated.
- The Natural Resources Article of the Maryland Annotated Code (Section 3-203) authorizes the Trust to accept land as gifts. The deed is recorded with the Clerk of the Circuit court in the local jurisdiction where the property is located. Land donated to the Trust can never be sold, transferred, or given away, except to another land trust.

For information, contact:

Southern Calvert Land Trust, P.O. Box 1745, Lusby, MD 20657, 410-326-6669

sclt@hughes.net

- Calvert Farmland Trust (*founded 1994*) buys farmland to resell for agriculture purposes, accepts land donations for tax purposes, maintains current farmland registry to connect farms with operators, and accepts easements on property dedicated to agriculture.
- Calvert Farmland Trust has depended on selling Transferable Development Rights from a farm, then reselling the farm at the farm value to a conservation buyer.

For information, contact:

Calvert Farmland Trust, P.O. Box 3448, Prince Frederick, MD 20678, (410) 414-5070

calvertfarmlandtrust@gmail.com

For more information, please contact Ron Marney (410-535-1600 X2336) or

Ron.Marney@calvertcountymd.gov