



**Summary Highlights of**  
**“Working Lands in the Washington Metropolitan Area:  
A Forum to Discuss the Future of Agriculture in the WMA”**  
**held**  
**April 12<sup>th</sup>, 2005**  
**at the**  
**Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments**



Sponsored by the Metropolitan Washington Green Infrastructure Demonstration Project – a partnership between the National Park Service, National Capital Region and the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments.



## Table of Contents

Working Lands Forum Attendees List.....	2
Forum Summary and Highlights.....	4
Welcome and Introductions .....	4
Opening Remarks.....	4
Past and Present State of Agriculture in the WMA .....	5
Agriculture’s Economic Contribution to the WMA .....	6
Government Support for Local & State Agriculture Programs .....	7
Surviving in the Urbanizing Landscape- A Farmer’s Perspective.....	9
Eating and Drinking Local - Farmers’ Markets, Wineries and Restaurateurs in the WMA .....	12
Agriculture in Transition: Recent Trends in the Hudson Valley .....	14
WMA Growth Trends and a Regional “Reality Check”-How Do Regional Growth Projections Play into the Reality of Preserving Agriculture as Green Infrastructure? .	15
Roundtable Discussion – How Do We Better Support and Ensure the Future of Agriculture in the WMA? .....	15
Post-Forum Evaluation .....	18
List of Acronyms .....	19

## Working Lands Forum Attendees List

First Name	Last Name	ORGANIZATION
Jennifer	ABEL	Arlington's Farmers Market
Anne	AMBLER	Sierra Club, Montgomery County Group
Andrea	ARNOLD	Celebrate Rural Montgomery
Sam	AUGUSTA	Community Harvest
John	BAILEY	Smart Growth Alliance
Jim	BAIRD	Izaak Walton League
John	BELLNCULA	Tarara Vineyard
Jeri	BERC	US EPA
Karl	BERGER	MWCOG
Tim	BLASER	Frederick County
Wade	BUTLER	Butler's Orchard
Melanie	CHOUKAS-BRADLEY	Mont. County Agricultural Reserve
James	CONRAD	Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation
Gray	COYNER	Fauquier County
Jeremy	CRISS	Mont. County Dept. of Economic Dev.
Judy	DANIEL	M-NCPPC Montgomery County
Lynn	DESAUTELS	US EPA
Paul	DESJARDIN	MWCOG
Marrise	DORSEY	USDA/CSREES/ECS
Steve	DRYDEN	Rural Montgomery
Regina	DYSON	Community Harvest
Lee	EPSTEIN	Chesapeake Bay Foundation
Glenn	EUGSTER	National Park Service
Colby	FERGUSON	Frederick County Office of Economic Development
Warren	FLINT	Five E's Unlimited
Ariele	FOSTER	Community Harvest
John	GALLI	MWCOG
Patrick	GIGLIO	Loudoun County Department of Planning
Ted	GRAHAM	MWCOG
Ellen	GRAY	Equinox Resturaunt
Royce	HANSON	George Washington University
David	HEISLER	heisler farm/comus market
Anne	HIGGANS	Loudoun County Department of Economic Development
Jeffrey L.	HINKLE	National Capitol Planning Commission
Warren	HOWELL	Loudoun Economic development
Christine	HOWARD	MWCOG
Mark	ISRAEL	Query Mill Farm
Laurie	JONES	Freelance
Skip	KAUFFMAN	Accokeek Foundation
Judith	LABELLE	Glynwood Center

Brian	LECOUTEUR	MWCOG
Bob	LEE	Virginia Outdoors Foundation
Judith	LESSER	Query Mill Farm
Kate	LEVENDOSKY	MWCOG
Lori	LYNCH	University of Maryland
Shawn	MALONEY	University of Kansas/University of Maryland
Keith	MENCHEY	Maryland Department of Agriculture
Andrea	MERRIT	The Capital Area Food Bank
Lavell	MERRIT	National Capital Parks-East
Bruce	MERTZ	Future Harvest-CASA
Nadejda	MISHKOVSKY	ICMA
Jason	MURRAY	Loudoun County Extension
Katherine	NELSON	Loudoun Economic development
Hiu	NEWCOMB	Potomac Vegetable Gardens
Lou	NICHOLS	Loudoun County Dept. of Economic Dev.
Alyce	ORTUZAR	
Chip	PLANCK	Wheatland Vegetable Farm
Nina	PLANCK	Farmers Market Specialist
David	PLUMMER	Mont. County Soil Conservation District
Nora	POUILLON	Resturaunt Nora
Bernadine	PRINCE	FRESHFARM Markets
Jocelyn	RICHGELS	Rural Policy Research Institute
Sarah	TAYLOR ROGERS	Maryland Center for Agn-Ecology, Inc
Mark	ROSE	Natural Resources Conservation Service
Pam	SAUL	Rolling Acres Farm
Tom	SLEIGHT	VA Dept. of Ag & Consumer Serv.
Errol	SMALL	Maryland Department of Agriculture
Jac	SMIT	The Urban Agriculture Network
Marilynn	SMITH	League of Women Voters
Jane	STORRS	Maryland Dept of Agriculture
Joe	TASSONE	MD Dept. of Planning
Tanya	TOLCHIN	Jug Bay Market Garden
Susan	TOPPING	Capitol Area Food Bank
Phong	TRIEU	MWCOG
Susan	VANEPPS	Loudoun County Economic Development
Christine	VATOVEC	MWCOG
Anne	HARVEY YONKERS	FRESHFARM Markets

## Forum Summary and Highlights

### Welcome and Introductions



Mr. Brian LeCouteur (MWCOG) welcomed all participants to the forum, and described the importance of agriculture and working lands as part of the “Green Infrastructure” of the Washington Metropolitan Area (WMA). For the past four years, MWCOG has been working in partnership with the National Park Service (NPS) on a regional Green Infrastructure Demonstration Project to bring to light the importance of open-space to the WMA. Mr. LeCouteur introduced Mr. Glenn Eugster (NPS) to provide more background information on this project.

Mr. Eugster shared with the participants that the purpose of the Green Infrastructure Project began as a way to conduct mapping projects to help quantify and improve forest cover and restoration potential in the region. In the 1990’s, President Clinton’s Council on Sustainable Development characterized green infrastructure as the nation’s life support system. Open and green spaces provide food, habitat, jobs, and community, as well as a sense of place, history, culture and scenery. Agriculture is an important part of this green space, and NPS is particularly interested in learning how to preserve and protect farmlands because of the rapid pace at which they are being lost.

### Opening Remarks

Ms. Sarah Taylor-Rogers (Maryland Center for Agro-Ecology, Inc.) provided opening remarks to help shape the direction of our efforts. Ms. Taylor-Rogers remarks were mostly related to Maryland agriculture because that is the area in which she works and is most knowledgeable. Overall, there are 6.2 million acres of land in the state of Maryland, with 4.28 million of these acres in privately owned estates including farms and forests. Each year, 37,000 acres in Maryland are lost to development. In response to this annual loss, a goal of protecting 20% of Maryland’s land has been established, with the greatest emphasis on protecting farmland, forests and open space.

Currently, the options available to landowners in Maryland for protecting their land comes in the form of state assisted easements, and the option to sell development rights. Funding for these land preservation programs is not constant, and recently the funding has been taken away to help balance the state’s budget. Land preservation options on the local scale which do not depend on state funding include agricultural preservation zoning (including cluster zoning), and county purchased easements and transfer of development rights. These local programs have developed their own budgets for open space preservation, but this creates a challenge for raising funds. Other challenges include preserving the “right locations”, for example those areas that are more environmentally sensitive, and trying to use land regulations to thwart development until the land can be preserved. Another challenge is the lack of consistency between counties when defining preservation goals and strategies. The most constant challenge is trying to fit the needs of the agricultural community with

the demands of development, for example water shortages force the issue of using water sources for houses or for agriculture.

With anticipated population growth on the order of 2 million additional residents in the next 25 years, it will be necessary for us to begin working together to help preserve and protect agricultural lands, and the environmental, social and economic benefits that agriculture brings to the WMA. Ms. Taylor-Rogers opened the forum by concluding her remarks with the statement, “Today is a great beginning.”

## **Past and Present State of Agriculture in the WMA**

Ms. Christine Vatovec (MWCOG) presented information about the past and present state of agriculture in the region to provide background information on where agriculture has been in the past 50 – 100 years, and to help us all get a sense of what may be the future of agriculture in the WMA. Ms. Vatovec’s presentation was based upon a database of agricultural statistics compiled over the past few months as part of the Green Infrastructure Demonstration project. This database was created by using Agriculture Census data provided by the National Agricultural Statistic Survey (NASS) of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). Data was presented for the WMA (Frederick, Montgomery, Prince George’s counties in Maryland; Loudoun, Fairfax, Arlington, Prince William counties Virginia), as well as for four counties beyond the WMA (Washington and Charles counties, Maryland; Fauquier and Stafford counties, Virginia) which will likely see many of the effects of suburban development pressure over the coming years as the regional population grows.

Highlights of the presentation included:

- Current definition of a farm – any establishment selling \$1,000 or more per year of agricultural products. Recent additions particularly important to this region include the inclusion of horse operations with 5 or more horses or ponies (1995), and the addition of Christmas tree farms, maple syrup producers, and woody crop establishments (1997)
- Number of farms declined steadily from 1899 (~13,000 farms) – 1997 (<4,000 farms), but the number of farms increased between 1997-2002. This increase reflects a decrease of “mid-size” (50-499 acre) and “large” (500+ acre) farms, and a corresponding increase of “small” (1-49 acre) farms.
- Farm acreage steadily decreased from 1899-2002, with a loss of over a million acres reported.
- Average farm size has fluctuated over the years, and currently rests at 109 acres in WMA, and 144 in the four counties beyond the WMA.
- In 2002, the market value of crop and livestock production (excludes horse boarding facilities) + horticultural sales + orchard sales = ~\$260 million in WMA, and ~\$121 million beyond WMA. This represents only a small portion of the actual economic contribution of agriculture to the region’s economy, which is estimated at \$1 billion/year. The difference could be attributed to lack of data on equipment, applications, vineyards, horses, and agritourism. For example, Montgomery County, MD alone reports an annual economic contribution of the county’s agriculture at \$251 million, with the industry supporting 10,000 jobs for residents.
- There has been a steady decrease in corn and wheat acreage, and a sharp increase in soybean acreage.
- Traditional livestock have seen a major decline in the past 50 years (e.g. 6,500 dairy farms in 1950 – 235 dairy farms in 2002). The number of dairy farms has declined so drastically that there are now more farms with sheep than dairy cows.

- The number of horses in the region are severely under-reported. For example, Montgomery County, MD reports having over 8,000 horses, while the census reports ~2,400 horses in the county.
- The percent of women who are principal farm operators has increased during the past 15 years from 12% (1987) to 23% (2002).
- The average age of farmers in the region is ~57 years.

Data was also presented that was compiled to determine the current state of “boutique” agriculture – specifically the number of farmer’s markets, pick-your-own farms and vineyards in the region. These data were collected from on-line searches, and is available with interactive maps at [www.mwcog.org/environment/green/agriculture](http://www.mwcog.org/environment/green/agriculture).

- There are currently 87 known farmer’s markets in the WMA. These markets provide opportunities for farmers to connect with consumers to determine new products of interest to consumers, and to help urban and suburban dwellers learn the importance of regional/local agriculture.
- There are currently 34 known pick-your-own farm enterprises in the region, providing opportunities for urban and suburban residents to get out and experience the agricultural landscape.
- Twenty-two vineyards dot the regional landscape, and bring in a large economic contribution through sales and tourism dollars.
- Summary: three most important things to remember about regional agriculture:
  - 1) agriculture is continuing to change and diversify in the WMA as seen by a shift in crops to soybean production, an increase in the number of small farms, and a decrease in total farm acreage
  - 2) there is a need to compile and more fully integrate regional agricultural data so that we may better understand current conditions, emerging trends and economic contributions to the WMA
  - 3) the forecasted growth in population will place greater stress on farmland, but may also create new opportunities for diversification, rural innovation and the marketing of local farm products

## **Agriculture’s Economic Contribution to the WMA**

Ms. Lori Lynch (Associate Professor of Agricultural and Resource Economics, University of Maryland) reported on the agricultural contribution to the regional economy, beginning with the fact that agriculture provides \$5 billion annually to the state of Maryland (3% of Maryland’s gross state production), and employs 62,700 workers. By expanding the definition of agriculture to include forestry, fisheries, wholesale, and retail the total employment increases to 350,618 jobs (16% of Maryland’s total workforce).

Highlights of the presentation include:

- The leading commodities in the state are broilers (31%), nursery products (18%), and dairy (12%)
- Land value has increased 4 times since 1950 – this increased is caused by development speculation pressures, but it allows farmers to stay in business even if sales are not good.
- The majority of farm income is coming from off-farm sources: nationally in 1960 50% of income was from off-farm, today it is 88%. In Maryland, the current figure is 70%.
- Agriculture depends on a robust rural economy.

- There has been a decrease in the number of farm employees at a faster rate than the decrease in the number of farms, and an increase in the number of employees in agricultural services and supplies.
- Economic impact of agriculture is not limited to its own activities – each dollar generated or person employed – stimulates more income and more jobs. This increased earning or employment effect is the “multiplier effect”.

## Government Support for Local & State Agriculture Programs



This panel discussion was moderated by Mr. Karl Berger (MWCOG). Each panelist was given the opportunity to introduce themselves and briefly share information about current programs in their jurisdiction to help preserve and promote agriculture in the WMA.

- Tim Blaser (Frederick County Planning Department) is the Land Preservation Program Administrator for Frederick County. He has worked in the Department since 1981 in a variety of capacities, mainly with the Comprehensive Planning Section. Tim has administered the Agricultural Land Preservation Program since 1985.
- Jeremy Criss (Montgomery County Department of Economic Development) is currently the Agricultural Services Division Manager for Montgomery County. He manages the County’s Farmland Preservation (PDR and TDR) and agricultural marketing programs. These programs support the viability of agriculture in preserving farmland for future generations while also providing new marketing outlets for farms selling their products.
- Bob Lee (Executive Director, Virginia Outdoors Foundation and former County Administrator in Clarke and Fauquier Counties, Virginia) is the Executive Director of the Virginia Outdoors Foundation, a semi-autonomous state agency created in 1966 by Act of the General Assembly to promote land conservation and hold conservation easements in trust for the citizens of Virginia. The Foundation holds more conservation easements than any other private or public land trust in the United States.
- Lou Nichols (Loudoun County Department of Economic Development) is the Senior Agricultural-Rural Economy Manager for Loudoun County. Currently the Agricultural Development Officer (ADO) of Loudoun County, he serves as principal advisor to the Board of Supervisors and senior county staff for rural issues.



- Mark Rose (USDA NRCS) is currently the Assistant State Conservationist for conservation programs, Resource Conservation and Development, Watersheds and Small Farms with the USDA NRCS in Maryland.
- Tom Sleight (VA Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services) is currently the Director of Marketing for the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services. He works to help enhance marketing options for farmers, and believes that a large contribution on the part of state agencies in helping farmers to teach farmers to think like entrepreneurs.
- Joe Tassone (MD Department of Planning) is currently Director of Resource Conservation Planning. He developed Maryland's regulations for State Certification of county agricultural land preservation programs, developed guidelines for easement valuation under Maryland's Rural Legacy Program, and was acting chair of Maryland's legislative Task Force to Study the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation.

*Panel Dialogue:*

Q1) Which is more critical to the future of agriculture in the region: marketing or land preservation?

- Criss: a critical mass is needed first before you can support the industry of agriculture. Once this critical mass is reached, then there are several tools available to help preserve lands (easements, services from Cooperative Extension, Soil and Water Conservation Districts, etc.). Currently in Montgomery County, MD 63,000 acres of farmland are protected with a goal of 70,000 acres by 2010.
- Lee: without land, there is nothing available to grow upon – you need to protect the land base first.
- Blaser: both are necessary components, a land base is essential, and it is important to prevent fragmentation of land so that all that is protected are small, unconnected islands preserved at very high costs in a sea of developed lands.
- Nichols: rural communities can't function in an urban zoned area. Zoning needs to be reasonable, and needs to be determined with reason in order to support a rural economy (e.g. spreading manure, moving equipment on roadways, etc.). It is hard to farm if you are surrounded by subdivisions.
- Lee: the Virginia state income tax credit is not providing a big incentive for farmers.
- Sleight: from the perspective of a farmer what is more important, land or marketing? To an apple producer in Winchester, VA, the choice is to continue growing apples or sell for \$80,000/acre. We need to find better incentives and better marketing for farmers to ensure that they'll stay on the land.
- Blaser: when you have a goal of preserving 100,000 acres of farmland, the key is the number of people interested in easement/protection programs. We need to increase the price of incentives to preserve the land and we have a short window in which to operate.

Q2) How do you judge when your programs are working well?

- Tassone: A question to ask is "How are the preserved lands laid out/clustered within the region?" Islands surrounded by subdivisions aren't the best approach. The distribution of preserved land is as important as the acreage preserved.
- Rose: One key is to ask what types of financial assistance is directly available to farmers from your program.

*Audience Questions:*

Q3) Is there priority lands to preserve? How do you choose the lands and are they environmentally sensitive areas with valuable resources?

- Criss: in Montgomery County's Agricultural Reserve there are two focused areas of preservation. The Department of Natural Resources helps to delineate the most important lands to preserve.

Q4) Are there wholesale markets available to help get products into the local area?

- Nichols: Yes, there are wholesale markets available but farmers are preferring to sell at farmer's markets. There is a need to get farmers better networked with farmer's markets, restaurants, etc to get the farmers better prices.

Q5) In regard to marketing opportunities and state lines (Maryland and Virginia), do we need a regional marketing system?

- Blaser: traditional agriculture (peanuts, tobacco) is transitioning to other crops in the region (consumer agriculture) and with this transition there is a need to address competition.
- Audience member comment: there is a need for an analysis to determine what the DC "urban constellation" needs and how we can get it to them locally.
- Blaser: other regions have been successful with "fresh and local" campaigns that teach consumers that local foods are "good for you and good for us."

Q6) Direct sales from farmers are a good approach for local agriculture, but has this been done at the institutional level? Are there opportunities for farmers to sell to regional institutions (schools, etc)?

- Nichols: institutional markets do not provide as much income and incentive to farmers. Farmer's markets are where you can currently get top dollar. Collective demand could increase the potential for selling to institutions.

Audience member comment: each jurisdiction has good policies in place to encourage land preservation via tax credits, easements, etc. How can these programs be adapted so they are useful "across the river" (across the Maryland – Virginia state line)? We need to work together if we want regional/local agriculture to continue.

### **Surviving in the Urbanizing Landscape- A Farmer's Perspective**



This session was moderated by David Plummer (District Manager, Montgomery County Soil Conservation District). Mr. Plummer opened this

session by thanking MWCOG for putting together this forum as a first effort in helping to promote regional agriculture. Mr. Plummer continued by saying that the farmers are the people who will make things happen on the landscape, so this is where we need to start and these are the folks we need to listen to since, in the end, they will determine how much land is preserved. Each panelist was given the opportunity to introduce themselves before beginning the panel dialogue.

- Wade Butler (Butler's Orchard) spoke on behalf of Butler's Orchard, one of the area's most prominent pick-your-own farms. The farm hosts 10,000 school children each year, was established 50 years ago, is family owned and operated, owns 280 acres of land and rents another 250 acres. The farm employs 6 full-time workers and 25 seasonal workers (the farm is proud to be the first employer for many area high school students). The farm is a part of Montgomery County's Agricultural Reserve.
- Gray Coyner (Fauquier County) is a member of the Piedmont Environmental Council which helps to preserve land and promote conservation. Mr. Coyner was a 7<sup>th</sup> generation farmer in Virginia, working 3,000 acres of land until recently.
- Tanya Tolchin (Jug Bay Market Garden) and her husband Scott Hertzberg started their farm four years ago as a part-time venture, and have no previous farming experience. The couple works full-time off the 6 acre farm located in Prince George's County, MD. They are surrounded by a rapidly changing landscape, having converted their own land from an old tobacco farm to now being certified organic vegetable producers. Jug Bay Market Garden has a small Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) farm, and sells produce at the Bowie Farmer's Market. Their motivation for starting a farm was realizing that the average meal travels 1,000 miles from farm to plate, and that it doesn't taste good. Farming for themselves feels good.
- Hiu Newcomb (Potomac Vegetable Gardens) operates her farm with the help of a daughter and friend. The farm has two distinct locations with a total of 25 – 30 acres of land. One of the locations is in the Tyson's corner area and in the 1960's the area was all open space and farmland. Today the farm is surrounded by development, and neighboring property has sold for \$500,000 per acre! The farm recently sold some of its land in Charles County, VA to a new beginning farmer and sold an easement on the property to reduce the price so the farmer could afford the property. Part of the land of Potomac Vegetable Farm has cluster zoning for a co-housing community, with 20 acres of surrounding land preserved. The farm operates a CSA, road side stand, sells to local restaurants and participates in several farmer's markets.
- Chip Planck (Wheatland Vegetable Farm) has been farming full-time for 25 years. The farm sells at 13 producer-only farmer's markets. Chip believes that agriculture is a demand-driven sector of the economy, and that farmer's markets in the region are improving, while processing opportunities and sales to restaurants are still in their infancy. Part of the farm acreage has been zoned for cluster development, and the rest of the acreage is under a conservation easement.
- Pam Saul (Rolling Acres Farm) helps operate her family's horse farm and show stables. All the hay consumed by the horses is produced on-site. The farm does no advertising, but rather relies on their reputation to be spread word-of-mouth to new customers. Many of the area children who have been involved in the farm have gone on to become veterinarians and trainers.

*Panel dialogue:*

Q1) Policies are not always helpful to farmers. Can you describe an instance when this has been true for you?

- Coyner: 25 – 40% of the cost of production is attributed to policy through regulations! Farmers are active participants in policy making, and they have to be because many of the policy makers do not know first-hand the applications of the regulations. For example, a person who had been writing regulations for water troughs for several years was on a farm

tour and upon seeing a water trough, announced “So that’s what I’ve been working on for all these years!”

- Butler: it is important for policy makers to work with farmers and to receive feedback on regulations from farmers. This approach has worked at Butler’s in regards to deer issues and pesticide regulations.
- Saul: many of the representatives do not know where farmers are located in their jurisdictions, and some don’t realize that there are even farmers still surviving in the region.
- Newcomb: the use of agricultural districts has been good for farmers, and requires a minimum of 25 acres. These lands are taxed for agricultural use.

Q2) Under current development pressures, how are you able to survive?

- Coyner: many farmers are not surviving and have gone out of business, including Mr. Coyner himself. Loudoun County, VA was #1 in state dairy production, and now it has only two dairy farms remaining. Traditional agriculture requires a large land base, and many policy makers do not listen to this perspective, which is very scary to farmers. A particular topic that may cause problems in this area in the future is the availability of water for farmlands. Currently, people choose to buy bottled water for drinking, and the cost can be calculated to \$256/barrel. Compare that to the \$50/barrel that oil currently costs – and we complain about the cost of oil! What will happen when we have to buy water?

Q3) There is a need to help traditional farmers maintain their land base, but niche farmers and market gardens are important too. What opportunities exist for these farmers to work together?

- Tolchin: Jug Bay Market Garden relies on traditional farmers for equipment and supplies, and supplements their CSA shares with melons and other foods that other local farms grow (these foods are distributed separately to customers so they know that the melons, etc are from a different local farm). In this way, the traditional farmers and niche farmers need each other.
- Planck: there are opportunities for “land intensive” farms to buy mulches, etc from “land extensive” farms (dairy and beef operations).

Q4) What else can the government do to help provide assistance to farmers? For example, with health insurance and labor housing needs.

- Coyner: there is a labor shortage for farming. The work is hard and requires long hours, six or seven days a week, from 6:00 am until dark. There aren’t many people willing to do this kind of work.
- Newcomb: college students provided a lot of labor during the summer months, but housing the students becomes a problem and causes a shift to off-farm help and part-time help. It is possible to find part-time help because people love being on the farm, and this type of help provides an excellent opportunity for farmers to educate consumers and provide community outreach.
- Tolchin: agricultural agents are a tremendous resource and they are in very little demand. It would be helpful to have a discussion on how to control stumbling blocks for farmers, such as equipment costs and health care.
- Butler: farmers are always watching the bottom line, and the costs of health care, etc are very important in this picture. Food in America is very cheap, so the bottom line is that farmers are caught between high production costs and low retail value of food.
- Saul: there is a need for laborers who have knowledge. The labor force has dried up, and many kids today don’t know how to manage horses. A further problem is that the horse industry is characterized as a high risk business, and it is very difficult to get health

insurance (\$500-700/person/month). Ms. Saul's sister is a world-class rider, and she has no insurance because of the cost, so one injury could be devastating for the farm business.

*Audience questions:*

- Q5) How can we create linkages so that farmers can sell to regional institutions?
- Planck: school cafeterias no longer have facilities for preparing fresh food. Also, institutional demands are high and require large scale constant production.
- Q6) How do we get the land into the hands of people who have the skills to operate a farm?
- Coyner: there are a number of programs available to help transfer land to new farmers. The Virginia Ag Vitality program, farmer link program, and Virginia Farm Bureau Federation ([www.savefarms.org](http://www.savefarms.org)) are all resources for getting land to new/beginning farmers.
  - Newcomb: farmer link programs have been successful in the Midwest. There are a number of folks who dream to have all farmland owned publicly – we need to have farmland available to everyone.

## **Eating and Drinking Local - Farmers' Markets, Wineries and Restaurateurs in the WMA**



The moderator for this session was Ellen Gray (Equinox Restaurant). Equinox restaurant buys directly from 8-10 local farmers, and advertises these farms on their menus. People are becoming educated about local agriculture and are willing to

pay to support “microregionality.” Each panelist was given the opportunity to introduce themselves and briefly share information about their connections to local agriculture.

- Jennifer Abel (Arlington Farmer's Market) is the newly appointed manager of Arlington Farmer's Market, which is in its 26<sup>th</sup> season. At the height of the season, 35 farmers will participate in the market, and there are several year-round producers. The market is a producers-only market and restricts participation to farmers within 125 miles. Data collected from 14 market farmers shows a total of \$332,668 for sales last year, \$120,000 of which came from one orchard producer alone.
- Nina Planck (Farmers Market Specialist) is the daughter of Chip Planck from the previous panel, and has been involved in several farmer's market projects, including having started the market program in London. Ms. Planck currently resides in New York City and is involved in

the market program there. Her wish list for policy makers to help farmer's markets is to provide sites for markets, road signs, and to add markets to maps.

- Nora Pouillon (Restaurant Nora) began her restaurant 26 years ago after becoming aware of U.S. agriculture's use of chemicals and poor treatment of animals. Ms. Pouillon helped establish links between restaurants and farmers, and helped many farmers become organic by providing demand for these products. She needs local farmers, and they need her as well. She believes government should make it easier for farmers to survive, for example by helping with processing – there are no longer any slaughter houses in the area.
- John Bellncula (Tarara Winery) is a winery representative for Tarara, which became established in Virginia in 1985. The vineyard is on a 475 acre estate, with 200 acres in grape production. Between 6-7,000 cases of wine are produced at Tarara each year, and hosts ~35,000 annual guests who come mainly during advertised events. Many regional wineries are in out-of-the-way locations, so people need to be brought out by marketed events, making them a “destination” and a tourist component of agriculture.
- Ann Harvey Yonkers (FRESHFARM Markets) works with five farmer's markets in the region, and in 2005 two more markets will be added. The markets are producer-only, and began with help from the American Farmland Trust. FRESHFARM Markets staff count market attendees every 30 minutes, and in 2004 90,000 people came to market. A total of 47 farmers participate in the markets, and sales total over \$5 million annually.

*Panel dialogue:*

Q1) How do restaurants and farmer's markets help to support local agriculture?

- Yonkers: the numbers tell you that farmer's markets have created an economy for local agriculture. Many chefs come to the farmer's markets each week, with 10 to 12 chefs at the Dupont Circle Market alone. The farmer's market acts as a “midwife”, by creating the link between supply and demand.
- Pouillon: chefs have an influence on what farmers grow by creating demand for certain items, such as arugula and heirloom tomatoes. Farmers can ask a premium price for these items because chefs can not get them in a regular supermarket. Chefs provide direction for what farmers should grow, and should expect to pay the premium price for these items. Restaurants also help promote local farms by listing them in their menus.
- Planck: farmers also learn a great deal from consumers about what they want and how they are cooking the items. The conversation works both ways in that farmers also educate chefs about new products. Farmer's markets provide a great outlet for farmers, for example in the Hudson Valley in New York, there is a 1,000 acre, 3<sup>rd</sup> generation family farm that sells 95% of its goods wholesale which accounts for 5% of its profit. The other 5% of the farm's sales are at a farmers market, which accounts for 95% of the profit.

Q2) Where do wineries fit into this picture? Can wineries sell at local markets?

- Bellncula: wineries can obtain permits to sell at farmer's markets, though there are tight regulations on this trade. Wineries and vineyards play an important role in contributing to the scenic role of agriculture and tourism.

Q3) What are the constraints on farmer's markets, and what quality standards exist at markets?

- Abel: no cooked foods are allowed at markets, space is a constraint – both for farmers and for customer parking. The application for producers to sell at market is quite onerous (12 pages long). As for standards, many markets are “producer-only” (farmers can sell only items that they grew themselves) and market administrators make farm visits to verify that all goods are produced on-farm.

- Planck: Some other standards that some markets try to stick with pertain to the “Organic” vs. “Non-certified Organic” issue. Many farmers grow without the use of hormones, antibiotics, and use pasture grazing techniques that are more natural. Furthermore, no dyes are allowed in foods to make them look more appealing, no high fructose corn syrup is allowed, etc.

Q4) What can policy makers do to help?

- Yonkers: provide sites for markets that have electricity, make the permit process easier/streamlined, protect small farms by relieving the burden of the organic certification process. Realize that nutrition, education, environment, etc are all coming together around food.

*Audience questions:*

Q5) How do you make connections to lower income people?

- Gray: “Operation Frontline” is one program that teaches low-income people how to cook a nutritious meal from fresh foods while on a budget.
- Pouillon: we need to change the mindset of people in the U.S. Food here is too cheap, no one respects food and the production of food, but by spending extra money on healthy, fresh foods you save money by not needing the doctor.

Audience comment: We need to break down barriers to low income residents to help bring them to the farmer’s market. Most farmer’s markets accept Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) and other food stamps, but we need to be able to use these stamps across borders (DC/MD/VA).

### **Agriculture in Transition: Recent Trends in the Hudson Valley**

Ms. Judith LaBelle (Glynwood Center, Cold Spring, NY) presented information about the state of agriculture in the Hudson Valley of New York, an area that is undergoing similar transitions to the WMA. The Hudson Valley is comprised of 10 counties from Albany to New York city, and encompasses 1,000 square miles of farmland. Agriculture is important to the aesthetics and ecology of the area. Ninety-nine percent of the farms in the valley are family owned, and most farms have avoided industrial agriculture. Farms in the valley produce 20% of the state’s vegetables.

Changes that are occurring in the valley appear to follow a pattern in shifting from dairy farms to hay producers, and finally to “horses and houses”. The challenges that agriculture faces include a loss of farm land base, a lack of understanding by local officials of what they are doing to undermine local agriculture, concentration in corporate-size farms that puts pressure on prices, “cheap food”, and pressures on “farmers in the middle” – they are too small for subsidies, but too big for niche markets.

The opportunities for local agriculture include concern consumers have about health, food security issues (the further food travels, the greater risk there is – whether intentional or not), cost of oil, recognition of other values of agriculture (environmental, aesthetic values), and growing interest in the taste of foods.

How can we keep farming viable? By educating consumers and local officials about the value of food and local agriculture, by recreating infrastructure (e.g. slaughterhouses) to support local

farms, by encouraging beginning farmers, and by believing that it is important to make agriculture an important part of the community. We all vote with our fork in each food choice we make for ourselves.

### **WMA Growth Trends and a Regional “Reality Check”-How Do Regional Growth Projections Play into the Reality of Preserving Agriculture as Green Infrastructure?**

Mr. Paul Desjardin (MWCOG) provided background information on the regional planning process, and MWCOG’s role as an advisor to its member jurisdictions. Mr. Desjardin also presented data pertaining to regional growth trends over the past several years, as well as growth projections for the next 25 years.

Overall, the region is expected to increase the number of job opportunities by 50% over the next 25 years, and the population will increase by almost 2 million people. The fastest rates of growth are anticipated in the region’s outer suburbs where land costs are cheaper, and where agriculture still exists. The key to protecting open spaces and agricultural land will be to direct the new growth and development to accommodate these people into areas that are already developed, and particularly near existing transit stations.

Local officials in the metropolitan region have a long history of working together to plan for future growth to ensure that the region grows in a manner that enhances the quality of life of all area residents, promotes a strong economy and protects the region’s natural, cultural and historic resources. The key will be using this growth to the advantage of the agricultural community, mainly as new market potential.

### **Roundtable Discussion – How Do We Better Support and Ensure the Future of Agriculture in the WMA?**



Mr. John Galli (MWCOG) moderated this final session. Several of the panel members had participated in earlier panel sessions, and over the course of the discussion the new panelists provided background information about themselves, and their connections to local agriculture.

- Melanie Choukas-Bradley (Celebrate Rural Montgomery) represented "Celebrate Rural Montgomery," a year long campaign to honor the 25th anniversary of Montgomery County's nationally acclaimed Agricultural Reserve. Melanie is working to raise awareness about the Agricultural Reserve and the benefits it provides to all who live in the Washington region,



including fresh farm produce, stunning rural scenery, recreational opportunities such as hiking, cycling and horseback riding, and protection of air and water resources.

- Jeremy Criss (Montgomery County Dept of Economic Development)
- Colby Ferguson (Frederick County Office of Economic Development) is the Agriculture Specialist for the Office of Economic Development in Frederick County, Maryland. Colby is responsible for planning, marketing and managing economic development strategies to attract and grow businesses, with special attention to agriculture policies and programs that lead to the viability of the agriculture industry in Frederick County.
- Bob Lee (Virginia Outdoors Foundation)
- Lou Nichols (Loudoun County Dept of Economic Development)
- Chip Planck (Wheatland Vegetable Farm)
- Bernadine Prince (FRESHFARM Markets) is a Co-Founder and Co-Director of the FRESHFARM Markets, a nonprofit organization, dedicated to educating the public about food and farming issues, providing vital economic opportunities for farmers, and celebrating the Chesapeake Bay watershed region's agricultural heritage and bounty. Ms. Prince's partner in FRESHFARM Markets is Ann Harvey Yonkers, who participated in an earlier panel.
- Joe Tassone (Maryland Department of Planning)

*Panel dialogue:*

Q1) As the region grows, both the public and elected officials will likely have less connection to agriculture and rural life. What can we do to reverse that trend?

- Choukas-Bradley: we need to communicate to the public that farmland is worth saving.
- Prince: we need to take action to keep farming in this region economically viable. When building communities we need to design and plan for spaces that accommodate farmer's markets to keep the urban residents in touch with farmers.
- Ferguson: we can produce just about anything, but we can't produce more land. We need to get farmers to put their land in easements now so that the land base will still be available in the future. The problem is that the land is the farmer's retirement, so we need to provide incentives for farmers to preserve their land. Today, we are talking about intensive agriculture with farmers who own small chunks of land, but the large land owners are the traditional dairy/beef/corn/soy producers. They need to be included in the discussion, and they need to get better prices for their products to keep them in business.
- Tassone: we can't do everything at once to preserve agriculture, but each part depends on all the other pieces, so we need a comprehensive approach to protect farms and farmland.

Q2) What are the top three things you think we need to do to save local agriculture?

- Nichols: we need to play to business interests by producing the environment in which businesses will locate because their employees want to be there. Part of this will be connecting rural areas to the public through farmer's markets and farm tours – not to sell wine and produce, but to get people invested in the rural landscape.
- Criss: create ag-preferred tax systems. Agricultural communities have small demands on public services (police, emergency response, schools, etc.) so they *should* be taxed less. Creating awareness of agriculture is critical, and should be promoted similar to the way that central park is valued to residents of New York city. However, the greatest threat to agriculture in Montgomery County is the white-tailed deer population.
- Planck: we need to protect the land in the short-run so it will be available in the long-run. Zoning is important, but in Loudoun County zoning just flew out the window, so we need to turn to other means of protection, including showing the costs of sprawl, such as increased transportation costs for schools, etc.

- Lee: Fauquier County is underdeveloped according to projections, and the county council has taken the side of “if you plan it they will come,” so they don’t plan it! Also, conservation easements need to be forever to be effective – most easements are just for 25 years and this needs to be changed.
- Ferguson: government itself can be more creative in land preservation programs and in using cluster zoning. Also, government should lead by example and use local products to support the region.
- Coyner: agriculture is often left out of the conversation when planning is done. Have respect for farmers by not scheduling meetings in the middle of the planting season.
- Tassone: cluster development doesn’t always work – it leaves little islands of farm land surrounded by development.

Q3) Is there a need or a value in creating a regional agriculture workgroup to deal with the issues brought up today? How would you envision a workgroup or follow-up piece working together to support local agriculture?

- Nichols: we all agree there should be a follow-up, perhaps a quarterly meeting that is rotated around the area. Goals could be to create a regional farmer’s market network to enhance the viability of markets, and creating greater linkages between farmers, markets and restaurants. We also need to help farmers increase productivity through new rural innovation, as in Winchester, VA.
- Planck: What would this kind of group do? If one were formed, the core actors should be Agricultural Economic Development Offices, planners, farmer’s markets, farmers, non-profit organizations, and others. We don’t need another farmer’s group, we do need policy makers involved.
- Criss: the problem with creating large working groups from various jurisdictions is finding common themes. These themes could include the WIC issue, farmer’s markets, etc.
- Planck: marketing and regulations should be the focus, not production and not zoning issues (zoning is too county and state specific).
- Coyner: DC should work to preserve rural water, air, and land. It may not be necessary to change policy, but there should be options for development.
- Prince: funding to support local agriculture is key. One option would be a check-off box on state taxes to protect farmland. This could help get things started.

*Audience comments and meeting conclusion:*

- We need to keep meeting. Clearly government is already overworked and not arranged to handle the comprehensive issues brought up today, but MWCOG could assemble people from the local governments to create a comprehensive framework for a policy-oriented group to tackle these issues.

## Post-Forum Evaluation

<b>Category</b>	<b>Average Score (1:poor – 5:excellent)</b>	<b>Total Respondents</b>
Overall impression of the forum	4.2	28
Ease of registration	4.7	26
<b>Site and Facilities</b>		
Forum location	3.9	26
Lunch and refreshments	4.1	25
<b>General Sessions</b>		
Past and Present State of Agriculture in the WMA	3.6	26
Agriculture's Contribution to the WMA Economy	3.6	28
Government Support for Local and State Agriculture	4.0	29
Surviving in the Urbanizing Landscape – A Farmer's Perspective	4.1	28
Eating and Drinking Local – Farmer's Markets, Wineries and Restaurateurs in the WMA	4.0	29
Agriculture in Transition: Recent Trends in the Hudson Valley	3.8	28
WMA Growth Trends and a Regional "Reality Check"	4.1	25
Roundtable Discussion – How Do We Better Support and Ensure the Future of Agriculture in the WMA?	3.9	15
<b>Category</b>	<b>Percent "Yes"</b>	<b>Total Respondents</b>
Fee was reasonable	100%	28
Forum met my professional needs	76.9%	26
Forum met my expectations	84.6%	27
Interested in becoming part of regional agriculture workgroup	76.9%	26
Would consider attending similar event in the future	100%	27
Interested in DVD	40%	20

## **List of Acronyms**

ADO – Agricultural Development Officer  
CSREES – Cooperative State Research, Education and Extension Service  
CSA – Community Supported Agriculture  
DED – Department of Economic Development  
DC – District of Columbia  
ICMA - International City/County Management Association  
MD – Maryland  
M-NCPPC – Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission  
MWCOG – Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments  
NASS – National Agricultural Statistics Survey  
NPS – National Park Service  
NRCS – Natural Resource Conservation Service  
USDA – United States Department of Agriculture  
USEPA – United States Environmental Protection Agency  
VA – Virginia  
WIC - Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children  
WMA – Washington Metropolitan Area (Frederick, Montgomery, Prince George’s counties in Maryland; Loudoun, Fairfax, Arlington, Prince William counties in Virginia)