



# INTRODUCTION



## 2000-2004 ANNUAL REPORT

Our *first* annual report covers four years, 2000 through 2004; including relevant documentation, developed actions of this newly formed organization to and including the full text of our governing documents, forms and references.

Farmland protection is an important issue for all Jefferson county residents. New residents to the county from urban areas view the rural areas of the county as a desirable place to live. As more and more land disappears as a result of suburban development, the open view vanishes from the county. Agricultural land, like energy, is a non-renewable resource. The simplest way to avoid losing the landscape is to protect agriculture-related land in Jefferson County. Established by the Jefferson County Commission on July 13, 2000, the Jefferson County Farmland Protection Board works to protect important farmland throughout Jefferson County through purchases of conservation easements from willing sellers as a way to ensure that prime farmland remains available for agricultural uses.

The Farmland Protection Program provides an essence of community identity, increased quality of life through aesthetic appearance of farmlands, and maintenance of a Farmland atmosphere within the county. The Jefferson County Farmland Protection Board negotiates with eligible property owners to ensure the protection of farmland within the county. The Jefferson County Farmland Protection Board places a

conservation easement on properties that qualify for consideration under the terms established by the approved Farmland Protection Program.

A conservation easement is a flexible legal tool that enables landowners to permanently protect the natural, scenic, and historic values of their property from subdivision and development. Property owners retain full use and ownership of their land. Because an easement is perpetual, it is transferred with the property when it is sold, thereby forever protecting it. Easements have become a key tool for protecting land threatened by development and inappropriate uses around the country.

### • Properties in Progress or Closed

The Jefferson County Farmland Protection Board holds an easement on one property and will be closing on six properties by the end of 2004 totaling 919 acres for a purchase cost of \$2,708,500.00.

### • First Easement



*On December 22, 2003 through the generosity of landowners, Margaret and Eugene Olcott.*



*The Jefferson County Farmland Protection Board was able to permanently protect 94 acres of the Olcott's agricultural riverfront property along the Potomac.*

The land is protected in perpetuity by a conservation easement purchased from funds derived from donations by private individuals and the Jefferson County property transfer tax.

The Jefferson County Farmland Protection Board was established by West Virginia law enacted in 2000. This law permitted counties to levy a transfer tax in 2002 on real estate to purchase development rights from farmers who want their land protected so that it may remain in agriculture. The Olcott easement was the **first** conservation easement completed by the Jefferson County Farmland Protection Board, which has been in existence since 2000.



*The Olcotts' use a large field in the floodplain of the Potomac River to provide hay for their cattle herd.*

The easement protects the property's working farm fields, as well as its forested land, which is managed for wildlife and stretches one mile along the Potomac River in the Shepherdstown District of Jefferson County. The Potomac Conservancy works in partnership with the Jefferson County Farmland Protection Board and serves as a co-holder of this easement. The Potomac Conservancy works to protect lands vital to the health, beauty, and enjoyment of the Potomac River and its tributaries.

Jefferson County is losing viable farming operations in Jefferson County at an unprecedented rate. The protection of this large piece of productive farmland is a step towards retaining agricultural viability for decades to come. In addition to helping to ensure long-term agricultural usability of the land, the easement on the Olcott property restricts future development and protects an important buffer along the Potomac River. This buffer is critical for filtering runoff and reducing erosion and sedimentation, as well as providing scenic enjoyment from the C&O Canal National Historical Park, which is directly across the river. The protection of this vital property is not only safeguarding the agricultural tradition of this area, but it is also protecting riverside lands that are essential to the health, beauty, and enjoyment of the Potomac River.

• **2002 Farm Bill**

The 2002 Farm Bill, *Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002*, provides funding for conservation programs on working farmlands. The United States Department of Agriculture, through the Natural Resources Conservation Service awards matching funds from the 2002 Farm Bill for conservation easements.

In 2002 the Jefferson County Farmland Protection Board was awarded \$250,600 in matching funds to purchase an easement on 120 acres in the Shepherdstown District and 80 acres in the Kabletown District of Jefferson County. The Jefferson County



Farmland Protection Board will close on these two properties during 2004. In 2003 the Jefferson County Farmland Protection Board was awarded \$290,250 in matching funds to purchase an easement on a 232 acre farm in the Shepherdstown District of Jefferson County. The Board will close on this property before the end of 2004. The Land Trust of the Eastern Panhandle works in partnership with the Jefferson County Farmland Protection Board and will serve as a co-holder of these easements.

#### • Civil War Preservation Trust

As of August 2003, working with the Civil War Preservation Trust and The Land Trust of the Eastern Panhandle, the Jefferson County Farmland Protection Board has secured \$1.04 million to protect three properties totaling 386 acres in the Antietam Advance & Retreat Study Area along Engle-Molers and Trough Roads outside of Shepherdstown.

Funding for these easement purchases will come from the National Park Service, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, and the Jefferson County Farmland Protection Program. The Farmland Protection Board hopes to expand this funding opportunity to additional properties in 2004 and 2005. There are approximately 3,600 acres eligible for protection in our area under the American Battlefield Protection Program in the Antietam Advance & Retreat Study Area and the Middleway Area. Congressional funding for the American Battlefield Protection Program was \$10 million nationally for the last fiscal year. Similar funding is anticipated for the next five years depending upon Congressional action. The Land Trust of the Eastern Panhandle works in partnership with the Jefferson County Farmland Protection Board and will serve as a co-holder of these easements. ♦

### Property Schedule 2000 - 2004

Property	Acres	District	Funding				Total
			Transfer tax	NRCS	CWT	Donations <sup>1</sup>	
Olcott	94	Shepherdstown	\$100,400			\$200	\$100,600
A <sup>2</sup>	93	Shepherdstown	\$130,200	\$130,200	\$173,500		\$433,900
S. Donley	90	Shepherdstown	\$73,000	\$132,000	\$183,500		\$388,500
B <sup>2</sup>	120	Shepherdstown	\$275,000	\$150,000			\$425,000
C <sup>2</sup>	80	Kabletown	\$199,400	\$100,600			\$300,000
D <sup>2</sup>	210	Shepherdstown			\$480,000		\$480,000
E <sup>2</sup>	232	Shepherdstown	\$290,250	\$290,250			\$580,500
<b>Total</b>	<b>919</b>		<b>\$1,068,250</b>	<b>\$803,050</b>	<b>\$837,000</b>	<b>\$200</b>	<b>\$2,708,500</b>

<sup>1</sup> A donation toward the first easement of Jefferson County's Farmland Protection Program.

<sup>2</sup> Properties currently in negotiations.