



# P R E S S



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### Monday December 22, 2003 County's first farmland deal close

by DAVE McMILLION

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CHARLES TOWN, W.Va. - The Jefferson County Farmland Protection Board is about to save its first piece of farmland.

Today, a deal is expected to be finalized for the preservation of 94 acres of farmland outside Shepherdstown, W.Va., along the Potomac River, Jefferson County Commission President Jane Tabb said Sunday.

The property is referred to as the Olcott farm, Tabb said.

Under the agreement, the land will not be developed under a conservation easement that has been drawn up for the property, she said.

Tabb said the owner of the property will receive money in exchange for allowing the conservation easement to exist, although she was not sure how much money it will be.

The money will come from funds generated by a transfer tax increase that was approved by the commissioners earlier this year, Tabb said.

A property transfer tax is a tax generated when a piece of real estate is sold.

The commissioners agreed to increase the transfer tax to the maximum allowable rate of \$6.60 per \$1,000 of land value. The county was receiving about \$4.40 per \$1,000 of land value.

The tax increase was expected to generate about \$600,000 a year for farmland protection, officials said.

Roger Dailey, chairman of the Jefferson County Farmland Protection Board, declined Sunday to comment about the Olcott deal. Dailey said he did not want to talk about the conservation easement for the property until the agreement is finalized today.

In addition to the Olcott deal, two other farmland proposals are in the works, Tabb said.

Farmland protection has been gaining interest in the Eastern Panhandle, where agricultural land quickly is giving way to residential development.

About three years ago, the West Virginia Legislature passed a bill that allows counties to set up farmland protection boards. The boards now exist in Jefferson, Berkeley and Morgan counties.

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**Friday December 26, 2003**

**Farmland Preserved by Owners,  
Jefferson County**

by DAVE McMILLION

< [charlestown@herald-mail.com](mailto:charlestown@herald-mail.com) >

CHARLES TOWN, W.Va. - Steep cliffs rise up from the Potomac River to the edge of the 94-acre property, creating a stunning landscape.

Other parts of the property are made up of heavily wooded areas and prime farmland, which allowed owner Eugene Olcott and his wife, Margaret, to run a beef cattle operation.

"It doesn't get any better than this," Eugene Olcott said, describing the property he and his wife have owned for 30 years. "You sit there and you're sort of entranced with this. It's a good place to meditate."

Olcott said he has nothing against residential growth, but he said he couldn't allow the property to be dotted with homes.

"It's just too good for that," he said.

The Olcotts and two conservation groups finalized a deal on Monday that will ensure the Olcott farm will be preserved.

The Olcotts received \$100,600 in exchange for agreeing not to develop the land, said Roger Dailey, chairman of the Jefferson County Farmland Protection Board.

The 94 acres the Olcotts own is a portion of their 215-acre farm. It is situated in a bend on the Potomac River adjacent to the Cress Creek Golf and Country Club.

The land will be preserved through a conservation easement, Dailey said. No matter who owns the property, it never can be developed because the conservation easement is spelled out in the deed for the property, Olcott said.

It will be up to the Jefferson County Farmland Protection Board and the Potomac Conservancy to make sure the property is not developed, Olcott said.

It is the first piece of farmland the Jefferson County Farmland Protection Board has set aside for preservation.

With concern mounting about the amount of farmland being lost to development, the West Virginia Legislature passed a bill that allows counties to set up farmland protection boards. The boards now exist in each of Jefferson, Berkeley and Morgan counties.

Under the effort, farmers can be paid money in exchange for agreeing to save farmland under a protective easement.

Money to pay farmers can come from a variety of sources, including tax revenue and private sources, county officials have said.

The money used to preserve the Olcott property came from private donations and a county transfer tax, Dailey said.

A property transfer tax is a tax that is generated when a piece of real estate is sold.

The Jefferson County Commission agreed to increase the transfer tax to the maximum allowable rate of \$6.60 per \$1,000 of land value. The county had been receiving about \$4.40 per \$1,000 of land value.

The tax increase was expected to generate about \$600,000 per year for farmland protection, officials have said.

The Olcotts have three children, but none of them are interesting in carrying on the beef farm, Olcott said.

"The problem is, you can't make a nickel," he said.

The Jefferson County Farmland Protection Board and the Potomac Conservancy are co-holders of the easement for the Olcott farm, Dailey said.

The Potomac Conservancy is a land trust organization that is involved in a number of programs, including watershed protection programs.

There are five other farm properties in Jefferson County that are being worked on



for protection, Dailey said. The farmland protection board in Berkeley County is working on several farmland protection projects, but none have been finalized, Dailey said.

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### Farmland Protection Gets Support

Publication: The [Martinsburg] Journal

Published: 01/19/2001

Headline:

#### Farmland Protection Gets Support

Byline: John McVey, Journal Staff Writer

CHARLES TOWN – Jefferson County Commissioners have agreed in principle to financially support the Jefferson County Farmland protection Board's attempt to win a state grant to buy development easements from farmers.

"We need \$10,000 to match a \$20,000 state grant," Janet B. Stine, a member of the Farmland Protection Board, told the commissioners on Thursday. "There are federal grants available we can apply for once we get set up."

Last year [2000], state **Sen. John Unger, D-Berkley, got the state Farmland Protection Act passed by the state Legislature.**

This year Unger is going after funding to implement the bill, Stine explained.

Unger will try to get a total of \$50,000 in this year's Legislative Budget Digest dedicated to Farmland Protection boards in Jefferson, Berkeley and Morgan counties, Stine said. Berkeley and Jefferson counties would be allotted \$20,000 each, and \$10,000 to Morgan County, she said.

Commissioner Jim Ruland said there was a good opportunity for the area to get grants.

"Not many states participate (in the federal farmland protection program)," Ruland said.

"West Virginia and the Eastern Panhandle could be in good position to get federal grants. This takes vision, imagination and

initiative, and that usually is not funded (by the state)."

Commissioner Dean Hockensmith was not pleased with the request.

"When they were trying to sell this last year, they said there would be no county money involved," Hockensmith told Stine. "You said it would be all state and federal money. Now, you're coming in asking for county money."

Hockensmith voted against the resolution of support, which passed 4-1.

The grant money and local matching money would be used for the farmland protection program – buying development easements from farmers – and not for administration, Stine said.

So, she asked the commissioners for \$2,500 for administrative start-up costs.

The board's treasurer, Roger Dailey, said that the Morgan County commissioners had created a separate line item in their budget for the Morgan County Farmland Protection Board.

"That was a good signal to the public that (the Morgan County commissioners) are serious about the program," Dailey said.

"We thought \$2,500 was reasonable for a year. We don't know exactly how much it will cost. It's all new."

The board has been meeting for less than a year, studying other areas' farmland protection plans, Stine said. The board members have started to write a plan for Jefferson County, but it will take a long time because a farmland protection plan is very complicated, she said.

The board decided it wants to control its funding, Dailey said. The commissioners suggested that using a the commission as the administrator for grants, as almost all other county agencies do, would save the board a lot of money and headaches.

At his request, the commissioners recommended Dailey talk with County Administrator Leslie Smith about what other boards



and commissions do before the commissioners give them money for administrative costs, which Dailey agreed to do.

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Staff Writer John McVey can be reached at  
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### POTOMAC FARMLAND PROTECTED

Publication: The Dominion Post Newspaper  
Published: 12/24/2003  
Headline:  
POTOMAC FARMLAND PROTECTED  
Byline: THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

### Eastern Panhandle farmland saved from builders

#### Associated Press

For the bargain price of \$1,000 an acre, Jefferson County officials have permanently spared 94 scenic acres of farmland along the Potomac River from the ever-increasing threat of development.

Suburban sprawl has been consuming huge chunks of the rapidly growing Eastern Panhandle for years as people leave Baltimore, northern Virginia and Washington, D.C., for the rolling hills and cheaper land.

Between 1990 and 2000, at least 6,264 people moved into the 212 square miles of Jefferson County, and plans for new developments could bring at least that many in the next 10 to 15 years.

With land values skyrocketing and family farms vanishing, the county created a Farmland Protection Board in 2000 to preserve some of its remaining open space.

On Monday, it signed its first deal. Property owners Eugene and Margaret Olcott will receive \$94,000 for granting a conservation easement that prohibits commercial or residential development on that portion of their farmland.

"This is prime development land along the river," said board Chairman Roger Dailey.

"When it was appraised, there was a farmland value, a development value and an easement value, which is the difference between the two. The easement value was \$1.8 million. And we picked it up for \$1,000 an acre."

The Potomac Conservancy is co-holder of the easement, which allows the Olcotts to continue working the farms and forests. The couple has carved out a separate 32-acre section for themselves and some lots for their children.

The rest will be protected even after it is sold.

"The protection of this vital property is not only safeguarding the agricultural tradition of this area, but it is also protecting the riverside lands that are essential to the healthy, beauty and enjoyment of the Potomac," said Matthew Logan, president of the Potomac Conservancy.

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### SMILES AND SCOWLS

Publication: THE CHARLESTON GAZETTE  
Published: 12/27/2003  
Page: 4A  
Headline: SMILES AND SCOWLS  
Byline: NOT AVAILABLE

To Charleston councilman Harry Deitzler, who returned his entire council salary - \$1,380 - and asked that it be spent for youth programs.

To the Uglan kids of Charleston - Allyson, 6, Will, 5, and Katie, 4 - who saved gallons of pennies and donated \$150 to the Clay Center.

To Joe Wollenberger and other leaders who expanded Charleston's GoodNight - the alcohol-free, family-oriented New Year's Eve bash - to a dozen sites with 23 volunteer performing groups.

To Kroger, providing fireworks for Charleston's New Year's Eve midnight ball-drop street party.



**To Jefferson County's Farmland Protection Board, the Potomac Conservancy and farm owners Eugene and Margaret Olcott, who permanently shielded 94 acres beside the Potomac River from commercial development.**

To Charleston's main post office, which had only two of seven customer windows open at times during the holiday rush, creating long waiting lines.

To U.S. Attorney Kasey Warner, whose staff prosecuted a record number of West Virginia gun criminals in the past two years.

To United Bank and the Charleston Job Corps Center, which both received "Expect the Best" Awards from the Charleston Regional Chamber of Commerce for outstanding performance.

To retired bookkeeper Xavier Imperiale of Mercer County, a frugal miner's son who forgot to pick up \$634,000 worth of stock dividend checks - and now he plans to donate part of the recovered money to West Virginia colleges.

To generous residents who made up the loss after thieves stole holiday gifts for about 100 needy children from the Fairmont Union Mission.

To the Kanawha County school bus driver who was highly intoxicated when he arrived to pick up Grandview Elementary tots - and was suspended and forced to resign.

To John W. Yates, listed by the regional Red Cross as a 20-gallon blood donor - and H. Mike Morris, 19 gallons.

**POTOMAC FARMLAND PROTECTED**

Publication: THE CHARLESTON GAZETTE  
Published: 12/26/2003

Page: 5A

Headline:

POTOMAC FARMLAND PROTECTED

Byline:

VICKI SMITH THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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"This is prime development land along the river," said board Chairman Roger Dailey.

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The Potomac Conservancy is co-holder of the easement, which allows the Olcotts to continue working the farms and forests. The couple has carved out a separate 32-acre section for themselves and some lots for their children.

The rest will be protected even after it is sold.

"The protection of this vital property is not only safeguarding the agricultural tradition of this area, but it is also protecting the riverside lands that are essential to the health, beauty and enjoyment of the Potomac," said Matthew Logan, president of the Potomac Conservancy.



The Olcott property has mature hardwoods and abundant songbird and animal habitat, Logan said. It's also a buffer that filters runoff and reduces erosion and sedimentation.

The county paid for the land with revenue from a transfer tax increase that was approved earlier this year. The County Commission now gets \$6.60 per \$1,000 of land that is sold in the county, up from a previous rate of \$4.40. The increase is expected to generate about \$600,000 a year for the preservation efforts.

Two other farmland deals are in the works, Dailey said.

Farmland Protection Boards also operate in Berkeley, Morgan, Greenbrier and Monroe counties.

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### Eastern Panhandle farmland saved from builders

Published: [day and month unavailable] 2003

Headline: Eastern Panhandle farmland saved from builders

Byline: VICKI SMITH - THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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Private donations also helped fund the purchase, Dailey said, including money from a local artist who staged a show about the vanishing landscape of the panhandle.

Two other farmland deals are in the works, he said.

Farmland Protection Boards also operate in Berkeley, Morgan, Greenbrier and Monroe counties. ♦

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*On the Net: Potomac Conservancy:*

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