

Stafford County Purchase of Development Rights Program

JANUARY 2017

AGRICULTURE IN STAFFORD COUNTY

As Stafford County continues to grow, farm land in the rural areas of the county is shrinking. According to the 2012 US Department of Agricultural, National Agricultural Statistics Service, there were 215 farms in Stafford County, totaling 15,260 acres, compared to 233 farms totaling 19,816 acres in 2007. The average size of farms decreased from 85 acres to 71 acres. Farms greater than 500 acres in size decreased in number by 50.0%, while farms less than 10 acres in size saw the biggest increase in number, up 37.9%. These statistics are updated every five years.

Agriculture in the County includes the raising of livestock, such as cattle, hogs, sheep, horses, and chickens; planting and harvesting crops, such as corn, wheat and oats; and timbering. In addition, the County has two winery operations. The market value of products sold in 2012 was \$2,739,000.



Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) Program

Increased development pressure and higher land values in the County often entice land owners to sell their property. The Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) program offers an alternative to selling land thereby preserving the rural and open spaces in the County.

A PDR Committee was established by the Board of Supervisors in August 2007 to create a PDR program. PDR is a voluntary program that compensates property owners for restricting development on their land through recordation of a conservation easement. The property owner retains ownership of the land and may continue to reside on

property, and retain such uses as farming or timbering. Compensation to the property owner is determined by how many development rights exist on the property. A development right is equivalent to a buildable lot that can be forged from a tract of land. The PDR Committee establishes the methodology for determining a development right, as well as the monetary contribution



per development right.

The County currently pays \$25,000 per development right. Areas of hydric (wet) soils, and slopes greater than or equal to 25% are subtracted from the overall formula.

In order to qualify for the County's PDR program, the following criteria must be met:

- ◆ Property zoned A-1 or A-2, minimum 20 acres (Contiguous properties can be combined to achieve 20-acre minimum)
- ◆ Property is able to be subdivided
- ◆ Property has capability of supporting agricultural or forestal use

PDR Funding

The Board of Supervisors determines the funding for the PDR program, which can come from a variety of sources. In 2006, the Board authorized use of general fund money for a pilot program. In 2011, the Board authorized a dedicated funding source from rollback tax excess from the Land Use Program. In addition, state matching

funds through the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (VDACS) and Virginia Land Conservation Foundation (VLCF) have been utilized to leverage the County's funds.

To date, the County has spent approximately \$1.38 million in PDR funds. Matching funds in the amount of \$1.55 million

have been received from VDACS and VLCF.





Total money spent:
 \$2,942,000
 County: \$1,388,000
 VDACS: \$1,554,000
 Total properties: 6
 Total land preserved:
 447 acres
 Total Development
 Rights retired: 115

PDR Progress

Since 2009, the County has purchased the development rights on six properties, totaling 447 acres. A total of 115

development rights have been retired. Two application rounds have been held. The County will continue with

additional application rounds as funds are available. The following highlights the progress to date.

	Farms Protected	Acres Protected	Development Rights Extinguished
2007	Stafford County Board of Supervisors establishes PDR Program		
2009	1	98.83	22
2013	2	166.79	30
2014	1	38.48	11
2016	2	143.00	52
TOTAL	6	447	115

Matching funds have been provided by the Virginia Department of Agricultural and Consumer Services and the Virginia Land Conservation Foundation.

For information on potential tax benefits, please contact your tax advisor or attorney.



Additional Information

PDR Committee

Jeff Adams, Hartwood District
 Martin McClevey, Griffis-Widewater District
 John Howe, Falmouth District
 Thomas Hale, Rock Hill District
 Ben Rudasill, Aquia District
 Vacant, George Washington District
 Robin Long, Garrisonville District

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