



Rural Maryland Council

2006
Annual Report

Our Vision for Rural Maryland

In the Year 2020, Marylanders living in rural communities are achieving success in education and employment, have access to quality and affordable health care and other vital services, enjoy an environment where civic and business entrepreneurship thrives and natural and cultural resources are being sustained for future generations.

Who We Are

The Rural Maryland Council (RMC) is an independent state agency that brings together federal, state, county and municipal government officials, representatives of the for-profit and nonprofit sectors and interested citizens to identify and address the unique needs of Rural Maryland's communities. A collaborative partnership, the RMC is nonpartisan and nondiscriminatory. RMC also functions as the State Rural Development Council under the National Rural Development Partnership.

Our Vision

In the Year 2020, Marylanders living in rural communities are achieving success in education and employment, have access to quality and affordable health care and other vital services, enjoy an environment where civic and business entrepreneurship thrives, and where natural and cultural resources are being sustained for future generations.

Our Mission

Our mission is to build a bright future for Rural Maryland by helping to address its unique concerns. The Council works toward achieving effective solutions by bringing together the diverse partnerships necessary to work collectively to improve the quality of life in Rural Maryland.



The Rural Maryland Council
50 Harry S Truman Parkway
Annapolis, MD 21401
Phone: 410-841-5772
www.rural.state.md.us

What's Inside

Rural Maryland Council 2006 Annual Report

- 3** RMC Executive Board
- 4** The Chair's Message
- 5** Executive Director's Message
- 6-8** Rural Economic Development
- 9-10** Rural Health Care
- 11** Honoring Rural Achievement
- 12-13** Rural Grant Programs
- 14-15** RMC Partnerships

The Rural Maryland Council tracks key indicators to gauge the health of Maryland's rural and semi-rural regions compared to the rest of the state. Some of the most significant indicators are shown in this report. Maryland's regions, as tracked by RMC, are:

Rural and Semi-Rural

- Western: **Allegany, Garrett, Washington**
- Lower Shore: **Somerset, Wicomico, Worcester**
- Midshore: **Caroline, Dorchester, Talbot**
- Upper Shore: **Cecil, Kent, Queen Anne's**
- Southern: **Calvert, Charles, St. Mary's**
- North Central: **Carroll, Frederick, Harford**

Non-Rural

- Suburban: **Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Howard, Montgomery, Prince George's**
- Baltimore City

This report covers RMC activities from July 2005 to July 2006.

RMC 2006 Executive Board

Chair: Phyllis E. Kilby, Cecil County Commissioner (*Representing MACo*)
First Vice Chair: Annie K. Kronk, Private Consultant (*Representing MD Rural Health Association*)
Second Vice Chair: Robert M. Hutcheson, Allegany County Commissioner (*Representing MACo*)
Immediate Past Chair: Mayor William F. Eckman, Town of LaPlata (*Representing District 3*)

Executive Board

- **Robert Agee**, Annapolis City Administrator and President of Maryland Aggregates Association (*District 7*)
- **Linda N. Bambarly**, Town Administrator, Town of Berlin (*MML*)
- **Mayor Don Bradley**, Town of Hurlock (*District 5*)
- **Bonnie Braun**, Ph.D., CFCS, Extension Family Life Specialist, University of Maryland at College Park (*Director of the Maryland Cooperative Extension*)
- **R. Kevin Brooks**, Executive Director, MD Rural Development Corporation (*Nonprofits*)
- **Wayne Clark**, Executive Director (*Tri-County Council for Southern Maryland*)
- **Senator Richard F. Colburn** (*Eastern Shore*)
- **Edmund R. "Ned" Cueman**, Principal, T/A Mason-Dixon Circuit Rider (*District 2*)
- **John A. Dillman, III**, Executive Director (*Upper Shore Regional Council*)
- **Marlene B. Elliott**, State Director, DE/MD, USDA Rural Development, (*Federal Agencies*)
- **Earl "Buddy" Hance**, President/*Representing the Maryland Farm Bureau, Inc.*
- **Timothy W. Hann**, RC&D Coordinator (*Western Maryland RC&D Council*)
- **Councilman Jerry K. Hansen**, City of Aberdeen (*MML*)
- **Dave Jordan**, Executive Director, Washington County, Community Action Council (*Maryland Association of Community Action Agencies*)
- **William Kilby**, President, Kilby, Inc. (*District 4*)
- **Rebecca Love**, Research Analyst, State Office of Rural Health, Office of Health Policy and Planning (*DHMH*)
- **Delegate William Daniel Mayer**, Charles County (*Representing State at Large*)
- **Leanne Mazer**, Executive Director (*Tri-County Council for Western Maryland*)
- **Senator Thomas McLain "Mac" Middleton** (*Southern Maryland*)
- **Senator Alexander X. Mooney** (*Western Maryland*)
- **Virginia "Ginger" Murphy**, State Conservationist, USDA-NRCS (*Federal Agencies*)
- **Michael P. Pennington**, Executive Director (*Tri-County Council for the Lower Eastern Shore*)
- **Charlie Ross**, President/CEO, Garrett County Chamber of Commerce (*For-Profits*)



RMC Board: Kneeling (from left) Emily Wilson, Rebecca Love, Marlene Elliott, Dave Jordan, Phyllis Kilby (standing), Steve McHenry. Standing, from left: Mike Pennington, Tim Hahn, Dave Wilson, Kevin Brooks, Duane Yoder, Bob Agee, Jeremy West, John Dillman, Rick Weldon, Linda Bambarly, Annie Kronk, Don Bradley, Tom Loughlin, Charlie Ross

- **Stanley T. Ruchlewicz**, Economic Development Administrator, City of Westminster (*Maryland Downtown Development Association*)
- **James Rzepkowski**, Assistant Secretary, MD Department of Business and Economic Development, Rural Region (*DBED*)
- **John C. Venditta**, Associate Director, Western Maryland Public Libraries (*Maryland Association of Public Library Administrators*)
- **Delegate Richard B. Weldon, Jr.** (*Western Maryland*)
- **Delegate John F. Wood, Jr.** (*Southern Maryland*)
- **S. Patrick McMillan**, Assistant Secretary, MD Department of Agriculture, Marketing & Consumer Services (*MDA*)
- **Scott Warner**, Executive Director (*Mid-Shore Regional Council*)
- **Jeremy West**, RC&D Coordinator (*Southern Maryland RC&D Council*)
- **Dave Wilson**, RC&D Coordinator (*Eastern Shore RC&D Council*)
- **Emily Wilson**, Director, Legislative Affairs, MD Department of Natural Resources (*DNR*)
- **Duane Yoder**, President, Garrett County Action Committee (*District 1*)



A Message from the Chair Phyllis Kilby

Mrs. Kilby has served as RMC chair since January 2004. She will step down at the end of 2006

2006 will be remembered as a year when many of the initiatives that the Rural Maryland Council had worked on for years finally became a reality.

The Rural Maryland Prosperity Investment Fund, which was authorized in 2006, takes the rural focus and broadens it to include many of those quality of life matters that are often not included in legislation that addresses these issues on a

statewide basis. The Fund is expected to encourage intergovernmental cooperation and make significant, targeted investments in rural economic and community development projects across the state. (see page 6)

Our rural working landscapes have been vanishing at a rapid pace and many of the programs that have taken shape in this last year are designed to help slow and redirect that trend. MARBIDCO

(Maryland Agricultural and Resource-Based Industry Development Corporation) is a crucial part of

maintaining the vitality of resource-based industries in a rapidly changing state. (see page 8)

There are many areas that present continuing challenges – rural health care, senior issues, affordable housing, workforce shortages, family care and support, transportation and much more. We have accomplished so much, but there is still so much to do!

Thanks so much to the state officials and legislators from both parties who supported our efforts and showed that they are truly rural champions. And to the RMC Board and staff, how can we express our gratitude for the endless contacts with legislators, the long hearing sessions and the numerous letters of support.

All I can say is – well done, and the ice cream is on me!

Phyllis Kilby is president of Kilby's, Inc., a family-owned and operated dairy farm in Cecil County, where she served on the Cecil County Commission since 1999. She did not run for re-election in 2006. She currently serves as a member of the Cecil County planning commission, the Commission on Aging, the Local Government Advisory Committee on the Chesapeake Bay Program, the Upper Shore Regional Council, and the Board of Directors of the Cecil Partnerships for Children, Youth, and Families. She was awarded the Distinguished Alumnus Award from Cecil Community College in 2003 and holds a MHS from Lincoln University.

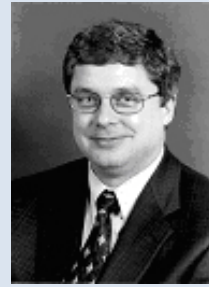


RMC Chair Phyllis Kilby presents a Kilby Cream ice cream cake to the RMC staff for another successful year.

2006: The Year of Rural Maryland

Stephen McHenry

Executive Director



2006 will go down in history as a banner year for Rural Maryland. The Administration and General Assembly took several actions that will have a profound affect on the future viability of rural businesses and the quality of life in rural communities. This success is attributable to the leadership and efforts of many individuals, working on a bipartisan basis, to get the job done. Numerous members of the Legislative Rural Caucus, state agency officials, regional and local government officials, and private sector leaders provided key leadership and support. Several members of the RMC Executive Board also played significant roles in contributing to this success. Three pieces of legislation passed that will have a lasting impact on Rural Maryland.

1. The Rural Maryland Prosperity Investment Fund (see page 6) will provide grants for rural regional planning, regional infrastructure deployment, rural entrepreneurial development, as well as funds for the RMC and MAERDAF programs.

2. Rural Broadband Communications Services (see page 7) which will help fund broadband infrastructure deployment in rural areas. This legislation will provide at least \$10 million of the estimated \$29 million needed for the deployment of a rural fiber-optic backbone network. Federal funding recently secured by Maryland's Congressional Delegation will also be used. The RMC and several other partners have worked to address the lack of affordable rural broadband service for more than a decade.

3. The Agricultural Stewardship Act of 2006 (see page 8), which contains a number of important provisions and recommendations, but key among them is it provides ongong funding for the Maryland Agricultural and Resource-Based Industry Development Corporation (MARBIDCO) through FY 2020.

Rural Maryland also fared well in the FY 2007 State Budget. Funding for the Maryland Agricultural Education and Rural Development Assistance Fund (page 12) and the small community municipal circuit rider program was restored. The Medbank Program (page 9), which disproportionately benefits rural seniors, was funded at \$500,000. In addition, the Capital Budget increased funding, from \$5 million to \$6 million for the Maryland Department of the Environment's Supplemental Assistance Program which helps small and low-income communities with their wastewater system needs. Finally, all the State's land conservation programs (Program Open Space, Rural Legacy, and Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation) were fully funded – and at record levels.

2006 was indeed a very good year. The RMC extends it sincere appreciation to everyone who helped make the future more prosperous for rural communities.

Steve McHenry, a lifelong Marylander, has served as executive director of the RMC since 1998. Near the end of 2006, he will leave the Council to serve as executive director of the Maryland Agricultural and Resource-Based Industry Development Corporation (MARBIDCO), an organization the Council helped create to assist Maryland's agricultural, forestry, seafood and recreation-based industries survive and thrive now and into the future. The Council extends its thanks to Steve for leading the Council through its most productive and important years. We look forward to working with MARBIDCO in the years ahead to protect the pastoral heritage and economic base of our rural communities.

Rural Maryland: A Status Report

Rural Economic & Community Development

Three important rural economic development initiatives came to fruition during 2006, setting the stage for future economic growth and success. They are described below.

Population

	2000	2004
MARYLAND	5,311,508	5,558,058
Rural Maryland	1,484,756	1,601,019
Baltimore City	648,554	636,251
Suburban	3,178,198	3,320,788
Upper Shore	146,536	160,186
Mid Shore	94,349	96,987
Lower Shore	156,380	163,619
Western MD	236,770	243,619
North Central	567,724	619,406
Southern MD	282,997	317,202

Source: Maryland Statistical Handbook, 2005

Poverty (All Ages)

	2000	2003
MARYLAND	7.8%	8.8%
Baltimore City	18.3%	18.9%
Suburban	6.0%	7.2%
Upper Shore	7.2%	7.5%
Mid Shore	10.4%	10.6%
Lower Shore	11.6%	11.4%
Western MD	10.3%	10.5%
North Central	4.8%	5.6%
Southern MD	6.3%	6.5%

Source: U.S. Census, Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates

Per Capita Income

	2000	2003
MARYLAND	\$34,257	\$37,446
Baltimore City	\$24,789	\$27,828
Suburban	\$38,890	\$42,202
Upper Shore	\$30,862	\$33,299
Mid Shore	\$27,740	\$31,117
Lower Shore	\$23,434	\$26,022
Western MD	\$22,695	\$25,162
North Central	\$32,129	\$35,078
Southern MD	\$30,353	\$32,677

Source: 2005 Maryland Statistical Handbook

The 2020 Rural Maryland Prosperity Investment Fund

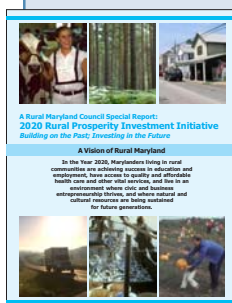
The common perception of Rural Maryland as pleasant, sparsely populated small towns dotting a pastoral landscape of farms and forests tends to mask the reality that many of these communities face serious challenges. Today, the 1.6 million people living in Maryland's 18 rural counties continue to struggle with changing economic conditions, aging populations, inadequate access to health care, and deteriorating or inadequate physical infrastructures.

To address some of these inequities, the State established the 2020 Rural Maryland Prosperity Investment Fund (SB902 /HB 1487) in 2006, which will be administered by the Rural Maryland

Council and the Maryland Agricultural Education and Rural Development Assistance Fund Board. This Fund will make important targeted investments in rural economic and community development programs and projects that help raise the standards of living in rural areas to a level that meets or exceeds statewide benchmark averages by 2020.

The goal of the Fund is to expand economic opportunity, reduce rural/metropolitan employment and service delivery disparities, and improve the rural quality of life. A key objective of the Fund is to promote intergovernmental cooperation in rural regions as well as public/nonprofit collaboration on regional projects and services. The five rural regional councils will play vital roles in facilitating regional cooperation. Moreover, educational institutions and nonprofit organizations will be instrumental in supporting entrepreneurs, developing workforce housing, and helping small or fledgling businesses succeed.

Under this initiative, the Governor and General Assembly are authorized – but not required – to allocate money each year to the 2020 Fund. The Fund is expected to make grants from 2008 through 2020, when the goals for the initiative should be fully realized and the funds lapse. The RMC has released an in-depth Special Report on the Rural Prosperity Investment Initiative, which can be downloaded from www.rural.state.md.us.



Broadband Services Coming to Rural Maryland

In 2006, many rural communities still do not have access to available or affordable high-speed internet services, which severely impedes efforts to diversify existing economies. Rural leaders and organizations, including the Rural Maryland Council, have repeatedly noted that economically competitive communities must have broadband access.

Under the Rural Broadband Communication Services Act (SB 753/HB 1156) that passed in 2006, the State will provide \$10 million over the next three years for broadband infrastructure deployment in Southern Maryland and on the Eastern Shore. Another \$2 million in federal money has been appropriated to construct a fiber optic network connecting NASA on Wallops Island, VA with communities on Maryland's Eastern Shore. Federal funding is also expected next year.

A Rural Maryland Broadband Cooperative being formed by the five rural regional councils will be responsible for overseeing the planning, construction, and management of this network. The Rural Broadband Coordination Board, which oversees the distribution of State funding to eligible service providers, is coordinated by the Rural Maryland Council.

With the fiber backbone in place, the private sector is expected to provide last-mile service to businesses and residents. The Eastern Shore-Southern Maryland phase of the network is expected to be completed within three years.

The Rural Maryland Council participated in the Rural Broadband Task Force, which was created in 2003 to examine best practices and expand broadband communications to rural Maryland. The task force concluded its work in 2006.



Regional council executive directors will help guide broadband deployment. (From left) Scott Warner (Midshore); Mike Pennington (Lower Shore). Not Shown: Wayne Clark (Southern Maryland); John Dillman, (Upper Shore) and Leanne Mazer (Western MD).

“What we would like to do is to have a future on the Eastern Shore of Maryland where broadband is ubiquitous, where all farmers have the ability to use broadband services to access the markets and information they need.”

—John Dillman

President,

Rural Broadband Cooperative ;

Executive Director,

Upper Shore Regional Council

Unemployment Rate

	2000	2005
MARYLAND	3.6%	4.2%
Baltimore City	5.9%	7.3%
Upper Shore	3.4%	4.2%
Mid Shore	3.9%	4.6%
Lower Shore	5.0%	5.2%
Western MD	4.5%	5.1%
North Central	3.0%	3.5%
Suburban	3.2%	3.9%
Southern MD	3.1%	3.5%

Source: MD Department of Labor, Licencing and Regulation

Rural Broadband Coordination Board

- **Chair: Virgil Shockley**, Tri-County Council For the Lower Eastern Shore
- **Ellen Flowers-Fields**, Director of Regional Economic Development, Tri-County Council for Southern Maryland
- **Hope Harrington**, Mid-Shore Regional Council
- **Ellis Kitchen**, State Chief of Information Technology, Maryland Department of Budget & Management
- **R. Earl Lewis**, Assistant Secretary, Maryland Department of Transportation
- **Stephen McHenry**, Executive Director, Rural Maryland Council
- **William Pickrum**, Chairman, Upper Shore Regional Council
- **James Rzepkowski**, Assistant Secretary, Maryland Department of Business & Economic Development
- **Jim Stakem**, Chairman, Tri-County Council for Western Maryland

Economic Development



MARBIDCO
growing rural ventures™

Traditional economic development programs often struggle to include agriculture and resource-based industry in their business development strategies. In Maryland, rural leaders have continued to recognize the importance of retaining these industry sectors for practical economic as well as societal and environmental reasons. What Maryland has long needed, and what the Governor and General Assembly funded in 2006 is a coordinating entity -- the Maryland Agricultural and Resource-Based Industry Development Corporation (MARBIDCO) -- that focuses exclusively on providing developmental assistance to agricultural and resource-based businesses.

The Agricultural Stewardship Act of 2006 (HB 2) contains many provisions that contribute to the long-term viability of Maryland agriculture, but key among them is mandatory funding for MARBIDCO. Due to significant budget constraints in the past few years, funding has not been available; however, support for MARBIDCO continued to grow during 2006, thanks in large part to the efforts of the Rural Legislative Caucus, the Agricultural Stewardship Commission and Maryland Agricultural Commission. Governor Ehrlich provided \$1 million in start-up funding in his FY 2007 Supplemental Budget for the organization.

The bill provides for funding totaling \$3 million for MARBIDCO in 2008; \$3.5 million in 2009; and \$4

million every year from 2010 through 2020. The bill also encourages, but does not require, that an additional \$5 million a year be appropriated for the Next Generation Farmland Acquisition Program, a rural land purchase/protection program for young farmers.

The MARBIDCO Board, chaired by Bob Frazee, CEO of MidAtlantic Farm Credit, has developed four business assistance programs that will be available, starting in 2007.

The Rural Maryland Council has provided staff support to MARBIDCO since it was created by statute in 2004. **For information about MARBIDCO's programs, as well as its 2006 Annual Report, visit www.marbidco.org, a website launched in June 2006.**

Market Value of Ag Products Sold (\$000)

	<u>1997</u>	<u>2002</u>
Maryland	\$1,371,374	1,293,303
Baltimore City	\$50,860	\$62,160
Suburban	\$130,332	\$148,641
Upper Shore	\$187,708	\$201,472
MidShore	\$243,131	\$221,675
Lower Eastern Shore	\$475,848	\$425,321
Western MD	\$82,849	\$82,569
North Central	\$210,576	\$191,803
Southern MD	\$38,930	\$21,824

Source: Maryland Department of Planning



The state established the **Maryland Agricultural and Resource-Based Industry Development Corporation (MARBIDCO)** to help Maryland's resource-based industries achieve profitability and sustainability today and into the future by providing them with the targeted, innovative financial and business development programs and services they need. At left, rural leaders join Governor Robert Ehrlich and other State officials for the signing of the Agricultural Stewardship Act in May 2006.

Rural Health Care



David Knapp, Dean of UIM-School of Pharmacy, talks with RMC Health Care Committee

RMC Committee to Study Pharmacy Woes

The RMC Health Care Working Committee, chaired by Annie Kronk (retired, Johns Hopkins University), met with the University of Maryland School of Pharmacy to discuss the lack of independent pharmacies and pharmacists in rural communities and the special difficulties rural pharmacists face in providing needed services.

Out of that meeting came a partnership with the School of Pharmacy to conduct a series of lunch time forums throughout the state to discuss ways to improve access to pharmacists and prescription drugs for rural residents, as well as ways to address significant shortages of pharmacists and other health care professionals in rural communities.

Forums were held for Southern and Western Maryland, as well as on the Eastern Shore.

A gathering with statewide policymakers in Annapolis will follow during the 2007 Legislative Session to discuss possible strategies and solutions.

Other partners include the Maryland Rural Health Association, the College of Southern Maryland and the University of Maryland, College Park. The Pharmacy Forums and their follow up will be an on-going initiative for the RMC's Health Care Committee into 2007.

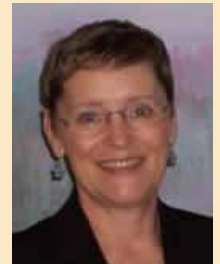
Rural residents face a unique combination of factors that create disparities in health care, from a lack of nearby emergency medical services to physician shortages to living long distances from a hospital or clinic. The Rural Maryland Council Health Care Working Committee works to address those disparities.

Although Maryland has many world class medical facilities, rural and semi-rural communities still have extraordinary difficulty recruiting and retaining health care workers in virtually all disciplines. Low-income and elderly rural residents have particular difficulty gaining access to specialized care and affordable prescription drugs. Several efforts have been made during 2006 to help improve access to health care.

Medbank of Maryland helps low income residents obtain needed prescriptions through assistance programs sponsored by pharmaceutical companies. Fifty-eight percent of those served by Medbank in 2005 lived in rural communities. Sixty-four percent of the wholesale value of medications received (more than \$15 million) went to rural patients. Medbank was scheduled to sunset in June 2006; however, legislation which passed unanimously repealed the sunset, allowing Medbank to continue operating. The Rural Maryland Council was among many organizations which delivered testimony supporting repeal of the sunset.

Statewide Commission on the Shortage in the Health Care Workforce: A statewide commission will be organized late in 2006 or early in 2007 to determine the extent of the State's health care workforce shortages and make recommendations for improving the education, recruitment and retention of health care professionals. The enabling legislation, as introduced, did not make note of the unique challenges facing rural health care facilities, and no rural representation was included. The Rural Maryland Council offered an amendment to require a rural representative on the commission. That amendment was accepted and RMC has appointed Colleen Parrott, Health Officer for Somerset County and a registered nurse, to sit on the commission.

Bonnie Braun,
Associate
Professor, State
Family Policy
Specialist,
Maryland
Cooperative
Extension will
chair the RMC's



Health Care Working Committee in 2007. She also manages the RMC's Strengthening Rural Families Initiative. (See page 13) Dr. Braun will replace Annie Kronk. (See page 10)

Rural Health Care

Annie Kronk Named Volunteer of the Year for Work in Rural Health

Annie Kronk, who retired in 2001 as The Johns Hopkins University's director of state and local affairs and special assistant to the president, a position she held for nearly 20 years, was presented with the Outstanding Rural Volunteer Award this year. This award is given during the Maryland Rural Summit to an individual for leadership, dedication, and noteworthy volunteer achievement beyond the call of one's professional duties.

Dr. Kronk spends much of her post-retirement time volunteering with the Rural Maryland Council, where she has served as First Vice Chair of the Board as well as Chair of the Health Care Working Committee. She remains active in the Maryland Rural Health Association, where she served on the board of directors for many years.

During 2005 and 2006, she led her colleagues in researching issues related to Medicare Part D, the federal prescription drug program, and its impacts on Maryland's state pharmacy programs. Two well-received public forums on access and issues in medicines helped focus the health community on changes in state-funded pharmaceutical programs made during the 2005 Legislative Session. She continues to monitor policy and legislative efforts that affect Rural Maryland.



Annie Kronk leads meeting of RMC Health Care Working Committee as Pam Christoffel of Washington County Health System looks on.

Causes of Death

(Deaths per 100,000)

	Heart Disease	Diabetes	Accident
MARYLAND			
2004	202.8	25.4	25.2
2000	231.9	28.5	21.0
Baltimore City			
2004	288.9	38.8	28.8
2000	344.3	46.5	24.1
Suburban			
2004	167.6	22.3	22.1
2000	196.1	22.1	17.6
Eastern Shore*			
2004	269.4	30.4	36.6
2000	294.0	35.4	31.8
Western MD			
2004	346.5	44.0	29.4
2000	338.1	48.5	30.9
North Central			
2004	194.7	14.9	25.8
2000	208.1	21.2	19.2
Southern MD			
2004	161.7	20.5	26.2
2000	181.3	28.4	25.9

* Eastern Shore statistics shown as a whole. (Source: Maryland Vital Statistics Annual Report, 2004 - DHMH)



Maryland House of Delegates Member Addie Eckardt (center) talks with participants at the Council's pharmacy forum on the Eastern Shore.



Participants engage in impassioned discussion at the forums in Cumberland.

Honoring Rural Achievement

Rural Leaders and organizations were recognized for their outstanding efforts to improve the quality of life in Rural Maryland during the 2005 Rural Impact Awards Luncheon. Extensive descriptions of the award winning accomplishments can be found on the RMC website at www.rural.state.md.us

■ **Outstanding Rural Legislators:** Delegate **Robert McKee** of Washington County, senior minority member of the House Ways and Means Committee, tenaciously led the charge to provide substantial and ongoing sources of funding for both the MAERDAF and MARBIDCO programs during the 2005 legislative session. Delegate **David Rudolph** of Cecil County championed rural prescription drug access and was largely responsible for the new Maryland Prescription Drug Program, which is designed to achieve significant savings on the cost of prescription drugs for state employees and retirees. Delegate Rudolph was also recognized for his leadership on the Maryland Pharmacy Discount Program and the Senior Prescription Drug Assistance Program.

■ **Outstanding Rural Economic Development:** The Southern Maryland Agricultural Development Commission was honored for helping a five-county region make the transition from a tobacco-based economy to one supported by healthful farm-grown products.

■ **Outstanding Rural Community Development:** The Eastern Shore Land Conservancy was honored for preserving 36,405 acres in six Eastern Shore counties since 1990.

■ **Outstanding Rural Health Program:** The Garrett County Health Department Dental Care Program established "Something to Smile About," a network of community dentists, as well as a dental clinic and dental surgery center at Garrett County Memorial Hospital, which resulted in many improvements in oral health for rural citizens.

■ **Outstanding Rural Health Achievement:** Wicomico County State's Attorney's Office was honored for the Wicomico EXILE Program, which shows high-school aged youth the consequences of gun possession and gun crime and gives them guidelines for making positive life choices.

*Rural Impact Awards are given annually.
Calls for Nominations are posted on the RMC website each summer.*



Delegate Robert McKee (left) and Delegate David Rudolph were honored with Maryland Outstanding Rural Legislator Awards.



(Fromleft) Kevin Brooks, Duane Yoder, Mary Randolph (Wyoming), Steve McHenry, Phyllis Kilby and John Dillman.

McHenry Receives National Honor

Rural Maryland Council Executive Director Stephen McHenry was honored with the National Rural Development Partnership's Ron Shaffer Award at the organization's annual meeting in Washington, D.C. The Shaffer Award is given annually to an individual who embodies the values, and exercises the collaborative leadership necessary to build national and state rural development partnerships that meet the needs of rural America.

Rural Grant Programs

Charitable or private sector dollars needed to support the efforts of rural non-profit organizations are either in short supply or simply do not exist. And local rural governments do not have the financial reserves to offer much assistance. Two rural grant programs are offering significant help.



Grant Program Benefits Nonprofit Multi-County Efforts

The Maryland Agricultural Education and Rural Development Assistance Fund (MAERDAF) was created in 2000 to offer important financial support to rural-serving nonprofit organizations that promote statewide and regional planning, economic and community development, and agricultural and forestry education. MAERDAF also awards grants to community colleges that provide training and technical assistance to small and agricultural businesses.

Due to significant state budget constraints, the MAERDAF program was not funded in FY 2006. For FY 2007, however, funding was restored, and \$348,000 is available for MAERDAF grants.

The Rural Maryland Council, which administers the MAERDAF Program, received more than 30 applications – a record number – requesting nearly \$1 million, another record number.

Organizations that leverage non-state matching funds receive preference, and many grantees have had matches exceeding 100 percent. During the five-year life of the MAERDAF program, 73 grants totaling \$1.4 million have been awarded.

In its short history, MAERDAF has helped nonprofits leverage a substantial amount of private and federal dollars, develop institutional capacity, improve grant-writing skills, and enhance the development of volunteer boards and staff.

The MAERDAF Grant Review Board is made up of representatives from the RMC and the Departments of Agriculture, Natural Resources, Housing and Community Development, Business and Economic Development, and Health and Mental Hygiene. The Board will announce its next grant awards late in 2006.

Information about how to apply for MAERDAF grants is posted on the RMC website during the summer if funds are available.

MAERDAF

Since 2001, the MAERDAF Program has awarded 73 grants totaling \$1.4 million to rural-serving nonprofits and community colleges. In FY 2007, another \$348,000 will be distributed. The RMC received nearly \$1 million in requests -- almost three times more than available funding. Grantees will be announced in late 2006.

Single Family Homes

Median Sale Price

	2000	2004
MARYLAND	\$146,000	\$238,832
Baltimore City	\$69,100	\$130,500
Suburban	\$172,060	\$336,200
Upper Shore	\$135,933	\$235,600
Mid Shore	\$114,400	\$193,891
Lower Shore	\$99,033	\$169,000
Western MD	\$90,833	\$151,300
North Central	\$157,500	\$297,975
Southern MD	\$157,400	\$259,058

Source: Maryland Department of Planning

Foundation, RMC Join Together to Help Rural Families Succeed

For the first time ever, the Rural Maryland Council joined with the Annie E. Casey Foundation in 2006 for the first time ever to administer *Strengthening Rural Maryland Families*, a direct service grant program that helps low-income working families build strong financial futures. This program is committed to helping families in Rural Maryland gain access to economic opportunities, find support through formal and informal networks, and have access to services that work for them.

Program activities emphasize helping vulnerable families become self-reliant and succeed over time. The initiative is managed by Bonnie Braun, an RMC Board Member and professor at the University of Maryland, College Park, Department of Family Studies.

During 2006, the Rural Families initiative distributed \$100,000 in grants that provided:

- Child cognitive development screenings, immunizations, and child care for 52 families;
- Transportation to and from parent education courses for 39 parents;
- Developmentally appropriate parent-child activities and events for 48 families;
- Training in infant mental health for 41 family service workers and parents;
- In-home mental health services for 12 at-risk families with children ages 2-5;
- A bi-monthly support group, health family screening, referral to in-home support services, links to educational services, and assistance in accessing Maryland Children's Health Care for 33 pregnant or parenting teens;
- A 10-week life skills training course for 15 families, which included the role of parents in schools, fire safety and emergency services, accessing social services, dining etiquette, programs for seniors and individuals with disabilities, and preventative health care; and
- Training in advocacy and navigating service systems for 12 families affected by mental illness.

Strengthening Rural Maryland Families

The Strengthening Rural Maryland Families Initiative operates on the premise that children do well when their families do well; and families do better when they live in supportive communities. However, many families living in rural areas are disconnected from the opportunities and supports they need to succeed. This grants program is committed to helping families in Rural Maryland get the support they need to thrive.

Funding for the program is provided by the **Annie E. Casey Foundation**, which is continuing its funding of the Initiative in FY 2007.



2005-2006 Grantees

- **Carroll County Human Services Program** – To increase transportation, child development services, case management services, and child care subsidies for low-income families.
- **Charles County Healthy Families** — To prevent child abuse and child mental health problems.
- **Dorchester County Health Department** — To expand the hours of the Registered Nurse/Teen Pregnancy Coordinator in the school-based Health Center.
- **Harford Community Action Agency** — To provide life skills training and support program for disadvantaged families.
- **Wicomico Partnership for Families and Children** — To train parents of severely emotionally disturbed youth to become para-professional service providers.
- **The Cumberland YMCA** — To develop a family health and fitness education and activity program for low-income families.

The 2006-07 grantees are: The Garrett County Community Action Committee, the Local Management Board of St. Mary's County, the Lower Shore Child Care Resource Center at Salisbury University, the Maryland Rural Development Corporation, the Shared Opportunity Service, Inc., and the University of Maryland Cooperative Extension, Worcester County.

RMC Partnerships

The Rural Maryland Council works with rural leaders across the state to share information and address the special needs and opportunities of Rural Maryland. Collaboration and consensus building are principles that form the foundation of RMC's work.

RMC Helps Study Water & Sewage System Issues Facing Small Communities in Maryland



The Interagency Technical Assistance Committee (ITAC) on Wastewater Treatment Systems, chaired by Rural Maryland Council Executive Director Stephen McHenry and staffed by the Maryland Department of the Environment, delivered its final report in January 2006.

The General Assembly established the ITAC in 2002 and gave it a three-year mandate to follow-up on the report of the Governor's 2001 Task Force on Upgrading Sewerage Systems by advising local jurisdictions on the efficient operation and financial management of wastewater treatment systems. ITAC recommendations include:

1. USDA-Rural Development and the State Departments of the Environment, Planning, and Housing and Community Development should enter into a Memorandum of Understanding to better coordinate grant and loan program funding for rural water and wastewater projects;
2. MDE and other stakeholders should identify and offer appropriate training sessions about local responsibilities for wastewater systems and encourage local officials to attend these training sessions;
3. MDE should create a database of wastewater system user rate structures to help funding agencies and managers of wastewater systems;
4. Current State capital funding for BNR wastewater treatment plant upgrade projects (approximately \$18 million) should be maintained and redirected to help meet smaller community water needs as ENR funding comes on line as a result of the Bay Restoration Fund; and
5. MDE, DBED and MDP, in cooperation with the Maryland Association of Counties, Maryland Municipal League, regional planning councils, and other relevant State and interstate agencies, should encourage inter-jurisdictional and regional cooperation for water supply and wastewater facilities.

The complete report can be viewed online at:
www.mde.state.md.us/assets/document/ITAC-Jan06.pdf

Wastewater Infrastructure Needs (\$000)

MARYLAND	\$5,442,344
Rural Maryland	\$1,647,595
Baltimore City	\$688,151
Suburban	\$3,106,598
Upper Shore	\$262,950
Mid Shore	\$182,832
Lower Shore	\$217,058
Western MD	\$400,097
North Central	\$367,061
Southern MD	\$217,597

Source: Maryland Department of the Environment

RMC Sponsors 8th Rural Summit

The 8th Annual Maryland Rural Summit was held in October at the WISP Resort in Garrett County, just a day after an early fall storm brought 12 inches of snow and ice and large scale power outages to the region. That failed to stop nearly 200 people from making the trek up the mountain to discuss the issues facing Rural Maryland. The theme of the summit was "Rural Workforce and Entrepreneurship Development: Investment in our Future." RMC hosts the Summit every year with the five rural regional councils, the Maryland Rural Health Association and the State Office of Rural Health.

RMC Supports National Water Trail

The Rural Maryland Council Executive Board voted unanimously to support efforts by Governor Ehrlich and the National Park Service (NPS) to develop America's first National Water Trail — a 1,500 mile route made by Captain John Smith through the Chesapeake Bay region nearly 400 years ago. Many rural communities along the route are planning festivals and celebrations related to an upcoming re-enactment of the expedition, which will be chronicled through the media, educational websites, and documentaries. The NPS is currently conducting a feasibility study on the water trail. Several municipal and county governments along with some regional councils along the route have also adopted resolutions in support of the project.

RMC Helps Review Strategy

RMC participated in two Rural Entrepreneurship Academies — statewide meetings to develop a strategy for encouraging rural entrepreneurship. Facilitated by the Center for Rural Entrepreneurship, the academy drew some 50 people from across Maryland. The RMC intends to host a statewide meeting of entrepreneurship service providers in 2007.

RMC Helps Bring Bioscience to Life

RMC joined with the Maryland Technology Development Corporation (TEDCO) to offer *Bioscience for Life: Technology to Enhance Health, the Environment and Agriculture*. This one-day event brought scientists together with corporate officials to help find ways to turn agricultural research into practical products.



USDA Helps RMC Start Up MARBIDCO

USDA-Rural Development State Director (MD/DE) Marlene Elliott (center) presents RMC Chair Phyllis Kilby and Executive Director Steve McHenry with a Rural Business Enterprise Grant for \$20,000, to help fund some MARBIDCO start up costs.

The RMC In 2007

Charlie Ross, CEO of the Garrett County Chamber of Commerce, will serve as Chairman of the RMC Executive Board in 2007. Mr. Ross is a highly respected leader with a long and distinguished background and broad knowledge of the many issues facing rural Marylanders.



Other officers elected for 2007 include First Vice Chair **Michael Pennington**, executive director of the Tri-County Council for the Lower Eastern Shore of Maryland; and Second Vice Chair **Dr. Bonnie Braun**, an associate professor and family policy specialist with Maryland Cooperative Extension. Dr. Braun also chairs the RMC's Health Care Working Committee.



The Rural Maryland Council

50 Harry S Truman Parkway

Annapolis, MD 21401

Phone: 410-841-5772

Fax: 410-841-5987

www.rural.state.md.us