



Celebrating 25 Years As the Voice of Rural Maryland





In 1994 when Governor William Donald Schaefer signed an executive order designating a "rural development council" for Maryland, he had no way of knowing he would set in motion the formation of a new institution that would touch the lives of hundreds of thousands of people, not just in rural Maryland, but in every corner of the state.

The following year, the council organized itself as the "FORVM for Rural Maryland" and was permanently established by an act of the state legislature, adopted by a unanimous vote of both chambers of the Maryland General Assembly. The Roman word "forvm" distinguished its mission, to provide a place for local and state leaders to exchange ideas and pursue solutions to the issues facing Maryland's rural communities.

Today - 25 years later - renamed the Rural Maryland Council (RMC), it continues to champion the causes of rural Marylanders while emphasizing the importance of working with suburban and urban communities to create a stronger, united Maryland. "It's true that our rural communities are faced with challenges that need to be resolved differently from our suburban and urban counterparts," said Charlotte L. Davis, RMC executive director. "But when you really get down to it there is more that we have in common than what separates us."

Throughout its history, the RMC has never backed away from the big, difficult and often controversial issues like wastewater, inadequate access to health care, financial resources, and broadband. From the beginning it has remained steadfast in problem solving using two important tools:

- Giving Voice to Rural Marylanders
- Creating Partnerships

Using these two tools, RMC has had several impressive accomplishments including:

- Creating the Maryland Agricultural Education and Rural Development Assistance Fund (MAERDAF) which to date as funded more than \$5.8 million in grants.

- Establishing the Tri-County Council for the Lower Eastern Shore, Mid-Shore Regional Council, and the Maryland Agricultural and Resource Based Industry Development Corporation (MARBIDCO).
- Receiving a National Rural Impact Award in 2001 from the National Rural Development Assistance Partnership (USDA) for its work - *the first of many accolades the USDA would bestow on RMC.*
- Establishing the Rural Maryland Prosperity Investment Fund (RMPPIF) in 2006 and waging a decade-long battle to get it funded, which finally came in 2016. To date, RMPPIF has funded more than \$14 million in grants.
- Co-hosting a regional forum on Rural Broadband in partnership with the USDA Rural Development and taking a leadership role in sifting through the many complex issues related to broadband to produce recommendations for legislative action. RMC's Executive Director was tapped by the Maryland legislature to head the Task Force on Rural Internet, Broadband, Wireless, and Cellular Service.
- Gaining national recognition in 2019 when Partners for Rural America bestowed its coveted Ron Shaffer Award to Executive Director Charlotte Davis - the award acknowledges an individual who excels in building a national and state rural development partnership.

Perhaps the best appraisal of an organization's success is whether it measures up to its founders' expectations, "When I founded the organization with Bill Walker 25 years ago, and drafted the State legislation that established the FORVM for Rural Maryland, we hoped it would continue to be a powerful voice for Maryland's rural communities for many years to come," said Gary V. Hodge, founding chairman of the FORVM.

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Message From the Chairman

In 2020, the Rural Maryland Council (RMC) celebrated its 25th Anniversary. Over the years, the Council has worked tirelessly to establish partnerships that have created more effective public policy and more efficient service delivery in rural areas of Maryland. Because the Council's programs and actions are inclusive and collaborative, making decisions by consensus, the RMC is truly able to provide a collective voice for rural Maryland.

Approximately 1.7 million people live in Maryland's 18 rural counties located in the State's western, southern and eastern shore regions. Rural communities in Maryland continue to face a variety of challenges relating to changing economic conditions, an aging population and an out-migration of youth, inadequate access to quality health care, gaps in internet services and a deteriorating or inadequate physical infrastructure. Local governments, educational and health care institutions, and private service providers in rural areas have struggled to respond to all these challenges but have made considerable gains in recent years.

The mission of the Council is to promote economic opportunity in our State's rural areas while helping to preserve the pastoral heritage of these working open spaces and adjacent small cities and towns. The RMC has focused attention broadly in such areas as agriculture, broadband communications, health care, economic development, infrastructure improvement, housing and community development, and resource based industry. By addressing a myriad of issues of concern and identifying resources and providing rural representation at the State and Federal levels, the Council has worked successfully to help improve the quality of life in rural communities.

In closing, I would like to extend my heartfelt appreciation to the Council's partners, stakeholders and many rural – and urban – supporters, in both the public and private sectors. I also especially want to commend the RMC's dedicated board members, as well as the Council's very able staff, who have given so much of themselves over the years to help make rural Maryland a better place to live. I am very proud of the work of the RMC over the past two and a half decades, and very much look forward to the next 25 years.



In 2019, RMC executive director Charlotte L. Davis earned the Partners for Rural America (PRA) Ron Shaffer Award. From left, are: Jerry Townsend, co-chair of the PRA Nominating Committee; PRA chair, Jessica AcMoody and Charlotte L. Davis, PRA chair emeritus.

John Hartline
RMC Chair

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"As is always true, the effectiveness of an institution depends on the ability and commitment of the people who lead it and support its mission," he adds. And for 25 years and counting, the Rural Maryland Council has answered that call.

"Although much has changed since the creation of the Rural Maryland Council, we remain dedicated to the core values of preserving rural heritage, advocating for equity, and engaging partners and stakeholders to help build strong, resilient rural communities," said John Hartline, RMC chairman.

The Rural Maryland Council operates under the direction of a 40-member executive board. It serves as the state's federally designated rural development council and functions as a voice for rural Maryland, advocating for rural communities and businesses across the state to help them flourish and achieve equity with their suburban and urban counterparts.

RMC Chairs Throughout The Years



Gary Hodge
1995-1997



Duane Yoder
1998-1999



William F. Eckman
2000-2003



Phyliss Kilby
2004-2006



Charlie Ross
2008-2009



Mike Pennington
2009-2010



Bonnie Braun
2010



Scott Warner
2011-2015, 2018



Doris Mason,
2016



Josh Hastings
2017



John Hartline
2019-Current Chair

The Council At Work

The goal of the **Rural Maryland Prosperity Investment Fund (RMPIF)** is to help raise the overall standard of living in rural areas to a level that meets or exceeds statewide benchmark averages by 2030, while preserving the best aspects of a pastoral heritage and rural way of life. Resources provided to the Fund are designed to facilitate significant targeted investments in important economic and community development programs and promote regional and intergovernmental cooperation. These investments will also enable local and regional public and nonprofit organizations to leverage additional non-state financial and human resources to facilitate the realization of sustainable rural development objectives.

RMPIF was authorized by the Maryland General Assembly in 2006. In 2016, thanks to Governor Larry Hogan, the Fund received \$2 million for targeted investment to promote economic prosperity in Maryland's traditionally disadvantaged and underserved rural communities. By sustaining efforts to promote rural regional cooperation, facilitating entrepreneurial activities and supporting key community colleges and nonprofit providers, the quality of life in rural Maryland can be advanced over the next several years.

RMPIF has three focus areas:

- Entrepreneurship
- Health Care
- Infrastructure

RMPIF

Between FY2017 to FY2021: 149 Grantees have been awarded more than \$14 million in grants.

The **Maryland Agriculture Education and Rural Development Assistance Fund (MAERDAF)** was established 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 efforts. In addition, the MAERDAF program was designed to provide targeted financial assistance to community colleges that support small and agricultural businesses through enhanced training and technical assistance offerings.

MAERDAF

Between FY2001 to FY2021: 283 Grantees awarded more than \$5.8 million in grants.



Photo Courtesy of Shore Gourmet, Mobile Farmers Market/Pantry Project

6,628 Members From Across The State

Broadband

The RMC has been an advocate for the expansion of broadband for many years and has worked with many of the key players in the broadband community.

Accomplishments include the following:

- Staff the Rural Broadband Coordination Board that was established in 2006.
- Provided both written and oral testimony on broadband bills, that has led to historic investment into telecommunication infrastructure across the State.
- Funded several broadband projects through the Rural Maryland Prosperity Investment Fund, including:
 - The Town of Myersville for a 1/4-mile of fiber between Myersville Elementary and the new town Library in FY17.
 - Garrett County Community Action for the installation costs for 200 homes in FY18.
 - Southern MD Minority Chamber for a user demand survey and the development of high-level broadband system engineering and build-out timelines in Southern MD in FY18.
- Two grants to the Town of Denton for fiber network between public buildings in FY17 and FY18.
- Tasked the Eastern Shore Regional GIS Cooperative (ESRGC) with mapping broadband service provider coverage in Maryland to better understand the availability of wireline broadband and assess the relationship of broadband access between rural and urban areas. This resulted in the creation of the Rural Maryland Council Statewide Broadband Assessment.

Rural Broadband Assistance Fund



- **FY2007 Federal: \$1,839,383**
- **FY2007 State: \$4,000,000**
- **FY2008 Federal: \$3,600,000**
- **FY2008 State: \$4,000,000**

Grant Total, To Date: \$13,439,383

Maryland Agricultural & Resource-Based Industry Development Corporation (MARBIDCO)

RMC led efforts to create a State agriculture finance agency, now called MARBIDCO. Since 2007, MARBIDCO has established nearly 20 loan and grant programs to help meet the various needs of the Maryland's food, feed, and fiber producers. Many of these programs are offered on an ongoing basis while others have been created to address temporary situations or meet emergency needs (e.g., the Covid-19 Pandemic). The popular "MR BIFF Program" (the Maryland Resource-Based Industry Financing Fund) has made 225 "gap financing" loans to agribusiness borrowers (ranging from \$10,000 to \$600,000) for projects located in every county in Maryland, to help match the financial resources provided by commercial lenders for all manner of food and fiber production or processing projects. Other loan and grant programs aim to help to meet other unmet financing needs of agricultural businesses including the forestry and shellfish aquaculture industries.

Right from the beginning it has been a key aim of MARBIDCO to assist aspiring young and beginning farmers with starting and expanding their business ventures and thereby help keep rural land "working" into the future. Over the past 14 years, MARBIDCO has assisted 529 young and beginning farmers by deploying nearly \$57 million in business project capital to them.

Also, since 2018, MARBIDCO has been offering the innovative Next Generation Farmland Acquisition Program (or "Next Gen Program"), which is designed to help facilitate the transfer of farmland to a new generation of farmers, while also effectively helping to preserve agricultural land from future development. And last year, MARBIDCO launched the Small Acreage Next Generation Farmland Acquisition Program (SANG) to further expand the ability of beginner farmers to acquire farmland.

MARBIDCO's programs have also been used to support and encourage on-farm value-added processing projects by farmers (funding some 264 value-added projects over the years). And adding it all up, MARBIDCO has funded a total of 1,012 farm and rural business projects since its founding worth nearly \$76 million (and leveraging another \$170 million from commercial lenders in the process). The future of farming and forestry in Maryland is helping to be both nurtured and sustained thanks to the efforts of the RMC and MARBIDCO.

Educating, Advocating, and Connecting



The **Rural Summit** offers a unique opportunity to network and learn about current issues and emerging policy issues that impact rural Maryland through innovative breakout sessions and panels. 11 Summits have been held throughout the years.

- 1998 – First Summit in Rocky Gap
- 1999 – 2nd Annual Summit in Ocean City
- 2000 – 3rd Annual Summit in Solomons Island
- 2001 – 4th Annual Summit in Rocky Gap
- 2002 – 5th Annual Summit in Annapolis
- 2003 – 6th Annual Summit Oct 23-24 Ocean City
- 2004 – Nov 4-5 Solomons Island
- 2005 – Oct 25-27 Wisp McHenry

- 2006 – Oct 25-27 Sandy Cove, McHenry
- 2007 – Oct 17-19 Solomons Island
- 2013 – Oct 17-18 at Ripken Stadium, Aberdeen
- 2015 – December 3, 2015 in Annapolis
- 2017 – December 1, 2017 in Annapolis
- 2019 – December 12, 2019 in Annapolis



Rural Maryland Day offers an opportunity for legislators to meet with rural constituents and stakeholders to discuss opportunities and initiatives in rural Maryland communities.

- 2015 – February 19, 2015, Annapolis
- 2016 – February 11, 2016 Annapolis
- 2017 – February 9, 2017, Annapolis
- 2018 – February 8, 2018, Annapolis
- 2019 – February 14, 2019, Annapolis
- 2020 – February 4, 2020, Annapolis

RMC Position Statements: Since 2015, the Council's Legislative Committee has actively supported legislation that impacts rural Maryland.

Year	Number of Statements
2015	15
2016	27
2017	28
2018	40
2019	51
2020	28
Total: 189	

Rural Families Grant Program Funding over a 6 year period = \$675,000.

This program was a partnership with the Maryland CASH Campaign to develop individualized savings and financial plans to low-income rural families.

Rural Impact Awards History

The Maryland Rural Impact Awards is an opportunity to annually recognize individuals and organizations that have performed extraordinary acts of service to communities throughout rural Maryland.

2002

- Outstanding Legislator Award - **Delegate Louise Snodgrass**
- Outstanding Rural Health Program - **Eastern Shore Oral Health Outreach Program**
- Outstanding Rural Community Development Program - **Lexington Park Library**
- Outstanding Rural Health Achievement - **Garrett County Cancer Prevention, Education Screening and Treatment Program**
- Outstanding Rural Health Practitioner - **Andrea M. Allen, M.D.**
- Outstanding Rural Economic Development Program - **Frederick County Office of Economic Development**



2003 Outstanding Rural Health Program Award, Health U of Delmarva

2003

- Outstanding Legislator Award - **Delegate Adelaide "Addie" Eckardt**
- Outstanding Rural Economic Development Award - **The Tri-County Council for Western Maryland**
- Outstanding Community Development Award - **The Maryland Rural Development Corporation**
- Outstanding Rural Health Program Award - **Health U of Delmarva**
- Outstanding Rural Health Achievement Award - **Rodney Glotfelty, Garrett County health officer**
- Outstanding Rural Health Practitioner Award - **Dr. Scott Wolpin, D.D.S.**
- Outstanding Rural Volunteer Award - **Robert "Bobby" Hutchison**

2004

- Outstanding Rural Legislator Award - **Delegate Rudolph C. Cane, and Senator Donald F. Munson**
- Outstanding Rural Economic Development Award - **Upper Shore Workforce Investment Board**
- Outstanding Rural Community Development Award - **Garrett County Chamber of Commerce**
- Outstanding Rural Volunteer Award - **John Bennett**
- Outstanding Rural Health Program Award - **Twin Beaches Community Health Center**
- Outstanding Rural Health Achievement Award - **William R. Kirk, Jr., President & CEO, Chester River Hospital Center**
- Outstanding Rural Health Practitioner Award - **Maureen Donovan, RN, MA, Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene**

2005

- Outstanding Rural Legislators Award - **Delegate Robert McKee, and Delegate David Rudolph**
- Outstanding Rural Economic Development Award - **Southern Maryland Agricultural Development Commission**
- Outstanding Rural Community Development Award - **Eastern Shore Land Conservancy**
- Outstanding Rural Health Program Award - **Garrett County Health Department Dental Care Program**
- Outstanding Rural Health Achievement Award - **Wicomico County State's Attorney's Office for the Wicomico EXILE Program**
- Outstanding Rural Health Practitioner Award - **Michael A. Stevens, LCSW**
- Outstanding Rural Volunteer Award - **Annie Kronk, Ph.D**

2006

- Outstanding Rural Legislator Award - **Senator E.J. Pipkin**
- Outstanding Rural Volunteer Awards - **John W. Lee Jr., DMV, Rising Sun and, George "Lanny" McClary, American Heart Association, Chestertown**
- Outstanding Rural Health Practitioner - **Dr. Robert McDonald, family practitioner, Easton**

Outstanding Rural Health Achievement Award - **Claudia R. Baquet, M.D., Associate Dean, Office of Policy and Planning, University of Maryland School of Medicine**
Outstanding Rural Health Program Award - **Partnership for a Healthier Carroll County**
Outstanding Rural Community Development Awards - **Somerset County Health Department's Whales Tales Program, and Garrett County Chamber of Commerce Living History Program**
Outstanding Rural Economic Development Award - **Garrett County Board of Commissioners Scholarship Program**

2007

Outstanding Rural Economic Development Award - **Charlie Ross, President/CEO, Garrett County Chamber of Commerce**
Outstanding Community Development Award - **Judy Linn, Director, Kent Family Center**
Outstanding Rural Health Program Award - **St. Mary's County Health Department's Medical Transportation Program**
Outstanding Rural Health Achievement Award - **Rodney Glotfelty, Garrett County health officer**
Outstanding Rural Health Practitioner Award - **Dr. Matthew Hahn, medical director of the Tri-State Community Health Center**
Outstanding Rural Volunteer Award - **Miles Circo**

2013

Outstanding Rural Legislator Award – **Senator George Edwards**

2015

Rural Champion - **Jeannie Haddaway-Riccio, Director, Intergovernmental Affairs, Governor's Office**
Outstanding Rural Community Volunteer - **The late Helen Astle**
Outstanding Rural Economic Development Award - **Tri-County Council of Southern Maryland**
Outstanding Rural Community Development Award - **Frederick County Public Schools and MyPlate Garden Program**

2016

Rural Champion - **Maryland Department of Budget and Management Secretary David Brinkley**
Outstanding Community Involvement - **Tom McLoughlin**
Outstanding Rural Supporter - **Outgoing RMC Chair Doris Mason**

2017

Outstanding Rural Volunteer - **Mr. J. Robert Tibbs, Jr.**
Outstanding Rural Economic Development - **Mr. Mike Thielke**
Outstanding Rural Community Involvement - **Dr. William McGowan**

2018

Rural Champion - **Dr. Joseph Ciotola, Jr**
Rural Legacy Award - **The Honorable Thomas McClain Middleton**
Outstanding Rural Community Volunteer - **Ms. Cathy and Mr. Rick Schwab from the Town of Ridgely**
Outstanding Rural Community Development - **For All Season**
Rural Supporter Award - **Susan Lawrence**
Rural Dedication Award - **Mike Pennington**



2016 Rural Champion Award to Maryland Department of Budget and Management Secretary David Brinkley.

2019

Rural Champion - **Delegate Sheree Sample-Hughes**
Rural Legacy Award - **Senate President Mike Miller**
Outstanding Rural Economic Development Award - **Cecil County Economic Development**
Outstanding Rural Community Development Award - **Evergreen Heritage Center Foundation, and Sudlersville Laundromat**
Outstanding Rural Volunteer Award - **Mr. Robert "Bob" Arnold of Arnold Farms.**



2019 Rural Champion Delegate
Sheree Sample-Hughes

2020

Rural Champions – **Senator Douglas Peters and Senator Stephen Hershey**
Outstanding Rural Volunteer Award - **Mr. Erroll Mattox**
Outstanding Rural Community Development Award - **Mr. David Wheelan**
Outstanding Rural Economic Development Award - **The Greater Cumberland Committee**

Rural Maryland Council Milestones 1994 - 2020

1994

- Governor William Donald Schaefer signs an Executive Order establishing the "Maryland Rural Development Council" (under the auspices of President George H. W. Bush's Presidential Initiative on Rural America). Maryland becomes the 36th State to establish a State Rural Development Council under the emerging National Rural Development Partnership Program.
- Organizational meetings are held in Easton, Cumberland, and later in Solomons.
- Mr. Bill Walker is selected to serve as the Council's first executive director.

1995

- The Maryland General Assembly's Rural Caucus introduces legislation permanently establishing the Maryland Rural Development Council as an independent State agency, and renames it the "FORVM for Rural Maryland".
- The FORVM conducts the "Ears to Rural Maryland Tour" by making visits and holding town meeting-type sessions in a half-dozen regions located throughout rural Maryland.



Pictured above is the bill signing ceremony for legislation establishing the FORVM for Rural Maryland on May 9, 1995. Seated, from left, are: Maryland Senate President Thomas V. "Mike" Miller, Jr.; Governor Parris N. Glendening; and Treasurer Richard N. Dixon. Standing to the right of Senator Miller and behind the Governor are Gary V. Hodge, founding chairman of the FORVM, and William "Bill" Walker, executive director, with members of the FORVM's board and staff. Photo by Maryland State Archives

1996

- A report on the findings of the "Ears to Rural Maryland Tour" is published which highlights many needs facing rural Maryland.
- The first annual meeting of the FORVM is held in Annapolis. An initial slate of officers are elected and the first full Executive Board (Board of Directors) is confirmed.
- A Rural Non-Profit Leadership Training Series is conducted in three rural counties in Maryland.

1997

- Bill Walker resigns as Executive Director and the nationwide recruitment effort to hire a new Executive Director begins.
- In addition to promoting job creation in rural areas, value-added agricultural development, broadband communications deployment, and microenterprise development emerge as key issues.

1998

- Mr. Stephen R. McHenry is appointed as the FORVM's new Executive Director.
- The FORVM hosts the "Shining the Lights on Rural Maryland" conference in Hagerstown.
- The "Harvesting the Sun - Solar for Farms" pilot project begins in partnership with the Maryland Energy Administration.
- The First Annual Maryland Rural Summit is held at Rocky Gap, in partnership with the State Office of Rural Health and the Maryland Rural Health Association. The Annual Rural Awards also begin.



Pictured from the left are FORVM Chariman Duane Yoder, Vice Chairman, Nan Booth and Garrett County Commissioner Fred Holiday during 'Stand Up for Rural Maryland Day', March 1999

1999

- The "Stand Up for Rural Maryland" Day is held in Annapolis during the Maryland General Assembly Session. The Senate and House of Delegates pass resolutions citing the FORVM's contributions to improving the quality of life in rural Maryland.
- A statewide microenterprise development conference (sponsored by the FORVM and others) is held at Chesapeake College. As an outcome, the FORVM is asked to facilitate the development of a statewide microenterprise development program serving both urban and rural areas.
- Legislation passes authorizing the new Cigarette Restitution Fund to fund rural healthcare services and the Southern Maryland tobacco buyout program (among other things).

2000

- Legislation initiated by the FORVM's Agriculture and Natural Resources Working Committee passes establishing the Task Force on Resource Based Industry.
- The FORVM, with the leadership of the Rural Caucus, successfully initiates the creation of the Maryland Agricultural Education and Rural Development Assistance Fund (MAERDAF), which is established to provide financial assistance to rural-serving nonprofit organizations and community colleges that support small and agricultural businesses.
- Legislation supported by the FORVM passes that doubles State financial support for rural regional libraries located in Southern and Western Maryland as well as on the Eastern Shore.
- The Microenterprise Council of Maryland is established. FORVM Executive Director Steve McHenry is elected to serve as the Council's first Chairman.
- The FORVM's Infrastructure Working Committee examines small community wastewater needs and works with the Governor's Task Force on Upgrading Sewerage Treatment Systems.
- The FORVM supports with the work of the Eastern Shore Economic Development Task Force and assists with its regional development and outreach efforts.
- LEAD Maryland (Maryland's new agricultural and rural leadership development program) "graduates" its first class of fellows. FORVM staff participates in the program and serve on the LEAD Curriculum Committee. (FORVM staff also serves on several state/national advisory panels.)

2001

- Legislation supported by the FORVM passes establishing the Tri-County Council for the Lower Eastern Shore and the Mid Shore Regional Council.
- The FORVM, working in concert with MML, is successful in inserting small community wastewater needs into the final report of the Governor's Task Force to Study Upgrading Sewage Systems.
- The FORVM's Housing and Community Development Working Committee works with the Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development and others to amend new State regulations that prohibit the use of federal housing and other funds in less populated rural areas.
- The FORVM receives a National Rural Impact Award from the NRDP (USDA) for its work.

2002

- Legislation initiated by the FORVM and sponsored by the Rural Caucus passes to provide \$1 million to pay for small community wastewater system and utility rate studies.
- The Lower and Mid-Shore Rural Regional Councils become fully operational.
- Legislation supported by the FORVM passes to establish the Task Force on Resource Industry Business Development.

2003

- Legislation is passed changing the name the FORVM for Rural Maryland to the Rural Maryland Council (RMC) and enlarging the Board to provide even more State agency participation.
- Legislation supported by the FORVM passes establishing a Task Force on Rural Broadband Communications Deployment as well as the Upper Shore Regional Council.
- The RMC moves its offices from Baltimore City to a more accessible facility located in Annapolis (with the Maryland Department of Agriculture).
- The RMC begins work on the 2020 Rural Prosperity Investment Plan; a long-term strategy to promote economic prosperity in Maryland's traditionally underserved rural communities and industries. In addition, the Rural Progress Index (RPI) is developed to provide an overview of health and prosperity in Maryland's six distinct rural and semi-rural regions (covering 18 rural counties).
- The MAERDAF Program hits the \$1 million mark in total grants awarded (some 26 rural serving nonprofit organizations and community colleges have been beneficiaries).



Photo taken of bill signing ceremony for Senate Bill 589, which authorized the establishment of MARBIDCO, May 2004.

2004

- Legislation initiated by the RMC passes establishing the Maryland Agricultural and Resource Based Industry Development Corporation (MARBIDCO) to promote the viability of Maryland's agriculture, aquaculture, forestry, and seafood industries through enhanced economic development assistance opportunities. Governor Robert L. Ehrlich, Jr. signs the bill into law on May 26, 2004.
- The RMC hosts cooperative developments seminars in conjunction with the Rural Regional Planning and Development Councils.
- The RMC Executive Director is selected to chair the Interagency Technical Assistance Committee on Wastewater Systems in Maryland (MDE). RMC staff also serves on three subcommittees.
- Work on rural broadband deployment, health care and agricultural/RBI development continues.
- The 7th Annual Maryland Rural Summit is held on November 4-5 in Solomons.
- The RMC celebrates 10 years of service to Maryland's rural communities.

2005

- The Maryland Agricultural and Resource Based Industry Development Corporation (MARBIDCO) Board of Directors is appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the Maryland Senate. The RMC agrees to provide interim staffing support to MARBIDCO and secures a Rural Business Enterprise Grant from USDA to initiate MARBIDCO programmatic planning. Legislation is also enacted to authorize MARBIDCO to receive up to \$5 million annually.
- The Annie E. Casey Foundation provides a sizable grant to the RMC to initiate the Strengthening Rural Maryland Families Direct Services Program.
- The RMC hosts a series of rural prescription drug forums in light of major changes in Federal Medicare Program.
- The RMC assists with the advance preparations for the Governor's Agricultural Forum to be held in early 2006.
- The 8th Annual Maryland Rural Summit is held in October in Garrett County.
- Work on rural broadband deployment, health care and agricultural/RBI development continues.

2006

- Legislation is enacted (the Agricultural Stewardship Act of 2006/House Bill 2) that will provide seed funding of about \$50 million in Fiscal Years 2008 - 2020 to the Maryland Agricultural and Resource Based Industry Development Corporation (MARBIDCO) to promote the viability of Maryland's agricultural, forestry, and seafood industries and help sustain Maryland's rural working landscape. The Next Generation Farmland Acquisition Program was also authorized in House Bill 2. The RMC had been providing staff support to MARBIDCO since its establishment by the General Assembly in 2004.

2006 Continue

- Legislation establishing the Rural Maryland Prosperity Investment Fund (Senate Bill 902/House Bill 1487) is enacted.
- Legislation is enacted (Senate Bill 753) that establishes the Rural Maryland Broadband Coordination Board and provides \$10 million over three years to support the construction of a cooperative-based fiber-optic broadband "backbone" in rural areas of the State.
- The Maryland Agricultural Education and Rural Development Assistance Fund (MAERDAF), which the RMC administers with the help of an interagency board, is funded again in the State Budget after a one-year hiatus. MAERDAF receives a record number of grant proposals, of which 25 are funded.
- The Interagency Technical Assistance Committee on Wastewater Systems in Maryland, chaired by the RMC Executive Director, issues its final report.
- The Annie E. Casey Foundation provides for a second year a sizable grant to the RMC to continue the Strengthening Rural Maryland Families Direct Services Program.
- The RMC, for a second year, hosts a series of rural prescription drug forums.
- The RMC assists with the preparations for the second annual Local Officials' Agricultural and Land Use Workshop as well as the inaugural meeting of the Governor's Intergovernmental Commission for Agriculture.
- The 9th Annual Maryland Rural Summit is held on October 25-27 at Sandy Cove in Cecil County.



2006 RMC Board Photo

2007

- MARBIDCO becomes a free-standing organization with its own staff and offices. The RMC's long-time executive director resigns to head up MARBIDCO. The RMC Board appoints David M. Jenkins, former director of the Tri-County Council for Southern Maryland, as RMC's third executive director.
- The RMC Board completes a strategic direction process and updates its strategic plan to reflect a switch in focus from agriculture (which MARBIDCO is now addressing) to improving access to affordable and quality health care in rural communities.
- The RMC's Health Care Working Committee testifies before several legislative committees on the results of its statewide pharmacy forums, held over the previous two years, and to emphasize the health care workforce shortage as it relates to rural pharmacists.
- Two RMC Board members sit on the steering committee which developed the Rural Maryland Health Plan, which DHMH released in June 2007.
- RMC enters into a partnership with the Department of Aging to aid in its three-year grant to implement the Evidence Based Prevention Program.
- The RMC provides staff support for the Rural Broadband Coordination Board which was established during the 2006 General Assembly Session and held its first organizational meeting late in 2006. Nearly \$4 million is distributed to entities constructing a high speed network on the Eastern Shore and Southern Maryland.
- The Maryland Agricultural Education and Rural Development Assistance Fund awards \$252,000 in grants to rural-serving nonprofits. MAERDAF has awarded \$1.9 million since 2001.
- The Annie E. Casey Foundation continues funding the Strengthening Rural Maryland Families Direct Service Grant Program for a third year.
- The tenth annual Maryland Rural Summit is held on Solomons Island.

2008

- In October 2008, the RMC sponsored a Rural Health Roundtable with sponsorships from 11 other agencies and organizations to develop recommendations and an action plan to help improve the recruitment and retention of rural health providers as a means of increasing access to primary and specialty care for Maryland's rural citizens. A major recommendation to come out of the Roundtable was to develop a statewide telehealth consortium so that both those receiving and delivering telehealth services could better coordinate their efforts and use technology more efficiently and more widely to increase access to care in rural areas.

2008 Continue

- Council cohosts a Rural Roundtable: Overcoming Barriers to Family Economic Success on December 11-12, 2008 in Frederick, Maryland in partnership with the Maryland CASH Campaign.
- During FY 2008, the MAERDAF Grants Review Board received 29 applications requesting \$764,073; however, due to limited funding, only \$288,739 in grants were awarded to 18 rural-serving nonprofit organizations.

2009

- In February 2009, the RMC hosted a follow-up Telehealth Roundtable to discuss the feasibility of creating a statewide telehealth consortium.
- RMC partnered with the Maryland CASH Campaign, the Maryland Rural Enterprise Development Center, and the State Office of Rural Health in October 2009 to host a Statewide Rural Roundtable -- a one day event where nearly 150 rural leaders from around the state met in Annapolis to discuss the issues most important to rural areas and to find new ways to collaborate.
- In partnership with the Maryland CASH Campaign to offer an improved Rural Maryland Families Direct Service Grant Program. Under the program, funded by the Casey Foundation, the Council selected seven rural-serving nonprofit organizations to work with low-income rural families to develop individualized savings and financial plans.
- During FY 2009, the Maryland Agricultural Education and Rural Development Assistance Fund received 26 grant applications requesting \$666,129 in funding. The Board selected 16 rural serving nonprofit organizations to receive the \$264,150 in available funding.
- The Rural Maryland Broadband Coordination Board during FY 2009 approved more than \$3.4 million in federal funds and \$604,000 in state funds for rural broadband buildout.
- Vanessa Orlando hired as RMC Executive Director.



2008 Healthy Round Table

2010

- The Rural Maryland Broadband Coordination Board meets to approve the distribution of \$1.5 million in state funds to the Maryland Broadband Cooperative.
- The RMC developed RuralStat, which went online in January 2010. RuralStat is an interactive web-based tool that tracks the general health of rural counties and regions in Maryland. Developed in partnership with the GeoDASH Initiative at Salisbury University, RuralStat allows a user to see how any rural county or region is doing in specific quality-of-life areas (such as poverty, unemployment, etc.) compared to the state, the region, or any other county or region in the state.
- During FY 2010, the Maryland Agricultural Education and Rural Development Assistance Fund program has a total grant pool of \$142,000. The RMC, which is statutorily responsible for administering the program, received 25 applications, requesting \$463,184.
- The Council administers the Strengthening the Well-Being of Rural Maryland Families program. During FY 2010, six rural-serving nonprofit organizations were selected to receive nearly \$91,000 in grants for program-related expenses.

2011

- During FY2011, the MAERDAF Grants Review Board received 28 grant applications requesting \$491,422 in funding. The Board selected 15 rural serving nonprofit organizations to receive the \$130,000 in available funding.
- Passage of HB 173 – Business and Economic Development – Invest Maryland Program which included \$250,000 for RMC operations.

2012

- During the summer of 2012, the RMC Executive Board hired Mr. Jim Youngquist with the SouthEast Regional Directors Institute (SERDI) to conduct a strategic assessment of the organization and conduct a nationwide executive director search.
- Charlotte Davis hired as Executive Director in November 2012.

2013

- For Fiscal Year 2013, the RMC received a line item appropriation of \$167,000 through the State's Operating Budget. The Council reported \$170,970 in carried over funding received in Fiscal Year 2012 through the Invest Maryland Initiative. Additional operating funding of approximately \$25,000 was received in horse racing revenues. Total Fiscal Year appropriations were \$383,182.14 with expenses totaling \$246,825.48.
- The State Office of Rural Health (SORH), Rural Maryland Council (RMC), and Maryland Rural Health Association (MRHA) jointly hosted a webinar on May 21, 2013 on an upcoming Federal Communications Commission (FCC) Rural Health Care Connect Fund. A presentation was made by Mark Walker of Wireline Competition Bureau of the FCC.
- Cohosted with the Maryland Rural Health Association and the State Office of Rural Health, the Rural Action Assembly is held on October 17 and 18, 2013 at Ripken Stadium in Aberdeen, Harford County.



Bill signing ceremony for Senate Bill 137/HB1024 for the Rural Maryland Prosperity Investment Fund.

2014

- Council conducts online surveys of 6-12th grade students in Cecil, Kent and Queen Anne's Counties.
- Rural Maryland Foundation films "Rural Aspirations" video.
- RMC presents a new logo, URL and website, www.rural.maryland.gov
- Passage of SB137/HB1024 Rural Maryland Prosperity Investment Fund
- Revisions and Extension of Termination Date during the 2014 General Assembly Session. This legislation extends the fund's authorization from 2020 to 2030, increases the capacity of the five regional councils and expands programming to include health care.

2015

- Council hosts Rural Maryland Day on February 19, 2015.
- During Fiscal Year 2015, a total of 54 rural-serving organizations submitted applications requesting more than \$1,000,000 in grants. This year, however, only \$170,000 was available; this was distributed to 17 rural serving nonprofits.
- The Rural Maryland Council (RMC) and the Upper Shore Regional Council (USRC) partnered together on a pilot youth engagement project that was envisioned to provide the tools and framework necessary for our communities to engage young people and keep them rooted in our rural areas.
- Council hosted Rural Summit on December 3, 2015 at the DoubleTree Hotel in Annapolis.

2016

- Council hosts Rural Maryland Day on February 11, 2016.
- We were successful in our efforts to attain funding for the Rural Maryland Prosperity Investment Fund (RMPIF) for the first time! On March 29, 2016, the Maryland Legislature passed the Fiscal Year 2017 State Operating Budget, which included funds, for the first time since its creation in 2006, to support RMPIF, a key step forward in addressing disparities in the State's rural areas.
- Supported the successful passage of Program Open Space-Transfer Tax Repayment-Use of Funds (HB462). For the first time since its inception, the program will realize full funding and in Fiscal Year 2018 will be allocated \$5 million for implementation of the Next Generation Farmland Acquisition Program.
- Hosted RMC Executive Board retreat in April 2016 to discuss strategic planning.
- During FY 2016, the MAERDAF Grants Review Board received 57 grant applications requesting a total of \$866,450.75 in funding. The Board selected 16 rural-serving nonprofit organizations to receive \$166,968.00 in available funding.
- Rural Maryland Foundation hosts Farmland screenings in Easton, Denton, Cockeysville, Mt. Airy and Thurmont.
- RMC Health Care Committee releases report encouraging all Primary physicians include an evaluation for depression in their private office visits; review and revise roles of school nurses and counselors to assist in detecting signs of depression for possible medical attention and develop certifications programs in mental health to further enhance qualifications and offset the recognized physician shortage in addressing, treating or referring adolescents suffering from depression.

2017

- Council adopts Strategic Plan with updated vision and goals.
- Council hosts Rural Maryland Day on February 9, 2017.
- Council cohosts a Regional Forum on Rural Broadband in partnership with USDA Rural Development on May 24, 2017 in Annapolis.
- RMC Executive Director named chair of state-wide Task Force on Rural Broadband, Internet, Wireless and Cellular Service.
- Council hosts Rural Summit "Bridging the Divide: Strengthening Rural and Urban Communities" on December 1, 2017.

2018

- In Fiscal Year 2018, the Council receives 119 grant applications.
- Council hosts Rural Maryland Day on February 8, 2018.
- 2018 Maryland Rural Health Plan released highlighting six areas of need and outlining several policy, system-based, and individual recommendations.
- Council hosts two regional Community Reinvestment Act and Broadband roundtables in Hughesville and Allegany College in partnership with the Federal Reserve Bank of Richmond Baltimore Branch.
- Council hosts Small Business Lending Forum in Hagerstown in partnership with USDA Rural Development.
- Council hosts national Partners for Rural America annual meeting in Annapolis.

2019

- Council hosts Rural Maryland Day on February 14, 2019.
- For Fiscal Year 2019, the Council receives 163 grant applications requesting \$10,520,515 in funding requests: the Council awards 79 grants totaling \$5,980,343.
- The Maryland Agricultural Education and Rural Development Assistance Fund awards 42 grants for a total of \$1,093,930 in disbursements.
- Council submits a Managing For Results Report that highlights the RMPiF investments having enhanced life in rural MD through:
 - 657 new full time jobs; 8,755 individuals served; 5,406 hours of instruction; \$1,147,389 in capital investment; Services to 124,099 rural Marylanders; Leveraged \$5,891,531 in nonstate funds.
- Foundation films follow-up video "We are Rural Maryland".
- RMC receives USDA state rural development council recognition.
- Council successfully hosts the biennial Rural Summit on December 12, 2019 at the DoubleTree Hilton Hotel in Annapolis.

2020

- Council hosts Rural Maryland Day on February 4, 2020.
- Council reaches 25th year of operations.
- New Rural Outlook demographic dashboard launched.
- The Council receives and reviews 179 grant applications totaling \$14,679,005 in funding requests.
- In FY2021, the Council under the Rural Maryland Prosperity Investment Fund distributes \$4,808,170 to 34 entities.
- The Maryland Agricultural Education and Rural Development Assistance Fund (MAERDAF), which the RMC administers with the help of an interagency board, is funded again in the State Budget. MAERDAF receives a record number of grant proposals, of which 39 are funded for a total of \$844,543.
- Council adopts updated Strategic Plan.



Pictured Left from Right: RMC Executive Director Charlotte Davis, RMC Chair Doris Mason, and Secretary of Natural Resources Jeannie Haddaway-Riccio. Rural Maryland Day 2016



1994



1995



2003

The Council was established in 1993/1994 under Governor William Donald Schaefer, as the Maryland Rural Development Council. In 1995, the Rural Caucus introduced legislation to establish the Council as an independent State agency and re-named it the FORVM for Rural Maryland. In 2003, the composition of the council Board was expanded, and the name was changed to the Rural Maryland Council.



Our **MISSION** is to bring together citizens, community-based organizations, federal, state, county and municipal government officials as well as representatives of the for-profit and nonprofit sectors to collectively address the needs of rural Maryland. The RMC is an independent state agency located within the Maryland Department of Agriculture. We provide a venue for members of agriculture and natural resource-based industries, health care facilities, educational institutions, businesses, economic and community development organizations, nonprofit entities and government agencies to cross traditional boundaries, share information and address in a holistic way the special needs and opportunities in rural Maryland.

Our **VISION** is a future where all of Rural Maryland is prosperous with thriving resources, vibrant economies and healthy connected communities.

Our **GOALS**

- Encourage healthy, connected communities throughout Rural Maryland through convening of stakeholders, education, public relations and advocacy.
 - Support the development and growth of vibrant economies in Rural Maryland
 - Foster stewardship of Maryland's natural resources
 - Maximize RMC outreach, resources and mission through financial and organizational development
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For more information, visit RMC's website at www.rural.maryland.gov

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