



CHESAPEAKE BAY COMMISSION
CHESAPEAKE CONSERVANCY



In Maryland

New report spurs proposal to reduce Pressure to sell inherited farms

A new study conducted by the Chesapeake Bay Commission and the Chesapeake Conservancy found that focusing on forests and farms is one of the keys for successful land conservation in the Chesapeake watershed. With this in mind, Maryland's members on the commission plan to introduce legislation to extend the period during which heirs who inherit working farms and forests can defer paying inheritance taxes.

"Our goal is to decrease the economic pressure on heirs who inherit working farms and forests so they aren't forced to sell off their inherited lands to pay the estate taxes, and so they have time to enroll the lands in conservation program," said Sen. Thomas "Mac" Middleton, a member of the Maryland delegation on the commission, and the commission's chairman.

Middleton sponsored a bill this past session that established a pilot project to allow heirs to defer payment of the estate taxes for up to three years, as long as the land was kept in working agriculture. The year the delegation hopes to increase the deferral period from three years to six years to reflect the amount of time it currently takes for farms to be accepted in a preservation program.

Nearly 10 percent of Maryland's forest land owners are 75 years old and older and will likely pass property to heirs in the next few years, the new report found. In recognition of the importance of preserving working forest lands, our the Maryland delegation will work to amend the pilot program to extend the estate tax deferral to heirs who inherit working forest lands that have a forest management plan.

Maryland's members on the Commission are: Senator Thomas "Mac" Middleton, the commission's chairman and Senator Brian E. Frosh; Delegates Virginia P. Clagett, James W. Hubbard, John F. Wood, Jr.; John R. Griffin, Secretary, Maryland Natural Resources; and Bernie Fowler, citizen representative.

The Chesapeake Bay Commission is a tri-state legislative commission (Maryland, Virginia, and Pennsylvania) that works on a broad array of environmental policies including promoting land conservation and land management practices to benefit water quality.

Chesapeake Conservancy is a non-profit organization whose mission is to ensure conservation, stewardship, access and enjoyment of the Chesapeake's iconic landscapes, great rivers and cultural and historic assets. The principal focus of the Conservancy is the implementation of: the John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail; the Chesapeake Gateways and Watertrails Network; and a Chesapeake Treasured Landscape Initiative.

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