

Prince George's County Save the Horse Farms Committee Report to the Maryland Horse Council (MHC)

I. Introduction

a. Prince George's County Committee:

- i. The Prince George's County Save the Horse Farms County Committee included Harry Ketts, Valerie Ormond, and Erica Lancaster, all Prince George's County residents, with interests in saving Maryland, and Prince George's County horse farms. The committee stated its mission as keeping horse farms, with goals to ensure farms large and small stay viable as urban outgrowth continues.

Specifically, the Committee's stated goals follow:

1. "Ensure the definitions used by local planning and zoning authorities are compatible with the realities of horse farming, horse keeping, and horse businesses.
2. Educate citizens and farmers of their rights with horses as agriculture in Maryland.
3. Partner with the County Farm Bureau, Agricultural Preservation Working Group, and other entities with similar interests to maintain open spaces and a rural tier.
4. Provide facts and statistics to inform county residents and legislators of the need to save the remaining horse farms for now and for the future."

II. Methods to Implement Goals

a. Research Phase

i. The County Committee:

1. Researched all applicable equine laws, statutes, and resolutions.
2. Requested input from Prince George's County MHC members and civic groups.
3. Investigated views of county officials via background research and on site interviews.
4. Collected facts and figures from Multiple Listing Service database on farm lands today vs. past twenty years in Prince George's County.
5. Discussed Save the Horse Farms campaign with Chesapeake Bay Foundation and Equine Land Conservation Resource (ELCR).

b. Partnerships

- i. Briefed initiatives to Maryland Farm Bureau, Prince George's County Agricultural Preservation Working Group, and Prince George's County Farm Bureau.
- ii. Participated in Prince George's County Equine Industry Task Force (2 of 17 task force members were MHC Prince George's County Save the Horse Farms Committee members).

- iii. Raised county elected officials' and staff interest in Save the Horse Farms Campaign.
 - c. Information Campaign
 - i. Tri-fold for distribution and to further discussions ([http://www.mdhorsecouncil.org/STHFFTrifold7\[1\].pdf](http://www.mdhorsecouncil.org/STHFFTrifold7[1].pdf)).
 - ii. Editorial (Bowie Blade, Aug. 12, 2010) to increase public awareness (<http://www.mdhorsecouncil.org/EricaLancaster-BowieBlade-editorial.pdf>).
 - iii. Discussions within communities of Committee members (civic groups, associations, word-of-mouth, networking).
 - iv. Drafting portions of the Prince George's Equine Industry Task Force Report and ensuring Save the Horse Farms issues covered in final report and legislation (<http://www.princegeorgescountymd.gov/Government/LegislativeBranch/pdf/2010-equine-Industry-Task-Force-Final-Report-reduced.pdf>).
 - v. Sharing information with other MHC County Coordinators through MHC meetings, then briefing and posting all pertinent information to MHC web site.
- III. Completed Actions
 - a. Research
 - i. The Committee received very little input from residents on concerns with county zoning and its effect on operations. Committee members will continue to welcome input, but do not see a reason to keep soliciting comments from people who do not wish to submit comments.
 - ii. Although research will be ongoing, the Committee believes the county zoning and definitions have been adequately researched at this time.
 - b. Legislation
 - i. Enacted legislation
 - 1. CB-85-2010 - Enacted - Animal Control: For the purpose of amending the definitions of farm animal and livestock and generally relating to animal control. Specifically, this legislation replaced the term "riding purposes" with the term "equine activities," to reflect greater purposes of horses than simply for riding, and solidifies equine activities as agricultural in the county.
 - 2. CB-92-2010 – Enacted - Agriculture, Agritourism, Equine Activities and Equine Facility: An Ordinance amending the definitions of agriculture and agritourism; adding definitions for equine activities and equine facility, and permitting these uses in certain residential zones and generally relating to these uses. Specifically, this legislation accomplishes the following:
 - a. Adds the language: "Agriculture includes equine activities and equine facilities."
 - b. Adds "Equine Activities" and "equine facilities" to agritourism uses (formerly only horseback riding was included as a use).
 - c. Defines Equine Activities as follows: "Includes teaching equestrian skills, participating in equestrian events, exhibitions

or other displays of equestrian skills, and caring for, breeding, boarding, dealing, selling, renting, riding, or training equines.

- d. Defines Equine Facility as follows: "Includes barns, stables, rings, paddocks or accessory buildings or structures used for Equine Activities."

- ii. Ongoing legislation

1. Although the Committee had hoped to pass the Right to Farm legislation, the County Council passed the lead for this action to the Prince George's County Agricultural Preservation Working Group. The Committee will monitor progress.
2. Early in the research phase, the Committee believed the county's manure removal legislation needed to be changed. However, in further discussions, it was discovered that there were more reasons for the legislation than originally understood, for example, to protect equines in certain situations. Per County Resolution 107-2010 (Adopted), the Agricultural Preservation Work Group has been expanded to review, evaluate and recommend "low impact development" technologies and other measures to improve agricultural operations as recommended by the 2010 Equine Industry Task Force. The Committee believes this group is more appropriate to address the manure removal issue under this resolution.

- iii. Other issues included in Prince George's County Equine Industry Task Force Report for County Coordinators (and others) to continue to follow:

1. Bowie Training Facility zoning of stables in Open Space to help ensure facility retains equine "farm" use.
2. Equine industry voice and involvement in Rosecroft Raceway re-zoning.
3. Positive impact statements regarding Maryland Horse Park proposal in Prince George's County.

- IV. Recommendations for future

- a. Close out research phase for Prince George's County Save the Horse Farms campaign.
- b. Publicize outcome of Prince George's County Equine Industry Task Force and solicit support for items that can help Save the Horse Farms (ex. "Did you know that your farm may be considered 'agritourism' and therefore be eligible for certain benefits?")
 - i. Press releases
 - ii. Blog comments, for instance, to ELCR type organizations, discussing grass roots campaign
 - iii. Interview with Prince George's County Gazette and other local media.
- c. Ensure Save the Horse Farms interests represented in Prince George's County Equine Industry Task Force extended discussions and actions. Per County Resolution (CR), "CR-106-2010 - Adopted - Equine Industry Task Force: For the purpose of extending and expanding the mission of the Equine Industry Task Force."
- d. Continue developing partnerships at the county level and expand to other counties and the State as appropriate.

- e. Conduct a community meeting for Committee members to explain recent and ongoing Save the Horse Farm initiatives to county horse farms owners. In an Open House type forum, explain the highlights of recent and ongoing legislation, actions of the Equine Industry Task Force, and allow for questions and dialogue on items of interest.

V. Conclusion

- a. In less than one year, the Prince George's County Save the Horse Farms Committee became aware of the county issues affecting many farm owners, enacted positive County legislation for the equine community, provided public awareness for an important subject, participated in the first county-level Equine Industry Task Force, and developed strategic partnerships to join forces in the statewide Save the Horse Farm Campaign's efforts.