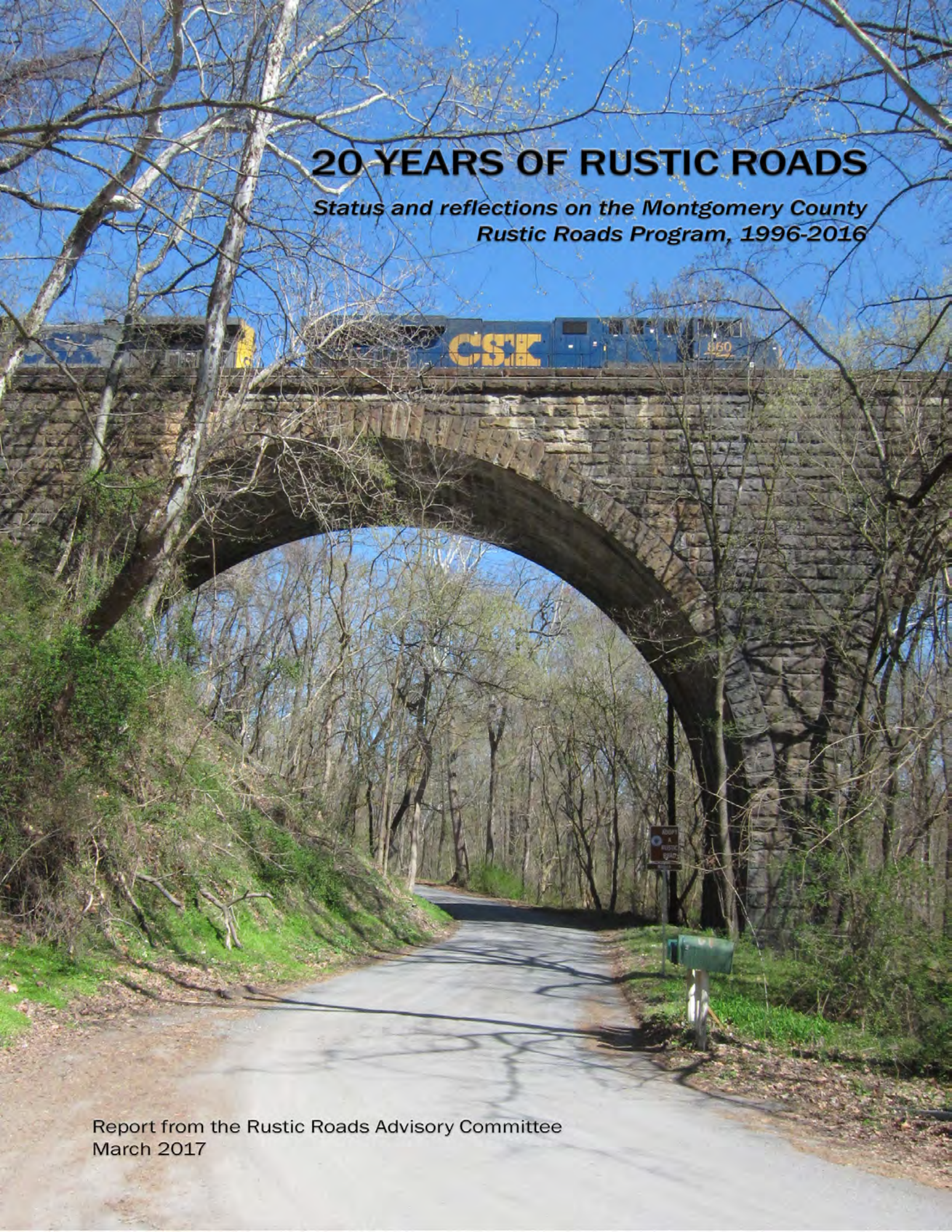


# 20 YEARS OF RUSTIC ROADS

*Status and reflections on the Montgomery County  
Rustic Roads Program, 1996-2016*



Report from the Rustic Roads Advisory Committee  
March 2017



*Front cover: Mouth of Monocacy Road, exceptional rustic*

*Opposite page: West Harris Road, exceptional rustic*

# 20 YEARS OF RUSTIC ROADS

STATUS AND REFLECTIONS ON THE MONTGOMERY COUNTY RUSTIC ROADS PROGRAM, 1996 – 2016  
March 2017



*West Harris Road, exceptional rustic*

This report has been prepared by the Rustic Roads Advisory Committee which oversees the Rustic Roads Program. For additional information about the program, please contact:

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## SUMMARY

This report provides a 20-year retrospective look at the Montgomery County Rustic Roads Program, beginning with the first Rustic Roads Functional Master Plan in 1996. The back of the report contains a more detailed status report for the activities of the Rustic Roads Advisory Committee during the past two years.

This report is also a call to action. While the program has proven to be broadly popular, the roads that are protected by the program have been incrementally changing and losing the character that makes them special. The stated purpose of the Rustic Roads Program is the preservation of the rustic roads. To accomplish this, the program must be strengthened and it must be supported at the top levels of our County agencies.

Time has shown the prescience of the Montgomery County Council's action in creating the Rustic Roads Program. Preserving the rustic roads has safeguarded the Montgomery County Agricultural Reserve, our farms and our working landscapes, while also celebrating our historic landscapes such as the C&O Canal, and our rural hamlets and villages such as Sandy Spring, Boyds, Barnesville and Hyattstown. The appreciation of our history and local heritage has grown since the program was created, and our local farming has been shifting to include the production of more table crops and farms for the public to visit such as Pick Your Own orchards, vineyards with tasting rooms and agritourism destinations.



*Gregg Road, rustic*

Time has also subjected the program and the roads it covers to incremental changes. Some of the changes relate to policies and practices, and some have resulted in physical changes to the rustic roads. Farming practices have changed, bridges have been replaced, historic buildings have been lost and new

buildings have been constructed, trees have grown or been removed, roads have been repaved. Many different kinds of changes, often unanticipated, have occurred.

With this report, our committee begins a much needed assessment of what is working in the Rustic Roads Program, and what is not.

The committee's initial assessment revealed three major elements:

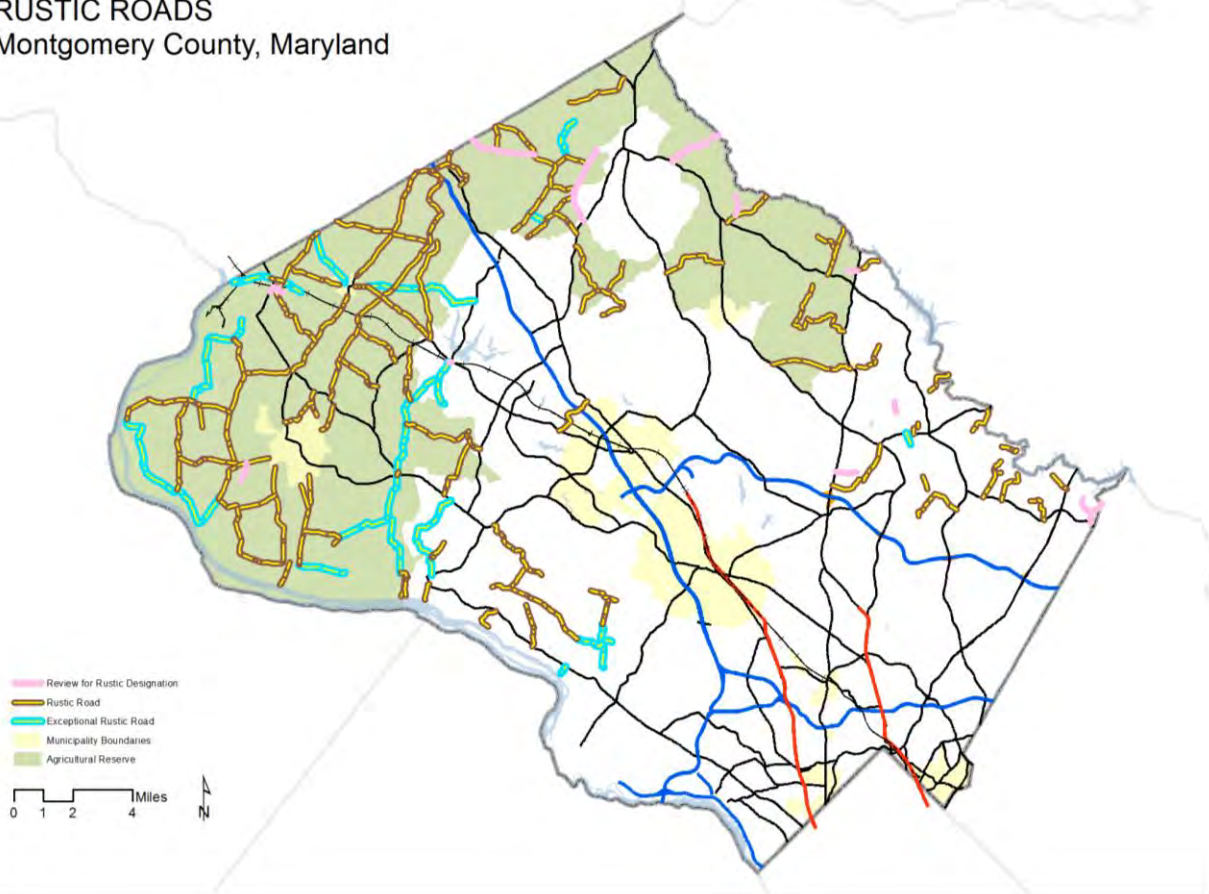
- Over the past 20 years, the program has become broadly supported by residents, farmers and travelers, though a minority who resisted the program from the start continues to oppose it.
- Changes have occurred to the roads, some positive, but those have been limited. Negative changes, such as road closures, unsympathetic bridge replacements, changing pavement materials, and widenings are far more common. Losses of the designated Significant Features, which are required to be retained by County Code, are of great concern to our committee.
- Administration of the program has been notably weak. Neither the County Code nor the Executive Regulation has been updated. The County Code needs to be updated to support the committee and to improve coordination between agencies. The Executive Regulation needs to be updated to fully support the preservation intent of the program and reflect the County Road Code provisions for Context Sensitive Design. Staffing of the committee has been changing annually for several years. Critical coordination efforts, especially with the Montgomery County Department of Transportation (MCDOT), have been inconsistent, and too often lacking in creativity and the necessary emphasis on the preservation of these unique, historic roads.

To assure that the Rustic Roads Program continues to support our agricultural, historic and scenic areas in the future, action must be taken. The program urgently needs:

- Clear and full support from our top County officials and agencies down to the boots on the ground staff.
- A renewed commitment to the preservation of these unique assets.
- An updated inventory of all of the roads, in order to set a path for the program going forward.
- Brown street name signs to promote community awareness and appreciation of these special roads.
- Comprehensive education about these roads, what makes them unique, and the special ways in which they need to be managed.
- An unqualified commitment to interagency coordination with all of the agencies that impact these roads.
- New management practices that preserve the roads and their unique attributes.
- Support for the committee and the purpose of the Rustic Roads Program through updates to the County Code and Executive Regulation for Rustic Roads.

The committee looks forward to working with the agencies, groups and community to strengthen the Rustic Roads Program, and to assure the preservation of the valuable roads in the future.

## RUSTIC ROADS Montgomery County, Maryland





## INTRODUCTION

The Montgomery County Rustic Roads Program preserves the historic and scenic roadways that reflect the agricultural character and rural origins of the County (Chapter 49, Article 8, Rustic Roads Program).

The Rustic Roads Program emerged from a 1989 Task Force appointed by the County Council to study a Rural/Rustic Roads Program, which resulted from widespread community concerns about the changing nature of our rural roads during a time of paving and widening efforts. They recognized the loss of the County's historical heritage and scenic beauty, and that the preservation of agriculture and rural open space programs would be further supported by a Rural/Rustic Roads Program. The Task Force recommended the creation of the program in 1990, writing:

*There are many roads throughout Montgomery County which reflect the agricultural origins of the County, provide glimpses of its history, and afford views of scenic beauty and unusual roadside character. Many of these roads will be altered by the continued development of the County and its accompanying roadway construction and improvements unless protective measures are adopted.*

The Task Force provided an extensive list of roads to be considered for inclusion in the program. This list became the Interim List of 91 rustic roads, which were protected by the legislation for the Rustic Roads Program, effective in 1993. With the 1996 Rustic Roads Functional Master Plan, its 2004 amendment, and various area master plans, this initial list was reviewed in full. More recent nominations by residents and community groups are under review with the Master Plan of Highways and Transitways update, which is currently underway.

Two roadway classifications were created under the program, Rustic and Exceptional Rustic, which were defined by the Task Force as follows:

Rustic A road within the Agricultural Reserve or adjoining rural areas... which enhances the rural character of the area due to its particular configuration, alignment, scenic quality, landscaping, adjacent views, and historic interest, and which exemplifies the rural and agricultural landscape of the county.

Exceptional Rustic A road having such unusual and pleasing character as it exists today that preservation of the road in its current state is highly desirable. The road has special characteristics which contribute significantly to the rural, scenic, or historic features of Montgomery County and might lose these specific characteristics if improved or widened.

Designations in the 1996 Rustic Roads Functional Master Plan, the 2004 amendment to the Functional Master Plan in 2004, and through 10 area master plans bring the total to 98 roads in the program: 80 rustic roads, 12 exceptional rustic roads, and six roads that have sections with both classifications.

The Rustic Roads Advisory Committee, comprised of seven County residents, oversees the Rustic Roads Program. One of the committee's duties is to report on the status of the program to the County Executive, the County Council, and the Planning Board in even numbered years.

This biannual report coincides with the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 1996 Rustic Roads Functional Master Plan. As such, we are taking this opportunity to look at the program to see what effects the program has had over the past 20 years, and what changes are needed to assure that this valuable program remains effective.

Throughout this document, the committee has included highlights from our past biannual reports together with input we have received from the community.

## TWENTY YEARS OF RUSTIC ROADS

In 1996, the Montgomery County Council approved and adopted the Rustic Roads Functional Master Plan, designating 66 roads for preservation. Significant features were identified for each road which must be preserved by code. These include unique road surfaces, narrow bridges, forest canopies and views. Through the adoption of an amendment to that plan in 2004, and through ten area master plans, the total number of roads in the program has grown to 98—there are 80 roads classified as rustic, 12 classified as exceptional rustic, and six roads that have sections with both classifications.

Community support for the program is strong as evidenced by the 13 roads that have been nominated and are under consideration as part of the Master Plan of Highways and Transitways update, though there have been detractors from the start. One road has been removed from the program since its inception, due to changing land uses along it.

When the Rustic Roads Program was first envisioned in the 1980s, the concept that historic and scenic roads were treasured assets to communities was new to many people. The Maryland Scenic Byways program, established in 1988, was in its infancy when the County Council appointed a Task Force in 1989 to study what would become the Rustic Roads Program.

Since that time, the value of protecting historic and scenic roadways has become widely recognized. Local programs have been created in Howard, Frederick, Prince Georges and Loudoun Counties, and the All American Roads and the National Scenic Byways were created at the national level. The concepts of context sensitive roadway design and historic preservation are now firmly established and promoted at the federal, state and local levels.

Rustic roads are an important component of the Montgomery County Agricultural Reserve which continues to be a treasured working landscape as well as a unique pastoral element and the “green lungs” in a large sprawling metropolitan area. Driving or bicycling along the roads remains a quiet pleasure 20 years on and the roads have become a valuable element in farm and county tourism. Residents along these roads tell us that they support the preservation and protections provided by the program, and they voice deep concern when changes are made to the roads that negatively impact their character, and the quality of life of those living along them.

*As a farmer, I appreciate that the narrow rustic roads help keep traffic at a safe speed while moving produce or farm equipment.*

Mark Mills  
Chocolates and Tomatoes Farm

The 1996 Rustic Roads Functional Master Plan recognized that rustic roads would need to be shared among a variety of users, including drivers, cyclists, equestrians and farmers with large, slow-moving farm equipment. To retain the character of the road and the generally slow speeds of traffic along them, sharing the road continues to be preferred.

However, what our committee has seen, and what community members have reported, is that through current maintenance practices, roads have gradually been widened and the traffic speeds on them have increased. Increased speeds have resulted in safety concerns, including reports of crashes in areas that had been safe before the inadvertent road widening.



In recent years, the committee has been asked to consider changes such as continuous street lighting, speed humps, sidewalks, bike lanes and new signing. MCDOT has sought agreement to change surface materials on some roads. Farmers have purchased larger farm equipment that needs to be moved along these narrow roads. Fire & Rescue Service (FRS) reviewers seek further widening of the roads to meet their standards. Widening exacerbates the problem of increasing speeds, without regard to the preservation purpose of the program or the understanding that the program would preserve roads that do not meet modern safety standards.

Rarely are these changes consistent with preserving the character of the road.

The committee recognizes that each road in the program is unique. Some of the requested amenities may be context appropriate on small portions of rustic roads which function as “historic village streets” such as in Hyattstown or Barnesville. This concept is not addressed in the rustic roads legislation or Executive Regulation. Addressing pedestrian needs around schools and train stations has been gaining importance in recent years.

Many challenges remain. Increasing development and traffic pressure, especially from neighboring jurisdictions; the increasingly residential rather than rural nature of some rustic roads, particularly outside the Agricultural Reserve; and the constraints of maintenance budgets will continue into the foreseeable future. Access for large farm equipment will continue to be an issue with overhanging foliage and new roadside barriers.



*Big Woods Road, rustic*

We believe that the County Council created an important and valuable program when it created the Rustic Roads Program. We are committed to protecting and advocating for these roads, their corridors, and their program in the broadest possible way. With a renewed commitment to the program, we believe it has a bright future.

Our 20 year retrospective of the Rustic Roads Program from the 1996 adoption of the Rustic Roads Functional Master Plan to today is broken down into the following sections:

- Physical changes to the roads.
- Public awareness of the program.
- Administration of the program.
- Recommendations for strengthening the program.

*The **Rustic Roads Program is not progressing well.** The Agricultural Advisory Committee (AAC) has recommended repeal of the Rustic Road legislation. While there is program support among preservationists, suburbanites, and environmentalists, it is fragmented. Positions of supporters and non-supporters are diametrically opposed and to some extent uncompromising. Supporters, in general, want narrow, winding, undeveloped rustic roads with canopies of trees, and rights of way with minimally maintained natural vegetation. The program challengers want greater freedom to widen and straighten the rustic roads, and to clear the rights of way. The agricultural community is afraid of restrictions that will limit the movement of farm machinery. Many landholders and developers are concerned that rustic road legislation will limit future land development.*

From the **Status of the Rustic Roads Program, 1994-1996**

## PHYSICAL CHANGES TO RUSTIC ROADS

The purpose of the Rustic Roads Program, as stated in County Code, is to “preserve as rustic roads those historic and scenic roadways that reflect the agricultural character and rural origins of the County.” Key to that preservation vision is limiting the physical changes to the roads and assuring that when changes are needed, they support the program’s purpose.

The most notable positive change to the rustic roads the committee has seen is **the replacement bridge on Mouth of Monocacy Road** over the CSX tracks in Dickerson. In 2007, the Montgomery County Department of Transportation replaced the 1927 bridge over the CSX line with a small, narrow, wood-decked pony truss bridge that is very compatible with the rustic road, and serves as an outstanding gateway to the historic sites, including the Monocacy Aqueduct, on the C&O Canal at the end of the road.

*Our Rustic Roads are integral to the working landscape in the agricultural reserve. Many of these rustic roads are narrow, tree covered lanes that follow the traditional rural byways. I have lived on a rustic road for 16 ½ years, and there are many charming experiences to recommend them. Farm machinery slowly going to adjacent fields helps me see how the patchwork of fields is worked.*

Tina Thieme Brown



*Replacement bridge, Mouth of Monocacy Road, exceptional rustic*



Another positive event was the restoration of the Seneca sandstone abutments on the **1910 truss bridge on Montevideo Road**, following major storm damage in September 2011. MCDOT reinforced the abutments from behind to retain the stone facing. This iconic bridge played an important role in the creation of the Rustic Roads Program when it was proposed for replacement in the 1980s.



*Montevideo Road, exceptional rustic*

Other bridge projects have been less successful.

- In 2002, a bridge on **Howard Chapel Road** over the Patuxent River was replaced with a long, 26-foot wide concrete bridge. The rustic road was 14-17 feet wide. In an effort to retain the rustic character, timber bridge rails and guard rails were used.
- In 2012, a 1950 bridge on **White Ground Road** was replaced. The 1950 bridge was narrow and winding, and only 28 feet long while the new bridge is a broad, sweeping 51.8 feet long. Again, the new bridge rails were made of timber, but instead of continuing the wood, a mixture of brown coated and galvanized “W” guardrails were installed on the approaches.
- Between 2011 and 2013, the 1930 concrete paneled bridge on **Martinsburg Road** was replaced without consultation with the committee. This bridge was designated as a Significant Feature of the road; under County Code, Significant Features “must be preserved when the road is maintained or improved.”

Part of the impetus for creating the program was the then-standard practice of paving gravel roads throughout the county, and widening narrow roads to uniform widths. Our few remaining Politician’s Roads, concrete ribbon roads installed in the 1930s, reputedly leading to the farms of those having influence in the county, were likewise unprotected and subject to change.



These **roads with special surfaces** have been largely preserved by the program, though one Politician's Road was paved during the approval process of the first master plan, and others have been partially changed or threatened with change. Our records of roads with special surfaces include the following:

- Belle Cote Drive, rustic, gravel
- Elton Farm Road, rustic, partially gravel
- Hoyles Mill Road, exceptional rustic, gravel (Parks)
- Hughes Road, rustic, gravel shoulders
- Hunting Quarter Road, exceptional rustic, gravel
- Hyattstown Mill Road, rustic, gravel (Parks)
- Martinsburg Road, exceptional rustic, concrete and gravel (listed in the Master Plan for Historic Preservation)
- Mouth of Monocacy Road, exceptional rustic, partially gravel
- Old Orchard Road, rustic, partially gravel
- Poplar Hill Road, rustic, gravel
- Prescott Road, rustic, gravel (Parks)
- Riggs Road, rustic, gravel
- River Road, exceptional rustic, gravel
- Sugarland Road, exceptional rustic, concrete and gravel
- Tschiffely Mill Road, rustic, gravel
- West Harris Road, exceptional rustic, gravel
- West Old Baltimore Road, exceptional rustic, partially gravel
- Westerly Road, rustic, concrete under paving



*Martinsburg Road, exceptional rustic, designated in the Master Plan for Historic Preservation*

Changes to the materials of these outstanding roads will change the character of the roads and the behavior of users. **Special pavement management** is needed. These roads are irreplaceable in the County, and they require unique handling, with special material needs and special staff training. The committee strongly recommends that all necessary support be provided to maintenance staff in their efforts to **preserve these roads**.

Another negative change involves **road closures**. Four roads in the program have been closed to drivers at least in some areas:

- Hoyles Mill Road
- Hyattstown Mill Road
- Prescott Road
- Hunting Quarter Road (closed for several years, barriers recently removed)

The 1996 master plan anticipated the Hoyles Mill Road closure, but not the others. Hyattstown Mill and Prescott Roads were closed by the Department of Parks in order to dedicate the roadways to hikers and trail users. The committee believes that Hunting Quarter Road had been partially blocked to traffic with Jersey barriers because of repeated washouts. The Executive Regulation for Rustic Roads stipulates that “a rustic or exceptional rustic road will receive the level of maintenance as necessary to assure its continued viability as a transportation facility and to allow for safe travel by motorized vehicles and agricultural equipment.”

**Widening** of rustic roads, most often through routine maintenance practices, is another negative change. Widening strongly impacts the character of the rustic roads, including changing the edges of the roadways, and influences driver behavior, encouraging speeds to increase. Spot checks of road widenings by the committee suggest that this issue is pervasive:



*Close up of how repaving widens roads – White Ground Road, exceptional rustic*



- Beallsville Road (MD 109), rustic – 18 feet widened to 20-22 feet
- River Road, rustic – 18 feet widened to 20-22 feet
- Tschiffely Mill Road, rustic – 10 feet widened to 13-22 feet
- White Ground Road, exceptional rustic – 16 feet widened to 18.5 feet by 2015, and 19.5 feet in parts in 2016
- Black Rock Road, rustic – an informal gravel area used as parking beside the bridge over Great Seneca Creek was paved when Black Rock Road was paved in about 2015. This changed the character of the road and significantly increased impervious levels just feet from Seneca Creek, with no stormwater treatment provided.

Trees and hedgerows, including some listed as Significant Features of the roads, have been lost or removed. The majority of the removals have been by individuals or by utility companies. The committee attempted to work with a local utility provider, as provided in County Code, but later found that tree removals proceeded without consultation.



*The trees lining Gregg Road, a rustic road, were a Significant Feature*

## PUBLIC AWARENESS AND KNOWLEDGE OF THE PROGRAM

Since its inception, the Rustic Roads Advisory Committee has struggled to promote the program, given its otherwise heavy workload with master plans and regulatory items, and lack of a budget for promotional items, such as maps.

When RRAC members have brought educational poster displays to events, such as the County's **Farm Tour and Harvest Sale** event, the **Farm Bureau's Farm to Table Dinner**, and **Poolesville Day**, feedback has been enthusiastic, but attendees are very often hearing about the program for the first time.

The collaboration on the **Agricultural Reserve Guide** (the "Explore" guide) with Montgomery Countryside Alliance, the County's Office of Agriculture and the M-NCPPC, has been and will continue to be an excellent educational tool for the program. The brochure depicts the rustic roads on a map that guides visitors to farms, markets, historic sites and parks within and beyond the Ag Reserve. Due to costs, the printing and distribution are limited.

By far the most successful effort toward education and public awareness has been with the MCDOT **Adopt A Rustic Road Program**, with special brown signage for the rustic roads. With 98 roads currently in the program, 34 are on the latest list of adopted roads, and five roads have been adopted by more than one group, totaling 39 groups or individuals who have adopted a rustic road.

*The **Preserving the Historic Road Conference** is a national event that was hosted in Washington D.C. in 2010. In recognition of the outstanding results of the Rustic Roads program, representatives were invited to join the steering committee, and asked to host a tour of the roads. RRAC members and staff participated along with staff from M-NCCPC, DOT, local historians and community members in an extensive tour of Montgomery County rustic roads (jointly with Loudoun County, Virginia) for conference participants.*

From the **Status of the Rustic Roads Program, 2008-2010**



*Martinsburg Road, exceptional rustic*



Since 2012, the committee has sought to build on the Adopt A Rustic Road success by replacing the standard green street name signs with **special brown street name signs**. MCDOT has installed a few brown signs when replacement signs have been needed, but the new signs remain rare, resulting in confusion rather than clarity. The committee's 2015 Capital Improvement Program (CIP) request to replace all of the signs over a two-year period, was not successful. The committee considers this effort to be a critical element in raising public awareness of the program.





## ADMINISTRATION OF THE PROGRAM

The Rustic Roads Program requires the coordination of many agencies and individuals, including:

- **Montgomery County Department of Transportation (MCDOT)** For maintenance, for capital improvements (from brown street name signs to replacement bridges), for development review items, for roadside tree work, for the Adopt A Rustic Road program.
- **Maryland State Highway Administration (SHA)** For maintenance, for capital improvements on state roads and intersections, for Maryland Scenic Byways program coordination.
- **Montgomery County Department of Permitting Services (MCDPS)** For development review items, for MCFRS (Fire and Rescue Service) reviews, for access permits, for sediment and erosion control permits, for stormwater permits, for roadside tree work.
- **Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission, Department of Parks and Planning (M-NCPPC)** For master plan recommendations, for development review items, for conditional use reviews, for historic preservation reviews (such as Martinsburg Road, roads within historic districts and historic sites that include rustic roads), for park master plans and park development projects.
- **Montgomery County Department of Environmental Protection (MCDEP)** For County Arborist reviews, for roadside erosion and stormwater issues.
- **Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS)** For schools along rustic roads.
- Utility companies, especially power companies, for work that impacts trees along the edges of rustic roads.
- Other Montgomery County boards, committees and commissions, such as the Agricultural Advisory Committee (AAC).



*MCDOT staff works on White Ground Road, exceptional rustic*

When the Rustic Roads Program was established by County Code in 1993, administration was headed by the Department of Transportation, with the M-NCPPC primarily responsible for the master plan efforts. In 1996, when the Department of Permitting Services was created by splitting off and combining sections from various departments, including MCDOT, the administration and the RRAC staff coordinator role shifted to MCDPS. This shift increased the need for interagency coordination.

*The committee participated ...in a **joint meeting** including representatives from Agricultural Advisory Committee (AAC) and the Agricultural Preservation Advisory Board (APAB) and PEPCO specifically to address the need for careful and regular tree maintenance along rustic roads.*

From the **Status of the Rustic Roads Program, 2010 – 2012**

Over the past five years (2012-17), the RRAC has had five staff coordinators assigned to it by DPS. During that time, the role has been assigned to newer staffers with limited authority. These coordinators have been uniformly thoughtful and tried to support the committee, but have not been given the needed support or training in the program, its purpose and value. They have little background in the Rustic Roads Program, in transportation issues or in historic preservation issues. Furthermore, being new to the agency, they have rarely had the informal peer-to-peer connections with the other agencies that play an important role in this program.

The committee greatly appreciates the assistance from these coordinators, and recognizes the difficult task they have as the job is presently organized. The committee sees a clear need for staff continuity, support for the authority of the staff from management, better training and more time allotted to the duties related to the Rustic Roads Program and the committee. Finally, to address the lack of informal connections, a more formal coordination structure is needed to assure better communication and collaboration between the other agencies and the committee.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR STRENGTHENING THE PROGRAM

The Rustic Roads Advisory Committee has identified the following issues as important to fulfilling the purpose of the Rustic Roads Program. These measures will strengthen the Rustic roads program and the functioning of the committee.

### Recommendations to address physical changes to the rustic roads

ISSUE: Modifications have been made to rustic roads over the past 20 years.

- 1) **Recommendation:** Conduct an inventory of all of the rustic roads to update existing conditions and document what alterations have occurred over the past 20 years.
- 2) **Recommendation:** Once this inventory is complete, it will be necessary to determine what changes to the roads, to the maintenance practices, or the master plans are needed.

In order to preserve the unique rustic characteristics and evaluate the context and appropriateness of the design of requested future improvements, an accurate baseline of current conditions is needed. As the original descriptions were done by the M-NCPPC as part of its master plan program in 1996, we suggest this as a future work item for that agency. With an updated inventory of the roads, a survey of changes to the roads will be needed.

With an updated inventory and assessment, the committee would initiate a broad discussion about changes to the roads and the program. Are there elements of roads that need to be restored? Are there roads that should be removed from the program? Are there maintenance practices that need to change? Are there administrative practices that need to be changed in order for the program to be effective?

ISSUE: Incremental changes have been made to the roads, especially widening but also surface material changes, through routine maintenance.

- 1) **Recommendation:** Develop techniques for maintaining rustic roads that preserve the roads as they were at the time of designation.
- 2) **Recommendation:** Develop, review and implement restoration options as needed.

Standard paving techniques currently being used result in the widening of rustic roads. Several undesirable outcomes result, including changing the character of the road, increasing traffic speeds, increasing impervious levels, increasing erosion and degrading roadside features, such as slopes, trees, hedgerows and wildflowers.

*The Committee met with the Chief of Highway Maintenance on two separate occasions... Specifically the areas of concern are: roadway resurfacing and shoulder repair activities, and tree and foliage trimming and maintenance. The Committee was supportive of DPWT's plan to re-instate the tar and chip (chip seal) resurfacing method for rustic roads. However, the RRAC went on record...that the maintenance of rustic roads should not result in a wider road...The **gradual widening of rustic roads with each successive resurfacing has been a continuing topic of discussion** within the Committee and with Highway Maintenance management.*

From the **Status of the Rustic Roads Program, 2004-2006**



Surface materials have been changed on some rustic roads, and some Significant Features have been lost. Restoration options should be developed, reviewed and implemented where needed.

Rustic roads are unique. If the roads are to be preserved, maintenance techniques must reflect the individual needs of the individual roads. The committee would like to work with MCDOT to find solutions to this long-standing problem.



*Poor results of shoulder work, Sugarland Road, exceptional rustic*

ISSUE: Limited knowledge about historic roadway structures and materials, and limited knowledge about the maintenance, renovation and restoration procedures needed to preserve them.

- 1) **Recommendation:** Develop and regularly provide training about our historic roadway structures, including bridges, walls and paving materials, to create a shared understanding and appreciation of their value, and what the program seeks to preserve.
- 2) **Recommendation:** Develop and regularly provide training about maintaining, renovating, and restoring these historic structures.
- 3) **Recommendation:** Offer joint training and online training options to the broadest possible audience, from staff at all agencies that are involved, to the RRAC members, to community groups and residents.

Other than the historic background information provided for individual roads in various master plans, there is very limited information that is readily available about the historic structures and elements that make up the rustic roads. Without this core understanding, preserving the designated roads and their environs will be haphazard, at best. The committee believes that historic preservation staff at the M-NCPPC and MCDOT staff would be best suited to jointly lead the effort needed to create training about these elements.

Once information about the historic structures and elements is available, the next clear step is to research and create training on their maintenance, as well as on renovation and restoration techniques, where those steps are needed. Creating this training may involve multiple agencies and perhaps outside experts.

Providing this training to the largest possible audience will be a vital element to the longevity of the program. Where the committee, a resident or an agency staff member is unaware of the importance of an element, they will not place the appropriate value on its preservation, nor be aware of renovation or restoration options, when elements are deteriorating.

**ISSUE: Lack of Significant Features identified on many roads designated outside of the two Rustic Roads Functional Master Plans.**

- 1) Recommendation:** Support the M-NCPPC’s Master Plan of Highways and Transitways (MPOH&T) work item to identify significant features and roadway characteristics for designated rustic roads that do not have such identified features. This identification is in the stated scope of work of the MPOH&T update currently pending.
- 2) Recommendation:** Until the MPOH&T is completed, and during periods when roads are nominated and awaiting a master plan opening, refer reviews to the committee and request that we create a recommended list of Significant Features.

The County Code requires that “When the Council classifies a road as a rustic road or exceptional rustic road, the Council must identify the significant features of each such road that must be preserved when the road is maintained or improved.” However, no significant features were identified for several rustic roads that were designated in area master plans subsequent to the 1996 Functional Master Plan. The M-NCCPC plans to remedy this as part of the update to the Master Plan of Highways and Transitways. Without the identification of significant roadway features, the unique scenic and historic roadway characteristics of a particular road are more difficult to protect from modification or destruction. For example, there are no Significant Features for rustic roads designated by the Potomac Subregion Master Plan, so when questions about the gravel surface of Poplar Hill Road have come up, it has not been clear that it is a protected feature, as it is on many gravel rustic roads. This ambiguity also leaves the Glen Road bridges more susceptible to changes such as widening than if they were identified as specific significant features that must be protected.

During the earlier years of the program, an Interim List of roads was maintained—roads that would be considered when area master plans were updated. These roads were protected until they were reviewed with a master plan. If a change was proposed prior to the master plan approval, agencies and applicants were directed to seek input from the committee on the Significant Features. Reinstate this procedure for the roads on the MPOH&T list and also for roads that are nominated in the future, which often wait several years for a master plan to open and allow review.

## Recommendations to improve public awareness and knowledge of the program

ISSUE: Lack of public awareness and identification of Rustic Roads

- 1) **Recommendation:** Fund a timely program to install special brown street name signs on all Rustic Roads.

Promoting public awareness and knowledge of the program is one of the required duties of the RRAC. One of the simplest methods to identify rustic roads to both the public and county or other agency staff is by use of a unique street name sign to set these roads apart from the non-rustic roads. A unique brown street name sign for rustic roads was approved by MCDOT and the committee in 2012, but signs are only replaced on an as needed basis.

The RRAC, with support from several groups and individuals, sought a CIP budget item in 2015 for this project, but the effort was ultimately unsuccessful. We urge that CIP funds be allocated to MCDOT so that the rustic road street name signs can be comprehensively installed over a one or two-year period.

Special signing would significantly contribute to and complement other public outreach programs the committee and other community groups have or may develop. Additionally, and very importantly, it would be a flag and reminder to county and other agency staff that

*Montgomery County's Agricultural Reserve is a treasure. The best way to experience it is slowly and intentionally. Rustic Roads help the visitor to slow their pace and truly experience all the Reserve has to offer.*

Janis Glenn

a particular road is rustic and, therefore, has certain associated regulations and requirements that must be met before any modifications are made. Visible identification of the roads is important for public support and will help eliminate mistakes.

ISSUE: Posting of Adopt A Rustic Road signs on roads that are not rustic

- 1) **Recommendation:** Adopt A Road staff should verify Rustic Road status with the RRAC staff coordinator prior to posting signs.

The Adopt a Rustic Road program has been an outstanding success for making people aware of the Rustic Roads Program, and the committee continues to be hugely appreciative of MCDOT staff support for the program. But for several years, complaints have been received about roads being posted with Adopt A Rustic Road signs that are not rustic. The committee has found cases where the road has been nominated by the community, or a different segment of the road is classified as rustic, or the road is classified as country, some of which appear similar to rustic roads. The errors can result in a variety of difficulties, the most important one to the committee being the public misunderstanding this creates about which roads are included in the program.

The committee has been working with MCDOT staff by reporting erroneous signs, and by providing maps and lists of rustic roads with their beginning and end points, but once a sign is posted, it can be very difficult or even impossible to have it moved or changed. To avoid further confusion, a phone call or email request to the committee's staff coordinator for confirmation is suggested.



## ISSUE: Inadequate time and staff support for consistent outreach efforts

- 1) **Recommendation:** Provide outreach assistance from staff members who are regularly responsible for agency outreach activities, to develop and implement an outreach plan.

The RRAC has discussed multiple outreach ideas, such as photo contests with local high school photography students, road rallies with historic cars through local auto clubs, and creating maps and brochures to be placed at much-visited locations on rustic roads, such as farm markets. Because of the very limited time that the RRAC staff coordinator has available, none of these ideas have moved forward.

*As a downcounty resident, I appreciate the county's rustic roads more than anyone might imagine. The county's rural reaches are my favorite place to visit, and I find that the rustic roads contribute greatly to the rural sense of place.*

Hugh Gibson

Most agencies have a staff member who is assigned to and experienced with outreach activities. Such a person should be assigned to work with the committee to develop and implement an outreach plan.

## Recommendations to improve administration of the program

ISSUE: Limited knowledge about and inconsistent support for the program from agencies.

- 1) **Recommendation:** Provide clear and full support for the Rustic Roads Program from the director level downward at all agencies.
- 2) **Recommendation:** Create an interagency team that meets regularly to assure support and coordination throughout the County. Subgroups may be appropriate, such as an interagency committee on maintenance (MCDOT, SHA, Parks) or tree maintenance (DPS, MCDOT, M-NCPPC).
- 3) **Recommendation:** Support the RRAC in developing an outreach strategy between the committee and frontline personnel to promote awareness, support, and coordination for the program.

The Rustic Roads Program was created by the County Council and is founded in County law and regulation. At the inception of the program, the vision for the program was shared widely by agency directors and staffers. But in more recent years, an incorrect perception has prevailed within a few agencies that this is an optional program of little merit or import, and it is only supported by a few community members.

Councilmembers regularly voice full support for the program, both because they are aware of the strong support it has within the community, and because they recognize the program's broad value to the County. This recognition needs to be embraced by agency directors, chiefs, managers and supervisors, and passed along to staff. This recognition also needs to be established on an interagency basis, so that the program is founded on a broad base, free from conflicting messages.

The committee often has contact with various agency staffers who are making thoughtful efforts to support the Rustic Roads Program, but they are struggling within their agencies because of indifference or poor support from above them in their chain of command. These staffers need internal support and the program needs everyone's support.

Many agencies touch on issues related to the rustic roads through regulatory reviews or needed maintenance. Regular contact among these groups would provide a greater understanding of the goals of the program and the needs of the roads. Through the Development Review Committee, some coordination does exist. This coordination should be extended to a more comprehensive group to include stormwater and access permit reviewers, roadway maintenance staff and roadside tree reviewers and crews.

*There are simple required courtesies extended daily on our rustic byways – whether giving way to the combine, slowing for the hiker or cyclist or coming to full stop for the ambling box turtle.*

Caroline Taylor

Committee members should meet with and provide guidance to frontline personnel who are the ones most often directly addressing issues with the roads. The committee members can learn about the issues staff deals with, and they can directly answer questions frontline staff hears from the public. Assistance in organizing periodic meetings would be needed.

Full support for the program will be evident when the needed time and resources are directed to the program, and staff is rewarded for supporting the program and its goals.



*Workers discuss a culvert replacement project with committee members  
Sugarland Road, exceptional rustic*

**ISSUE:** Lack of continuity, priority, time resources and training of DPS staff provided to the Committee

- 1) Recommendation:** Staff the committee with a DPS or MCDOT experienced staffer with decision making authority and on a permanent basis.

- 2) **Alternative recommendation:** Staff the Committee through the Historic Preservation Section of M-NCPPC using the model currently used by the Historic Preservation Committee (HPC).
- 3) **Recommendation:** If the Committee is staffed by MCDOT or M-NCPPC, amend the County Code to include a DPS staff member as a non-voting member of the RRAC.

Currently, staff to the RRAC is provided by DPS on a rotating annual basis. The employees have a steep learning curve and by the time they become somewhat proficient, the year is over. Further, the RRAC is not a priority or even a significant item in the staff coordinator's work program and the staff has typically had no background in roads or historic preservation. Most crucially, the time required to provide support to the committee takes away from the employee's primary work program but is insufficient to keep up with the committee's needs. MCDOT declined a request by DPS to staff the committee.

With the two departments that are primarily responsible for roads not willing or able to provide sufficient committee support time and resources, we suggest as an alternative that the Historic Preservation Section of M-NCPPC provide staff to the Committee through an interagency agreement with the Executive branch, as is done for the HPC. The Rustic Roads Program is arguably as much about historic preservation as about roadway engineering.

If the Historic Preservation Section assumes staffing responsibilities for the program, a position for DPS will need to be created on the committee. The majority of modifications along these roads by property owners, developers and utility companies require a permit issued by DPS. This process, together with committee staffing by DPS, has resulted in a generally satisfactory level of oversight and coordination. The recent adoption of the Roadside Tree Law appears to be a very positive development for providing oversight to roadside tree removal on rustic roads.

Should such a shift in responsibilities be made, a non-voting member seat for DPS would be needed on the committee, to retain the oversight and coordination with the permitting process. An amendment to County Code would be appropriate.

ISSUE: Inconsistent awareness, support and coordination with MCDOT staff on maintenance and improvement projects results in inconsistent preservation on rustic roads

- 1) **Recommendation:** Designate a staff member from the Director's Office of MCDOT as a non-voting member of the RRAC to be included in RRAC meetings and activities on an ongoing basis. Amend the County Code to include the new member.

Modifications to rustic roads are proscribed by the County Code, master plans, the development process and Executive Regulation. These modifications may typically be made by property owners, developers, utilities and MCDOT as part of a maintenance or CIP project. Sections of two state roads are designated rustic, so the SHA staff and contractors may also perform work on rustic roads. Several roads are within county parks, including three gravel roads.



Unfortunately, some recent overall coordination with MCDOT, has been unsatisfactory—either absent, “after the fact”, or after the RRAC has asked for a briefing after finding out about a project through other sources, usually residents.

The committee is extremely concerned that the lack of coordination could result in significant or unique features on rustic roads being purposely or inadvertently altered or destroyed. The RRAC feels strongly that having a non-voting staff member from MCDOT on a regular basis at the monthly meetings would help eliminate the coordination problem.

***DPWT bridge projects on rustic roads ...are now being submitted by the Division of Engineering Services for Committee review earlier in the process and this has resulted in better overall coordination and more meaningful input by the Committee.***

From the **Status of the Rustic Roads Program, 1998-2000**

ISSUE: Difficulty finding farmers to fill the three positions on the committee

- 1) **Recommendation:** Amend the County Code regarding farmer members of the committee to reflect the language and proportional representation of farmers similar to that used by the Agricultural Advisory Committee (AAC).

Over the past 20 years, farming has been changing in Montgomery County and finding farmers who meet the current code requirement that they be “owner-operators of commercial farmland earning 50 percent or more of their income from farming” has become increasingly difficult. Three of the seven RRAC member are required to be such farmers. Filling these positions has regularly taken several months longer than filling the other committee vacancies, and the RRAC has had to pass up otherwise qualified candidates who actively engage in farming, and whose applications are supported by the AAC, but who don’t meet the income requirement.

The criteria for nine of the 12 farmer members of the AAC is: “bona fide farmers who represent the total farm community and reflect a variety of farm sizes, geographical locations and agricultural projects.”

Adopting this language for two of our farmer members would promote a broader range of farmer interests, and aid the committee in recruiting farmer members. Retaining the existing language for one farmer member is suggested, and would be in proportion to the number in the AAC.

*Rustic roads are a window into our past and as such, they help tie our modern day Ag Reserve to the long agrarian history of the area.*

Ellen Gordon

ISSUE: The Executive Regulation for Rustic Roads does not protect the character of the rustic roads adequately.

- 1) **Recommendation:** Amend the Executive Regulation to reflect the purpose of preserving the rustic roads.
- 2) **Recommendation:** Include clarifying language in the amendment that reflects that rustic roads are not expected to meet the design standards for safety that other roads are subject to; they may be subject to spot improvements for safety based on a history of vehicle and pedestrian accidents, as specified in County Code.
- 3) **Recommendation:** A team that includes the RRAC should be created to advise on the amendment to the Executive Regulation.

The Executive Regulation for Rustic Roads, COMCOR 49.79, provides guidance for maintenance and improvements of rustic roads, primarily directed to MCDOT activities. The regulation is broadly permissive in allowing changes to the roads, and does little to reflect the purpose of the Rustic Roads Program, as stated in Montgomery County Code:

*to preserve as rustic roads those historic and scenic roadways that reflect the agricultural character and rural origins of the County. Preservation of rustic roads must be achieved by retaining certain physical features of rustic roads and by certain right-of-way maintenance procedures, (Chapter 49, Article 8, Rustic Roads Program, Sec. 49-76, Purpose).*

Through numerous complaints from community members and by spot checks by committee members over many years, the committee has learned that applying standard maintenance practices to these unique roads regularly results in changing the character of them. For example, standard resurfacing practices result in pavement widening; pavement widening results in higher traffic speeds, which result in reduced safety for bicyclists, hikers, pedestrians and farmers moving large pieces of farm equipment along the rustic roads. Community members have also stated that they have had crashes on their rustic roads for the first time following repaving and widening.

Safety is also cited as a reason to change the rustic roads, but change proposals, when submitted to the committee, are only rarely accompanied by an analysis of the history of vehicle and pedestrian accidents that is a County Code safety finding requirement for designating the roads. Last, reducing costs and maintenance is cited as a reason to change the roads.

*Do not let anything happen to these history rich lanes, old trails, Indian paths, and pure beauty that criss cross our land and lives.*

Percy Lee Langstaff, farmer



*Grading on West Harris Road, exceptional rustic, has widened the road and cut into the banks along the roadside, resulting in extensive erosion and ongoing tree loss.*

As currently written and implemented, the Executive Regulation provides limited support for the intent of the Rustic Roads Program to preserve the roads, nor for the program's ongoing viability. This issue also places the committee in unwanted conflict with MCDOT because we are not directed to achieve a shared goal.

ISSUE: Ambiguities have developed over time that repeatedly cost the committee time and effort

- 1) **Recommendation:** Consult with the RRAC and apply context-sensitive design solutions to all improvements made to rustic roads that are bounded on one side by a municipality.
- 2) **Recommendation:** Confirm that in municipalities where DPS or other agencies issue permits along rustic roads, the committee has authority to comment on matters relating to those permits where they have an impact on a rustic road.
- 3) **Recommendation:** Confirm that the three rustic roads being retained on MCDOT's Dedicated But Unmaintained road list are public roads that are publicly maintained and remove them from the DBU inventory.

Where rustic roads enter some jurisdictions, one side of the road falls under the County's jurisdiction while the other side falls under the municipality's jurisdiction. The committee has noted that in some cases, a developer will be required to make road improvements to one side of a rustic road that are inconsistent with the classification and character of the road. These roads were classified as rustic at the request and with the agreement of the municipalities, and the improvements do not support that classification.

Where densities warrant elements such as sidewalks, the committee supports using designs that maintain the character of the road. But currently, standard designs for other road classifications are being applied without regard to context, and the committee is not being consulted. Context sensitive design standards are now recognized at the federal, state and local level; coordination and the application of such standards is needed in these locations.

Some County agencies that the committee works with, such as MCDOT and MCDPS, have maintenance or permitting responsibilities in certain municipalities. The committee has received requests to comment on some such permits, but have later been told that they have no authority to comment upon those permits. Clarification is needed.

In 1993, the County established the Rustic Roads Program, with the County Code defining a rustic road as an "existing public road." The Executive Regulation for Rustic Roads requires roadway maintenance sufficient to assure safe travel.

In 2009, the County established a Dedicated But Unmaintained Road (DBU) Policy which requires residents to improve roads to County standards in order to receive public maintenance. There are no standards for rustic roads. One designated rustic road and parts of two other rustic roads were put on the DBU inventory: Belle Cote Drive, Old Orchard Road and Poplar Hill Road. Their inclusion appears to be an error since the roads were already classified as rustic roads when the policy was created and the inventory developed. Further, it is not possible for residents of a rustic road to "improve" the road to meet a County standard and qualify for County maintenance, since the roads do not meet standards.



Residents of Poplar Hill Road and the committee have received a letter from MCDOT, accepting responsibility for maintenance of the road, but an engineering study that was performed shortly thereafter continues to state that the road is Dedicated But Unmaintained. This status appears to contradict MCDOT's letter. This issue needs to be clarified for all three roads.



*Poplar Hill Road, rustic*

## RRAC COMMITTEE MEMBERS AND STAFF, 1996-2016

The first meeting of the Rustic Roads Advisory Committee was held on January 4, 1996. Since then, hundreds of meetings have occurred and thousands of hours have been dedicated to the program. The committee has been very fortunate to have a talented and dedicated group of volunteers and staff coordinators. We wish to thank them and acknowledge their valuable work:

### Members

Edwin D Patterson  
Wendy Child  
Randall Stabler  
Heber Bouland  
Patricia Tregonning  
Milford H Sprecher  
Eileen Ross  
Eugene Walker  
Lloyd Young  
Robert Raver  
Robert M. Albiol  
Laura Van Etten  
Todd Butler  
Cheryl Imperatore  
Jim Arnoult  
Kevin Foster  
Fred Lechliden  
Michael A. Seebold  
Robert Goldberg  
Eric Spates  
Robin Ziek  
Marc T Miller  
Greg Deaver

Greg Glenn  
Christopher Marston  
Angela Butler  
Jane Thompson  
Todd Greenstone  
Tom Hartsock  
Bob Tworkowski  
Sarah Navid

### M-NCPPC Members

Maria Martin  
Judy Daniel  
Mark Dorsey  
Leslie Saville

### DPS Staff Coordinators

Donald Ayres  
Sarah Navid  
Laura Bradshaw  
Jay Beatty  
Brian Jeeves  
Chris Myers  
Michael Knapp

The committee would also like to recognize the members of the Rural/Rustic Roads Task Force that recommended the creation of the program in their report in 1990.

### Members

Mary Ann Thane, chair  
Frederick Gutheim  
Robert M. Hanson  
Franklin A. Jamison  
Steven D. Lubar  
Gwen Marcus  
Robert L. Mitchell  
Glenn Orlin  
Edward P. Thompson, Jr.

Elizabeth Tolbert  
Aron Trombka  
Tim Warman  
Piera M. Weiss  
Patricia B. Willard

### Staff

Justina J. Ferber, Legislative Analyst  
Linda Alford, Legislative Analyst  
Karen C. Brogden, Office Services Manager

# RRAC BIENNIAL REPORT, July 1, 2014 to June 30, 2016

## DUTIES OF THE RUSTIC ROADS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Under County Code, the committee has four specific duties which are addressed in detail in the sections below:

1. Promote public awareness and knowledge of the County Rustic Roads Program;
2. Review and comment on classification of rustic roads and exceptional rustic roads;
3. Review and comment on Executive Regulations and other County policies and programs that may affect the Rustic Roads Program; and
4. Report on July 1 of each even numbered year to the Executive, the Council, and the Planning Board on the status of the Rustic Roads Program.

### Promote public awareness and knowledge of the County Rustic Roads Program

- The committee continues to advocate for the installation of brown street name signs for rustic roads, to enable them to be readily identified. In 2015, the RRAC and multiple supporting groups and individuals submitted a budget request to the County Council for brown street name signs on rustic roads. Due to budget constraints, the item was not funded. This item remains one of the RRAC's most important elements for promoting awareness of the rustic roads.
- In 2016, an RRAC member mentored a Global Ecology student from Poolesville High School. For her senior project, Anelia Slavoff researched the history of Allnutt Road, a road that was nominated for rustic classification by the residents living along it. The historic farm the road passes through has been owned by the same family for more than 200 years. Through research of historic documents and deeds and by interviewing one of the family members, Anelia assembled and wrote an extensive history of the road and its environs. The outstanding report received an award from Sugarloaf Citizens' Association.

Anelia's project brought the Rustic Roads Program to the attention of students and faculty in the high school's Global Ecology program. Due to the success of this project, two more Global Ecology students have approached the RRAC member about researching other roads. (Anelia's project is available on the Rustic Roads website,

<http://montgomeryplanning.org/planning/transportation/rustic-roads/>.)

We will use Anelia's excellent research as part of our consideration of the road's rustic nomination.

### Review and comment on classification of rustic roads and exceptional rustic roads

- The Committee reviewed the **Sandy Spring Rural Village Plan** with respect to rustic and exceptional rustic designation.
  - Several years ago, **Bentley Road** residents wrote to the committee, seeking a rustic designation for their road. As part of this master plan, we reviewed the road and



- supported the community's request for designating the entire length of Bentley Road as a rustic road.
  - **Meeting House Road** was designated as a rustic road in the previous master plan. Upon review for this master plan, the committee noted that the road met the criteria for exceptional rustic, and recommended that the designation be changed.
  - Both recommendations were adopted by the County Council in 2016.
- As part of the update of the Master Plan of Highways and Transitways, the committee will be reviewing nominations for 13 new rustic roads, and reviewing descriptions and Significant Features of 28 existing rustic roads. The committee has initiated site visits to the roads.

Review and comment on the Executive Regulation and other County policies and programs that may affect the Rustic Roads Program

- Briefing to the County Council's Transportation, Infrastructure, Energy and Environment Committee – October 19, 2015

Three RRAC members and staff briefed the Transportation, Infrastructure, Energy and Environment Committee members on the status of the Rustic Road Program. Several issues were discussed:

- Unintended incremental changes to the roads such as pavement widening and changing materials
- The need for improved coordination between the RRAC and various agencies, including MCDOT and MCFRS.
- The difficulty of finding eligible farmer members under the existing language in the County Code
- The need for better maintenance along unpaved rustic roads. Staff attended training on environmentally sensitive gravel road maintenance at Penn State, and recommended that MCDOT consider sending staff to this course. The training provides extensive information about materials and techniques that reduce maintenance time, costs and dust, and improve drainage on gravel roads.
- The need to make residents and visitors aware of the Rustic Roads Program. The Adopt a Rustic Road program has been highly successful in making travelers aware of the rustic roads. Adding brown street name signs is a critical measure in continuing that success.

- **Updates to County Code**

The Rustic Roads Program is authorized by County Code, Chapter 49, Section 8. To better support the program, the RRAC recommends that updates be made, especially to the membership section of the code.

Three of the seven members of the committee are farmers. Over the course of the last several years, the committee has found it increasingly difficult to recruit farmer members. In discussing the issue with the Agricultural Advisory Committee (AAC) staff and Agricultural Preservation Advisory Board staff, this challenge has been identified as a difficulty the committees share—the number of traditional farmers has been decreasing, and their farm operations keep them very

busy—finding time to volunteer for a committee can be difficult. The RRAC is looking at ways to update the language on farmer eligibility to allow for a broader pool of farmer candidates.

Another recommended change involves the addition of two non-voting members, one from DPS and one from the MCDOT, to improve communication and coordination. Currently, DPS provides staff to the committee, and MCDOT makes occasional presentations. Given the critical role MCDOT staff members play in the preservation of these roads, we recommend their regular participation.

## INTERAGENCY COORDINATION

### Coordination with MCDOT

MCDOT is responsible for maintenance and improvements on the majority of rustic roads. Close coordination and regular collaboration with MCDOT staff is critical to the success of the Rustic Roads Program.

- In 1990, **Poplar Hill Road** was listed for consideration as a ‘small, unpaved’ rustic road in the Proposal for a Rural/Rustic Roads Program, and it was subsequently put onto the Interim List of rustic roads. In 2002, with the adoption of the Potomac Subregion Master Plan, the road designation was finalized. During that time, the road was not publicly maintained—it was called an “orphan” road, and in 2009, became a Dedicated But Unmaintained (DBU) road.

Because rustic roads are public roads, the residents approached the RRAC, requesting support for public maintenance of the road. The committee wrote in support, and asked for MCDOT to assess the road. MCDOT agreed to maintain the road, and conducted a survey and engineering assessment, recommending drainage and safety improvements, and that the gravel road be tar and chipped to reduce maintenance. Many community members, citing potholes, mud and dust, support the change.

Since MCDOT has been maintaining the road for a limited time, and has not been using dust suppressants, the committee suggested that the road be considered for treatment using the **Penn State Center for Dirt and Gravel Roads Studies** recommendations for driving surface aggregate and methods, to address the community’s concerns. [Postscript: As of March 2017, MCDOT has invited Penn State to assess the county’s gravel roads.]

- Residents on **Batchellors Forest Road** requested a shared use path from the new Trotters Glen development to Farquhar Middle School. MCDOT studied the section of road and determined that the proposal would exceed the budget for the sidewalk program, due to the need for grading, retaining walls, and utility relocation. Generally, sidewalks and shared use paths are inconsistent with the character of rustic roads.
- The committee noted **bridge proposals on rustic roads** in the 2017 MCDOT CIP request that had not been presented or reviewed. Upon request, MCDOT presented a Mouth of Monocacy Road bridge superstructure replacement and Montevideo Road bridge repairs. Bridges in The Glen in Potomac will be discussed at a later time. Coordination is ongoing.

In the future, items such as these should be submitted to the committee for review prior to inclusion in the CIP.

- Two Politician's Roads—1930s concrete ribbon roads—are exceptional rustic roads. The Politician's Road sections are named as Significant Features which must be retained under law. MCDOT proposed tar and chip for the gravel shoulders of **Sugarland Road** to reduce the gravel erosion. The committee was told that the tar and chip would replicate the appearance of the gravel shoulders. On that basis, the RRAC approved the change with work completed in 2014, and monitored the results. The first winter, the committee noted damage primarily from snow removal equipment which required patching. The second winter saw patching of the patches, poor drainage and a poor overall appearance; the tar and chip has not replicated the appearance of the gravel shoulders. Restoring the gravel shoulders has been discussed as an option with MCDOT.

Without consulting with the committee, MCDOT also replaced the gravel shoulders on **Martinsburg Road** with tar and chip. This section of road is in the Master Plan for Historic Preservation, and requires review by the Historic Preservation Commission, which was likewise not done. This matter is unresolved.

- In 2016, the committee contacted MCDOT with concerns about **Adopt A Rustic Road** signs on portions of roads that are not rustic, including Martinsburg Road and Whites Ferry Road. To date, the signs have not been relocated.

### Coordination with the Maryland State Highway Administration

Coordination with SHA is routinely necessary for the committee. Portions of two state highways are designated as rustic roads, and numerous rustic roads intersect with other state highways. In addition, two Maryland Scenic Byways pass through Montgomery County, and several rustic roads are part of these Byways routes. These double designated roadways have led to a productive and collaborative relationship with staff for the two programs.

- In 2014, the **Maryland Scenic Byways** program initiated a new signage program promoting the byways and sites to visit along them. The committee reviewed and supported installation of the signs.
- The committee reviewed the proposal for the **MD 97 Brookeville bypass** for impacts to Brookeville Road, a rustic road. The committee recommended the high bridge alternative that would have minimized the impact to the rustic road, and made comments on other alternatives to reduce the impacts to the road. A roundabout option was selected.

*Maryland has designated 19 Scenic Byways, with two in Montgomery County; these Byways traverse numerous Rustic Roads...the **Maryland Scenic Byways Coordinator** offered an excellent **Scenic Byways workshop to the RRAC staff** and members which was also attended by staff from Montgomery County DOT, Department of Parks, the Heritage Tourism Alliance of Montgomery County, the City of Rockville, and the National Parks Service. Since then, County staff has worked with the Scenic Byways staff on two proposals on Rustic Roads...*

From the **Status of the Rustic Roads Program, 2010 - 2012**



- Improvements were proposed at the intersection of **Brookeville Road and MD 108** to widen the road and raise the elevation of the intersection. The committee submitted comments asking for impacts to be reduced.

#### **Coordination with the Parks Department**

Many parks are located along rustic roads, leading to regular reviews and consultations between the Montgomery County Department of Parks staff and the committee.

- Department of Parks staff has presented **Greenbrier Local Park** development plans to the committee at several stages and has been very sensitive to maintaining the character of **Glen Road**, a rustic road. Most recently, they consulted with the committee on trees in poor health along the road that needed to be removed. Removals and replacements were agreed upon that will retain the natural wooded character of this section of the road.
- Parks staff and the committee have likewise been working together on **Seneca Store** as the plan has developed. Initially, no changes were anticipated to **Old River Road**, but later, a stormwater facility was proposed. Due to the impact on the rustic road, a waiver to the requirement for stormwater management treatment was granted by DPS. The committee is appreciative of the sensitivity shown by both Parks and DPS staff to the historic alignment of Old River Road that is being preserved, and is enthusiastic about reopening this facility.
- For several years, residents have been requesting **cricket fields** in the County. A site at **Schaeffer Road and Burdette Lane** in Germantown was selected—both roads are classified as rustic. Parks staff has worked with the committee on several occasions to minimize disturbances along these two rustic roads, locate access points sensitively, and provide screening of the new facilities, thereby retaining the character of the rustic roads.

#### **Coordination with the Department of Environmental Protection**

Projects will periodically have overlap between the committee and DEP. In the future, it may be useful to increase this coordination.

- A utility sought permits for the removal of several trees along **Martinsburg Road**, an exceptional rustic road, on County-owned property. DEP requested that the committee review its recommendations. The committee supported DEP's recommendations, which limited the removals of healthy trees, thereby retaining the character of the roadside.
- DEP staff inquired about the possibility of installing stormwater facilities on rustic roads. No specific project has come up, but this discussion may be worthwhile to pursue in the near future. Given the discussions about gravel roads and erosion, this conversation might begin with a look at reducing the amount of gravel from roads that is migrating into our streams.

#### **Development Review**

Most projects on rustic roads that come before the Development Review Committee for pre-preliminary, preliminary or site plan reviews are referred to the committee for comment by staff with DPS, MCDOT and M-NCPPC. Site plans for Conditional Use applications have also been referred for review.

- Club Hollow Property and Resurvey on Kilmain - Club Hollow Road, rustic (fire cisterns)

On these two adjacent properties, the Fire and Rescue Service reviewer required the inclusion of an easement for a 30,000 gallon water cistern. On the Club Hollow Property, a 12 foot by 60 foot widening of the rustic road would be required for access, with extensive grading along the road. On Resurvey on Kilmain, a 32-foot wide driveway area in the front yard of the future residence would be required. The committee proposed a single shared easement.

- Emerald Landscaping - Burnt Hill Road, rustic (conditional use, landscape contractor)  
After an initial discussions of alternative sites for this use, the committee determined that the impacts on the rustic road would be excessive, and they did not support the use. New uses along rustic roads can change the character of the road, and they need to be considered individually and in detail to avoid significant negative impacts to the roads.

*The Committee **reviewed proposals for six ...cell towers...**The General recommendation was that cell towers in the Agricultural Reserve on or within view from rustic roads should be set back from the road as far as possible, should be a monopole or slim pole design with internal antennas and an unobtrusive color, and should use existing driveways for access where possible.*

**From the Status of the Rustic Roads Program, 2010 - 2012**

- Glenstone – Glen Road, rustic (new driveways, entrance, tree removals)  
The committee has reviewed several items relating to changes to the Glen Road frontage of Glenstone, a private art museum and residence. Recent reviews have included new driveways and entrances, and a proposal for the removal of the majority of trees in the right-of-way. Unless the power lines are buried along the frontage, necessitating tree removals, the committee supports the recommendations of DPS roadside tree law staff, and recommends that the healthy, native trees remain.
- Kuhlman residence and business – Budd Road, rustic (Poolesville coordination)  
Two driveways, including a commercial driveway, were proposed for these new facilities. The committee recommended minimizing the width of the driveways to reduce the loss of the existing, mature trees. Representatives from the Town of Poolesville stated that the committee has no jurisdiction on the matter, although DPS has jurisdiction on the roadside trees and the access permits, and MCDOT maintains the rustic roads in this location.
- Freeman Property – Sugarland Road, exceptional (conditional use, equestrian facility)  
The property owner proposed a small horse barn for two horses, using the existing driveway. The committee supported the agricultural use, traditional architecture, modest scale and overall sensitivity to the character of the road shown with this proposal.
- Pleasant Grove Community Church – Mountain View Road, rustic (historic district coordination)  
The existing Pleasant Grove Community Church facility is too small for its congregation, but is unable to expand within the existing building or site. The church has acquired the adjacent property for a needed expansion. A new driveway for the new facility will require removal of a long hedgerow along the rustic road, as well as considerable grading. The committee recommends minimizing grading to the extent possible, and replanting with native trees outside of the driveway's sight lines.

- **Bealls Mount – Stoney Creek Road, rustic (subdivision)**  
A proposed subdivision reused an existing brick driveway in order to retain the character of the edge of the rustic road, driveway and existing mature trees and shrubs that lined it. The committee supported the proposal and appreciated the retention of the unique features.

## COMMITTEE ACTIVITY AND COMPOSITION

### Meetings

Under County Code, the committee must meet at least six times per year. Since the last report on July 1, 2014 we have held a total of 17 meetings. Those meetings took place on the following dates:

September 3, 2014	September 22, 2015
October 7, 2014	October 27, 2015
November 5, 2014	December 1, 2015
February 3, 2015	February 23, 2016
February 24, 2015	March 24, 2016
March 24, 2015	May 3, 2016
April 28, 2015	May 31, 2016
May 26, 2015	June 28, 2016
August 25, 2015	

### Members

As of June 30, 2016, committee members included the following:

- **Christopher Marston**, chair, second term until December 2017, as representative with knowledge of rural preservation techniques.
- **Jane Thompson**, second term until December 2018, as representative of civic associations inside the Agricultural Reserve.
- **Todd Greenstone**, first term until December 2016, as owner-operator of commercial farmland.
- **Bob Tworowski**, first term until December 2017, as representative of civic associations outside the Agricultural Reserve.
- **Audrey Patton**, first term until December 2016, as owner-operator of commercial farmland, and Agricultural Advisory Committee representative.
- **Tom Hartsock**, first term until December 2017, as owner-operator of commercial farmland.
- **Sarah Navid**, first term until December 2019, as representative with knowledge of roadway engineering.
- **Leslie Saville**, M-NCPPC designated member, non-voting.
- **Michael Knapp**, DPS, staff coordinator.

The Committee wishes to recognize the dedicated service of members and staff coordinators who left the RRAC since the last report.

The former members are as follows:

- **Greg Deaver** – as representative with knowledge of roadway engineering.



- **Marc T. Miller** – as representative of civic associations outside the Agricultural Reserve.
- **Angela Butler** – as owner-operator of commercial farmland.

The former staff coordinators are as follows:

- **Brian Jeeves**
- **Chris Myers**