

**QUEEN ANNE'S CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION
JOINS LAWSUIT TO OVERTURN REZONINGS**

Queen Anne's Conservation Association (QACA) has joined fourteen citizens and three other conservation organizations in a legal challenge to the recent rezonings of four farm properties from agricultural use to commercial and residential uses. The rezonings affect a total of 525 acres of farmland.

The lawsuit, styled *Bilek et al. v. County Commissioners of Queen Anne's County*, was filed in Circuit Court in Queen Anne's County yesterday. The complaint in the lawsuit alleges that the rezonings are unlawful because they are inconsistent with the County's 2010 Comprehensive Plan. That Plan designates the areas in which the four rezoned properties are located as areas that should remain "rural-agricultural".

Jay Falstad, QACA Executive Director, stated:

"QACA strongly supports the 2010 Comprehensive Plan's treatment of these properties and its fundamental affirmation (on page 1 of the Plan) that Queen Anne's should remain a 'quintessential rural community' -- a county with, as the Plan says, 'small towns connected by creeks and county roads through fields and forest -- a great place to live'.

"These rezonings of farmland for large-scale commercial and residential development are both unlawful and unnecessary. They flout our Plan and come at a time when the County has hundreds of acres of commercially zoned lands that are yet to be developed, and hundreds upon hundreds of residential subdivision lots that are yet to be built on.

"The only upside to these reckless actions, by a slim 3 to 2 majority of the County Commissioners, is that they will be the occasion for the first clear test of the 2009 State law requiring that county zoning actions must be consistent with county comprehensive plans. For that reason, these rezonings and our lawsuit are of major State-wide importance. While we are nominally the plaintiffs here, in reality we are defending the 2009 law and comprehensive plans everywhere, as well as all the citizens and officials in every county and municipality who work so hard in the demanding process of adopting a comprehensive plan.

"It is not too much to say that if we fail, prudent planning for a 'smart, green and growing' Maryland goes out the window. But I am confident we will not fail."

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