

Appendix 4—Review of Ranking Criteria

This appendix contains several tables that describe the ranking schemes of several agricultural PDR programs in the five States whose array of open space and preservation policies were analyzed in the preceding section of this report.¹

- Appendix table 4.1 contains a detailed breakdown of weights used in several ranking schemes. The

¹ We would like to acknowledge the assistance of American Farmland Trust's Technical Information Center and Donna Menino of AFT's Maryland Office in providing a large number of the ranking criteria forms and documentation.

columns indicate whether the PDR program is a State or county program, the rows list factors used when ranking parcels. When points are assigned, the scale is typically unique to each program; to ease interpretation, rather than report specific points the table reports the maximum percentage of total points assigned to each category.

- Appendix table 4.2 lists some minimum eligibility requirements for several State and county agricultural PDR programs.
- For illustrative purpose, the box below shows a portion of a typical ranking scheme.

Example of a Ranking System

Subset of the Harford County, MD, Easement Priority Ranking System (total 300 points)

1. Soil Productivity Score (LESA program) (only used for cropland)	= (100 pts. max)	_____
2. Farmland Capability	(35 pts. max)	
A. Cropland		
i. 75%-100% cropland	= 30 pts.	_____
ii. 50-74% cropland	= 20 pts.	_____
iii. less than 50% cropland	= 10 pts.	_____
B. Pasture		
i. 75%-100% pasture	= 15 pts.	_____
ii. 50-74% pasture	= 10 pts.	_____
iii. less than 50% pasture	= 5 pts.	_____
C. Innovative farming practices	= 0–30 pts.	_____
3. Development Factors	(75 pts. max)	

Appendix table 4.1—Summary of ranking criteria weights as a percent of total points, selected PDR programs

		Maryland						Massachusetts
		State Rural Legacy (Cecil)	State PDR Program			County PDR Howard	County PDR Montgomery	State PDR All counties
			Caroline	Carroll	Harford			
Land in farms, 1997 ^a	<i>acres</i>	2,150,000	111,000	160,000	94,000	40,000	77,000	500,000
Percent land area in farms	<i>percent</i>	35	54	56	33	25	24	10
Base points						18	15	
Soil capability								
Soil productivity		15	44	75		9	44	(1)
Land evaluation and site assessment score					33	5		
Parcel size		5	22	3	5	27	5	(3)
Farmland Management								
Use of land for crops & pasture/ percent tillable					12			
Farm capital improvements								
Owner operated					7			
Farm product sales							4	
Soil conservation plan/stewardship					7		1	
Importance to agricultural community		20			5	9		✓
Duration of family farming								
Unsubdivided farm								
Potential for diversified agricultural use								
Location								(1)
Contiguous to easement/restricted land			11		7			
Near easement/restricted land		25		7				✓
Contiguous to land with easement sale application								
Contiguous to other protected open space								
Percent adjoining land in ag security area/ districts			22					
Percent nearby land in ag security area/ farming area								
In/near exclusive ag zoning or right-to-farm area								
Consistency with county land use plan/zoning		10			7	14		
Development Pressure								(2)
Threat of conversion/significant nonag use nearby ***					3		15	
Near water & sewer service areas					3			
Availability of public water & sewer**								
Number of dev rights given up				4	7	7		
Road access/frontage				4		9	15	
Minimal septic limitations				7				
Near water bodies, good schools								
Historical/scenic/environmental significance								✓
Tenant dwellings						2		
Other								
Local government support								✓
Special conditions (economic hardship, young farmer, etc)					5			
Presence of natural resources/environmentally sensitive land		25						✓
Relative best buy			✓	✓	✓			✓
Other								
Total points		100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	(n/a)
			Note (A)	Note (B)	Note (C)	Note (D)	Note (B)	

See footnotes at end of table.

Continued—

Appendix table 4.1—Summary of ranking criteria weights as a percent of total points, selected PDR programs—Continued

		Pennsylvania*				New Jersey	Vermont
		State PDR Program				State PDR	State PDR
		Lancaster	Luzerne	Union	Montgomery	All counties	All counties
Land in farms, 1997 ^a	<i>acres</i>	392,000	57,000	63,000	42,000	800,000	1,300,000
Percent land area in farms	<i>percent</i>	65	10	31	14	18	21
Base points							
Soil capability							
Soil productivity		40	54	40	40	14	(1)
Land evaluation and site assessment score							
Parcel size							
		10	4	6	3	9	(2)
Farmland Management							
Use of land for crops & pasture/percent tillable		2	4	6	1	14	
Farm capital improvements					3		(3)
Owner operated							
Farm product sales		5		5	5		
Soil conservation plan/stewardship		2	5	5	10		(4)
Importance to agricultural community							(2)
Duration of family farming					1		
Unsubdivided farm				5			
Potential for diversified agricultural use							(1)
Location							
Contiguous to easement/restricted land		13		5	6	18	(2)
Near easement/restricted land			5			9	(2)
Contiguous to land with easement sale application		5	5				(2)
Contiguous to other protected open space				2			(2)
Percent adjoining land in ag security area/districts		1	5	3	5		(2)
Percent nearby land in ag security area/farming area				3			(2)
In/near exclusive ag zoning or right-to-farm area				3		5	
Consistency with county land use plan/zoning		1	5	4	14	6	
Development Pressure							
Threat of conversion/significant nonag use nearby ***		12	3	3	1	9	(2)
Near water & sewer service areas			3	3			(2)
Availability of public water & sewer**		4	3	3	1	3	
Number of dev rights given up							
Road access/frontage		4	3	3	3		(2)
Minimal septic limitations							(2)
Near water bodies, good schools							(2)
Historical/scenic/environmental significance		1	3	3	3		(2)
Tenant dwellings							
Other							
Local government support						5	(2)
Special conditions (economic hardship, young farmer, etc)							
Presence of natural resources/environmentally sensitive land				2	5		
Relative best buy						✓	
Other						9	
Total points		100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	(n/a)
Note (E)							

^a Source: 1997 Census of Agriculture at <http://www.nass.usda.gov/census/census97/county/farms/index.htm>

* Pennsylvania has 7.2 million acres in farms (25 percent) in 1997.

**Pennsylvania counties award max points if public water & sewer service exists; New Jersey awards points if service is absent.

***All programs except Cecil County, MD award max points if threat of conversion is high; Cecil awards max points if threat is low.

Notes

(1) - (4) Massachusetts and Vermont do not use formal point systems. Numbers (1) - (4) indicate the categories that are considered, in order of importance. A check mark (✓) indicates the category is considered also in the rankings. (A) If 20 points are not earned based on soil quality, Caroline County awards up to 12 or 8 points to farms specializing in specialized food production or non-food agricultural production, respectively. (B) Assumes 200 acre farm. For Carroll County, assumes five lot rights given up and within ½ mile of 500 acres in easements. For Montgomery County, assumes property is within ½ mile of ag zoning edge (C) Harford County awards 30 points for innovative farming practices if use of land totals less than 35 points. (D) Howard County deducts points if tenant dwellings exceed one per 50 acres, and awards points if landowner agrees to one dwelling per 50 acres for future tenant dwellings. Also assumes eight development rights are given up. (E) New Jersey deducts up to 10 points if lot rights are retained.

Appendix table 4.2—PDR program minimum eligibility criteria

Requirement	Maryland			Pennsylvania	New Jersey	Massachusetts	Vermont
	State PDR All counties	County PDR Howard	County PDR Montgomery	State PDR Select counties	State PDR All counties	State PDR All counties	State PDR All counties
In agricultural district/ag security area	Yes	In zoning district requiring clustering	Yes	Yes	Yes		
Parcel size	100 contiguous acres, less if contiguous to existing easement	100 acres, or 25 acres if adjacent to at least 50 easement acres	None	50 acres, or 10 acres if contiguous to easement		5 acres	Must be viable farm unit or contribute to adjacent farm
Soils	50% in USDA soil capability Class I-III and / or woodland group I or II	50% in USDA soil capability Class I-III and 66% in Class I-IV	50% in USDA soil capability Class I-III	50% in USDA soil capability Class I-IV			
Use of land				50% or 10 acres in harvested cropland, pasture or grazing land		Agricultural or horticultural use	Must be actively farmed
Conservation plans	Water quality and soil conservation plans required	Water quality and soil conservation plans required	Water quality and soil conservation plans required	Water quality and soil conservation plans required	Water quality and soil conservation plans required	Parcel ranked higher if conservation plans are in place	Parcel ranked higher if conservation plans are in place
Landowner bid/payment caps	(landowner bid affects ranking)			Max \$2,500/acre in Luzerne County; max \$10,000/acre in Montgomery	(landowner bid affects ranking)	Max \$10,000/acre	Lesser of \$975/acre or easement value
Farm gross income test			(affects ranking)	(affects ranking in some counties)		\$500 plus \$5/acre	