

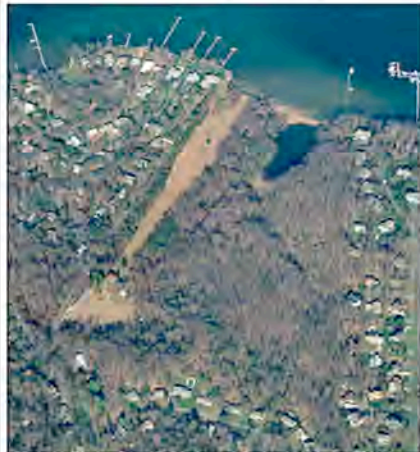
TOP STORIES

State, feds team to buy Spriggs Farm in Arnold

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By PAMELA WOOD, Staff Writer
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Another environmentally sensitive property in the county is being preserved.



TOP: Heather Lipinski – The Capital; BOTTOM: Courtesy of Anne Arundel County

BOTTOM: This aerial photo shows Spriggs Farm, one of the last undeveloped parcels on the Broadneck Peninsula. The farm includes the narrow cleared area and the adjacent woods along the shoreline. The county, state and federal governments teamed up to buy the property.

Spriggs Farm, one of the last undeveloped tracts in Arnold, is being bought by the county with help from the state and federal governments.

The 54-acre tract was once a large farm that over the years was carved up into subdivisions, including Ulmstead Estates and Bayberry.

Now the farm's remaining section will become a park for passive recreation such as bird-watching and hiking. It also may be used by students for environmental education.

"It's the last unprotected farm on the Magothy to be protected in perpetuity from development," County Executive John R. Leopold said. "It's a significant purchase for the protection of this sensitive land."

Leopold called the farm the "crown jewel of the Magothy."

The state Board of Public Works - composed of the governor, comptroller and treasurer - approved the land purchase Wednesday.

The state approved using \$1.4 million in state-local Program Open Space money as well as a \$700,000 federal grant. Anne Arundel County Forest Conservation Funds also are being used.

The property is home to an 1875 farmhouse that the Spriggs family lived in until Ruth Spriggs died in 2008 at age 100.

Part of the land is cleared, but the property also includes forests, a meadow, a stream, a tidal pond and 650 feet of

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waterfront on the Magothy River.

For the past few years, residents from Ulmstead Estates, Bayberry and other surrounding neighborhoods rallied to preserve the farm.

They organized a coalition called the Spriggs Farm Preservation Foundation, set up a website (<http://savespriggsfarm.org>), made T-shirts and held a benefit concert.

Neighbors were worried that Spriggs' estate would need to sell the land quickly to settle debts and tax obligations.

Jack Neil, a trustee of the foundation, said the neighbors calculated that about 40 homes could have been built on the land if it was sold to a developer.

They raced to get funding for preservation, even as helicopters carrying prospective buyers sometimes buzzed overhead.

"It's a very unique convergence of individuals and governmental entities - the feds, the state and the county government - during tough economic times, pulling together a myriad of funding sources to put forth a viable preservation option," said Neil, who lives in Ulmstead.

Neil praised scores of government officials for throwing support behind the purchase, from the County Council to state lawmakers, as well as House of Delegates Speaker Michael E. Busch, D-Annapolis, and Leopold.

The Anne Arundel County government will own the property. The Department of Recreation and Parks will work out details of how residents can visit and use the property, Leopold said.

This is the second major land preservation deal in the county in two weeks.

Last week, the county finished a deal to spend about \$1.4 million to buy development rights on a 200-acre tract near Rockhold Creek in south county. While that property will remain in private hands, the land can never be developed.

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