



Status of the  
**Rustic Roads Program**

July 1, 2008 to September 15, 2010

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

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Rustic Roads Advisory Committee meetings are open to the public. Meetings are normally held on the fourth Tuesday of the month, at least six times per year, at 7:00 p.m., in the 15<sup>th</sup> Floor Conference Room of the Executive Office Building, 101 Monroe Street, Rockville, Maryland.

Information about upcoming meetings and the **Rustic Roads Functional Master Plan** is available online:

[http://montgomeryplanning.org/community/plan\\_areas/rural\\_area/rustic\\_roads.shtm](http://montgomeryplanning.org/community/plan_areas/rural_area/rustic_roads.shtm)

*Cover photo: Wildcat Road (rustic)*

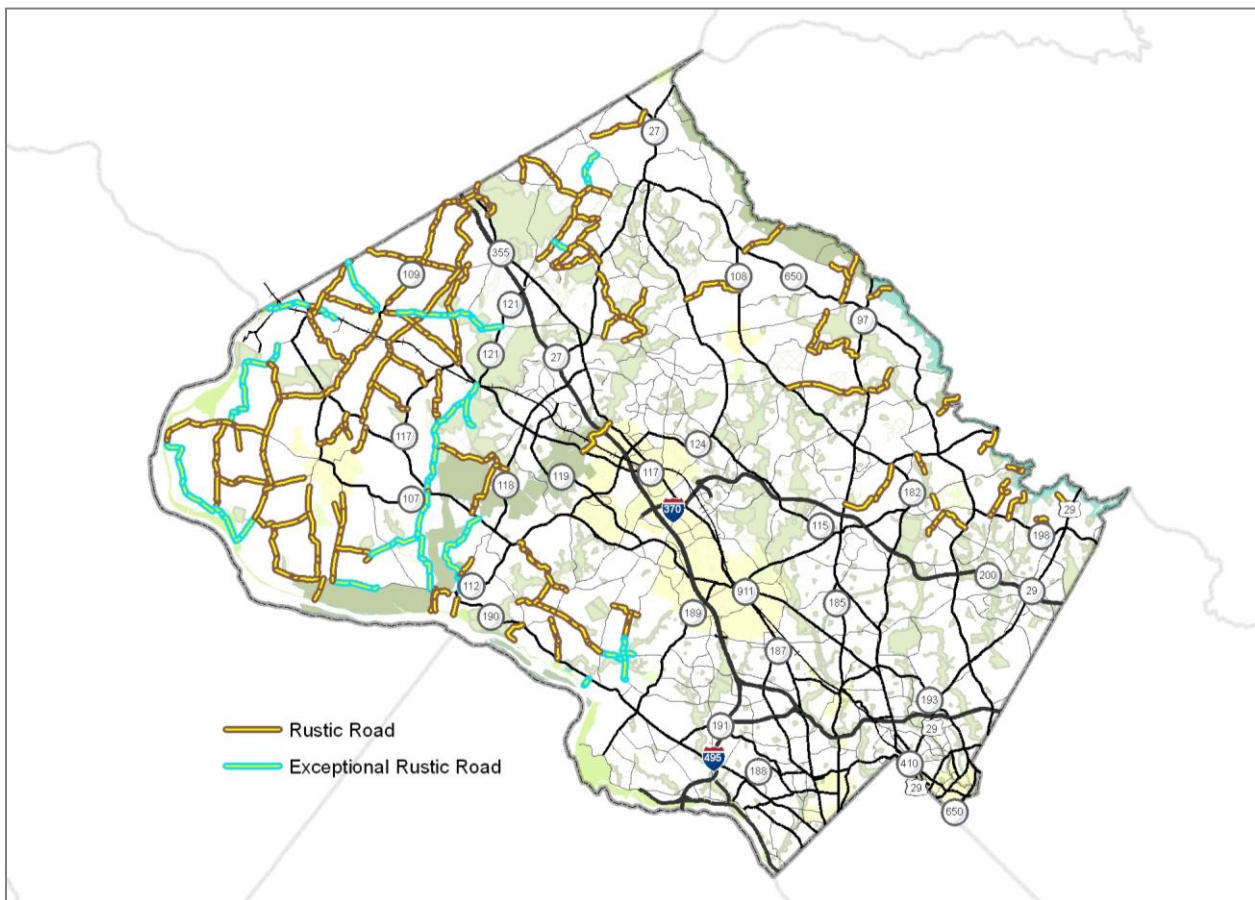
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**I. INTRODUCTION**

In Montgomery County, there are 97 roads classified as rustic or exceptional rustic; these are roads “which exemplify the rural and agricultural landscape of the county... [and have] special characteristics which contribute significantly to the rural, scenic, or historic features of Montgomery County (Rustic Roads functional Master Plan, pp. 3-5). The Rustic Roads Program (Article 8, Chapter 49, Montgomery County Code) establishes the authority for the Rustic Roads Advisory Committee (RRAC) and sets forth duties that the committee must perform. One of those duties is to prepare this report in even numbered years.

Other duties of the RRAC include promoting public awareness of the program, reviewing rustic roadway classifications, county regulations or policies which affect rustic roads and advising on the significant features that must be preserved when a rustic road is scheduled for maintenance or improvement.



## II. ITEMS BEFORE THE RUSTIC ROADS ADVISORY COMMITTEE, 2008-2010

### Bill 20-09

This bill proposed reduction/consolidation of boards, committees and commissions, and specifically proposed establishment of the Rustic Roads Advisory Committee as a subcommittee of the Agricultural Advisory Committee. The committee's position was that the bill would not result in staff time savings and that there was little overlap in the types of reviews and discussions that the two groups customarily handle. Further, not all rustic roads are located in the Agricultural Reserve. The current balance of interests represented on the committee (farming, civic groups, engineering and rural preservation) could be significantly skewed. RRAC member Robert Goldberg testified on behalf of the RRAC before the County Council.

### Master Plan Re-Classifications and Updates

The RRAC evaluated and recommended designation of **Game Preserve Road** between MD 355 and MD 177 as a Rustic Road as part of the Gaithersburg West Master Plan (Great Seneca Science Corridor). This recommendation was subsequently approved by the Department of Transportation (DOT), the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC) and the County Council.



*Game Preserve Road (rustic) is the most recent addition to the rustic roads program*

The committee is participating in the **Master Plan of Highways** (MPOH) update process which provides for a comprehensive update of the 1955 plan. Part of its scope is to make changes and additions to rustic roads, update descriptions of rustic roads, and describe the significant features of 29 roads that were classified as rustic roads in several area Master Plans.

The committee met with a resident and representative of the Southeast Rural Olney Civic Association regarding their request that **Emory Church Road** be considered for rustic road designation. This will be discussed further as part of the MPOH process. However, in the meantime, a church interested in locating along the road would be required to make modifications through its frontage, thus changing a portion of the existing roadway character including mature trees. Rustic designation might protect the road from modification.

### Tree and Roadside Maintenance

The committee held a joint meeting in September 2008 with the Agricultural Advisory Committee (AAC) and the Agricultural Preservation Advisory Board (APAB) specifically to address the need for tree maintenance along rustic roads. This has become a major concern of farmers due to overgrowth that impacts their ability to operate farm machinery and safely traverse the roads. The Department of Transportation (DOT) tree maintenance representative indicated that there is currently no funding for cyclical maintenance, but rather tree trimming is complaint driven. The individual depots provide clearing and grubbing of brush along the roads and remove broken branches and fallen trees. The RRAC, the AAC and APAB subsequently sent a letter to the County Executive and County Council requesting additional funding for tree maintenance.



*An example of a well-maintained hedgerow on Hughes Road (rustic)*

## Road Surface Restoration

In the previous biennial report, the RRAC recommended that a Capital Improvement Project (CIP) be created and funded to provide for the restoration of the concrete pavement on Martinsburg Road and Sugarland Road. Although this did not occur, the Committee continues to support such an effort. These roads require continual costly joint and shoulder maintenance. Additionally, the unstable shoulders together with the loss of skid resistance on the concrete pavement can be hazardous to the safety of roadway users.



*Martinsburg Road (exceptional rustic) is one of two concrete Politicians roads remaining in the County*

## Road Surfaces and Bicyclist Safety

In November 2008, the RRAC met with bicycle representatives and DOT Highway Maintenance representatives to discuss complaints from cyclists about the chip seal process of resurfacing rustic roads. This is a cost effective resurfacing method and maintains the rustic character of the roads. The process results in loose gravel for a period of time, a potential hazard to cyclists. Highway Maintenance staff agreed to install advance notification warning signs on these projects and announcements to county bicycle groups. Subsequent to this meeting and as a result of resident complaints on roads that were chip sealed in 2009, Highway Maintenance staff are re-evaluating the quality control on these resurfacing projects. There was no funding for these projects in 2010.

## Design Guidelines

The committee is continuing to work on a design guide to provide a resource for residents, agency staff, developers, utilities, homeowners and other stakeholders when conducting maintenance, construction or utility work within or adjacent to the right of way. This guide will supplement the guidelines provided by the Executive Regulation on rustic roads and is modeled on the 2008 publication "Context Sensitive Solutions for Work on Maryland Byways" by the Maryland State Highway Administration.

## Cell Towers

The committee reviewed proposals for five T-Mobile cell towers (Wildcat Road, West Offutt Road, Wasche Road, Old Hundred Road and Mt. Ephraim Road). The general recommendation was that cell towers in the Agricultural Reserve on or within view of rustic roads should be set back from the road as far as possible, should be a monopole or slim pole design with internal antennae and an unobtrusive color, and should use existing driveways for access where possible.



*Cell towers with internal antennas such as those on this unipole in Baltimore County are more compatible with rustic roads (photo from Tower Committee representative Bob Hunnicutt).*

## Scenic Views

The May 2010 meeting of the committee featured a discussion with the Agricultural Services Division, community members and the RRAC about whether the committee should or is legally authorized to comment on the preservation of scenic views from rustic roads when they are reviewing subdivision plans. There is concern in the AAC about property rights if mandatory scenic easements come into effect. Scenic views are sometimes specifically listed in a Master Plan as significant features of the roads to be protected. The committee will carefully consider

how to address and balance this issue under the Design Guidelines that are currently being drafted.

### Public Awareness

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 the M-NCPPC, DOT, local historians and community members in an extensive tour of Montgomery County rustic roads (jointly with Loudoun County, Virginia) for conference participants. The tour contrasted Virginia's gravel road districts and Context Sensitive Solutions approach on rural and historic roads to the Rustic Roads Program In Montgomery County. The tour covered twelve rustic and exceptional rustic roads, bridges, a ford, an aqueduct, and a wide variety of features including historic road surfaces, roadside walls, historic and new bridges, and the maintenance of these unique roads. Invaluable assistance was provided by speakers on the tour including pavement management, construction and maintenance representatives from DOT, transportation, historic preservation, environmental and community planning representatives from the M-NCPPC, plus two historians and authors who live in the County and a former RRAC member who continues to be active in preserving the rustic roads.



*Tour participants discussed the history of Martinsburg Road (exceptional rustic) as well as maintenance and restoration issues (photo by Christopher Marston, PHR conference chair)*

This tour provided national and international prominence to the County's rustic roads and agricultural reserve programs. Staff organized and moderated sessions on the Maryland Scenic



Byways, among others. In the future, the RRAC is likely to work more closely with this program, as several rustic roads are also designated Byways. RRAC members attended conference sessions on topics pertaining to historic road preservation that will have applicability to the County's program. The Proceedings (a digital version of the papers presented by the panels) from the conference are expected to be a valuable resource for the committee.

#### Promoting the Rustic Roads Program

The RRAC is charged with promoting public awareness of the rustic roads program. Identification signs are not currently allowed on the roads. DOT is currently posting special brown Adopt A Road signs for rustic roads, and community feedback has been positive; more than 750 volunteers regularly clean road segments, including many on rustic roads. The RRAC would like to expand that effort to allow community organizations or developers to sponsor/fund identification signs. Allowing signs would require modification to the Executive Regulation. The RRAC recommends that this be done in coordination with the Design Guidelines.



*A new Adopt A Road sign on White Ground Road (exceptional rustic)*

#### Webpage

The Rustic Roads Program has a webpage under the Planning Department website. This page is managed by Leslie Saville, committee member designated by the Planning Board Director. Information on the program, upcoming meetings, minutes of past meetings, committee members, contact information and links to the applicable master plans, previous biennial reports and a map of the rustic roads is provided. The site can be viewed at [http://www.montgomeryplanning.org/community/plan\\_areas/rural\\_area/rustic\\_roads.shtm](http://www.montgomeryplanning.org/community/plan_areas/rural_area/rustic_roads.shtm).

## Other

- The committee supported the Department of Permitting Services' successful effort at the Board of Appeals to relocate a monumental entrance sign from the Berryville Road right of way that had been constructed contrary to the permit.
- Staff coordinator attended a meeting of the 5<sup>th</sup> District Police Advisory Board meeting for a discussion of bicycle safety on rustic roads.
- Staff coordinator met with Highway Maintenance staff at the Poolesville Depot to discuss tree trimming and foliage clearing along rustic roads and to request advance notification of this type of work.



*Entry sign on Berryville Road (exceptional rustic) that was built within the right of way*

## Development Review

The Committee reviewed and forwarded comments to the M-NCPPC on the following subdivisions or other developments:

- Barnesville Oaks – Peachtree Road, Whites Store Road and Beallsville Road; met with developer, community representatives and roadway residents
- Potomac Estates – Montevideo Road
- Heitmueller Property – Beallsville Road
- Stoney Creek Property – Stoney Creek Road
- Batchellors Forest Site Plan – Batchellors Forest Road at Farquhar Middle School

- Murchison Property – Bryants Nursery Road
- Sandy Spring Monthly Meeting property – Meetinghouse Road

The committee reviewed numerous other proposals along rustic roads and provided staff with input which was included in memos to the Development Review Committee and the Planning Board.



*Reviewing potential new entrances along Peach Tree Road (rustic)*

## **II. COMMITTEE ACTIVITY AND COMPOSITION**

### Meetings

Since the last report ending July 1, 2008, the Rustic Roads Advisory Committee held meetings on the following dates:

September 16, 2008  
 October 28, 2008  
 November 25, 2008  
 December 16, 2008  
 February 17, 2009  
 March 19, 2009  
 April 28, 2009  
 May 26, 2009

June 30, 2009  
 September 22, 2009  
 October 27, 2009  
 December 9, 2009  
 January 26, 2010  
 March 23, 2010  
 April 27, 2010  
 May 25, 2010



*Seneca Creek State Park abuts Game Preserve Road, the most current addition to the program, along much of its length*

### Members

The current members of the Rustic Roads Advisory Committee are as follows:

- Kevin Foster
  - second term until December 2010
  - owner-operator of commercial farmland
- Robert Goldberg
  - second term until December 2012
  - representative of civic associations in the Agricultural Reserve
- Eric Spates
  - first term until December 2010
  - owner-operator of commercial farmland and representative to the Agricultural Advisory Committee
- Fred Lechliden
  - second term until December 2011
  - owner-operator of commercial farmland
- Robin Ziek
  - first term until December 2011
  - representative with knowledge of rural preservation techniques
- Marc Miller
  - first term until December 2011

- representative of civic association outside the Agricultural Reserve
- Greg Deaver
  - first term until December 2012
  - representative with knowledge of roadway engineering
- Leslie Saville
  - the M-NCPPC designated member, non-voting

Staff Coordinator - Sarah Navid, Department of Permitting Services

The Committee wishes to recognize the dedicated service of members who left the RRAC since the last report: Jim Arnoult, Cheryl Imperatore and Mike Seebold. The untimely death of Todd Butler a former member is noted here with great sorrow.

### III. STATUS OF PROGRAM

The Rustic Roads Program continues to be an important tool in retaining the agricultural, rural and historic character of parts of Montgomery County. The RRAC is looking forward to working on a master plan amendment that will update the program, and design guidelines that will provide assistance to residents, developers, agency staff and others in any proposed development or changes along the roads.

Development pressures in the Agricultural Reserve and in other areas where rustic roads are located, together with current budget constraints for maintenance, will be a continuing challenge for preservation of these vital and beautiful rural roads



*Rocky Road (rustic) after an early snow in December 2009*

