

5-9A-05.

(a) A sponsor may file an application to designate a Rural Legacy Area in accordance with a schedule established by the Board. A local government may not apply for or approve an application for a Rural Legacy Area designation inside another jurisdiction's boundaries without that jurisdiction's approval.

(b) The application shall describe the proposed Rural Legacy Area, include a Rural Legacy Area Plan, identify existing protected lands, state the anticipated level of initial landowner participation in the Program and the amount of the grant requested, and comply with the criteria set forth below.

(c) The Board shall evaluate and compare applications in accordance with the following criteria in order to select those that best carry forward the goals and objectives of the Program set forth in § 5-9A-01 of this subtitle:

(1) The significance of the agricultural, forestry, and natural resources proposed for protection, including:

(i) The degree to which proposed fee or easement purchases will protect the location, proximity, and size of contiguous blocks of lands, green belts or greenways, or agricultural, forestry, or natural resource corridors;

(ii) The nature, size, and importance of the land area to be protected, such as farmland, forests, wetlands, wildlife habitat and plant species, vegetative buffers, or bay or waterfront access; and

(iii) The quality and public or economic value of the land;

(2) The degree of threat to the resources and character of the area proposed for preservation, as reflected by patterns and trends of development and landscape modifications in and surrounding the proposed Rural Legacy Area;

(3) The significance and extent of the cultural resources proposed for protection through fee simple purchases, including the importance of historic sites and significant archaeological areas;

(4) The economic value of the resource-based industries or services proposed for protection through land conservation, such as agriculture, forestry, recreation, and tourism;

(5) The overall quality and completeness of the Rural Legacy Plan, including:

(i) The degree to which existing planning, zoning, and growth management policies contribute to land conservation and the protection of cultural resources;

(ii) The degree to which the proposed plan is consistent with the applicable local comprehensive plan, including protection of sensitive areas and mineral resources;