

T&E COMMITTEE #3
October 19, 2015

MEMORANDUM

October 15, 2015

TO: Transportation, Infrastructure, Energy & Environment (T&E) Committee
FROM: ^{GO} Glenn Orlin, Deputy Council Administrator
SUBJECT: Status Report – Rustic Roads Program

The purpose of the Rustic Roads Program, as described in Section 49-76 of the County Code, is “to preserve as rustic roads those historic and scenic roadways that reflect the agricultural character and rural origins of the County. Preservation of rustic roads must be achieved by retaining certain physical features of rustic roads and by certain right-of-way maintenance procedures.”

This program emanated from the concern in the late 1980s that such roads were steadily disappearing due to Department of Transportation (DOT) applying suburban standards for road construction and maintenance to them. In 1989 the County Council appointed a Rural/Rustic Roads Task Force to address this issue. In March 1990 it published its final report, recommending the preservation of all or part of 82 roads, 44 of which were categorized as exceptional rustic roads. During a briefing on this report to the Council, then DOT Director Robert McGarry announced he would immediately enforce the recommendations of the Task Force. In 1993 the Council incorporated the program in the County Code, including the establishment of the Rustic Roads Advisory Committee (RRAC). In 1995 the Council approved the Rustic Roads Functional Master Plan, formally classifying most of the Task Force’s recommendations as either “rustic” or “exceptional rustic” roads. In 1996, the Council approved Executive Regulation 21-96AM that provided more detailed guidance regarding reconstruction and maintenance of these roads. Over the past two decades, as several area master plans have been updated, the inventory of rustic roads has grown to all or part of 97 roads, although the number of those designated as “exceptional” have been reduced to all or part of 17 of them. A map of these roads is on ©1; they exist in four of the five Councilmanic Districts.

This is the Committee’s first update on the program in the near-two decades since the approval of the initial Executive Regulation. The RRAC has highlighted its concerns in a letter to the T&E Chair (©A-B), concerns that Council staff shares. Christopher Marston, the Chair of the RRAC, will expand on each point in his presentation. Other members of the RRAC will also attend the briefing. Agency staffs will also likely be in attendance.

Attachments:

RRAC’s October 14, 2015 letter	©A-B
RRAC Biennial Status Report, July 2012-June 2014	©1-11
Rustic Roads Program in the County Code	©12-14



RUSTIC ROADS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

October 14, 2015

The Honorable Roger Berliner, Chair
Transportation, Infrastructure, Energy & Environment Committee
Montgomery County Council
100 Maryland Avenue
Rockville, Maryland 20850

RE: October 19 Status Report – Rustic Roads

Dear Mr. Berliner and members of the T&E committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to brief you on the Rustic Roads Program.

In 1989, the County Council established a task force that recommended creating what was originally called a Rural/Rustic Roads Program. Because of that foresight, all of us have a valuable resource in these historic and scenic roads today. Our job is to help to preserve and promote these roads.

Our committee needs your support to sustain these resources keep this program viable. On Monday, we look forward to discussing the following items:

- Incremental changes to the Rustic Roads
 - Widening
 - Changes in surface materials
 - Loss of roadside vegetation
 - Increased traffic speeds and safety concerns
- Promoting the Rustic Roads Program
 - Adopt A Rustic Road program
 - Brown street name sign replacement program
 - Private donations for brown street name signs
 - Technical and financial support for promoting the program (e.g. host a high school photo competition; create an app for travelers to learn more about the roads; host a road rally with local classic car groups)
- Improving coordination with the Department of Transportation (DOT)
 - Add a DOT representative and advocate on the Rustic Roads Advisory Committee (RRAC) - consider shifting the staff coordinator position to DOT, and creating a member position for the Department of Permitting Services
 - Provide training and support for staff working on these unique roads (e.g., Penn State's Center for Dirt and Gravel Roads training)
 - Work together to find site-specific solutions for individual roads and needs (the emergency Seneca sandstone abutment repair on Montevideo Road's historic 1910 truss bridge is an excellent example)
 - Work with us on other maintenance items that change the character of the road
 - Address misperceptions that rustic roads are not maintained

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- Improving coordination with the Department of Fire & Rescue Services (DFRS)
 - Current DFRS recommendations require changes to rustic roads such as widening and creating pull-offs
 - Establish alternative designs that promote public safety while preserving the rustic roads
- Address farmer eligibility issues for RRAC membership
 - Finding eligible farmer RRAC members has become increasingly difficult.
 - Amend the County Code to specify 50 percent or more of active income from farmers to allow more farmers to qualify. Currently farmers must earn 50 percent or more of their total income from farming.

With your support, we believe we can make real progress on the challenges the program faces.

Montgomery County contains a million people and is located next to Washington DC, yet we've sustained a commitment to preserving our working Agricultural Reserve and Rustic Roads. It is an accomplishment to be proud of. It's a pleasure to serve on the Rustic Roads Advisory Committee and to be part of the Rustic Roads Program.

Thank you for your ongoing support for our committee and the program.

Sincerely,



Christopher H. Marston, Chair
Rustic Roads Advisory Committee

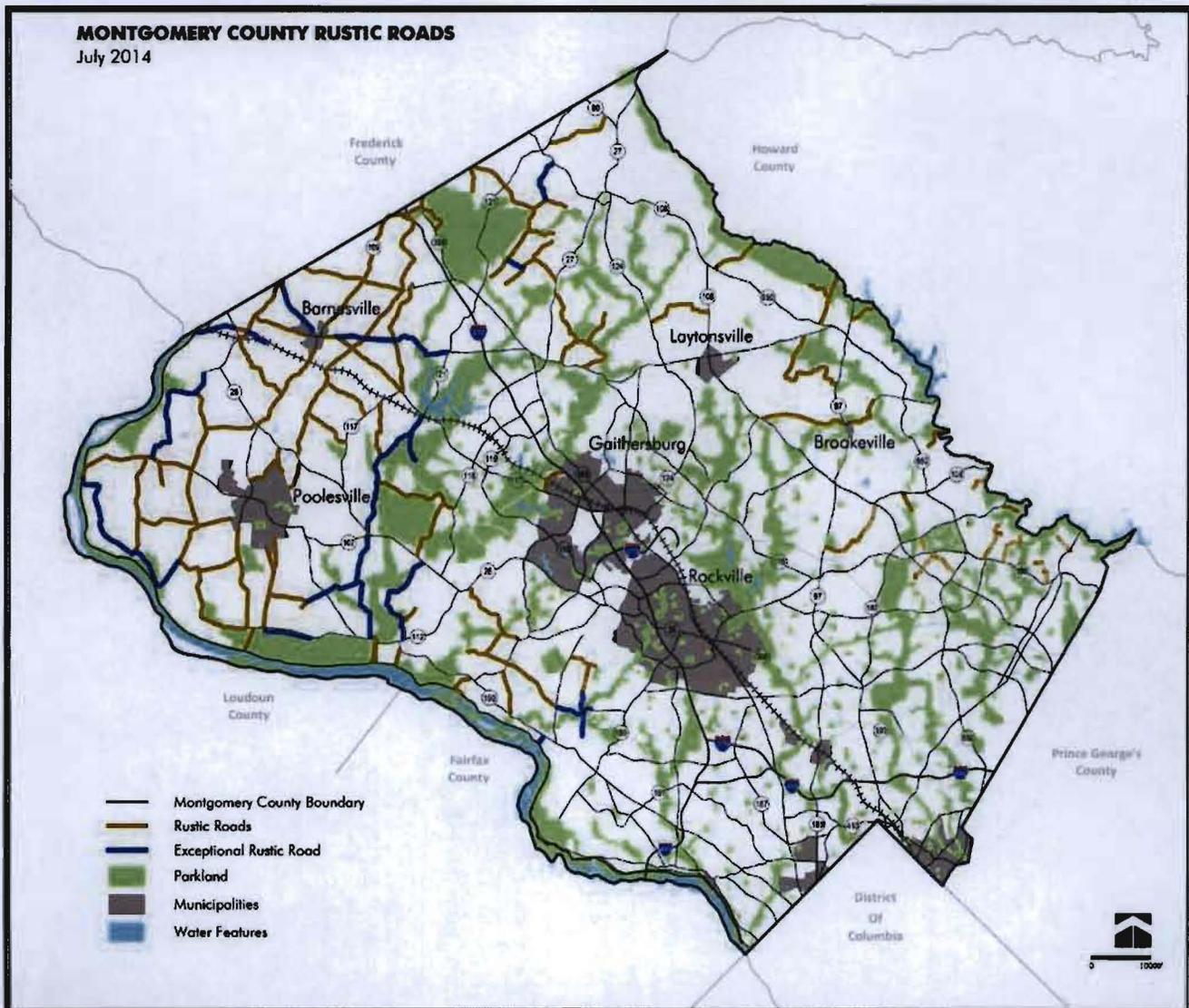
Committee Members: Greg Deaver, Todd Greenstone, Thomas Hartsock, Audrey Patton, Jane Thompson, Robert Tworkowski

I. INTRODUCTION

The Montgomery County Rustic Roads Program preserves those historic and scenic roadways that reflect the agricultural character and rural origins of Montgomery County. The Program was initiated in 1989 when the County Council established the *Task Force to Study a Montgomery County Rural/Rustic Roads Program*. The Task Force recommended the creation of the Rustic Roads Program in 1990, and legislation became effective May 31, 1993.

There are currently 97 roads in the Rustic Roads Program. Of those roads, 80 are classified as rustic roads, 11 are classified as exceptional rustic roads and six have sections with both rustic and exceptional rustic road classifications. Roads have been added to the program through the Rustic Roads Functional Master Plan (1996) and Amendment (2004), as well as through several area Master Plans. The Rustic Roads website maintained by the M-NCPPC¹ contains links to digital copies of all Master Plans with rustic and exceptional rustic designations.

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 on July 1 of even numbered years.



¹ www.montgomeryplanning.org/rusticroads

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

II. TOPICS BEFORE THE RUSTIC ROADS ADVISORY COMMITTEE FROM JUNE 30TH 2012 THROUGH July 1, 2014

Rustic Roads Advisory Committee Resource Manual

The most significant effort to increase education and public awareness of the Rustic Roads Program since the last reporting period has been the completion of a draft of the Rustic Roads guidelines, now named the Rustic Roads Advisory Committee Resource Manual. This manual has been circulated to the community, various agencies and committees in order to obtain comments; those comments have been compiled and reviewed, and the re-write of the document is nearing completion at this time. The committee anticipates recirculating the manual at the end of summer 2014, allowing for one final round of comments before the document is published in 2015.



RRAC members support the assessment of Emory Church Road for addition to the Rustic Roads Program. Origins of the County. Rocky Road is a rustic road.

New Nominations to the Rustic Roads Program

Residents of Emory Church Road in Olney submitted a nomination to add their road to the Rustic Roads Program. Committee members and staff walked the road with a resident and agreed that the road has a rustic appearance, and should be assessed for addition to the program at the next opportunity for adding roads to the program.

Pending nominations to the program include Allnut Lane in Poolesville, Bentley Road in Sandy Spring and Mt. Carmel Cemetery Road in Brookeville. The Sandy Spring Rural Village Plan is currently underway, so consideration is being given to Bentley Road as part of that Plan. The Master Plan of Highways update will begin on July 1, 2014, providing an opportunity to evaluate County road classifications and fully consider pending nominations.

Public Education and Promotion of the Rustic Roads Program

In addition to the ongoing work on the Resource Manual, committee members worked on several projects aimed at educating the public and promoting the Rustic Roads Program:

Farm To Table Dinner Information Booth

In September 2013, the Montgomery County Farm Bureau hosted a farm-to-table dinner at the Agricultural History Farm Park that included information booths to raise awareness of agriculture-related issues in the County. Two of the farmer members of the RRAC, Angela Butler and Greg Glenn, developed and tended a poster display for a booth. The session was very well received. Members seek to continue this kind of outreach.



RRAC members support a Share The Road sign that reflects the variety of users that drive, ride or hike along the rustic roads.

Share the Road Sign

Caroline Taylor, executive director of Montgomery Countryside Alliance, brought a Share the Road sign proposal to the RRAC. She witnessed a driver arguing with a farmer about having farm equipment on the road and suggested the specialized Share the Road sign could depict a farmer on a tractor, an equestrian, a bicyclist and a hiker –to signify the different users of the road. The committee supports this proposal and would like to place signs in about 10 locations as a trial effort.

Program Handout

RRAC members wish to develop a handout about the Rustic Roads Program and distribute it to local farm stands and other destinations in the County where the rustic roads are located. General pricing information about creating and printing such a flyer was obtained. Next steps include developing a mock-up of the draft handout and obtaining information about making a budget request.

Conference Presentations

RRAC members participated in two conferences related to agriculture and roads. Eric Spates and Greg Glenn were panelists at the Farming at Metro's Edge conference in January 2013, and Christopher Marston and Leslie Saville served as presenters at the Preserving the Historic Road conference in September 2012.

Adopt A Rustic Road Program

Several years ago, the RRAC worked with the Adopt A Road program staff at the Montgomery County Department of Transportation (MCDOT) to create a special, brown Adopt A Rustic Road sign. This program has been spectacularly successful, with 49 rustic roads being adopted as of June 2014, often with several sections of a rustic road adopted by different groups. The RRAC wishes to thank MCDOT and the dozens of community members for their support of the Rustic Roads Program.

Coordination with Montgomery County Department of Transportation

During the past two years, the RRAC worked with MCDOT on a wide variety of projects along rustic roads:

MCDOT Maintenance

Randy Paugh from MCDOT provided an overview of MCDOT's maintenance program to the committee, explaining how the roads in the County are periodically assessed. Randy mentioned that repairs to rural roads are often not "the" permanent fix, especially with the County's limited budgets in recent years. The age and non-standard original construction of many rustic roads also complicates this issue. Tree trimming is important for safety and vehicle sight distances, and requests for MCDOT maintenance should be handled by the 311 call system.

Sugarland Road Repairs

Mr. Paugh also brought a shoulder repair proposal for the "politician's road" section of Sugarland Road. The repair included removal and replacement of existing shoulder material with tar and chip, addressed drainage and ongoing maintenance issues.

Poplar Hill Road

In 2002, the County Council added a portion of Poplar Hill Road to the Rustic Roads Program, with the adoption of the Potomac Subregion Master Plan. The road was not added to MCDOT's



Poplar Hill Road, a rustic road, was nominated for the program in 1990, when the Rustic Roads Program was first recommended by a County Task Force.

maintenance list at that time, leading to deterioration of the road, and questions from the residents. At MCDOT, Kyle Hanley initiated research leading to confirmation of the status of the road. Thanks are due to Mr. Hanley and his colleagues, including surveyors and staff at the Poolesville Depot, who promptly initiated work to repair and maintain this gravel rustic road.

Stringtown Road

Dewa Sahili, also from MCDOT, presented a proposal for improvements to the end of Stringtown Road, a rustic road, to assure a safe connecting alignment with Snowden Farm Parkway.



A group meets on Mountain View Road, a rustic road, to work with the applicant on a safe and compatible driveway location for a new church in historic Purdum.

Mountain View Road

A church proposal on Mountain View Road involves a rustic road, an historic district, tree variances and a site plan requirement. Monet Lea from MCDOT's Development Review Team is working diligently and creatively with the large team of reviewers, including the RRAC, to find a context-sensitive solution that assures safety, while retaining the character of the road.

Barnesville Sidewalk

The Town of Barnesville proposed a sidewalk along the east side of Beallsville Road, connecting the southern limits of the town to the Barnesville MARC Station. A site visit was made by RRAC member Jane Thompson, Barnesville's consultant, and staff from MCDOT and the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC). After driving the proposed route, they discussed slope and safety issues, how to work around the wetlands as delineated on NRI 420031510, possible land acquisition costs, whether the location of the sidewalk should be on the east or west side of the road, and ways of protecting the character of the road.

Gravel Road Maintenance

With the harsh winter conditions in 2013-2014, the committee heard complaints about the conditions of some of the gravel roads in the program; committee members and staff confirmed that the roads needed prompt attention. MCDOT continually sent crews out to repair and regrade these unique roads. The RRAC would like to express their thanks and gratitude to MCDOT staff members for the hard work that they have done in restoring these roads as quickly as they have.

Safety Signs

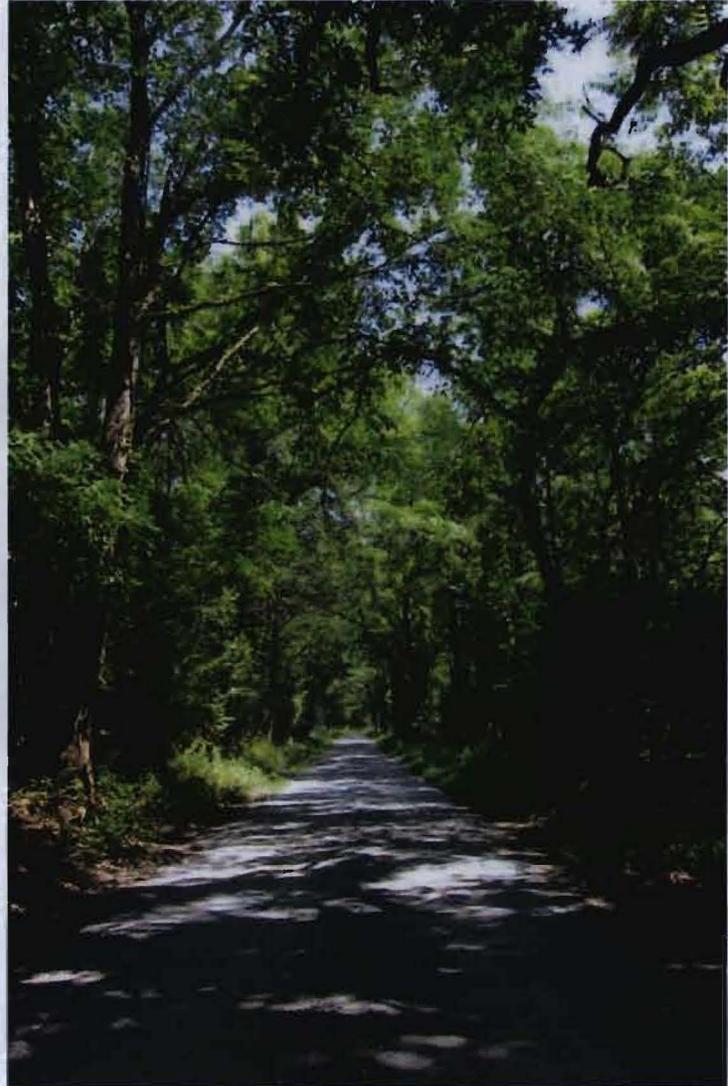
Former RRAC member Robert Goldberg worked with MCDOT to have warning signs posted in two locations where unique conditions exist: before the ford on West Old Baltimore Road, an exceptional rustic road, and before the one-lane bridge with a sharp bend on Huntmaster Road, adjacent to Davis Mill Road, a rustic road.



The RRAC and MCDOT worked together in 2012 to develop a brown, street name sign for rustic roads.

Brown Street Name Signs

Following the enthusiastic reception of the brown, Adopt A Rustic Road signs, the RRAC requested that rustic and exceptional rustic roads be identified with similar brown street name signs. This proposal was approved by MCDOT staff who indicated that the current green signs would be replaced by brown signs on the regular replacement cycle. Until then, requests have been made to have the signs on Stringtown Road and Batchellors Forest Road changed, as projects on those rustic roads move forward. The RRAC would like residents and community groups to have the opportunity to purchase replacement signs prior to scheduled replacements, should they volunteer to do so.



River Road is believed to follow a trail established by Native Americans. The unpaved section in Poolesville between Edwards Ferry Road and Whites Ferry is an exceptional rustic road.



Seneca Store (Pooles Store) is located on the original alignment of River Road, which is now called Old River Road, a rustic road.

Parks Department Coordination

Three Parks items were reviewed by the RRAC, including two unusual items relating to historic country stores:

Seneca Store (formerly Pooles Store) – Old River Road

Project manager Eileen Emmet of the Montgomery County Department of Parks made a presentation to the committee about the current status of this historic property. Seneca Store is located on Old River Road, a rustic road. The building is being rehabilitated and members noted that the project will not impact the road. The committee reviewed the proposed plans and provided comments.

The Darby Store – Beallsville Road

Committee members Angela Butler, Eric Spates, Christopher Marston, Jay Beatty, Laura Bradshaw and Leslie Saville met Parks project manager Julie Mueller at the Darby Store located on Beallsville Road, a rustic road. The committee reviewed the proposed plans for a new driveway, parking lot and plantings following the store relocation and provided comments. This project is also located on a Maryland Scenic Byway, so the RRAC and Department of Parks staff coordinated with the Byway staff.

Greenbriar Local Park – Glen Road

Project manager Linda Komes of the County Department of Parks presented updated plans for development of a local park on Glen Road. Ms. Komes and the committee discussed options for limiting the impacts to the rustic road. Comments were provided.

Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) Coordination

The RRAC reviewed two items from MCPS:

Farquhar Middle School – Batchellors Forest Road

A renovation project was proposed for Farquhar Middle School, located in Olney on Batchellors Forest Road, a rustic road. In order to reduce impacts to the road, the Olney Master Plan provides direction for a connection between the existing school's driveway and a new road, Old Vic Boulevard. Likewise, the Plan directs the

adjacent parkland to limit access to the existing school driveways. Limiting the visual impact of parking areas was discussed. The committee provided comments to Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) staff.

Darnestown Elementary School – Turkey Foot Road

RRAC staff received a query regarding a replacement sign for Darnestown Elementary School on Turkey Foot Road, a rustic road. The committee generally recommends unlighted wooden signs.

Development Review

The Committee reviewed and forwarded comments on the following subdivisions, site plans, mandatory referral and plan amendments:

- Horizon Hill – Glen Mill Road
- Trotters Glen– Batchellors Forest Road
- Stanmore– Batchellors Forest Road
- Batchellors Forest – Batchellors Forest Road
- Longacres Preserve, Phase 2 – Pennyfield Lock Road
- Lake Potomac – Stoney Creek Road
- Hilltop Farm – Slidell Road, West Old Baltimore Road
- National Institutes of Health Animal Center – Elmer School Road and Club Hollow Road

III. COMMITTEE ACTIVITY AND COMPOSITION

Meetings

Since the last report on July 1, 2012, the Rustic Roads Advisory Committee has held a total of 18 meetings (which exceeds the minimum 12 meetings for a two-year period). Those meetings took place on the following dates:

September 27, 2012	September 24, 2013
November 27, 2012	October 22, 2013
January 29, 2013	December 4, 2013
March 5, 2013	February 11, 2014
March 26, 2013	February 25, 2014
April 23, 2013	March 25, 2014
May 21, 2013	April 28, 2014
July 2, 2013	May 28, 2014
August 6, 2013	June 24, 2014



RRAC members and staff walk Emory Church Road, a rustic road nominee, with a resident.

Members

The Rustic Roads Advisory Committee consists of seven voting members, a M-NCPPC- designated member and a Department of Permitting Services Staff Coordinator. Members are listed below with their respective fields of expertise and terms:

- Greg Deaver (Chairman) – second term until December 2015, as representative with knowledge of roadway engineering.
 - Eric Spates – second term until December 2013, as owner-operator of commercial farmland and representative to the Agricultural Advisory Committee.
 - Greg Glenn – first term until December 2013, as owner-operator of commercial farmland.
 - Jane Thompson – first term until December 2015, as representative of civic associations inside the Agricultural Reserve.
 - Marc T. Miller – second term until December 2014, as representative of civic associations outside the Agricultural Reserve.
 - Angela Butler – first term until December 2014, as owner-operator of commercial farmland.
 - Christopher Marston – first term until December 2014, as representative with knowledge of rural preservation techniques.
 - Leslie Saville – M-NCPPC-designated member, non-voting.
- Staff Coordinator – Brian Jeeves, County Department of Permitting Services.

The Committee wishes to recognize the dedicated service of members and staff coordinators who left the RRAC since the last report.

The former members are as follows:

- Robert Goldberg – as representative of civic associations in the Agricultural Reserve.
- Fred Lechliden – as owner-operator of commercial farmland.
- Robin Ziek – as representative with knowledge of rural preservation techniques.

The former staff coordinators are as follows:

- Jay Beatty served as the staff coordinator from the County Department of Permitting Services from September 2012 to March 2014.
- Laura Bradshaw served as the interim staff coordinator from June 2011 to September 2012.

IV. STATUS OF PROGRAM

- The Rustic Roads Advisory Committee continues to make progress on the Resource Manual.
- With the launch of the Master Plan of Highways on July 1, 2014, the RRAC hopes to move forward with the designation of several new rustic roads.
- The Committee welcomes the continued opportunity to comment on development projects within the County that will have an effect on these beautiful and historic roads.
- Challenges include:
 - The budget constraints for maintenance; the majority of the communication received from community residents relates to the condition of their local rustic roads and requests for maintenance.
 - Finding new committee members to fill vacant farmer positions. (The percentage of income requirement has recently disqualified candidates with many years of farming experience.)
 - Finding ways to promote awareness of the program without the ability to produce flyers, calendars, maps, posters and obtain space at events where items could be displayed and handed out is increasingly difficult. (If the committee was to receive a small budget of approximately \$3,000 per fiscal year, with some careful planning, we would be able to make many more residents aware of this program and the beautiful roads that are being preserved by it.)
- Efforts to promote the program through the Adopt A Rustic Road program have been a notable success. The RRAC looks forward to building on that success with the brown, street name sign program.



Rustic roads reflect the agricultural origins of the County. Rocky Road is a rustic road.