



# Rustic Roads

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From the Eyes of the Farmer

# River Road

Photos by Linda  
Lewis





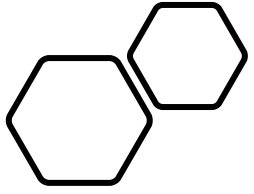
# River Road

Photos by Linda Lewis



River Road  
Photos by Eric  
Spates





Rocky Road  
Photo by Paula  
Linthicum



Moore Road  
Photos by Lori  
Larson



White Store Road  
Photo by Eric Spates

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Wasche Rd

Photos by Eric Spates



- One can clearly see that water runs from the edge of the roadway onto the road because of lack of maintenance of the roadside ditches. This not only causes a dangerous situation which can lead to sliding on ice, or hydroplaning on water, but is also destructive to the roadway itself. The presence of water during winter freezing breaks up the road surface.
- Just like you need to clean the gutters on your house, so too must the ditches be cleaned to maintain proper drainage."



West Willard Road  
Photos by Michael  
Jamison

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Mt Nebo Road  
Photos by Michael  
Jamison

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Mt Ephraim Road  
Photos By Michael  
Jamison

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Sugarland  
Road  
Photos by  
Robert Butz



# Wildcat Road Photos by Wade Butler

- This woman and small child barely escaped injury after a bee flew into their car. Intersection of Davis Mill and Wildcat.
- These Porta pots almost made it into Wildcat branch after dodging a car in the middle of Wildcat rd.
- This dump truck was parked fully on Wildcat road with no lights on, after sun set in December. My mother not expecting anything parked in the road, ran into the back of this truck the day before her 90th birthday, on her way to my sister's house for dinner. Miraculously she made it out of the hospital the next day in time for her birthday celebration.
- After little or no maintenance, this roughly 700' section of Wildcat rd. cost the county several million dollars and an extended road closure that impacted both Butlers and Waters Orchards during our harvest season.



# Combine Travels Photos by Linda Lewis



# Combine Travels Photos by Linda Lewis

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Truck Damage  
Photos by Michael  
Jamison

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# Farmer Testimonials

March 14, 2022

## Assessment of Rural and Rustic Roads

Rural and rustic roads may seem nice on paper for those that take a Sunday stroll through the countryside or come out from the city for a bike ride. To live and work on these roads is another matter. The basic purpose of a road is to transport people and goods to a destination with ease and safety. With this in mind many of our rustic roads do not meet this basic test.

Here are a few examples. Areas that do not have annual ditch maintenance will flood during rain events in the spring and summer and then freeze over in the winter causing very hazardous conditions. Lack of tree trimming is also a problem. There are several intersections where it is difficult to see oncoming traffic and in many cases you cannot see until your vehicle is halfway in the road and by then it is hard to avoid an accident. Tree branches can hang out in the road far enough to hit a truck mirror let alone farm machinery. I live on Cattail road where on several occasions I have seen pickup trucks with their mirrors folded in for this very reason. On areas of Cattail, and many rustic roads, a school bus and pickup truck cannot pass on another without one having to yield and move off the road because the road is too narrow or overgrown brush. Another issue are the small narrow bridges that are existing and the ones that are rebuilt or replaced. We haul grain from the fields and pay attention to bridge weight limits. Some bridges have a weight limit that won't support a fire truck or school bus. If they are that bad they should be condemned and replaced. All of this in my opinion is unacceptable. I noticed Rt.117 is going to be considered for Rustic designation. This is a state road that is also a snow emergency route. It has no business as rural and rustic. The most redeeming aspect of rt 117, according to park and plannings website, is the dangerous one lane bridge at white store road. This bridge should have been condemned years ago and replaced, yet rural and rustic thinks it deserves preservation. This is the disconnect between people that live and work here and those that do not.

Rustic roads are not on a park trail or small housing community. We use them for commute of our families and commerce. They are funded with our tax dollars to be purposefully neglected. In Poolesville we refer to them as **Ruined** roads, not rustic. All of this can be avoided with improved maintenance. Our roads do not have to be dangerous and obsolete to preserve rural character. The rural character is not derived from the blacktop and brush but from the sustainability and progress of the farms and ranches on either side.

Patrick Jamison

# Farmer Testimonials

My involvement with rustic roads is primarily with Howard Chapel Rd, a narrow poorly maintained route.

## **Observations**

The road has become a busy commuter route, particularly in the morning, when backups are common. Accidents are common at the intersection with Damascus Rd. I have passed as many as 13 cars between Damascus Rd and our barn entrance, just two tenths of a mile.

As a popular bicycle route with its blind corners and no shoulder it is only a matter of time until there is a bad accident.

Water covers the south end of the road adjacent to our property with any heavy rain.

Some much needed repairs were done in the area near the bridge in 2021 but the rest of the road was ignored.

Robert Butts  
Waredaca Farm

# Farmer Testimonials

I have lived on a Rustic Road my entire life. Here are some problems that have arisen because of rustic roads and the increased population in the up-county. The roads aren't wide enough, the tree canopy isn't high enough, the shoulders of the road aren't clear enough. the roads are rough with potholes.

The following are some of the things I remember happened on RUSTIC ROADS,

1. Meeting firetruck and having to go into the bush and scraping my car to get out of the way
2. Moving equipment and meet a vehicle that wouldn't give you the right of way, the vehicle scraped down your piece of equipment.
3. Meeting a truck and both mirrors hit and break
4. Having your child on a school bus it breaks a bus mirror and your child asks the policeman what took so long he was stuck on the bus
5. Being on River Road when a reported plane went down and you couldn't get around the emergency vehicles to open the gates for them.
6. Having a box trailer's roof corner was damaged by a tree
7. Replacing row markers on no-till and corn planters.
8. The DUST making your crop unsellable
9. Picking up sticks/branches after a combine goes down your road.
10. A suburban hit a ditch near my home, blowing out tire and ruining two rims.
11. Hauling a Sweet Corn with a truck and trailer and following a bike rider/s knowing I couldn't pass because the road was safe and wide enough. Having another driver try to pass us almost get hit head-on.

Sincerely,

Linda Lewis  
Lewis Orchards  
18901 Peach Tree Rd  
Dickerson, MD 20842

# Farmer Testimonial

## Tim McGrath

March 16, 2022

Tim McGrath

17801B Comus Rd.

Dickerson MD 20842

Ref. Rustic Roads

I am a lifelong resident of Montgomery County; my grandparents were Edward and Grace Blunt of Blunt Road. I watched that road go from a dirt road with a water crossing to being paved with no fording of the stream. I have retired from horse farming in Clarksburg after 26 years and know the difficulty to navigate 8' x 8' x 30' horse trailer down the Rustic roads in the AR zone. It's my opinion and history will back my opinion that all of the existing Rustic Roads were created as Farm to Market roads those roads are still being used as Farm to Market roads. As farm equipment gets larger not smaller it's important that these roads be upgraded to help the farmers get their crop to market, that is what these roads were made for not for riding bicycles. At the end of the day the AR zone was created to preserve all types of Agriculture the roads need to be upgraded to accommodate existing farming operations. The users of the Rustic Roads that make their farms viable need to be on the Rustic Roads Committee.



Tim McGrath

Supervisor for

MC Soil Conservation District

# Farmer Testimonial

## Lonnie Luther

- My greatest fear of Rustic Roads (RR) is the risk of a tree falling on a passing car or truck or tractor and killing someone. There are hundreds of dead trees that I see every day as I travel the back roads of Damascus, including Clarksburg road which is a major thoroughfare, not RR. My granddaughter Abby (age 14) lost a classmate when a tree fell on her and her father on a road in Loudon County. It is one thing to watch for falling trees, something different to watch the tree fall on me or one of my family, friends, or neighbors. This is a preventable accident - but begs for a master plan from DOT to control (remove) tree hazards along all county roads. Even large limbs could and do kill innocent people.
- I have been watching a 24-30 inch wide tree along Clarksburg Road that is leaning more and more over the roadway each week and will without question fall within a few weeks or months. Lord help who ever happens to be beneath it when it falls.

# Farmer Testimonial

## Robert Butz

- 1) Tree clearing along Sugarland has been a constant problem although I do note that there has been some clearing recently and I think in general tree clearing has improved along the road. Images 3208 and 3209 clearly show obstructions that are encroaching into the roadside. Sugarland is already a very narrow road so these encroachments can be a real hazard in the event that two vehicles larger than a car meet each other on the road. Image 2824 shows damage to our grain truck sustained when hitting a tree along Sugarland. This incident costed approximately \$3,000 to repair and more impactful than that, placed my truck out of service for several days during the busy harvest season. From my perspective any tree clearing guidelines for rural and rustic roads should include vertical and horizontal clearing zone calculated to ensure the safe movement of agricultural equipment.
- 2) The condition of roadbed along much of Sugarland Rd is poor. In my opinion the condition of the roadbed creates an impediment to the safe transport of goods and equipment. Images 3210 and 3211 clearly show the rough and degraded condition. Image 3211 in particular shows what can properly be described as a "speed bump" in the middle of the road. I would suspect that to some, having rough road conditions and speed bumps may be potentially beneficial if they slowed travel speeds. However, I think it is poorly understood that conditions that simply appear "rough" in a car are potentially unsafe in a tractor hauling equipment. Unless one has actual experience driving agricultural equipment on a poorly maintained road it may be hard for them to appreciate the difficulty. Additionally, Sugarland Rd is so rough that another farmer who needs to travel on this road to deliver his produce related to me that the condition of the roadbed oftentimes leads to bruised fruit as he attempts to deliver to market.
- 3) The combination of the rustic roads designation and the County's tree law make normal and necessary brush clearing along field edges very difficult. I have attached a copy of an email thread relating to my request to clear brush along my field edges and direct you to the County's position that literally any woody material larger than a blade of grass is subject to County approval prior to work. This is a very difficult requirement for the Farmer to comply with.

# Farmer Testimonial

## Randy Stabler

- Thanks for reaching out to many of us in the Ag Community on this very important, and tiring, topic of a tool for adequate transportation for agriculture. This topic also effects health and safety of anyone who traverses the many Rural and Rustic Roads of this county. I was a member and I believe the first chairman of the RRAC and appreciated serving.
- 1) The RRAC has no roll in maintenance and needed improvements to Rural and Rustic Roads. This is a function of MCDOT, there are adequate executive regulations that address this. Rural and Rustic Roads are the network that services the largest acreage and area of the county. MCDOT needs to be able to do their job.
- 2) The RRAC cannot be the dictating force to MNCPPC or MCDOT on the direction of Rural and Rustic Roads. The intent of that committee was to be an advisory capacity made up of the stakeholders that this transportation network effected. This committee is not operating like this, nor are the parties using the advice, doing so with discretion. The committee make-up is not of such of the area's it represents. Your comments represent this, commodity agriculture needs a larger roll.
- 3) It is imperative that the Chapter 2 language from the 1996 Rustic Road Master Plan be included. The leadership of MNCPPC and MCDOT must acknowledge this if they want to insure viable Agriculture as an industry/business in Montgomery County. Without the transportation network to support agriculture it will not survive. Your illustration was very important. I have to wonder if an economic impact equivalent to agriculture (ie; Amazon), would come to Montgomery County , what would be provided in the form of transportation network needs?
- 4) The Roadway character additions to the draft, though "flowerily", serve no purpose to the issues of providing adequate and safe transportation to a scenic, progressive, business friendly part of the county. The historic character of the Rustic Roads is the direct result of agriculture and other business's that occupies the land that is adjacent to these roads. MNCPPC or MCDOT cannot afford to preserve or protect these roads and promote the land uses at the same time.
- Rural and Rustic Roads needs a commonsense approach to the complex issues, not a agenda oriented approach. The program is to big, along with to many roads to propel this county into the future needs of transportation. The purpose and intent of this program are broke and failing. If a Master Plan approach is to continue, than a budget to support it and those it serves needs to be provided, just as bridges and other examples in the county.

Thanks,  
Randy Stabler

# Farmer Testimonial

## Michael Jamison

- The Agricultural Reserve in Montgomery County is one of the most cherished pieces of land throughout the county. It serves as the breadbasket for the county and local regions. Ancestors on both sides of my family dating back more than five generations have utilized the land in this county to support their farming operations. Today I work alongside my two Brothers, Mother and Father, grain farming and producing turfgrass sod. What a success story that we can cultivate the same land from generations ago and still maintain a viable agricultural operation right here in Montgomery County.
- Throughout the years there have been county programs that have enabled agriculture to progress with the times to stay viable. Some of these programs have recognized the ever-changing dynamics of agriculture. Policy or law sometimes must be enacted (or revised) for this industry to build and sustain. There however, have been some regulations and policies that have proven to be an encumbrance to the operations of the agricultural businesses encompassing this county. Rural Rustic Roads is one of those problematic programs to agriculture.
- When operating a business that performs ninety-nine percent of its daily operations navigating these rural and rustic roads, two words come to mind: **Anxiety** and **Dangerous**. One reading this would wonder, why **anxiety** and **dangerous**?
- Imagine the farmers seat for a moment. We operate full-size pick-up trucks, 18-wheelers, and large farm equipment. Some of that equipment is equal to two 18-wheelers combined in width by thirteen feet tall. Imagine operating an 18-wheeler that is the approved DOT (Department of Transportation) federally legal width of 8' 6". You are travelling down the last few miles of West Willard Road and River Road intersections. You look in your side mirrors and see the driver side tire is over the center of the yellow line, while your passenger side tires are just hanging by a thread on the white line/ditch (because there is no shoulder from white line to the ditch). As you approach a school bus coming in the opposite direction, you fear a side swipe collision. You slightly navigate your truck just inside your yellow lane while your other tire rides the white/ditch line. Then a violent scathing noise from overgrown tree branches slaps the side of your truck accompanied by an alarming bang with a tree branch shattering your passenger side mirror. You're still traveling and look down and see shattered glass from the side mirror covering the cab and your lap. You come to a stop and realize what just happened. While frenzied, your relieved. Relieved that you didn't hit the oncoming school bus that my kids sometimes travel on. Relieved that you didn't lose control while your tire slipped off the thin margin of the white line and ditch. Relieved that no one was riding in the passenger seat that would have obviously sent that person to the hospital. You travel back to the farm to fix the \$200.00 mirror. Thankfully you have a few on stock in the machine shop because this has happened on numerous occasions. A business owner cannot afford to have their equipment down while tending to their crops and livestock.
- The farming community and the surrounding community confront circumstances like this on a regular basis. We have become accustomed to operating equipment and transporting our goods on the neglected roads throughout the agricultural transportation network. That is why we sometimes must pick and choose what times of the day (i.e., rush hour times) we can and cannot move our farm equipment. We do not want to risk the safety of ourselves or the surrounding community. Or why we carry chain saws on our tool trucks in the case a low hanging branch. Some officials in the county have said, we need to call DOT if there is a low hanging branch that could cause damage. Again, imagine what option there is when you are in the moment, moving a large piece of equipment taking up both lanes of the road with cars oncoming and behind. You come to a complete stop due to the low hanging branch that will cause thousands in damage to your equipment. You radio your employee whose job is to travel ahead to slow oncoming traffic. That person hands you a chain saw while climbing on the roof of your equipment. You carefully reach out to saw the limb that was the county's job to maintain. In scenarios like this, it is unrealistic to contact the proper authorities via calling 311.
- Since the rural rustic roads program was established, almost 30 years ago, the size of our equipment has only grown. The type of agriculture has changed since then. Agritourism in unison with wineries and breweries has become a large growing sector in this county over the past five years. More families have moved to these rural communities in the Ag Reserve. The onslaught of the pandemic has resulted many to discover the federal and local parks throughout. More and more people are visiting the Ag Reserve while the maintenance to our roads has virtually ceased to exist. To my knowledge, the individuals who serve on the Rustic Roads Committee have never actually taken the time to come out and physically ride in our equipment and see firsthand what we are dealing with. The farming community feels the ones whose role to advise the executive branch does not understand what we as farmers deal with daily regarding ill-maintained roads.
- A concept of the Rural Rustic Roads program is to preserve the scenic identity of the Agricultural Reserve. We as farmers feel that assuming the risk every year to go out and produce food in this region is what has allowed the Ag Reserve to keep its rural landscape. Regarding our transportation network, we feel the county has failed us in assisting safe and efficient networks of transportation. If these neglected roads, that are becoming more congested every year, are designed to help maintain a rural character, than what good are they if agriculture cannot thrive and operate under these conditions? We ask that prudent discernment is given to the future of the Rural Roads program that works WITH agriculture and not against.