



CALVERT COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

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News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Calvert County Receives \$65,000 Preserve America Grant in Support of Biscoe Gray Heritage Farm

PRINCE FREDERICK, Md. – October 1, 2008 – The U.S. Department of the Interior announced September 29 that Calvert County will be awarded a \$65,000 Preserve America grant to support planning for a Heritage Farm at the county's Biscoe Gray property. The project is one of 44 initiatives in 24 states funded in the second round of Preserve America grants for 2008. The total amount awarded nationwide exceeded \$4.3 million.

The grant will allow Calvert County to survey and document heritage resources on the Biscoe Gray property and produce a master plan for its development as a working Heritage Farm for tourism and education. The 196-acre farm is located off of Grays Road south of Prince Frederick and was acquired by Calvert County in 1996 with funds through Maryland's Rural Legacy Program.

As part of a dollar-for-dollar matching requirement for the grant, Calvert County appropriated \$35,000 for the project in the fiscal year 2008 budget. The balance of the matching funds was contributed through in-kind donations from six partners: the Calvert County Division of Natural Resources, the Calvert County Department of Planning and Zoning, the Calvert County Department of Economic Development, the Soil Conservation District, the University of Maryland Agricultural Extension and Jefferson Patterson Park & Museum.

The funds will go toward a comprehensive plan for the protection and interpretation of the archaeological sites and structures at the Biscoe Gray property. The goal is to re-create a functioning small-scale family farm of the type common in the region circa 1950 that will provide opportunities for experiential learning, heritage tourism, heritage education and sustainable agriculture.

Named for the last private owner of the property, the Biscoe Gray farm was owned by an African American family with the surname of Rice in the 19th century. Four principal structures are on the property: A 1930s frame house, known as the George Rice House, with a chicken

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Calvert County Receives \$65,000 Preserve America Grant

October 1, 2008

Page 2

coop, meat house and cowshed; a 19th-century side-passage, two-story vernacular house; and two tobacco barns, one dating from the mid-20th century and the other constructed circa 1830. The 1930s house and the 1830s barn are listed on the Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties.

Upon completion, the restored farmstead will be an integral part of living history interpretation at the site, which will be the only known mid-20th century farm site for public visitation in the region. The project planning phase will enable Calvert County to restore the farmstead, which will serve as a residence for a farm manager who will assist with demonstrating life on a sustainable small farm. The barns and other buildings will be used for farm activities to support agriculture on the property and also for activities involving the visiting public. Other recreational opportunities for visitors will include birding, interpreted walking trails and horse trails.

For more information on the Preserve America grant award and the Biscoe Gray Heritage Farm project, contact Kirsti Uunila, historic preservation planner with the Calvert County Department of Planning and Zoning, at 301-535-1600, ext. 2504.

Preserve America is a White House initiative in cooperation with the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation that supports community efforts to preserve and enjoy our nation's heritage. For more information on Preserve America, visit www.preserveamerica.gov.

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Calvert County is Maryland's smallest county in land area with 213 square miles. It is home to over 87,000 people and has one of the highest standards of living in Maryland. There are more than 4,000 businesses in the County and a labor force of at least 1.8 million resides within a one-hour drive. Major industries include defense contracting, information technology, tourism, utilities, light manufacturing and administrative services.