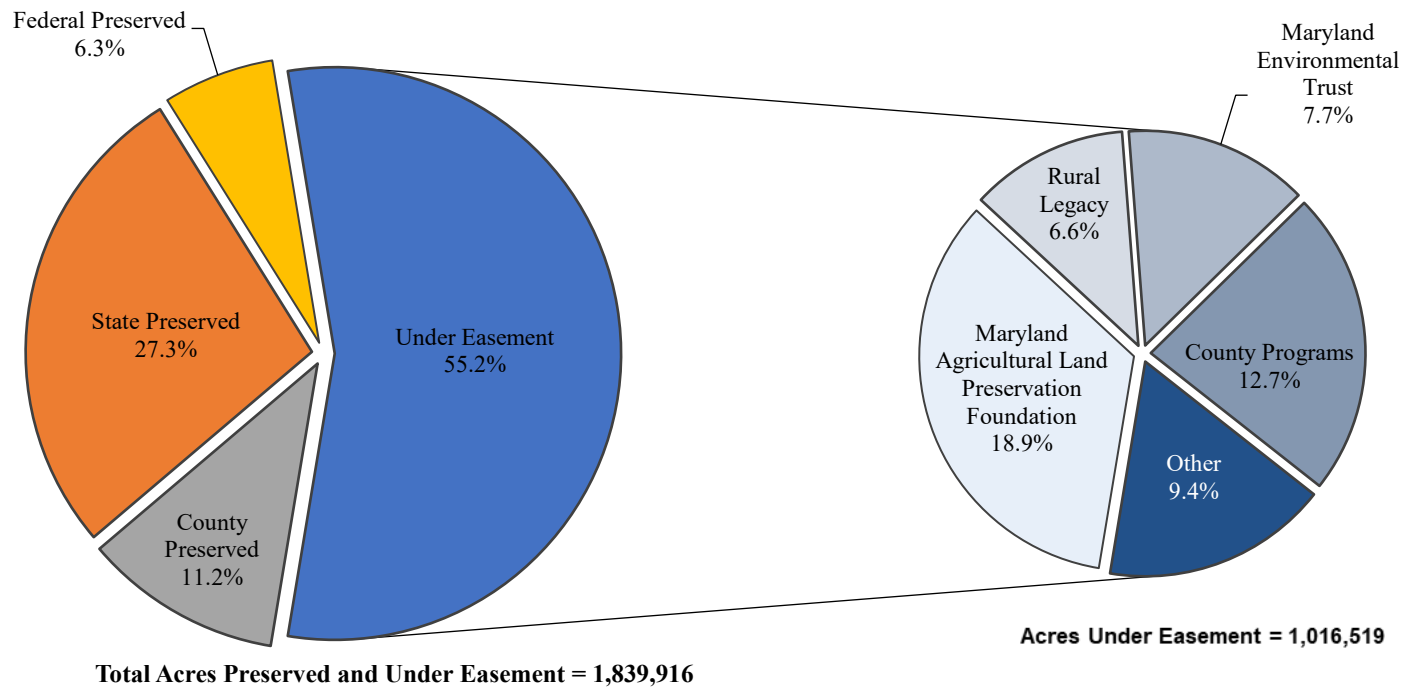


Land Conservation in Maryland

Maryland has a longstanding tradition of land conservation. This includes not only the protection of agricultural land and woodland, but the protection of open space and open space resources. State land conservation spending is allocated among several programs such as Program Open Space, the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation, the Rural Legacy Program, and the Maryland Environmental Trust. As of June 2023, Maryland had over 1 million acres of land under easement.

The primary source of funding for these programs is the State property transfer tax; therefore, the amount of funding available for the programs depends largely on the real estate market. However, in recent years, the amount of funding available for these programs has not only been impacted by a fluctuating housing market, but by the extent to which transfer tax revenues have been transferred to the State's general fund in order to help address budget deficits.

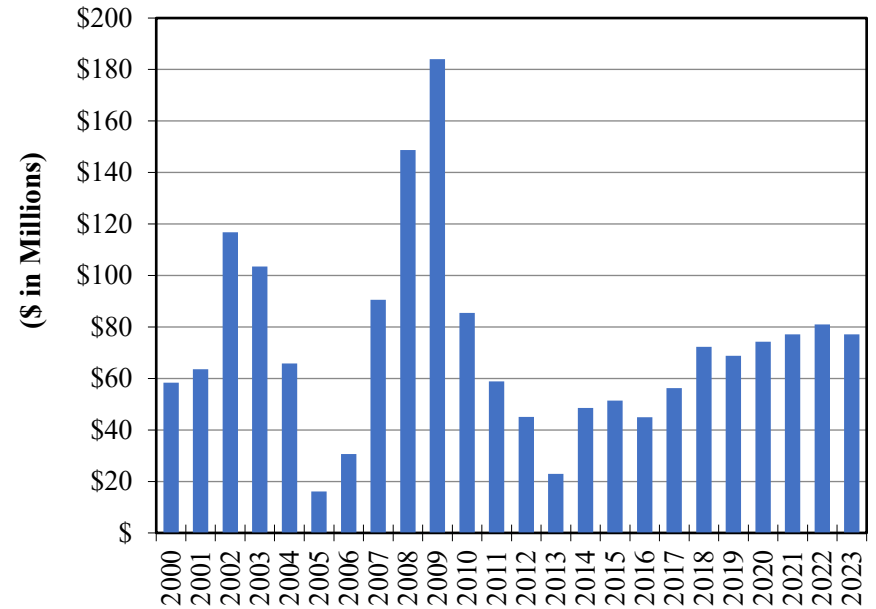
Cumulative Acres of Land Conserved: Through June 2023



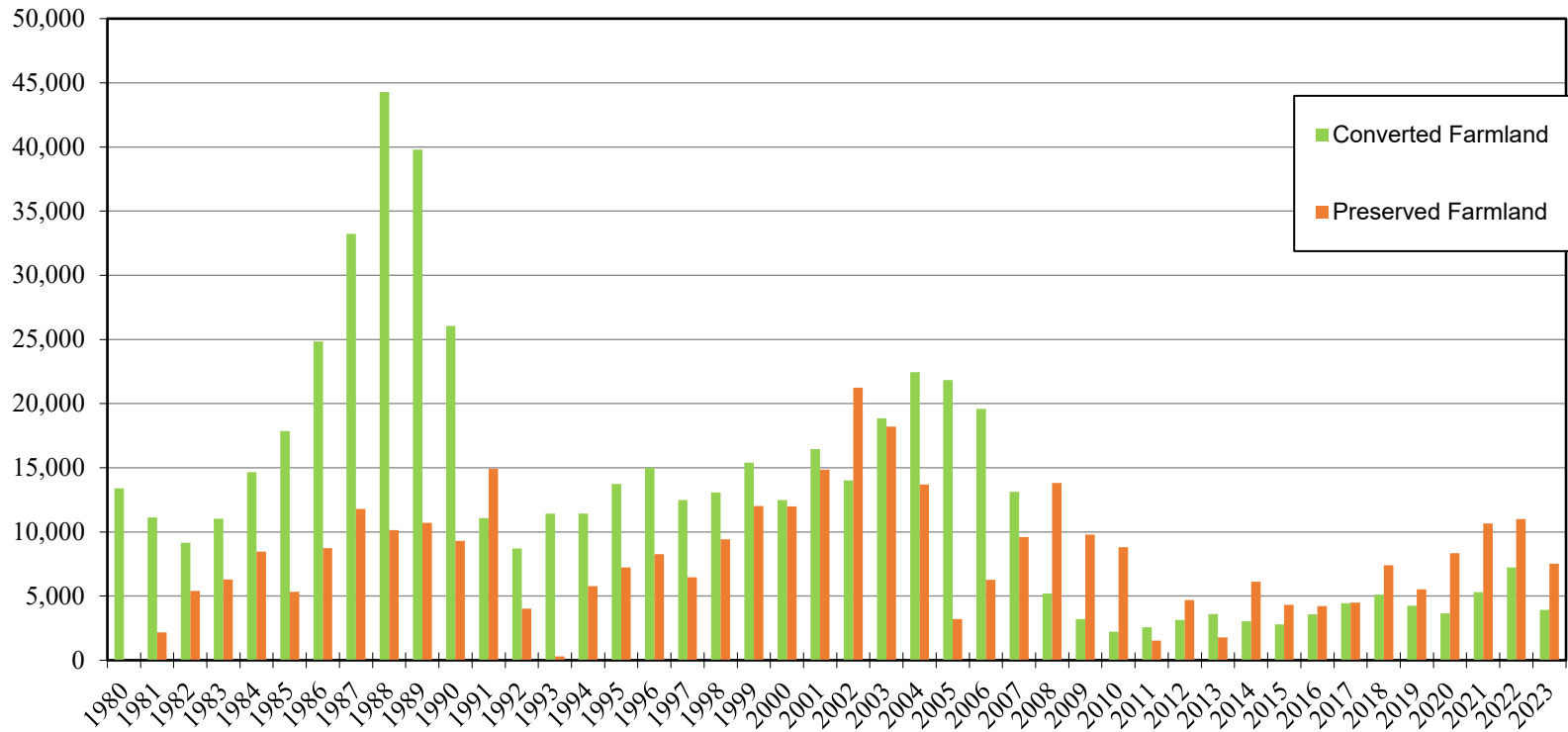
State Land Conservation Spending: Fiscal 2000-2023

- This exhibit shows State land conservation spending for Program Open Space (State share only), the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation, the Rural Legacy Program, and GreenPrint. The primary source of funding for these programs is the property transfer tax; however, in recent years, general funds also have been budgeted to replace prior year transfer tax revenues that were directed to the State's general fund. Transfer tax revenues vary from year to year depending on the housing market and the extent to which any such revenues are transferred to the general fund to help balance the budget.

- In fiscal 2004 through 2006, spending on land conservation decreased, largely because transfer tax revenues were diverted to the general fund to help balance the budget. In fiscal 2007 through 2009, transfer tax revenues increased, and no transfer tax revenues were redirected to the general fund. Fiscal 2010 through 2017 spending reflects diversions of funding to the general fund, reduced transfer tax revenue as a result of the weak housing market, and the timing of purchases. Since fiscal 2017, spending generally has increased due to the end of transfer tax redirection to the general fund and increasing transfer tax revenues as a result of the recovery of the housing market. Previously, Chapter 10 of 2016 and subsequent legislation required the repayment of \$242.2 million in past redirected transfer tax funds by fiscal 2031. Chapter 39 of 2022 ended the repayment after accelerating repayment for certain programs.



Acres of Farmland Preserved by the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Program versus Converted to Other Uses: Fiscal 1980-2023



Prepared by: Maryland Department of Legislative Services
 Source: Maryland Department of Agriculture; Maryland Department of Natural Resources; Maryland Department of Planning; State Department of Assessments and Taxation; Maryland Department of Legislative Services

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