

From: Amy Beall [mailto:abeall@sha.state.md.us]
Sent: Thursday, March 06, 2014 7:23 PM
To: Criss, Jeremy
Cc: Cheryl Schreiber; 'Brian Grandizio'; 'Stone Slade -MDA-'
Subject: Ag Tourism Signing Program - Montgomery County

Good Evening Jeremy,

I left you a voicemail earlier today and in anticipation of our conversation I am attaching the latest draft/pilot guidelines and a sample of the approval forms we send to the state applicants. The final guidelines will be out soon but the remaining edits will not change the criteria as stated in the attached. There are some additional form letters we have created that we can provide at a later date.

As we are ready to move forward statewide with the Ag Tourism Signing Program, I wish to discuss with you that participation from the county means the county must establish a program that supplements the state program. The county program is intended to capture applicants requiring trailblazer signs along county roads from the state road and permits the county to determine how the costs associated with these signs will be addressed. Additionally, the manufacturing and installation of these signs will be the responsibility of the county.

I look forward to your call and to answer any questions you may have at that time.

Thank you,

Amy

Amy K. Beall

Transportation Engineer

State Highway Administration

Office of Traffic and Safety - Traffic Engineering Design Division

7491 Connelley Drive, Hanover, Maryland 21076

Direct: 410-787-4087; Fax: 410-787-3798

www.roads.maryland.gov



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ATTACHMENT A – Ag-Tourism Signing Program Application
(Please print)

CONTACT INFORMATION

NAME OF APPLICANT

TITLE

COMPANY

STREET ADDRESS

CITY/TOWN

COUNTY

STATE

ZIP

TELEPHONE

FAX

E-MAIL

FACILITY WEB ADDRESS

AG-TOURISM FACILITY LOCATION DATA

NAME OF AG-TOURISM FACILITY AS IT APPEARS ON YOUR SITE

STREET ADDRESS

CITY/TOWN

COUNTY

STATE

ZIP

NEAREST FREEWAY, EXPRESSWAY OR STATE ROUTE (I-95, MD 2, US 1)

BILLING INFORMATION *(If all requirements are met, you will be sent an approval letter with a request for payment prior to installation of signage)*

BILL TO

TITLE/POSITION

BILLING ADDRESS

CITY/TOWN

COUNTY

STATE

ZIP

FED ID or SSN

PHONE NUMBER

FAX NUMBER

EMAIL ADDRESS

AG-TOURISM FACILITY CRITERIA

SCHEDULE:

MONTHS OPEN: _____
 (i.e.: May – September)

DAYS/HOURS OPEN: _____
 (i.e.: Monday: 9:00 am – 4:00 pm)

Sunday: _____
 Monday: _____
 Wednesday: _____
 Thursday: _____
 Friday: _____
 Saturday: _____

Please circle either “yes” or “no” for all items listed below:

- | | | |
|--|-----|----|
| Open at least 6 months annually | yes | no |
| Open to public at least 4 days/wk. | yes | no |
| Open to public at least 6 hrs/day – all activities available during hours of operation | yes | no |
| Parking available within short walking distance of Ag-Tourism Facility | yes | no |
| Public Restrooms/drinking water access | yes | no |
| Telephone available in case of emergency | yes | no |
| Have an educational tour <input type="checkbox"/> and/or Host public events <input type="checkbox"/> (check if applicable) * | yes | no |
| Have on-site staff, able to answer questions, during all hours open to the public | yes | no |
| Offer samples and/or sales of local agricultural products | yes | no |
| Have a permanent all weather facility provided for customers | yes | no |
| Have a permanent sign posted on-site with the days and hours of operation and notification of educational tour (if provided) | yes | no |
| Written approval from County or Municipality attached | yes | no |

** Minimum of three (3) public events per year without educational tour / minimum one (1) public event with educational tour. Include schedule of public events in comments below or as an attachment.*

COMMENTS:

IMPORTANT NOTE: In order for your application to be approved for participation in this program, **all criteria must be met.** If all criteria are not met, your application will be denied.

All applications will be reviewed and verified by the Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA), SHA which are subject to all Federal, State, County and City/Town regulations. If, during the life of this program, any Acts are passed or Regulations adopted which affect the rights herein granted, the said Acts and Regulations shall be applicable to this program from the date on which they come into force.

Certification:

I certify that the above statements are true and correct and that I will inform the Department of Agriculture of any changes to the above indicated information that may affect the applicability of the sign and/or sign messages within 30 calendar days of the change. Furthermore, I certify that the subject Ag-Tourism facility is in full compliance with all applicable Federal, State, and local laws, rules and ordinances, including the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act and all applicable license and permit requirements.

Signed: (Applicant) _____ Date: _____

Falsification of the above statements will result in the Denial or Revocation of this Application.

The Application must be submitted with the associated \$250 Application Fee, payable to the ***Maryland Department of Agriculture***. The check should identify the name of the specific Ag-Tourism facility and the County, and be mailed to:

Maryland Department of Agriculture
Marketing and Agribusiness Development
50 Harry S. Truman Parkway
Annapolis, MD 21401
Attention: Ag-Tourism Signing Program

ATTACHMENT E – Ag-Tourism Signing Program Costs

	Sign Fabrication	Sign Installation	Total
Mainline Sign (Large) 108 in. x 60 in.	\$496.00	\$1,160.00	\$1,656.00
Mainline Sign (Small) 84 in. x 40 in.	\$369.50	\$1,160.00	\$1,529.50
Sign Modifications (Overlay)	\$100.00	\$200.00	\$300.00
Application Fee			\$250.00

Ag-Tourism Signing Program

October 1, 2013

Introduction

The Maryland State Highway Administration's (SHA) Office of Traffic & Safety (OOTTS), in conjunction with the Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA), Charles County and the Southern Maryland Agricultural Development Commission have developed the following guidelines for the application, fabrication, installation and maintenance of Ag-Tourism highway signs along State maintained roadways. The Ag-Tourism Signing Program is intended to notify drivers of Ag-Tourism destinations in Maryland. Ag-Tourism highway signs are special signs in the interest of travelers and are limited to rural conventional roads.

MDA and the SHA have approved the Ag-Tourism highway sign design shown in Figure 1 below. The costs for new and replacement signs will be borne by the Ag-Tourism Facilities requesting and approved for the signs.

Figure 1 –Ag-Tourism Sign



Definitions

An *Ag-Tourism Facility* is an agricultural destination located on a working farm that (a) is open to customers and tourists for at least six (6) months of the year for on-site sale of local agricultural products, and (b) has established an educational tour that can be provided by a knowledgeable guide upon request, public events, such as festivals, fairs or workshops, or both educational tours and events.

An *Educational Tour* is a tour of an Ag-Tourism Facility, educational and informative in nature, and guided by a knowledgeable employee of the facility upon request or in accordance with a publicly-available schedule, or self-guided with sufficient interpretive signing and information to provide clear instruction and guidance throughout the public facility.

A *Public Event* is an event, such as a festival, fair or workshop, which is hosted on an Ag-Tourism Facility's premises, where knowledgeable staff is on-site and able to answer facility-related questions during all hours the facility is open to the public.

Eligibility

A destination that is recognized by the SHA and the MDA as an Ag-Tourism Facility and is eligible for Ag-Tourism highway signs must meet the following criteria:

1. The location shall certify in writing that the facility is in full compliance with all applicable Federal, State and local laws, rules and ordinances, including the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act and all applicable license and permit requirements; and
2. The Ag-Tourism Facility shall
 - Be open for customers and tourists at least six (6) months of the year, for at least four (4) days a week and for at least six (6) hours a day,
 - Establish (1) an educational tour, (2) scheduled public events (minimum of three (3) per year), or (3) both educational tours and public events (minimum of one (1) per year),
 - Have a permanent sign posted on-site in a conspicuous and prominent location that is visible to customers entering the facility and states the name of the facility.
 - Have a sign(s) posted in a conspicuous location stating (1) the days and hours of operation; and (2) if educational tours are provided, language conveying that they are available upon request.
 - Provide (1) on-site public restroom facilities, (2) drinking water suitable for public consumption, and (3) a telephone in case of emergencies,
 - Offer samples and/or sales of local agricultural products,
 - Be able to accommodate customers in a permanent, all-weather structure, and have adequate on-site parking available within a short walking distance of the structure.
3. If the facility is not directly along a state roadway, the facility must have signs along the local road network that have been approved by the local authority prior to requesting them on a state road.

Application / Approval Guidelines

The Ag-Tourism Signing Program Application for new signs along a state roadway is provided as Attachment A and may be obtained from the MDA and SHA at the following web addresses:

<http://www.mda.state.md.us/.....> [MDA to provide]

<http://www.marylandroads.com/....> [SHA to provide]

The Application must be submitted with the associated \$250 Application Fee, payable to the *Maryland Department of Agriculture*. The check should identify the name of the specific Ag-Tourism Facility and the county of jurisdiction, and be mailed to:

**Maryland Department of Agriculture
Marketing and Agribusiness Development
50 Harry S. Truman Parkway
Annapolis, MD 21401**

The process under which all applications will be reviewed and approved is as follows:

1. The County or Municipality where the Facility is located must provide written approval for the Facility to request signing along a state highway through this program. Each County or Municipality may elect to submit a written blanket statement for a County's or Municipality's participation or may elect to provide written documentation on a case by case basis. It is the responsibility of the Facility to determine which is the acceptable procedure for their jurisdiction and follow through as required. This documentation must accompany the application when submitted to the MDA.
2. Once an Application is received, MDA will process the application and fee, establish charge numbers, and distribute the Application to OOTS' Traffic Engineering Design Division (TEDD) for review with a carbon copy to the County and/or Municipality of jurisdiction. TEDD will have 30 calendar days from receipt of the application to review and determine whether or not the facility meets the eligibility requirements. MDA TEDD reserve the right to make on-site visits to the Applicants' facilities to validate the veracity of information provided in Applications.
3. If MDA determines that the facility does not meet eligibility criteria and/or the County or Municipality of jurisdiction does not elect to participate in the program, MDA will return the application fee to applicant. A Denial Letter will accompany the refund informing the applicant of the reason for the denial within 30 calendar days of receipt of the Application (a sample Denial Letter is provided in Attachment B).
4. For facilities along a State roadway: If the Application is approved by TEDD and space is available to safely install the Ag-Tourism highway signs, the approved application will be forwarded to MDA by TEDD. MDA will send an Approval Letter to the Applicant indicating the number and location of signs to be installed and the associated cost within 30 calendar days of receipt of the approved application (a sample Approval Letter is provided in Attachment C). The costs will cover fabrication and installation of the signs, including sign supports. If the application is denied by SHA a notice of denial will be forwarded in writing to the MDA from TEDD with an explanation for the denial. MDA will then notify the applicant of the denial.
5. For facilities along a County or Municipality roadway: Trailblazer signs from the state highway to the Facility will be required. No signs will be installed along a state highway until the trailblazer signs are installed along the County or Municipality roadway(s) first. The Application can be submitted but processing will not commence until the County or Municipality provides MDA and TEDD with notification of the installation of these signs. The process then follows #4 above.

6. The Approval Package will include an Approval letter, a graphic of the sign layout and a graphic of the sign locations along the state highway. The Applicant is to review the sign layout for spelling and months of operation. Corrections are to be made directly on the layout and signed by the Applicant. The graphic of the sign location map is to give the applicant an opportunity to see where the signs will be located so there is no miscommunication of what the applicant will be receiving. The applicant must sign this as well as an acknowledgement of the final product. Upon receipt of the Approval Letter Package for signs along State roadways, the Ag-Tourism Facility must submit the sign layout and the sign location map with signatures along with a check within 60 calendar days, payable to the *Maryland Department of Agriculture* for the amount indicated in the letter. The check should identify the specific Ag-Tourism Facility and the County or Municipality of jurisdiction and be mailed to the address listed herewith. Once payment is received, TEDD will be notified by MDA so that sign fabrication and installation may proceed. Upon such notification, TEDD will send a Confirmation Letter to the Applicant confirming the receipt of payment, as well as providing a typical time frame for sign installations (a sample Confirmation Letter is provided in Attachment D). Signs along County or Municipality roadways must be installed prior to installation of any signs on State roadways.
7. All qualified Ag-Tourism Facilities will be listed on the MDA website.
8. The costs for application, fabrication, modifications (overlays), and installation are provided as Attachment E.

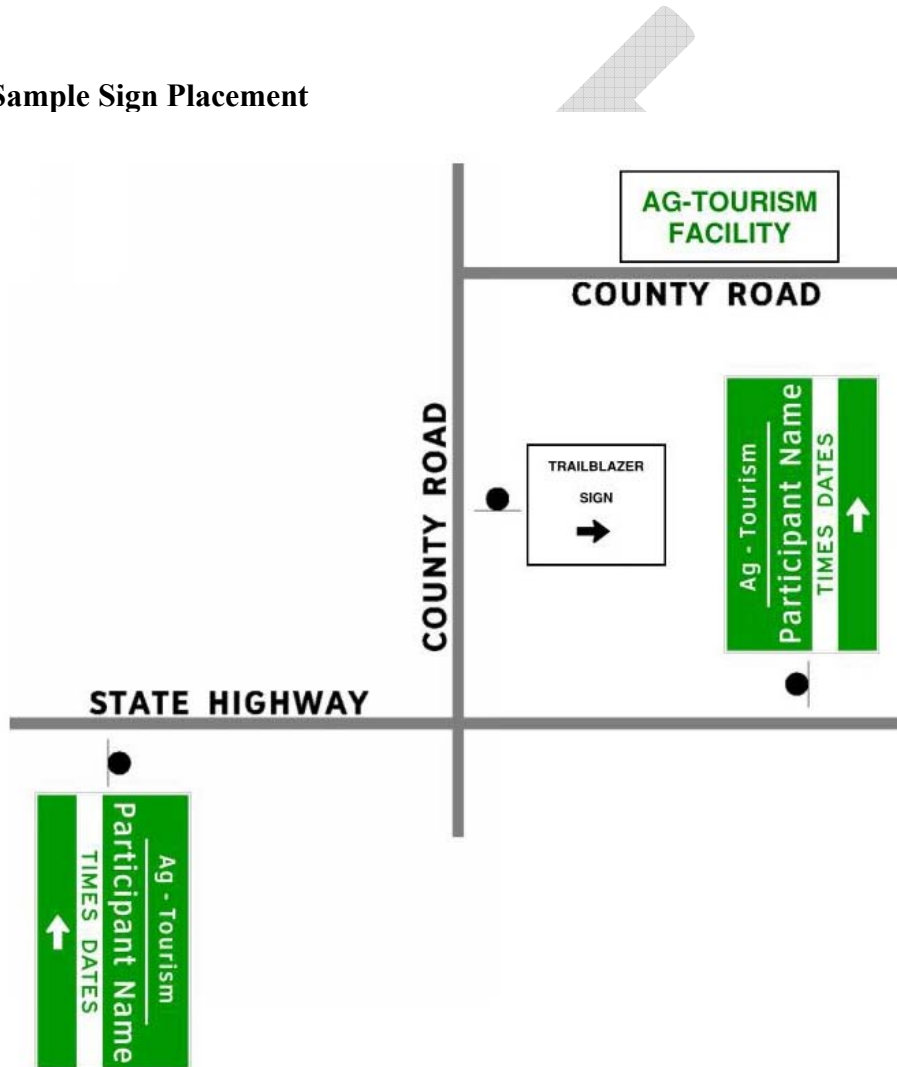
Sign Guidelines

The following guidelines apply for the fabrication, installation and maintenance of Ag-Tourism highway signs:

1. Ag-Tourism Signs may not be placed along Expressways, Freeways or Interstate Highways.
2. Mainline signs will display the name of the facility, months of operation, and a directional arrow and/or mileage if more than one mile (see Attachment F). The name of the facility on the Mainline Sign will be limited to two (2) lines of text with a maximum of ten (10) letters including spaces and punctuation per line.
3. Signs along State Highways will be installed and maintained by SHA Sign Shop forces.
4. Signs along County or Municipal roadways are independent from this state program and will be installed and maintained by the County or Municipality of jurisdiction in accordance with their guidelines.
5. Signs will not be installed along State Highways prior to the installation of the signs along the County or Municipal roadways.
6. All signs along State roadways must be located within SHA rights-of-way.
7. If, at any time, a particular Ag-Tourism Facility ceases to be functional, MDA will formally notify SHA TEDD in writing so that the signs may be removed. SHA District Traffic and the County or Municipality will be copied on all such correspondence.

8. The Facility will be signed along only one state roadway. One Mainline Ag-Tourism Sign will be installed for each direction along the closest State Highway, except where the closest State Highway is an Expressway, Freeway or an Interstate Highway. If a Facility is located along a state roadway, that is the roadway the signs will be placed on. The size of the signs along State roadways will be determined by TEDD and is dependent on the prevailing speed along the road. Roads with a prevailing speed below 40 mph will have the smaller signs installed, while roads with a prevailing speed of 40 mph and above will have the larger signs installed. Trailblazer signs are to be installed along County or Municipality roadways by the local authority, as necessary, where a change in direction is required to access the Ag-Tourism Facility. Figure 2 illustrates an example of sign placement.

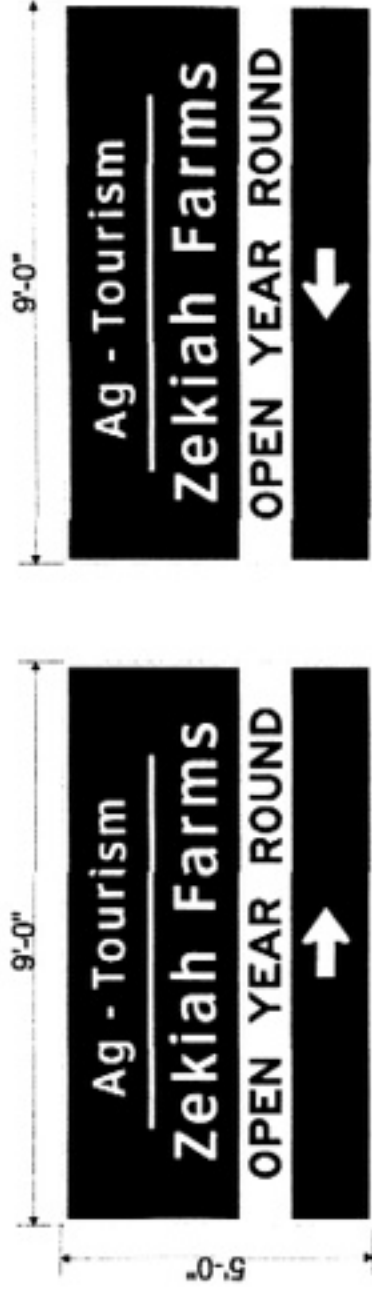
Figure 2 – Sample Sign Placement



9. All Ag-Tourism Signs along State roadways require MDA and SHA approval.
10. In the event that a sign is damaged or missing, the cost of replacing the sign will be borne by the Ag-Tourism Facility.
11. Ag-Tourism Highway Sign Fabrication Details and approved Ag-Tourism Sign Logos are provided in Attachment F.

12. If TEDD determines that a sign replacement or modification is necessary, a new application may be required. At that time, the facility will be required to meet all current program criteria and requirements.
13. If a participating Ag-Tourism Facility foresees a change in ownership the Facility shall notify MDA so sign removal can be scheduled. If the new owner wishes to retain the existing signs, the new owner shall provide written notice to the MDA within 30 calendar days of the recorded transfer of ownership. To retain his or her predecessor's signs, the new owner is required to submit a new application with an associated re-application fee of \$100 to MDA within 30 calendar days of the recorded transfer of ownership. Where sign message modifications (overlays) are necessary due to changes in the facility name and/or months of operation the Facility owner shall be responsible for the associated costs. The Ag-Tourism Facility is required to meet all current program criteria and requirements.
14. Should MDA or SHA find that a participating Ag-Tourism Facility is not in compliance with this policy and/or the criteria herein, MDA must notify the Ag-Tourism facility that it will be given 30 calendar days to bring the facility into compliance or its Ag-Tourism signs will be removed. If the signs are removed and the facility later applies for reinstatement, the request will be handled in the same manner as a request by a new applicant. If MDA or SHA determines that a facility is not in compliance twice within a two year period, its Ag-Tourism signs will be permanently removed and the facility may not reapply under the same ownership. In the event that an Ag-Tourism Facility is removed from the program, MDA will not be required to refund any program costs paid by the Facility.
15. SHA will make a reasonable effort to maintain all Ag-Tourism signs however, SHA reserves the right to:
 - a. Cover, relocate, or remove any Ag-Tourism signs for maintenance or construction operations, or when deemed to be in the best interest of SHA or the traveling public, without advance notice.
 - b. Remove signs when roadway improvements or changes in the roadway cross-section or configuration will no longer accommodate the existing signs.
 - c. Relocate or remove Ag-Tourism signs if a need for a higher-priority regulatory, warning, guide, supplemental, service, or any other sign is identified.
16. MDA and SHA reserve the right to terminate this program or any Agreement for Ag-Tourism signs, or any portion thereof, by furnishing the Ag-Tourism Facility with written notice of such intent not less than 30 calendar days prior to the termination.
17. MDA and SHA reserve the right to waive, increase and/or reduce the application fees in certain, limited instances.

PLEASE REVIEW THE SIGN LAYOUT BELOW FOR SPELLING AND DATES OF OPERATION
NOTE ANY CHANGES ON THIS FORM



Customer Approval

[Signature]
Customer Signature
Cynthia Reuchert Thomas
Printed Name
Date

RETURN THIS COPY WITH PAYMENT FOR SIGN FABRICATION AND INSTALLATION