

## DNR Response to Pierpoint Regenerative Practices and Traditions RFP Questions

Formal questions received during the RFP questions period are included below. Questions are listed as received in the numbered list. DNR responses are included in the lettered sub-bullets immediately below each question.

1. Would a honey bee apiary be something that would be considered?
  - a. Please feel free to include a honey bee apiary in your proposal. At this time, DNR is considering all creative agriculture and agricultural production-adjacent proposals
2. Is there a price range per acre that you can advise us of to make sure we are not over or under bidding?
  - a. As the RFP states, the rent will not be the main determining factor in selecting a proposal. However, if you want to get a sense for average rental rates, the University of Maryland Extension provides this analysis county-by-county: <https://extension.umd.edu/resource/maryland-cash-rental-rates/>. Please take into consideration any necessary infrastructure improvements in selecting a rent amount. Feel free to explain your justification for the rent amount you select in your proposal, including any thoughts on return-on-investment timelines.
3. The terms "Regenerative Agriculture," "Regenerative Farming," and "Regenerative Practices and Traditions" are used across the narrative and website, how do these terms differ?
  - a. The legal framework of the program is based solely on the Chesapeake Legacy Act statutory definition of "regenerative practices and traditions" (<https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/2025RS/bills/sb/sb0428T.pdf>). In the public-facing advertisement materials, these terms are used interchangeably to bring more farmers to the table who may be unfamiliar with the statutory language, especially given the popularity of these other terms amongst non-governmental organizations and the recent use of "regenerative agriculture" by the USDA in their pilot program. DNR also wanted to mirror the language used by Governor Moore at the Bay Legacy Act signing. Additionally, DNR engages with partners on a host of other soil regenerating initiatives, such as afforestation and meadow habitat creation, and including the terms "farming" and "agriculture" on the public facing communication materials make it clear that this is an agricultural program.
4. What are the expected annual taxes, fees and assessments associated per acre annually?
  - a. The County assesses these. To date, DNR has no record of taxes, fees, or assessments being levied against the property, however, that is potentially subject to change based on County regulation and the type of activity occurring on the property and/or any future utilities installed. This is a standard clause in all DNR leases to cover any future assessments, but DNR has no expectation or prediction of taxes to be levied.

5. What utilities are available at which fields?
  - a. None are currently present on the property. The selected Tenant(s) will be permitted to construct facilities and install utilities, per the conditions in the sample lease, pending DNR approval.
6. What, if any "equipment and facilities" are on the land or available for lease through DNR?
  - a. None are currently available.
7. What details would I need to know prior to visiting the fields, i.e. where to park, etc?
  - a. To coordinate a visit to the property, please contact Park Manager Shea Niemann at [shea.niemann@maryland.gov](mailto:shea.niemann@maryland.gov).
8. Regarding the Financial Disclosure Statement requirement, the bid packet links to a Personal Financial Statement. Would nonprofit applicants be permitted to submit organizational financial documentation instead, such as audited financial statements, our Form 990, current financial statements, or another organizational financial disclosure?
  - a. Yes, organizations such as nonprofits are eligible to submit organizational financial disclosure statements such as those listed above.
9. Applicant and operating structure. The RFP permits nonprofit, private, and commercial entities to apply. May a nonprofit organization serve as the primary tenant while engaging an affiliated farm business or other qualified partners as farm managers, contractors, instructors, or program partners?
  - a. Yes, subject to approval by DNR. Please include any proposed partnerships in your official proposal.
10. Beginning farmers, apprentices, and trainees. The sample lease prohibits assignment, subletting, and sharecropping. May the primary tenant operate a supervised farmer-training or apprenticeship program in which beginning farmers or trainees cultivate designated areas under the tenant's direct management, without creating a sublease or sharecropping arrangement? If so, what operating structure would DNR consider acceptable?
  - a. Yes, subject to approval by DNR. Please include any proposed training programs in your official proposal. Proposed operating agreements would be subject to review by the DNR Office of the Attorney General. DNR has several agreement templates that may work for this purpose, subject to approval.
11. Collaborative proposal. May the applicant identify multiple affiliated or community partner organizations that will provide agricultural operations, education, workforce development, conservation, food distribution, or public programming under the primary tenant's control?
  - a. Yes, please include any proposed partnerships in your official proposal.
12. Acreage and phasing. May an applicant propose leasing the full approximately 111 acres while bringing individual fields into active production in phases over several years, provided the remaining acreage is maintained in approved cover crops or other regenerative management?
  - a. Yes.

13. Existing water resources. What water sources currently serve or are available to the agricultural fields? Are there existing wells, hydrants, irrigation connections, ponds, withdrawal permits, or other water infrastructure associated with the property?
  - a. There are no existing water resources on the property. The selected Tenant(s), subject to approval by DNR, are permitted to install water-related infrastructure such as wells. Any permit applications, including withdrawal permits, will require collaboration with DNR prior to submission.
14. Electricity and farm infrastructure. Is electrical service currently available within or near the agricultural area? Would DNR consider proposals for temporary or removable infrastructure such as high tunnels, deer fencing, livestock fencing, wash/pack facilities, cold storage, mobile farm structures, tool or equipment storage, shade structures, or similar agricultural improvements, subject to project review and permitting?
  - a. No electricity service is currently available to the Pierpoint property directly, however service to nearby structures does exist. The selected Tenant(s), subject to approval by DNR, are permitted to install electricity-related infrastructure. Small-scale solar installations could also be considered. Any permit applications will require collaboration with DNR prior to submission. Yes, DNR will consider proposals that include installation of temporary or removable infrastructure such as those types listed above.
15. NRCS, MDA, and other cost-share programs. May the selected tenant pursue NRCS EQIP, Maryland Agricultural Water Quality Cost-Share, Chesapeake Bay, healthy soils, or other public or philanthropic grants and cost-share programs for improvements to the leased property? Where a program requires landowner authorization or evidence of site control, is DNR generally willing to execute the necessary certifications after its required review and approval?
  - a. Yes to both parts of this question.
16. Grant-funded improvements and lease termination. Because the sample lease permits DNR to withdraw acreage for public purposes and provides that permanent improvements become State property, how should applicants address grant-funded or tenant-funded infrastructure with a useful life extending beyond the period of occupancy? Are removable improvements preferred where practicable?
  - a. Removable improvements are preferred where practicable, however, DNR recognizes this is not always possible, especially regarding water- and electricity-related infrastructure. For all grant-funded projects, DNR is generally willing to collaborate with granting agencies wherever possible to ensure installations remain through its useful life, even if this extends beyond the lease term, if this is a requirement for accepting grant funding. For tenant-funded projects, please take expected expenditures into consideration when developing your proposed per-acre rent and business proposal.
17. Hunting and public programming. Are all five agricultural fields included within the existing public hunting area? If so, can DNR and the tenant establish seasonal scheduling, safety zones, temporary activity restrictions, or other protocols so that school programs, volunteers, public events, agricultural workers, and hunting access can safely coexist?

- a. Yes, all five agricultural fields are currently included within the existing public hunting area. Yes, DNR and selected Tenant(s) will collaborate on safety zones and other protocols to ensure visitor and worker safety on site.
- 18. Public engagement expectations. The RFP requires public programming and prioritizes proposals with a strong public-access component. Beyond the minimum annual engagement requirement in the sample lease, does DNR have a preferred frequency, scale, season, or type of public programming for Pierpoint?
  - a. No, DNR wants the public-engagement component to complement the selected Tenant(s) business model and does not have a strict vision for this aspect. There are no requirements associated with frequency, scale, or type of public programming. In the long run, DNR hopes this area of Seneca Creek State Park can be a draw for more day-use visitors and school group interpretation, but the form of this public engagement is subject to the shared vision of the selected Tenant(s) and DNR.
- 19. Retail and food distribution. The RFP asks applicants to identify proposed on-site retail. Would DNR consider a seasonal farm stand, CSA pickup, produce distribution, educational market days, or sale of products grown on the property? Are there specific limitations on revenue-generating public activities on State park property?
  - a. Yes, DNR would consider these on-site retail proposals, subject to approval and review by our Office of the Attorney General. Please include any details in your official proposal.
- 20. Per-acre rent. Is there a minimum acceptable rent, historical rental rate, appraisal benchmark, or expected range that applicants should use in developing the proposed per-acre rent? If acreage is activated in phases, may the proposed rent structure reflect that phasing?
  - a. As the RFP states, the rent will not be the main determining factor in selecting a proposal. However, if you want to get a sense for average rental rates, the University of Maryland Extension provides this analysis county-by-county: <https://extension.umd.edu/resource/maryland-cash-rental-rates/>. Please take into consideration any necessary infrastructure improvements in selecting a rent amount. Feel free to explain your justification for the rent amount you select in your proposal, including any thoughts on return-on-investment timelines and rent-phasing.
- 21. Insurance. Does DNR have minimum general liability, vehicle, workers' compensation, agricultural, event, or other insurance limits that the applicant should incorporate into the financial plan?
  - a. Insurance requirements and minimums may depend on the proposed use of the property by the tenant. General Liability Insurance will likely be required, related to bodily injury, death, property damage, or destruction, for one-million dollars (\$1,000,000) listing the State of Maryland as a co-insured. Proposals should include other potential insurance needs in accordance with applicable state laws.
- 22. Existing farm and soil records. Can DNR provide any recent soil tests, prior nutrient management plans, conservation plans, cropping history, erosion assessments, drainage studies, or other baseline agricultural information for the Pierpoint fields?

- a. No baseline agricultural information exists for the Pierpoint fields at this time. DNR can work with selected Tenant(s) to determine if any of this information can become available upon request to the county Soil Conservation District.
- 23. Historic and environmental review. Are there known archaeological, historic, wetland, stream-buffer, Land and Water Conservation Fund, or other site constraints beyond those identified in the RFP that applicants should account for when proposing agricultural infrastructure?
  - a. The Pierpoint property is subject to Land and Water Conservation Fund program requirements. DNR is responsible for adhering to LWCF program requirements and any other historic and environmental legal requirements, which is partially why the Internal Review Process is required for all major disturbances and infrastructure updates on the site. There are no known archaeological, historic, wetland, or stream-buffer site constraints at this time, but DNR will work with the selected Tenant(s) to assess projects according to these site constraints on a case-by-case basis.
- 24. Lease commencement. Following selection of a successful proposal, what is DNR's anticipated timeline for negotiation, Maryland Board of Public Works approval, execution of the lease, and tenant access to the property? Should applicants assume that initial field work and production could begin during the 2027 growing season?
  - a. Yes, this lease is expected to begin in the 2027 growing season. Exact timelines for the Board of Public Works approval are difficult to make. However, DNR anticipates announcing the official Tenant(s) selection in early November 2026, followed shortly by submission to the Board of Public Works.
- 25. Additional site access. Will prospective applicants have an opportunity to request an additional site visit before the October 9 proposal deadline for purposes of evaluating water, access, utilities, field conditions, and potential infrastructure locations?
  - a. To coordinate a visit to the property, please contact Park Manager Shea Niemann at [shea.niemann@maryland.gov](mailto:shea.niemann@maryland.gov).

Additionally, the below organization expressed interest in partnering with selected farmers. If you are interested in partnering with them on your proposal, please contact [Madeline.williams@maryland.gov](mailto:Madeline.williams@maryland.gov) for more information.

- Farm Fresh Glow LLC: Interested in partnering with farmers who are open to the idea of thoughtfully inviting people into their farming world but aren't sure where to start. Farm Fresh runs a program called Camp Serviceberry that could be adapted to what they are growing or tending.