



Partners in Action

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MET Easement Landowners Participate with 5 Million Trees Initiative

The state's *5 Million Trees Initiative* (5MT), which aims to add five million more trees to Maryland's landscape by 2031, is currently close to two million new plantings. Since the start of the program in 2022, this multi-department initiative is continuing afforestation efforts through working with property owners on both public and private lands. In cooperation with Maryland Environmental Trust (MET) landowners, the Maryland Forest Service (MFS) has been able to plant a portion of these new trees on land protected by conservation easements, benefiting both the state initiative and the improvement of protected ecosystems.

Easement land owners interested in participating with Five Million Trees can contact the Maryland Forest Services or fill out the [MET survey](#), which begins the process on each planting project. Site visits are then set up to evaluate land for planting. Funding for public land afforestation comes internally from the Forest Service, while private land funding is evaluated through other departments and programs.



MET easement landowners who have participated in the 5MT include Alice Altstatt of Carroll County, who is jointly participating in the [White Oak Initiative](#), a project intending to enhance regeneration of the Maryland white oak tree. 200 seedlings of white oak, including over 400 sowings of other species made up the new two acres of plantings as a part of the [Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program](#). This program, a Farm Service Agency-led partnership with the Maryland Department of Agriculture, Department of Natural Resources (DNR), and Natural Resources Conservation Service, funds landowners to install better conservation practices on their property in environmentally sensitive areas.

"This particular two acre strip of land in between two wooded areas was not good for hay nor pasture and it made sense to convert it back to woodland," Altstatt said. "I appreciate aesthetically forests and woodlands and like the idea of expanding contiguous woodland habitat."



Other easement owners like Kenny and Annie Braitman of Garrett County have afforested 4.8 acres of former horse pasture. Funded by both the DNR and the volunteer-led Trout Unlimited program, the 2,300 tree project was completed in roughly three hours by 13 volunteers.

“Annie and I believe that trees play a critical role in keeping our planet healthy. They help with rain through transpiration, they filter water, they interact with the microbial life underground, they support hundreds of forms of life, and provide food and shelter as well,” Kenny Braitman said.

The couple has long participated in the planting of new forest acreage. In 1994, they received several grants for planting 10,000 trees on the entire acreage of their land. They completed a planting two years ago that covered the wetlands on the river's edge of their property.

Fellow Garrett County easement owner Kathryn Weise has also participated in 5MT afforestation on her property, utilizing the plantings as borders around eight acres of field, totaling 550 trees. A mix of species was used for different heights, including red and white oaks and shrubs which facilitate wildlife habitat. Contractors installed the trees with protective tubing which remain for three years.

To take part in the 5 Million Trees Initiative, individuals can also plant a tree and [plot the locations](#) online, or [participate in an incentive program](#). Those interested in starting a 5 Million Trees project on their property can reach out to county-based tree planting specialists within the [Assistance and Rebate Programs](#) page on the 5MT website. Landowners can also get involved by participating in volunteer-led seed collections by the Maryland Forest Service.

Orders for [purchasing trees from the John S. Ayton Tree Nursery](#) can begin being placed starting in October. DNR offers a [\\$25 coupon toward the purchase of a tree](#) from participating retail nurseries and garden centers, and donations through the [Gift of Trees](#) program also contribute to the goal. The Maryland Department of the Environment routinely publishes new data on the [progress of the initiative and locations of tree plantings](#) across the state.

