

*From the Baltimore Sun*

## Letters to the Editor

August 13, 2006

### **Open space critical to the state's future**

Land conservation is more critical now than ever before ("Md. open-space program lags behind development," Aug. 7).

As of 2003, almost 20 percent of the state's lands had been developed and another 20 percent had been permanently protected. That leaves 60 percent of Maryland's lands adrift, their future undecided.

A real estate transfer tax funds Program Open Space, Rural Legacy and other conservation programs that protect and preserve our undeveloped fields, forests and farms. This tax is artfully crafted so that, when none of the funding is diverted, land preservation can keep pace with development.

But the recent diversions of more than \$400 million in land preservation funding to the state's General Fund have left our natural lands at risk of development.

While that full amount will never be repaid, we must ensure that future cuts to this program are prevented.

Polls show that more than 80 percent of Marylanders support open-space preservation.

In this election year, it is critical for all the candidates running for office - and the candidates for governor in particular - to pledge to end the raids on open-space funding.

The future of our state's undeveloped lands - and therefore of the [Chesapeake Bay](#) - depends on it.

*Jennifer Bevan-Dangel  
Baltimore*

The writer is a staff attorney for Environment Maryland.