

## Pot Lucks and Outer Beltways

On Sunday, October 23, Sugarloaf members and friends gathered for the annual Potluck Dinner. It was great to see the Linden Barn full of neighbors enjoying good food, warm fellowship and fabulous music in our beautiful up-county area. As you know, most of our barn gatherings tend to be “business” related because of the many challenges to the Agricultural Reserve.

One of the most consistent threats to the integrity of the up-county started long before the AgReserve was formed. No less than six feasibility studies were conducted to determine a route for a superhighway to connect Virginia and Maryland **with a new bridge over the Potomac**. First dubbed the “Outer Beltway”, then the “Techway”, this highway ran **right through the AgReserve**. Look at the maps on SCA’s web site and you will see that these proposed routes would cut through the heart of our farm land. However, since the beginning Sugarloaf and a terrific coalition of citizens groups have successfully encouraged local and state governments to **“just say no”**.

Sean Connaughton, the Virginia Secretary of Transportation said that Virginia would like to see a new bridge south of the Wilson Bridge. The Secretary of Transportation for Maryland, Beverley Swaim-Staley, stated that Maryland was concentrating on a list of priorities, and another river crossing was not on that list. In Washington Post Oct. 23, Dr. Gridlock pointed out that the billions of dollars needed to “end” congestion appear to be far beyond the public’s willingness to spend. Even maintaining our present infrastructure is a major financial challenge.

However, it now appears that Virginia’s Governor Bob McDonnell and Virginia’s U.S. Senator Mark Warner are reopening Pandora’s Box. Be assured that Sugarloaf will keep our eye on this outer beltway/bridge crossing issue. In the past, our state and local officials have resisted the siren call from Virginia. **We hope to encourage them to continue to do so.**

Meanwhile, if you have not looked into formally conserving your acreage, check out the Maryland Environmental Trust ([www.dnr.state.md.us/met](http://www.dnr.state.md.us/met)) and the Sugarloaf Countryside Conservancy. The more acreage is formally conserved, the better our chance of protection.