



## Maryland Green Registry MEMBER

The Maryland Green Registry promotes and recognizes sustainable practices at organizations of all types and sizes. Members agree to share at least five environmental practices and one measurable result while striving to continually improve their environmental performance.

## Founding Farmers



12505 Park Potomac Avenue  
Potomac, MD 20854  
240-750-0449  
[www.foundingfarmers.com](http://www.foundingfarmers.com)  
Restaurant  
Member since April 2019

### Management and Leadership

#### Environmental Policy Statement

**SUSTAINABILITY IS NOT A CATCH PHRASE; IT'S A NATURAL EXTENSION OF WHO WE ARE.** For us, sustainability is not a lofty idea but a fundamental, and necessary, endeavor. Our concept is about the food and drink of course, but it's also about our team, our facilities, our practices, and the hundreds of decisions we make each day that affect the world around us. We believe it's about finding a balance, which allows us to sustain our quest of making quality, accessible food, while also giving back to our community and the environment.

**FOOD WITH A CONSCIENCE.** We give a great deal of thought to the farmers who grow, raise, and harvest our food, as well as the people who eat it. We seek out family farmers and support purveyors who employ responsible farming methods. This includes farms that value and support conservation, biodiversity, animal stewardship, economic viability, and fair treatment of workers. Above all, we focus on quality, whether we're bringing in peaches from down the road or broccoli from across the country.

**A GREEN FOUNDATION.** Our flagship location opened as Washington, D.C.'s first LEED Gold Certified restaurant and as the first upscale-casual, full-service LEED Gold restaurant in the country. All of our restaurants are LEED certified. **Our Maryland location is LEED Silver certified.** These prestigious certifications, offered by the U.S. Green Building Council, recognize architecture and interiors that have been constructed and created with a minimal impact on the environment. Every element is thoughtfully designed, from the efficient HVAC

*and lighting systems all the way down to the paints and furniture. In addition, we continually work to establish and pursue all of our Founding Farmers locations as 3 and 4 Star Certified Green Restaurants<sup>®</sup>. To make this possible and continue our commitment to being a green business, we compost food waste, use no bottled water on site, donate our used grease so it can be recycled into biofuel, use the most energy efficient equipment, and use occupancy sensors to reduce energy usage.*

**MAINTAINING OUR BELIEFS.** *We hold ourselves accountable for living our green mission each and every day in our stores, but so does the Green Restaurant Association. The GRA measures, among many things, recycling practices and high-efficiency water and energy usage. Every two years we undergo a careful recertification and reevaluation process where the GRA reviews invoices and systems, and scores on a strict point system. We keep a close eye on maintaining and improving our score as we evolve and new green initiatives become available. Find the steps that our Maryland restaurant is taking to maintain our certification from the Green Restaurant Association here:*

*[MoCo's Founding Farmers](https://www.wearefoundingfarmers.com/about/story/sustainability/). And more on our sustainability efforts here: <https://www.wearefoundingfarmers.com/about/story/sustainability/>*



#### **Environmental Team**

*At Founding Farmers, we rely on a team of company-wide experts who work across all topics related to sustainability. Our Co-Owners, Mike Vucurevich and Dan Simons with the American family farmers of the North Dakota Farmers Union, decided from day one to be pioneers in the restaurant industry by making sustainability a core value and by constantly finding new ways to improve upon that commitment. To support our mission, we rely on a group of in-house subject matter experts:*

- We are part of the Founding Circle for [DC's Conscious Capitalism chapter](#), participating in educational efforts and outreach to elevate humanity in all of the businesses across the DMV. Our Co-Owner Dan Simons continues to actively participate in their development and programming and has been on a number of Conscious Capitalism panels during the past year.*
- Lara Hardcastle, Senior VP in charge of restaurant development, works to ensure our restaurants are built to LEED standards and coordinates the Green Restaurant Association Certifications.*
- Leah Frankl, Director of Design, ensures the dining environment is not simply lovely, but also decreases our environmental impacts through selection of energy efficient lighting and low VOC materials.*
- Tony Higdon, Director of Kitchen Operations, works with our culinary teams to ensure training, and upkeep of standards with portioning, and food waste to keep our kitchens running sustainably.*

- *Julie Sharkey, Director of Marketing Operations and Project Manager for Our Last Straw, works with leaders in the community to educate restaurants on reducing single-use plastic in their establishments. She also represents the restaurant community as a part of the Department of Environmental Protection education materials review panel.*

*Our team and company-wide sustainability mission is in action every day at our MoCo's Founding Farmers located in Potomac, MD. This mission is strengthened through this leadership team, as well as our company "Constitution" and the company management practices.*

*We are a high-performing, fast-paced restaurant. In order to walk our talk requires commitment, continual staff development, and a consistent workforce. We have regular classes for employees on our Constitution and company practices. Very often, we provide one-on-one trainings and mentorship. We work to grow our talent in house, which has major impact in all of our programs and environmental efforts, because it creates a stable work force of well-trained and very often like-minded individuals that truly care about the company and its mission.*

*Knowing we can't have all the necessary expertise in-house to support some of our efforts, we rely on third party evaluators. They ensure our practices are in keeping with the times and the latest earth-friendly innovations, teaching and guiding us when we fall short of our intended goals. We work with the Green Restaurant Association who provide audits to maintain MoCo's Founding Farmers 3-star rating on a pre-determined schedule. And we worked with the U.S. Green Building Council in obtaining our LEED certified SILVER status for MoCo's Founding Farmers. More details above in our sustainability statement.*



### **Annual Environmental Goals**

*In the past year, we joined the NOAA Marine Debris Action Plan with specific goals to accomplish by 2026. Section 1.1.1.4.: By the end of 2026, Action Plan leads and partners will promote sustainable and waste-reducing initiatives in their respective office operations and events to reduce consumer debris and single-use plastic.*

*We maintain our certifications from the Green [Restaurant Association](#) and the U.S. Green Building Council (LEED) in our continuing operations and pursue LEED and GRA certification for all future planned projects.*

*As a part of 2020 remodeling, we also implemented the Circuit Meter System to live monitor and improve energy use.*



## Environmentally Preferable Products and Services

*At Founding Farmers, we seek out family farmers and support purveyors who employ responsible farming methods. This includes farms that value and support conservation, sustainability, biodiversity, animal stewardship, economic viability, and fair treatment of workers. While most restaurants buy from large companies and corporate food factories, we select and work with our vendors individually to ensure they match our company values. From the local, artisan hand soap we use in our bathrooms to the chicken we buy for our guests (that is air chilled, requiring less water, and isn't soaked in chlorine baths) to the Beachley furniture specifically designed for our restaurants to even the original art we commission, every choice is considered carefully, and often reconsidered again and again as new products become available.*

*See next section for more details how we address another critical aspect of our sourcing decisions and efforts: packaging and our procurement work to ensure the packaging is earth friendly.*

*Founding Farmers also supports the George Washington University Urban Apiary and Honeybee Research Program. Since 2011, we have been providing funding for the program to maintain the hives, for an undergraduate researcher, and for a 24-hour bee cam. The honey harvested is used in some of our recipes, when available, and for our Founding Spirits distillery. In addition, we support the environmental researchers at the Cornell University Maple Syrup Research Program and buy our maple syrup from their maples and sugarhouse.*



## Environmentally Preferable Purchasing

*Whenever possible, we buy directly from farmers, including running our own 18-wheeler from American family farms, which we ensure is always full and runs on an environmentally sound schedule. We have mastered the local last mile with a cadre of primarily independent and locally owned distributors, who source from nearby sustainable family farms and fishermen, are able to carry the products we need, keep up with our volume, and align with our mission. For example, over the past several years, Founding Farmers has been working with our supplier, Congressional Seafood, doing our part to #EatTheInvaders and increase the market for Chesapeake Blue Catfish, which is now on our menus. These invasive fish were introduced into nearby rivers as a recreational fish in the 1970s and have now become the Chesapeake Bay's biggest threat. What started as 1,500 fingerlings has grown to 100 million fish across the Chesapeake watershed in nearly every major tributary. They have taken over the James River, constituting 90 percent of the fish. These invaders feast on the Chesapeake's supply of rockfish, blue crabs, clams, oysters, and shrimp diminishing our once abundant seafood varieties. This diet, however, makes them uniquely delicious.*

*Mild, white, and flaky, Chesapeake Blue Catfish are wild-caught and taste nothing like what most expect when they hear “catfish.” They have quickly become a guest favorite on our menus for their great taste... and to help us Save the Bay.*

*Across our company, we are constantly evaluating the sources of our ingredients, our furniture, our cleaning supplies, and more. We have built essential working relationships with farmers and suppliers that we were able to utilize during the Pandemic to launch our Founding Farmers Market & Grocery. Communities need food. First responders also need food. When COVID-19 came to our region, the grocery stores couldn't meet demand. There were devastating supply chain issues daily with food, staples, and essentials. It's not hard to remember trying to find toilet paper and even flour to make bread. Luckily, we have built vital relationships with our suppliers and farmers and were able to use those channels to continue to bring in food for our restaurants and gave us access to products and packaging that the grocery stores do not or cannot use. What can a grocery store do with a 50-pound bag of flour, a box of 144 eggs on flats, or a giant box of individually wrapped toilet paper rolls? Not much. They need their products in retail packages with bar codes for scanning. But a restaurant turned retailer. We created new, innovative ways to package and deliver food and necessities to our communities, all the while creating jobs, providing charity, and doing our part to keep our communities fed and healthy. We gave toilet paper rolls away with orders.*

*During the pandemic, we also adapted our distillery to make desperately needed hand sanitizer to help sustain our region. We supplied it to area community centers, first responders, firefighters, and hospitals. We also sold it in our Market & Grocery and ensured that it was available to our staff while on and off shift.*

*One of the areas where we also focus significant attention and staff time is what our ingredients are wrapped and delivered in, that is the types of packaging and the layers of packaging. We have banned the presence of Styrofoam and single-use plastic straws in our restaurants. We also avoid products with tertiary layer. We do this type of work with many of our vendors, but below are a few examples:*

- 1) Through our non-profit, Our Last Straw (see additional information below), we have developed a new partnership with Newlight technology company and are exploring their regenerative Restore foodware for our restaurants. Restore is made with the innovative AirCarbon®, a combination of naturally occurring PHB and PHB, found in almost all known life on Earth, from microorganisms and trees to the human body. Restore brand foodware products never get soggy in hot or cold food or drinks, are dishwasher safe*

*and reusable, and have a carbon-negative footprint. On Earth Day, thanks to our efforts, Newlight provided starter kits of their products to all Our Last Straw coalition members and a 30% discount on additional products.*

- 2) We worked with our seafood company and coffee company to receive products in reusable plastic totes that go back to the vendor. In the case of the seafood company, we eliminated wax coated cardboard boxes.*
- 3) We were buying Coca Cola from a third party who was shipping the cans in 4-6 pack case with plastic collars holding them together. We reached out directly to Coca Cola, and they agreed to sell to us directly without the plastic collars. Now, we receive our Coca Cola direct in a corrugated case, no plastic collar.*
- 4) We worked with our artisanal miller in Kentucky – they didn't pack product for restaurant wholesale business – and we were able to specify the type of corrugated box, with recycled content and made in America. It was a triple win.*

*We are actively evaluating and looking for things that are made with recycled content – and even if we can – post consumer recycled content. Unfortunately, a lot of post consumer recycled content cannot be used for food products. As an alternative, for our to-go food, we have found containers that are 100% reusable and perform just like plastic storage container people buy. They are great for using at home, and we encourage our guests to use them again and again before recycling them.*

*All of this research and evaluation takes work and staff time. We are constantly working to improve our efforts, especially as new and more innovative products are becoming more readily available. For example, we have never used plastic straws, but for some time we were using compostable straws until we learned that the “compostable” part was a bit of a fallacy. They were compostable only if the straws made it to an industrial composting facility, which we use, but we couldn't guarantee that all of our straws were making it into that bin. We switched to biodegradable paper straws and more recently given supply chain difficulties with the paper straws and preference, we have switched to hay straws. We are also researching additional alternatives to plastic straws confirming their production is both food safe and sanitary and earth friendly.*



### **Environmental Restoration or Community Environmental Projects**

*Our Last Straw – which we launched in June 2018 to eliminate the distribution and use of plastic straws across the restaurant and hospitality industry – continued its mission throughout the pandemic. We supported the MD legislation passed in the fall of 2020 to eliminate single-use plastic straws, as well as PLA Straws. Founding Farmers and Our Last Straw are working closely with the MoCo Department of Environmental Protection on their one year long*

*educational campaign. The aim of this campaign is to support foodservice providers with resources and education through the transition of the upcoming straw ban, which starts in May 2021.*

*We continue to believe businesses can drive change by increasing the demand on our suppliers and manufacturers to come up with effective, affordable alternatives. Early in our efforts with our non-profit, Our Last Straw, we worked with companies making alternatives to straws out of paper and hay. We just recently developed a partnership with the innovative tech company, Newlight, who are making regenerative foodware from AirCarbon®(details above). We are not only sampling their products in our restaurants, but we are working to connect their products to the hospitality industry at large as major distributors of foodware. On EarthDay, we sent their straws to our Our Last Straw coalition members with a guarantee for 30% off wholesale costs.*

*At Founding Farmers, we continually and consistently invest in our communities in Maryland and across the DMV. Guided by our farmer-owners, we are on a mission to support American family farmers, preserve and protect our planet, and maintain close ties to our neighbors, friends in business, and collaborators. For over a decade we have stayed true to our mission, consistently working to build community and make an impact in how we hire our employees, source our ingredients, participate and influence others in our regions and across the hospitality industry.*

*Our enterprise goes beyond the plate, beyond the dining experience, to walking our talk where we work and live. We continue to work with the Alice Ferguson Foundation on their annual Potomac Cleanup and support a honey bee education curriculum with a non-profit based in Virginia called Sweet Virginia, the GW Urban Apiary, and the Cornell University Maple Syrup Research program (more details above in environmentally preferred products). We collaborate with Last Call for Food, a DMV program providing affordable meals for college students, which has extended to housebound elders and homeless adults during the pandemic. We support many local schools, community groups, and nonprofits including Best Buddies, KIPP DC schools, Crohn's & Colitis Foundation, World Central Kitchen, and the Exodus Treatment Center, to name a few.*



### **Independently-Audited Environmental Management System**

- *All of our restaurants are Green Restaurant Association certified. MoCo's Founding Farmers has been a [Three-Star GRA Certified Green Restaurant](#) since 2012.*
- *In 2020, we partnered with NOAA Marine Debris Action Plan with specific goals to accomplish by 2026. Section 1.1.1.4.: By the end of 2026, Action Plan leads and partners will promote sustainable and waste-reducing*



*initiatives in their respective office operations and events to reduce consumer debris and single-use plastic.*

## **Waste**

### **Solid Waste Reduction and Reuse**

*Much of our waste management is certified through a third party, the Green Restaurant Association, and reviewed regularly. The Green Restaurant Association estimates our practices divert 90% of our waste from landfills. During our last review, we received a three-star rating. More details and our evaluation of our efforts are available at:*

*<http://dinegreenco.com/customers/featured.asp?ID=REST11257&featured=yes&safaribrowser=yes>*

*We limit single-use beverage containers. Since we opened, we have been providing free filtered water, sparkling or flat, to all of our guests, served in reusable glass water bottles. We also serve scratch-made sodas and mostly draft beer, which draw many more guest orders than the traditional sodas we serve in cans, and the small sampling of bottled beer.*

*We only use biodegradable hay and paper straws or no straws at all. We have specifically chosen water glasses because they don't need a straw, and many of our craft cocktails are served strawless by design. Our efforts reducing our straw usage led to the development of our coalition turned non-profit, Our Last Straw.*

*We provide no paper towels in our restrooms, no tablecloths, no paper napkins, and reusables are used for staff meals. In the procurement and products section, there are more details about our work reducing the packaging coming into our restaurants from working specifically with all of vendors to change their packaging practices.*

### **Recycling**

*We recycle all plastics, glass, aluminum, cardboard, paper. Combined with our composting program, we divert 90% of our trash from the landfill every year.*

### **Composting**

*We compost almost all of our food waste. In 2018, we diverted 280,800 lbs., or 140 tons of compost, from the landfill to the Prince George's County Compost Facility. This figure is calculated specifically based upon compost pickups averaging 1800 lbs. three times per week.*



## Energy

### **Energy Efficiency**

*As a three-star Green Restaurant Association certified restaurant, we look to a third party to evaluate our energy efficiency. We earned 57 points for our energy efficiency, which includes high efficiency and energy star equipment in our kitchen and across the restaurant, occupancy sensors in our restrooms, use of energy efficient lighting and HVAC systems, and our commitment to regularly scheduled maintenance. For more details on our GRA certification, <http://dinegreenco.com/customers/featured.asp?ID=REST11257&featured=yes&safaribrowser=yes>*

*As a part of 2020 remodeling, we also implemented the Circuit Meter System to live monitor and improve energy use.*

## Transportation

### **Efficient Business Travel**

*We have implemented the use of Upkeep, a software that our team uses to organize all service requests for our equipment. Weekly, our fix-it team is able to optimize travel routes between our seven locations that are most efficient and reduce our carbon emissions from traveling unnecessarily from location to location.*

### **Efficient Fleet Vehicles**

*We have purchased a bakery truck, which is used to transfer product from restaurant to restaurant. Our inventory management system is set up with ordering so that our operators can receive deliveries on pre-determined schedules and greatly reduce store-to-store commutes.*

## Water

### **Water Conservation**

*We conserve water in our restrooms (with automatic faucets, 1.28 gpf toilets, 1/8 gpf urinals) and in our kitchen (with energy star dishwashers and steamers and 1.5gpm Faucet Aerators, Handwashing Sinks). This is certified through a third party, the Green Restaurant Association, which gave us a three-star rating. More details are available at:*

<http://dinegreenco.com/customers/featured.asp?ID=REST11257&featured=yes&safaribrowser=yes>

## **Green Building**

### **LEED Certification**

*We LEED certify all of our restaurants. MoCo's Founding Farmers is LEED Silver under the 2009 ID + C rating system.*

## **Environmental Certification Programs, Awards, and Other Activities**



- *All of our restaurants are Green Restaurant Association certified.*
- *MoCo's Founding Farmers has been a Three-Star GRA Certified Green Restaurant since 2012.*
- *MoCo's Founding Farmers awarded 2019 Maryland Green Registry's Leadership Award.*
- *Our MoCo's Founding Farmers in Maryland won the Leading by Example Green Business Award from Bethesda Green.*
- *Founding Farmers and our parent company, Farmers Restaurant Group, won the 2018 People's Choice Award from the Green Restaurant Association. <https://www.wearefoundingfarmers.com/two-major-wins-for-us-the-planet/>*
- *In 2016, Founding Farmers was named one of the 10 most sustainable restaurants in the US by Huff Post. [https://www.huffpost.com/entry/the-10-most-sustainable-restaurants-b-11057274?utm\\_hp\\_ref=good-news&ir=Good+News&section=us\\_good-news](https://www.huffpost.com/entry/the-10-most-sustainable-restaurants-b-11057274?utm_hp_ref=good-news&ir=Good+News&section=us_good-news)*
- *Our restaurant company, Farmers Restaurant Group, won the People's Choice Award at the 2019 District's Sustainability Awards.*
- *Our very own Erin Chalkley, Construction & Development Project Manager and LEED Green Associate, was named one of the nominees for the Green Leader of the Year Award for her tireless work in helping us build and operate green restaurants.*
- *Our sibling restaurants have also won numerous green awards.*



[View our video](#)  
[View our video](#)

*Profile Updated April 2021*



*Help build a greener, more sustainable Maryland through voluntary practices that reduce environmental impacts and save money.*

*Learn more at [green.maryland.gov](http://green.maryland.gov)*

