

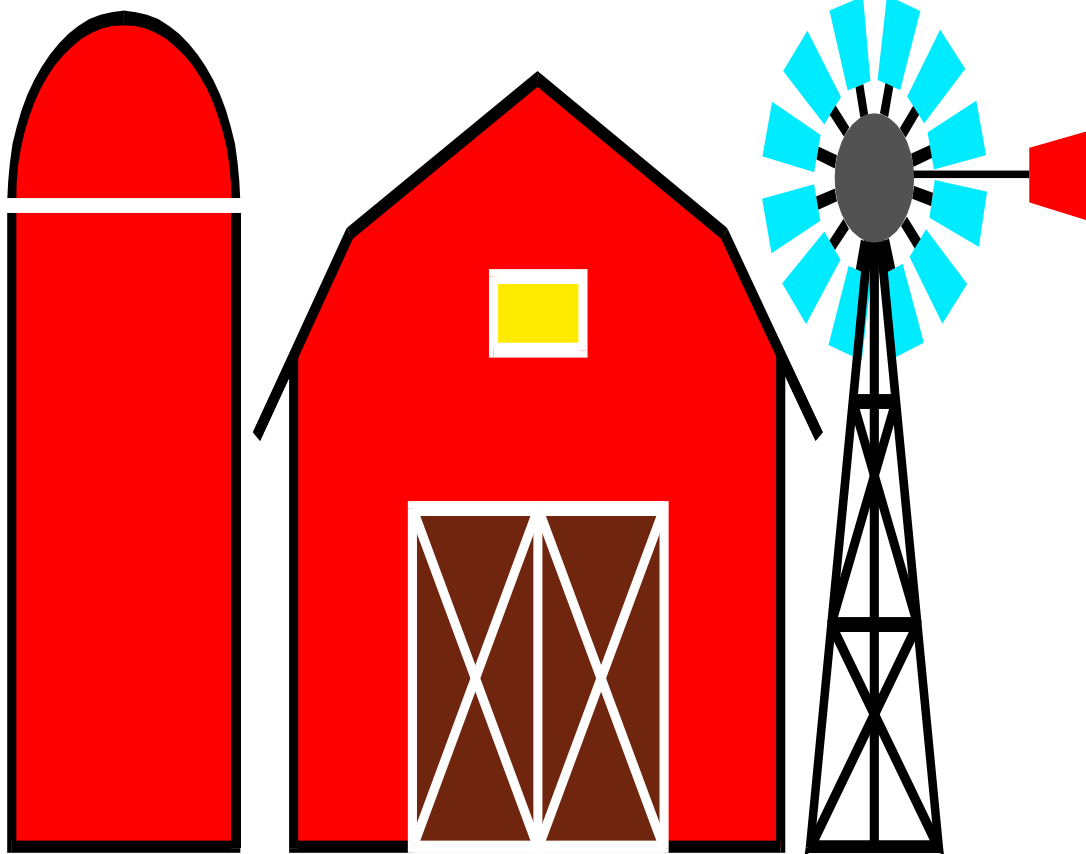
Lebanon County Agricultural Land Preservation Program

Administered by the
Lebanon County Conservation District

2120 Cornwall Road, Suite 5

Lebanon, Pa 17042

(717) 272-3908 Ext. 4



History and Purpose

Farmland preservation is a wise investment in Lebanon County's leading industry. Recognizing this, the County Commissioners decided to participate in one of the most successful conservation programs in the nation. They appointed a nine-member volunteer board to insure the viability of agriculture as an industry and a way of life. Since spring of 1991, the Lebanon County Conservation District has administered the farmland preservation program under the direction of the Agricultural Land Preservation Board. As of October 3, 2008, 120 agricultural conservation easements have been acquired, representing 14,025 acres.

Frequently Asked Questions

What are the benefits of Farmland Preservation?

- ◆ Agriculture employs about 40% of Lebanon County's population.
- ◆ Makes farming more affordable for future generations.
- ◆ Assures affordable and accessible food and energy supplies while simultaneously helping to protect our national security.
- ◆ Keeps the demand for public services and the taxes needed to support these demands lower.
- ◆ Encourages soil and water conservation of Lebanon's natural resources.
- ◆ Preserves farm culture.
- ◆ Preserves quality of life through protection of open space, aesthetics, watershed, recreation, and wildlife.

Does my farm qualify?

- ◆ Must be enrolled in your township's agricultural security area (ASA).
- ◆ Must be at least 50 contiguous acres, or at least 10 acres if either a unique crop is grown or adjoining a perpetual agricultural conservation easement.
- ◆ Must contain the greater of 50% or 10 acres of harvested crop, pasture, or grazing lands.
- ◆ Must contain at least 50% of soils which are available for ag production and are of capability classes I - IV.

The property must meet all four requirements to qualify. If you are not clear about any of these factors, contact the program staff for clarification.

How do I sign up for the program?

Qualifying farms can apply by filing an application obtained from the Lebanon County Conservation District or their web site (www.lccd.org). Applications are accepted year-round. They will not be considered until October 1st (ex.- an application received October 3, 2007 will not be considered until October 2008).

Is there a cost to apply to the program?

No, there is no cost to apply to the program. However, there will be some expenses which will occur once the preservation process begins.

Once I have applied, how long will it be until my farm is preserved?

This question is hard to answer. It usually takes between six months to two years, or more, when we reach step three. The following steps will need to be completed:

1. **Application approved** by the Board at the meeting following receipt of the application.
2. **Scored and ranked:** the applications are evaluated based on our score system. After October 1st, all farms are ranked against the other applicant scores. The highest scoring farm will be preserved first.
3. **Appraisal Deposit:** this is the only time you will be asked for money. The deposit will only be requested once the Board has funds available to preserve your farm. It will be the cost of the appraisal, currently \$1,500, and is returned when the farm is preserved.
4. **Appraisal:** a third party will determine the value of the agricultural conservation easement, usually completed about 45-90 days after the deposit is received.
5. **Offer to preserve:** once the appraisal is received, the board will make a written offer to preserve the farm, which will need to be accepted within 30 days.
6. **Perimeter survey:** *if needed*, a property survey will need to be completed. Approximately half of the farms need this completed. This may take up to a year.
7. Before the farm is preserved, the following must be completed:
 - a) **Conservation Plan:** outlines your management practices to ensure soil erosion and pollution potentials are at a minimum.
 - b) **Nutrient Management Plan:** addresses all sources of plant nutrients used on the farm, both manure and chemical fertilizers.

*** Both of these items can help a farm be more efficient and cost effective if the plans are developed properly and followed accordingly, even if the farm is not preserved.
8. **Legal research and agreements** are prepared and signed. This usually takes two to six months.
9. **Right-to-be-heard opportunity:** all adjacent landowners are provided a limited list of reasons to object the preservation. The landowners are required to be notified approximately 3 weeks prior to the public meeting when their comments may be heard.
10. **Closing:** the actual time of preservation. This will occur after the funds are received and may take up to 12 weeks after the right-to-be-heard hearing. Although the conservation plan and the nutrient management plan can be completed at any time during the process, closing will not occur until these plans are completed.

Will I be compensated for preserving my farm?

Yes, an appraisal will be completed to determine the value of the agricultural conservation easement. If the appraised value is less than \$2,500 per acre, you will be offered the appraised value. If the appraised value is greater than \$2,500 per acre, you will be offered \$2,500 per acre, and the remainder will be considered a charitable contribution to our program, which may be eligible for a tax credit (talk to your accountant for details). However, donations of entire easements are always accepted.

I had an appraisal completed recently on my farm. May I use this appraisal for the farm preservation program?

No, the appraisals required for our program are different than a simple fair market value appraisal, which you may have had completed.

Can I still build on my farm if it is preserved?

Yes, you can build any agricultural buildings your farm operation needs, as long as the area the buildings cover is less than 10% of the total acreage preserved. You would also be allowed to build one additional residential structure for either a family member or an employee of the farm.

Can I subdivide my farm?

No, unless the municipality would require subdivision to build the allotted additional residence.

When my farm is preserved, does the county own my farm?

No, you still have all the rights as the property owner to sell, lease, or manage your land as you see fit, as long as the terms of preservation are being followed (please refer to our “Key Points of Agricultural Conservation Easement” flyer for more details on the terms).

How long will my farm be preserved?

The farm is preserved through a **perpetual** agricultural conservation easement. Simply put, the preservation is permanent.

For additional information about the Lebanon County Farmland Preservation Program, please contact the Lebanon County Conservation District at (717) 272-3908, extension 4, or visit our web site at www.lccd.org.