PRIME FARMLAND USE IN LEBANON COUNTY

A REPORT PREPARED BY THE LEBANON COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT FOR THE LEBANON COUNTY AGRICULTURAL LAND PRESERVATION BOARD AND LEBANON COUNTY COMMISSIONERS.

REVISED THROUGH JUNE 1, 2012
WHAT:
A study to determine how much growth in Lebanon County is impacting soils designated by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) as prime farmland or other farmland of statewide importance.

WHY:

SOIL FACTS -
- Soils designated as prime and important are critical for food production.
- Soils are a finite resource.

POPULATION FACTS –
- Lebanon County is growing rapidly, adding approximately 42,715 people to our population since 1960 (approximately 854 new residents a year). This assumes a 2010 population estimate of 133,568 and a 1960 population of 90,853.
- 4,523 people have left the City of Lebanon since 1960 (1960 census was 30,000 - estimated 2010 census was 25,477).

DEVELOPMENT FACTS -
- Residential development costs more in services than it provides in tax revenues (Penn State/Bethel Twp. study). More residential development is occurring on farmland than in our cities and towns. Inefficient residential development increases taxation, gobbles up open space, increases traffic congestion and decreases our quality of life.
- Based on this annualized study, Lebanon County has lost 12,106.83 acres of farmland since 1990. This represents 9.5% of our County’s 126,870 acres of prime and important farmland soils lost in 20 years! [Not all prime and important soils are used for agricultural purposes.]
- Farmland is a limited resource. When productive farmland is converted to another use (ex. residential), it is lost and cannot be regained. For example, Jackson Township has lost the most acres of prime and statewide important agricultural land since 1990. Out of 13,482.81 acres of prime and important farmland (88.9% of the township’s land), Jackson Township has lost 11.6%, or 1,559.97 acres due to subdivision for land use other than agriculture.

FARM FACTS –
- Lebanon County has 113,486 acres in farms with an average size of 95 acres (2007 Pennsylvania Agricultural Statistics Summary or PASS).
- Agriculture contributes more in tax revenues than it demands in services (Penn State/Bethel Twp. Study). It keeps taxes lower by lessening demands for services such as schools, police, sewer, water, road etc.
• Agriculture is our county’s number one industry contributing $257,097,000 in cash receipts in 2007. (2007 Statistical Summary Lebanon County Penn State Cooperative Extension)

PLANNING FACTS –
• Current summarized data to guide land use decisions by the county and municipalities in many instances does not exist or has not been compiled. The Lebanon County Comprehensive Plan of 2007 showed enough residential zoning to accommodate 25,000 new homes thus tempering the need to rezone any land from agricultural to residential.

VOTING FACTS –
• Over 60% of Lebanon County residents supported farmland preservation in the late 1980s. (Statewide referendum)

PRESERVATION FACTS –
• Preserving family farms encourages young people to stay in farming by making farms more affordable to the next generation (since there is only agricultural value).
• Preserving family farms enhances values of other properties nearby and enhances tourism.
• Preserving farms in Lebanon County means preserving some of America’s most productive non-irrigated farmland.

HOW:
• Initially, information was researched at the Lebanon County Planning Department and Recorder of Deeds in the Lebanon Municipal Building until the year 2009, when records became available digitally online. Subdivision records from the 16 municipalities with significant agricultural land were researched with the assumption that land undergoing subdivision would be converted to other land uses either now or in the future. Information gathered from the subdivision records contained the name of the owner of the affected area, a description of the type of subdivision, an indication of prime or important farmland lost, and the total acres of impacted area.
• Parcel data from the Lebanon County GIS Department was used to determine the location of the subdivision. It was cross-referenced with another dataset compiled from the former USDA Soil Conservation Service (now the Natural Resources Conservation Service) data to determine whether the impacted area contained prime farmland soils or other soils of additional statewide importance. Results are summarized in the table that follows. Charts that follow graphically depict data from our table of research as well as other research.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Municipality</th>
<th>Total All Acres</th>
<th>Acres Prime Ag. &amp; as % of Total</th>
<th>Acres Ag. of Statewide Importance &amp; as % of Total</th>
<th>Total Ag. Acres (Prime + Statewide)</th>
<th>Prime Ag. Acres Developed Since 1990 &amp; as % of Total Prime Ag.</th>
<th>St. Imp. Ag. Acres Developed Since 1990 &amp; as % of St. Imp. Ag.</th>
<th>Total Ag. Acres Developed Since 1990 &amp; as % of Total Ag. Acres</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bethel</td>
<td>22,461</td>
<td>5,136.93 22.9%</td>
<td>8,721.69 38.8%</td>
<td>13,858.62</td>
<td>530.75 10.3%</td>
<td>871.24 10.0%</td>
<td>1,401.99</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cornwall</td>
<td>6,208</td>
<td>1,614.16 26.0%</td>
<td>669.61 10.8%</td>
<td>2,283.77</td>
<td>228.81 14.2%</td>
<td>18.50 2.8%</td>
<td>247.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Hanover</td>
<td>21,969</td>
<td>3,613.67 16.4%</td>
<td>4,635.80 21.1%</td>
<td>8,249.47</td>
<td>44.93 1.2%</td>
<td>409.78 8.8%</td>
<td>454.71</td>
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<tr>
<td>Heidelberg</td>
<td>15,616</td>
<td>7,401.80 47.4%</td>
<td>4,250.48 27.2%</td>
<td>11,652.28</td>
<td>202.69 2.7%</td>
<td>306.77 7.2%</td>
<td>509.45</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jackson</td>
<td>15,168</td>
<td>11,008.00 72.6%</td>
<td>2,474.81 16.3%</td>
<td>13,482.81</td>
<td>1,320.46 12.0%</td>
<td>239.51 9.7%</td>
<td>1,559.97</td>
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<tr>
<td>Millcreek</td>
<td>12,825</td>
<td>6,489.61 50.6%</td>
<td>1,930.51 15.1%</td>
<td>8,420.12</td>
<td>574.93 8.9%</td>
<td>47.48 2.5%</td>
<td>622.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Annville</td>
<td>12,348</td>
<td>2,403.37 19.5%</td>
<td>3,912.51 31.7%</td>
<td>6,315.88</td>
<td>103.96 4.3%</td>
<td>107.03 2.7%</td>
<td>210.99</td>
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<tr>
<td>North Cornwall</td>
<td>6,204</td>
<td>4,551.93 73.4%</td>
<td>634.25 10.2%</td>
<td>5,186.18</td>
<td>743.68 16.3%</td>
<td>21.12 3.3%</td>
<td>764.80</td>
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<tr>
<td>North Lebanon</td>
<td>10,329</td>
<td>6,361.41 61.6%</td>
<td>2,738.56 26.5%</td>
<td>9,099.97</td>
<td>775.05 12.2%</td>
<td>221.98 8.1%</td>
<td>997.03</td>
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<tr>
<td>Subtotal</td>
<td>123,128</td>
<td>48,580.88 39.5%</td>
<td>29,968.22 24.3%</td>
<td>78,549.10</td>
<td>4,525.25 9.3%</td>
<td>2,243.42 7.5%</td>
<td>6,768.67</td>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>North Londonderry</td>
<td>6,842</td>
<td>3,282.31 48.0%</td>
<td>1,912.94 28.0%</td>
<td>5,195.25</td>
<td>1,058.29</td>
<td>300.49</td>
<td>1,358.78</td>
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<tr>
<td>South Annville</td>
<td>12,348</td>
<td>8,359.52 67.7%</td>
<td>1,010.98 8.2%</td>
<td>9,370.50</td>
<td>304.44</td>
<td>45.35</td>
<td>349.79</td>
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<tr>
<td>South Lebanon</td>
<td>13,564</td>
<td>9,597.07 70.8%</td>
<td>910.79 6.7%</td>
<td>10,507.86</td>
<td>994.54</td>
<td>75.52</td>
<td>1,070.05</td>
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<tr>
<td>South Londonderry</td>
<td>15,552</td>
<td>3,599.43 23.1%</td>
<td>4,587.18 29.5%</td>
<td>8,186.61</td>
<td>573.24</td>
<td>261.95</td>
<td>835.19</td>
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<tr>
<td>Swatara</td>
<td>12,736</td>
<td>2,593.73 20.4%</td>
<td>3,514.31 27.6%</td>
<td>6,108.04</td>
<td>185.14</td>
<td>451.07</td>
<td>636.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Union</td>
<td>21,568</td>
<td>2,403.65 11.1%</td>
<td>4,035.93 18.7%</td>
<td>6,439.58</td>
<td>141.89</td>
<td>811.76</td>
<td>953.66</td>
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<tr>
<td>West Cornwall</td>
<td>5,502</td>
<td>1,879.90 34.2%</td>
<td>633.50 11.5%</td>
<td>2,513.40</td>
<td>131.45</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>134.45</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Subtotal</strong></td>
<td><strong>88,112</strong></td>
<td><strong>31,715.61 36.0%</strong></td>
<td><strong>16,605.63 18.8%</strong></td>
<td><strong>48,321.24</strong></td>
<td><strong>3,388.99</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,949.15</strong></td>
<td><strong>5,338.14</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>211,240</strong></td>
<td><strong>80,296.49 38.0%</strong></td>
<td><strong>46,573.85 22.0%</strong></td>
<td><strong>126,870.34</strong></td>
<td><strong>7,914.24</strong></td>
<td><strong>4,192.56</strong></td>
<td><strong>12,106.80</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 1. TOTAL MUNICIPAL AREA & TOTAL PRIME AND IMPORTANT FARMLAND AREA BEFORE DEVELOPMENT (see initial table for data)
Figure 4. ESTIMATED ACRES OF TOTAL FARMLAND (all types included) REMAINING IN LEBANON COUNTY

The definition was changed to include tree farms and reserve program farms in 1998.

Sources:
- Lebanon County Comprehensive Plan (1940, 1960)
- Resource Conservation Agenda 1983
- PSU Env. Resources Res. Inst.- Land Use Projections for Pennsylvania (2020)
Figure 5. NUMBER OF FARMS IN LEBANON COUNTY

Lebanon County statistics reach as far back as 1850, with 1,449 farms. Other reported statistics from the LCDD Resource Agenda Support File includes:
1880-2,475 1910-2,525 1940-1,920 1950-1,826 1960-1,492 1980-1,030

The definition was changed to include tree farms and reserves program farms in 1998
Figure 6. AVERAGE SIZE OF FARMS

Lebanon County statistics reach as far back as 1880, with an average farm size of 78 acres. Other reported statistics from the LCCD Resource Agenda Support Files include: 1910-69 acres, 1940-78 acres, 1950-82 acres, 1960-93 acres, 1982-124 acres.

This definition was changed to include tree farms and reserve program farms in 1998.

Figure 7. COUNTY POPULATION

* Census data are collected every 10 years. The last National Census was in the year 2000. Other years are based upon estimates.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau
RESEARCHERS:

Owen Zimmerman, Intern, Moravian College, 1995
Brian Penrose, Intern, Univ. of Pittsburgh at Johnstown, 1996
M. Seth Pelepko, Intern, Penn State University, 1997
Heather Rodriguez, Intern, Millersville University, 1998
Jeremy Roth, Intern, Kutztown University, 1999, 2000
Jamie Grumbine, Intern, Kutztown University, 2001
Laura J. Richenderfer, Intern, Bloomsburg University, 2002
Susan E. Bernard, Intern, Davis and Elkins College, 2003
Robert Troutman, Intern, Kutztown University, 2004
Adam R. Grimes, Intern, Bloomsburg University, 2005
Michelle A. Campbell, Intern, Juniata College, 2006
Adam M. Feiner, Intern, Bloomsburg University, 2007
Dana Wolf, Intern, Harrisburg Area Community College, 2008
Timothy Hoffer, Intern, Kutztown University, 2009
Cristina Angst, Intern, Bloomsburg University, 2010
Katie Keeney, Intern, Bloomsburg University, 2012
Charles Wertz, Manager, Lebanon County Conservation District

SOURCES:

Lebanon Co. Planning Department Subdivision Record Books
USDA SCS Important Farmlands Map of Lebanon Co (1977)
Lebanon County Planning Department Road Map
Lebanon County Conservation District GIS Soils Data
Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture Annual Reports
1987 Lebanon County Interim Plan
Dept. of Commerce, Bureau of Census, 1992 Census of Ag.
National Agricultural Statistics Service, USDA, 2002 Census
Economic Profile of PA’s Lebanon Valley, Autumn 1989, LCIDA
Lebanon County Conservation District Resource Agenda, 1983
Lebanon County Comprehensive Plan, 1970
I.A.3. Resource Agenda/Supporting Material: Comprehensive Plan for the County of Lebanon, PA
Pennsylvania Agricultural Statistics Service Manual
U.S. Census Bureau
Target Area for Future
Lebanon County Farmland Preservation
By Lebanon County Agricultural Land Preservation Program (LCALPP) and the Lebanon Valley Conservancy, Inc. (LVC)

Legend
- Municipality
- Preserved by LCALPP
- Preserved by LVC, Inc.
- * Target Area for Preservation

*Target Area Parcels contain 50% or more Class I-IV Soils and are within an Agricultural Security Area or are Zoned Agriculture

This map was last updated June 2012 by the Lebanon County Conservation District

0 1.5 3 6 9 12 Miles
Lebanon County

Important Farmlands
(Prime Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance and Preserved Easements)

Legend
- Preserved Farmlands
- Municipality Boundaries
- Prime Farmland
- Statewide Importance

This map was last updated June 2012 by the Lebanon County Conservation District

Milos
“Lebanon County is presently blessed with an abundance of rich fertile agricultural land and beautiful mountainous woodlands which together comprise some of the most scenic open spaces in Pennsylvania. However, the uncontrolled explosion of residential and commercial development is rapidly deleting the quality of that open space from both the aesthetic and recreational standpoint.”

1970 Comprehensive Plan, Page 61