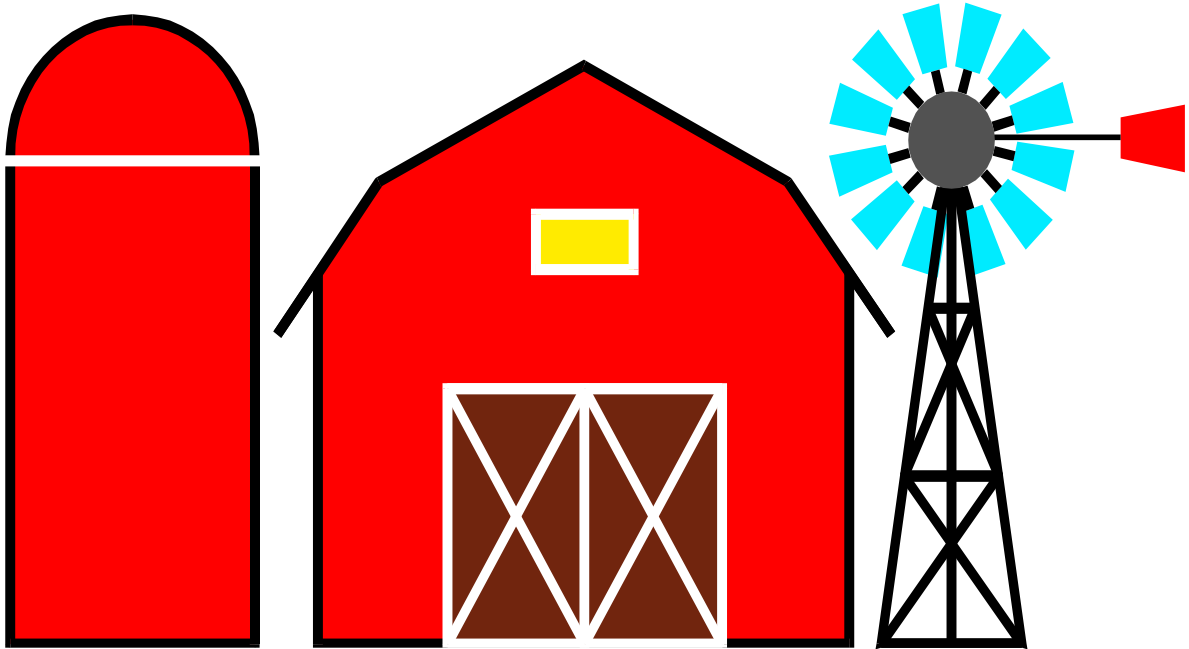


# **PRIME FARMLAND USE IN LEBANON COUNTY**



**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.

**REVISED THROUGH JUNE 1, 2012**

- 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.

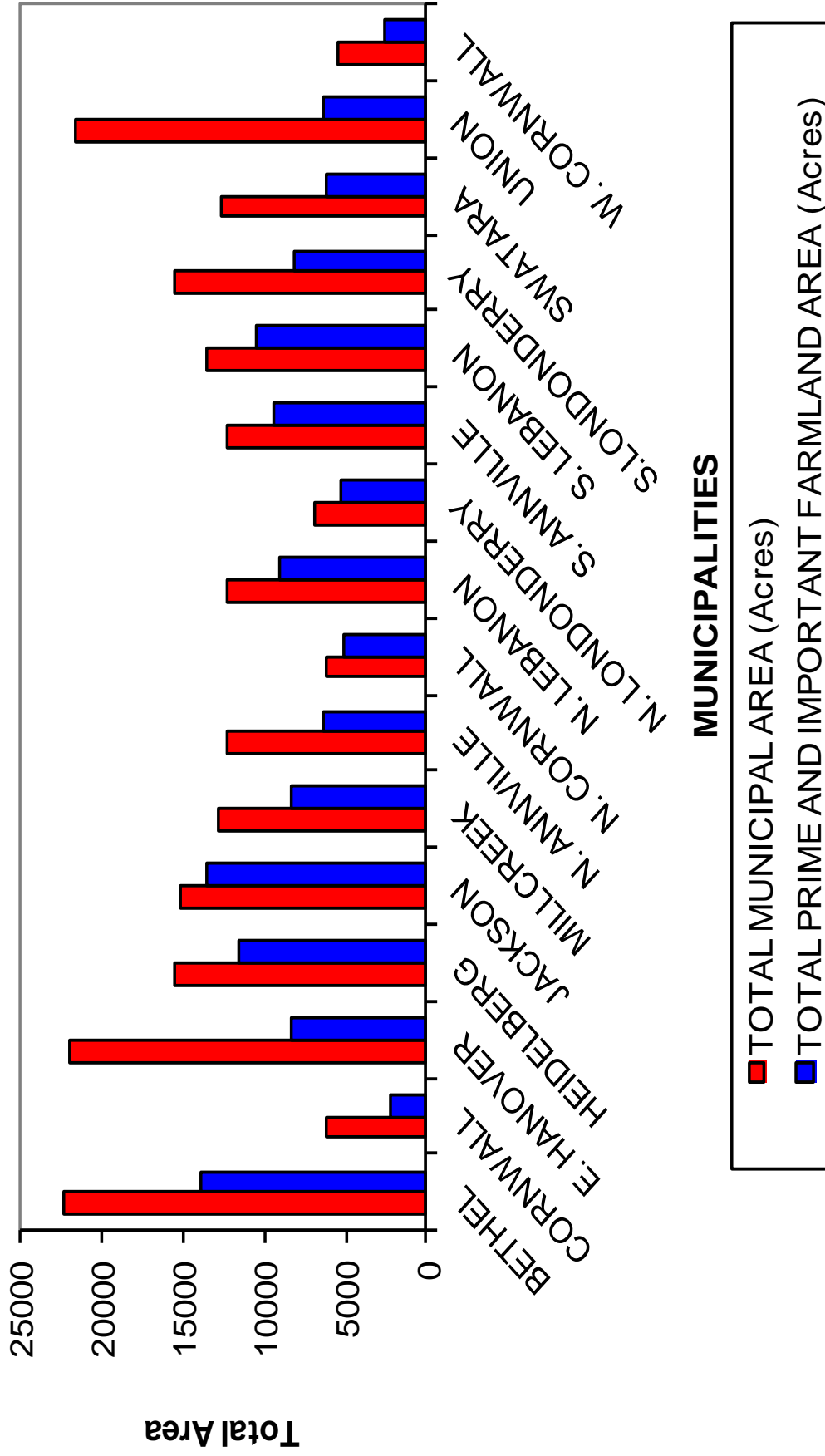
### **HOW:**

- 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.

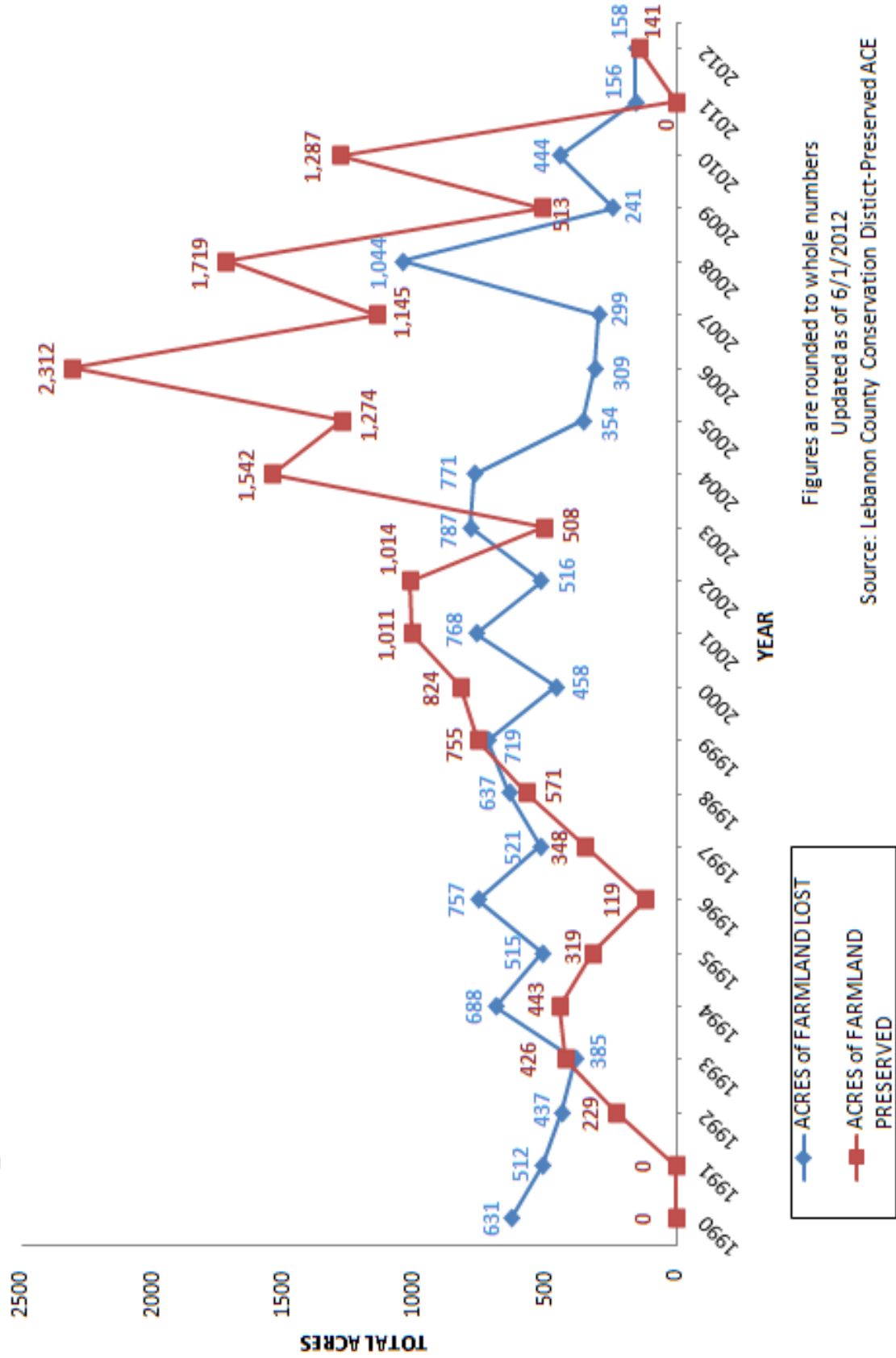
Municipality	Total All Acres	Acres Prime Ag. & as % of Total	Acres Ag. of Statewide Importance & as % of Total	Total Ag. Acres (Prime + Statewide)	Prime Ag. Acres Developed Since 1990 & as % of Total Prime Ag.	St. Impt. Ag. Acres Developed Since 1990 & as % of St. Impt. Ag.	Total Ag. Acres Developed Since 1990 & as % of Total Ag. Acres
Bethel	22,461	5,136.93 22.9%	8,721.69 38.8%	13,858.62 61.7%	530.75 10.3%	871.24 10.0%	1,401.99 10.1%
Cornwall	6,208	1,614.16 26.0%	669.61 10.8%	2,283.77 36.8%	228.81 14.2%	18.50 2.8%	247.32 10.8%
East Hanover	21,969	3,613.67 16.4%	4,635.80 21.1%	8,249.47 37.6%	44.93 1.2%	409.78 8.8%	454.71 5.5%
Heidelberg	15,616	7,401.80 47.4%	4,250.48 27.2%	11,652.28 74.6%	202.69 2.7%	306.77 7.2%	509.45 4.4%
Jackson	15,168	11,008.00 72.6%	2,474.81 16.3%	13,482.81 88.9%	1,320.46 12.0%	239.51 9.7%	1,559.97 11.6%
Millcreek	12,825	6,489.61 50.6%	1,930.51 15.1%	8,420.12 65.7%	574.93 8.9%	47.48 2.5%	622.42 7.4%
North Annville	12,348	2,403.37 19.5%	3,912.51 31.7%	6,315.88 51.1%	103.96 4.3%	107.03 2.7%	210.99 3.3%
North Cornwall	6,204	4,551.93 73.4%	634.25 10.2%	5,186.18 83.6%	743.68 16.3%	21.12 3.3%	764.80 14.7%
North Lebanon	10,329	6,361.41 61.6%	2,738.56 26.5%	9,099.97 88.1%	775.05 12.2%	221.98 8.1%	997.03 11.0%
<b>Subtotal</b>	123,128	48,580.88 39.5%	29,968.22 24.3%	78,549.10 63.8%	4,525.25 9.3%	2,243.42 7.5%	6,768.67 8.6%

Municipality	Total All Acres	Acres Prime Ag. & as % of Total	Acres Ag. of Statewide Importance & as % of Total	Total Ag. Acres (Prime + Statewide)	Prime Ag. Acres Developed Since 1990 & as % of Total Prime Ag.	St. Impt. Ag. Acres Developed Since 1990 & as % of St. Impt. Ag.	Total Ag. Acres Developed Since 1990 & as % of Total Ag. Acres
North Londonderry	6,842	3,282.31 48.0%	1,912.94 28.0%	5,195.25 75.9%	1,058.29 32.2%	300.49 15.7%	1,358.78 26.2%
South Annville	12,348	8,359.52 67.7%	1,010.98 8.2%	9,370.50 75.9%	304.44 3.6%	45.35 4.5%	349.79 3.7%
South Lebanon	13,564	9,597.07 70.8%	910.79 6.7%	10,507.86 77.5%	994.54 10.4%	75.52 8.3%	1,070.05 10.2%
South Londonderry	15,552	3,599.43 23.1%	4,587.18 29.5%	8,186.61 52.6%	573.24 15.9%	261.95 7.2%	835.19 10.2%
Swatara	12,736	2,593.73 20.4%	3,514.31 27.6%	6,108.04 48.0%	185.14 7.1%	451.07 12.8%	636.21 10.4%
Union	21,568	2,403.65 11.1%	4,035.93 18.7%	6,439.58 29.9%	141.89 5.9%	811.76 20.1%	953.66 14.8%
West Cornwall	5,502	1,879.90 34.2%	633.50 11.5%	2,513.40 45.7%	131.45 7.0%	3.00 0.5%	134.45 5.3%
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>88,112</b>	<b>31,715.61 36.0%</b>	<b>16,605.63 18.8%</b>	<b>48,321.24 54.8%</b>	<b>3,388.99 10.7%</b>	<b>1,949.15 11.7%</b>	<b>5,338.14 11.0%</b>
<b><u>Total</u></b>	<b>211,240</b>	<b>80,296.49 38.0%</b>	<b>46,573.85 22.0%</b>	<b>126,870.34 60.1%</b>	<b>7,914.24 9.9%</b>	<b>4,192.56 9.0%</b>	<b>12,106.80 9.5%</b>

**Figure 1. TOTAL MUNICIPAL AREA & TOTAL PRIME AND IMPORTANT FARMLAND AREA BEFORE DEVELOPMENT (see initial table for data)**

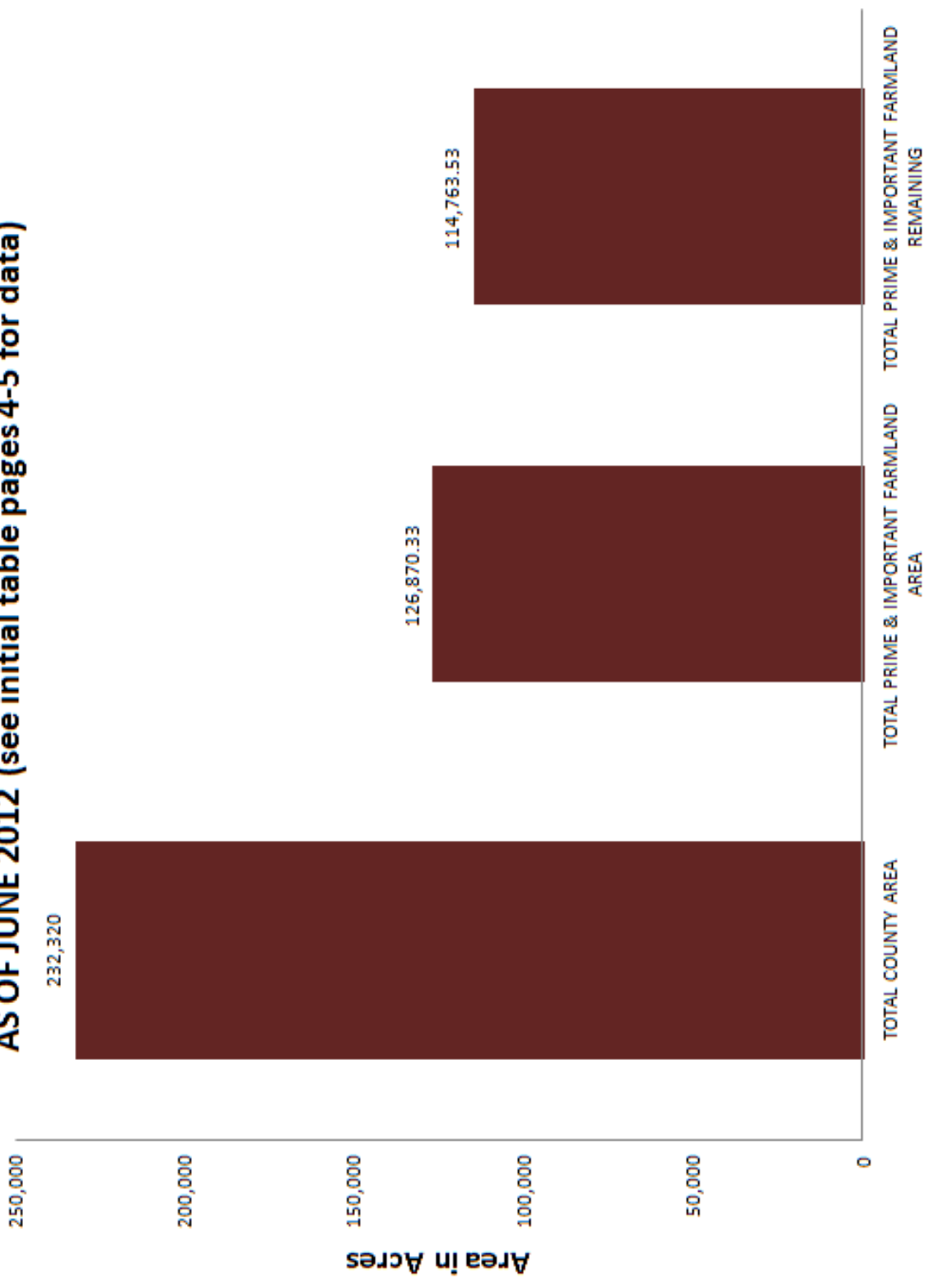


**Figure 2. PRIME & IMPORTANT FARMLAND LOST/PRESERVED**



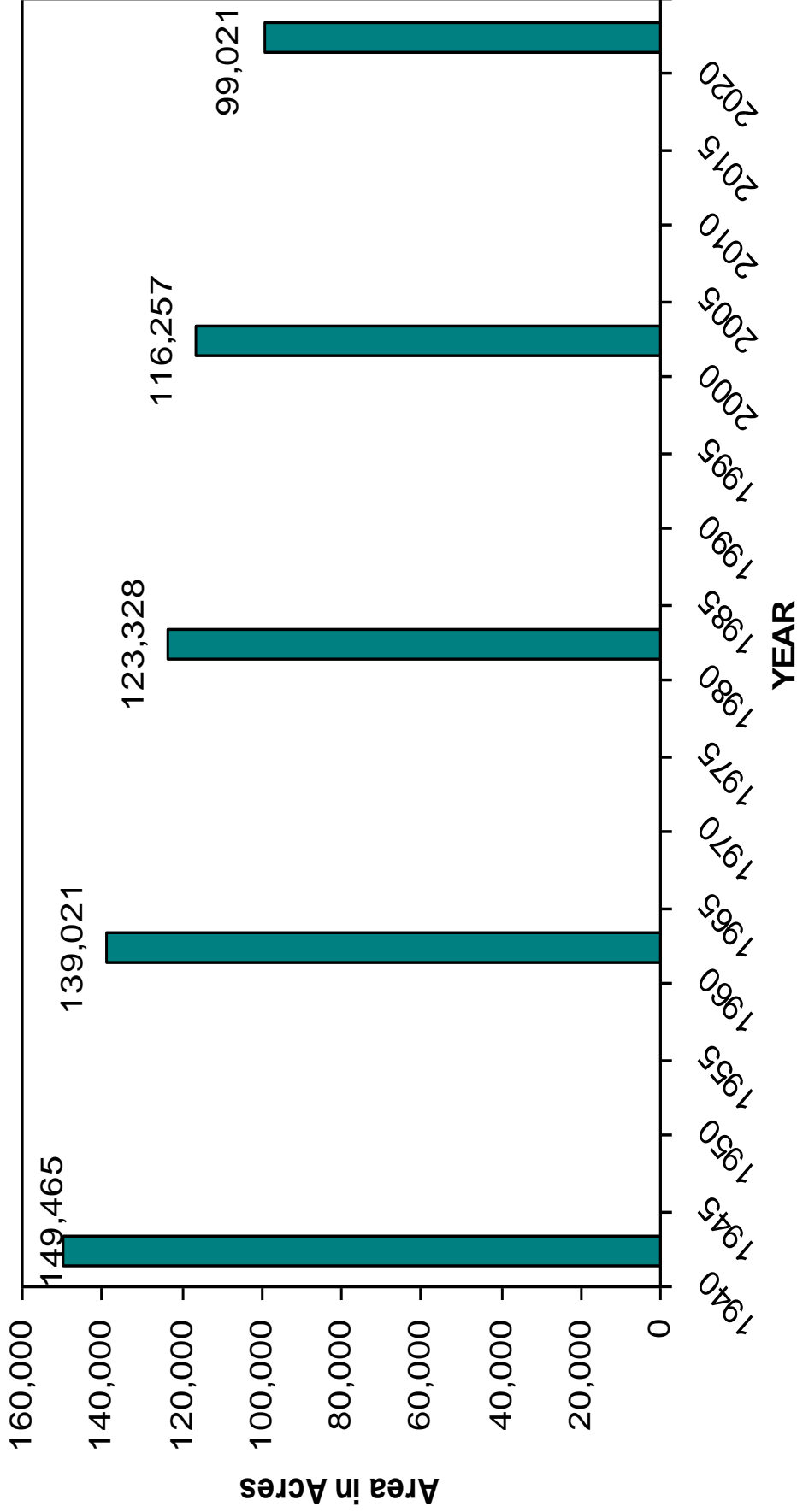
Figures are rounded to whole numbers  
 Updated as of 6/1/2012  
 Source: Lebanon County Conservation District-Preserved ACE

**Figure 3. TOTAL PRIME & IMPORTANT FARMLAND REMAINING  
AS OF JUNE 2012 (see initial table pages 4-5 for data)**





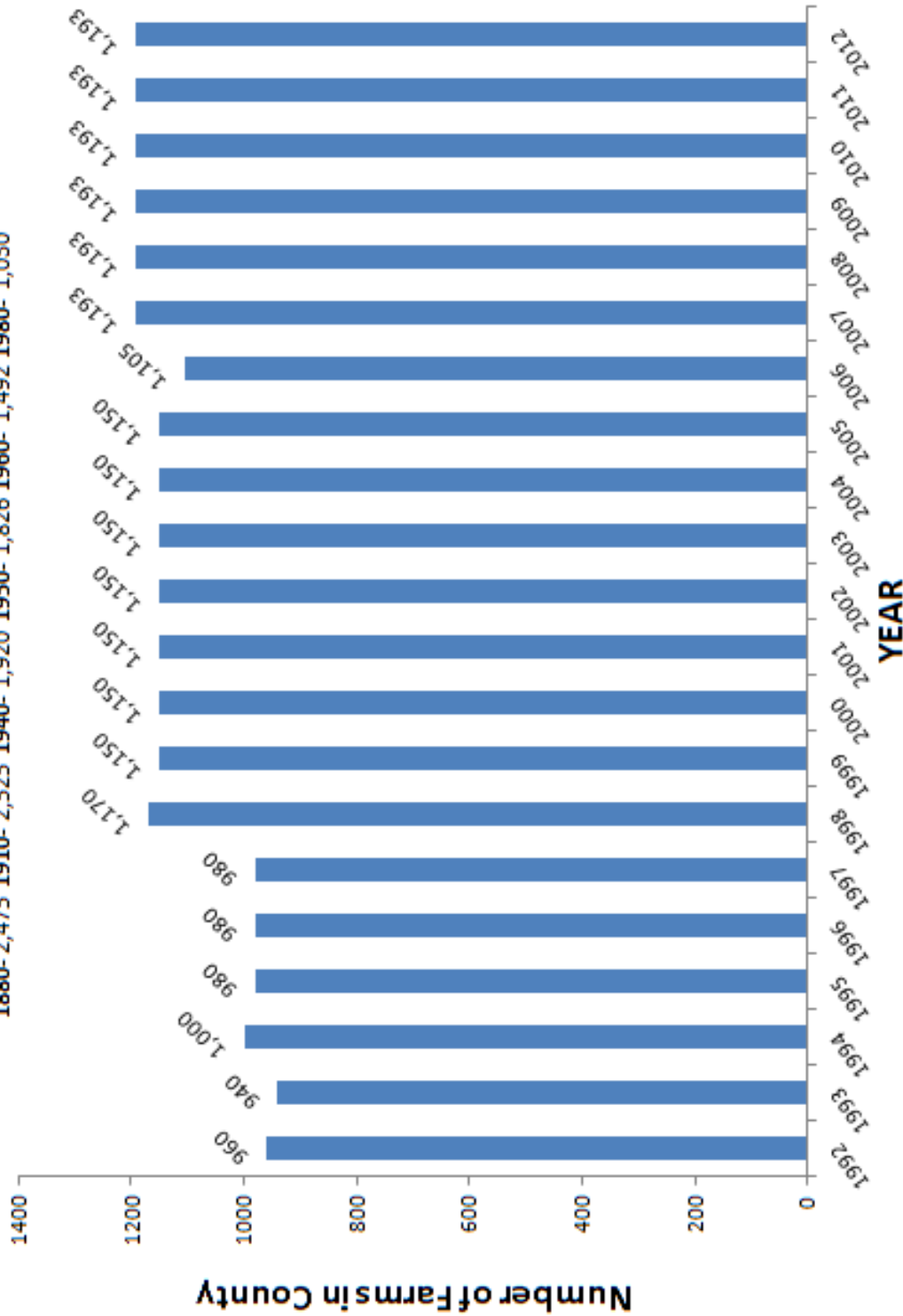
**Figure 4. ESTIMATED ACRES OF TOTAL FARMLAND (all types included) REMAINING IN LEBANON COUNTY**



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  
 Pennsylvania Agricultural Statistics Manual (2000)  
 PSU Env. Resources Res. Inst.- Land Use Projections for Pennsylvania (2020)

### Figure 5. NUMBER OF FARMS IN LEBANON COUNTY

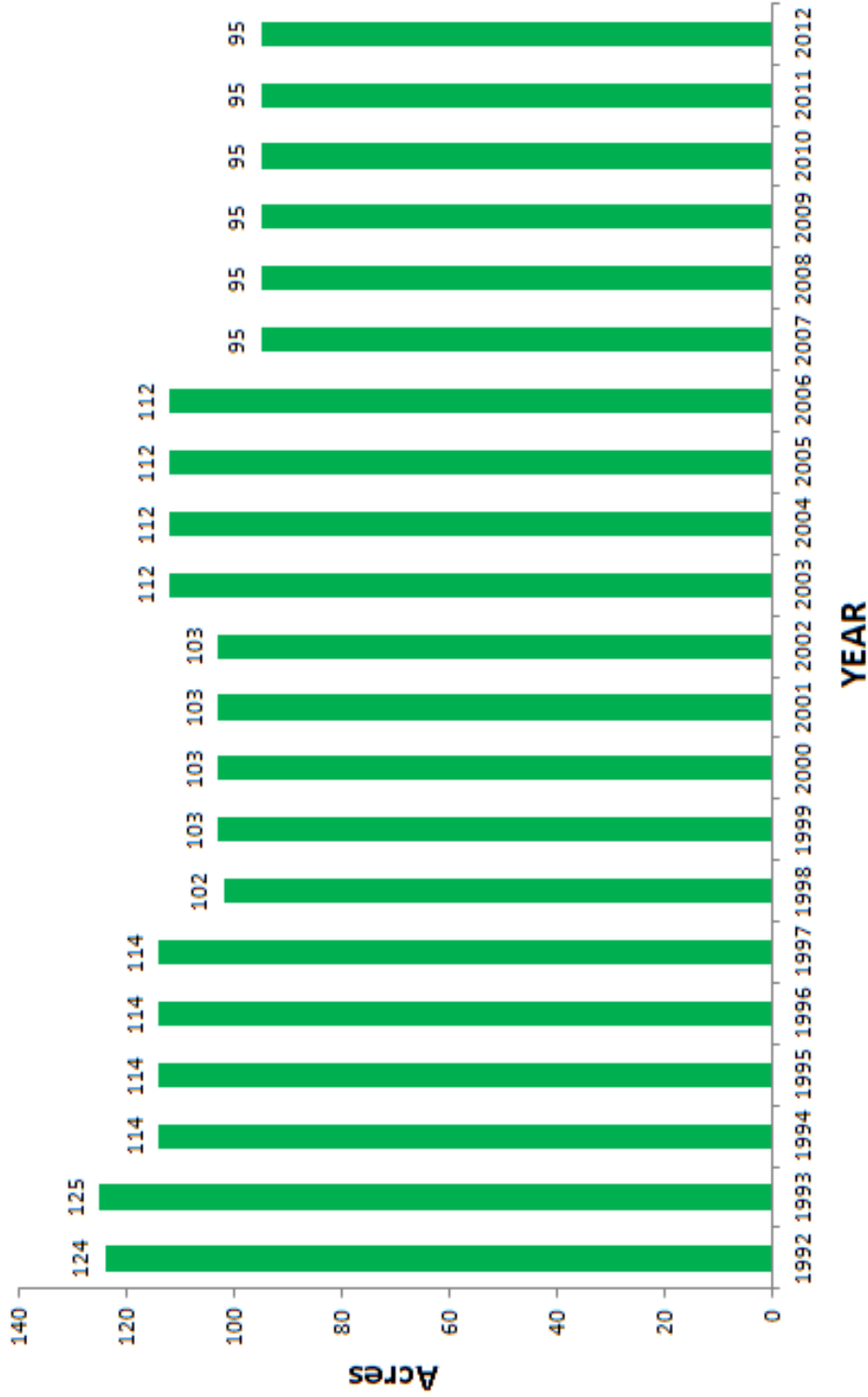
Lebanon County statistics reach as far back as 1850, with 1,449 farms.  
 Other reported statistics from the LCCD Resource Agenda Support File includes:  
 1880-2,475 1910- 2,525 1940- 1,920 1950- 1,826 1960- 1,492 1980- 1,030



The definition was changed to include tree farms and reserves program farms in 1998  
 Source: Pennsylvania Agricultural Statistics Manual

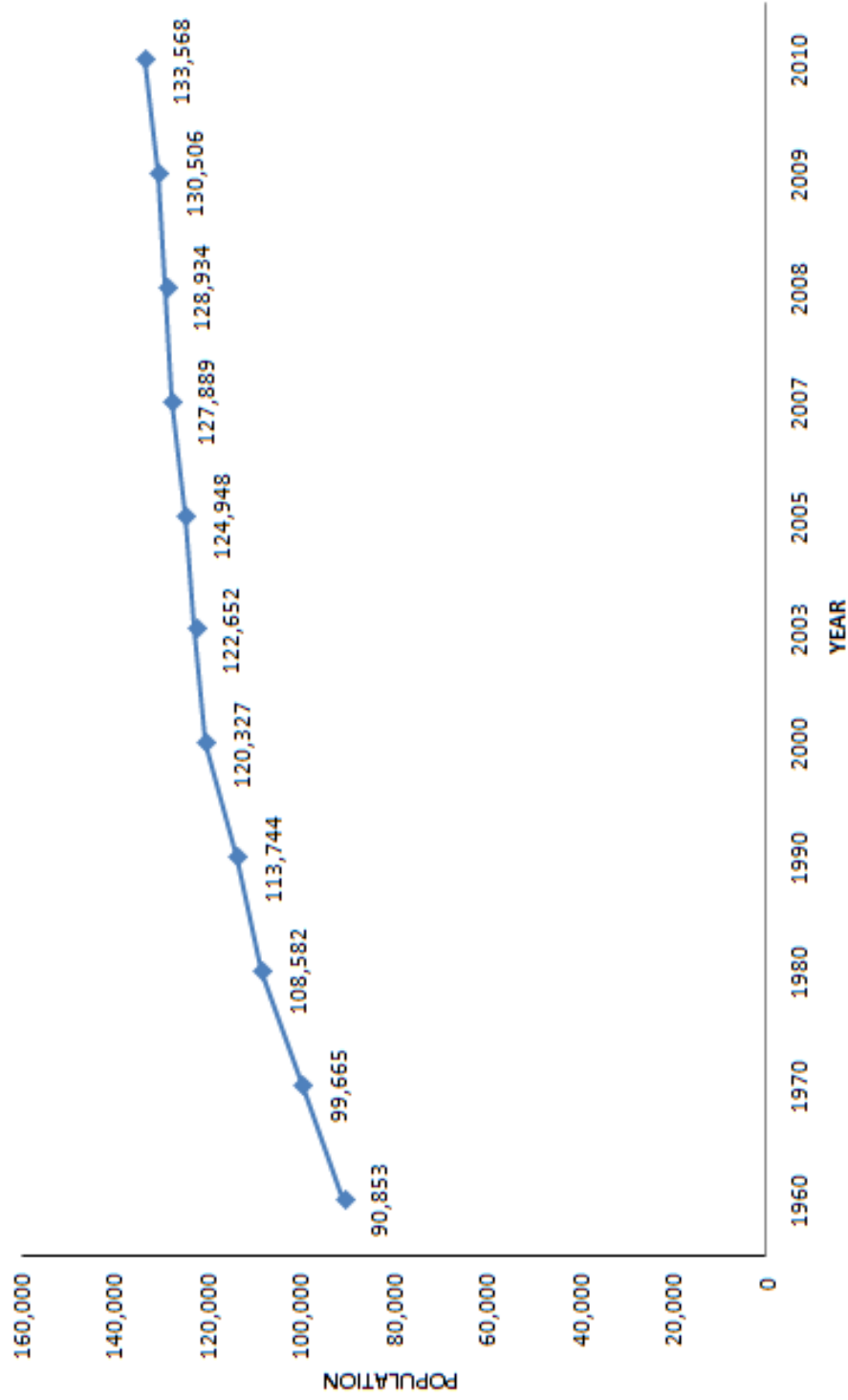
### Figure 6. AVERAGE SIZE OF FARMS

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  
 Source: Pennsylvania Agricultural Statistics Manual

**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:**

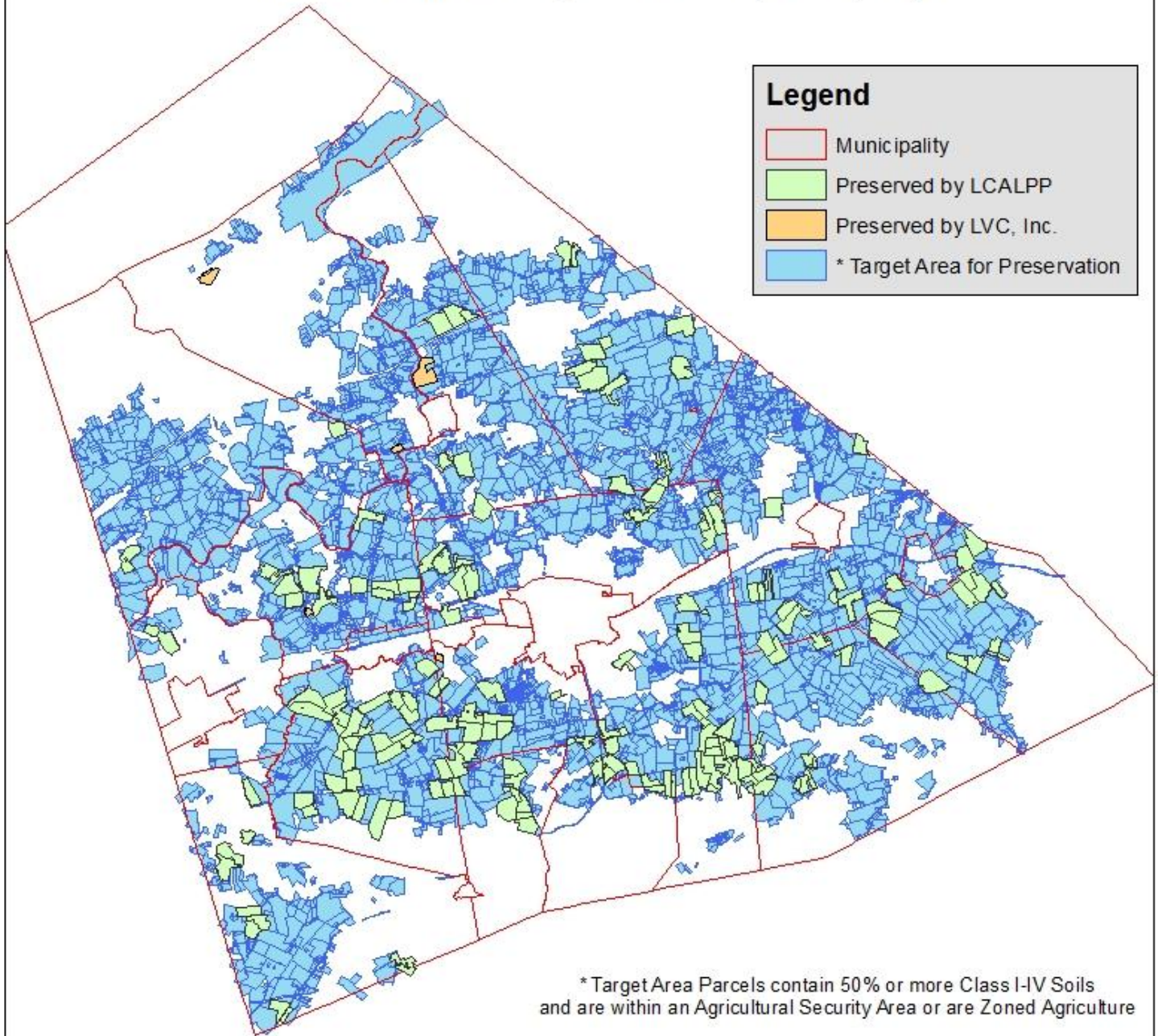
Owen Zimmerman, Intern, Moravian College, 1995  
Brian Penrose, Intern, Univ. of Pittsburgh at Johnstown, 1996  
M. Seth Pelepko, Intern, Penn State University, 1997  
Heather Rodriguez, Intern, Millersville University, 1998  
Jeremy Roth, Intern, Kutztown University, 1999, 2000  
Jamie Grumbine, Intern, 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  
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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: Resource Conservation Agenda 1983  
I.A.3. Resource Agenda/Supporting Material: Comprehensive Plan for the County of Lebanon, PA  
I.A.3. Resource Agenda/Supporting Material: Land Use Projections for Pennsylvania, ERRI, PSU  
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)



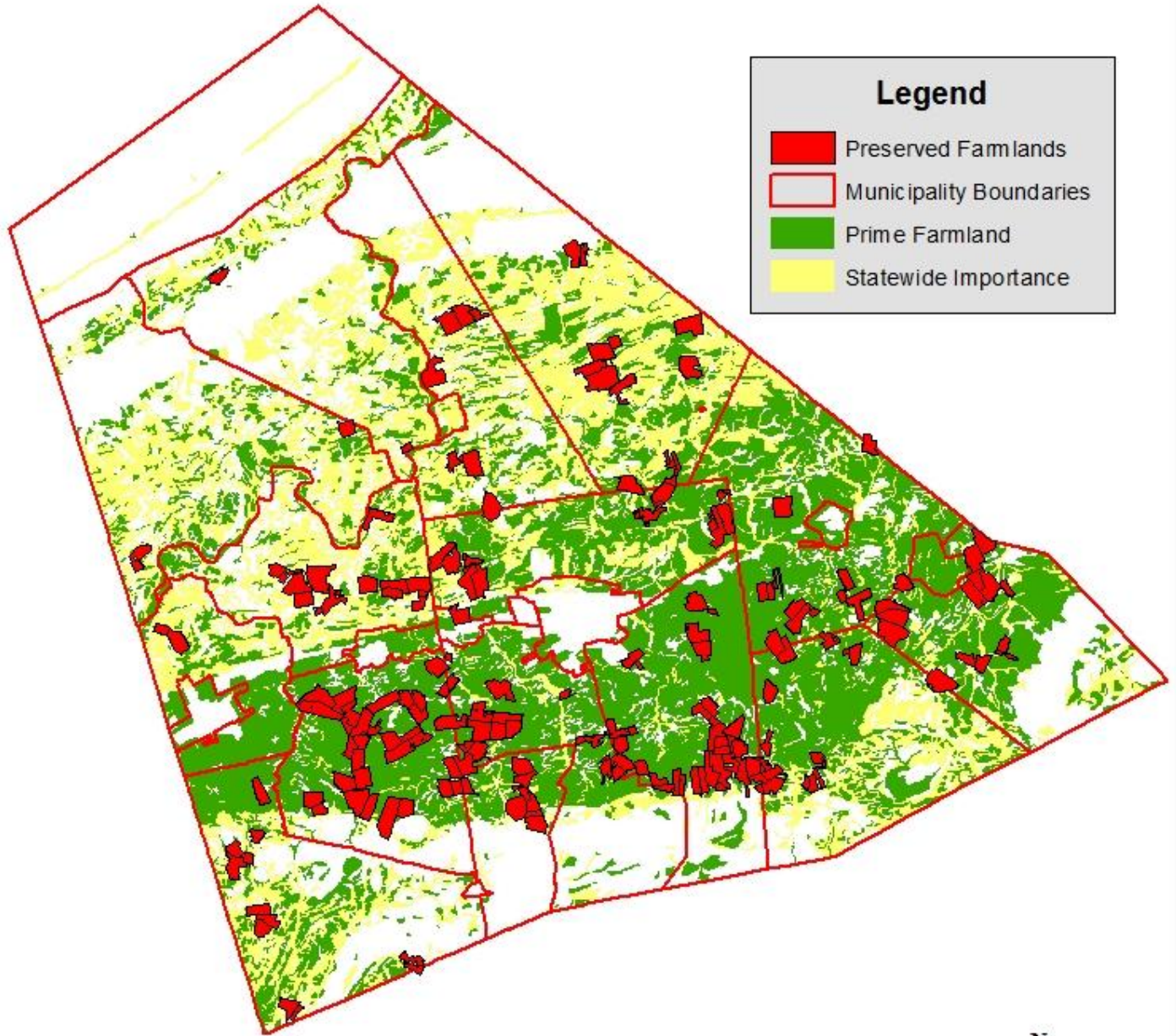
This map was last updated  
June 2012 by the  
Lebanon County  
Conservation District

0 1.5 3 6 9 12 Miles



# Lebanon County

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

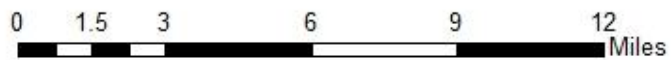


**Legend**

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



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





*“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*

