

Farmland Preservation FAQ's



The Farmland Preservation Program

The Bradford County Agricultural Land Preservation Board has preserved 17 farms, covering 4146 acres, and investing over \$3.5 million. But when did the program start? How is it funded? And what is an agricultural easement? Today, I will answer these frequently asked questions.

What is the farmland preservation program?

The farmland preservation program, officially titled the Pennsylvania Agricultural Easement Purchase Program, was developed to strengthen our agricultural economy and protect prime farmland from development. The program is set up to purchase agricultural easements on productive, quality farmland.

What is an agricultural easement?

An agricultural easement is an interest in land which represents the right to prevent the development or improvement of a parcel for any purpose other than agricultural production. The easement may be granted by the owner to any third party or to the state, county or local government. The easement is granted in perpetuity.

When did it start?

The farmland preservation program was approved in 1988. The first easement was in Lancaster County in 1989. It took longer for the idea of farmland preservation to take hold in Bradford County. Bradford County Commissioners approved the formation of the Bradford County Agricultural Land Preservation Board in 2001 and the county manual was approved by the state board in December 2001. The first applications were received in 2002 and the first 2 farms preserved in 2004.

How is it funded?

Funding is provided from county, state and federal funds. Original County funding came from the Landfill Closure Fund. Also the County is obligated to contribute any funds from the Clean and Green rollback taxes collected each year. State funding comes from cigarette taxes and the growing greener program. The State will match county funds and then distribute remaining funds to each county based on agriculture production, land sales/transfer, and local match. Any donations are combined with the county funds to increase match funds from the state.

How do farms qualify?

There are four minimum requirements for applications.

1. Land must be located in a duly recorded Agricultural Security Area which has at least 500 acres enrolled.
2. At least 50% of the property's soils are available for agricultural production and are of Land Capability Classes I through IV, as defined by USDA-NRCS.
3. At least 50% of the property's total acreage must be in current use as harvest cropland, pasture or grazing land.
4. Farms must be contiguous acreage of at least 50 acres in size unless the tract is at least 10 acres in size and is either utilized for a crop unique to the area or is contiguous to a property which has a perpetual conservation easement in place.

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What is an Agricultural Security Area?

An Agricultural Security Area or ASA is a tool for protecting our farms and farmland from non-agricultural uses. To establish an ASA, farmers must submit a petition to the township supervisors. Bradford County has 33 municipalities that have an established ASA. New parcels may be added to an established ASA at any time. ASA participants receive protection from local ordinances and nuisance lawsuits affecting normal farming activities.

Where can I get an application?

Applications can be found on our website www.bccdpa.com/farmland-preservation or picked up at the Bradford County Conservation District, 200 Lake Road, Towanda, PA 18848.

How are farms chosen for funding?

Farm applications are ranked according to several criteria including quality of soil and farmland, stewardship, and development potential.

Farmland Preservation plays a key role in preserving our farmland, our local economy and our heritage. For more information contact Amy Kneller at 570-485-3119 or amy.kneller@pa.nacdnet.net.