



Cumberland  
County  
Farmland  
Preservation  
Program

---

# Common Questions...

- What are the restrictions of the program?
- What are the minimum criteria to apply?
- How are farms ranked and selected?
- What would I be paid?
- What is the process and timeline?

# Background/History

- State program administered locally by Cumberland County Agricultural Land Preservation Board
- 62 of 67 counties participate
- 600,000+ acres preserved in PA
- Nearly 6,000 farms preserved in PA

# Background/History

- Cumberland County Agricultural Land Preservation Board was formed by Commissioners in 1989
- Board establishes Program policies and guidelines
- First easement purchase in 1992
- 23,000 acres preserved in Cumberland County
- GOAL: 30,000 acres by 2030
- 12% of all farmland preserved
- #7 in the State for total acres preserved

# How does the program work?

- GOAL...*"to preserve working farmland by purchasing conservation easements which prevent development of the land for any other purpose than agricultural production."*
- Conservation Easement = Voluntary, legal agreement which limits the use of the property
- Landowners are paid to place restrictions on the use of their property
- Restrictions of the easement are permanent and transfer from owner to owner

# Program Funding

- Primarily State & County funds
- Federal funds w/ additional restrictions
- Ability to partner with Local Municipalities & Non-Profit Organizations
- Program funding varies annually:
  - \$3 M - \$4 M
  - Preserve 8-12 farms

# ***The Rules –***

## Terms of the Conservation Easement

- Permitted Activities
- Rural Enterprises
- Construction of Buildings
- Utilities & Mining
- Conservation Plan
- Inspections
- Change of Ownership
- Subdivision

# The Rules –

## *Permitted Activities*

Crops, livestock and livestock products including, but not limited to:

1. Field crops, including corn, wheat, oats, rye, barley, hay, potatoes and dry beans.
2. Fruits, including apples, peaches, grapes, cherries, and berries.
3. Vegetables, including, tomatoes, snap beans, cabbage, carrots, beets, onions and mushrooms.
4. Horticultural specialties, including nursery stock ornamental shrubs, ornamental trees and flowers.
5. Livestock and livestock products, including cattle, sheep, hogs, goats, horses, poultry, furbearing animals, milk, eggs and furs.
6. Timber, wood and other wood products derived from trees.
7. Aquatic plants and animals and their byproducts.
8. Commercial equine activities



# The Rules –

## *Rural Enterprises*

- Certain side businesses are permitted
- Part time an/or seasonal in nature
- Do not impact the agricultural or open space character of the farm
- Approved on a case-by-case basis by the County Board

# ***The Rules –***

## ***Construction of Buildings***

- Construction, Renovation & Expansion of Agricultural Buildings
- Renovation & Expansion of Existing Residential Buildings
- Replacement of Residential Buildings
- Construction of One Additional Residential Structure
  - *Landowner, Immediate Family Member or Farmer worker only!*

# *The Rules*

- Utilities - Water, Sewer, Electric, Telephone, Coal, Gas, Oil Permitted
- Underground Mining for Coal, Oil & Gas permitted
- Conservation Plan
- Annual Inspections
- Change in Ownership

# *The Rules –* Subdivision

- For new farms entering program:
  - A subdivision cannot create a lot smaller than 100 acres
  - If farm is adjacent to another preserved farm, it is exempt from 100 acre requirement
  - 2 acre subdivision allowed for the one new additional residence or an existing house
- *Farms preserved prior to 1996 have less restrictive subdivision requirements*

# What are the criteria to apply?

1. Be located in an Agriculture Security Area (ASA)
2. Minimum acreage:
  - 52 acres OR
  - 10 acres for a crop unique to area OR
  - 10 acres and adjacent to existing preserved farm
3. 50% of property in agriculture production (cropland, pasture & grazing)
4. 50% of soils are Class 1-4
5. Conservation Plan w/ Manure Mgmt (as needed)
6. Preservation must be consistent with County and Municipal land use plans and ordinances

# Agricultural Security Area (ASA)

- Municipal designation
- Designed to strengthen agricultural land use
- ASA Benefits:
  - Limited protection from local nuisance regulations
  - Limited protection from condemnation of land
  - Pre-requisite to apply to the farmland preservation program

# Conservation Plan

- Details the management practices on the farm
- Purpose – Improve soil health and farm productivity & protect water quality
- Plans can be prepared by:
  - Private consultant OR
  - Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS)

# How are farms selected?

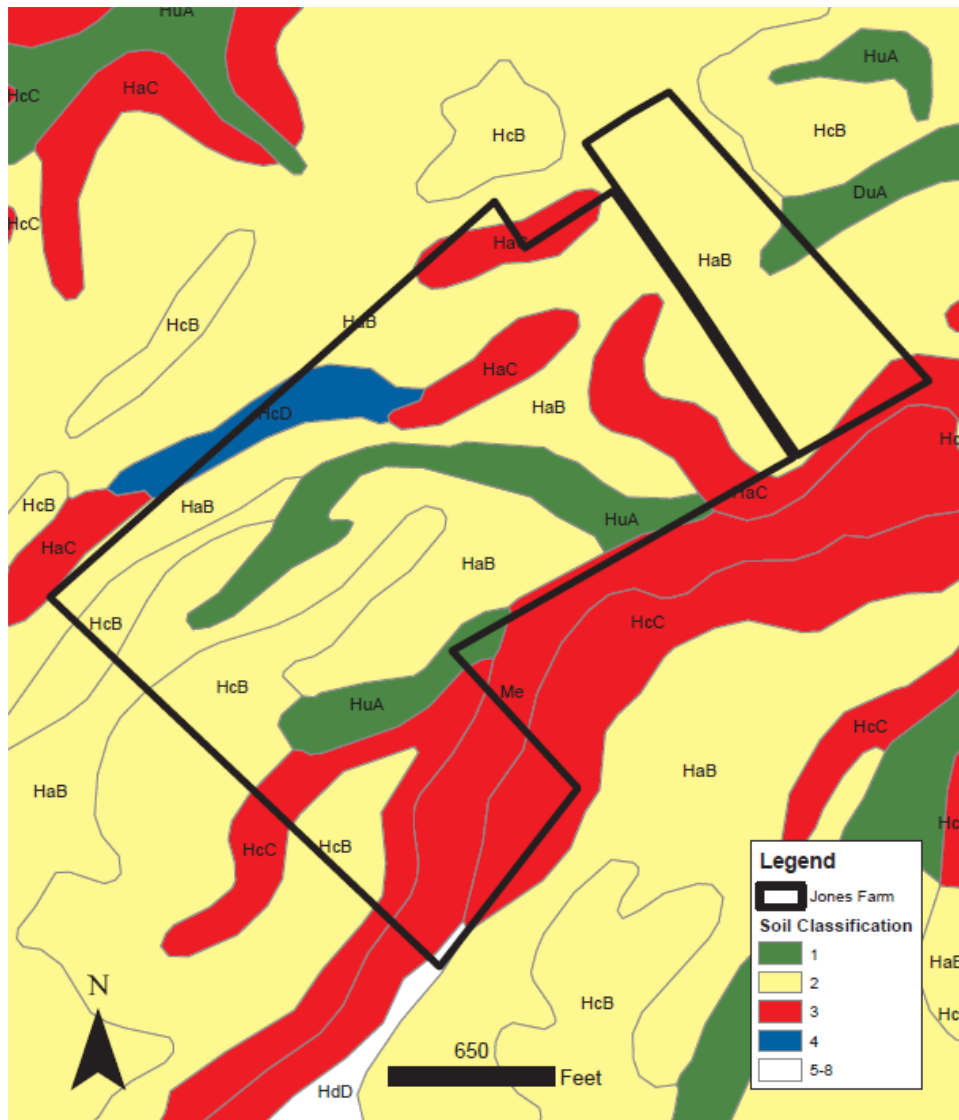
- Farms are evaluated annually against the farmland ranking system
- # of farms selected is based on amount of available funding
- 2021 Round
  - 27 farms ranked
  - 10 farms selected



# How are farms ranked?

## Farmland Ranking System

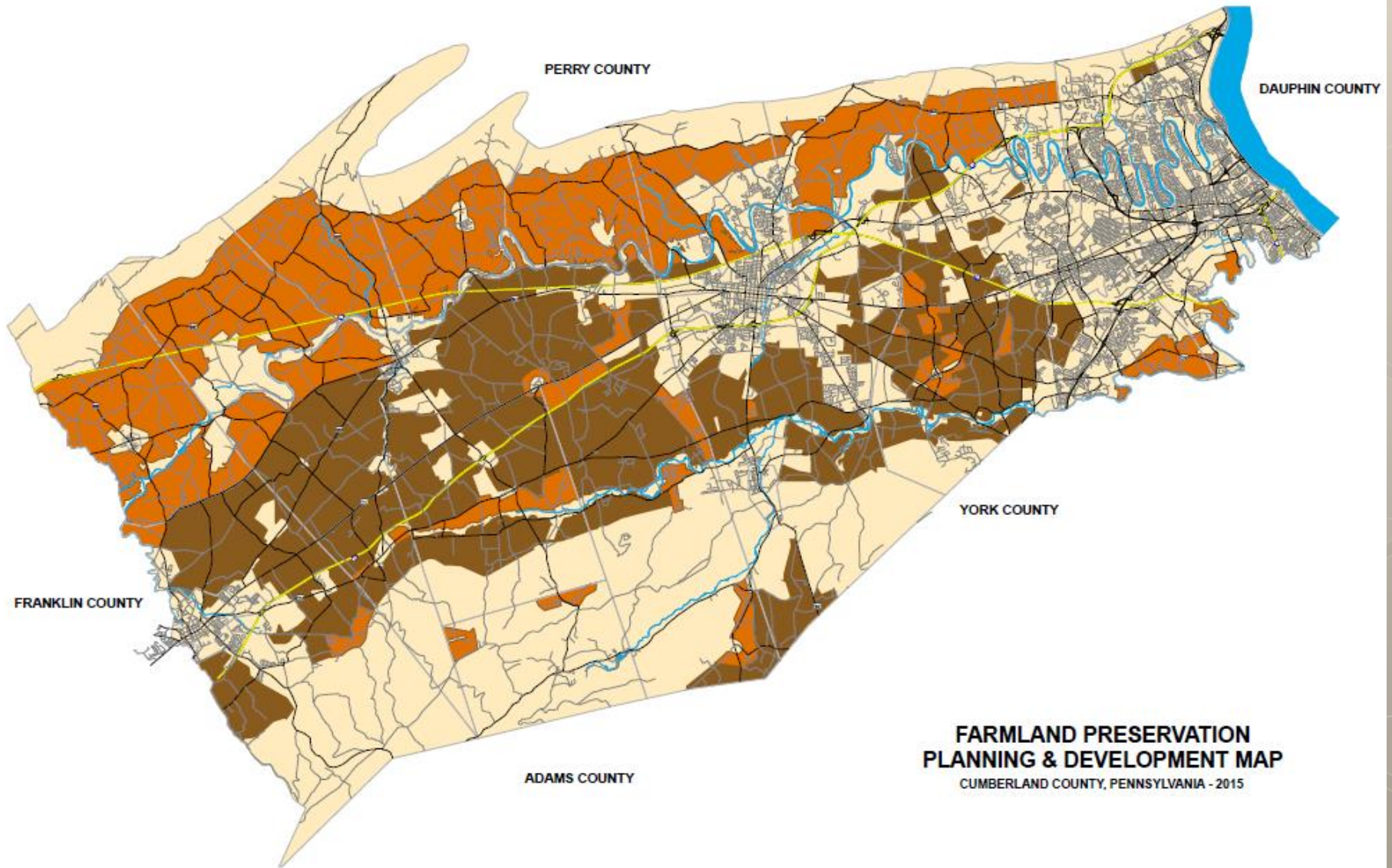
Soil Quality	40%
Clustering Potential	30%
Farmland Potential	20%
Development Potential	10%



Soil  
Quality  
40%

# Clustering Potential – 30%

1. Proximity to other preserved farms
2. Percent of land adjacent to farm is enrolled in an official Agricultural Security Area.
3. Consistent with the County Planning and Development Map



# Farmland Potential - 20%

1. Size of Farm
2. Percent of Tract Used for Cropland, Pasture or Grazing
3. Conservation Practices/Stewardship of Land
4. Historic, Scenic and Environmental Qualities
5. Percentage of Farm Offered for Easement Purchase
6. Family Farm

# Development Potential - 10%

1. Extent of non-ag land use within one mile of tract
2. Public Road Frontage
3. Availability of Public Sewer
4. Availability of Public Water

# Out of Ranking Order Option

Allows the Board to consider selecting a farm “out of ranking order” if :

- The Landowner accepts 50% of appraised value OR
- Another entity (Township, Non-Profit, etc.) is willing to contribute 50% of the cost



# Silver Spring Township Land Preservation Program

- Started in 2013 to preserve farmland and open space
- Funded with voter approved Earned Income Tax - .01%
- Preserved over 500 acres to date
  - 3 farms in partnership w/ County
  - 2 additional farms pending w/ County



# What would I be paid?

- Independent appraisal obtained by certified real estate appraiser
- Easement Value = The difference between the development value and agricultural value of a farm:

Development Value		\$11,000/acre
Agricultural Value	-	<u>\$7,500/acre</u>
<b>Easement Value</b>		<b>\$3,500/acre</b>

- **Board has discretion to make an offer at or below full value**

# What would I be paid?

- Maximum purchase price = \$4,000/acre
- Average offers – 90% of easement value
  - 2021 = \$3,440/acre (5 bargain sales)
  - 2020 = \$3,579/acre
  - 2019 = \$3,402/acre (6 bargain sales)

# Process/Timeline

Applications due	December 31, 2021
Applications scored & ranked	January - March 2022
Farm selection by County Board/ \$2,000 appraisal deposit required	April 2022
Appraisals conducted	May – July 2022
Offers made to Farmers	August – September 2022
Title Searches	September – October 2022
Surveys (if required)	November – December 2022
State Board Approval	2023 – meet 6X year
Settlement	Summer-Fall 2023



# Q & A

Stephanie Williams  
Mark Kimmel  
Elizabeth Grant

Cumberland County Planning Department

[www.ccpa.net/farmland](http://www.ccpa.net/farmland)

717-240-5383 OR 717-240-5362