

York County Agricultural Land Preservation Board
Written by Eric Naylor, Farmland Preservation Technician

The York County Agricultural Land Preservation Board is pleased to announce the totals of their ag land preservation efforts since 1990. Program totals as of January 1st, 2018, including farms preserved through easement purchase or easement donation, total 282 farms covering 41,883 acres! These farms represent working lands across the county which produce field crops, milk, fruits, berries, vegetables, Christmas trees, nursery stock, timber, and a variety of livestock. On behalf of the County of York and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, thank you to the families who have made this commitment to preserve their family farm, “forever and a day”.

As we begin a new year in 2018, we look forward to a new year of preserving York County farms. The York County Commissioners have allocated \$284,707 for Agricultural Conservation Easement Purchases in 2018. By February, we will know our state match as well as our total easement purchase funds for 2018. If you applied for preservation in 2017, you should have received an application update form in the mail. It’s a benefit to return the application update form each and every year, ensuring that your farm has a chance of being selected for preservation. Those farmers that apply every year will need to fill out a crop report and their gross farm income figures for 2017. If you haven’t applied in the past year, you will need to fill out a new application, with the past three years of gross farm income. We do not charge an application fee, meaning that applying for our program is free. As a reminder, easement applications can be changed, but must be finalized prior to ranking and selection for preservation. We encourage you to sit down with YCALPB staff, to review your easement application and mapping boundaries prior to ranking to ensure an accurate application is submitted. Many of our easement applications do exclude certain parts of the farm, such as woodlands, poor soils, and homesteads. Each application is different and reflects each farmer’s preferences.

Once we have received your application for 2018, staff will begin to schedule conservation evaluation visits with you. During these farm visits, we will compare your farming operation with the operation described in your conservation plan. If your farm generates or spreads manure, you will also be required to have a manure management plan or nutrient management plan, as per state law. Common issues that we find with conservation plans can include:

- Plan not written for current operator
- Plan does not address all lands in commercial ag production
- Land uses have changed since the plan was written (i.e. cropland is now pasture)
- Plan does not address resource concerns
- Plan is not implemented (Less than 50% of practices are present on the farm)

Keep in mind that we no longer have deadlines for easement applications. We will accept applications year round. However, the YCALPB can begin selecting farms for preservation as early as February. Once the easement purchase funds are exhausted, no more farms will be selected for that funding year. Therefore we urge you to return your application for easement purchase as early as possible, to ensure we have time to qualify, visit, and rank your farm.

In order to qualify for land preservation, a farm must be enrolled in an Agricultural Security Area, it must be comprised of 50% lands in Soil Classes I – IV which are used for commercial agricultural production. A farm must also generate an average of \$10,000 of gross farm income for three years, and finally have a current conservation plan that is at least 50% implemented. The easement purchase program also has a 50 acre minimum or 10 acre minimum if the applying property lies adjacent to a previously preserved farm.

Landowners interested in preserving their farmland may contact the agency at (717) 840-7400, or find our information at www.YorkCountyPA.gov. Useful Links and a Preservation Map now show all preserved farms within the county. See if any preserved farms are near you. The York County Ag Land Preservation Program continues to rank third in the state and ninth in the Nation for acres of farmland preserved. YCALPB Office Hours are 8 AM to 4:30 PM Monday through Friday. We are located in the County Annex Building at 118 Pleasant Acres Road, York, PA 17402.



The Rebert Farm, located in North Codorus and Codorus Townships
Preserved by YCALPB on October 5th, 2017 in Perpetuity.