

## Open Enrollment for Agriculture Preservation Easements

The Huntingdon County Agricultural Land Preservation Board is announcing open enrollment for the agricultural land preservation program. The program is a purchase of a permanent easement that limits any non-agricultural development on the farm in perpetuity. The farmer still owns and operates the farm, but the land can never be subdivided into residential or developed for any other non-agricultural use. Since the county program's inception in 2001, there have been 1,369 acres of farmland preserved in Huntingdon County. With over 591,819 acres preserved in this program statewide, Pennsylvania leads the nation in this initiative.

Farm applications are ranked according to soil productivity, development potential, farmland potential, and clustering, or proximity to other farms under easement and in Agricultural Security Areas. There are minimum qualifications that a farm must meet prior to applying, including a contiguous acreage of at least 50 acres, enrollment in an Agricultural Security Area of at least 500 acres in total size, and the farm must contain 50% or greater of soils that are rated Land Capability Class I through IV, as defined by the USDA NRCS.

The process to preserve a farm is long, taking at least one year but often up to 3 years to complete. The Huntingdon County Agricultural Land Preservation Board wishes to open the enrollment again at this time in order to meet state guidelines and also to allow interested farms to apply. The Program Coordinator will work with the farmers who currently have applications on file as well as work with new applicants.

Open enrollment in the program will run through June 7, 2024. Interested applicants should carefully review the program and application, consult with their families, and potentially their attorney and estate planner prior to applying. Applicants are encouraged to contact the Program Coordinator, Jonathan Yoder, to learn more about the program by calling 627-1626 or emailing [Agriculture@huntingdonconservation.org](mailto:Agriculture@huntingdonconservation.org). Applications are available by request and on the Conservation District website: <http://huntingdoncd.org/agricultural-programs/agricultural-land-preservation>.

Funding for this program comes from the Pennsylvania Farmland Preservation program, Huntingdon County's Marcellus Legacy funds, township contributions, and the county's Clean and Green rollback tax interest.