

What does Preserved Farmland do for Schuylkill County?

Secures A Local Food Source

A wide variety of agricultural products are grown in Schuylkill County including dairy, beef, poultry, pork, produce, Christmas trees, and more. Preserved farmland ensures food will always be produced here, which is an essential component to our food security.

Maintains The Local Heritage

Preserved farmland preserves the scenic and rural character of the county for both residents and visitors.

Stabilizes Property Taxes

Residential development increases the demand for services like schools, police, and roadways, which require more in taxes. Overall, a farm uses less tax dollars than what the farmer pays in taxes.

Contributes to the Local Economy

Agribusinesses support industries such as financial and legal services, seed and equipment sales, and food production and processing are important to both the agricultural community and the local economy.

Maintains Open Space And Ecosystem Services

Agricultural lands provide many ecosystems services including open space for wildlife, ground-water recharge, and carbon sequestration.

Schuylkill County Statistics

115
Preserved
Farms

11,848 Total
Acres
Preserved

Additional Resources

District Website: <http://www.schuylkillcd.com/>

PA Dept. of Ag: <http://agriculture.state.pa.us/>

Schuylkill County *Agricultural Land* *Preservation* *Program*



Preserving Schuylkill County
Farmland

Schuylkill Conservation District
1206 Ag Center Drive
Pottsville, PA 17901
(570) 622-3742
www.schuylkillcd.com

Farmland Preservation Program Overview

The Schuylkill County Agricultural Land Preservation Board is responsible for administering the Agricultural Conservation Easement (ACE) Program. The ACE Program permanently preserves farmland to ensure the future of agriculture in Schuylkill County through the purchase of agricultural conservation easements.

Funding for the ACE Program is provided annually by both Schuylkill County and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Landowners voluntarily apply and if selected, are paid up to \$2,000 per acre in exchange for complying with specific restrictions placed on their land. These restrictions include devoting the land to agricultural uses, limitations on construction and subdivision, and implementation of a conservation plan to maintain or improve soil quality on the farm. All preserved farms are inspected regularly to ensure compliance with the easement. The easement remains with the property during changes of ownership, protecting the land in perpetuity.

Eligibility Requirements

To qualify for the program, a farm must:

- Be located in a township's Agricultural Security Area (ASA)
- Have at least 35 contiguous acres. If the tract is at least 10 acres in size and is utilized to grow a unique crop, or if the tract adjoins a property that already has a perpetual easement, it may also be eligible.
- Contains 50% of soils in Capability Classes I-IV
- Have at least 50% of its land in agricultural production (harvested cropland, pasture, or grazing land)
- Not be located in a Future or Designated Growth Area as defined by the current Schuylkill County Comprehensive Plan.

*The annual application deadline is December 31st.

Benefits to Farm Owners

- Provide revenue to pay down debt, buy equipment, purchase additional land, or reinvest in the farm
- Offer a means to transition the farm to the next generation
- Create pockets of preserved land that minimizes conflict with neighbors over land use and nuisance complaints
- Afford a level of security that the farm will be available for agricultural production for generations, making it worth investing additional time and funds
- Contribution to a lasting legacy for farming and farmsteads

How to Apply for Preservation

The first step in applying for Farmland Preservation is to submit an application. You may obtain an application from the Schuylkill Conservation District's website or you may call the District and request one to be sent to you. The SCD's phone number is **(570) 622-3742 ext. 3325**. There is currently no fee for submitting an application.

The application deadline for inclusion in the next year's ranking is December 31st of each year. All applications will be ranked or re-ranked in January - February.

The waiting list for Schuylkill County currently includes over 70 farms. Don't let this number discourage you from submitting an application, but be aware that it may be some time until your farm is selected for easement purchase.

The flow chart to the right gives a general description of the easement purchase process.

Easement Purchase Process

Application Submission



Ranking of Applications



Selection of farms based on ranking and available funding



Selected farms are asked for a security deposit and an appraisal is requested



Appraisal is performed to determine easement value and price per acre



Offer is made, and if accepted a legal survey and title search are performed



Agreement of Sale is signed



Information is submitted and presented to State Board for approval



Funds are received and settlement occurs