

Governor Ted Strickland  
Lieutenant Governor Lee Fisher  
Director Robert J. Boggs

Office of Communication  
8995 East Main Street, Reynoldsburg, OH 43068  
Phone: 614-752-9817 • Fax: 614-466-7754  
www.agri.ohio.gov • communications@agri.ohio.gov

## Clean Ohio Agricultural Easement Purchase Program (AEPP)

REYNOLDSBURG, Ohio (Feb. 18, 2009) – The Ohio Department of Agriculture’s Agricultural Easement Purchase Program (AEPP) purchases agricultural easements from interested farmland owners with the ultimate goal of preserving Ohio’s farmland for future generations. Farmland plays a crucial role for Ohio, contributing to the state’s largest industry. The food and agriculture industry generates more than \$98 billion annually to the state’s economy and provides jobs to one in seven Ohioans.

Governor Strickland and the General Assembly’s Bipartisan Jobs Stimulus Plan, a \$1.57 billion investment in Ohio’s economy and infrastructure, includes a \$400-million bond continuation of the Clean Ohio Fund. The fund, similar to its original form in 2001, will preserve farmland and greenspace, develop recreational trails, and clean up brownfield sites. It will allocate \$25 million to purchase agricultural easements on productive farmland from willing landowners throughout the next four years. Since 2002, the original Clean Ohio Fund distributed \$25 million toward farmland preservation, which ultimately preserved 135 farms totaling 26,813.88 acres.

Under an agricultural easement, the land itself stays under private ownership, but the easement prohibits any future non-agricultural development. The value of the easement is calculated by the Ohio Department of Agriculture’s points-based appraisal system. This system uses the county auditor’s land valuation to establish a base value modified by the auditor’s three-year appraisal and consideration of the farm’s specific farmland preservation attributes.

### **Program Requirements**

- Counties, townships, municipalities, or charitable organizations must apply on behalf of interested farmland owners.
- The applicant farm must be enrolled in the Current Agricultural Use Value program (CAUV) and the Agricultural District Program.
- The farm must be a minimum of 40 acres unless the land is located adjacent to property with an agricultural easement. In this case, the land may be a minimum of 25 acres. All contiguous parcels owned by the same legal entity must be submitted as one farm. No contiguous parcels can be withheld from the application.
- The farmland owner must certify the property does not contain hazardous substances.
- The farmland owner must have been in compliance with state and federal agricultural laws for the past five years.
- The farmland owner must have possession of clear title to the applicant property.
- The local sponsor must agree to share monitoring and enforcement responsibilities.

-more-



- Local sponsors must provide a 25 percent minimum local match either in cash or the farmland owner can donate 25 percent or more of the points-based appraised value of the agricultural easement.
- Local sponsors that are charitable organizations must be tax exempt and organized for the purpose of farmland preservation.

### **Ranking System**

The 13-member Farmland Preservation Advisory Board recommends to the director of agriculture which farms should receive AEPP funding. A two-tier ranking system, as explained below, is used.

#### Tier One

(100 points available, scored by online application)

- Soil types and agricultural productivity
- Proximity to permanently protected land
- Best management practices
- Development pressure
- Local government's comprehensive land-use planning
- Other factors as determined by the director

#### Tier Two

(50 points available, scored by advisory board)

- Agricultural activities, support services, facilities of general area
- Estate plan, business plan, long-term investment in the farm
- Promotion of farmland preservation
- Local government farmland preservation strategies
- Sustainable agriculture

### **Selected Applicants and Program Guidelines**

Clean Ohio AEPP selected applicants are chosen by the director of agriculture and contacted by ODA staff with funding offers. The director may set a maximum dollar amount per acre or limit the dollar amount or number of finalists awarded to each county or landowner. The director also has the ability to adopt other guidelines regarding funding distribution. Historically, the program receives more than 200 applications each funding round. Typically, offers can be provided to approximately eight percent of applicants due to available funding.

For further Clean Ohio AEPP requirements, limits, and other questions, refer to the application "Guidelines and Policies" and other informational documents by visiting [www.agri.ohio.gov](http://www.agri.ohio.gov).

