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Clean Ohio Agricultural Easement Purchase Program (AEPP)

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.

The AEPP is the farmland preservation component of the Clean Ohio Fund bond initiative, which was originally approved by Ohio's voters in 2000, and further supported at the ballot for continuation in 2008. The Clean Ohio Fund preserves farmland and grows green space, improves outdoor recreation and encourages redevelopment of communities by cleaning-up brownfields. The anticipated distribution for AEPP 2012 is \$6.25 million.

An agricultural easement is a voluntary and legally-binding restriction placed on a farm. The easement limits the use of the land to predominantly agricultural activity. The land remains under private ownership and management and stays on the tax rolls under Current Agricultural Use Valuation (CAUV). The farmland can be sold or passed along as a gift to others at any time, but the restriction prohibiting non-agricultural development stays with the land.

Program Requirements

- Counties, townships, municipalities, or charitable organizations must agree to be local partners with the department in working with interested farmland owners.
- The farm must be enrolled in the Current Agricultural Use Value program (CAUV) and the Agricultural District Program.
- 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 partner must agree to share monitoring and enforcement responsibilities.
- Local partners 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 partners that are charitable organizations must be tax exempt and organized for the purpose of farmland preservation.

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Ranking System

Farms are selected using a ranking system that gives preference to those farms best suited to promote the program's priorities:

- Soil types and agricultural productivity
- Proximity to permanently protected land
- Conservation planning
- Development pressure
- Local government's comprehensive planning
- Other factors

For further requirements, limits, and other questions, visit www.agri.ohio.gov. Click on "Clean Ohio AEPP."

Current as of 11/08/2011

