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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## **Morrow County Landowners Preserve Farmland; Donate Development Rights to State**

REYNOLDSBURG, Ohio (Feb. 12, 2008) – Tim and Mary Weiler of Morrow County recently donated permanent agricultural easements on 495 acres to the Ohio Department of Agriculture, assuring three of their farms will forever remain in agriculture. With this donation, there are now six farms in Morrow County permanently preserved by the department.

“Farming is how our entire family has made a living. It is all they’ve ever done,” said farmland owner Mary Weiler. “We want to continue to see that our farmland is available for future generations.”

The Weilers decided to pursue agricultural easement donations after they watched easements in action when their uncle, Thomas Weiler, passed away in February 2007. Thomas donated easements on two farms in Morrow County, and both the land and the agricultural easements were passed to Tim and Mary, who resolved to follow the same path with their own land.

“We are grateful that the Weiler family has entrusted our department with these easements,” said Ohio Agriculture Director Robert Boggs. “I am convinced that future generations will proudly reflect on the visionary foresight displayed by the Weilers in the selfless preservation of their farmland.”

The Morrow Soil and Water Conservation District will monitor the properties, located in Chester and Harmony townships, to ensure the agricultural easement terms are followed. The easements will ensure the land, currently used to raise corn, wheat, and soybeans, continues to be used for agriculture.

Under the department’s Ohio Agricultural Easement Donation Program, landowners can donate a permanent agricultural easement on their farm to the state. Agricultural easements are voluntary legal agreements restricting non-agricultural development on farmland, with the land itself remaining on the tax rolls and under private ownership and management. Landowners may undertake any agricultural activity permitted under Ohio law, and they can sell their farm or pass it along as a gift to others. However, the easement remains with the land, prohibiting any future non-farm development to ensure it remains in agricultural use.

Landowners can receive federal tax advantages from donating permanent agricultural easements to the department. Donated easements that meet Internal Revenue Code criteria are treated as charitable gifts, and interested landowners should seek professional advice from an accountant or attorney.

To date, Ohio landowners have donated agricultural easements on 35 farms totaling more than 4,300 acres statewide. For more information on the department’s Agricultural Easement Donation Program, call 614-728-6210 or visit [www.ohioagriculture.gov/farmland](http://www.ohioagriculture.gov/farmland).