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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Ohio Landowners Preserve Farmland, Donate Development Rights to State

REYNOLDSBURG, Ohio (Jan. 15, 2009) – Five new Ohio farms are permanently preserved through the Ohio Agricultural Easement Donation Program, administered by the Ohio Department of Agriculture (ODA). This assures that the land will forever be used for agricultural purposes.

“Through this program and others like it, Ohio has preserved more than 35,000 acres of farmland,” said Ohio Department of Agriculture Director Robert Boggs. “Preserving our farmland benefits every Ohioan not only by providing fresh, home-grown products for consumption but also by providing jobs to our citizens and money to our economy.”

Robert Jones, of Licking County, donated a permanent easement on his 273.66 acre farm in Madison Township. Jones was born and raised on the farm, which currently produces corn, hay, and soybeans in addition to a 60-head feeder calf operation. The Licking County Soil and Water Conservation District will monitor the land annually to assure the easement is followed. This marks the fifth donated easement in the county to ODA, which assures the land will forever remain used for agricultural purposes.

A 155.82 acre easement on a farm in Logan County, owned by Renee and Alan Winner in Harrison Township, was donated to the department. Crop rotation at the Winner farm is no-till beans, no-till wheat, and conservation tillage corn. The Logan County Land Trust will annually monitor the farm. This is the county’s second donated agricultural easement.

Keith Jackson also donated a permanent agricultural easement on his 60 acre farm in West Township in Columbiana County. The farm is managed under a standard rotation of corn, soybeans, and wheat using no-till planting methods to assure soil is not eroded in natural drainage paths. The Columbiana County Soil and Water Conservation District will monitor the farm yearly. This is the first preserved farm in the county.

Two farms in Fulton County donated permanent easements to the department. The first is a 169.45 acre farm, owned by Julia McClarren, in Franklin Township, and the second is a 159.34 acre additional farm in Pike Township, owned by McClarren and her husband, Benson. Both farms are managed under a standard rotation of corn, wheat, and soybeans using no-till, conservation, and conventional tillage practices. The farms will be annually monitored by the Fulton County Soil and Water Conservation District and are the first two donated easements to the department within the county.

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Under the Agricultural Easement Donation Program, landowners may 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 make certain that it remains used for agricultural purposes.

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 42 farms, which total more than 5,300 acres statewide. For more information on the department's Agricultural Easement Donation Program, call 614-728-6210 or visit www.agri.ohio.gov.

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