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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Clean Ohio Ag Easement Purchase Program 2009 Application Period Opens

REYNOLDSBURG, Ohio (Feb. 9, 2009) – Ohio farmers wishing to preserve their farmland through the Clean Ohio Agricultural Easement Purchase Program can find the 2009 application on the Ohio Department of Agriculture’s Web site beginning, Feb. 10. The applications are used by the department to evaluate and purchase agricultural easements in an effort to preserve Ohio’s farmland. All applications must be submitted to the department by May 11, no later than 5 p.m.

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-agricultural development to make certain that it remains used for agricultural purposes.

“Since the program’s inception in 2002, our department has preserved more than 26,000 acres of farmland,” said Ohio Department of Agriculture Director Robert Boggs. “Due to the overwhelming support of the Clean Ohio bond issue by Ohio voters in the November election, we are able to continue this program, which helps us secure precious farmland, save jobs, and help Ohio’s economy.”

The Clean Ohio Fund, which is one part of Governor Strickland’s and the Ohio General Assembly’s Bipartisan Job Stimulus Plan, provides many great things for Ohioans in addition to preserving our farmland and the many social, environmental, and economic benefits it creates. It also continues efforts to protect green areas and improve outdoor recreation spaces, and it allows the state to revitalize urban areas and clean up vacant industrial sites.

To apply for the Agricultural Easement Purchase Program, farmers must work through a sponsoring organization such as a local land trust, a Soil and Water Conservation District, or a group of local officials. These sponsors complete and submit applications on behalf of interested landowners. Additional requirements must be met, such as the land must be located in an agricultural district and landowners must be willing to donate at least 25 percent of the easement’s points-based appraised value.

Applicants have the possibility of earning up to 150 points on their two-part application, which is calculated based on several factors. Part one of the application focuses on development pressure, soils, proximity to protected properties, best management practices, and local development and preservation initiatives. Part two includes narrative questions regarding the farm and its unique appeal to the program.

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2009 AEPP Application Round Opens
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For more information on the Clean Ohio Fund, the Agricultural Easement Purchase Program, or for a copy of the 2009 application, visit the department's Web site at www.agri.ohio.gov, or contact the department's Office of Farmland Preservation at 614-728-6210.

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