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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## **Licking County Landowner Preserves Farmland, Donates Development Rights to State**

REYNOLDSBURG, Ohio (July 10, 2009) – Licking County resident Joan Harris preserved her 170-acre farm for agricultural use by donating an agricultural easement to the Ohio Department of Agriculture in June. This assures the land will forever be used for agricultural purposes.

The farm consists of cropland, pasture, and woods in Madison Township. Harris, her late husband, Ralph, and his family purchased the farm in 1941. Together, the two purchased the farm from his family in 1961.

Harris is the sixth farm owner in Licking County to donate an agricultural easement to the department, which holds easements on more than 963 acres in the county. The Licking County Soil and Water Conservation District will monitor the land annually to assure the easement is followed.

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 41 farms totaling more than 5,495 acres statewide. For more information on the department's Agricultural Easement Donation Program, call 614-728-6210 or visit [www.agri.ohio.gov](http://www.agri.ohio.gov).

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