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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Richland County Landowners Preserve Farmland, Donate Development Rights to State

REYNOLDSBURG, Ohio (Sept. 13, 2010) – Richland County sisters Carol Bernhardt and Betty Shultz recently preserved three farms totaling 310.33 acres by donating agricultural easements to the Ohio Department of Agriculture. These donations assure the land will forever be used for agricultural purposes.

Betty Shultz's 142.5-acre farm is located in Bloominggrove Township where the fields are managed under a standard rotation of corn and soybeans.

Carol Bernhardt's 93.75-acre farm is located in Butler and Bloominggrove townships, and its fields were recently planted in soybeans and oats. She is also donating the easement rights to a second 74.08-acre farm also located in Butler and Bloominggrove townships. It is managed under a standard rotation of corn and soybeans.

These are the first farms in Richland County with easements held by the state of Ohio. The Richland County Board of Commissioners supported the donations and designated the Richland County Regional Planning Commission as easement monitors, where annual monitoring efforts will help assure the terms of the easements are followed.

Through 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 give it 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.

Since the program began in 1999, Ohio landowners have donated agricultural easements on 52 farms totaling more than 6,310 acres statewide. For more information about the department's Agricultural Easement Donation Program, visit www.agri.ohio.gov.

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