



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **AGRICULTURAL LAND PRESERVATION BOARD ACCEPTING APPLICATIONS**

**Uniontown, PA** - The annual application period for the Fayette County Agricultural Land Preservation Board is now open.

Founded in 1996, the Agricultural Land Preservation Program's goals include sustaining farmland and preserving the best soils in Fayette County. Program funding is generated through the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture's Clean and Green Program, tobacco taxes, county contributions and more.

Fayette County Chief Community Development Specialist Art Cappella said it's important for Fayette County to preserve "its most valuable resource, which is arable land."

"Once you build a highway or a Walmart, there's no going back to using that land for crops. Its agricultural use is done. That's why soil quality is so important," Cappella said. "We want to preserve the best soil, but developers also want the same soil, so there's kind of a conflict sometimes."

Agriculture is the leading industry in both Pennsylvania and Fayette County, Cappella added.

"By preserving farmland, we're investing in our future. Agricultural easements conserve food production sources and green spaces," Cappella said. "It's also a method by which we can maintain the farming industry's traditions and culture; as well as enhance Fayette's community appearance by establishing a common balance between economic development and the agriculture industry."

Some Agricultural Land Preservation Program requirements include:

- A minimum of 35 acres of farmland.
- Location in an agricultural security area. (These areas may include non-adjacent farmland parcels of at least 10 acres. Applicants must contact their local governments to place farmland into an agricultural security area.)
- Completion of an appraisal and soil testing following application submission.

Cappella said 25 Fayette County farms are currently part of the program, with a total of 2,923 acres preserved as of 2023. More than \$3.4 million have been invested in the project thus far.

"We're working on our 26<sup>th</sup> farm right now, so that should be done soon, and those totals will go up. Our board also recently updated a few things, such as lowering the requirements from 50 acres to 35 acres for eligibility," Cappella said. "In addition to that, if there's a farm with at least 10 acres located directly adjacent to one of our preserved farms, then we can preserve that land, as well."

All applications are valid for two years. The 2024 application period closes September 1.

“Agricultural land preservation helps control urban sprawl, while allowing for smart development and growth,” Cappella said. “It allows for investment where infrastructure already exists, so no one has to cut down trees or chew up farms.”

Interested landowners may apply by contacting the Fayette County Office of Planning, Zoning and Community Development, 724-430-1210; at the Fayette County Courthouse, 2 West Main St., Suite 2, Uniontown, PA 15401.

To learn more about Fayette County, visit [www.fayettecountypa.org](http://www.fayettecountypa.org).

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