

NC Agricultural Development & Farmland Preservation Trust Fund

In North Carolina, the number of farms and farmland has been steadily declining. 5,500 farms and 300,000 acres of farmland have been lost since 2003. Since 1990, North Carolina has lost 900,000 acres of farmland and 14,000 farms. With each loss of an acre, North Carolina loses products that once contributed to our economy.

Participation in the VAD and EVAD programs allows access to the NC Agricultural Development & Farmland Preservation Trust Fund, which helps secure grants for programs that promote sustainable agriculture, agricultural agreements, and conservation easements, and gives farm businesses the resources needed to reinvest in their operations.

To learn more about the North Carolina Agricultural Development & Farmland Preservation Trust Fund, please visit: <http://www.ncadfp.org>



Participation is Voluntary!

This is a voluntary program. Landowners participating in the VAD program may remove all or a portion of his/her land from the program by giving written notice to the Agricultural Advisory Board. EVAD participants can choose to remove their land from the program at the end of their 10-year contract. If a portion of the land is removed from the program, the remaining land must meet the programs conditions and qualifications for the farm to continue in the program.

Agriculture Advisory Board

The Voluntary/Enhanced Voluntary Agricultural District Ordinance provides for the creation of an Agricultural Advisory Board to administer the VAD and EVAD programs. The Board will review and approve applications for qualifying farmland as well as establish voluntary agricultural districts.

The Board is composed of seven county residents, selected by Jackson County Commissioners based on recommendations from local agencies throughout the county. Five members must be actively engaged in farming, and the two remaining members must have experience or education in agriculture and/or rural land preservation. Additional members can be appointed to serve in an *EX OFFICIO* capacity.



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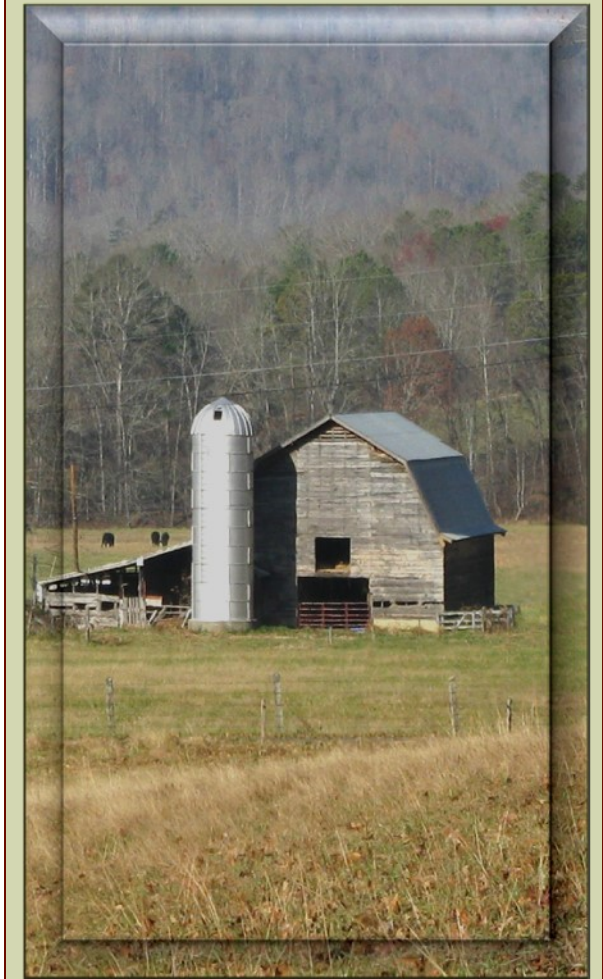


Contact Information

To learn more about the VAD and EVAD programs or to get an application to participate, please call the Jackson Soil & Water Conservation District at 828-586-5465.

Design by Deidre Parris

FARMLAND PRESERVATION PROGRAM



Jackson County, North Carolina

WHAT IS THE FARMLAND PRESERVATION PROGRAM?

The purpose of the Voluntary Preservation Program is to encourage the voluntary preservation and protection of farmland from non-farm development. This is in recognition of the importance of agriculture to the economic, health, social, and scenic benefit of the county.

The General Assembly of the State of North Carolina authorized counties to undertake a series of programs to encourage the preservation of farmland. This statutory authority is found in Chapter 106, Article 61 of the North Carolina General Statutes.

On May 22, 2008, the Jackson County Board of Commissioners used this authority to adopt an ordinance establishing a Voluntary [VAD] and Enhanced [EVAD] Voluntary Farmland Preservation Program. Details regarding the VAD and EVAD programs are listed to the right:



VOLUNTARY AGRICULTURAL DISTRICT (VAD)

ELIGIBILITY

Farmland, forestland, and horticultural lands must meet the following criteria:

1. Be actively engaged in agriculture as that word is defined in G.S. 106-581.1 and has a written conservation plan as determined by the Agriculture Advisory Board; and
2. The land must be managed in accordance with USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service guidelines with respect to highly erodible lands.

BENEFITS

1. Increased protection from nuisance lawsuits if notice is provided through computerized county land record systems;
2. Public hearings for proposed condemnation of enrolled land;
3. Water and sewer assessments may be suspended or waived if the land is in VAD but not connected to the utility in question;
4. Signage to publicize the land's enrollment in the program;
5. Possible flexibility in city ordinances related to farming operations within a city's planning jurisdiction; and
6. Greater public awareness of the local agricultural community and increased pride in its way of life.
7. Recorded notice of proximity to farmland.

REQUIREMENTS

The land must be subject to a conservation agreement between the landowner and the county that prohibits non-farm use or development for a period of at least 10 years.

This agreement may be revoked by the landowner at any time with a 30-day notice. When the agreement is nullified, the property no longer qualifies for the VAD program and its benefits.

ENHANCED VOLUNTARY AGRICULTURAL DISTRICT (EVAD)

ELIGIBILITY



Same Requirements as VAD

BENEFITS

Same benefits plus the following:

1. Landowners are eligible to receive a higher percentage of cost-share funds under the Agricultural Cost Share Program (up to 90%);
2. State agencies, departments, and institutions that award grants to farmers are encouraged to give priority consideration to landowners participating in Enhanced Districts;
3. All utility assessments may be suspended or waived if the land is in EVAD but not connected to the utility in question;
4. The farm may receive up to 25% gross sales from the sale of non-farm products and still maintain its designated exemption as a bona fide farm;
5. Landowners may experience fewer unsolicited requests from developers to sell the land, due to the 10-year irrevocable conservation agreement; and
6. Landowners can stabilize the use of their land while considering longer-term options, such as permanent working land conservation easements.

REQUIREMENTS

Same conservation agreement requirements as VAD, except that the agreement cannot be revoked during the term of the agreement except for the creation of not more than 3 lots that meet applicable county land use regulations.

At the end of its initial term of at least 10 years, the EVAD conservation agreement automatically renews for 3 more years, unless the landowner provides a timely written notice to the county (usually a 30-day notice). Ending the agreement will result in the property no longer qualifying for the EVAD program and its benefits.