

Farmland Preservation Board accepting applications through October 5.

GREENE COUNTY FARMLAND PRESERVATION BOARD — is accepting applications through October 5 from those seeking to be considered for the agricultural easement program, a program aimed at preserving agricultural lands.

To be eligible, landowners must be enrolled in an approved agricultural security area consisting of at least 500 acres and have at least 50 contiguous acres. At least 50 percent of the soils on the property must be in soil capability classes I-IV (as defined by the local Soil Survey). The land must be available for agricultural production and contain the greater of 50 percent or 10 acres of harvested cropland, pasture or grazing land.

In Greene County, five townships now have approved agricultural security areas - Center, Cumberland, Greene, Washington and Wayne.

An agricultural conservation easement is an interest in land, which represents the right to prevent development or improvement of a parcel for any purpose other than agricultural production.

The agricultural conservation easement can be granted by a farmland owner to the state, a county agricultural land preservation program, a local government unit or a local land trust.

Easements can be sold or donated. After an easement is sold or donated, the conservation easement restrictions are recorded in the county's recorder of deeds office.

A landowner may want to sell an agricultural conservation easement for several reasons:

- Selling a conservation easement can permanently protect a family's farmland from being lost to future nonagricultural development.
- Landowners can receive cash for some of the equity tied up in their land and still retain ownership of their land. This money can be used to expand or improve a farm operation; used to pay off debt; or saved for retirement.
- Conservation easements can be used as an estate planning tool to help landowners successfully pass farms on to the next generation.

Call the Greene County Farmland Preservation Board for an application or more information on eligibility requirements at 724-852-5278 or visit www.co.greene.pa.us/gccd/agr.html under Conservation District Agricultural Programs.