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Centre County creates 59th agricultural conservation easement

(BELLEFONTE, PA)—The Centre County Agricultural Land Preservation Board on January 13 officially preserved 82 additional acres of farmland, bringing its total acreage of preserved farms to 8,288 acres.

Supported by state, county and Potter Township funds, the board recorded a deed of agricultural easement for the Donald A. and Teresa L. Grove farm, a crop operation on PA SR-45, Earlystown Road, in Centre Hall.

The Grove farm is the county's 59th agricultural easement, and the 11th property to be preserved in Potter Township, bringing the township's total acreage for preserved farms to 1,612 acres.

The farm's operator Melvin Dutrow grows corn, snap beans and soybeans, and the Groves' grandchildren grow pumpkins to sell at their roadside stand in the fall. Anyone who travels this route routinely may have spotted their "Jacob and Kenzie Pumpkins" sign and stopped to buy pumpkins. Kenzie has told her grandparents she wants to farm the land when she grows up. In preserving the farm for their granddaughter and for future generations, the Groves have permanently preserved the land for agricultural production. The property cannot be developed for any other purpose.

How farms are evaluated for preservation

Currently, 39 eligible applicants in Centre County are on a ranked waiting list to be considered for farmland preservation. Farmland is ranked by weighted criteria that includes the percentage of Class I through IV soils, their potential to be purchased by developers, and their proximity to farms that have already been preserved.

Contiguous to the preserved farms owned by David D. and Darlene R. Bierly and by Mary A. Resides, and opposite the preserved farms owned by Michael Marquardt and Daniel E. Wasson, the Grove farm expands the cluster of preserved acreage in the Rt. 45 corridor of Potter Township.

Applicants for farmland preservation are required to be located in their municipality's Agricultural Security Area (ASA). A combined minimum of 250 acres is required to establish an ASA. Once enrolled in an ASA, land qualifies for consideration under the farmland preservation program if the ASA has at least 500 acres enrolled.

Joining or leaving an ASA is entirely voluntary. The benefits of joining and staying in an ASA include protection from local ordinances and nuisance lawsuits that affect normal farming operations, among others.

Unpreserved property landowners in an ASA are permitted to develop the property for non-agricultural purposes. Preserved farm landowners within the ASA, having sold their development rights, are prohibited from developing their properties for non-agricultural purposes.

Potter Township Supervisors on December 7, 2020 approved the addition of the 76.19-acre Mark T. and Amy L. Sharer farm to the township's Agricultural Security Area, bringing its total acreage to 11,897.

For more information about the farmland preservation program and the benefits of being in an Agricultural Security Area, visit the Centre County website at

<http://centrecountypa.gov/609/PACE-Program>, or email Diana Griffith, Agricultural Land Preservation Coordinator, at dlgriffith@centrecountypa.gov

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