

2013 Centre County Planning Opportunities

Agriculture

Centre County Comprehensive Plan — Phase II Implementation Strategies

Introduction

The PA Municipalities Planning Code (MPC), Act 247 of 1968, as reenacted and amended, requires the Comprehensive Plan to consider the protection of natural resources. In 2003, the Centre County Board of Commissioners adopted a County-wide Comprehensive Plan which included background studies, inventories of existing conditions, goals, and recommendations. These recommendations, revised and updated continue to serve as a vision and a general direction for policy and community improvement. Those specific to agriculture will be discussed here along with implementation tools to achieve the recommendations. For more detailed background information please refer to the 2003 Comprehensive Plan available on the Centre County Planning Department webpage: <http://www.co.centre.pa.us/planning/compplan/default.asp#county>.



The Keystone Principles

In 2005, Pennsylvania adopted the “Keystone Principles for Growth, Investment and Resource Conservation”, a set of principles that have focused Pennsylvania on reinvestment and reuse of its assets.

Initially intended for state agencies, these principles are becoming embraced by local governments as a tool to guide local decisions and have become adopted into county comprehensive plans.

- Redevelop first
- Provide efficient infrastructure
- Concentrate development
- Increase job opportunities
- Foster sustainable businesses
- Restore and enhance the environment
- Enhance recreational and heritage resources
- Expand housing opportunities
- Plan regionally and implement locally
- Be fair

County-wide Planning Goals

Adopted 2003

#1 — Identify, preserve, enhance and monitor agricultural resources.

#2 — Identify, preserve, and monitor environmental and natural resources.

#3 — Preserve historic and cultural resources.

#4 — Ensure decent, safe, sanitary and affordable housing in suitable living surroundings, compatible with the environment for all individuals.

#5 — Appropriately locate and maintain existing and proposed community facilities, utilities, and services for all residents.

#6 — Identify and promote economic development initiatives to maintain and grow a diverse economic base in each of the County’s planning regions.

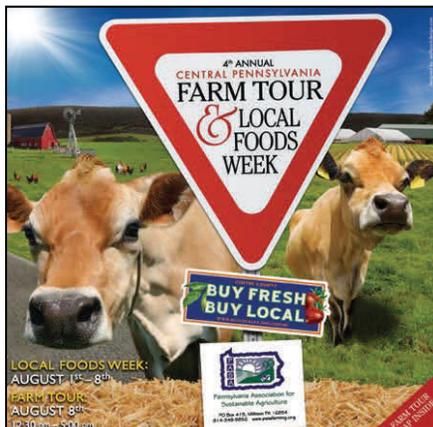
Current Trends and Considerations

Agriculture is an important industry in Centre County. In 2003, the County Comprehensive Plan recorded that approximately two acres of farmland were lost to other uses per day — the equivalent of an average size Centre County farm every three months. However, from 2006 to 2010, agricultural land increased from 108,344 Acres to 108,693 Acres, due to forest conversion and a decrease in development activities. According to the 2007 Census of Agriculture, Centre County ranked 21st among the 67 counties in Pennsylvania with 1,146 farms. Agriculture sales in Centre County account for \$69,661,000 or 1.2% of all agricultural sales in Pennsylvania (Centre for Rural Pennsylvania, 2009). A Centre County farm sold on average \$60,786 of products in 2007. The economic impact of farming in Centre County, coupled with the continued loss of prime farmland, necessitates the enactment and enforcement of agricultural land protection for future generations.

With programs in place that encourage the consumption of locally grown foods, farm land preservation, and better farm practices, agriculture will continue to have a significant influence on Centre County's economy.

Agritourism

Agritourism consists of any activity that takes place on a working farm that can be experienced by visitors for a profit to the farmer. Types of activities can include: tours, markets, wineries/breweries, petting zoos, corn mazes, or serving as a venue for special events.



Biofuels

The emerging use of biofuels as a fuel source presents an opportunity to farmers. Biofuels are any fuel that is derived from organic material called biomass made from plants or animals. Ethanol can be produced from corn, and cellulosic ethanol can be produced from crop residues, timber debris, or perennial grasses.

In 2012, Pennsylvania Grain Processing reopened an ethanol processing facility in Clearfield County. The facility could expand the market for local farmers. The costs associated with processing biomass depends largely on the market prices for agricultural commodities, especially corn prices. Transporting costs can also affect the success of any individual biofuel plant when the source biomass must be transported long distances.

Locally Grown and Organic Produce

The demand for purchasing local goods and services has increased in recent years. This trend has grown from a desire to purchase products at a lower cost, to support the local economy, and because of an increased awareness of chemicals and additives in processed foods. As a result, organically grown crops have increased as well as the availability of farmers markets, and restaurants and grocery stores promoting the use of foods purchased from local farmers. Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) in which customers subscribe to a farm and then receive produce shares throughout the growing season, has also grown considerably, with at least 9 farms marketing CSA programs in the County.

Local Foods Week* is sponsored by the Pennsylvania Association for Sustainable Agriculture and Buy Fresh Buy Local Centre County. This weeklong event showcases local farms, markets, restaurants, and businesses that support the regional food system, and culminates in a Farm Tour. The tour features local growers and gives participants a glimpse of a wide variety of production practices. In 2012, Local Foods Week Sponsors and Pennsylvania Certified Organic held the inaugural Pennsylvania Organic FarmFest at the Grange Fairground. *Tickets are required for some Local Foods Week events.

Dairy and Beef

Of Centre County's agricultural sales, approximately 46% are related to the Dairy industry. While the number of farms raising cattle for beef or dairy in Centre County dropped from 2002 to 2007, the amount of sales increased by nearly 30%. Cattle operations can vary greatly, from small farms with 40 head, to large 800-head operations. As prices of hay and grain rise, many farmers grow their own feed and store silage. Grass-fed and grass-finished beef and dairy operations are also gaining popularity.

Management Plans

Regulations are always changing, and it is the responsibility of farm owners and operators to maintain compliance with State Laws such as the PA Clean Streams Law, which may require the establishment of Manure, Sedimentation, or Erosion Plans. It is in the interest of farmers to follow Best Management Practices outlined in such plans, as they protect important soil and water resources and ensure the viability of farming for future generations.

Contact the Centre County Conservation District for more information.

Equine Industry

While horses are less visible than large cornfields, they are a significant part of our culture and economy. The equine industry promotes agricultural operations with the production of grains and forage grasses, and supports the preservation of farmland by keeping the land in agriculture.

Many prestigious equestrian competitions take place in Centre County, and the Centre County Grange Fair Grounds equine facility hosted 2,500 visitors for a Delaware Quarter Horse Association Show in 2011. The Snider Agricultural Arena at Penn State also holds equestrian events.

Centre County is home to champion horse breeders, and horses are utilized for purposes from recreation to transportation to therapy. Draft horses are a common sight on Amish farms.

A 2003 study conducted by Penn State's College of Agriculture, Department of Dairy and Animal Science determined that Centre County had an equine population in excess of 2,160 animals, 16% of which were race horses. Equine activities occupy over 10,000 acres in Centre County.

Municipal zoning ordinances outline regulations regarding the boarding of

horses and livestock. Active PA equine chapters in Centre County include:

- Equine Council
- Quarter Horse Association
- Horse Breeders Association
- Draft Horse and Mule Association
- Council of Therapeutic Horsemanship
- Horse Racing Commission
- Harness Racing Commission
- Equine Trail Riders Association
- Thoroughbred Horsemen's Assoc.
- PSU Extension: Horse Specialist

Viticulture & Viniculture: Grapes and Winemaking

Viticulture is the science, production, and study of grapes. When the grapes are grown for the purpose of winemaking, the process is called **viniculture**. Pennsylvania is the fourth largest wine grape producer in the nation, which means that the wine and grape industry has a significant impact on Pennsylvania's economy, tourism, and employment.

In 2007, the grape and wine industry in Pennsylvania generated 10,537 jobs across the state, for a payroll of over \$472 million (MKF Research LLC of Napa Valley, 2007). Centre County currently has two wineries that contribute to the state and local economy and several

farmers who are in the early stages of vineyard development.

Cold hardy hybrid grapes grow well in colder climate regions, such as north central Pennsylvania and produce a variety of wine not able to be produced in warmer climates.

Grape production requires well-drained soils, moderate fertility, and proper elevation—all found in Central Pennsylvania. The snow coverage of Centre County provides protection to the delicate vines during winter months.

The biggest challenge for the Pennsylvania wine industry is the variable weather and wildlife.

Resources available for wine and wine grape producers include:

- USDA Viticulture Consortium
- American Vineyard Foundation
- The National Grape and Wine Initiative (NGWI)
- Pennsylvania Wine Association



Award-winning wines from Mt. Nittany Winery



Deer and Elk Farming

The deer and Elk farming industry has long been a staple industry in Europe and New Zealand, and it is currently growing at a fast rate in the U.S. as well. Cervids, including whitetail deer, elk (or wapiti), red deer, sika deer, and fallow deer, are raised within enclosures. Deer farms produce deer urine, sperm, antlers, pelts, and bones, along with venison and tourist opportunities such as hunting and photography. Pennsylvania is home to over 750 deer farms, 83% of which raise native whitetail deer. PA is #2 in the nation for commercial deer farms, and Centre

County is #2 in the State. Deer farming generates over 3,500 jobs statewide. The industry is growing an average of 12% per year, and now represents an agricultural niche that is greater than sheep, goats, tobacco, and Christmas trees.

Each deer farm comprises an average of 69 acres of open space, often a mixture of pasture and forestland.

More information available from: Pennsylvania Deer Farmers Association www.padfa.com

Centre County Grange Fair and Encampment

A 150-year-old tradition that promotes agricultural history and way of life in Centre County is the **Grange Fair**, a weeklong encampment and festival. The fair features not only musical venues, food vendors, and rides, but is also a place where people of all ages can showcase their animals and agricultural food products. Farm equipment vendors and salespeople display their products and can answer questions about the latest

techniques and technologies.

The most unique aspect of the fair is the encampment—people live on-site in tents and campers for the event. For many Centre County residents and their extended families, the Grange Fair is considered the “farm family reunion”.

For people unfamiliar with farm life and agriculture, the Grange Fair offers a chance to observe or participate in a cultural event that celebrates the farming history of Centre County.

For more information regarding Grange Fair events and to view the calendar, visit the website: <http://www.grangefair.net>

Parking and admission fees apply.



Ag Progress Days

Ag Progress Days is a 3-day event hosted by Penn State’s College of Agricultural Sciences. Located on the grounds of the Russell E. Larson Agricultural Research Center on State Route 45 in Rock Spring, this event offers visitors the opportunity to view the latest technologies in crop production, farm safety, and conservation. Over 800 exhibitors of heavy equipment, agricultural commodity sales and services, and farm-related businesses show their products and explain their services. Education and demonstrations

are also included in the event. The tractor roll-over demonstration and the bus tour of the research center are the most popular venues. Visitors to Ag Progress Days can interact with experts in the fields of soil conservation, crop and forage management, pesticides and insecticides, and tilling practices. Ag Progress Days is the largest outdoor agricultural exhibition on the east coast of the United States.

*Admission and parking is free. For more information on upcoming Ag Progress Days, visit the website: <http://agsci.psu.edu/apd/events/guide>



Events like Grange Fair and Ag Progress days involve entire families in agriculture through exhibits and 4H Programs.

Farming: Changes and Challenges

Around 10,000 years ago, nomadic hunter-gatherer societies began cultivating the land and domesticating herd animals. This shift to a settled agricultural lifestyle enabled the formation of civilizations, and until the industrial revolution the vast majority of individuals labored in agriculture. Until that time, food production was labor-intensive and time-consuming.

The industrial revolution had two major impacts on the farming lifestyle: (1) advances in mechanical farm equipment lessened both the amount of labor and time needed for crop production and (2) non-farm employment opportunities offering better pay became available.

After WWII, more of the population left family farms to join the labor force. Aging farmer populations, unable to maintain

their farms and with no one to take over their operations, sold or subdivided their land. In many cases, subdivided farmland has been sold to developers, and the promise of generating fast capital makes subdivision and sale an attractive option for agricultural landowners.

Today in America, one acre of farmland per minute is lost to development. Farmland close to urban centers benefits from economic opportunities, but is also especially vulnerable to conversion. Programs and tools available to preserve farmland while securing property market value for farmers are discussed later in the chapter.



Land use conversion (1980-2010): Red areas have been converted from agriculture or forest to residential, industrial, or commercial uses.

Urban Sprawl and Leapfrog Development

The greatest challenge facing the preservation of farmland is encroaching suburbanization. **Urban sprawl** is a threat to agricultural land because the high quality soils used for farming are also desirable for developers. With urban sprawl comes the fact that people are consuming more land, even when population and density remains steady. Signs and symptoms of urban sprawl include:

- Large-lot residential development with low resident densities
- Strip malls, big box stores, and retail stores are “decentralized” from a traditional downtown
- Land uses highly segregated; few mixed-use development areas
- Transportation limited to automobile access, people highly dependent on personal vehicles

Such patterns result in the reduction of open space and agricultural areas.

Sprawl occurs more frequently in rural localities without land use controls and zoning ordinances.

Farmland that is close to urban areas is especially vulnerable to sprawling development. This farmland is also uniquely positioned to benefit from and serve urban areas through processing centers and local markets for agricultural goods.

Leapfrog development is another inefficient use of land. Agricultural land is targeted by leapfrog development because most farmland is located away from prime real estate, which means it could be purchased by developers at a lower cost. However, leapfrogging means developments are located beyond existing infrastructure (water, sewerage, utilities, roads, etc.). Providing the infrastructure in turn increases the development costs - offsetting the desirable low land value. Unlike urban sprawl which occurs in a linear pattern, leapfrog developments skip throughout the landscape, like

pockets of urbanization. Signs and symptoms of leapfrog development mirror those of urban sprawl, making residents more dependent on automobiles for transportation.

Opponents of urban sprawl and leapfrog development argue that these patterns are detrimental to the environment and culture of rural areas:

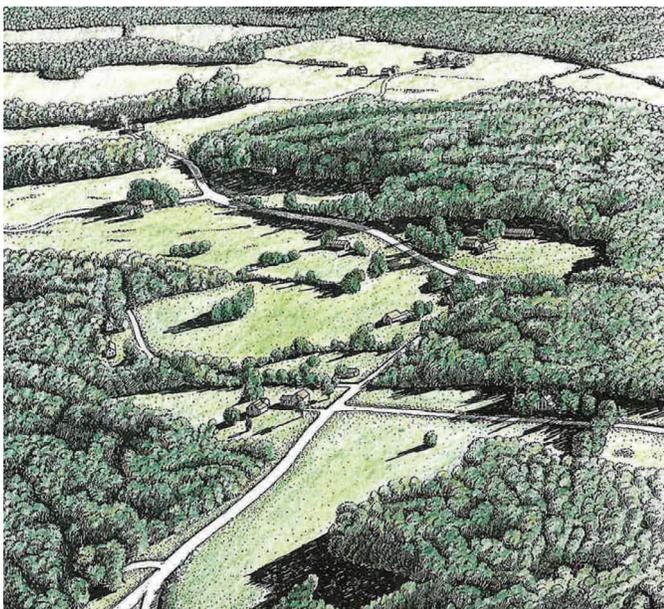
- Increased dependence on automobiles creates more vehicle trips and more automobile emissions
- Loss of land as a natural filter for drinking water recharge areas
- Agriculture land buffers communities, reinforcing heritage and identity

Proponents of sprawl and leapfrogging argue that people prefer to live in the suburbs and desire the independence of traveling in their own vehicles.

Below: Poorly balanced, inefficient sprawl erodes open space and other valuable community uses.

Given the legal constraints that govern land use regulation and the powerful economic forces that drive land development and real estate speculation, it is not surprising that sprawl continues to prevail.

Brandywine Conservancy, 2003



Images: Arendt, Randall. Rural By Design. Chicago: Planners Press, 1994.

Tools & Techniques

The programs and organizations in the next section provide tools and techniques to meet the following goals:

- Keep active farms in an agriculture use to promote local food production, retain open space, and protect jobs in the agricultural sector.
- Assist farmers and their families who want to keep properties as active agricultural operations for future generations.
- Minimize the incentive to subdivide farms for residential development lessening urban sprawl and leapfrog development.
- Promote smart growth and restrict conversion of agricultural lands by establishing a regional growth boundary.
- Provide education, training, and loans to keep people employed in the agriculture sector.
- Provide education, training, and loans to farmers so they can make property improvements and implement best management practices for soil and water conservation.
- Promote programs that offer tax reductions to agricultural property owners.
- Assist municipalities in drafting zoning ordinances that protect and promote agricultural activities in the appropriate districts.

Agricultural Security Areas

Agricultural Security Areas (ASA) are intended to promote more permanent and viable farming operations over the long term by strengthening the farming community's sense of security in land use and the right to farm. Agricultural security areas are created by local municipalities in cooperation with individual landowners who agree to collectively place at least 250 acres in an agricultural security area.

Distinct benefits exist for farms located in an ASA:

- The municipality is prevented from enacting ordinances which "unreasonably restrict farm structures or farm practices"
- The ability of the state to condemn land is limited
- Federal loan applicants may qualify for a lower interest rate
- Only land in an ASA can be considered for purchase of a conservation easement

Having land enrolled in an agricultural security area does not restrict a landowner's ability to use his or her property for non-agricultural development purposes.

Agricultural Conservation Easements

A **conservation easement** is a legal agreement between a landowner and a conservation organization that protects natural, cultural, and/or historic resources limiting specified uses on all or a portion of a property while leaving the property in private ownership. In Centre County, the Centre County Farmland Trust (*private, non-profit*), the ClearWater Conservancy (*private, non-profit*) and the Centre County Agricultural Land Preservation Board (*public*) can serve the role of the conservation organization.

Easements are unique to the circumstances of each property and the desires of both the landowner and the conservation organization. Landowners can use their property as they did before the easement, provided that the use is consistent with the easement.



Centre County Ag Land Preservation Board

The Centre County Agricultural Land Preservation Board is appointed by the Centre County Commissioners and is comprised of nine members. The Centre County Planning and Community Development Office has administered the Purchase of Agricultural Conservation Easements (PACE) Program on behalf of the Board since 1990. Through the PACE Program, agricultural conservation easements are purchased from landowners for the difference between the development and agricultural value of the property. Funding for the program is provided through the PA Department of Agriculture Bureau of

Farmland Preservation, via a tax on cigarette sales which provides \$20.5 Million for the program statewide. A primary focus of the program is to protect high quality soils. Centre County is home to some of the richest soils in Pennsylvania.

In Centre County, 39 farms comprising a total of over 6,000 acres have been protected through the PACE Program. Currently over 60 active applications (8,000 acres) await consideration.

For more information on the program, contact Sarah Parker, *Senior Planner/Agricultural Preservation Coordinator* by phone (814-355-6791) or email (srparker@co.centre.pa.us)

Centre County Farmland Trust

Founded in 1995, the Centre County Farmland Trust (CCFT) is a private non-profit that gives landowners another option for farmland preservation. The board of trustees is responsible for the selection of farms to be preserved. Farms in production or that have potential for production are given higher preference for preservation.

Preservation requires a commitment from the landowner as well as an appraisal and possible survey. Landowners that place an easement on their property may be eligible for tax benefits.

Currently the CCFT holds easements on 11 farms totaling 1009 Acres. Visit the CCFT website at: www.centercountymfarmlandtrust.org



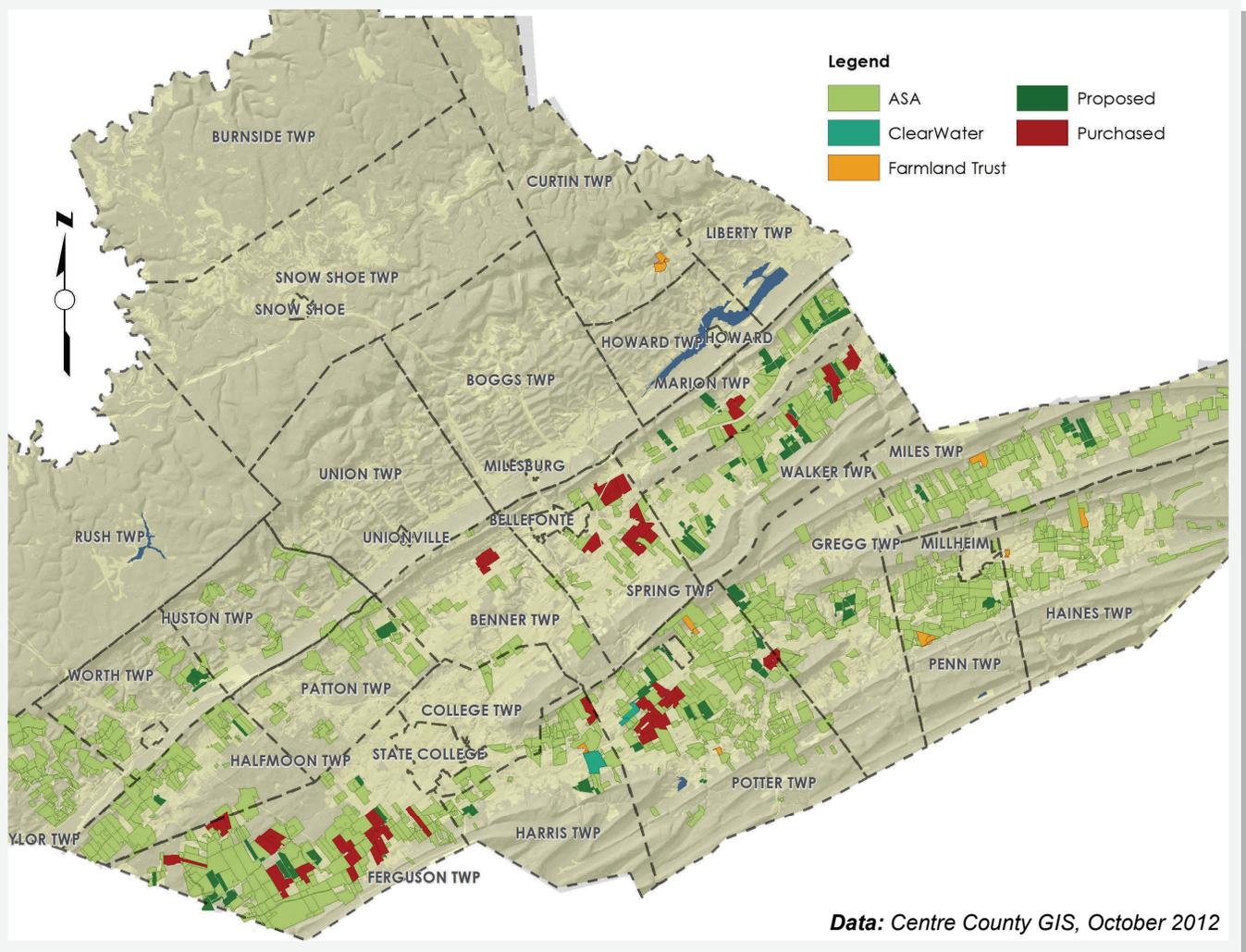
ClearWater Conservancy

The ClearWater Conservancy has conserved over 4,000 acres of land with conservation easements, through land acquisition, or through conservation partnerships. Privately-owned properties that ClearWater has helped to protect include Tussey View Farm, McCorkel Tree Farm, Fisher Farm, Potter Farm, and Nittany Farms. ClearWater's role in the conservation easement process is to identify the resources on the property, work with the landowner to determine what the permitted and restricted uses on the property will be, and ensure that the

terms of the conservation easement comply with the permitted uses. The conservancy relies on 3 internal committees to assist in determining the best land preservation methods: the Land Conservation and Stewardship Committee, the Advisory Committee, and the Action Committee. ClearWater has 7 on-going conservation projects throughout the county as part of their "Operation Conservation" initiative.

For more information please visit the organization's website at: www.clearwaterconservancy.org





Agricultural Preservation in Centre County

The above map illustrates Agricultural Security Areas (ASA) and agricultural conservation easements held by the Centre County Agricultural Land Preservation Board, the Centre County Farmland Trust, and the ClearWater Conservancy.

USDA Census of Agriculture

America’s farmers and ranchers have the opportunity to make a positive impact on their communities by taking part in the **2012 Census of Agriculture**. Conducted every five years by the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS), the Census looks at land use and ownership, operator characteristics, production practices, income and expenditures and other topics. For example, legislators use the data when shaping farm policy and agribusinesses factor it into their planning efforts.

PA Preferred

PA Preferred is a statewide program, sponsored by the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture, that works to connect consumers with locally-sourced products. The PA Preferred logo is placed on goods produced by members of the program. Products carrying the logo must meet a number of requirements related to certifying that the product originated in Pennsylvania. More information on the requirements of the PA Preferred Program is available here: <http://papreferred.com/membership/criteria>.



Pennsylvania Farm Link

Pennsylvania Farm Link is a non-profit organization established to create farming opportunities for the next farming generation. These opportunities are focused around developing better succession strategies and educating and providing job training assistance to young farmers. More information is available at the PA Farm Link Website: www.pafarmlink.org.



Agricultural Zoning

Agricultural zoning is one of the most important tools that municipalities can utilize to protect and promote agriculture. Agricultural zoning has 2 main functions: (1) protect farmland by limiting development in agricultural areas and (2) allow existing and future agricultural operations to function without placing restrictive limitations on farming activities as related to noise, odors, fencing, and the setbacks and heights of farm structures.

Typically, agricultural zoning requires uses and lot sizes that are *compatible* with farming. Development might be limited to one home per 10 or 20 acres, with the home allowed on a smaller lot and the remainder of the land restricted against development. Several varied local examples of agricultural zoning exist. Ferguson Township's agricultural zoning sets the minimum lot size at 50 acres. Gregg Township's agricultural zoning restricts the number of lots that can be subdivided from one parcel so that the parent tract remains large enough to farm.

Spring Township modified their agricultural zoning to distinguish 2 districts: Agriculture Preservation District 1 (A-1) and Agricultural Development District 2 (A-2). The Agricultural Preservation District aims to discourage further subdivision of large farmland tracts for development and will act as the municipalities "sending regions" for the Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) program. The Agricultural Development District aims to retain farmland as open space, would allow for clustered development where appropriate, and would permit facilities of other uses if those uses are compatible with agriculture.

While normal farm operations carry some degree of noise and odor, homeowners not accustomed to agricultural operations may find living beside them a nuisance. Municipalities can draft language into zoning ordinances (sometimes as an afterthought) that does not restrict day-to-day farm operations; however, agricultural zoning can be forward-thinking in its language to permit the continued use and discourage non-conforming uses. (large-scale animal operations).

Zoning Techniques Summary

Existing Use Zoning - Protects current land uses, such as agriculture, through strictly enforced development boundaries. Often labeled *Urban Growth Boundaries (UGB)*, development is concentrated within the UGB, while areas outside the UGB typically are zoned for very specific, agricultural and open space uses. *Agricultural Protective Zones (APZ)* serve a similar purpose, and often restrict uses, subdivision of properties, and enforce large lot size minimums. This technique has been utilized in Portland, Oregon and Lancaster, Pennsylvania with much success.

Low-Density Zoning - Less restrictive than existing use zoning, low density zoning follows similar guidelines, requiring large lot size minimums. The size typically relates to the amount of land necessary to successfully farm, in some parts of the country this range is 20-50 acres, in others it is as much as 100 acres.

Area-Based Allocation Zoning - (ABAZ) is the practice of restricting the maximum size of parcel subdivisions, and sometimes limiting allowable locations for subdivisions. Subdivisions are typically only large enough to allow for the development of a single house (often 1 to 2 acres), and are required to be sited in areas not suitable for farming.

Spot Zoning - Is the practice of applying a zoning type to a specific parcel of land when the use is at odds with the surrounding master plan or zoning restrictions. This highly controversial technique often is used to the sole benefit of the landowner, detracting from a cohesive master plan and potentially resulting in conflict.

Cluster Development - Residential cluster development is a means of permanently protecting open space, rural character,

and important environmental resources in new housing developments, while still providing homeowners with good housing and landowners with the opportunity to develop their property. Cluster development groups development into designated higher density areas, preserving open space.

Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) - Similar to a conservation easement, TDR transfers the development rights from one parcel to another. The original "sending" parcel is preserved, while the "receiving parcel" can be developed. Often, the developer is allowed to build at a higher density, and the receiving parcel is typically located closer to municipal zones and existing utilities than the sending parcel. Most TDR transactions are between private landowners and developers.

Clean and Green - The Clean and Green Program in Pennsylvania was established under the PA Farmland and Forest Land Assessment Act, Act 319. This law permits the assessment of land which is devoted to agricultural and forest land use, to be assessed at a value for that use rather than Fair Market Value. The intent of this law is to encourage property owners to retain their land in agriculture, open space, or forest land uses, by providing some real estate tax relief. Participating in the Clean and Green Program is an agreement that as long as the property owner does not change the use to an ineligible use, then they may continue to receive the benefits. If the land is withdrawn from the program, the landowner must repay 7 years worth of back taxes, plus interest. People who have at least 10 acres of farm, forest or open land may apply for this program. Landowners who have less than 10 acres may qualify if they can prove that they earn at least \$2,000 annual gross income from farming their land. Contact the Centre County Tax Assessment Office to register for this program.

Implementation Strategies & Opportunities

One basic method of helping farming survive is to encourage and protect agricultural means and methods. Local governments should make their land use regulations compatible with

existing agricultural operations. Often unknowingly, local communities can adversely affect farms with limitations on things like signs, burning, fence location, and building location.

Examples:

- Large setbacks on farm buildings can limit crop production.
- Zoning should allow the expansion of non-conforming farm buildings.

- Public nuisance ordinances should not include agricultural activities.
- Cluster zoning or landscape buffers should be required between zoning uses.
- In agricultural areas, limit land uses that are incompatible with farming.
- Agricultural uses permitted in all zoning districts potentially lead to land use conflicts.

Agricultural Resources Identify

- High priority agricultural production areas, prime soils, unique agricultural operations, and agricultural infrastructure to be protected via zoning.
- Communities that wish to implement zoning to protect agriculture and open space can seek assistance from the Centre County Planning Office.
- Areas not suitable for agriculture should be targeted for residential, commercial, and industrial development.

Preserve

- Programs and organizations that promote farming, including 4-H Programs, the PA State Grange, and the Pennsylvania Farm Bureau, should be encouraged to continue to meet the needs of county farmers.
- Initiatives that encourage businesses that utilize local agricultural products build the local economy and support local farmers.
- Farmers markets protect farming and

enhance regional food and economic security.

Enhance

- Revise and enact land use regulations to promote continued agricultural production.
- Cultivate partnerships between the PACE program and donated Agricultural Easements programs such as the Centre County Farmland Trust and ClearWater Conservancy.
- Increase awareness of preserved agricultural properties in Centre County through outreach and signage.
- Update the Centre County Agricultural Land Preservation Board LESA (Land Evaluations Site Assessment) criteria to more fully reflect long-term goals for the region.
- Programs and organizations that promote farming, including 4-H Programs, the PA State Grange, and the Pennsylvania Farm Bureau, should be encouraged to continue to meet the needs of county farmers.
- Conservation and Resource Management Plans required and monitored by the Natural Resources

Conservation Service (NRCS) increase the environmental value of farms, and ensure resource protection.

- Technical support from Extension services can assist farmers in adjusting to new markets and trends (Organic farming, U-Pick, agritourism, specialty crops etc.)
- Programs such as the Rural Economic Development Clinic, launched by Penn State Law, are designed to make law students more familiar with agricultural law. The clinic, supervised by licensed attorneys with provide students with a wide variety of legal issues encountered by agricultural businesses and rural communities.

Monitor

- Annual inspections take place on farmland protected with Agricultural Conservation Easements to ensure compliance.
- The NRCS also conducts annual inspections on farmland that has received funds through the Farm and Ranch Land Protection Program (FRPP).

Cost of Community Services

Agriculture provides valuable revenues through taxes that offset the resources utilized by other land uses such as residential. In many cases, the development of agricultural lands would reduce tax revenues in proportion to the cost burden of resources required by communities, affecting the financial functionality of municipalities. These resources include utilities, education, health, roadways, sanitation and sewer, and other infrastructures that must grow with communities. One way to analyze these costs is to compare how much it costs municipalities to maintain each land use for every one dollar of tax revenue. This ratio is called the Cost of Community Services, or COCS ratio.

COCS Study in Walker Township that compared the cost to maintain residential, commercial, and agricultural land uses for every one dollar of tax revenue received. The results of the study are in the table below, and show that agricultural land is critical to subsidize the needs of residential land.

Agricultural preservation through permanent conservation easements ensures that a critical mass of farmland remains in Centre County municipalities.

	Residential	Commercial	Agricultural
Revenues:	1 : 1.08	1 : 0.03	1 : 0.01
Expenditures			

Table from: *The Public Finance Implications of Land Uses and Community Services: Walker Township, Centre County, Kelsey, Tim and O'Neill, Kelley, The Pennsylvania State University: 2001.*

Tim Kelsey of The Pennsylvania State University conducted a

Interrelationships

Recent revisions to the [Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code](#) specify that a comprehensive plan include a statement of interrelationships among various plan components with emphasis given to environmental, energy conservation, fiscal, economic development and social impacts. Additional information of relevance to this discussion as it relates to agriculture can also be found in other 2003 Centre County Comprehensive Plan Chapter Updates titled: Economic Development, Historic Resources, Housing, and Land Use; and in the newly completed Centre County Greenways Plan.

Environmental Impacts

Different types of farming impact the environment in different ways. Responsible farmers utilize Best Management Practices (BMP's) to ensure that their farming practices are at the highest standard or efficiency and safety. Conserving natural resources helps to protect the future of farming while maintaining or enhancing production levels and quality.

All farms are required to follow a Conservation/Resource Management Plan, and all farms that import, produce, or apply manure are required to have a Nutrient Management Plan. The NRCS assists with and monitors these plans.

Conservation, Resource Management, and Nutrient Management Plans address the following:

- Sediment and erosion control
- Nutrient application and runoff
- Storm water runoff
- High-use livestock areas
- Freshwater stream protection
- Tillage
- Surface water protection
- Open space

Economic Development

- Communities can encourage commerce through local Farmers' Markets, which benefit local farmers economically while giving citizens access to fresh produce and agricultural goods.
- Sustainable initiatives for farming practices, such as energy-saving techniques like solar or wind power, or pollution-reducing practices that lead to the reduction of phosphorous or other harmful elements save farmers financially through tax credits from agencies like AgChoice Farm Credit, other loan programs, or through reduced energy costs.
- Municipalities can encourage agricultural ventures that market agricultural goods and serve as tourist attractions. While many such businesses have a commercial component, marketing is a necessary component of a successful agricultural network.
- Ensuring that municipalities maintain a balance between agricultural, commercial, and residential land uses is crucial to their economic viability. Tax revenues provided by agricultural areas balance the disproportionate resources (utilities etc.) demanded by higher density residential areas.

Ecology

As a natural-resource-based industry, agriculture is directly dependent on the variety of natural processes that provide tangible value to human industry, called Ecosystem Services. Ecosystem Functions are processes that naturally occur within the landscape, such as rainwater infiltration or pollination. When the benefits of these functions can be assigned a dollar value, they are called Ecosystem Services. Through Ecosystem Services, Agriculture is linked to the health of the environment. Some Ecosystem Services that benefit agriculture are:

- Storm water infiltration/water table recharge
- Pollination (insects)
- Pest Control (birds, bats, insects, reptiles)
- Shelter for beneficial animals and insects
- Wind control

The factors that affect available Environmental Services are complex. Many times, human activities impact the environment in unforeseen ways. Recent population crisis amongst honey bees and bats are expected to have impacts on the agricultural industry (pollination and pest control). The causes of these crisis remain unknown.

The introduction of invasive species have also affected Agriculture in many ways, in some cases reducing local populations of beneficial insects or changing the composition of pastures. In extreme cases, the conversion of forest or wetland to pasture or cropland reduces the ability of the landscape to infiltrate storm water, leading to catastrophic flooding.

It is important for municipalities to recognize the inherent value in seemingly non-profitable natural landscapes. The benefits of these environments can be measured in dollars

saved by farmers and communities. Valuable landscapes include:

- Interior forest habitat
- Native grasses and wildflowers (meadows)
- Wetlands and riparian areas
- Caves and Karst geologic features
- Natural swales and gullies
- Windbreaks, fencerows, and corridors



County of Centre



2013 Centre County Planning Opportunities

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[HTTP://WWW.CO.CENTRE.PA.US/151.ASP](http://www.co.centre.pa.us/151.asp)

Definitions

Agritourism—agricultural tourism is a commercial enterprise at a farm, ranch or vineyard that provides enjoyment or education to visitors and generates supplemental income to growers. These enterprises also provide opportunities for urban populations to experience a farm. Agritourism can include farm stands, ag tours, wildlife viewing or bird watching, festivals, farm-animal petting zoos, wine tasting or u-picks

Biofuels—liquid fuels produced from biomass materials that are used primarily for transportation

Urban Sprawl—process of expansive suburban development over large areas; the automobile provides the primary source of transportation

Agricultural Security Area—Agricultural security areas are intended to promote more permanent and viable farming operations over the long term by strengthening the farming community's sense of security in land use and the right to farm. Agricultural security areas are created by local municipalities in cooperation with individual landowners who agree to collectively place at least 250 acres in an agricultural security area

Clean and Green—Clean and Green is a land conservation program that lowers the property tax rate for the vast majority of landowners who enroll in the program. Landowners are obligated to devote their land to agricultural use, agricultural reserve use, or forest reserve use in order to qualify for lower property taxes. Landowners who exit the program may be required to pay up to seven years' worth of "roll-back" taxes, plus interest.

Conservation Easement—A conservation easement is a voluntary agreement that allows a landowner to limit the type or amount of development on their property while retaining private ownership of the land.

Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) - Local governments undertake transfer of development rights (TDR) programs to use the market to implement and pay for development density and location decisions. TDR programs allow landowners to sever development rights from properties in government-designated low-density areas, and sell them to purchasers who want to increase the density of development in areas that local governments have selected as higher density areas.