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CENTRE COUNTY AGRICULTURAL LAND PRESERVATION BOARD

Willowbank Office Building • 420 Holmes Street • Bellefonte, PA 16823
(814)355-6791 • Fax: (814)355-8661 • www.centrecountypa.gov/agland

FOR RELEASE

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CONTACT: Diana Griffith

Centre County Agricultural Land Preservation Coordinator
(814) 355-6791

Centre County's agricultural easement program preserves 53rd farm

(BELLEFONTE, PA)—The Centre County Agricultural Land Preservation Board on January 7 officially preserved 234.35 additional acres of farmland, bringing its total acreage for preserved farms to 8,023 acres.

Supported by federal, state, county and Ferguson Township funds, the board recorded a deed of agricultural easement for Fairbrook Farms, a 45-year-old crop and dairy operation on Tadpole Road. Co-owned by Ronald E. and Frank S. Connelly, Jr., the farm is now permanently preserved for agricultural production and cannot be developed for any other purpose.

Fairbrook Farms is the county's 53rd agricultural easement, and the 26th property to be preserved in Ferguson Township, bringing the township's total acreage for preserved farms to 3,564 acres. In September, 133 acres of the Ralph Wheland farm, also on Tadpole Road, were permanently preserved.

Two additional applications from farms in Ferguson Township will be presented for approval at the Pennsylvania Agricultural Land Preservation Board meeting on February 20.

At its meeting on December 12, 2019, the state board safeguarded 2,450 acres on 29 farms in 16 counties, ending the year by preserving 209 farms and 17,505 acres—the highest number of farms in a decade. Pennsylvania leads the nation in farmland preservation.

"This collaboration of state, county, local, and federal government combines with the farmer's commitment to safeguarding our land to help secure a future for agriculture and the world our industry feeds, clothes, and fuels," said Agriculture Secretary Russell Redding. "Preserved farmland represents an investment in our best agricultural land for not only our state economy, environment, and food supply, but for the generations to come."

Currently, 54 farms that have applied for the PACE program are on a ranked waiting list to be

considered. Farmland is ranked by weighted criteria that includes the percentage of Class I through IV soils, proximity to farms that have already been preserved, and their potential to be purchased by developers. Applicants must be in their municipality's Agricultural Security Area (ASA).

For more information about the Purchase of Agricultural Conservation Easement (PACE) program, 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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