THE JEFFERSON COUNTY FARMLAND PROTECTION BOARD

The Jefferson County Farmland Protection Board is committed to keeping Jefferson County’s farmland available to grow food and to protect clean water, wildlife habitats and our historic countryside. Farmland protection directly benefits you, your neighbors and the many visitors who appreciate this special place we call home. Today, almost half of Jefferson County’s land is still in farms. Yet we can’t ever take it for granted.

WHY PROTECT FARMLAND?

Agriculture has sustained Jefferson County’s people and economy for more than 300 years. Our scenic and productive working lands contribute to a diverse economy, support local businesses and employ local labor. Our open fields, woodlands, streams and historic rural landscapes make the county a desirable place to live, work and visit.

Since the 1990s, over one-third of Jefferson County’s fertile farmland has vanished, permanently lost to buildings and pavement. In 2000, concerned farmers, townspeople and public leaders founded the Jefferson County Farmland Protection Board to protect and preserve the county’s working farmland through a voluntary conservation program.

Protecting farmland keeps land available and affordable for future farmers. Now more than ever, our county’s valuable farmland must be secured to feed a growing and increasingly urbanized world at our doorstep.

HOW DOES THE BOARD PROTECT FARMLAND?

The Board is empowered by the West Virginia Voluntary Farmland Protection Act (WV Code §8A-12 et. seq.) to protect agricultural land. It does so by entering into a legal agreement with landowners to place a permanent conservation easement on qualifying properties. Landowners may sell the easement to the Board or donate all or part of the easement value.

WHAT IS AN EASEMENT?

A Deed of Conservation Easement is a flexible legal tool that landowners can use to retire development rights permanently on all or part of their land to protect its natural, agricultural, scenic and historic values. Property owners retain full use and title to their land, subject to the easement terms. Because a deed of easement is perpetual, future owners also will be bound by its terms. The Farmland Protection Program also can help families meet financial goals, expand their operations, reduce debt or fund retirement.

The Jefferson County, West Virginia “Envision Jefferson 2035 Comprehensive Plan” (“Comprehensive Plan”) adopted February 19, 2015 recognizes the county “as a place of natural beauty and historic value”; and requests that the County find ways to balance the desire of property owners to benefit fiscally from their lands with the desire of property owners to be stewards of the County’s historic, cultural, and natural resources so future generations can enjoy the resources that County residents hold dear.”

The Farmland Protection Board is composed of seven volunteer county residents appointed by the County Commission. Each is a voting member, except for the Jefferson County Commissioner, who serves in an advisory capacity.

Robert E. Glenn, Esq., President
Jefferson County Resident at Large

Nicholas Kercheval, Vice President
Farmer, Member of the Eastern Panhandle Soil Conservation District

Gavin Perry, Treasurer
Jefferson County Resident at Large

Russell Quinn, Secretary
Farmer, Member of the Jefferson County Farm Bureau

Vacant
Executive Director of the County Development Authority

Catharine Johnson
Farmer, Jefferson County Resident

Jane Tabb,
Farmer, County Commissioner (non-voting)

STAFF
Elizabeth B. Wheeler
Director

James Walker
Assistant

JEFFERSON COUNTY FARMLAND PROTECTION BOARD

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JeffersonCountyFarmlandProtectionBoard
THE BOARD THANKS
THE MANY PEOPLE WHO HAVE GIVEN THEIR TIME, TALENT AND FUNDS FOR FARMLAND PROTECTION.

John C. Allen, Jr.
Jennifer Allen
Dr. & Mrs. Richard Avioli
John & Patricia Bain Bachner
Hillary Banachowski
A. Neil & Alice T. Barkus
Trevor Barnett
Robert R. Barrat
Chip & Debbie Bennett
Dr. Keith Berkeley, DVM
Jules Bodwell & Patrick Rizzo
Laura Bowman
Marion Buckner, in memoriam
Martin Burke
Linda Carter
Matthew Coffey
Chris Colbert
Tom Conant
James Lee & Emily Cooper
Phil Cox
Jill N. Daniel
Henry & Faye Davenport
David & Dana DeJarnette
Christopher & Susan Donham
R.T. & B.C. Donham
William Donley, in memoriam
Samuel & Edwina Donley
William Drennen
Jack & Emma Eggleston
Eileen Taylor Davis
John Doyle
Bill Drennen
Matthew Dunn
Joan & Erdem Ergin
Josephine Frazier
Peter & Linda Fricke
Randy & Clissy Funkhouser
Heather H. Gibson
Maurice Gladhill
Robert E. Glenn
Jeffrey Gustafson
Beth Haney
Debra Henshaw
Paul Herrup
Randy Hilton
James C. & Mary G. Holland
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Mary & Joseph Horky
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Jack R. Huyett
Judy Jenner
Marty & Carol Kable
Euphemia Kallas & David Hammer
June & Dixon Hemphill
Debra Lee Hovatter
Nick & Shari C. Kercheval
Richard Latterell
James Leathers
Lisa, Gina & Eugene Lefferts
Eric Lewis
Niels & Alice F. Lium
Col Edward A. & Barbara J. Lloyd
Ralph & Rosemarie Lorenzetti
John & Renee Lowe
Christina Lundberg
John R. Maxey
Nancy C. McCormick
Liz McDonald
Phil & Becky McDonald
Bob & Tia McMillan
Noah Mehrkam
G. Warren & Reva N. Mickey
William & Deloris Nicewarner
Michael & Rosemary Nickerson
Carlos Niederhauser
Jane Dieter Nuland
Bridget O'Brien
Sylvie O'Brien
Margaret Olcott
Sandra Osbourn
Pam & Ren Parziale
Gavin Perry & Patricia Perry
Jane Peters
David Pill
Russell & Victoria Quinn
Jane F. Rissler
Mark Schiavone & John Restaino
John Schley, in memoriam
Keri Shaner
Linda Shea
Harold Shotwell
Amy Silver
Bill Senseney & Angela Sosdian
Susan Robertson
Dorothy Smith
Peter & Vicki Smith
Grant Smith
Timothy Smith
Sylvia Sorkin
Michael & Nancy Spensley
Robert Stark
Kathryn Bragg-Stella
Eric Stine
Oscar C. & Janet B. Stine, in memoriam
William Strider
Scott Sudduth
Neil Supper
J. Frank Supplee IV
Stephen & Lucinda Swartz
Jane & Lyle C. Tabb
Hali Taylor
Robin Huyett Thomas
Brenda L. Villard
Terry Lee & Margaret Walker
Linda & Shawn Walker
Lisa & Paul Welch
Elizabeth B. Wheeler
Ron & Lyn Widmyer
Henry K. Willard II, in memoriam
Henry A. Willard III
John Brooks Willard
Dennis Wilson
Roy Winkel
Julia & Greg Yuhasz
Linda Zwobota
ORGANIZATIONS
Bank of Charles Town
Bennett Agency
Berkeley County Farmland Protection Board
CCBC Essex Math Department
City National Bank
Charles Town Farmers Market
The Claymont Society
Horsemen’s Benevolent & Protective Association
Land Trust of the Eastern Panhandle
Lyle C. Tabb & Sons, Inc
Jefferson County Development Authority
Jefferson County Farm Bureau
Jefferson Security Bank
Skinner Law Firm
USDA/Natural Resources Conservation Service
NPS/American Battlefield Protection Program

THANK YOU TO OUR FUNDING PARTNERS

CONSERVATION PARTNERS
• Berkeley County Farmland Protection Board
• American Battlefield Trust
• Land Trust Alliance
• Land Trust of the Eastern Panhandle
• National Park Service/American Battlefield Protection Program
• Potomac Conservancy
• The Nature Conservancy
• USDA/Natural Resources Conservation Service,
• West Virginia Agricultural Lands Protection Authority
• West Virginia Association of Farmland Protection Boards
• West Virginia Rivers

JEFFERSON COUNTY PARTNERS
• Eastern Panhandle Conservation District
• Jefferson County Development Authority
• Jefferson County GIS Office
• Jefferson County Historic Landmarks Commission
• Jefferson County Planning and Zoning Office
• Jefferson County Prosecuting Attorney’s Office
• The many County employees who have assisted us during the year.
The Farmland Protection Program is funded locally through the county’s real estate transfer tax and by private donors. The Board receives matching funds from the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (USDA/NRCS) and the National Park Service’s American Battlefield Protection Program (NPS/ABPP).

The Board manages its resources carefully. Operations and personnel costs in 2019 totaled $88,744, or 9% of income. Easement costs totaled $40,834 or 4% of income. The Board committed a reserve of $1.8 million for pending conservation easements on 853 acres on three farms, with a pending match of $822,540 from NRCS and $547,000 from the American Battlefield Protection Program. The Board’s books are audited by external auditors and reviewed by the State Auditor’s Office annually. The audit passed successfully in 2019 and in all previous years.

As of December 31, 2019, the Board has invested a total of $8.8 million to protect farmland with a development value of $29.9 million. Each local dollar has been matched with $1.02 of federal money and $1.37 of donated value from landowners. Since 2002, generous landowners have donated $12.1 million through bargain sales. These substantial donations help the Board to stretch its limited funds to assist others seeking to protect their land.

Visit www.jefferson.wvfp.org to view our audited financial statements.
OUR ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Increasing Protected Lands

Since 2002, the Board has helped landowners protect 45 working farms with over 4,700 acres of land. Day by day, and farm by farm, we help landowners keep their family land intact.

In 2019, Jefferson County welcomed two new farms to the Farmland Protection Program. In November, Timothy Smith protected 83 acres in Harpers Ferry, funded by the Farmland Protection Board and the Natural Resources Conservation Service. In December, Hank Willard and John Willard made an extraordinary contribution to the county by donating a conservation easement on their 93-acre family property in Shepherdstown. Both properties contain more than 95% prime and important soils and are actively farmed. Currently the Board is working to complete conservation easements on three additional farms totaling 858 acres.

A Visionary Bequest

This summer, a native-born Jefferson County resident surprised the Board with a generous $44,000 donation. The donor, who wishes to remain anonymous, also pledged a bequest to protect farmland in the Kabletown area. The Board is honored to accept this heartfelt gift for Jefferson County.

“My brother and I are immensely proud to donate this easement to the Jefferson County Farmland Protection Board. The land is productively farmed and it also is a uniquely beautiful piece of land that we felt must be preserved intact.”

— HANK WILLARD
BOARD PROGRESS

New GIS technology
Our work has been transformed by sophisticated map-making software from Esri, a geographic information system company, allowing us to quickly analyze a property’s soils, water resources, geology, and land use.

Board Strategic Plan
In August, the Board renewed its Strategic Plan for the next three years. As the county faces the loss of more farmland the Board will focus on outreach and advocacy, planning for board and staff leadership transition and improving stewardship of properties in the program.

Safe Water Conservation Collaborative
The Board participated with West Virginia Rivers and other local conservation groups to develop a plan to protect drinking water sources in Jefferson County.

A FARM PROTECTED FOR THE NEXT GENERATION

In 2018, the Boyd family protected their 216-acre Windy Knoll Farm in Summit Point through a conservation easement with the Farmland Protection Board and USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Service. The farm lies within a swath of rich farmland and active orchards in the southern part of the county. Edward L. Boyd, who farmed the land for over 40 years said, “My father bought our farm in 1939. Our land is the top producer in the county. The soil is too good to dig it up and put houses on it.”

In January 2019, after completing the conservation easement, Mr. Boyd sold the farm at an affordable price to Jeremy LaRue, a young farmer and family friend who had been leasing the land. The farm produces grain crops, and several saddle horses enjoy its pastureland.

“Our families have worked together for generations. I am very grateful for the opportunity to own this land and keep it in farming. It’s a dream come true.” — JEREMY LARUE

NEW BOARD MEMBER: CATHARINE JOHNSON

Catharine Johnson joined the Board in February 2019 as a Farmer-at-Large member. She brings to the Board 32 years of experience as a biologist for the US Fish and Wildlife Service and for 24 years has managed Southwood Farm Forge in Kearneysville with her husband Eric.

“Eric and I have long been proponents for agricultural preservation and conservation practices. Serving on the Farmland Protection Board is one way I can help keep farms in our community.” — CATHARINE JOHNSON

YOU CAN HELP PROTECT LAND NOW.
Every dollar you give is dedicated to the Farmland Protection Fund, and will be matched by public grants.

GIVE ONLINE: www.jefferson.wvfp.org, OR MAIL YOUR GIFT TO PO Box 731 Charles Town, WV 25414.

Leave a legacy through a bequest: A gift through your will or living trust for farmland protection will be a lasting memorial for future generations. Donations to the Farmland Protection Board, a 501(c)3 charitable organization, are tax-deductible.

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Photo credit: Elizabeth Wheeler