Annual Report

JANUARY 1, 2020 - DECEMBER 31, 2020
The 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.

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.
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.

Board and Staff

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, Secretary
JEFFERSON COUNTY RESIDENT AT LARGE

Dr. Glen H. Hetzel
JEFFERSON COUNTY FARMER AT LARGE

Catharine Johnson
FARMER, MEMBER OF THE JEFFERSON COUNTY FARM BUREAU

Jane Tabb
FARMER, COUNTY COMMISSIONER (NON-VOTING)

Dennis Jarvis, II
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE COUNTY DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

STAFF

Elizabeth B. Wheeler, Director

James Walker, GIS Consultant

NEW BOARD MEMBER

Dr. Glen H. Hetzel

Glen H. Hetzel joined the Board in September 2020. About his background he wrote, “I was raised in Bakerton, Jefferson County, having been born in Charles Town. I earned a BA in Agricultural Mechanics and a MS in Engineering from WVU, and a PhD in Engineering Technology from Michigan State. After a 30 year plus career in Agricultural Safety with Extension at Virginia Tech, I retired to Jefferson County in December 1999. I live on a three-hundred-acre farm where I raise corn, soybeans, a few groundhogs and a lot of deer. My wife and I particularly enjoy the views and quietness of rural Jefferson County. The land I farm has been in my deceased first wife’s family for over 100 years. My two sons would like to continue the family farming tradition in the future.”

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

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 placing permanent conservation easements on qualifying properties through legal agreements with the landowners. Landowners may sell the easement to the Board or donate all or part of the easement value.

You can help protect land now. Every dollar you give is dedicated to the Farmland Protection Fund, and will be matched by public grants.
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 sale of a conservation easement to the Farmland Protection Board may help families meet financial goals, expand their operations, reduce debt or fund retirement.

What is FOREVER?

The vision of the Farmland Protection Board is to protect farmland for future generations. When we say “Farmland Forever” we are upholding Jefferson County’s commitment to the community to preserve the integrity of our rural landscapes and fertile soils that support agricultural viability. The conservation easements that the Board acquires are legal agreements supported by state and federal laws.

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.
Tax ID No. 55-0779838
OUR ACCOMPLISHMENTS

A Growing Family of Protected Farms

In 2020, three farms totaling 853 acres joined the Jefferson County Farmland Protection Program. The Magaha, Ware, and McKee families signed their deeds of conservation easement for their properties, completing the process to protect their lands in perpetuity. The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and the Jefferson County Farmland Protection Board provided funds to purchase the conservation easements.

The new easements increase the amount of protected farmland in Jefferson County to 5,560 acres on 48 farms. More than 90% of the newly protected lands include prime and statewide important agricultural soils.

“This is a momentous milestone for our organization,” said Robert Glenn, President of the Board. “With the addition of these three working farms, the county has made a significant step towards our vision of a future where we have protected 20,000 acres of the remaining prime and important agricultural soils in Jefferson County.”

In the Charles Town District, the 295-acre Magaha property fronts on Middleway Pike and lies entirely within the boundaries of the August 1864 Civil War Battle of Summit Point that occurred at the beginning of Union Major General Philip Sheridan’s Shenandoah Valley Campaign. The farm produces grain crops, hay and cattle.

The 280-acre Ware property lies a few miles north of the Magaha Farm on Darke Lane and produces grain crops and hay. Rick Ware said, “We appreciate the Farmland Protection Program, which has made it possible to ensure the legacy of our family’s farm. Our parents would have been so happy to know that the farm they passed on to us will not be developed.”
Jefferson County is home to five congressionally recognized Civil War battlefields comprising nearly 35,000 acres. Much of the battlefield land is rural and agricultural; many of the Civil War battles occurred on what was then and still remains working farmland.

In June 2020, the 278-acre Borden Farm joined the Farmland Protection Program. It lies off Trough Road, almost entirely within the boundaries of the Core Area of the 1862 Civil War Battle of Shepherdstown and borders 3,000 feet of Rattlesnake Run that flows to the Potomac River. The farm pastures cattle and horses and produces hay. The property connects ten parcels previously protected by the Farmland Protection Board, the Land Trust of the Eastern Panhandle and the Jefferson County Historic Landmarks Commission, creating a 460-acre cluster.

“The Trust is thrilled to have been a part of the protection of the Borden Farm at Shepherdstown. That engagement, the final clash of the Antietam Campaign, represents a critical moment in the Civil War’s progress. And I believe that this activity, representing the largest single acreage yet protected on this important battlefield, will also become a moment of note in the story of its preservation.”

Jim Lighthizer, President of the American Battlefield Trust
Financial Summary

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), the National Park Service’s American Battlefield Protection Program (NPS/ABPP) and the West Virginia Agricultural Lands Protection Authority.

The Board manages its resources carefully. Operations and personnel costs in 2020 totaled $107,204, or 2.5% of 2020 expenditures. Easement expenses totaled $48,776 or 1.1% of the 2020 expenditures. The Board committed a reserve of $1.28 million for pending conservation easements on 855 acres on four farms, with a pending match of $684,440 from NRCS and $289,995 from the West Virginia Agricultural Land Protection Authority. The Board’s books are audited by external auditors and reviewed by the State Auditor’s Office annually. Visit www.jefferson.wvfp.org to view our audited financial statements.

As of December 31, 2020, the Board has invested a total of $11.18 million to protect farmland with a development value of $33.24 million. Each local dollar has been matched with $1.97 of federal money and $1.09 of donated value from landowners. Since 2002, generous landowners have donated $12.2 million through bargain sales. These substantial donations help the Board to stretch its limited funds to assist others seeking to protect their land.

FY 2020 TOTAL LAND, FARMLAND & PROTECTED FARMLAND

Jefferson County, WV

- 69,567 AC Non Farmland
- 59,804 AC Farmland
- 5,560 AC Protected Farmland
- 749 AC Pending Protected Farmland
Looking Ahead to New Protected Lands

Currently, the Board is working to complete conservation easements on three new farms totaling 749 acres. Two are just over 300 acres and one is 142 acres. The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) funded two of the farms through the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPPP) which prioritizes applications that rank high for water resource protection. We submitted applications for the FY 21 funding cycle for one 95-acre farm to NRCS and one 152-acre tract to the American Battlefield Protection Program.
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Thank You to Our Partners

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- American Battlefield Trust
- Berkeley County Farmland Protection Board
- 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.