

AGRICULTURAL EASEMENTS

INTRODUCTION

An agricultural conservation easement is a legal agreement between a landowner and a conservation organization or governmental entity that protects agricultural lands in perpetuity. An agricultural easements encourages:

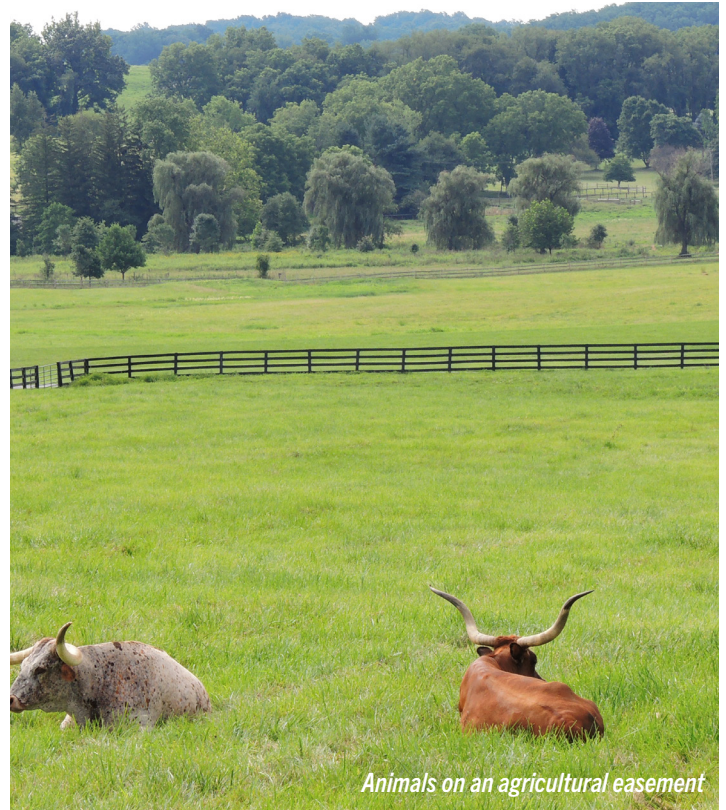
- Preservation of agricultural lands.
- Preparation of farm conservation plans.
- Aid for farmers to implement best management practices.

An agricultural easements permits:

- Landowners to sever and sell the development rights permitted on their property.
- Landowners to retain all other rights of ownership, including the right to farm, prevent trespass, sell, bequeath or otherwise transfer the land.
- Counties to pay the difference between the value of the land for agriculture and the value of the land for its “highest and best use,” generally residential or commercial



Barn located on an agricultural easement



Animals on an agricultural easement

APPLICABILITY

Preservation through agricultural conservation easements can support the following:

- Conservation: protection and improvement of key natural resources, specifically preserving agricultural prime soils from development.
- Education: inform and educate residents on opportunities for best land management practices.
- History and Culture: preservation of the historic, cultural and scenic landscapes that define a community's character.
- Sustainable Development: strategically balancing development and land preservation to ensure sensitive areas of agricultural land, natural and historic resources are preserved.



**BRANDYWINE
CONSERVANCY**

IMPLEMENTATION

Farm selection by the Agricultural Preservation Program gives 40% consideration to land evaluation (how productive soils are) and 60% consideration to site evaluation. The 60% consideration to site evaluation breaks down into 25% for Farmland Productivity and Conservation practices, 10% for development risks, and 25% for farmland clustering.

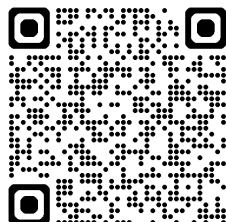
Agricultural Best Management Practices

Agricultural best management practices help keep valuable soils in place, reduce the need for chemical fertilizers and minimize water-polluting runoff, ultimately improving sustainability and profitability of the farm operation.



Amish farmer plowing

*For more information,
scan the QR code
to find additional
resources related to land
preservation.*



AGRICULTURAL PRESERVATION PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

To apply to the County or State Agricultural Preservation Program, a farm must have:

- At least 50 acres (Chester County Challenge Grant Program requires 25 acres), or at least 10 acres producing a crop unique to the area, or at least 10 acres contiguous to a property with a perpetual conservation or agricultural easement. The Chester County Challenge Grant Program seeks to permanently preserve agricultural land by purchasing development rights.
- At least 50% of the soils must be available for agricultural production and in Class I through Class IV soils.
- Contain the greatest option: either 50% or 10 acres of harvested cropland, pasture or grazing land.



Agricultural easement

SUCCESSFUL CASE STUDIES

Agricultural easements have been implemented throughout Chester County and the United States as a whole.

As of May 2026, in the Brandywine Christina watershed 360,498 acres were preserved with agricultural or conservation easements; and 12,647 acres (3.5%) were preserved through agricultural easements.

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