



Protecting Farmland. Preserving Farming.

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Instructions for Applications – 1 July 2021 and beyond

The Berkeley County Farmland Protection Board accepts applications year-round, but at the end of each October we score the current applications for consideration for funding in that fiscal year. Thus, applications received on or after the 1st of November in each year will not be considered until the following fiscal year (WV fiscal years begin on the first of July and end the following June).

There were several significant program changes in prior years and we have an updated application form as well as an updated scoring sheet that reflects these changes. One significant change is that we now award points for agricultural production value so we require that applicants include a copy of an approved Farm Use Valuation form – the Assessor generally approves these by September of each year – they are due to the Assessor's office by 1 September.

Another change is a reallocation of points for farm size, with larger tracts being awarded more points.

Recently new is a policy that will cause an immediate rejection of an application should such property be marked for sale at the time of application or during the review process. Another new change beginning in FY 2022 relates to how we determine whether to seek matching NRCS/USDA funds. Beginning in July 2021, any applicant property that scores in the top tier of submitted properties and is asking for \$1 million or more for the purchase of an easement will automatically be sent to the NRCS state office in Morgantown for matching federal funds and will not immediately be considered for local funding. Applications asking for less than \$1 million will be retained in the local funding pool. If an application is sent to the NRCS state office and is ultimately rejected by the NRCS, we will offer 80% of the appraised value using local funds. The intent behind this new policy is to ensure

that we are best using our local monies and ultimately protecting as much acreage as we can.

When completing the Application Form, provide as much detail as you can. When staff begin the process of scoring applications, we will award points for categories that you couldn't complete. For example, you may not know that you are within 2,500 feet of public water or sewer, or within 5,000 feet of another protected parcel. Some declarations, such as the presence of a perennial spring or the presence of rare or threatened species will require a site visit and may require that we bring in staff from the WV Department of Natural Resources (only with your permission). In any event, please feel free to contact our office if you have questions while completing the Application Form.

Also please note that certain information on the Application Form is required and is noted with a ☒ symbol. These include, but are not limited to: Names, addresses, signatures, and date of signature of all legal owners of the property (for corporations and legal entities this list is the shareholders, general partners, etc.). We also require knowing the total acreage, how many acres are being offered, and at what asking price. Failure to provide information in places marked with the ☒ symbol may result in the application being rejected.

If a mortgage or lien exists on the property (or a legal judgement against one or more of the property owners), we need to know that as well. Failure to provide that information will result in the rejection of the application.

To close, the Berkeley County Farmland Protection Board greatly appreciates your interest in protecting your property with a conservation easement. Again, please feel free to contact our office if you have any questions.

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