



Protecting Farmland. Preserving Farming.

Members of the Board

Tom Gleason, Chair

George Miller, Vice Chair

Jennifer Smith, Secretary

Karen Burkhardt, Treasurer

Bill Bennett, Member

P. Fred Johnson, Member

Steve Catlett, County
Commission Representative

Staff

Resa Ingram-Orsini,
Executive Director

Rebecca Pearl, Stewardship
Coordinator/Administrative
Assistant

Contact Us

PO Box 1243

229 E Martin St, Suite 300
Martinsburg, WV 25401

Office: 304-260-3770

Mobile: 304-260-9250

Email: berkeley@wvfp.org

Web: berkeley.wvfp.org

Instructions for Applications – 15 May 2024 and beyond

The Berkeley County Farmland Protection Board (BCFPB) accepts applications starting in June and ending **30 September**, starting with fiscal year 2025 (West Virginia fiscal years run July 1 through June 30, thus July 1, 2024 begins fiscal year 2025).

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** (if applicable) 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. A property that is listed for sale at the time of application or at any point during the review process will cause an immediate rejection of an application.

The *most recent policy change* is that Phase I environmental studies will be required on each property selected for acquisition. NRCS/USDA has always had this requirement, but it will also be required using local funds starting with the FY 2025 application cycle.

As of FY2022, the Board determined how we seek matching NRCS/USDA funds. 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, the BCFPB will offer up to 80% of the appraised value using local funds *IF* the reason NRCS has rejected the property is not something that the BCFPB would also

reject it for – not to exceed the cap of \$6,500 per acre. The intent behind this 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.

It is the *Board's goal* to close acquisitions within twelve months of selection. We know sometimes issues may arise, or surveys may take longer than normal, but please help us meet that goal as well by maintaining open communication and limiting any personal delays.

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.

Resa Ingram-Orsini, Executive Director

Email: berkeley@wvfp.org

Web: <http://wvfp.org/berkeley>

Desk: (304) 260-3770

Mobile: (304) 260-9250

Mailing Address: P.O. Box 1243, Martinsburg WV 25402

Physical Address: 229 E. Martin Street, Suite 3, Martinsburg WV 25401