



## Instructions for Applications Fiscal Year 2027 and Beyond

The Berkeley County Farmland Protection Board (BCFPB or the Board) accepts applications annually, with the application period typically running from June through **September 30**. Applications are accepted based on fiscal years (West Virginia fiscal years run 1 July through 30 June, so for example, FY2027 is 1 July 2026 through 30 June 2027).

The program has undergone several significant updates over the years - the most recent occurring with the update of the Board's FY2027 Strategic Plan - reflected in both the revised application form and updated scoring matrix. *Among the most important changes:*

Scoring adjustments include a reduction in points for development pressure, and an increase in maximum points for both farm size and soils. Under the working farms category, the overall maximum remains 150 points, though points have been redistributed — only properties grossing over \$1,001 are eligible, earned at a rate of 1.5 points per \$1,000. Proximity to properties under conservation easement and contiguous with properties that have farm-use valuation or park land has increased to a maximum of 100 points. Minor adjustments have also been made to historical significance and natural resource categories, as well as if the property has no secured debt.

*Other important notes before you apply:*

**Active Listings:** Any property listed for sale at the time of application — or at any point during the review process — will result in **immediate rejection**.

**Phase I Environmental Studies:** Beginning with the FY2025 cycle, Phase I environmental studies are required for all selected properties, regardless of funding source.

**Completing the Application:** Please provide as much detail as possible. Staff will award points for certain categories — such as proximity to public water, sewer, or a protected parcel — as these are verified independently using GIS. Some features, such as the presence of 10 acres of hardwood forests, may require a site visit. Please contact our office with any questions.

**Required Fields:** Items marked with the  symbol are required and must be completed. These include names, addresses, signatures, and signature dates for all legal owners (or



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shareholders and general partners for corporations and legal entities), total acreage, acres being offered, and asking price. Incomplete required fields will result in *rejection*.

**Mortgages & Liens:** Any mortgage, lien, or legal judgment against the property or its owners must be disclosed. Failure to do so will result in **disqualification**. If selected, any loan must be subordinated.

**Agricultural Production Value:** Applicants must include a copy of an **approved** Farm Use Valuation form of the most current year, if applicable. These forms are due to the Assessor's office by September 1.

**BCFPB Cap:** The Board's maximum payment is **\$6,500 per acre** in local funds, and asking price is factored into scoring — properties asking the maximum earn zero additional points. Per state code, if a property is selected, an appraisal will be completed and the Board must pay the lesser of the asking price or the appraised value. If the appraisal exceeds the asking price, a donation component may apply — applicants are encouraged to consult an accountant or tax attorney in that scenario.

**Closing Timeline:** If selected, the Board's *goal* is to complete all acquisitions within twelve to eighteen months of selection. We ask that applicants maintain open communication and minimize personal delays in helping us meet this timeline.

Thank you for your interest in protecting your property with a conservation easement. Please don't hesitate to contact our office with any questions.

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