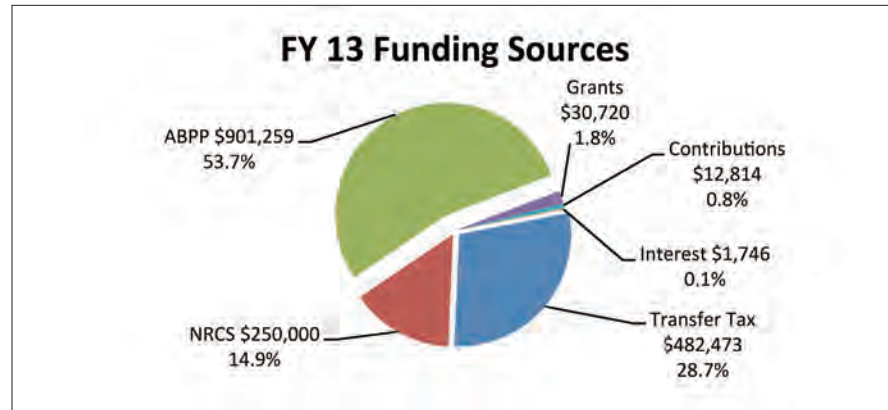
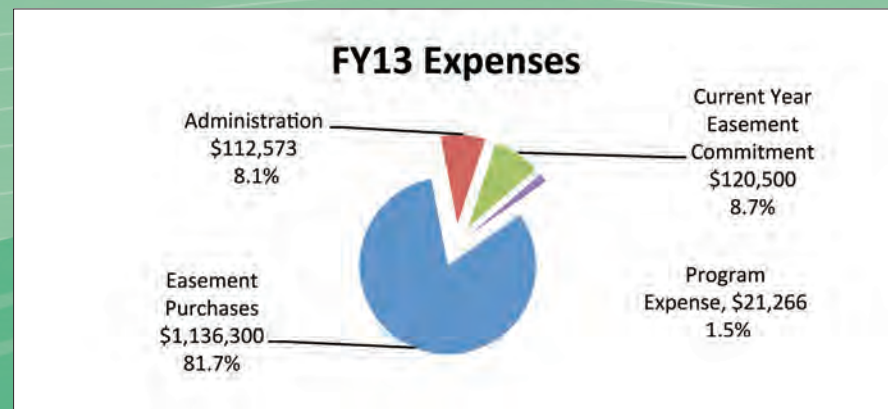


**HOW WE FUNDED FY13 EASEMENTS** In 2013, the Board paid landowners \$1,383,700 for easements on 412 acres through three sources: 1) Jefferson County real estate transfer tax (\$250,000), 2) matching funding from the USDA/National Resource Conservation Service (\$250,000), and 3) matching funds from NPS/ABPP (\$883,700). The landowners received an average of \$3,358 per acre for development rights, and donated a total of \$901,600 through bargain sales of the easements, or about 65 percent of the easement value. These generous donations help stretch the Board's limited dollars further.



The Jefferson County Farmland Protection Board pursues a conservative approach to finances and program management. FY13 administrative expenses, including office and personnel costs, totaled \$112,573 or 8% of total expenses. Easement costs, including legal and professional fees, totaled \$21,266 or 1.8% of total easement purchases. Net of income over expenditures is \$288,354. In compliance with State law, the Board's books are audited by external auditors and reviewed by the State Auditor's Office annually. We are pleased to report that the audits passed successfully in FY12 and in all previous years.



**OUR PARTNERS** The Jefferson County Farmland Protection Board could not accomplish the considerable work of completing easements without its many partners and supporters. The Board appreciates the collegial and professional support of the staff and volunteers of the following organizations:

- Our conservation partners, including the USDA/Natural Resources Conservation Service, NPS/American Battlefield Protection Program, Land Trust of the Eastern Panhandle, The Potomac Conservancy, The Nature Conservancy, Civil War Preservation Trust, the Berkeley County Farmland Protection Board and the West Virginia Agricultural Lands Protection Authority.
- The Jefferson County Development Authority
- The Jefferson County GIS Office
- The Jefferson County Planning and Zoning Office
- The Jefferson County Prosecuting Attorney's Office
- The many other County employees who have assisted us during FY2013.

### FARMLAND PROTECTION BOARD MEMBERS FY13

**One County Commissioner** (non-voting): Jane Tabb

**Executive Director of the County Development Authority:** John Reisenweber

**One farmer who is a member of the county Farm Bureau:** Russ Quinn

**One farmer who is a member of the Soil Conservation District:** Nick Kercheval

**One farmer at large:** vacant

**Two county residents who are not members of any of the above organizations:**

Robert Glenn and Elizabeth D. McDonald, Board President

**Elizabeth Wheeler, the Board Administrator,** manages the farmland protection program.



**Jefferson County Farmland Protection Board**

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Cover Photo: Shepherd Ogden, Interior Photo: Benita Keller

# The Jefferson County Farmland Protection Board

## ANNUAL REPORT

This Fiscal Year 2013 Annual Report is for the period of July 1, 2012 to June 30, 2013.



# “Agriculture is an integral and viable part of the County’s economy, landscape, natural resources, and sense of community.”

–Jefferson County Commission, 2000

**WHO WE ARE** The mission of the Jefferson County Farmland Protection Board is to protect productive farmland for future generations in order to maintain the long-term viability of agriculture in Jefferson County.

Established by the Jefferson County Commission in 2000, the Jefferson County Farmland Protection Board (Board) protects important farmland throughout the County by accepting donations of conservation easements and through purchases of conservation easements from willing sellers. We collaborate with partner organizations to provide effective easement stewardship for the long-term protection of farmland.

As dictated by the West Virginia Voluntary Farmland Protection Act, The Board comprises seven county residents appointed by the County Commission, each serving without compensation. Each is a voting member, except for the Jefferson County Commissioner, who serves in a non-voting, advisory capacity.

**WHY WE PROTECT FARMLAND** Agricultural land is a non-renewable resource. A strategy for protecting farmland in our rural areas is vital to the future of the agricultural community, because the loss of land resources will threaten all farm-related businesses. For agriculture to remain viable, there must be a critical mass of farms to sustain the infrastructure (for example, suppliers of machinery, crop inputs and fuel, veterinarians, repair services). Each time a farm is sold for non-agricultural uses, the viability of every other agricultural operation in Jefferson County is diminished.

An effective and straightforward way to secure productive farmland for future use in Jefferson County is to protect it with a Deed of Conservation Easement.

**WHAT IS AN EASEMENT?** A Deed of Conservation Easement is a flexible legal tool that enables landowners to permanently protect the natural, agricultural, scenic and historic values of all or part of their property from development and subdivision. Property owners retain full use and ownership of the land. Because an easement is perpetual, it is transferred with the property when sold, thereby protecting it forever.

The Jefferson County Farmland Protection Board negotiates with eligible property owners to place a conservation easement on properties that qualify for consideration under the terms established by the Jefferson County Commission-approved Farmland Protection Program.

**FUNDING SOURCES** Funding for the Jefferson County Farmland Protection Board was established under a state law passed in 2002 that allows West Virginia counties to levy a transfer tax on real estate transactions to fund the purchase of agricultural development rights from willing landowners. The local share of easement funding is generated through Jefferson County real estate transfer tax and private donations.

The County’s revenue is matched by funding from several partners, including landowners who donate easement value, the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (USDA/NRCS), the National Park Service/American Battlefield Protection Program (NPS/ABPP), The Nature Conservancy and other private sources.

**ACCOMPLISHMENTS** In FY13, the Board purchased agricultural easements on 412 acres on two farms in Jefferson County through partnership with the USDA/NRCS, and NPS/ABPP. To date, the Board has protected 3,892 acres on 38 farms. Another 133 acres on two farms are in the easement process.

With a \$20,000 grant from the NRCS, the Board produced a comprehensive strategic plan to guide its work for the next 3 years. The process included extensive input to the organization from more than 300 citizens, including farmers, community opinion leaders, elected officials, nonprofit and agency partners, and other stakeholders. The Board’s strategic direction includes five elements:

- First, the Farmland Protection Board must establish a more deliberate plan of action that places a priority on productive soils and an effective scale of conservation.
- Second, the Board must make itself known better among the landowners and farmers that it serves, as well as among the diverse communities and organizations that benefit from its conservation efforts.
- Third, with responsibility today for 38 farms and nearly 4,000 acres of land, the Board must invest more time in managing its stewardship responsibilities.
- Fourth, the Board needs to develop additional financial resources to protect agricultural land.
- Fifth, the farmland protection program will continue to operate under the highest professional, legal and ethical standards. Our operations, project selection, transactions and stewardship activities must conform to accepted best practices in land conservation.

