

Jefferson County Farmland Protection Board

Executive Director Position Description

OUR MISSION:

“Agriculture is an integral and viable part of the County's economy, landscape, natural resources, and sense of community.” - Jefferson County Commission, 2000

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.

We accomplish our work through holding purchased and donated conservation easements, collaborating with like-minded organizations, and providing community outreach and education to raise awareness about farmland protection.

WHO WE ARE:

Jefferson County, the eastern-most county in West Virginia, is experiencing a high rate of conversion of agricultural land to other uses. The county comprises over 212 square miles in the Eastern Panhandle of the state, which places us within the Washington/Baltimore metropolitan statistical area. The area is served by Interstate 81, US Routes 340 and 9, and the Amtrak and MARC rail systems. Our program was established in 2002, and presently we hold 58 easements with 6,846 acres of land.

WHAT WE DO:

Using locally generated funds (a percentage of Real Estate Transfer Tax income) combined with Federal funds (NRCS, ABPP and others) the Jefferson County Farmland Protection Program (JCFPP) purchases permanent easements on qualifying properties. These easements protect the agricultural, environmental and scenic attributes of the property and, most importantly, enable and support the continued agricultural use of the land. To date, several easement clusters have emerged over the years, creating and protecting large agriculturally productive areas in the county. Through our stewardship program, we monitor our protected properties to ensure the continued integrity of the conservation easement.

THE OPPORTUNITY:

The incoming Executive Director will have the opportunity to build on the history and success of the Program and, in particular, manage the growing stewardship responsibilities that the size and scope of the program have created. The successful candidate will work with the JCFPP Board to continue to solicit, evaluate and purchase easements on agricultural properties in the County.

The annual operating budget of \$230,000.00 includes management of one full time staff member whose focus is on stewardship of existing easements (this position is shared with the neighboring Berkeley County Farmland Protection Board). Locally collected Transfer Tax funds and private donations typically generate upwards of \$1 million dollars for easement purchases and the Program's operating budget. When an agricultural property meets certain criteria, Transfer Tax funds can be combined with matching Federal funds for the purchase of such easements.

The Executive Director actively protects and advocates for the local funding stream as well as identifies and pursues other potential funding sources to maintain the viability and purchasing power of the Program.

Although primarily an office job, the Executive Director often works in the field (Jefferson County) conducting site visits for documentation and/or monitoring of properties. As the public face of the program the Executive Director interacts with landowners already in the program; those seeking to apply, and the general public in a variety of local and state forums.

We envision the successful candidate to be competent and versatile in using social media and other appropriate venues to disseminate information about the program. In addition, he/she must be comfortable dealing with individual landowners to explain the program and walk them through what can be a complicated submission process.

Qualifications for Candidates:

First and foremost, the Candidate for this position should be self-directed, highly self-motivated, and possess a strong work ethic and initiative.

As the public face and spokesperson for the Program, the Candidate must have:

- strong interpersonal skills and ability to work with constituents (landowners), contractors, board of directors and county council. They will benefit from a knowledge of Jefferson County.
- skills for initiating face-to-face, telephone, and written outreach.
- skill, comfort and confidence in public speaking.
- competence in all applicable social media platforms used for marketing and information sharing.
- strong technical writing skills as well as the ability to write clear, concise and interesting copy for public consumption.

As the business manager for the Program, the Candidate must have:

- administrative and organizational skills appropriate for running a complex business.
- ability to coordinate and direct contracted work for finances, legal services, etc.
- ability to manage complex, often multi-year timelines.
- ability to work independently.
- ability to manage budgets, resources and general financial business processes.
- ability to effectively manage, supervise and evaluate JCFPB employee(s).
- working knowledge of GIS and other land mapping software.
- commitment to the goals outlined in the JCFPB Strategic Plan Summary (available on the website).

Ideal candidates will have the following:

- Bachelor's degree is required; graduate degree in a related field is preferred.

- Genuine interest in Jefferson County Farmland Protection Program's mission of preserving the agricultural resources and rural character of the county.
- Knowledge of the agricultural community and culture and awareness of issues and concerns affecting landowners and their property.
- Knowledge of conservation issues and the benefits of land preservation, particularly with regard to agricultural/farm use.
- Knowledge of NRCS FRPP and ACEP/ALE easements, including the application and acquisition process for ACEP/ALE.
- Knowledge of the Department of Interior's American Battlefield Protection Program and their application and acquisition process.
- A minimum of five years of relevant, demonstrable management experience is required, including successful financial management, board relations and a proven capacity to motivate, mentor and lead staff.
- Proficiency with GIS mapping is a plus.

Attributes of patience, perseverance and commitment to preservation of the agricultural way of life and environment are key qualities for the future Executive Director. Easement applicants, predominantly long time, family farmers/landowners, have many questions and often require patient shepherding through the many aspects of the application process (as brief as two years or as long as five). Likewise, succeeding owners of protected properties will require careful and tactful guidance to ensure that they understand and uphold the conservation values protected under the easement.

Compensation:

JCFPB offers a competitive pay rate, commensurate with experience, and flexible work environment. As per JCFPB's personnel policy, full-time staff are eligible for health and retirement benefits as well as paid leave. This position is expected to be compensated between \$65,000 - \$80,000.

To Apply:

Please email your cover letter, names and contact information of three profession references, and resume to Jefferson@wvfp.org. Applications will be accepted until COB, Friday, May 31, 2024. Please do not send photographs. Additional information about the Jefferson County Farmland Protection program can be found at wvfp.org/Jefferson.

Equal Opportunity

The Jefferson County Farmland Protection Board celebrates, supports, and thrives on our differences to benefit our staff, our mission, and our community. We are an equal opportunity workplace and do not discriminate based on race, color, religion, sex, gender identity, national origin, political affiliation, sexual orientation, marital status, disability, genetic information, age, parental status, military service, or other non-merit factors.