



# Annual Report

JANUARY 1, 2023 - DECEMBER 31, 2023

# A Message from the President

No matter how long – or how briefly - you have lived in Jefferson County, you are almost certainly aware of the pace of change that has transformed our rural landscapes in the past few years. Farmland is steadily being lost through non-farm development on good agricultural land. We witness subdivisions and commercial development replacing cropland and open space, rural roads surging with traffic, and most recently, industrial scale solar arrays covering agricultural fields.

In the midst of this transformation, the Farmland Protection Board continues to stay the course. Every day we are working with families to preserve their land and the fertile soils, water resources, wildlife habitat and historic landscapes that support our economy and shape the character of our community.

**As of January of 2024, the Board has helped landowners protect 6,846 acres of land on 58 farms. Another five farms with 574 acres are in line for completion of their easements in the coming year.**

Over 30 years ago, a determined group of thoughtful people made farmland protection a reality in West Virginia. These visionaries and the remarkable landowners who have protected their land have ensured a precious legacy now and for future generations. Your encouragement and support will help us build on that foundation and continue the work of keeping Jefferson County's irreplaceable farmland available for agriculture. Thank you for helping us grow our protected lands!

We are pleased to invite you to read about our work over the past year.

Sincerely,

*Jane M. Jabl*  
Board President

## BY THE NUMBERS

The county's

# 58

protected farms  
have preserved:



# 5,849

acres of prime and  
important soils

# 1,443

acres of  
forested land

# 7

miles of  
streams

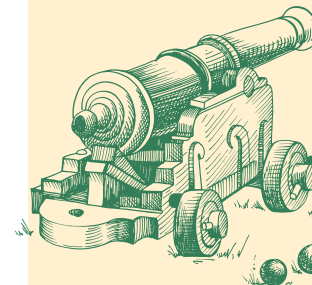
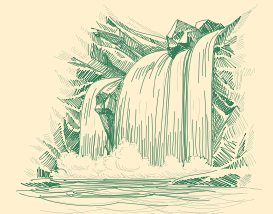
# 15

historic  
properties



# 266

acres of  
wetlands



# 1,571

acres of Civil War  
battlefield lands

# 15

springs



Thanks to dedicated citizens, donors, conservation partners and, most importantly, committed landowners, Jefferson County continues to build a critical mass of protected agricultural lands.

# The Jefferson County Farmland Protection Board

**The Farmland Protection Board** works to keep Jefferson County’s farmland available to grow food and to protect our natural and historic resources. Farmland protection directly benefits you, your neighbors and the many visitors who appreciate this special place we call home. Yet we can’t ever take it for granted.

**Since the 1990s**, over one-third of Jefferson County’s fertile farmland has vanished, permanently lost to other uses. While almost half of Jefferson County’s land is still in farms, accelerating

residential and commercial development places intense pressure on the remaining agricultural lands.

**This rapid uncontrolled growth** in the county united concerned farmers, citizens and public leaders to advocate for legislation for farmland protection. The West Virginia Voluntary Farmland Protection Act, adopted in 2000, enabled counties to create farmland protection boards to preserve working farmland. Jefferson County was among the first to establish the program.

**How Does the Board Protect Farmland?**

**The Board is empowered** by the West Virginia Voluntary Farmland Protection Act (WV Code §8A-12 et seq.) to protect agricultural land. It does so by placing permanent conservation easements on qualifying properties through legal agreements with voluntary landowners.

PHOTO BY MARK MUSE

## Why Protect Farmland?

**Farmland is finite** and irreplaceable. Just a fraction of our globe has topsoil suitable for agriculture. It takes thousands of years to create good soil, and bulldozers can destroy fertile farmland in minutes. Most of the County’s land base has agriculturally prime and important soils, and much of that lies directly in the path of development. When it’s gone, it’s gone forever.

Our land is our legacy. Agricultural land has supported Jefferson County’s people and economy for more than 300 years. Protecting

farmland provides tangible benefits with enormous cultural and ecological importance. Our open fields, woodlands, streams, and historic rural landscapes make the county a desirable place to live, work and visit. Our scenic and productive working lands protect natural resources, help slow climate change, contribute to a diverse economy, support local businesses, and employ local labor. Now more than ever, our county’s valuable farmland must be secured to feed the growing urbanized world at our doorstep and across the globe.

## What is an Easement?

**A Deed of Conservation Easement** is a flexible legal tool that landowners can use to retire development rights permanently on all or part of their land to protect its natural, agricultural, scenic and historic values. Landowners may sell the easement to the Board or donate all or part of the easement value. Property owners retain full use and title to their land, subject to the easement terms. A deed of conservation is recorded in the county land records, and future owners will be bound by its terms which strictly follow the perpetuity provisions required by section 170(h) of the Internal Revenue Code.

## What is Forever?

**The vision of the Farmland Protection Board** is to protect farmland for future generations. Creating a critical mass of farms in the county brings stability to the local farm community and the economy. When we say “Farmland Forever” we are upholding Jefferson County’s commitment to the community to preserve our rural landscapes and fertile soils that support agricultural viability. West Virginia law and federal law ensure the integrity of permanent conservation easements held by the Board.

Jefferson County’s 600 farming operations are 96% family-owned, with some dating back multiple generations. As stewards of the land, farmers possess a wealth of knowledge and skills essential for the maintenance of soils and biological systems that underpin a healthy farm economy. Our farm economy is a web of this community of farms, and the agricultural businesses, equipment suppliers, veterinarians, transportation services and many other enterprises that support and rely on one another.

Pennsylvania’s conservation organization WeConservePA reports that “Although agricultural land generates less tax revenue per acre than residential, commercial, or industrial property, it requires fewer public services such as schooling, road maintenance, and policing. The difference means that non-agricultural lands receive more services and pay less in taxes than they could in the absence of agricultural land.”

**Cows don’t go to high school, cornstalks don’t call 911, but farmers still pay taxes.**

# Growing Our Protected Lands

In January and April of 2023, we welcomed two Kearneysville farms to the Farmland Protection Program, permanently conserving 223 acres of productive land and important water resources. In January 2024, a 153-acre farm in Kearneysville and a 150-acre farm in Shepherdstown's Civil War battlefield joined the program.

Another four farms with 574 acres are in line for completion of their easements in the coming year.

## Kime Farm

Located on Brucetown Road in Kearneysville, Kime Farm buffers 2,200 feet of Opequon Creek. The majority of the 178-acre property is open rolling hayland, and contains a large forested section. The farm borders other working lands and a 154-acre tract known as "Fiddler's Bottom" that lies across Opequon Creek and is protected through the Berkeley County Farmland Protection Program.

Jake Farver, an owner of the farm, remarked, "Our goal from the outset of our purchase of the farm was to conserve the land in perpetuity for the benefit of future generations as well as the open space and agricultural nature of this beautiful property. It is an honor to be a small part of a great conservation program and have the opportunity to use it as an example to our children and grandchildren about how we must take individual and collective action to protect our most important resources."



**"Our goal from the outset of our purchase of the farm was to conserve the land in perpetuity for the benefit of future generations as well as the open space and agricultural nature of this beautiful property."**

—JAKE FARVER

## Lotze Farm

Located at the corner of Old Leetown Road and Wiltshire Road, the 45-acre Lotze farm is surrounded by active farmland. Conrad Lotze and Kristina Maciunas purchased their property in 2001, with Lotze's parents, who live on the adjacent 30 acres. Conrad Lotze's parents Christian and Evie Lotze run Roxley Farms, which for the past 22 years has produced grass-fed Black Angus beef cattle. Together the family also grows and sells hay, without the use of pesticides or chemical fertilizers, choosing to remain as natural as possible.



Lotze remarked, "We created a small family homestead, to be better able to care for our elders. We're grateful to live in this lovely, supportive rural community, close to family, and we are grateful we can pass down the land, along with our love for it, to future generations."

## Aspen Pool Farm

In 2005, the late C.F. Printz placed 60 acres of Aspen Pool Farm under a conservation easement, one of the county's first Civil War battlefield easements. The protection of another 150 acres of the farm is a significant addition to the Shepherdstown Battlefield's protected land.

Charles F. Printz Jr. remarked, "Our family is grateful that the protection of this beautiful farm, a process started by C. F. Printz, is now complete. Aspen Pool was created from lands devised from the Last Will of Thomas Shepherd in 1776. It later was the site of Showman's Shop, a blacksmith shop and forge. The farm's historical significance arose following the Battle of Antietam when A.P. Hill's Division launched its counterattack from the farm to repulse federal forces of Sykes Division which had crossed the Potomac at Pack Horse Ford on September



Chazz & Donna Printz at Aspen Pool Farm

20, 1862, during the Battle of Shepherdstown. The farm sits strategically at the crossroads of Trough and Engle Moler's Road. Equally important, this is productive farmland – a diminishing county asset. Only the commitment to conserve land for future generations will honor the County's past and sustain our vigilance for its future."

## Cedar Cottage Farm

The 153-acre Cedar Cottage Farm, owned by Gloria Willis, lies next to the Henshaw Farm in Middleway that was protected in 2011. Together the properties create a 226-acre block of farmland. Ms. Willis remarked, "I am very pleased to finally get my farm protected. After my husband Gary passed, I started noticing buildings with vinyl siding being thrown up everywhere with air guns. They are already falling apart. That beautiful land they put the houses on is destroyed, forever. There's only so much land. They can't make more, and if you don't take care of it, it will be gone. My farm will continue producing grain crops as it has for many years. I may be gone tomorrow, but I am grateful to know my farm will stay a farm."

## Board and Staff

The Farmland Protection Board is composed of seven volunteer county residents appointed by the County Commission. Each is a voting member, except for the Jefferson County Commissioner, who serves in an advisory capacity.

**Jane M. Tabb, President**

COUNTY COMMISSIONER (NON-VOTING)

**Catharine P. Johnson, Vice President**

FARMER, MEMBER, JEFFERSON COUNTY FARM BUREAU

**O. Colin Stine, PhD, Secretary**

JEFFERSON COUNTY RESIDENT AT LARGE

**Erik W. Berndt, Treasurer**

JEFFERSON COUNTY RESIDENT AT LARGE

**Glen H. Hetzel, PhD**

JEFFERSON COUNTY FARMER AT LARGE

**T. Neill Banks**

FARMER, MEMBER, EASTERN PANHANDLE SOIL CONSERVATION DISTRICT

**Edwina (Eddie) Benites-LM**

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, JEFFERSON COUNTY DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

STAFF

**Elizabeth B. Wheeler, Director**

**Rebecca Pearl, Stewardship Coordinator**

## New Board Member

### EDWINA (EDDIE) BENITES-LM

In April 2023, the Farmland Protection Board welcomed Eddie Benites-LM as the new representative of the Jefferson County Development Authority. Benites-LM has over 20 years of success in government relations and economic development. She has experience as a staffer in the US Senate, as a federal lobbyist primarily representing governmental entities, and as a small business owner. Benites-LM earned a master's degree in rural development through the University of Alaska Fairbanks, and her undergraduate degree is through George Washington University. She recently earned a graduate certificate in Excellence in Local Governance through the University of Maryland. Benites-LM serves on various boards and commissions, coaches youth basketball, and is a mom of four.



# \$25.5M

The Farmland Protection Program has put \$25.5 MILLION DOLLARS in the pockets of Jefferson County landowners. This accomplishment has been made possible with your help and the help of our dedicated partners.

# Conservation Accomplishments

GROWING OUR COMMUNITY OF PROTECTED LANDS

**Thanks to ongoing support** from our many supporters, donors and landowners, the Farmland Protection Board has steadily built the county's reserve of protected lands. Since 2002 the owners of 58 farms and 6,856 acres of farmland have joined the program. These successes are the result of often complex, multi-year efforts to secure funding and partnerships to protect our rural lands. Our most important partners are the landowners who understand that farmland is a precious resource; their decision to protect their land in perpetuity is a profoundly generous gift to the community. This forward-looking work will ensure that land is available for future generations of farmers.

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**Since 2002**, the Board has spent \$14.23 million in county transfer tax funds to leverage \$11.3 million in state and federal matching funds and \$16.3 million in landowner donations to protect 6,846 acres of farmland. For every \$1 of local funds, the Board has received \$1.93, composed of \$0.80 in federal and state funds and \$1.13 in landowner donations.

# PROTECTED FARMS IN JEFFERSON COUNTY

The Farmland Protection Board has protected 10.9% of the county's farmland



MAP SHOWING PROTECTED FARMLAND 2002 – 2023

## Together, We Protect Farmland Forever

Conservation is about protecting land for people and the planet. The Jefferson County citizens listed here have given us a precious legacy by protecting their land.

### \$16M

Generous landowners have donated over \$16 million through tax-deductible bargain sales. These substantial contributions help the Board to stretch its limited funds to assist others seeking to protect their land.

#### CONSERVATION LEADERS & YEAR LAND PROTECTED

Eugene & Margaret Olcott	2003
Shannon & René Donley	2004
Richard & Frances Latterell	2004
Samuel & Edwina Donley	2004
RSP Enterprises	2005
Eric & Joy Lewis	2005
Edward & Helen Moore	2005
Charles Printz Sr.	2005
Linda C. Renaud	2006
Oscar & Janet Stine	2006
Tony Lorber	2006
C. Forrest & Mildred A. Hammond	2006
Miriam E. Ellis	2006
W. Lewis Pamplin & Dianna L. Mills	2006
Dorothea I. & John J. Quinn, Jr.	2007
Paul T. & Carolyn B. Willis	2007
S. Walter Washington	2007
David & Tracie McCormick	2007
John S. & Deborah N. Bauserman	2007
Donald E. & Vickie L. Davidson	2008
Timothy W. Smith & Garnet E. Payne	2009
Judith Ann Hockman	2009
Mary Kathryn Hockman Robinson	2009
The Bower, LLC	2009
James A. Rogers & Patricia F. Rissler	2009
Judith Ann Hockman & Margaret Ann Saunders	2011
Mark Schiavone & John Restaino	2011
Twin Ridge Orchard, Inc.	2011
Laurie L. Scott	2011
William A. Knighten	2011
Scott I. & Sondra J. Morgan	2011
Walter, Tammy P. & Ray E. Walls	2011
Hank A. & Betty J. Stehr	2011
Jack L. Burch, Sr.	2011
Robert C. Henshaw	2011
John H. Writt	2011
David A. & Franella J. Gray	2012
Hugh Hoover & Diana Gray	2012
Claymont Society for Continuous Education	2012
William C. Donley	2014
William M. & Deloris M. Nicewarner	2014
Susannah M. Buckles	2017
Edward L. Boyd & Sons, Inc.	2018
Kevin S. Carter, Linda C. Dean, William A. Knighten, Jr., Freda L. Mullaney	2018
Timothy W. Smith	2019
Henry A. Willard, III & John B. Willard	2019
T. L. Magaha & Sons, Inc	2020
Borden Farm, LLC	2020
Rick E. Ware, Carolyn W. Voges, Darlene W. Quinn	2020
William N. & Mary S. Snyder	2021
John C. Hendricks	2022
Timothy & Staci Brown	2022
Kime Farm Owners	2023
Conrad Lotze & Kristina Maciunas	2023
Gloria Willis	2024
Charles F. Printz Jr.	2024



# Financial Summary

The Farmland Protection Program is funded locally through the county's real estate transfer tax and by private donors. The Board receives matching funds from the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (USDA/NRCS), the National Park Service's American Battlefield Protection Program (NPS/ABPP) the West Virginia Agricultural Lands Protection Authority and individuals.

The Board measures the value of its work by the benefits created by protecting agricultural lands that support the local farming economy.

We manage our finances with the same diligence and care we apply to our conservation work and stewardship. More than 96% of our annual income goes to protect farmland.

In 2023, The Board received an anonymous bequest of \$1.5 million for the purchase agricultural conservation easements. This truly astonishing and unexpected gift allows the Board to protect more acres, far sooner than expected. We are deeply honored and humbled by the faith and trust this gift represents.

## 96%

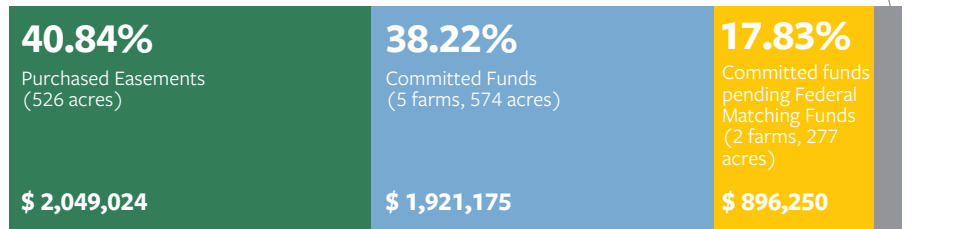
More than 96% of our annual income goes to protect farmland.



PHOTO BY MARK MUSE

## 2023 Uses of County Funds

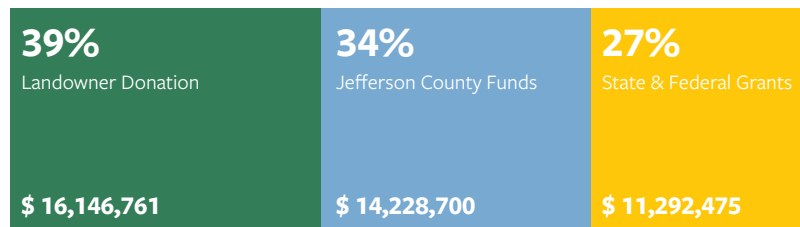
Total Funds: \$5,026,687



## Easement Funding Sources 2002-2023

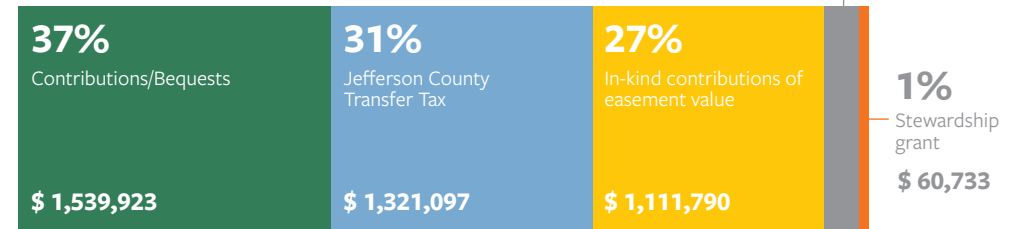
Total County Funds invested: \$25,521,175

Total Appraised Value of Easements: \$41,667,936



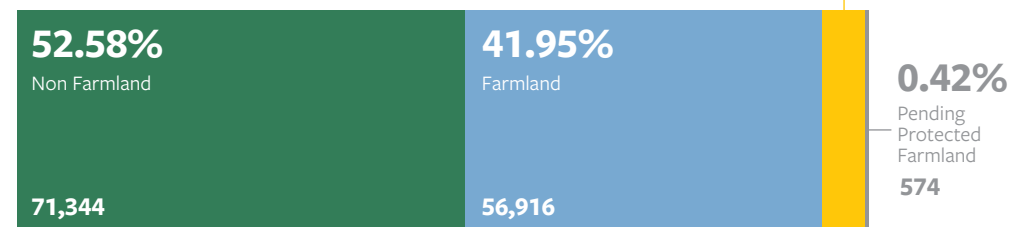
## 2023 Revenue

Total Revenue: \$4,200,127



## Total Land, Farmland and Protected Farmland, 2023

Total Lands (acres): 135,680



# Thank You to Partners and Supporters

**Without the collaboration** of our partners for 22 years, we wouldn't have been able to protect 58 farms! We are grateful to all our supporters and partners who make this work possible.

## CONSERVATION PARTNERS

- American Battlefield Trust
- Berkeley County Farmland Protection Board
- Land Trust Alliance
- Land Trust of the Eastern Panhandle
- National Park Service/American Battlefield Protection Program
- Potomac Conservancy
- Safe Water Conservation Collaborative
- The Conservation Fund
- The Nature Conservancy
- USDA/Natural Resources Conservation Service
- West Virginia Agricultural Land Protection Authority
- West Virginia Association of Farmland Protection Boards
- West Virginia Rivers

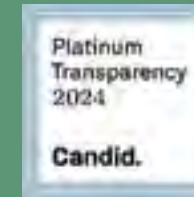
## JEFFERSON COUNTY PARTNERS

- Eastern Panhandle Conservation District
- Jefferson County Development Authority
- Jefferson County Farm Bureau
- Jefferson County GIS Office
- Jefferson County Historic Landmarks Commission
- Jefferson County Planning and Zoning Office
- Jefferson County Prosecuting Attorney's Office
- The many County employees who have assisted us during the year
- WVU Jefferson County Extension Service

**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.**

## Your gift matters!

JOIN IN WITH THE INCREDIBLE INDIVIDUALS WHO SUPPORT CONSERVATION, WHO LIKE YOU, CARE DEEPLY ABOUT MAKING THIS WORLD A BETTER PLACE.



**THE FARMLAND PROTECTION BOARD HAS EARNED A PLATINUM RATING ON CANDID GUIDESTAR**

With your generous support, we are helping farm families in Jefferson County protect their land and precious natural resources for future generations. Your contributions are dedicated to the Farmland Protection Fund and are matched by public grants.

GIVE ONLINE:  
[www.wvfp.org/jefferson](http://www.wvfp.org/jefferson)

MAIL YOUR GIFT TO  
**PO BOX 731  
CHARLES TOWN, WV 25414**

Leave a Legacy through a bequest:

A gift through your will or living trust for farmland protection will be a lasting memorial for future generations. Donations to the Farmland Protection Board, a 501(c)3 charitable organization, are tax-deductible.

Tax ID No. 55-0779838



CEDAR COTTAGE FARM  
PHOTO BY MARK MUSE



## Jefferson County Farmland Protection Board

PO BOX 731  
CHARLES TOWN, WV 25414

304.724.1414  
[wvfp.org/jefferson](http://wvfp.org/jefferson)  
[jefferson@wvfp.org](mailto:jefferson@wvfp.org)

 [JeffersonCountyFarmlandProtectionBoard](https://www.facebook.com/JeffersonCountyFarmlandProtectionBoard)