A decorative background for the title section featuring a light blue sky and a field of green corn leaves, with the leaves appearing as a semi-transparent overlay.

Field Notes:

An Overview for New Owners of Preserved Farmland



About the Program

The Montgomery County Agricultural Land Preservation Program, also known as the Farmland Preservation Program, started in 1990. Under this program, landowners choose to preserve their land through the sale of development rights, permanently placing a conservation easement on the property. The county's first preserved farm was the 164-acre Wismer Farm in Trappe Borough. Since then, the county has preserved over 9,300 acres of farmland on more than 160 farms in 18 municipalities. The county is committed to preserving agricultural land and promoting farming as an important part of today's economy. The county's comprehensive plan, *Montco 2040: A Shared Vision*, has a goal to preserve an additional 6,000 acres of farmland by 2040.



Moser farm

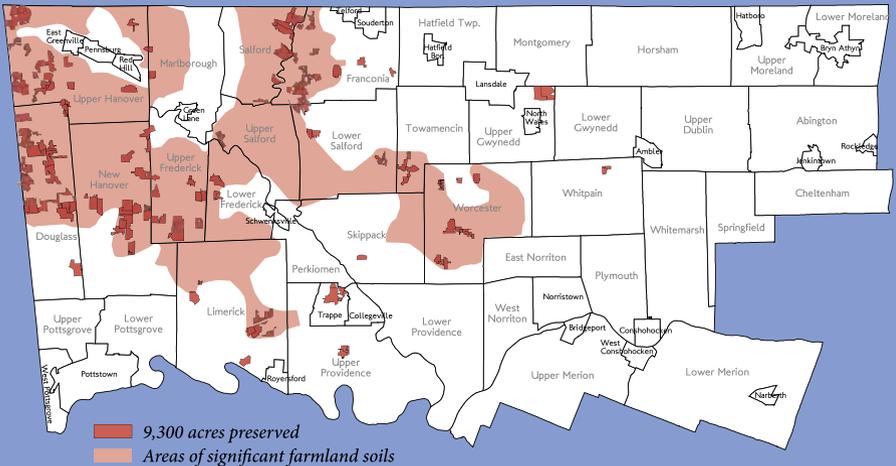
What is a Conservation Easement?

A conservation easement is a permanent deed restriction on a property's future development, which is recorded with the county's Recorder of Deeds. The land, which no longer can be developed, stays in private ownership and management while remaining on the property tax rolls. Funds to purchase easements come through a partnership with the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Montgomery County, and frequently a township or borough.

What to Expect as a New Preserved Farm Owner

- Preserved land must be used for production agriculture or equine activity.
- An inspection is required every 1-2 years on each preserved farm. You will be notified by mail at least 10 days in advance of the visit. Visits take place on weekdays between 8 AM and 5 PM. While the owner is not required to be present, we encourage the owner and/or operator to attend the inspection visit.
- Updated (written within the last 10 years) conservation plans are required for all preserved farms. A new plan is required for a change in farming type or to replace an older plan, and even if farming practices are unchanged. Contact the Montgomery County Conservation District at 610.489.4506 for a list of qualified plan writers. For information on reimbursement up to 50% of the cost of a new plan, please contact Danielle Dobisch at 610.278.5239 or go to www.montcopa.org/FarmlandProgram for an application.
- If the farm changes ownership again, the program administrator must be notified within 30 days of settlement with the name and address of the new owner, a copy of the new deed, a statement of the price per acre of the portion involved in the transfer, and the book and page number of the new deed (once recorded). A copy of the conservation easement must be recorded with the new deed.
- The Center for Farm Transitions is run by the Pennsylvania Dept. of Agriculture to assist preserved farm owners planning for the future of their farm businesses. For more information: contact Jared Grissinger at 717.705.9513 or ra-pagrows@pa.gov or www.iplantofarm.pa.gov
- Farmland and existing residences can be leased out after preservation. There is no requirement that the landowner farms or lives on the property.

Preserved Farmland in Montgomery County



Post-Preservation Actions

One Additional Residential Opportunity

After preservation, a landowner may build an additional residence one time only, with approval from the Farmland Preservation Board for its location. This can be done concurrently with any municipal permit applications, which may be required for new construction. Once built, no subsequent landowners retain this right.

The Farmland Preservation Board will approve or disapprove an application based upon the impact of the residence on the viability of the land for agriculture. The proposed residence must have as minimal an impact as possible. The curtilage shall not exceed two acres, and shall leave the greater of at least 10 acres or 50% of the preserved farmland in cropland, pasture, and/or grazing land.

Before proceeding, the landowner must determine whether the land needs to be subdivided to build the additional house. The guidebook permits a two-acre subdivision for the additional residence and the guidebook Appendix contains two distinct applications for this purpose, based on whether or not subdivision is required.

Subdivision of a Preserved Farm

Subdivision of a preserved farm into two smaller farms will not be permitted unless the subdivision meets the criteria in the program guidelines and is approved by the Farmland Preservation Board.

For any subdivision request, please complete a subdivision application (found in the program guidebook's Subdivision Guidelines). Only farms 100 acres or greater are eligible.

Preserved Farm Signs

A roadside sign is required on all farms preserved after September 2007. The sign states that the farm is preserved by the Montgomery County Farmland Preservation Program. There is no cost to the landowner for the sign. Owners with frontage on more than one road may request one sign on each road.



For More Information

Contact: **Danielle Dobisch**
Farmland Preservation Administrator
610.278.5239
ddobisch@montcopa.org

Part-time or Off-Season Activities

Activities listed here are permissible in addition to the main farm operation, and are not intended to substitute for the required agricultural production or a commercial equine activity. Please refer to the program guidelines for full descriptions. The provisions below do not supersede local ordinances.

- A. On-site farm markets provided that at least 50 percent of items sold are produced on-site by the farm operator.
- B. The construction of agricultural buildings.
- C. Hunting and the production and stocking of game birds.
- D. The construction of wind, solar, hydroelectric, geothermal, methane, wood, and alcohol fuel systems, and structures and facilities for the storage and treatment of animal wastes. Please see the Program Guidelines for details and restrictions.
- E. Irrigation, farm pond improvements, and soil and water conservation practices.
- F. Production and sale of arts and crafts.
- G. The accommodation of tourists and visitors within residential and/or agricultural structures otherwise permitted under the law.
- H. Minor rural enterprises and activities including beekeeping, corn mazes and similar farming activities, hayrides, hunting, and educational tours.
- I. Other similar uses upon approval by the Montgomery County Agricultural Land Preservation Board and the State Agricultural Land Preservation Board.





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