

Farmland Protection: A Community-Based Approach

Presented By:
The Piedmont Land Conservancy

Mission of the Piedmont Land Conservancy

- To protect natural and scenic lands, farms and green spaces in Piedmont North Carolina to enrich the quality of life for our communities and future generations.
- Serve Alamance, Caswell, Forsyth, Guilford, Randolph, Rockingham, Stokes, Surry and Yadkin Counties

Overview of PLC

- Established in 1990
- Currently 4 Full-time & 4 Part-time staff, 2 regular Contractors/Consultants
- Protected nearly 3,900 acres at 52 sites valued at more than \$19 Million
- Protect land in four Project Themes:
 - Farmland
 - Natural Heritage
 - Urban Green Space
 - Water Resources

How PLC protects land?

- Conservation Easement (Preferred)
 - Donated, Bargain Sale, Fair Market Value purchase
- Fee-Simple Acquisition
 - Donated, Bargain Sale, Fair Market Value purchase
- Bequest

What is a Conservation Easement?

- A legal agreement between landowner & qualified holder (IRS 170h)
- Landowner grants specific property rights to the holder of the easement
- Landowner reserves specific property rights
- Maintain ownership and right to sell or will land to whomever

Costs of an Easement

- Overhead for Project Management
- Transactional Steps
- Purchase, if applicable
- Stewardship Endowment

Landowner Motivation

- Emotional
 - Family land
 - Sentimental meaning
- Conservation-minded
 - Limit development
 - Protect resources
- Tax Benefits
 - Estate
 - Income
 - Property

Steps for a Conservation Easement

- Inquiry/Approach
- Site Visit
- Identification of Funding Strategy
- Approval
 - Land Committee
 - Board
- Securing Funds
 - Grant Writing
 - Fundraising appeal
- Draft Easement Document

Steps for a Conservation Easement

- Transactional Steps
 - Appraisal
 - Biological inventory
 - Environmental Assessment
 - Survey
 - Photo Documentation
 - Mapping
 - Title Search/Legal Services

What happens after the Easement is signed and recorded?

- Public Relations
 - Press Event/Press Release
 - Newsletter/Web page
- Stewardship
 - Annual visit
 - Respond to requests for approval/questions
- Documentation for Tax Benefits
 - Federal Tax Form 8283
 - NC Conservation Tax Credit

Overview of PLC's Farmland Protection Program



Farmland Protection Options

- Agricultural Districts
 - Voluntary
 - County Ordinance
- Establishment of Conservation Practices
 - Protects the natural resources
 - Provide farmer with cost-share or annual payments
- Term Agricultural Easements
 - Typically 10, 15, 30 years
 - Debt-Reduction Programs

Farmland Protection Options

- Permanent Conservation Easement
 - Need qualified holder
 - Restrictions “run with the land”
 - Prohibit development for non-agricultural purposes



Farmland Protection Issues

- Capacity to meet the demand
 - Staff (Projects & Stewardship)
 - Funding
- Prioritization and Identification
- Raising awareness importance & need
 - General Public
 - Decision-makers
- Funding, Funding, Funding

Project Prioritization Criteria

- Motivation of landowner to protect farmland & adopt Best Management Practices
- Level of Threat
- The Tract's Significance
 - Agricultural productivity
 - Impact on long-term sustainability of an on-going agricultural operation
 - Contribution to long-term sustainability and economic viability of agriculture within its community

Project Prioritization Criteria

- Tract location relative to other areas identified by PLC or other entity as farmland protection area or rural conservation district
- Level of interest from surrounding farmers/landowners

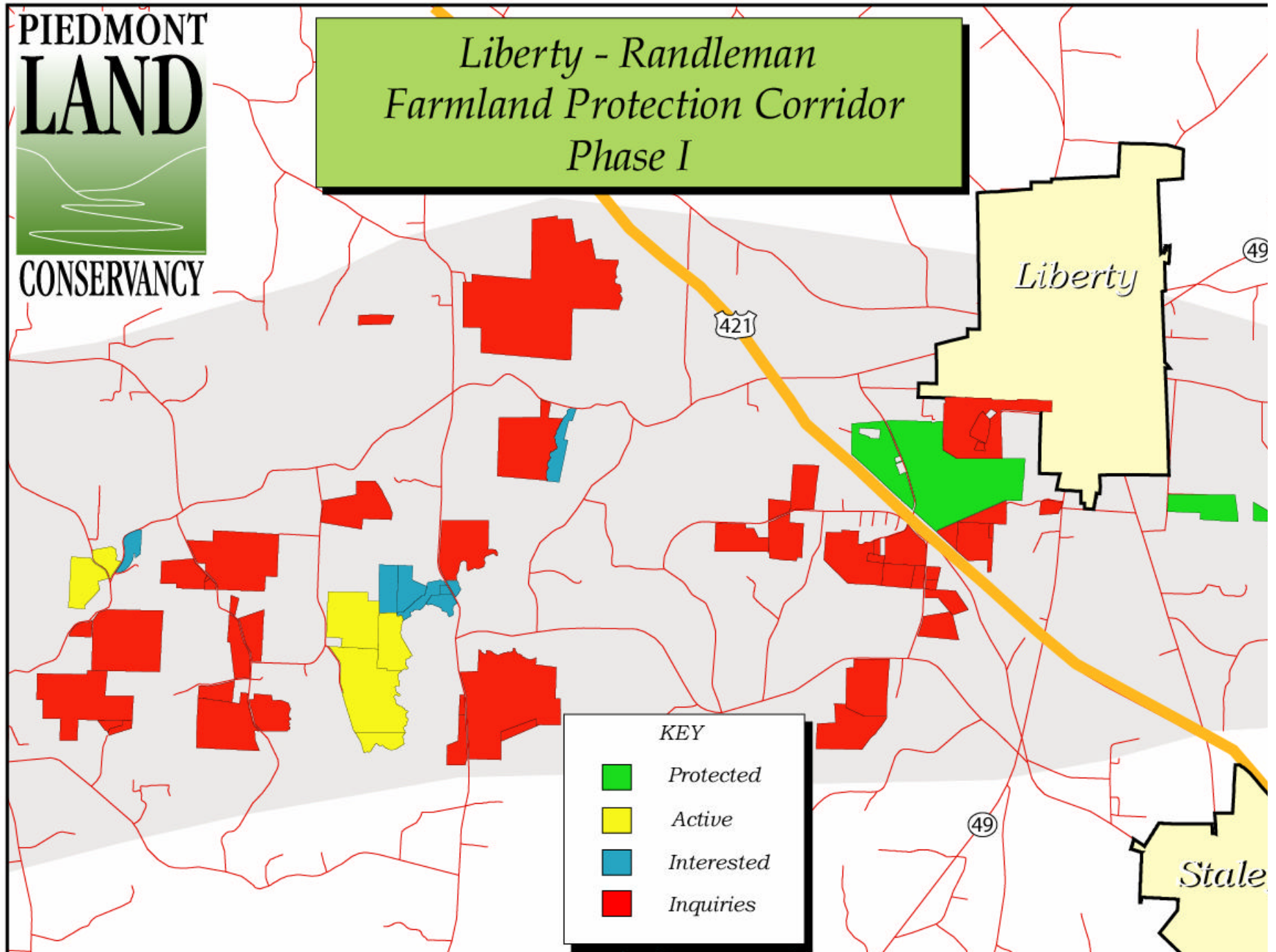
PLC's Farmland Protection Statistics





- 15 of 52 completed projects protect farmland from non-agricultural development
- 1,362 acres of farmland currently protected
- Farmland represents 35% of PLC's protected acres

PLC's Farmland Protection Statistics

- 63% of protected farmland acres are within two farming community projects
- Approximately \$1,420,116 has been donated in development rights by the farmers
- By end of 2002, nearly 1,000 acres will be protected within PLC's two farming community projects

*Liberty - Randleman
Farmland Protection Corridor
Phase I*



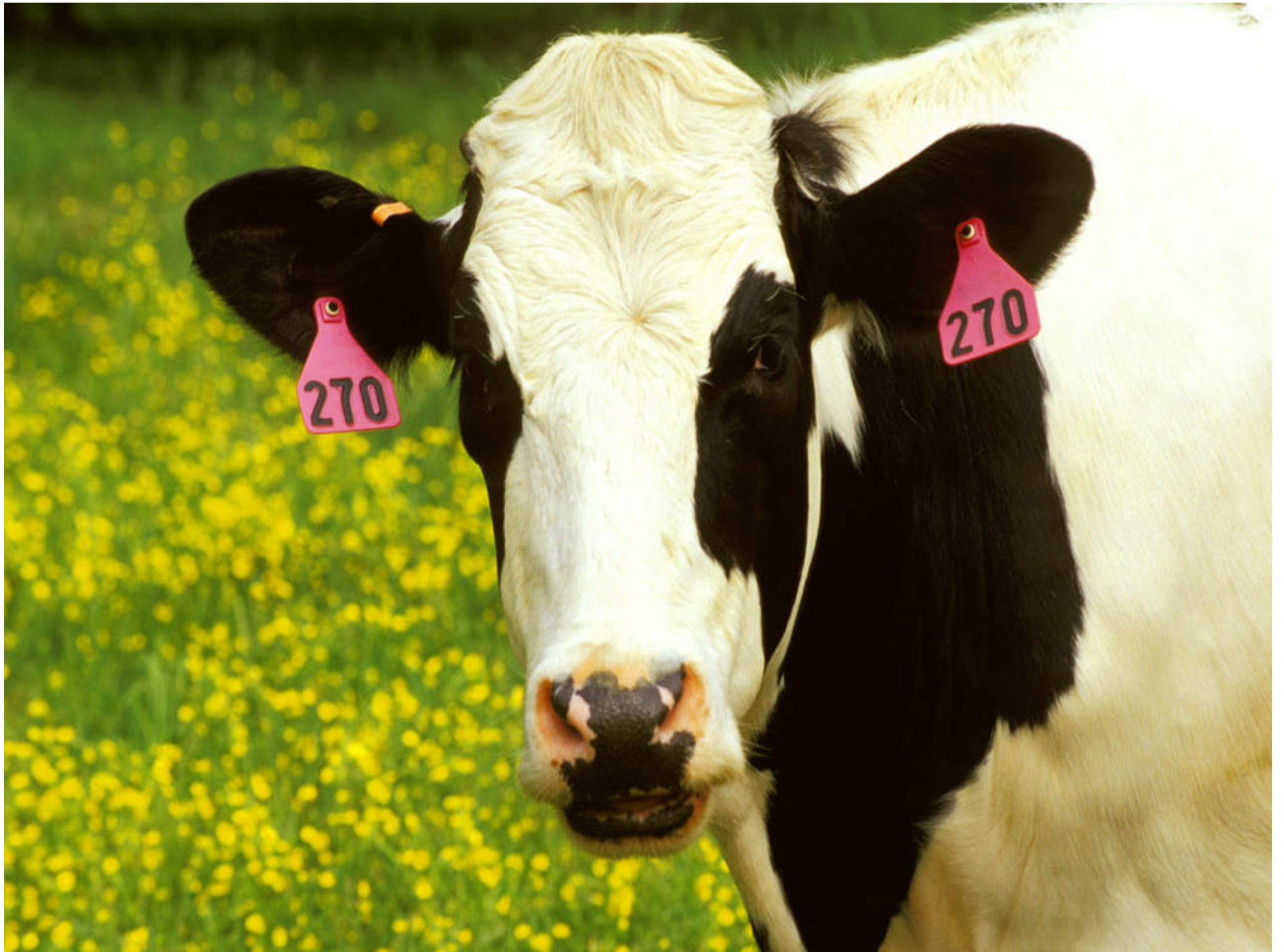
KEY	
	<i>Protected</i>
	<i>Active</i>
	<i>Interested</i>
	<i>Inquiries</i>

Liberty-Randleman Heritage Corridor Protection Initiative

- Several communities:
 - Bull Run
 - Gray's Chapel
 - Liberty
- All located along Old Liberty between Liberty & Randleman
- Area designated as a Rural Conservation Area in Randolph County's Growth Management Plan

Liberty-Randleman Heritage Corridor -- Threats

- Randolph County's population increased by 22.4%
- Piedmont Triad Metropolitan Statistical Area home to 1.2 Million people
- Two new interstates are planned in the region
 - I-73
 - I-74







Current projects underway

- Williams Dairy I
 - Bargain Sale
 - USDA, CWMTF, Landowner
- Williams Dairy II
 - Bargain Sale
 - Town of Ramseur, USDA, Landowner
- Goat Lady Dairy
 - Phased Easement
 - CWMTF

Community-Based Farmland Protection Sources of Support for Agricultural Easements

