

Cleveland County Voluntary Farmland Preservation Program

The purpose of this program is to promote agricultural values and the general welfare of the county and more specifically, to increase identity and pride in the agricultural community and its way of life; encourage the economic development and financial health of agriculture; and increase protection from non-farm development and other negative impacts on properly managed farms.



Administered by the Cleveland County Agricultural Advisory Board. The seven-member board is appointed by the Cleveland County Board of Commissioners and is comprised of Cleveland County farmers actively engaged in production agriculture representing one or more agricultural districts.

Staff assistance is provided by the Cleveland Soil and Water Conservation District.

Tradition in Agriculture

Soils in Cleveland County, as well as much of the Piedmont, are highly weathered and some of the oldest in the world in terms of soil development. Early settlers cleared and cultivated the land until the natural fertility was depleted, at which time they would abandon the fields and clear more land. This practice gradually ended toward the latter part of the 1800's as farmers began to replenish the soil with organic matter and nutrients from planting legumes and other cover crops as well as adding fertilizer. Terracing to prevent soil erosion was begun in the 1890's. In 1909 Cleveland County farmers were growing 39,000 acres of cotton, 40,000 acres of corn

and 9,000 acres of wheat. In the 1940's Cleveland County led the state in cotton production with up to 87,000 acres with more than 145,000 total acres of cropland. In the 1960's no-till planting was first used to control erosion. Eighty percent of all crops are now no-till planted. Today Cleveland County has a variety of farm operations. Cropland has declined significantly to approximately 30,000 acres but pasture and beef cows along with poultry farms and nursery/greenhouse operations have all been steadily increasing. Total agricultural sales exceed \$35 million annually in Cleveland County.



Past



Present

Farms accepted in the Farmland Preservation Program will be part of an Agricultural District.

Qualifications are:

Agricultural Districts will consist of at least 50 acres of qualified farmland or when combined with other participating farms within a mile of each other, total a minimum of 50 acres. This may include one or more participants.

Farms must be in or qualify for the present-use-valuation taxation program with the Cleveland County Tax Office.

Farms must be properly managed according to the Natural Resources Conservation Service's highly erodible land erosion control practices.

Farms must have been actively used in agriculture, horticulture, or forestry for a minimum of five years or have soils best suited for agricultural production on two thirds of the land.



The Conservation Agreement

Participants with qualifying farmland must agree to:

- Sustain, promote, and encourage agriculture in the district.
- Support protection against nuisance suits and undesired non-farm development.
- Prohibit non-farm use or development of the land for a period of at least ten years except for the creation of not more than three lots that meet applicable county regulations.

Since this is a voluntary program landowners can revoke this conservation agreement by written notice to the agricultural advisory board.



Benefits of Farmland to Cleveland County

- Provides an important source of income and employment
- Protects water quality and quantity; infiltration of rainfall in the soil replenishes groundwater and reduces flooding
- Protects air quality; plants convert carbon dioxide to oxygen
- Provides wildlife habitat
- Provides recreational opportunities such as hunting, fishing, horseback riding, hiking
- Promotes tourism with scenic drives, roadside stands, farm tours
- Results in less public services per property tax dollar than residential land use



Benefits to Participants

- Agricultural Districts will be identified along with one half mile buffers on maps located in the Cleveland County Planning Department, Register of Deeds, Cleveland Soil and Water Conservation District and Cooperative Extension Service
- The Cleveland County Geographic Informational System will include information identifying parcels in agricultural districts or within one half mile of an agricultural district
- Notice in Register of Deeds office will inform public to expect activities associated with agriculture to be taking place in these districts
- Public hearing required on any proposed state or local condemnation of land in an agricultural district

Cooperating Agencies

County of Cleveland
 Cleveland Soil & Water Conservation District
 USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Service
 Cleveland County Farm Bureau
 Mountain Valleys RC&D Council
 N.C. Cooperative Extension Service
 USDA, Farm Service Agency

For more information and/or applications contact:

**Cleveland County
 Farmland Preservation
 Program
 844 Wallace Grove Road
 Shelby, NC 28150-7213
 704-471-0235, ext. 3**



FARMLAND PRESERVATION PROGRAM



Protection
Pride
Production
Promotion

CLEVELAND COUNTY NORTH CAROLINA

