



CUMBERLAND VALLEY RAIL TRAIL



Farmland Preservation

Agricultural Conservation Easement (ACE)

Purchase Program: Thanks to the ACE program, Pennsylvania has become a leader in the nation when it comes to the number of farmland acres that have been permanently preserved for agricultural production. The ACE program gives local farmers the option of selling or donating agricultural easements to local, county, or state governments which then protect this prime farmland from future residential or commercial development.

Several farms along the Cumberland Valley Rail Trail have been preserved through this important initiative (see map at right). Between 1989 and 2012, over 459,000 acres of Pennsylvania farmland (15,000 acres in Cumberland County alone) have been protected in this manner, and more lands are added each year.

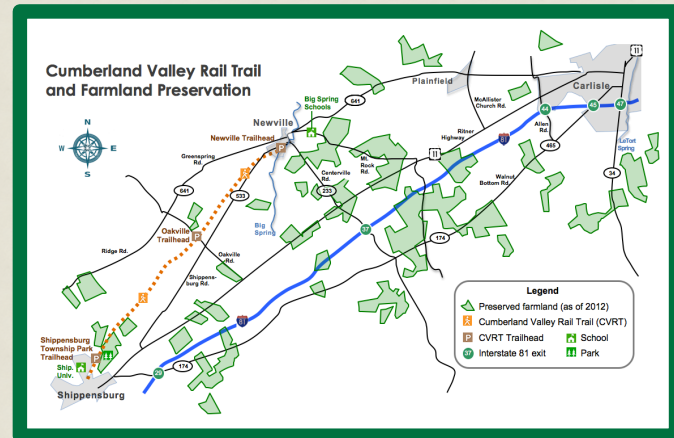
In order to qualify for preservation, at least half the tract of land being considered must be harvested cropland, pasture, or grazing land. Tracts of land are then prioritized for preservation according to their vulnerability to development, proximity to other tracts of preserved farmland, soil quality and farmland potential.

Image credits: Kathleen and Don Engle

Agricultural Conservation Easement Program Particulars

Participation is completely voluntary and very competitive. The property must be currently engaged in agriculture, at least 52 acres in size and be enrolled in an Agricultural Security Area. Farms are ranked for participation on the following criteria:

- Soil Quality: Determined via soil survey
- Farmland potential: Size of farm, percent of farm in production, conservation practices/stewardship of the land, scenic and environmental qualities, percent of farm offered for easement purchase, existence as a family farm
- Cluster potential: Proximity to other preserved farms, consistency with County Comprehensive Plan, proximity to Agricultural Security Areas
- Development Potential: Proximity to public water/sewer, adjacent land use, amount of road frontage



The importance of farming: More than 27% of acreage in Pennsylvania is farmland, and over half of that is in active production. Farming is the state's leading economic enterprise. Pennsylvania's farm preservation initiatives support this important sector of our economy. These initiatives also ensure that the predominantly agricultural nature of the state is maintained, help guarantee our future food supply, and assure a way of life Pennsylvanians cherish will continue for generations to come.

