

F.P.P. 10-

CLEVELAND COUNTY
VOLUNTARY FARMLAND PRESERVATION PROGRAM
ORDINANCE

ARTICLE I
TITLE

An ordinance of the Board of County Commissioners of CLEVELAND COUNTY NORTH CAROLINA, entitled, "VOLUNTARY FARMLAND PRESERVATION PROGRAM ORDINANCE."

ARTICLE II
AUTHORITY

The articles and sections of this program are adopted pursuant to authority conferred by the N.C. G.S. Sections 106-735 through 106-743.

ARTICLE III
PURPOSE

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

ARTICLE IV
DEFINITIONS

The following are defined for purposes of this ordinance:

Advisory Board: Cleveland County Agricultural Advisory Board.

Chairman: Chairman of the Cleveland County Agricultural Advisory Board.

District: Voluntary Agricultural District as established by this ordinance.

Board of Commissioners: Cleveland County Board of Commissioners.

ARTICLE V
AGRICULTURAL ADVISORY BOARD

A. Creation

The Board of Commissioners establishes an Agricultural Advisory Board to implement the provisions of this program

B. Membership

The Advisory Board shall consist of seven (7) members appointed by the Board of Commissioners.

C. Membership Requirements

1. Each Advisory Board member shall be a Cleveland County resident and except for the initial Advisory Board each member shall represent one or more Agricultural Districts.
2. All members shall be actively engaged in production agriculture.
3. The members actively engaged in production agriculture shall be selected for appointment by the Board of Commissioners from the names of individuals submitted to the Board of Commissioners by the Soil and Water Conservation District, the Cooperative Extension Service, the Farm Service Agency Committee,

and the Cleveland County Farm Bureau with an effort to have the broadest geographical representation possible.

D. Tenure

The initial board is to consist of 2 appointees for terms of one year: 2 appointees for terms of two years: and 3 appointees for terms of three years. Thereafter, all appointments are to be for terms of three years with reappointment for one consecutive term permitted, after which the member may be reappointed after a one year absence from the Advisory Board.

E. Vacancies

Any vacancy on the Advisory Board is to be filled by the Board of Commissioners for the remainder of the unexpired term. Vacancies should be filled on membership criteria stated in Article V, Section C.

F. Removal for Cause

Any member of the Advisory Board may be removed for cause by the Board of Commissioners subsequent to written charges being presented to the member and after consultation with Agricultural Advisory Board.

G. Funding

The funding of the Advisory Board shall be fixed and amended by the Board of Commissioners.

H. Advisory Board Procedure

1. Chairman

The Advisory Board shall elect a chairman and vice-chairman each year at its first meeting of the fiscal year. The chairman shall preside over all regular or special meetings of the Advisory Board. In the absence or disability of the chairman, the vice-chairman shall preside and shall exercise all the powers of the chairman. Additional officers may be elected as needed.

2. Jurisdiction

The advisory Board may adopt rules of procedure not inconsistent with this ordinance or with other provisions of State law.

3. Advisory Board Year

The Advisory Board shall use the Cleveland County fiscal year as its meeting year.

4. Meetings

Meetings of the Advisory Board shall be held at the call of the chairman and at such other times as the Advisory Board may specify in its rules of procedure. Notice of any meetings to the members shall be in writing, unless otherwise agreed to by all Advisory Board members. A quorum of the Advisory Board must be present to conduct business. A quorum will consist of a majority. All meetings will be conducted in compliance with the North Carolina open meetings law.

5. Majority Vote

The concurring vote of a majority of the members of the Advisory Board present shall be necessary to decide in favor of an applicant; or to pass upon any other matter on which it is required to act under this ordinance. To reverse any order, requirement, decision, or determination of the Agricultural Advisory Board the concurring vote of a majority of all members of the Advisory Board shall be necessary.

6. Records

The Advisory Board shall keep minutes of the proceedings showing members present, the vote upon each question, and shall keep records of its examination and other official actions, all of which shall be filed in the Office of the Advisory Board and shall be a public record.

I. Duties

The Advisory Board shall:

1. Review and approve applications for qualified farmland and voluntary agricultural districts and make recommendations concerning the establishment and modification of agricultural districts.
2. Conduct public hearings:
3. Advise the Board of Commissioners on projects, programs or issues affecting the agricultural economy or activities within the county that will affect agricultural districts:
4. Review and make recommendations concerning proposed amendments to this ordinance:
5. Study additional methods of farmland preservation and make recommendations to the Board of Commissioners; and

6. Perform other agricultural related tasks or duties assigned by the Board of Commissioners.

ARTICLE VI
CREATION OF VOLUNTARY AGRICULTURAL DISTRICTS

A. Implementation

In order to implement the purposes stated in Article III, this program provides for the creation of voluntary agricultural districts, which meet the following standards:

1. The district shall contain a minimum of 50 contiguous acres of qualified farmland: OR
2. The district shall contain two or more qualified farms which contain a minimum of 50 acres and are located within a mile of each other.

B. Encourage formation

The county may take such action as it deems appropriate through the Advisory Board or other entities or individuals to encourage the formation of the Districts and to further their purpose and objectives, including the implementation of a public information program to reasonably inform landowners of the farmland preservation program.

C. Display

The Districts shall be marked on county maps displayed for public view in the following offices:

1. Register of Deeds
2. Planning Department
3. Soil and Water Conservation District
4. Cooperative Extension
5. County Land Records
6. Any other office deemed necessary by the Advisory Board.

D. Withdrawal

In the event that one or more participants in the District withdraw and the acreage in the district becomes less than the minimum acreage required or results in the remaining land being non-contiguous, a voluntary agricultural district will continue to exist so long as there is one qualifying farm.

ARTICLE VII
CERTIFICATION AND QUALIFICATION OF FARMLAND

A. Requirements

1. To secure county certification as qualifying farmland, a farm must:
 - a. Be participating in the farm present-use-valuation taxation program established by G.S. 105-277.2 through 105-277.7 or is otherwise determined by the county to meet all the qualifications of this program set forth in G. S. 105-277.3;
 - b. Be certified by the Natural Resources Conservation Service of the United States Department of Agriculture as being a farm on which at least two-thirds of the land is composed of soils that:
 - i. Are best suited for providing food, seed, fiber, forage, timber, forestry products, horticultural crops and oil seed crops:
 - ii. Have good soil qualities:
 - iii. Are favorable for all major crops common to the county where the land is located.
 - iv. Have a favorable growing season and
 - v. Receive the available moisture needed to produce high yields for an average of eight out of ten years.

OR

Have been actively used in agricultural, horticultural or forestry operations as defined by N.C. G.S. 105-277.2 (1,2,3) during each of the five previous years, measured from the date on which the determination must be made as to whether the land in question qualifies:

- c. Be managed, if highly erodible land exists on the farm, in accordance with the Natural Resources Conservation Service defined erosion-control practices that are addressed to said highly erodible land:

- d. Be the subject of a conservation agreement as defined in N.C.G.S. 121-35 between the county and the owner of such land that prohibits non-farm use or development of such land for a period of at least ten years, except for the creation of not more than three lots that meet applicable county regulations.

ARTICLE VIII
APPLICATION, APPROVAL AND APPEAL PROCEDURE

A. Application Procedure

1. A landowner may apply to participate in the program by making application to the chairman of the Advisory Board or a designated staff person. The application shall be on forms provided by the Advisory Board. The application to participate in a district may be filed with the certification for qualifying farmland.
2. An agreement to sustain, encourage and promote agriculture must be executed by the landowner and recorded with the Advisory Board.

B. Approval Process

1. Upon submission of the application to the Advisory Board, the Advisory Board shall meet within 60 days to approve or disapprove the application. The chairman shall notify the applicant by first class mail of approval or disapproval of participation in the district.
2. Upon receipt of an application the chairman will forward copies immediately to:
 - a. The Cleveland County tax assessor's office: and
 - b. The Cleveland County Soil and Water Conservation District and the Natural Resources Conservation Service. The offices shall evaluate, complete and return their copies to the chairman within 30 days of receipt.

C. Appeal

If an application is denied by the Advisory Board, the petitioner has 30 days to appeal the decision to the Board of Commissioners. Such appeal shall be presented in writing. The decision of the Board of Commissioners is final.

ARTICLE IX
REVOCATION OF PRESERVATION AGREEMENT

By written notice to the Advisory Board, a landowner of qualifying farmland may revoke the Preservation Agreement or the Advisory Board may revoke the same Preservation Agreement based on non-compliance by the landowner, subject to the same provisions as contained in Article VIII for appeal of denials. Such revocation shall result in loss of qualifying farm status and loss of eligibility to participate in a district.

ARTICLE X
PUBLIC HEARINGS

A. Purpose

Pursuant to N.C.G.S. 106-740 which provides that no state or local public agency or governmental unit may formally initiate any action to condemn any interest in qualifying farmland within a District until such agency or unit has requested the Advisory Board to hold a public hearing on the proposed condemnation, this ordinance provides for such hearings.

B. Procedure

1. Upon receiving a request, the Advisory Board shall publish notice describing the proposed action in the appropriate newspapers of Cleveland County within five business days of the request, and will in the same notice notify the public of a public hearing on the proposed condemnation, to be held within 30 days of receipt of the request.
- 2.. The Advisory Board shall meet to review:
 - a. If the need for the project has been satisfactorily established by the agency or unit of government involved, including a review of any fiscal impact analysis conducted by the agency involved.
 - b. Alternatives to the proposed action that have less impact and are less disruptive to the agricultural activities of the District within which the proposed action is to take place.

3. Land value will not be a factor in the selection between properties under consideration for the proposed action.
4. Within 10 days after the public hearings, the Advisory Board shall make a report containing its findings and recommendations regarding the proposed action. The report shall be made available at the office of the Advisory Board for a period of ten days for public comment prior to its being conveyed to the decision-making body of the agency proposing acquisition.
5. Pursuant to N.C.G.S. 106-740, the Board of Commissioners shall not permit any formal initiation of condemnation by local agencies while the proposed condemnation is properly before the Advisory Board within these time limitations.
6. Prior to initiating condemnation proceedings which would convert land in a District to non farm uses: the county or any other local unit of government shall submit to the Advisory Board a statement that the governmental unit has considered alternatives to condemning farm land in the District.

ARTICLE XI
PUBLIC NOTICE

A. Procedure

1. Upon certification of qualifying farmland and designation of real property as a District, the Cleveland County Geographic Informational System shall be changed to include a notice reasonably calculated to alert a person researching the title of a particular tract that such tract is located within one-half aerial mile of a voluntary agricultural district.
2. The following notices shall be posted in the Office of the Register of Deeds

**“Notice to Real Estate Purchasers in Cleveland County “
Cleveland County Agricultural Districts**

Cleveland County has established agricultural districts to protect and preserve agricultural lands and activities. These districts have been developed and mapped by the county to inform all purchasers of real property that certain agricultural activities, including but not limited to pesticide spraying, manure spreading, machinery and truck operations, livestock operations, sawing, and similar activities may take place in these districts any time during the day or night. Maps and information on the location and establishment of these districts can be

obtained from the Register of Deeds Office , the Natural Resource & Conservation Service Office, and the Building Inspector's Office.

B. Limit of Liability

In no event shall the County or any of its officers, employees, or agents be held liable in damages for any misfeasance, malfeasance or nonfeasance occurring in good faith in connection with the duties or obligations imposed by this ordinance.

C. No Cause of Action

In no event shall any cause of action arise out of the failure of a person researching the title of a particular tract to report to any person the proximity of the tract to a qualifying farm or voluntary agricultural district as defined in this ordinance.

ARTICLE XII
SUBDDIVISION ORDINANCE AND ZONING ORDINANCE REVIEW

Developers of major subdivision or planned unit developments shall designate on preliminary development plans, the existence of the Districts within one-half aerial mile of the proposed development.

ARTICLE XIII
WAIVER OF WATER AND SEWER ASSESSMENTS

A. No Assessment

A landowner belonging to the District shall not be assessed for or required to connect water and/or sewer systems.

B. Abeyance

Water and sewer assessments will be held in abeyance, without interest, for farms, whether inside or outside of a District until improvements on such property are connected to the water or sewer system for which the assessment was made.

C. Termination of Abeyance

When the period of abeyance ends, the assessment is payable in accordance with the terms set out in the assessment resolution.

D. Suspension of Statute of Limitations

Statutes of limitations are suspended during the time that any assessment is held in abeyance without interest.

E. Other Statutory Abeyance Procedures

Nothing in this section is intended to diminish the authority of the County to hold assessment in abeyance under N.C.G.S. 153A-201.

ARTICLE XIV
CONSULTATION AUTHORITY

The Advisory Board may consult with the Cooperative Extension Office, the Cleveland County Soil and Water Conservation District, Natural Resources Conservation Service Office, the North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, the Cleveland County Farm Bureau, the North Carolina Farm Bureau, the County Board of Commissioners, and any other such agency the Advisory Board deems necessary to properly conduct its business.

ARTICLE XV
NORTH CAROLINA AGENCY NOTIFICATION

A. Record Annually with the N. C. Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services

A record of this ordinance shall be recorded with the North Carolina Commissioner of Agriculture's office after adoption. At least once a year the county shall submit a written report to the Commissioner of Agriculture concerning the status, progress and activities of the county's Farmland Preservation Program, including District information regarding:

1. Number of landowners enrolled:
2. Number of acres applied:
3. Number of acres certified:
4. Number of acres denied:
5. Date certified.

ARTICLE XVI LEGAL PROVISIONS

A. Severability

If any article, section, subsection clause, phrase or portion of this ordinance is for any reason invalid or unconstitutional as determined by any court of competent jurisdiction, such decision shall not affect the validity of the remaining portions of this ordinance.

B. Conflicts with other Ordinances and Statutes

Whenever the provisions of this ordinance conflict with other ordinances of Cleveland County, this ordinance shall govern. Whenever the provisions of any federal or state statute require more restrictive provisions than are required by this ordinance, the provisions of such statute shall govern.

C. Amendments

After notification and in consultation with the Agricultural Advisory Board this ordinance may be amended from time to time by the Board of Commissioners.

ARTICLE XVII
ENACTMENT

The Cleveland County Board of Commissioners hereby adopts and enacts the preceding articles and sections of this ordinance.

Adopted this 5 day of JUNE 2001

Motion for adoption by TOM BRIDGES

and seconded by CHARLIE HARRY

Unanimously adopted at 7:19 pm

Cleveland County Voluntary Farmland Preservation Program

Cleveland Soil and Water Conservation District
844 Wallace Grove Road
Shelby NC 28150-9213

Ph: 704-471-0235, ext. 3
Fax: 704-471-1230

October 23, 2001

Meg Scott Phipps
Commissioner of Agriculture
N. C. Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services
PO Box 27647
Raleigh, NC 27611

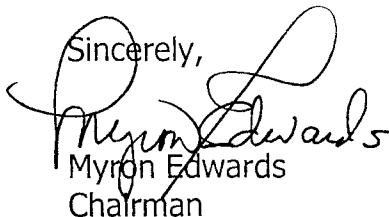
OCT 29 2001
COMMISSIONER
MAIL

Dear Commissioner Phipps:

Enclosed is a copy of the Cleveland County Voluntary Farmland Preservation Program Ordinance that was approved June 5, 2001. According to N.C. General Statute 106-743 this ordinance shall be recorded with the N.C. Commissioner of Agriculture office. In addition, each year we will provide a progress report giving the number of landowners enrolled, as well as the number of acres for which applications are received, certified and denied.

We feel this ordinance is important in promoting the agricultural community and general welfare of the county and are pleased to provide you this information.

Sincerely,



Myron Edwards
Chairman
Agricultural Advisory Board
Cleveland County, NC

Enclosure



Meg Scott Phipps
Commissioner

North Carolina
Department of Agriculture
and Consumer Services

October 31, 2001

Mr. Myron Edwards, Chairman
Agricultural Advisory Board
Cleveland County Voluntary Farmland
Preservation Program
844 Wallace Grove Road
Shelby, North Carolina 28150-9213

Dear Mr. Edwards:

Thank you for sending us a copy of the Cleveland County Voluntary Farmland Preservation Program Ordinance. This will be filed in the Department's permanent records.

Congratulations on your efforts to save farmland in Cleveland County for future generations.

Please let us know if we can be of assistance.

With kind regards, I remain

Sincerely,

Meg Scott Phipps
Commissioner of Agriculture

MSP:jw

mispEdwardsM-ClevelandCoOrd

✓ bcc: Brandon King
NC State University



Cleveland County Voluntary Farmland Preservation Program Application Form

NAME _____

STREET or PO BOX _____

CITY _____ **STATE** _____ **ZIP** _____

TELEPHONE _____

In order to participate within an Agricultural District the property must meet the following:

1. Contain a minimum of 50 contiguous acres of qualified farmland,
or
contain a minimum of 50 acres with two or more different landowners with qualifying farms, which are located within a mile of each other.
2. Be participating in the farm present-use-valuation taxation program established by G.S. 105-277.2 through 105-277.7 or is otherwise determined by the county to meet all the qualifications of this program set forth in G.S. 105-277.3.
3. Be certified by the Natural Resources Conservation Service of the United States Department of Agriculture as being a farm on which at least two-thirds of the land is composed of soils that:
 - a. Are best suited for providing food, seed, fiber, forage, timber, forestry products, horticultural crops and oil seed crops;
 - b. Have good soil qualities;
 - c. Are favorable for all major crops common to the county where the land is located;
 - d. Have a favorable growing season and
 - e. Receive the available moisture needed to produce high yields for an average of eight out of ten years.or
Have been actively used in agricultural, horticultural or forestry operations as defined by N.C.G.S. 105-277.2 (1,2,3) during each of the five previous years, measured from the date on which the determination must be made as to whether the land in question qualifies.
4. Be managed, if highly erodible land exists on the farm, in accordance with the Natural Resources conservation Service defined erosion-control practices that are addressed to said highly erodible land.
5. Be the subject of a conservation agreement as defined in N.C.G.S. 121-35 between the county and the owner of such land that prohibits non-farm use or development of such land for a period of at least ten years, except for the creation of not more than three lots that meet applicable county regulations.

Property Information

	Parcel #1	Parcel #2	Parcel #3
Parcel identification Number *			
USDA Tract Number **			
Property Address			
Township			
Number of Acres			
Current Land use (field crops, livestock, Horticulture, forestry)			
Is this property currently in present-use-valuation (land use) taxation program (G.S. 105-277.2 through 1050-277.7) through the Cleveland County Tax Office? ***	_____(Y/N)	_____(Y/N)	_____(Y/N)
How many years has this tract been actively used in agriculture, horticulture or forestry (as defined by NCGS 105-277.2)?	_____Years	_____Years	_____Years
On annually planted cropland are you following a soil conservation plan on highly erodible land (HEL)?	_____(Y/N)	_____(Y/N)	_____(Y/N)
If not, are you willing to develop and follow a plan with NRCS on these HEL fields?	_____(Y/N)	_____(Y/N)	_____(Y/N)

* Found at Cleveland County GIS site: www.webgis.net/cleveland/, Planning Department or on your Cleveland County Tax Notice after SEQ#.

** Found at Farm Service Agency or Soil and Water Conservation District/NRCS Office

*** If property is not in the present-use-valuation (land use) taxation program, one may complete an application at the Cleveland County Tax Office to determine if the property meets the qualifications for the present-use-valuation (land use) taxation program.

Property Information

	Parcel #4	Parcel #5	Parcel #6
Parcel identification Number *			
USDA Tract Number **			
Property Address			
Township			
Number of Acres			
Current Land use (field crops, livestock, Horticulture, forestry)			
Is this property currently in present-use-valuation (land use) taxation program (G.S. 105-277.2 through 1050-277.7) through the Cleveland County Tax Office? ***	_____(Y/N)	_____(Y/N)	_____(Y/N)
How many years has this tract been actively used in agriculture, horticulture or forestry (as defined by NCGS 105-277.2)?	____Years	____Years	____Years
On annually planted cropland are you following a soil conservation plan on highly erodible land (HEL)?	_____(Y/N)	_____(Y/N)	_____(Y/N)
If not, are you willing to develop and follow a plan with NRCS on these HEL fields?	_____(Y/N)	_____(Y/N)	_____(Y/N)

* Found at Cleveland County GIS site: www.webgis.net/cleveland/, Planning Department or on your Cleveland County Tax Notice after SEQ#.

** Found at Farm Service Agency or Soil and Water Conservation District/NRCS Office

*** If property is not in the present-use-valuation (land use) taxation program, one may complete an application at the Cleveland County Tax Office to determine if the property meets the qualifications for the present-use-valuation (land use) taxation program.

CONSERVATION AGREEMENT

If approved by the Agricultural Advisory Board, I agree to sustain, promote and encourage agriculture in the district, support protection against nuisance suits, undesired non-farm development and other negative impacts on participating farms and I agree to prohibit non-farm use or development of the land under this Agreement for a period of at least ten years, except for the creation of not more than three lots that meet applicable county regulations. This Agreement may be revoked by the landowner by written notice to the Advisory Board, or the Advisory Board may revoke the same Conservation Agreement based on non-compliance by the landowner.

Signed _____ Date _____
(Landowner)

Signed _____ Date _____
(Landowner)

Signed _____ Date _____
(Landowner)

Signed _____ Date _____
(Landowner)

Signed _____ Date _____
(Landowner)

RETURN TO: Cleveland Soil and Water Conservation District
844 Wallace Grove Road
Shelby, NC 28150-9213

704-471-0235, extension 3

NAME _____ **Date Application Received** 06-26-06

PARCELS INCLUDED IN APPLICATION _____, _____, _____, _____,
_____, _____, _____, _____, _____,

OTHER APPLICATIONS SUBMITTED CONJOINTLY _____

TO BE COMPLETED BY THE CLEVELAND COUNTY TAX OFFICE:

The following parcels included in this application **are** in the present-use-valuation (land use) taxation program (G.S. 105-277.2 through 105-277.7)

_____, _____, _____, _____, _____

The following parcels included in this application **are not** in the present-use-valuation (land use) taxation program (G.S. 105-277.2 through 105-277.7)

_____, _____, _____, _____, _____

The following parcels **are not** in the present-use-valuation (land use) taxation program, **but** information has been provided to the tax office showing the following parcels would qualify.

_____, _____, _____, _____, _____

Certified by Cleveland County Tax Office _____

(Signature and Date)

Return to Cleveland Soil and Water Conservation District
844 Wallace Grove Road
Shelby, NC 28150-9213

TO BE COMPLETED BY THE CLEVELAND SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT AND NRCS OFFICE:

Parcels meeting criteria per NRCS review (VII-A 1.b and 1.c)

_____, _____, _____, _____, _____

Parcels not meeting criteria per NRCS review (VII-A 1.b and 1.c)

_____, _____, _____, _____, _____

Certified by SWCD/NRCS _____

(Signature and Date)

REVIEW BY ADVISORY BOARD:

Approved _____

(Signature and Date)

Denied _____

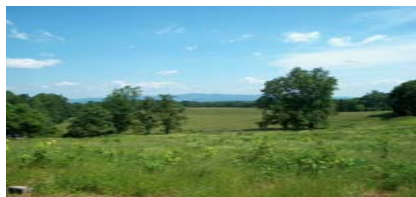
Total Acres Approved _____

Township-Number in Township-Participant Number _____

Assigned Agricultural District Number _____

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
- Improves our quality of life by maintaining open land; keeps us connected to the land



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:

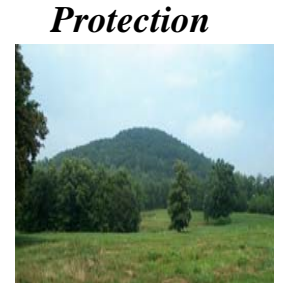
Cleveland County
 Farmland Preservation
 Program
 844 Wallace Grove Road
 Shelby, NC 28150-7213
 704-471-0235, ext. 3



FARMLAND PRESERVATION PROGRAM



Production



Protection



Pride

Promotion

CLEVELAND COUNTY NORTH CAROLINA



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.