

What is the Voluntary Farmland Program?

The purpose of the Voluntary Preservation Program is to promote health, safety, & rural agricultural values to increase the identity and pride in the agricultural community and its way of life. The program is intended to encourage voluntary preservation and protection of farmland from non-farm development and increase protection from nuisance suits and other negative impacts on properly managed farms. This is in recognition of the importance of agriculture to the economic and social life of the county.

The General Assembly of the State of North Carolina has authorized counties to undertake a series of programs to encourage the preservation of farmland. This statutory authority is found in Chapter 106, Article 61 of the North Carolina General Statutes.

Desiring to assist farmers in staying in the farming business, the Alexander County Voluntary Farmland Preservation Program (VFPP) was unanimously adopted by the Alexander County Commissioners on March 5, 2002.

What is an Agricultural Advisory Board?

This VFPP ordinance instituted the creation of an Agricultural Advisory Board to administer the program. The Board will review and approve application for qualifying farmland, as well as establish **Voluntary Agricultural Districts**. The Board will also be available to advise the County Commissioners on issues affecting agriculture.

The Board is composed of seven county residents, some whom are actively engaged in farming. The Board members are selected by the County Commissioners from a list of names submitted by the Soil & Water Conservation District, NC Cooperative Extension, Farm Bureau, FSA and the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

What are Voluntary Agricultural Districts?

Agricultural Districts are areas that are designated as "farmlands", where agriculture will be promoted and encouraged.

An agricultural district would consist of one or more 10 acre tracts of qualifying farmland, individually or separately owned, which are located within one mile of each other.



What are the qualifications to become a VFPP Member?

1. Be participating or eligible to participate in the "Present Use Value" Taxation Program; as agricultural, horticultural, or forest land.
2. Have a minimum of 10 acres.
3. Be certified by the Natural Resources Conservation Service as being a farm that is managed, if highly erodible land exists on the farm, in accordance with NRCS defined erosion control practices that are addressed to said highly erodible land.

Applications are taken throughout the year and considered at the next regularly scheduled Voluntary Farmland Preservation Program Meeting. The Advisory Board meets quarterly, generally in February, May, August, and June. Updates to the countywide map (print and online on GIS) occur 1 or 2 times a year.

What will joining the VFPP do for me?

Recognition

Members of the VFPP will be given signs to post, identifying your farm as a member of a preservation district; indicating to any potential land buyers or passersby that your land is committed to the preservation of the agricultural way of life. Also, the parcels will be designated on GIS as part of the VFPP.

Increase protection from Nuisance Suits

Persons buying land near an agricultural district will be made aware that their potential property is located near a farming district. Notices stating the occurrence of farm activities, which may result in certain noise, smells, etc., will be posted, along with maps that identify where the Districts are located. Maps will be posted in the Register of Deeds, and Soil & Water Conservation Offices, Alexander County Services Center Building and the Alexander County Administration Building. The current Ag District Map can also be accessed by the internet on the Soil & Water Website: <http://www.alexandercountync.gov/departments/soil-water/farmland-preservation/>

We are currently pursuing new ways to inform land buyers about Districts before they purchase property; through disclosure forms, building permits, tax information, & realtors.

Public Hearings Required for Proposed Condemnation

No State or County agency may initiate condemnation proceedings against any lands within an Agricultural District until such agency has requested the Agricultural Advisory Board to hold a public hearing on the purposed condemnation.

Eligibility for Funding

District members may be eligible for farmland preservation funds for the permanent preservation of farmland as local, state or federal funding becomes available.

Waiver of Water & Sewer Assessments

Landowners within Districts will not be required to connect to water or sewer systems, operated by the county, nor will they be assessed any charges until the property is connected to these services.

What restrictions will be placed on my farm if I join the program?

Voluntary Farmland Preservation Program members will be subject to a conservation agreement between the County and the landowner that prohibits non-farm use or development of that land for a period of at least 10 years. The conservation agreement does allow for the development of up to three lots on participating farms within a District.

What happens if I want to remove all or part of my land from the program?

A landowner in the Voluntary Farmland Preservation Program may remove all, or a portion, of his/her land from the Program by simply giving a written notice to the Agricultural Advisory Board. If a portion of the land is removed from the program, the remaining land must meet the program conditions and qualifications for the farm to continue in the program.

Alexander County Agricultural Facts

County Ranking in North Carolina (figures from North Carolina Dept. of Agriculture & NC State University)

Milk Cows	#10
Layers	#4
Broilers	#12
Beef Cows	#13
Hay Production	#32
Corn for Grain	#76
Number of Farms:	544
Total Land in Farms:	54,146 acres
Average Farm Size:	100 acres
Total Farm Income	\$276,033,223

Voluntary Farmland Preservation Program Agricultural Advisory Board

Coy Reese

Eugene White

Traci Fox

Dustin Queen

Kent Herman

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FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT:

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Alexander Voluntary Farmland Preservation Program

Voluntary Agricultural Districts



Alexander County, North Carolina

