



• Sketch Plat:

1. Property layout showing the entire parcel as it exists on the current tax map. Plat can be hand drawn but at an approximate reasonable scale (1 inch = 50 feet, 1 inch = 100 feet or 1 inch = 200 feet). The plat shall have United States Geological Service (USGS) contour lines superimposed on it and it should show in simple form existing improvements, such as structures and driveways, and natural features, such as watercourses, ponds, woods and rock outcrops. The sketch plat should also show

the area and acreage intended for easement dedication. It should also show all adjoining properties identified by owner and acreage. Sketch plat should be accompanied by a tract location map and a soils report indicating the soil types on the parcel and a map delineating the boundaries of each soil type.

Additional program criteria must be met for acceptance of a donated easement. Purchased easements and expenses on donated easements shall be ranked in accordance with the Program Criteria. ♦



RANKING CRITERIA

Farmland Protection Ranking Criteria

Definitions for Land Evaluation Criteria

This criterion was developed following the criteria set forth in *West Virginia Code §8-24-79* Criteria for Acquisition of Conservation and protection easements by county farmland protection boards and the authority. Each of the following major and minor criteria have been “weighted” as to their importance to viable farming². This criterion will be applied to each deeded parcel separately.

See Endnotes²

A. Development Pressure (13.5%)

- a) *Compatibility with the Comprehensive Plan*

Points are awarded based on the location of the land and its potential uses based on the Jefferson County Comprehensive Plan.

Greater weight will be given to land in the agricultural zone.

Points are awarded using the following:

- The Land is in the Rural Zone 20 points
- The Land is in a non rural zone, but is currently being farmed 10 points
- The Land is in a non rural zone and not currently farmed 0 points

B. Total Acreage (12.5%)

A traditional farming enterprise that has the potential to be viable is connected to directly to the acreage used in that operation. The rationale applied to this criteria is



that the larger the farm, the better the chance for it to remain an economically viable farm.



C. Soils (30%)

a) Soils Profile

An evaluation conducted by the Natural Resource Conservation Service. This profile is based on the types of soil on the land and its relative productivity of corn. This is an objective method of farm productivity developed by NRCS in the early 1980's. This profile would have a scoring range between 0 and 100.

b) NRCS Conservation Plan

Any farm that wishes to participate in Federal Programs must have an approved plan on how the land will be used over a period of time. These plans can be revised annually and ensure that measures are in place to minimize soil erosion and maintain water quality.

See Appendix – forms 1 thru 9

See Index to Maps

D. Contiguous to other Land Used for Agriculture (15%)

This criterion takes into account what percentages of the contiguous tracts of land are being assessed by the Jefferson County Assessor as agriculture use. This will be calculated by adding up the acres in contiguous tracts, categorizing the tracts, and calculating the percentage of the acreage that is assessed as being used for

agriculture. Farming activities are sometimes seen as a nuisance and can create unwanted noises, smells and exposure to neighbors that are not familiar with accepted farming practices. The more the farm is surrounded by like uses, the better opportunity there is not to be impeded through nuisance lawsuits.

E. Value of the Asking Price vs. the Value of the Easement (12.5%)

Through appraisal procedures established by the board, the value of the land will be determined for its use for agriculture and its value for other uses such as commercial or residential development. The difference between those two values is the value of the easement. The owner of the easement must determine if the full value is required to complete the transaction or some more or less amount is required. Limited dollars for the purchase of easements can be spread out over more acres if the landowner is willing to take less than the appraised value of the easement.



F. Historical and Natural Features (7.5%)

a) Land is Associated with an Important Place, Person or Event

i. Property on National Register

The National Register of Historic Places is the Nation's official list of cultural resources worthy of protection. Authorized under the National Historic Protection Act of 1966, and amended 2000, the National Register is part of a national program to coordinate and support public and private efforts to identify, evaluate, and protect our historic and archeological resources. Properties



listed in the Register include districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects that are significant in American history, architecture, archeology, engineering, and culture. The National Register is administered by the National Park Service (NPR), which is part of the U.S. Department of the Interior (USDI).

National Register properties are distinguished by having been documented and evaluated according to uniform standards. These criteria recognize the accomplishments of all peoples who have contributed to the history and heritage of the United States and are designed to help state and local governments, Federal agencies, and others identify important historic and archeological properties worthy of protection and of consideration in planning and development decisions.

- ii. Property is of National, State or Local Significance

These properties are of importance as defined by the Jefferson County Historic Landmarks Commission or the Jefferson County Historical Society and may not be on the National Register.

- iii. Property is Adjacent to Such Area

The significance and historical value of such properties is only enhanced if neighboring lands are kept open.

- b) *Adjoins State or National Park, Existing Permanent Easement or Permanently Protected Land(s)*².

See Endnotes²

- c) *Contains Important Natural Features*



- i. Includes Frontage on Major Stream

The major streams of Jefferson County include the Potomac and Shenandoah Rivers and its tributaries in Jefferson County as identified by the Jefferson County Watersheds Coalition. This non-profit organization monitors streams in Jefferson County including Bullskin Run, Elk Run, Evitts Run, Flowing Springs Run, Rattlesnake Run, Rocky Marsh Run and Town Run.

- ii. Includes Area in 100 Year Flood Plain

The 100-year plain is determined by maps developed by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).



- iii. Contains at Least 10 Acres of Mature Forest

This will be determined by an onsite evaluation by the State Service Forrester.



- iv. Contains Stone Fences

Along with marking the boundaries of their property, protecting crops from wandering livestock was an early concern of farmers. A stone wall was one of the first methods of marking boundaries and is a historical reminder of the past.



d) *Property Contains Unique Natural Features*

i. Contains a Cave

Caves alone have their own unique and fragile ecosystem and provide safe harbor-age for many species of flora and fauna. They are also unique in that they are direct vectors to the groundwater and therefore must be protected from opportunities for surface contamination.

e) *Source Water Protection (50%)*

i. Contains stream or tributary

ii. Contains a Year-round Spring

This is defined as a spring that flows through the normal course of the year under normal rainfall conditions.

iii. Contains a Wetland

The National Wetlands Inventory (NWI) of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service produces information on the characteristics, extent, and status of the Nation's wetlands and deepwater habitats. The National Wetlands Inventory Center information is used by Federal, State, and local agencies, academic institutions, U.S. Congress, and the private sector. The NWIC has mapped 90 percent of the lower 48 states, and 34 percent of Alaska. Maps are provided to the NRCS or can be obtained to identify wetlands in the county. These sensitive areas provide havens for many species of wildlife.



iv. Contains a Sinkhole(s)

Sinkholes are direct links between surface water and groundwater. They are common where the rock below the land surface is

limestone, carbonate rock, salt beds, or rocks that can naturally be dissolved by ground water circulating through them. As the rock dissolves, spaces and caverns develop underground. Sinkholes are dramatic because the land usually stays intact for a while until the underground spaces just get too big. If there is not enough support for the land above the spaces then a sudden collapse of the land surface can occur. Since these are ever changing, a visual inspection of the farm will be required to determine if there is one or more on the land.

See Index to Maps.

G. Debt (5%)

Two critical measurements of debt relate to the practical involvement of the lending institutions carrying the first and possibly second mortgages. If the value of the easement is less than the value of what is owed on the real estate then the lending institution may not accept the purchase of easements.

H. Length of Easement (4%)

While the Senate Bill requires that this be a part of the criteria, the bill also states that easements will be for perpetuity. [West Virginia legislation passed in 2000 West Virginia Senate Bill 209, a law related to the preservation of West Virginia farmland. Senate Bill 209 was modified in March 2004 by Senate Bill 454.]

I. Land Evaluation Criteria: How to Evaluate Your Property

Referring to the Land Evaluation Criteria Chart, the landowner can make a preliminary calculation of the points his property would accumulate. There is no point limit or threshold that automatically grants a landowner acceptance into the FPB program. The points serve as a method for the Board to fairly evaluate each property. The point total for each property would be



used to rank all offered properties; properties with the highest total numbers of points would gain priority for funding and acceptance into the program.

All criteria on the chart are weighted, which reflect the value that the Board has placed on that item. In addition, the subsets of criteria associated with “F - Historical” are also weighted. Consequently, points must be multiplied by their respective weight factor *before* a total is calculated.



For example:

Under “B - Total Acreage”, a 150 acre tract would be awarded a value of 16, which must be multiplied by the weight factor of 12.5% to yield 2 points. If a property contains a sinkhole, look in “F - Historical - e” which contains a sinkhole(s) to see that would be awarded a value of 8 which must be multiplied by 50% for “e - Source Water Protection”, then multiplied again by 7.5% weight factor for “Historical”. This calculation would net 0.3 points (8 x 50% x 7.5%).

A Total Raw Score is the sum of the complete evaluation of a property by awarding values for certain features and characteristics and multiplying these values by the weight factors.

The Total Raw Score is multiplied by 2 for the Final Score that could conceivably approach 100. The Final Score is then used by the Board to prioritize properties. ♦