



from the Chairman . . .

Today you have an opportunity to alter the future of Jefferson County. You can help to protect the scenic vistas, critical wetlands, and green corridors that define Jefferson County and make it so attractive. You can help to ensure that in one year, ten years or one hundred years from now the natural character of the County we love will still be present.

Who we are: The Jefferson County Farmland Protection Board's (created by the Jefferson County Commission) sole purpose is to protect Jefferson County farmlands. Formed in 2000, more than 180 acres valued over a million dollars have been protected. We have seven active volunteers serving on the board. Our county property transfer tax is the major source of funds used to purchase conservation easements.

We protect land. Land is a resource that is owned by individuals, but enjoyed by many. When it is overdeveloped or misused, we all suffer. The Farmland Protection Board works with landowners to protect the natural values of their property to ensure that the scenic beauty of Jefferson County will be maintained for future generations. Our protected property has been donated by land owners with some compensation from the Jefferson County Property Transfer Tax through the Jefferson County Farmland Protection Board, the Civil War Preservation Trust through the National Park Service, and the Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program through the United States Department of Agriculture's Natural Resource Conservation Service (USDA-NRCS).

Why should you be involved? Most of us have a sizeable investment in Jefferson County. Whether it is our home or cottage, property or business, we each have a vested interest in the future of the area.

Take a moment to envision the lush rolling hills of a Jefferson County farm; rich, black soil and straight rows of a cornfield; or the expanse of grass stretching over a pasture. We know deep inside that farm land sustains us in body and spirit; provides an abundance of fresh, safe food; scenic vistas, and centuries-old cultural heritage. They form the economic base of the rural and suburban communities across the County, fueling a food and farming system that feeds the world. Well-managed agricultural lands also provide essential environmental benefits, including wildlife habitat, clean air and water, and flood control. **Our farms are private lands with tremendous importance to all County residents.**

However, the farmland that has sustained us for centuries is being paved over and degraded at an alarming rate. Development claims an expanse of Jefferson County farmland every year. But that's only part of the story.

A farm does not have to be in the path of development to be at risk. Many farms are sold for development because it is simply too difficult to make a living off the land. The future of farming in Jefferson County is threatened.



The Jefferson County Farmland Protection Board has a different vision for the future - economically and environmentally sustainable agriculture. We are the only Jefferson County organization solely dedicated to saving farmland and keeping it productive and healthy. Through the Board's efforts, county residents are beginning to understand that the most important environmental opportunity we face is conserving our private working lands. We cannot address our other environmental issues without it! **This is the new frontier of conservation.**

The Jefferson County Farmland Protection Board is ensuring that we do not waste this important moment in time. We are implementing a plan that lays out a clear path and sets measurable goals: protect the best land through private conservation easements to keep farmland forever farmland; help the county plan for growth and agriculture by supporting a land use plan that guides development away from the richest farmlands.

When the Jefferson County Board was formed four years ago, West Virginia had just passed the Voluntary Farmland Protection Act due to concern in the Eastern Panhandle about the loss of farmland. This concern has now extended to many of the rural sections of West Virginia where farmland exists. To date fourteen counties have formed Farmland Protection Boards and five of these counties have enacted the property transfer tax to fund their Farmland Protection Programs. Almost one-third of the counties in West Virginia have either formed Farmland Protection Boards or have had public meetings to discuss formation in their county. *(I've included area maps in this report to demonstrate the importance of farmland protection across our state.)*

The Jefferson County Farmland Protection Board has been instrumental in these achievements. Throughout this annual report you will see examples of how we work with partners to maximize the purchasing power of our funding dollars.

As we report on our work for 2000 thru fiscal year 2004, we are proud of the legacy we're building for the future, more farmland is permanently protected. Jefferson County communities have a future that includes local agriculture and a cleaner environment.

We are determined to carry this progress forward into the coming years. We recognize there are no "quick fixes" in this struggle. The work we do today may not produce final results until years later. **Our ultimate goal of achievement — preserving economically and environmentally sustainable farming in Jefferson County.**

In a year filled with many economic and political challenges, we take tremendous pride in all of our accomplishments. We promise to honor the trust that you, our supporters, have placed in us by using our resources wisely. We are extremely grateful for your help in saving the land that sustains us. ♦

Roger Dailey, **Chairman**

Jefferson County Farmland Protection Board