

Delaware Aglands Program Ranks Second in the United States for Preserving Farmland

Delaware announces 24th consecutive round of easement selections for Aglands Program

DOVER, Del. – Delaware announced its [24th consecutive round of easement selections](#) by the Delaware Agricultural Lands Preservation Foundation. With the preservation of another 5,500 acres, Delaware has permanently preserved more than 139,000 acres of farmland for future generations.

In a recent [report](#) by the American Farmland Trust, Delaware was recognized as having one of the most effective farmland protection programs in the country, ranked second only to New Jersey.

“Our state’s Aglands Preservation Program has been critical to keeping Delaware farms in production,” said **Governor Carney**. “I think we can all agree through the pandemic, we learned how important family farmers are to ensuring food including fruits and vegetables, dairy products, and meat are readily available. Preserving farmland is not just about passing a farm down to the next generation, it’s about making sure future generations have food grown locally available to feed their families.”

In this round of easement selections, there were four farms in New Castle County, 12 farms in Kent County, and 47 farms in Sussex County preserved. A total of 26 percent of Delaware’s

farmland has been successfully preserved through Delaware's Aglands Preservation Program.

"With today's announcement, 5,500 acres have been permanently preserved, including 63 farms through the Aglands Preservation Program and two forested parcels through the Forestland Preservation Program. The success of this program has been built off partnerships between landowners, the Delaware Department of Agriculture, members of the General Assembly, county governments, and federal agencies," said Delaware **Secretary of Agriculture Michael T. Scuse**. "The purchase of this year's easements would not have been possible without matching funds from multiple sources, including the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP), the United States Navy's Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration Program, New Castle County Council, Kent County Levy Court, and Sussex County Council."

Since the beginning of the program, landowners have donated, on average, 59 percent of their development rights value – that is they received 41 cents on the dollar of their farm's development rights value to preserve their farm. The average discount (donation) for Round 24 is 63 percent.

The Delaware Agricultural Lands Preservation Foundation selects those farms approved for easement purchase using an impartial discounted ranking system that maximizes benefits for taxpayers. The Foundation does not own the land, but rather purchases landowners' development rights and places a permanent agricultural conservation easement on the property. Landowners must first voluntarily enroll their farm into a 10-year preservation district before they can sell an easement. In addition to more than 139,000 acres in permanent easements, Delaware's Aglands Preservation Program has over 36,000 acres of land enrolled in farmland preservation districts.

"Delaware NRCS is proud to preserve and protect the state's

productive farmland and the long-term viability of our food supply,” said **Kasey Taylor, NRCS State Conservationist**. “Working with our partners, we are able to place these critical easements on the land, ensuring that we preserve the agricultural legacy and economy that is so beneficial to our state.”

County governments can choose to partner with the state program and add county funds to select properties in their areas, leveraging state resources for the greatest impact.

“This makes three out of my four years as County Executive where we have partnered with the state program,” said **County Executive Meyer**. “Preserving agricultural land is important for New Castle County – as a matter of fact I worked with our county council and created a land preservation task force last August to look at both agricultural land preservation and open space preservation with outcomes expected this September, as well as how New Castle County can make better use of the state’s agricultural land preservation program.”

Delaware’s statewide program made its first round of easement purchases in 1996 and has since preserved 22 percent of New Castle County farmland, 39 percent of Kent County farmland and 19 percent of Sussex County farmland.

“Agriculture is the number one industry in Central Delaware and a large part of the culture and identity of Kent County”, said **Kent County Administrator Mike Petit de Mange**. “The Aglands Preservation Program has been a huge success in preserving thousands of acres of working land in our County and we are very pleased to financially participate once again with the State of Delaware in Round 24 to preserve an additional 886 Acres this year.”

“Sussex County is proud to again support the Delaware Aglands Program in preserving working farms that strengthen our economy and ensure an important part of our heritage

continues,” **Sussex County Administrator Todd F. Lawson** said. “Ag faces a tremendous amount of pressure in the 21st century, be it economic, environmental, or, as the recent pandemic has illustrated, the exceptional. Now more than ever it is imperative for America to have a strong agricultural sector, and by working with our partners at the state and federal level, we’ll continue to have that right here in Sussex County.”

The Foundation’s Board of Trustees includes representatives from agriculture and state agencies. Trustees are: Bob Garey, chairman; Bill Vanderwende, vice-chairman; L. Allen Messick Jr., treasurer; William H. “Chip” Narvel Jr., secretary; Secretary of Agriculture Michael T. Scuse; State Treasurer Colleen C. Davis; Secretary of Natural Resources and Environmental Control Shawn Garvin; Peter Martin; Theodore P. Bobola Jr.; Robert Emerson; and Janice Truitt.

[Click here for more information on the Aglands Preservation Program.](#)

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