

Farmland Preservation Options In Lancaster County

In Lancaster County, preservation efforts are strong with the combined efforts of the Lancaster County Agricultural Preserve Board and the Lancaster Farmland Trust. Together the two preservation organizations have preserved 402 farms and more than 33,900 acres. As Lancaster County's population continues to grow, one of the two fastest growing counties in the state, farmers will continue to face more and more development pressure. When thinking about the decision to preserve your farm, you may be confused about which organization to use, although both have a central goal to preserve as much prime farmland as possible. The following is a comparison of the Lancaster County Agricultural Preserve Board and the Lancaster Farmland Trust.

The Lancaster Ag Preserve Board is a Public (County) Agency with their Board serving as their advisory body to the County Commissioners. The Lancaster Farmland Trust is an independent, non-profit organization (501(c)(3) tax status), which

is an important consideration for Amish and other Plain Sects. The Ag Preserve Board uses County appropriated funds from the general fund and bonds, state appropriated funds, and limited federal funds to purchase easements at full-appraised value (average price paid per acre is \$2000). The Farmland Trust uses private donations, grants, and memberships for its funding. No government funding is sought or accepted. Most easements are donated or purchased at a "bargain sale" (average price paid per acre is \$490). The Ag Preserve Board has preserved 292 farms since 1980, which is a total of 26,769 acres with 50 farms expected in 2000. The Farmland Trust has preserved 110 farms since 1988, which is a total of 7,163 acres with 15 farms expected in 2000.

The waiting period when preserving your farm through the Ag Preserve Board is uncertain. All applications must be re-ranked yearly. Depending on soil quality, development pressure and other criteria, the waiting period could be brief or extend for several years. Preserving your farm through the Farmland Trust takes very little time when the easement is donated or a low easement price is paid. Otherwise the waiting period is dependent on the availability of funds.

Farms within Urban Growth Boundaries generally are not preserved by either organization. The Ag Preserve Board requires farms to be zoned agriculture and be in designated Agricultural Security Areas. Township officials designate ASA's, which need to be at least 500 acres in size for preservation. The Farmland Trust does not require your farm to be in an ASA. With regard to intensive animal agriculture, the Ag Preserve Board has no limitations other than a required conservation and nutrient management plan. With the Farmland Trust, limitations on intensive animal agriculture are only at the request of the landowner and the Trust encourages conservation and nutrient management plans.

The Ag Preserve Board generally limits the farm to one

additional house per farm. With the Farmland Trust, generally they limit one house per 25 acres. When your farm is preserved the taxable estate is normally reduced by the easement value. Depending on the property's original basis, some or all funds received may be subject to income tax, although a "like-kind exchange" may be used. The greater the donation of your easement, the greater the potential income tax deduction. The flexibility of the Ag Preserve Board is somewhat limited because it is a government agency. September 1st is the yearly application deadline and currently more than 150 farms are awaiting funds. The Farmland Trust can often respond at once to landowner's unique needs because of its private affiliation and funding process.

For more information on the Lancaster County Agricultural Preserve Board, call (717) 299-8355 and ask for June Mengal, director. To reach the Lancaster Farmland Trust call (717) 293-

Agriculture Insights

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The Lancaster Chamber
of Commerce & Industry



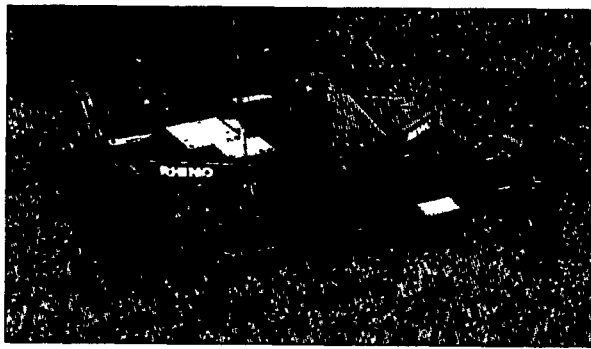
Phone: (717) 397-3531 ext. 62
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0707 and ask for Tom Stouffer, president. Many of the agricultural counties across PA have a County Ag Preserve Board. Other preservation organizations similar to the Lancaster Farmland Trust are the Berks County Conservancy, the Brandywine Conservancy in Chester County, and the Farm and Natural Lands Trust of York County.

Celebrate June as National Dairy Month during Family Dairy Days at Oregon Dairy, June 13-15

from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. With over 8,000 people expected, this event extends the opportunity for our non-farm neighbors to learn more about today's modern dairy farm. Enjoy this free event sponsored by The Lancaster Chamber. Please send your questions or comments about Farmland Preservation or Family Dairy Days to Brent Landis at The Lancaster Chamber at blandis@lcci.com or 717-397-3531.

19 WAYS TO A PERFECT FINISH!



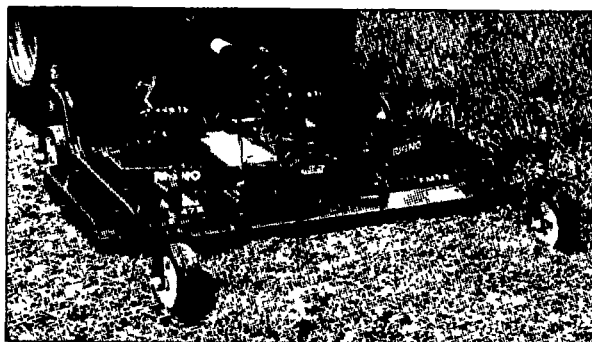
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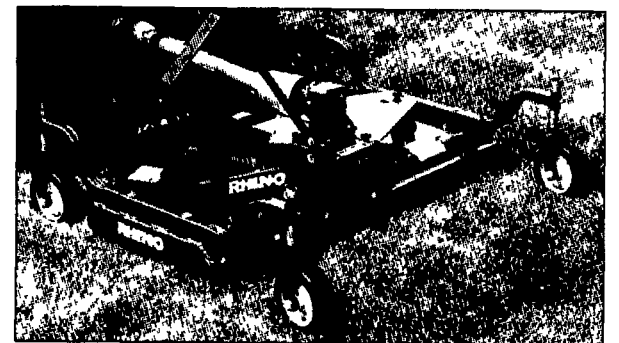
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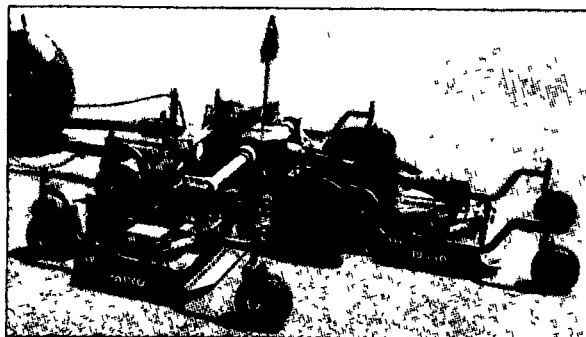
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