

**The Northampton County
Agricultural Conservation Easement (ACE) Program:**

Agricultural conservation easements are purchased by Northampton County and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania to permanently protect farms for agriculture in perpetuity. Land protected by an agricultural conservation easement cannot be used for any purpose other than agriculture. Protecting groups or clusters of farms helps maintain agriculture as a viable industry.

Application: All ASA landowners will receive an application from Northampton County Farmland Preservation on November 1st of each year. If you have a property in an ASA and did not receive an application, please call our office as soon as possible after November 1. Applications **must** be returned by December 15 at 4:00 pm., **NO EXCEPTIONS**.

Selection: Eligible applications are ranked according to the guidelines of the ACE Program. Farms will be selected yearly in the order in which they are ranked, based on the amount of available funding.

For additional information, please contact:

Northampton County Farmland Preservation
14 Gracedale Ave.
Nazareth, PA 18064
610-746-1993
Maria Bentzoni, Administrator
Barbara Martucci, Farmland Preservation Technician

Or visit our website at www.northamptoncounty.org for:
(click on County Government link at top, then our link on left-hand side)

- ASA Application Form
- Northampton County Farmland Preservation Booklet
- List of Preserved Farm Acreage by Townships
- Township Websites
- FAQs on Northampton County's ACE Program
- Map of Preserved Farms
- Sample ACE Application
- And much more!



**Northampton County
Farmland Preservation**

Agricultural Security Area Program

Act 43 of 1981, as amended

The Agricultural Security Area program began in 1981 as a tool for strengthening and protecting agriculture in Pennsylvania. Landowners, working together, initiate the process of establishing such areas where agriculture is the primary activity. When enrolled, participating farmers are entitled to special consideration from local and state government agencies thus encouraging the continued use of the land for productive agricultural purposes.

Agricultural Security Areas are intended to promote more permanent and viable farming operations by strengthening the farming community's sense of security in land use and the right to farm. Agricultural Security Areas are created by local municipalities in cooperation with individual landowners who agree to collectively enroll at least 250 acres in an Agricultural Security Area.

Who Should Enroll In an ASA

Landowners whose land meets the following requirements:

- The property must be at least 10 acres in size. It does not have to be adjoining other property enrolled in an Agricultural Security Area.
- The property must be viable agricultural land. Cropland, pasture, and woodland can all be included in an Agricultural Security Area.
- At least 50% of the land should be in soil capability classes I-IV, as defined by the county soil survey.
- The property must be zoned to permit agricultural uses.

Benefits to Landowners
Joining an Agricultural Security Area (ASA)

1. The local governments refrain from enacting ordinances and regulations which restrict farming operations and farm structures within an Agricultural Security Area.
2. When defining a public nuisance, the local government will provide exceptions for normal agricultural activities occurring within an Agricultural Security Area, unless the law protects public health and safety.
3. State agencies or programs, which could negatively affect farmers, shall act in a manner that will encourage the continuation of viable agriculture in the areas.
4. Limitations are placed on the use of land condemnation procedures—eminent domain—by State and local agencies unless approval is obtained from the Agricultural Land Condemnation Approval Board (ALCAB).
5. The ASA designation does not restrict the use of the property by the landowner. The landowner or any subsequent owners may develop the property in any manner authorized by local zoning, subdivision and land development regulations.
6. The landowner has the opportunity to apply to the Agricultural Conservation Easement (ACE) Program once enrolled in an Agricultural Security Area*. The ACE Program can provide financial benefits to those landowners that sell an agricultural conservation easement to Northampton County.

** The ACE Program has other criteria that must be met in addition to the ASA enrollment prior to applying.*

**Participation in Act 43,
the Agricultural Security Area Law, is voluntary.**

Both enrollment in an Agricultural Security Area and participation in the Northampton County Agricultural Conservation Easement (ACE) Program are voluntary.

How to Enroll Your Land In an ASA

1. Complete an Agricultural Security Area application form and attach a copy of your tax map. Application forms may be obtained by contacting our office, Northampton County Farmland Preservation, at 610-746-1993, by visiting our website at www.northamptoncounty.org (click on County Government, then click on our link on left) or at the township where you reside.
2. Mail the application to your township office by certified mail with return receipt, provided your township has an ASA.*
3. Keep the return receipt as proof the township received your application. They have a 180-day limit to take action on it, or it becomes automatically enrolled.

Northampton County
Townships
with Agricultural
Security Areas

Allen
Bushkill
East Allen
Forks
Lehigh
Lower Mt. Bethel
Lower Nazareth
Moore
Plainfield
Upper Mt. Bethel
Washington
Williams

*Note: If your township isn't listed and you want to enroll in an ASA, you must apply to a neighboring township with an ASA.

Township Review and Approval

- The township will review your application and follow the steps outlined in Act 43 before they vote on your enrollment at a regular township meeting.
- Once your property is enrolled, it will be documented with the Northampton County Recorder of Deeds office.
- New parcels of farmland may be added to an established ASA at any time. Parcels can be withdrawn at any time.
- Townships review their full enrollment in Agricultural Security Areas every seven years; at which time, parcels also may be added or withdrawn from the ASA.