

Public Benefits of All Programs

In addition to providing direct benefits to landowners, Farmland Protection Plans, VADs, and EVADs offer the following advantages for the general public:

- providing a *voluntary* way to support the conservation of rural communities;
- conserving rural lands without adding significant expenses to local government;
- preserving farmlands that represent an average 63 cent net gain of revenue for every tax dollar received for the tax base (for every dollar in taxes received from residential development, governments pay \$1.19 – a 19 cent net loss)*;
- supporting each community's rural heritage and economy;
- providing local jobs and tax income;
- preserving the agriculture and agriculture-related businesses industry, North Carolina's #1 industry;
- maintaining scenic views and tourism-based economic activity;
- providing fresh food, flowers, and other local farm products for local residents and visitors;
- supporting clean air and water;
- providing wildlife habitat;
- maintaining lower levels of traffic and noise; and
- minimizing the infrastructure burden on county and local government.

*American Farmland Trust, Cost of Community Services Studies, 2006



For More Information

For maps and other information on Farmland Protection Plans, VADs, and EVADs please visit the North Carolina Agricultural Development and Farmland Preservation Trust Fund website:

www.ncadfp.org

For VAD and EVAD Provisions:

The exact provisions of each VAD and EVAD ordinance may vary from one county or municipality to the next. North Carolina State University and North Carolina Cooperative Extension maintain a website with links to existing VAD and EVAD ordinances in each participating county and municipality in North Carolina, as well as model ordinances and other related information:

www.cals.ncsu.edu/wq/lpn/modelordinances.htm

For VAD and EVAD Application Information:

For more information or to apply to enroll your land in an agricultural district, please contact your local Soil and Water Conservation District office or your local Cooperative Extension office.

Farmland Protection for North Carolina

Why is farmland protection important to North Carolina?

- Agriculture and related businesses comprise North Carolina's #1 industry with a value of over \$70 billion annually.
- In recent years, North Carolina has led the nation in the loss of farms. This trend threatens to impact our agricultural heritage in many different ways, from the loss of farm-related income to reduced availability of fresh food, wildlife habitat, and much more.

VADs, EVADs, and Farmland Protection Plans

Voluntary Agricultural Districts (VADs), Enhanced Voluntary Agricultural Districts (EVADs), and Farmland Protection Plans recognize the importance of agriculture to the economic and social well-being of North Carolina by encouraging the preservation and protection of farmland from non-farm development.

The information in this brochure will help you learn more about these options, what they might mean for you and your region, and how you can participate.

Voluntary Agricultural Districts

Eligibility

Farmland, forestland, and horticultural lands must meet the following criteria:

- The land must be part of the present-use-value taxation program or be determined eligible for present use value; and
- The land must be managed in accordance with USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service guidelines with respect to highly erodible land.

Local governments may also require a minimum acreage and/or a minimum number of farms within a certain area to establish a new district.

Benefits

- Increased protection from nuisance lawsuits if notice is provided through computerized county land records systems.
- Public hearings for proposed condemnation of enrolled land.
- Water and sewer assessments may be suspended or waived if the land is in VAD but not connected to the utility in question.
- Possible signage to publicize the land's enrollment in the program.
- Possible flexibility in city ordinances related to farming operations within a city's planning jurisdiction.
- Greater public awareness of the local agricultural community and increased pride in its way of life.

Requirements

- According to NCGS 106-737, the land must be subject to a conservation agreement between the landowner and the county or local municipality that prohibits non-farm use or development for a period of at least 10 years, except for the creation of not more than three lots that meet applicable county zoning and subdivision regulations.
 - This agreement may be revoked by the landowner at any time, usually with only a short period of advanced notice (such as a 30-day notice). Ending the agreement will result in the property no longer qualifying for the VAD program and its benefits.



Enhanced Voluntary Agricultural Districts

Eligibility

Same eligibility requirements as VAD.

Benefits

Same benefits as VAD, plus:

- Landowners are eligible to receive a higher percentage of cost-share funds under the Agricultural Cost Share Program – as high as 90% assistance.
- State agencies, departments, and institutions that award grants to farmers are encouraged to give priority consideration to landowners participating in Enhanced Voluntary Agricultural Districts.
- All utility assessments may be suspended or waived if the land is in EVAD but not connected to the utility in question.
- The farm may receive up to 25% of gross sales from the sale of non-farm products and still maintain its zoning exemption as a bona fide farm.
- Landowners may experience fewer unsolicited requests from developers to sell the land, due to the 10-year irrevocable conservation agreement.

Landowners can stabilize the use of their land while considering longer-term options, such as permanent working land conservation easements.

Requirements

- Same conservation agreement requirement as VAD, except that the agreement cannot be revoked during the term of the agreement.

At the end of its initial term of at least 10 years, the EVAD conservation agreement automatically renews for 3 more years, unless the landowner provides a timely written notice to the county or municipality (usually a 30-day notice). Ending the agreement will result in the property no longer qualifying for the EVAD program and its benefits.

See www.ncadfp.org for more information about VADs and EVADs, including examples and maps.

Farmland Protection Plans

Definition

A countywide farmland protection plan is a plan that satisfies all of the following requirements:

- The countywide farmland protection plan shall contain a list and description of existing agricultural activity in the county.
- The countywide farmland protection plan shall contain a list of existing challenges to continued family farming in the county.
- The countywide farmland protection plan shall contain a list of opportunities for maintaining or enhancing small, family-owned farms and the local agricultural economy.
- The countywide farmland protection plan shall describe how the county plans to maintain a viable agricultural community and shall address farmland preservation tools, such as agricultural economic development, including farm diversification and marketing assistance; other kinds of agricultural technical assistance, such as farm infrastructure financing, farmland purchasing, linking with younger farmers, and estate planning; the desirability and feasibility of donating agricultural conservation easements, and entering into voluntary agricultural districts.
- The countywide farmland protection plan shall contain a schedule for implementing the plan and an identification of possible funding sources for the long-term support of the plan.

Benefits

- Assessment of the state of farming and forestry in the county.
- Coordination of activities, agencies, and funding for farmland and forestland preservation.
- Lower matching percentage required for funds received from the Agricultural Development and Farmland Preservation Trust Fund if county has a plan:
 - ADFP Trust Fund Matching Requirements:
 - Tier Two and Three Counties
 - with a Farmland Protection Plan - 15%
 - without a Farmland Protection Plan - 30%
 - Tier One Counties
 - with a Farmland Protection Plan - 0%
 - without a Farmland Protection Plan - 30%

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