



Farmland Conservation Easements

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A conservation easement is a voluntary agreement between a landowner and the State of Michigan that keeps land available for agricultural or open space uses. It provides the protection of the quality of farmland and natural condition of land and remains in private ownership. The Michigan Agricultural Preservation Fund provides grants to qualified local farmland preservation programs to close on conservation easements. The State of Michigan also accepts conservation easement donations, which are considered a charitable donation and may provide a federal income tax deduction.

IMPACT FOR MICHIGAN:

The availability of permanent conservation easements on agricultural land and open space provides a focal point for local land use planning, zoning, and associated farmland preservation efforts. Agricultural and open space lands are an integral part of the state's economy. More than 26,000 acres of land in conservation easements contributed to the \$104 billion of economic activity generated by Michigan's food and agriculture sector.

2020 ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

- The Conservation Easement Donation Program closed on three new agricultural conservation easements covering 121 acres in 2020.
- The Michigan Agricultural Preservation Fund held an application cycle with \$1.9 million available to local farmland preservation programs. Five grants were awarded to local farmland preservation programs, preserving just under 1,000 acres.
- Another application cycle with \$1.9 million available was held in October 2020 for fiscal year 2021. There are 24 qualified local farmland programs that can submit applications which will be scored and awarded by March 2021.

MEASURING SUCCESS:

Metric	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
New Conservation Easements					
Conservation easements recorded	2	2	8	5	4
Acreage enrolled	87	276	480	668	289
Program Total Conservation Easements					
Conservation easements recorded	131	133	141	146	150
Local conservation easements	11	11	11	11	12
Acreage enrolled	24,815	25,038	25,518	26,186	26,475
Easement Monitoring					
Donated development rights	51	53	61	66	69
State purchase of development rights	50	50	50	50	50
USDA farm and ranch land	21	21	21	21	21
Total	122	124	132	137	140

2021 PROGRAM GOALS:

- Work with the agriculture community, Federal Agricultural Conservation Easement Program, township and county farmland preservation programs to award state grants for farmland conservation easements.
- Collaborate with American Farmland Trust, state land conservancies, townships and counties to help local farmland preservation programs become qualified for the Michigan Agricultural Preservation Fund.



KEY STAKEHOLDERS:

- Michigan farmers
- Local farmland preservation programs
- Consumers of Michigan grown food
- Those who enjoy the open space and farmland

LEGAL AUTHORITY:

- Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act, Public Act 451 of 1994, as amended, MCL 324.36101 *et seq.*
- Conservation and Historic Preservation Easement Act, Sub Part 11 of Part 21 of the Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act, 1994 Public Act 451, as amended, MCL 324.2140 *et seq.*
- Public Act 451 of 1994, as amended, MCL 324.36201 *et seq.*