

**Serving The Counties Of:**

Allen  
Auglaize  
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Hardin  
Mercer  
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Van Wert



**West Central Ohio Land Conservancy**

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*Helping People Preserve Their Heritage*

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**-FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE-**

**Local Agricultural Easement Purchase Program Application Period Opens**

Landowners in Allen County can apply from January 4<sup>th</sup> – February 17<sup>th</sup>.

Lima, Ohio (December 29, 2016) – The West Central Ohio Land Conservancy (WCOLC) will begin the process of selecting interested landowners who meet the qualifications for the Local Agricultural Easement Purchase Program (LAEPP) in Allen County from January 4<sup>th</sup>-February 17<sup>th</sup>. **Interested agricultural landowners are encouraged to call or email WCOLC (info@wcolc.org) for additional information.** The WCOLC will complete a pre-certification scoring of qualified applicants. The WCOLC will select the landowners with the highest pre-certification scores and aid them in completing an application to be submitted to the Ohio Department of Agriculture (ODA) for purchase of their agricultural easement.

The LAEPP program allows landowners to voluntarily sell easements on their farms to the State of Ohio. The easement requires the farm remain permanently in agricultural production. Selected farms must be more than 40 acres, actively engaged in farming, participate in the Current Agricultural Use Valuation program, demonstrate good stewardship of the land, have support from local government and not be in close proximity to development. Landowners may use the proceeds of the easement in any way they wish, but most reinvest it in their farm operation.

Funding for the LAEPP program is derived from the Clean Ohio Conservation Fund, approved by voters in 2008, and used to purchase agricultural easements from willing sellers through a competitive process. When combined with easements from all ODA programs, 380 family farms in 55 counties have collectively preserved more than 63,000 acres in agricultural production.

Agricultural easements are voluntary legal agreements restricting non-agricultural development on farmland, with the land itself remaining on the tax rolls and under private ownership and management. Landowners may undertake any agricultural activity permitted under Ohio law, and they can sell their farm or pass it along as a gift to others. However, the easement remains with the land, prohibiting any future non-agricultural development to make certain that it remains used for agricultural purposes.

For more information on the local program contact WCOLC at 567-204-9126 or the Ohio Department of Agriculture's Office of Farmland Preservation at 614-728-6210.

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