

Durham County



Farmland Protection
Advisory Board



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ANNUAL REPORT

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The Farmland Protection Advisory Board (FPAB) had another exciting year implementing the 32 goals outlined in the 2009 Durham County Agriculture Development and Farmland Preservation Plan. This report highlights the accomplishments over the last year and provides recommendations for continued focus going forward.

Durham County is experiencing unprecedented growth and two programs administered through the FPAB are vital to the mindful and purposeful preservation of farmland and open space in this county. During 2022 and early 2023, 45 acres on three family farms were permanently preserved through Durham County's Open Space Program. Permanently protecting land through conservation easements protects our county's valuable open space and enables the continuation of farming operations with the purchase of future development rights. This work to preserve farms requires detailed planning and complex piecing together of federal, state, and local government grant opportunities and the Farmland Board remains grateful to be partnered with the Open Space team to support this work.

In addition, local Voluntary Agricultural District (VAD) Ordinances establish programs to promote and protect rural land uses. This important program is administered by the Durham Soil and Water department with oversight from the FPAB. In Durham County, benefits to the landowner include signage, notice to the Register of Deeds to reduce nuisance issues between rural land uses and other land uses including residential, and waiver of water and sewer assessments for land that is enrolled in the program. There are currently 8,679 acres of land enrolled in the VAD Program representing 33% of the agricultural and forest land in the county, and this past year saw the renewal of 300 acres, and addition of 946 acres (includes acres of new landowners of existing VADs).

The FPAB is in the midst of the sixth year of supporting the Agriculture Economic Development Grant Program which is also administered by the Durham Soil and Water Department. This valuable program helps schools, farmers markets, and farmers – new, beginning, socially disadvantaged, and experienced alike – expand in new directions. You'll see more details on this in the report, but to summarize, this program remains highly successful and well utilized as this past year saw \$200,391 in grant proposals of which 75% were funded and are underway.

We were very excited to hold our Farm Tour on the morning of October 6 with the Board of County Commissioners and a great turn out of other key elected officials again this year after having to post-pone for the previous two years because of COVID-19. We were able to visit and learn about several unique farms spanning scale, enterprise-focus and farming business-models on the eastern side of our county on the morning of October 6. A number of these farms were able to demonstrate Agriculture Economic Development grants in action. These farms represented a full range of Durham farmer creativity, resiliency, community engagement, and local food shed and local economy contributions, and we are extremely grateful to the farmers and to the attendees for a very rewarding return to farm touring!



Finally, this year the FPAB focused on the Durham County Stormwater Fees which have been coming into place over the past two years and are heavily financially impacting many in the farming community. We had an opportunity for members of the Stormwater and Erosion Control Division to come present to the FPAB, and after that discussion, to distill our concerns and share them with the Board of County Commissioners in late 2022. We are looking forward to continuing that dialog as we head further into 2023 in hopes of reaching some further clarity and resolution before the next round of tax bills impacts farmers in our county.

Looking ahead to the next year, the FPAB will continue our work and support of farmland protection and recognition through the Conservation Easement and VAD programs, and farmer enablement through our support to the Agriculture Economic Development Grant Program and educational and outreach events. We are also hoping to receive word shortly on a grant for consultative support so that we can undertake a refresh of the Durham County Farmland Protection Plan. Finally, the FPAB remains committed to providing training opportunities for the many interests and needs of the Durham farming community and expect to extend support to the farmer training breakfasts again in early 2024.

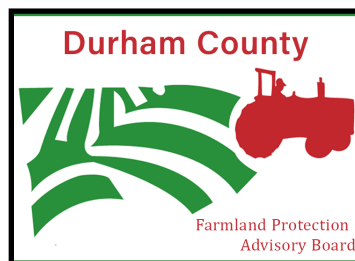
With Gratitude,

Nicole Connelly

Durham Farmland Protection Advisory Board Chairperson and
Little River VAD Representative

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MISSION

The Farmland Board shall foster the wise use of our farmland resources by working with farmers, the community, government entities and agencies, and other resources to identify and implement strategies for the preservation and enhancement of our farming community while protecting the land and soils for future generations.

FPAB Budget Highlights

FPAB Budget FY 21	VAD Supplies	Hope Valley Elem. Garden	Farm tour	Farmer Breakfasts/ Workshops	Outreach/ Advertisement
\$3,375.00	\$541	\$189	\$742	\$412	\$1,491

VAD supplies fund signage costs.



Lunch provided to Farm Tour participants

As part of the Board's Outreach and Advertisement Campaign, window clings, bags, hats, tablecloth, t-shirts and Soil for a school garden were purchased.



Below: Students put soil donated by the Farmland Board in the school garden beds



Before



After



2022 Farm Tour

Farmland Board Showcases Urban Agriculture on October 6, 2022



Board of County Commissioners, Board of Education, Durham City Council and Legislators were invited to hear from farmers, schools, and staff about agricultural programs offered and unique opportunities for agriculture in Durham on the 2022 Farm Tour.

It was a great success!



Mama Springs Farm discussed microgreen and flower production.



Hawks Nest Healing Garden



Hope Reins at feeding time.



Presentations at Hawks Nest Healing Gardens and Wolfberry Hawthorne Farm.



Monica Unger from RN Harris Elementary tells about the school gardens where students learn about growing vegetables.



Page Farms (left) and Tailgate Farms (right) welcome u-pick customers.



Farmer & Landowner Breakfast Series

Each winter the FPAB hosts a monthly breakfast and information session for farmers.

This year in three hybrid sessions, 71 Durham Landowners and Farmers joined us in locations across the county to learn about interesting topics.



1/19/2023 Joe Folta, Wildlife Resources Commission Biologist gives presentation.



12/21/2022 Starlin Beatty, Durham County Tax Department delivers PUV info.



2/15/2023 John Lyttle, Ag Extension Agent with NC Cooperative Extension provides discussion.

Breakfast #1 - Thursday December 21, 2022 at 8-10am

Farmers and Landowners met at the Durham Farm Bureau Meeting Room to hear Durham County Tax Deputy Assessor, Starlin Beatty discuss the Present Use Value program.

Breakfast #2 - Thursday, January 19, 2023 at 8-10am

Joe Folta, Wildlife Biologist, with the NC Wildlife Resources Commission presented information on the Wildlife Conservation Lands Program to farmers and landowners present at the Redwood Ruritan Building.

Breakfast #3- Thursday, February 15, 2021 at 8-10am

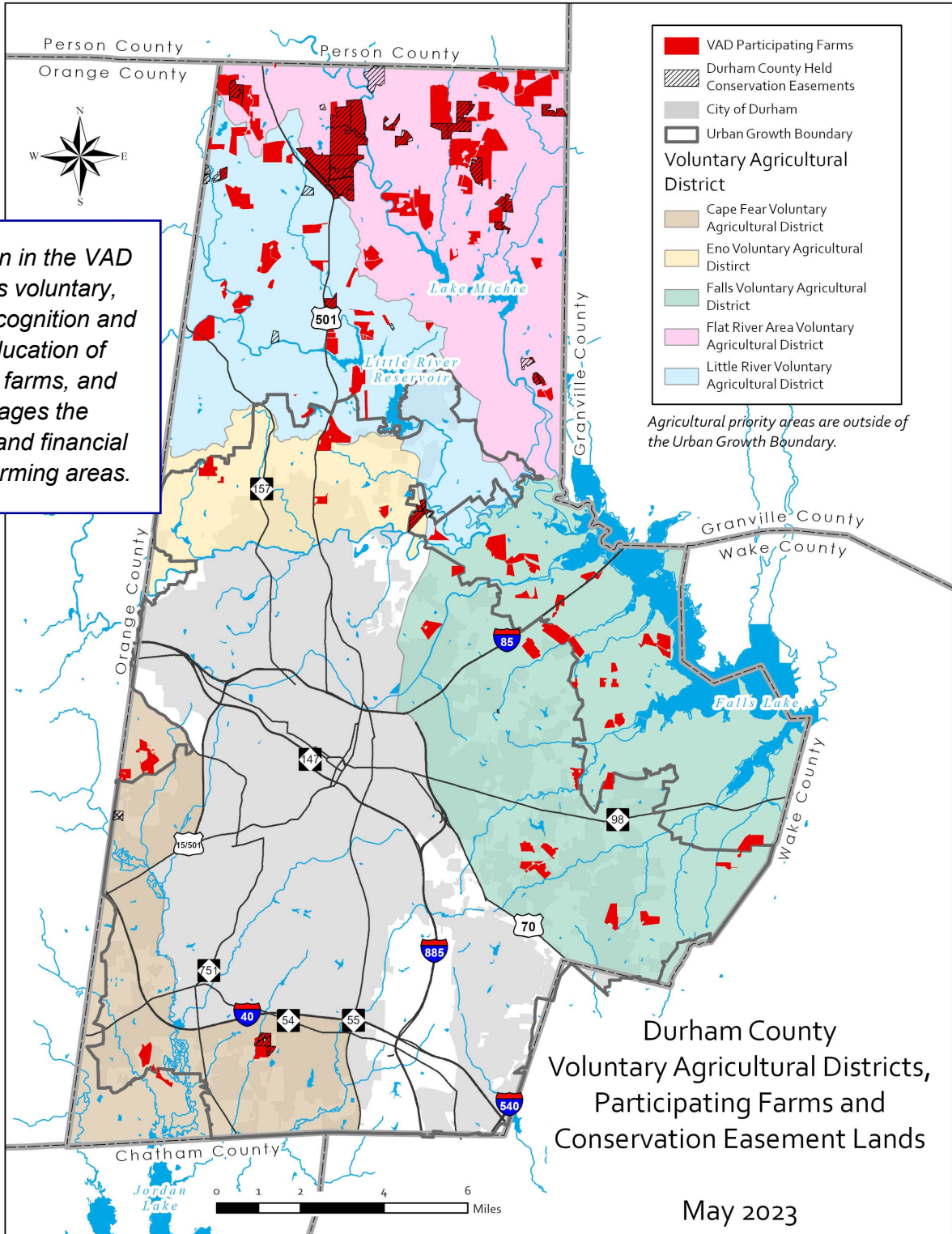
Participants attending this breakfast at the Bahama Rural Fire Department earned one CEU of pesticide credit while listening to Durham Cooperative Extension’s Ag Agent, John Lyttle, discuss Licensed Applicator Responsibilities.



2023 Voluntary Agricultural Districts (VAD)

101 VAD participants
227 land parcels
8,679 acres

Participation in the VAD program is voluntary, provides recognition and public education of Durham's farms, and encourages the economic and financial health of farming areas.



Farmland Conservation Easements

Farmland preservation is a unique and important part of Durham County’s Open Space Program which is staffed by the County’s Open Space Division within the Department of Engineering and Environmental Services.

Since 2001 Durham County, with guidance from the Durham Farmland Protection Advisory Board, has preserved farmland by purchasing development rights through conservation easements that permanently protect the farm. The County works with interested landowners on a voluntary basis, with grants and donations keeping the program affordable. The land stays privately-owned, for farming and/or forestry uses, but cannot be subdivided or developed. **To date Durham has leveraged approximately \$4.33 dollars in outside grants and donations for every \$1 that the County has spent.**

To date the County has permanently protected **2,422 acres on 19 farms** with funding secured for an additional **80 acres** on two different farms. In 2023 we will finalize currently funded easement projects, continue outreach and communications with interested landowners, and monitor currently-held conservation easements.

2,422 acres of farmland on 19 farms are permanently protected with Durham County–held conservation easements.

# of Farms	Farm Acres Protected	Overall Easement Value	Grant and Partner Contributions	Durham County Easement Cost
19	2,422	\$14,534,030	\$11,177,395	\$3,356,635
Percentage of overall cost:			77%	23%



Coming Soon! Clara Glenn (center) has lived on their 40-acre farm, part of the Lucious Glenn Farm, in the historic Bowling-Glenn House (ca. 1850) for over 70 years.



Coming Soon! Bill Sparrow, Jr. and his wife, Margie have been living and raising sheep on their Red Mill Road farm next to Falls Lake since the early 1980s.



Farmland Conservation Easements 2022-2023



Douglas Daye's Farm, LM & D Farm, is the only State-registered black-owned Century Farm in Durham County and was once part of Lucious Glenn's farm. Mr. Daye enjoys raising beef cattle, tending his hay fields, and cutting firewood. In June 2022 the County protected an additional 12 acres of Mr. Daye's family land.

Three Easements Closed on
45 acres
Two Easements in Process on
80 acres



Alston Glenn's Farm has been in his family for several generations and 50 acres was protected in 2020. Mr. Glenn raises beef cattle and cuts hay and although he lives in town, spends almost every day on the farm. In April 2023 an additional 12 acres of his Glenn family land were protected.



Len and Cindy Needham live adjacent to their Blazing Hill Farm and have, over years, acquired the easement farmland. Mr. Needham grew up in this area and spent his childhood on this and other nearby historic Durham Farms. In December 2022, 33 acres of pasture and hayland were protected.



Agriculture Economic Development Grant Program

The Durham County Board of County Commissioners Agricultural Economic Development Grant Program was allocated \$150,000 in 2022 for the FY2023. The program purpose is to offer cost share and financial support to farms, new and beginning entrepreneurs and to support agriculture education in schools.

Program Impact & Data	FY 22	FY 23
Funding level	\$ 75,000	\$ 150,000
Request for funding from applicants	\$ 109,289	\$ 200,391
Number of applications	32	36
Number of farm applications	20	33
Number of M/WBE applications (farms)	17	19
Number of farm projects funded	14	24
Percentage of M/WBE contracts awarded	85%	79%
Number of farms funded for food safety compliance	4	2
Number of schools funded	4	3

Project Examples



Vacuum Sealer



Community Garden Beds



Agriculture Economic Development Grant Program



Greenhouse and Cistern



Wildlife Exclusion



Rinse Conveyor

Project Types	FY22	FY 23
Number of farm operations that raise livestock only	7	3
Number of operations that raise livestock & produce	6	10
Number of farms that grow produce only	8	8
Projects that improved access/equity/non-profits with direct sales	8	4
Schools supporting Agricultural Education	4	3
Other agriculture commodities produced	2	5

Program Goals for Calendar Year 2024

1. Continue to support and promote the Voluntary Ag District (VAD) Program, Conservation Easement Program and the Agricultural Economic Development Grant Program.
2. Continue to support agricultural education through adult programming and in Durham County public schools.
3. Update the 2009 Farmland Protection Plan through grant funding and review and potential update of the Farmland Protection Program ordinance.

Funding Requests for FY 2022

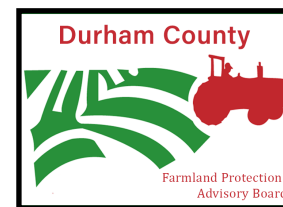
1. Farmland Economic Development Grant Program – Through this program, the Farmland Preservation Board assists local farmers by providing cost-share grants.
2. Conservation Easements – The FPAB requests the BOCC continue funding the county’s Farmland Protection Easement Program through the Capital Improvement Plan.

FY 22-23 Members:

Nicole Connelly Chair/Little River VAD	Mark Waller Vice Chair/Farm Bureau Representative
Kenny Browning 2nd Vice Chair/Eno River VAD	Heidi Carter County Commissioner
Neil Frank At large <i>(Farmland Board appointed)</i>	Talmage Layton Falls VAD
Samantha Gasson At Large <i>(Farmland Board appointed)</i>	S. Douglas Daye Flat River VAD
David Harris SWCD Board Representative	David Heeks At Large <i>(Farmland Board Appointed)</i>
Matthew Eagle At Large <i>(Farmland Board appointed)</i>	Lindsay White At Large <i>(Farmland Board appointed)</i>
William Sparrow Business Representative	Shakira Campbell Open Space & Trails Representative
Nancy Herndon Cape Fear VAD	



Soil & Water



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Staff support provided by Soil and Water Department , Open Space and Real Estate Division, and Cooperative Extension.