

--- For Immediate Release ---

January 12, 2023

Photo of William Lyons, Perry County Ag Land Preservation Board Chairman – included
Photo of Banquet crowd - included

On December 12, 2022 the Perry County Conservation District Board hosted the Farmland Preservation 10,000 Acre Celebration and Annual Banquet at the Perry Mennonite Reception Center in Elliottsburg where a delicious dinner was served to 114 attendees. Current and former members of both the Ag Land Preservation Board and Conservation District Board, and current and past owners of preserved agricultural land came together to celebrate this milestone along with some special guests. The evening began with a welcome from District Board Chairman Mike Clark, followed by accolades and remarks from Ag Land Preservation Board Chairman William Lyons who recounted the history of the Perry County Ag Land Preservation Program and gave tribute to those pioneer members of the first Ag Land Preservation Board who came together in the year of 1989 and then held their first meeting on March 13, 1990 at the Perry County Courthouse to develop this program into what it has become today (Robert Gabel, Virgil Gutshall, Clark Bower, Jonas Stoltzfus, Brenda Benner, Russell Raub, and Jim Hoover). "I'm not sure what the board's goals may have been then, but I am pretty sure that they would be impressed as to how far we've come over the last 33 years," said Lyons. "It doesn't matter where you go in Perry County you will see beautiful farmland, either preserved acres, in the process of being preserved, or farms that are ranked high on our waiting list. The Ag Land Preservation Board has always had great District staff members to make this program move forward (both past and present: Todd Brajkovich, Lucy Jansama, Neil Imes, and Sally Tengeres) have been key to this program's success. They have been the nuts and bolts that make all of this work as well as it does. There are many strict rules, guidelines, and regulations to adhere to. County support of the program through the Commissioners is greatly appreciated, currently providing \$45,000 annually to go along with state and federal funding."

It is known that Perry County leads the state in the amount of donated easements to the program, coming in at 2,991.92 acres. The Bureau of Farmland Preservation Acting Director Stephanie Zimmerman and Department of Agriculture Deputy Secretary Cheryl Cook also spoke of the importance of preserving such valuable ground and how and why protecting it for the future is an incredible act.

Here are the overall statistics for the Perry County Farmland Preservation Program as of January 2023: There are 71 farmland easements with a total of 10,076.35 acres preserved. Of those, there are 2,991.92 acres in donation, 3,950.02 acres in state purchased, and 3,134.41 acres in federal purchased. There are 44 operation types represented on these preserved farms being: 8 crop, 16 dairy, 8 poultry, 10 beef, 1 sheep, and 1 swine.

Those who are interested in learning more about the Farmland Preservation Program can contact the District by phone at 717-582-8988 ext. 4 or by email at perrycd@perryco.org