



# COUNTY OF LEHIGH

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## Press Release

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### **Lehigh County Preserves 25,000 Acres Of Farmland**

*October is recognized as Lehigh County Farmland Preservation Month*

**Lehigh County, PA-** On Wednesday, October 14<sup>th</sup>, the Sterling Raber Agriculture Land Preservation Board of Lehigh County and the Lehigh County Board of Commissioners will be commemorating Lehigh County as it reaches its 25,000-acre landmark in farmland preservation. This accomplishment marks Lehigh County as one of the leading counties in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania to achieve a high acreage in preservation efforts.

The event will be honoring Lehigh County farmers, especially former Lehigh County Commissioner Sterling Raber whose influence inspired the creation of the Sterling Raber Agriculture Land Preservation Board of Lehigh County. It is through this board that farmland preservation remains a top priority in the County of Lehigh. As a result, the month of October will be commemorated as Lehigh County Farmland Preservation Month.

“One of my first initiatives as County Executive was to prioritize our farmland preservation efforts in Lehigh County.” said Phil Armstrong, Lehigh County Executive. “There is history in this soil and it is up to us to preserve what we can for today and tomorrow’s generation. I cannot thank the Sterling Raber Agriculture Land Preservation Board enough for their continuous hard work and for preserving our farmers’ legacies. Our county’s farmland is simply irreplaceable and it is through preservation we can guarantee these lands will continue to flourish well into the future.”

In order for farm to qualify for preservation, a farm is required to be active and forego any development rights while maintaining the property for farming. As of October 14<sup>th</sup>, 2020, over 350 Lehigh County farms have been preserved at a total of 25,139 acres. Over 75% of farms that were preserved are 50 acres or larger. Currently, there are 60 additional farms waiting to be reviewed by the Sterling Raber Agriculture Land Preservation Board of Lehigh County for preservation.

“The quickest way to protect our quality of life is to preserve our land.” said Madam Chair Amy Zanelli of the Lehigh County Commissioners. “It preserves not just the land, but our clean air and our clean water against the perils of over development and trucking pollution. I could not be more proud of our farmland preservation team. My only hope is that more townships start to realize this and participate even more. Land is truly our most precious resource- and they aren’t making any more of it.”

Agriculture remains one of the leading industries in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and in Lehigh County. Local farms that were preserved with the most acreage under the Sterling Raber Agriculture Land Preservation Board of Lehigh County were Folck Farms (615 acres over six farms), Fink Farms (513 acres over 6 farms), Turner Farms (505 acres over five farms), and

Henninger Farms (418 acres over five farms). The Peter and Jolanta Knight Farm (102 acres) was the most recent farm to be preserved that pushed Lehigh County over the 25,000-acre mark.

“Lehigh County’s milestone of 25,000 acres preserved is a testament to the widespread support by local officials, the public, and the farming community year after year.” said Douglas Wolfgang, Director of Farmland Preservation, PA Dept of Agriculture. “The Lehigh Valley has some of the most productive farmland soils in state –along with some of the most intense development pressures. These 25,000 acres of preserved farmland will feed the community, the region and the nation for generations to come.”

The Lehigh County Livable Landscape Plan is a study commissioned by Lehigh County to analyze the living expectations of county citizens and their quality of life. In the most recent survey, open space preservation and farmland maintenance remain a top priority for local residents. It is through this feedback and effort that Lehigh County prioritizes the needs of county farmers and their farms.

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