



Regional Conference on Farmland Protection

Anita Zurbrugg
American Farmland Trust
Sugar Grove, IL
February 2007



- Founded in 1980
- Dedicated to saving farm and ranch land across the country
- Works directly with farmers, communities, conservationists, developers and government officials
- Involved in farm bills since 1982
- Leading role in farmland protection, IPM, risk insurance for BMPs and other conservation initiatives



- Protecting the best land
- Planning for agriculture
- Keeping the land healthy



Protecting farmland and agriculture in Illinois

- Challenges
- Research
- Programs, Policies, Tools
- Illinois Programs
- Farm Bill 2007



Core beliefs

- Commitment to agriculture for our future
- Poorly planned land use changes have negative impacts on agriculture's future
- Critical mass of agricultural land
- Keep farmland for next generation



Challenges



It's not farmland without farmers!



Farmers in Transitioning Counties

- Are under pressure from development
- Often disinvest in their enterprises due to perceived impermanence of agriculture
- Produce about 33 percent of the value of U.S. farm input
- May find their operations becoming fragmented by development



Challenges

Farmers in Transitioning Counties...

face increased likelihood of conflicts and complaints, both social and legal

- Transportation and maneuverability
- Chemical and fertilizer applications
- Offending odors
- Compromised drainage



Agricultural Viability

- Higher costs of inputs (land, energy, nutrients, etc)
- Narrowing profit margins
- Aging farm population
- Economies of scale lead to larger farms and/or higher value agriculture enterprises
- Disappearing middle



Increasing Land Prices

- Rural land is attractive for developers
- More development increases land prices
- Makes it difficult for farmers to enter or expand operation
- Equity in farmland is often a farmer's primary retirement plan
- Tougher to pass land to the next generation



.... and on even a larger scale

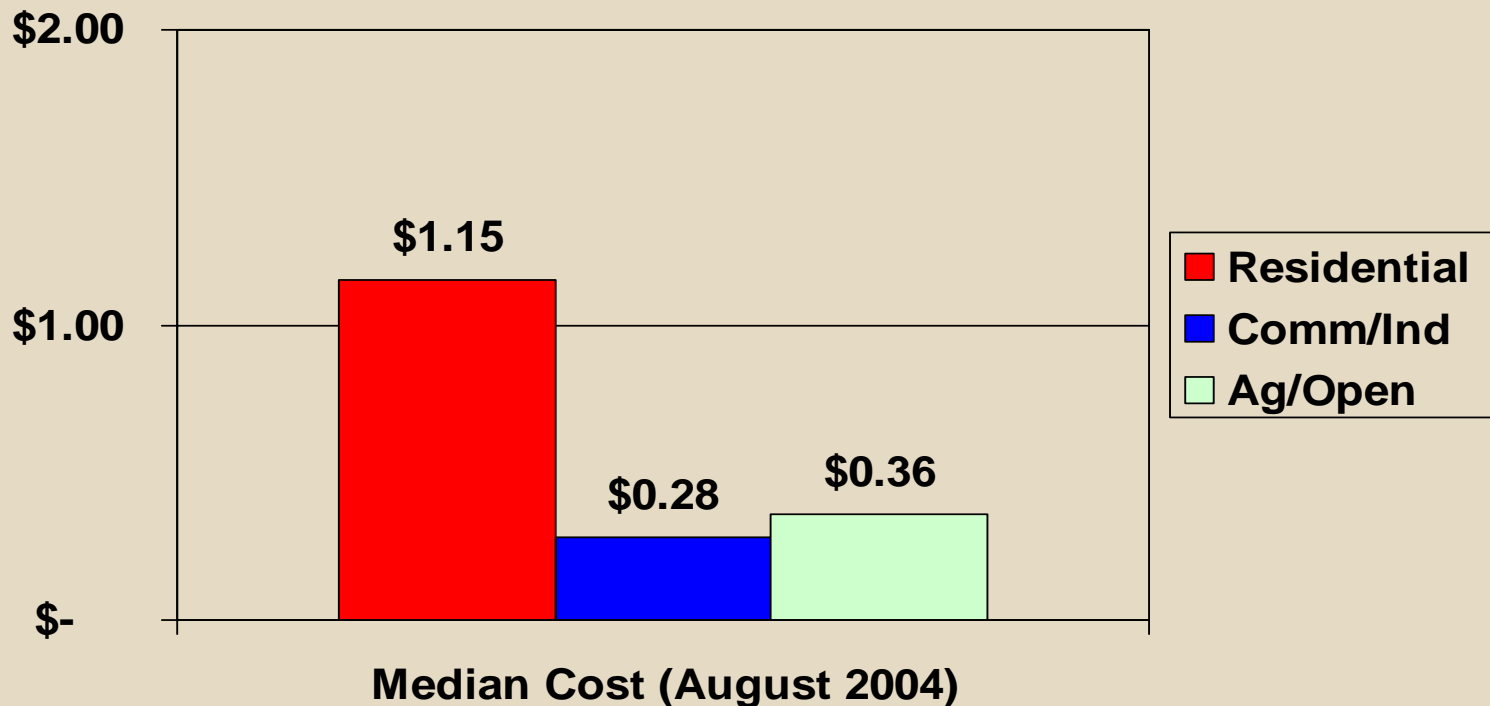
- U.S. agricultural sector is critical to the balance of trade
- Market for agricultural exports is growing
- U.S. farm products are critical to world food security



Fiscal Stability

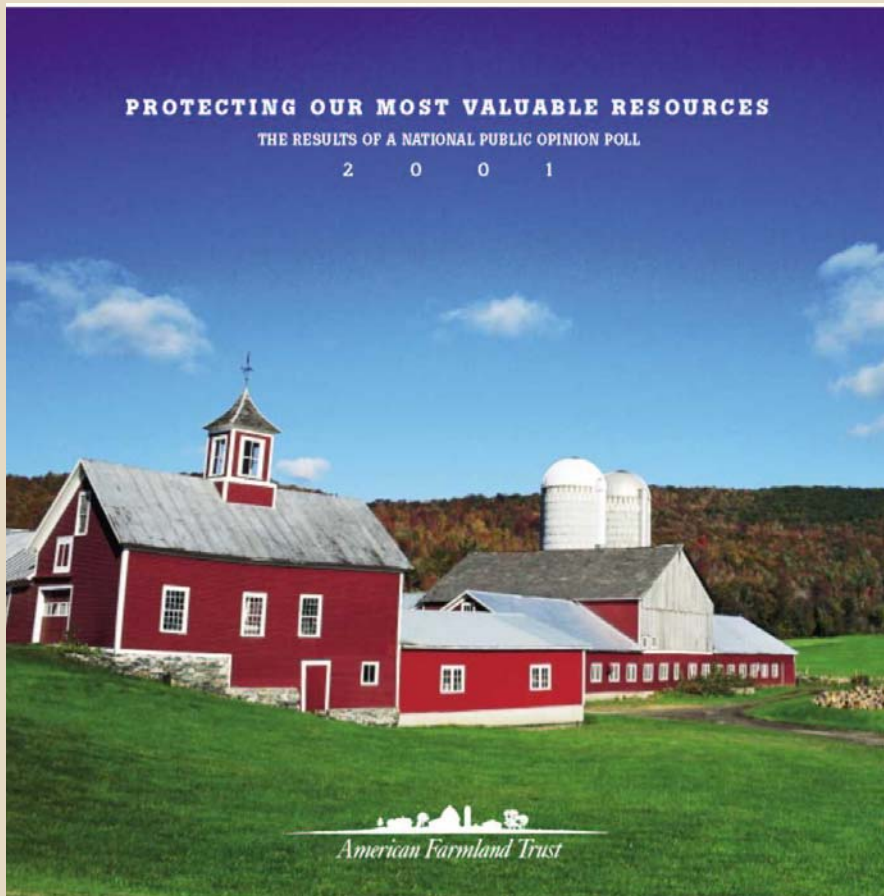
Cost of Community Services studies show that privately owned agricultural land generates more in taxes than it uses in services

Median Cost per Dollar of Revenue Raised to Provide Public Services





Research



2001 AFT public opinion poll found 85 percent of voters willing to pay farmers and ranchers for providing environmental benefits



2006-2007 USDA Agriculture Viability Study*

DeKalb County Farm operator/landowners who responded to survey *

- who have had at least one conflict with urban neighbors are less likely to have a positive outlook for agriculture's future in the county
- who viewed local zoning regulations as helpful were three times more likely to have a positive outlook for agriculture's future in the county.
- who are diversified (crops and animals) are twice as likely as other respondents to indicate they are likely to be farming in 10 years

* *preliminary results - DeKalb Co one of 15 counties studied nationwide*



Ability to protect agricultural land is limited by

- Availability of a wide variety of policy tools at all levels of government
- Funding
- Politics and jurisdictional authority
Local vs. state vs. federal
- Collective local political will and capital



Local, state and federal policies that affect agriculture

- Farmland Protection Policies
- Planning Regulations
- Environmental Restrictions
- Economic Development Incentives
- Stewardship Incentives



Land Use Policies and Programs

- **Purchase of development rights**
- Transfer of development rights
- Agricultural districts/agricultural areas
- Agricultural zoning
- Minimum lot sizes
- Cluster zoning
- Right-to-farm
- Tax relief / incentives



Purchase of Development Rights (PDR)* Program

- Voluntary
- Compensation for permanently restricting development through easements
- Keeps land available for agriculture
- Land remains privately owned and managed, stays on the tax roles
- Over 60 local programs nationwide
- Matching state and federal funds

*PDR = Purchase of Agriculture Easements (PACE)

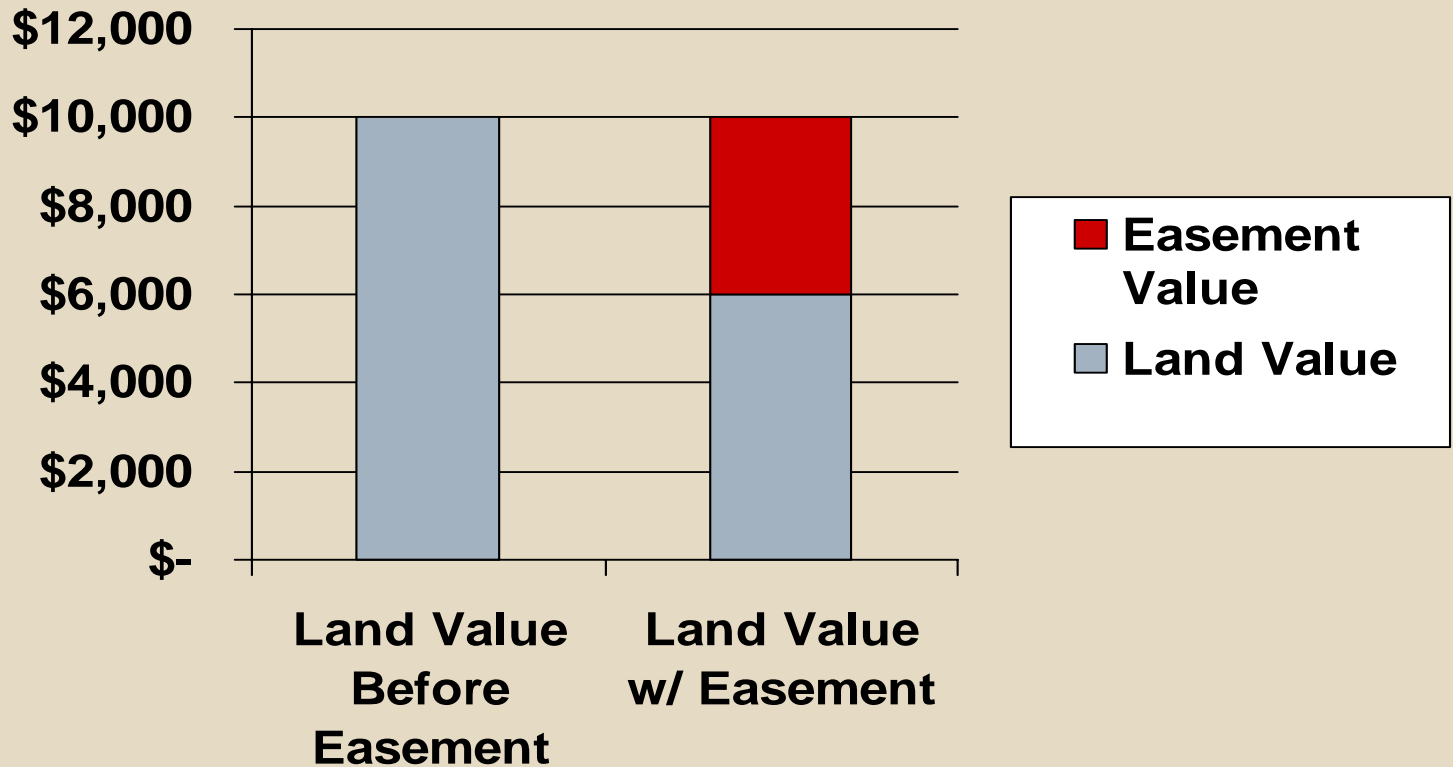


Agricultural Conservation Easement

- a *voluntary*, legal agreement
- between a landowner and a conservation organization or government agency
- permanently limits a property's uses in order to protect the property's conservation values
- can be donated, sold or in combination



Value of Easements





Benefits of PDR/PACE to landowners

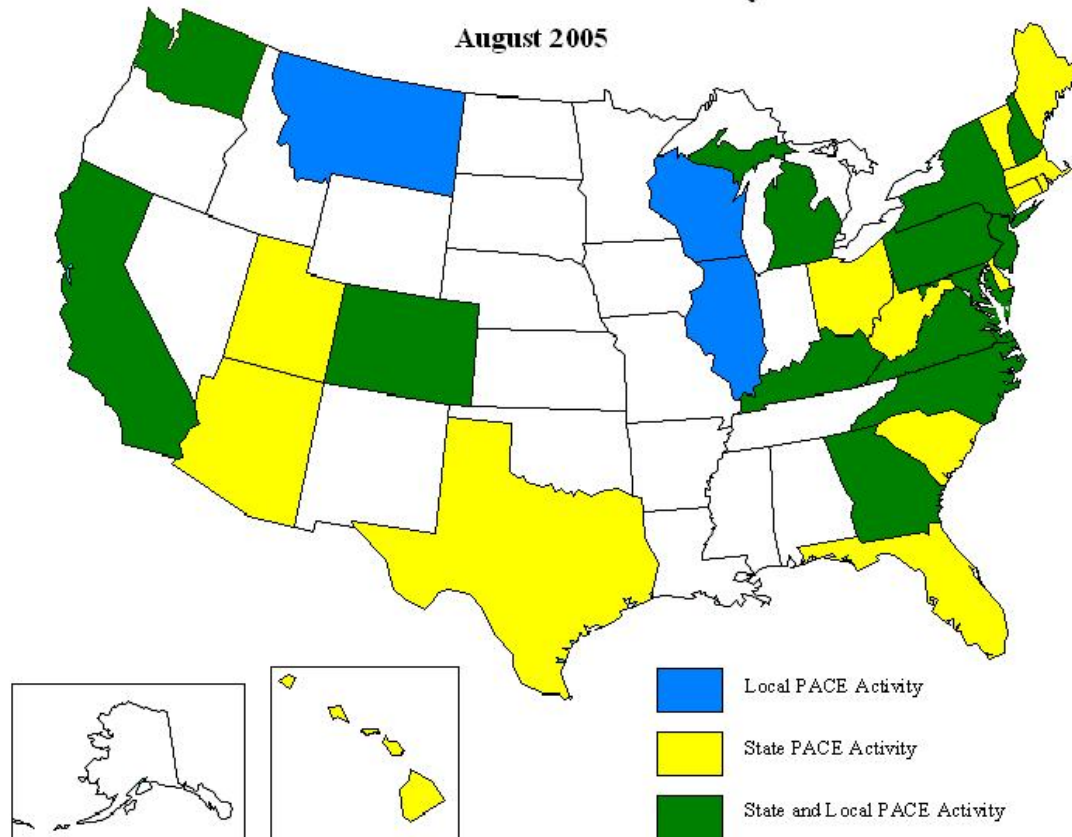
- Converts equity in land into cash
- Offers a viable alternative to development or financing
- Keeps ownership and management of land in private hands
- Involves the public in supporting farming
- Valuable tool for estate planning/farm succession



Programs, Policies and Tools

Nationwide PACE Activity

August 2005



Notes:

1. "PACE activity" means there is either authorization for easement acquisitions to protect agricultural land (i.e., as state or local law) or an established program that buys easements to protect agricultural land. Programs that are temporarily inactive due to a lack of funding are counted, programs that have sunset are not (e.g., Montana).
2. Montana's statewide PACE authority expired in 2003.



County Easement Programs

PDR Program

Kane 2001

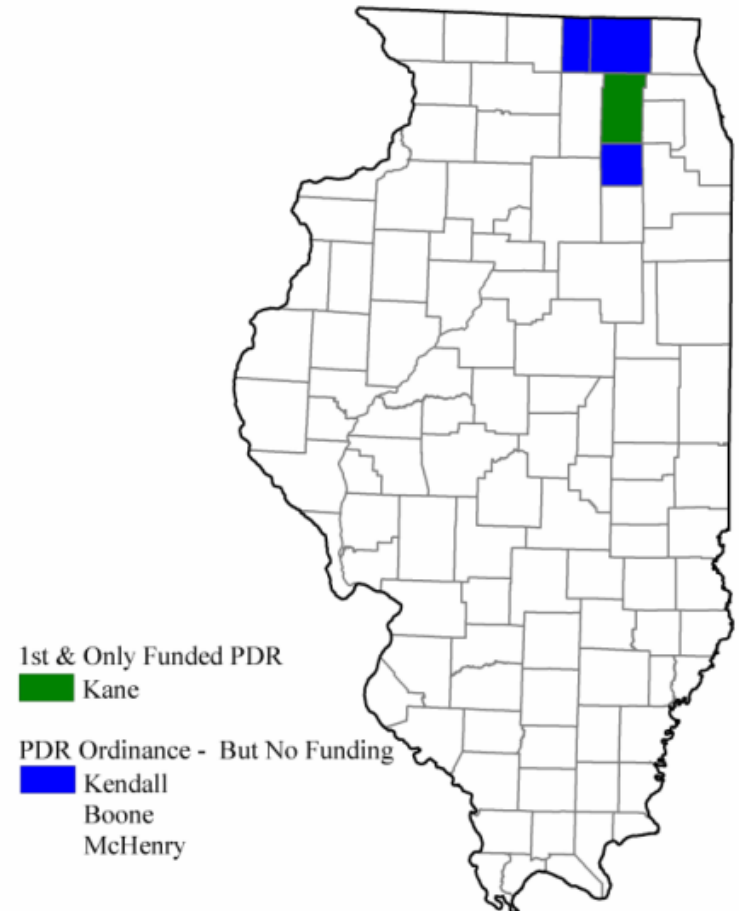
Farmland Protection Program - no funding

Kendall 2004

Boone 2006

McHenry 2006

County Easement Programs





State Programs

- Right-to-Farm
- Agriculture areas
- Differential assessment

Local Programs

- PDR/PACE
- Comprehensive planning
- Ag protection zoning, cluster zoning
- Minimum lot sizes



Federal programs and partnerships that fund easements

- Farm and Ranchland Protection Program (FRPP)
- Forest Legacy
- Grassland Reserve



AFT's Agenda 2007: National Farm Policy

Major Policy Proposals

- Doubling of funding for conservation programs – including farmland protection
- Expanded and Reformed Conservation Security Program
- Revenue Protection Program (replace LDP & CCP)
- Cooperative Conservation Partnership Initiative
- Farm Profitability Grants Program



Farm and Ranchland Protection Program

- Increased funding authorization (from \$100 M to \$300 M)
- Establishes block grants to qualified state and local programs
- Allows qualified programs to determine own purchase priorities, procedures and legal documents
- Eliminates back up federal power of enforcement and eliminates federal contingent right
- Provides flexibility in easement valuation



AFT Can Help



Visit the Farmland Information Center

www.farmlandinfo.org

Sign up for AFT's newsletters!

- *E-News*
- *U.S. Farm Policy Update*

www.farmland.org

Thank You !