

**Information Sessions on Ohio's Agricultural Easement Purchase Program Coming Soon**

The Ohio Department of Agriculture (ODA) is busy preparing for the Agricultural Easement Purchase Program and looks forward to working with many interested landowners and local governments. In anticipation of the first annual funding round expected to take place next spring, ODA, in cooperation with American Farmland Trust, C. William Swank Program in Rural-Urban Policy-OSU, Center for Farmland Preservation in Northeast Ohio, Ohio State University Extension, and Otterbein College, will sponsor five regional information sessions.

A training session for public officials and professionals assisting landowners with easement applications will be offered during the day at the following venues. **The public is invited to attend a two-hour evening session, offered from 7:00 until 9:00 pm, on the following dates:**

- NW: January 17, 2002** — NW OSU Extension District Office, Findlay, co-hosted by Black Swamp Conservancy
- NE: January 22, 2002** — Holden Arboretum, Kirtland, co-hosted by the Northeastern Ohio Land Trust Coalition and the Holden Arboretum
- SE: January 24, 2002** — Hocking College, Nelsonville, co-hosted by the Appalachia Ohio Heritage and Land Alliance
- SW: January 31, 2002** — OSU Extension meeting room, Greene County Fairgrounds, Xenia, co-hosted by Tecumseh Land Trust
- Central: February 5, 2002** — Hopewell Hall, Central Ohio Technical College, Newark, co-hosted by Granville Land Conservancy

If you're a landowner interested in participating in this voluntary program, please consider attending one of the information sessions. An agricultural easement may create a new option for you to cash in on some of your land's equity while retaining ownership and the right to farm. An agricultural easement is an agreement between the landowner and the state to keep a piece of property in agricultural production forever. While the landowner may sell the property or pass it on as a gift at any time, the agricultural easement stays with the property forever. Agricultural easements purchase programs are currently being used in 19 other states.

Ohio's efforts to preserve farmland began as Ohioans grew increasingly alarmed at the rate of farmland conversion – Ohio lost 28.7% of its farmland between 1954 and 1992. When voters approved Governor Taft's Clean Ohio Fund in November 2000, \$25 million was made available to purchase agricultural easements. ODA will finally be able to begin Ohio's Purchase of Agricultural Easement Program in the spring of 2002.

For more information about the upcoming sessions, visit American Farmland Trust's Web site: [www.farmland.org](http://www.farmland.org) and click on "Around the Country." Look for the Ohio page. Or, contact Vicki Garrett, Ohio Department of Agriculture's Office of Farmland Preservation, [garrett@odant.agri.state.oh.us](mailto:garrett@odant.agri.state.oh.us) or 614.728.6211