



Farmland Preservation Program: RBA Analysis

Background

On June 29, 2012, the program review committee authorized a study of the Department of Agriculture's Farmland Preservation Program (FPP). The study focus is to assess the program's effectiveness in protecting agricultural lands for current and future farming and food production.

In 1974, recognizing that agricultural land is one of the state's important natural resources, the Governor's Task Force report recommended preserving agricultural lands. In 1978, the FPP was initiated as a pilot program for the purchase of agricultural land within the state (P.A. 78-232). In order to retain a viable soil base, the program seeks those prime and important farmlands most suitable for agricultural use and most likely to contribute to current and future productivity. Prime farmland is defined as "soils defined by the United States Department of Agriculture as the best suited to producing food, feed, forage, fiber, and oilseed crops." (C.G.S. Sec. 22-26bb)

The FPP preserves lands through the acquisition of development rights to agricultural properties. By doing this, the program is able to fulfill its statutory objective of securing food and fiber producing lands for the benefit of future generations. Under the terms of the program, the purchase of development rights places a restriction on non-agricultural uses of the land, while allowing the land owner to retain ownership of land. Participation in the program is voluntary on the part of land owners.

The program has the current working goal of preserving 130,000 acres of farmland, of which 85,000 (65%) acres are to be dedicated to cropland. This goal has remained unchanged since the program's inception.

The program receives funding through numerous sources, including the state General Fund, state bonds in the form of biannual lump sums, the Community Investment Act (P.A. 05-228), the Federal Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program, and through cooperative efforts of a variety of local land trusts and municipalities dedicated to maintaining their agricultural heritage.

To date, committee staff has met with the FPP staff and stakeholders. Staff has also attended meetings of the FPP Advisory Board and the Governor's Council on Agricultural Development.

Main Points

State law and the state's Conservation and Development Policies Plan both recognize farmland in the state as a vital resource and the importance for the state to preserve such land for the benefit of its citizens.

The process to acquire agricultural development rights consists of several checks and balances and, until recently, has been dependent upon project-by-project bond allocations. The process includes an internal evaluation/scoring process by the agriculture department of farms applying for the program, independent land appraisals, and reviews by the state Properties Review Board, the state Bond Commission, and the Office of the Attorney General. Detailed land surveys are also conducted prior to final price negotiations.

Program Operations

Staffing

- The program has five staff members.

Budget

- The program receives funding from several sources including: State Bonding monies, Community Investment Act (CIA), the Federal Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program and various local partners.
- In FY10, the program received \$155,000 from the General Fund and \$10 million in lump-sum bond proceeds. In calendar year 2010, the program received approximately \$2 million in Community Investment Act funding, \$4.9 million from the federal Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program, and \$1.3 million from local and private trust sources.

There are several programs in addition to FPP that assist in the effort to preserve farmland across the state.

Program Data

- To date, the Farmland Preservation Program has preserved 36,572 – or 28% of its 130,000 acre goal – on 278 farms statewide at a state cost of just over \$117 million.
- The yearly annual acreage preserved has fluctuated greatly since the program's inception. The overall trend in total acres preserved annually, however, has steadily decreased: from 15,083 acres during 1980s, to 10,757 in the 1990s, to 8,433 acres from 2000-2010.

Next Steps

Staff will continue to collect and analyze data, and talk to stakeholders, to help answer the key RBA questions of "How Well" is the program meeting its purpose and "Is Anyone Better Off" as a result of the efforts of the program.

Farmland Preservation Program: RBA Analysis

Staff Update
September 25, 2012

Draft RBA Framework

Draft RBA Framework: Farmland Preservation Program

Quality of Life Results Statement:

“Connecticut has prime agricultural land that is protected from development and used to benefit the health, economic, and social interests of the state’s citizens.”

Main Partners

Sharing Responsibility for Achieving Results Statement

<p>State Agencies Department of Agriculture Dept. of Energy and Environmental Prot. Office of Policy and Management State Properties Review Board State Bond Commission University of Connecticut Office of the Attorney General Dept. of Economic and Community Dev.</p>	<p>Advisory Boards/Councils Farmland Preservation Advisory Board Governor’s Council for Agricultural Dev. Connecticut Food Policy Council Connecticut Agricultural Business Cluster</p>	<p>Federal Agencies Department of Agriculture Farm and Ranch Land Pres. Program Natural Resources Conserv. Services Farm Services Agency Environmental Protection Agency</p>	<p>Non-Profit/Private/Other Farmers CT Farm Bureau CT Farmland Trust Municipalities American Farmland Trust CT Land Conservation Council Land Trusts (e.g., Joshua Trust) Natural Resource Inventory Working Lands Alliance Nature Conservancy State-licensed surveyors, appraisers Municipal Associations</p>
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PROGRAM LEVEL ACCOUNTABILITY

Program Performance Measures

<p>Farmland Preserved 1. <i>Total Acreage Available</i> 2. <i>Useable Acreage Available</i> 3. <i>Prime Farmland Preserved</i> 4. <i>Goal Completion Rate</i></p>	<p>Land Utilization 5. <i>Acreage in Production</i> 6. <i>Fallow Acreage</i> 7. <i>Acreage Lost to Development</i> 8. <i>Diversity of Production</i></p>	<p>Economic Vitality 9. <i>State Investment</i> 10. <i>Agricultural Sales</i> 11. <i>Value of Land After Resale</i></p>	<p>Customer Satisfaction 12. <i>Purchasers</i> 13. <i>General Public (health, environmental, social)</i></p>
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Background

- State policy stresses the importance of preserving agricultural land
 - Statute (C.G.S. Sec.26-22aa)
 - State Plan of Conservation and Development
- Farmland Preservation Program (FPP) started as a pilot in 1978
- Purpose is to purchase the development rights of prime and important agricultural lands within the state
 - Prime farmland is defined as:
 - “soils defined by the United States Department of Agriculture as the best suited to producing food, feed, forage, fiber, and oilseed crops,” (C.G.S Sec 22-26bb(g))

Background (cont.)

- Program Goal:
 - Preserve 130,000 acres of prime and important farmland
 - 85,000 (65%) to be dedicated to cropland
 - Goal has remained unchanged since program inception
 - 28% of goal achieved to date

Program Operations: Quick Facts

Organization

- Administered within the Department of Agriculture

Staffing

- 5 full-time employees
- Staff currently split their time performing the daily operations for the Farmland Preservation Program, Community Farmland Preservation Program, and the Farmland Restoration Program

Budget

- General Fund program expenditures totaled \$155,000 for FY10
- Other funding sources (2010)
 - State Bond Monies (\$10 mil)
 - Community Investment Act (\$2 mil)
 - Federal Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (\$4.9 mil)
 - Local/Other Partners (\$1.3 mil)

Other Programs Administered by Farmland Preservation Program Staff

Community Farmland Preservation Program

- Preservation program for farmland created by the legislature “that does not meet the criteria for the FPP, but may contribute to local economic activity through agricultural production.”
 - Reasons land did not meet criteria:
 - Size of farm
 - Soil quality
 - Location
- Lands acquired through purchase of development rights
- Voluntary
- 11 applications received to date; 4 accepted into pilot program
- 23 joint cooperative agreements

Farmland Restoration Program

- Helps to restore land not currently in production so that it can be used for food and fiber production.
- Some reasons land is not in production:
 - Overgrown
 - Drainage issues
 - Fencing problems
- Objective: Increase state’s resource base for food and fiber production agriculture.
- Voluntary
- Requires applicants to have a Conservation Plan or FLRP plan
- Farmers are reimbursed no more than \$20,000 or 50% of the farm resources management plan.

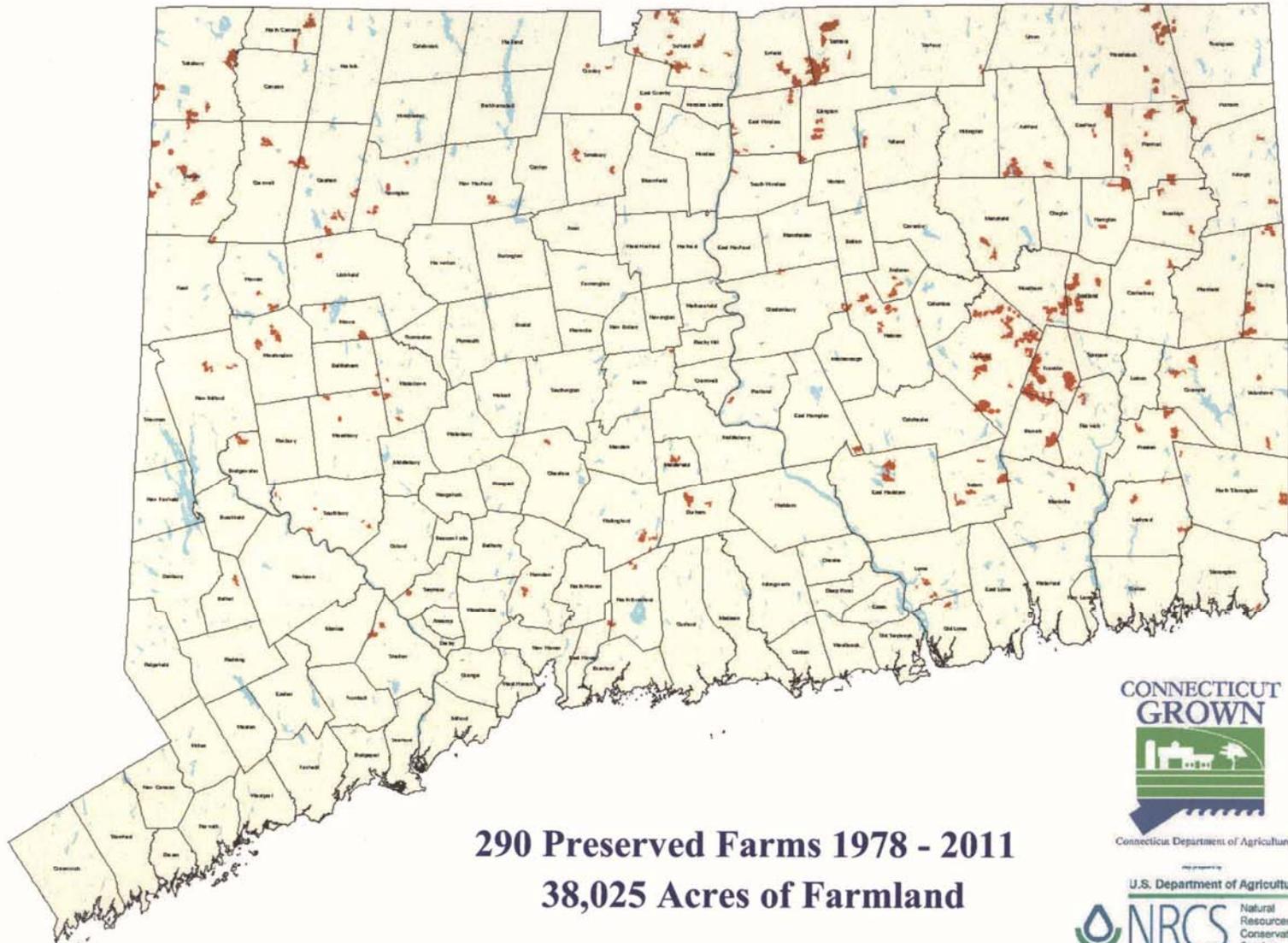
Connecticut Agriculture: Current Landscape

Total State Land Mass (Acres)	3,100,721
Prime and Important Soils (Acres)	862,822
Number of Farms	4,916
Total Farm Acres	405,616
Total Cropland Acres	163,686
Harvested Cropland Acres*	136,833

* According to the USDA Census of Agriculture, harvested cropland includes land which crops were harvested and hay was cut, land used to grow short-rotation woody crops and land in orchards, citrus groves, Christmas trees, vineyards, nurseries, and greenhouses. Land from which two or more crops were harvested were counted only once. Land in tapped maple trees was included in woodland not pastured.

Source: 2007 Census of Agriculture, USDA, National Agricultural Statistics Service; UConn Center for Land Use Education and Research.

Connecticut Farmland Preservation Program



290 Preserved Farms 1978 - 2011
38,025 Acres of Farmland

CONNECTICUT
GROWN



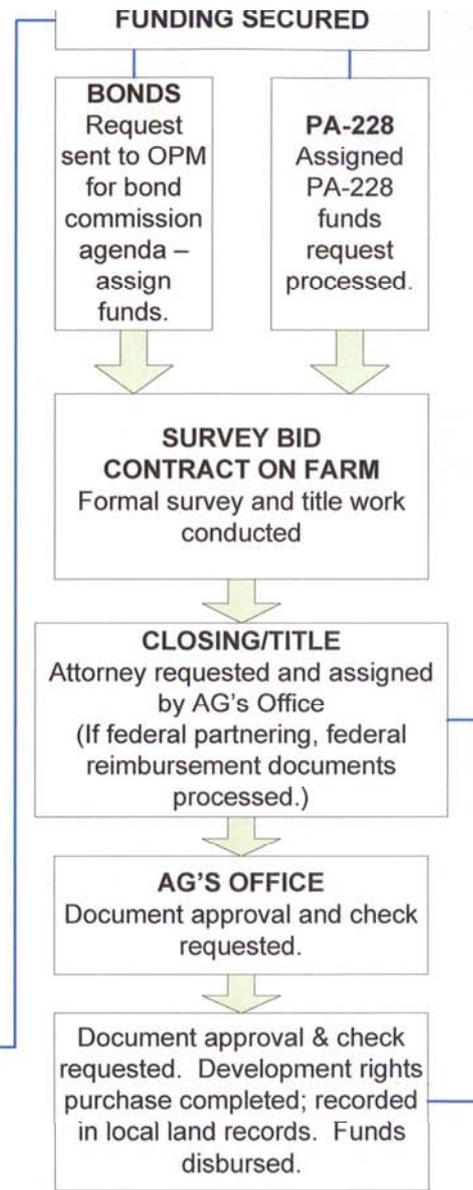
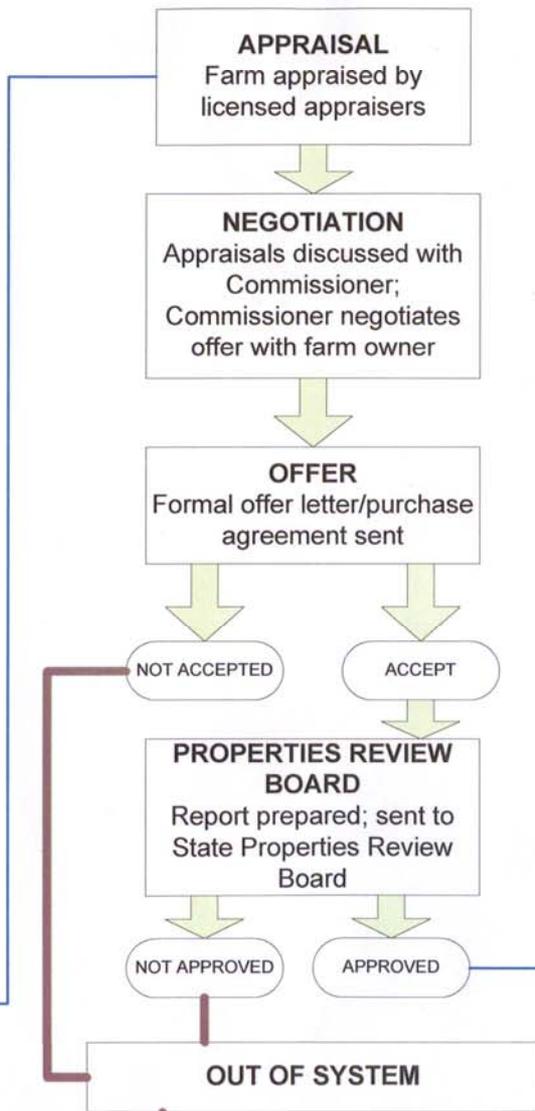
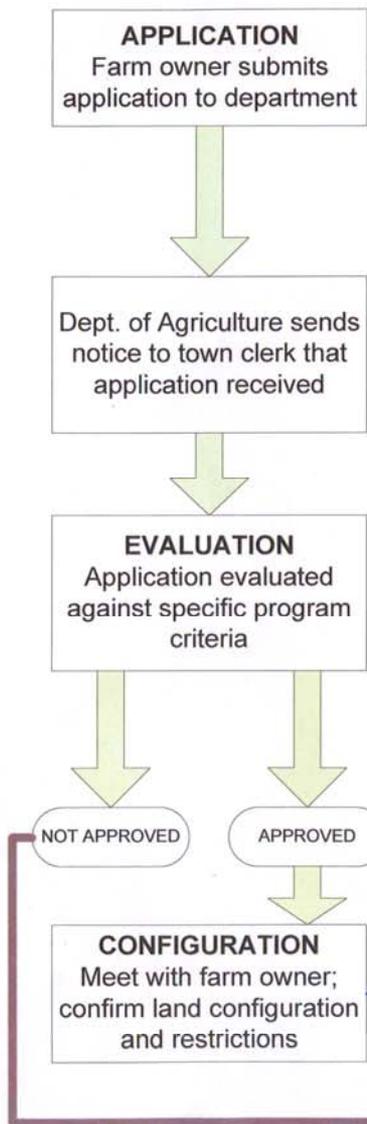
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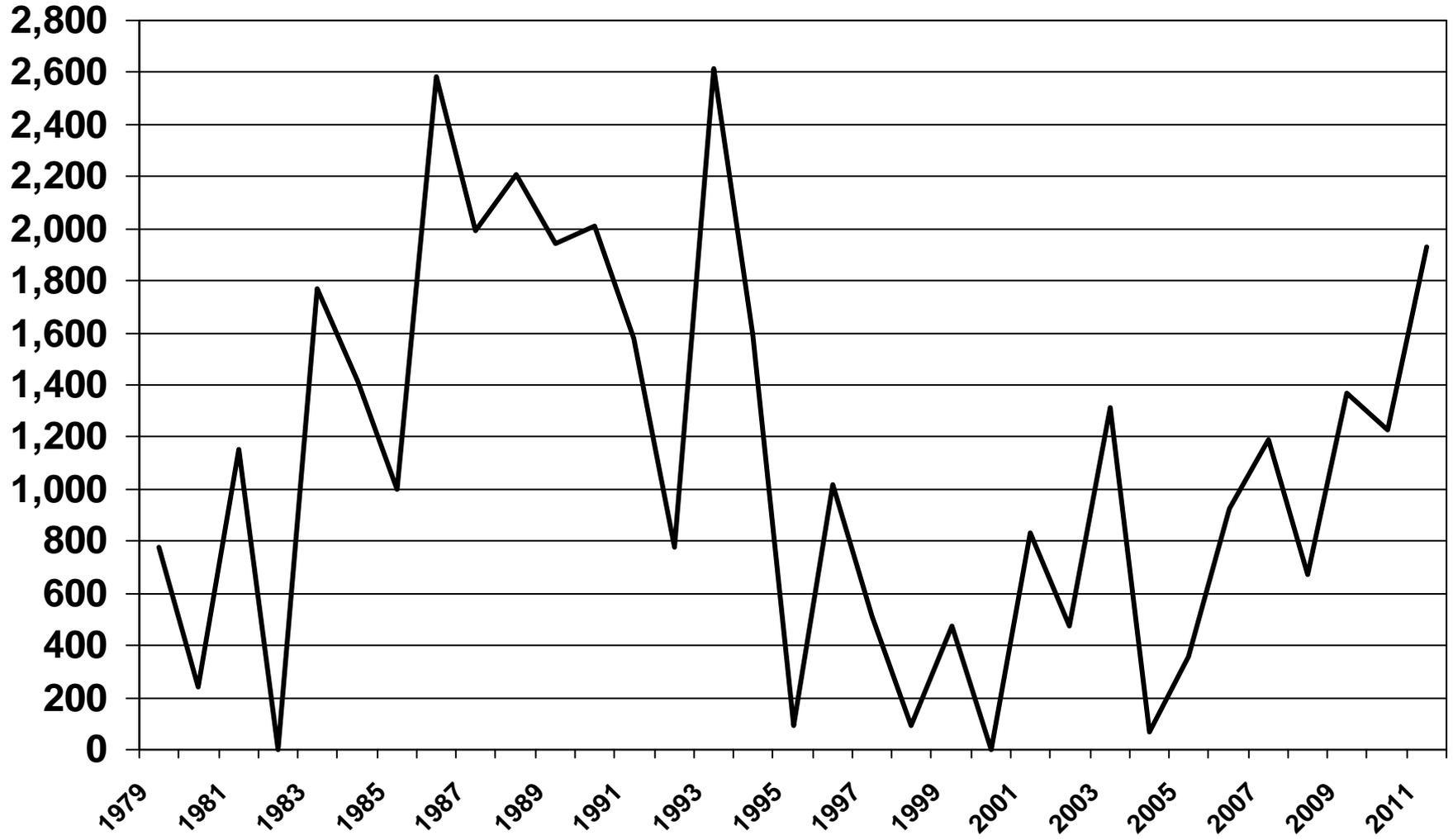


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Purchase of Development Rights Process Flowchart



Farmland Preservation Program: Acres Preserved by Year



Current FPP Projects	# Farms	Acreage	\$ Value
Closings pending	11	1,374	\$7,680,110
Farms pending surveys	3	142	\$670,000
Farms pending SPRB approval	1	208	\$270,400
Farms extended offers	3	286	\$1,910,000
Farm offers appraised/negotiated	13	1,932	\$8,400,000 est.
Totals	31	3,942	\$18,930,510 est.
Other	# Farms	Acreage	\$ Value
Offers not accepted (2007-2012)	14	1,335	\$9,150,000
Source: Department of Agriculture (FPP)			

Next Steps

- Continue analyzing program data
 - Rate of prime farmland protection to loss
 - Per acre cost paid vs. appraised value
- Review farmland preservation methods and processes used by other states and compare to CT; examine whether current FPP policies meet current needs
- Continue RBA analysis; complete report card
- Continue meeting with key stakeholders