

Why Have Agricultural Districts?

The State of North Carolina passed the Farmland Preservation Enabling Act in 1985, authorizing counties to establish farmland preservation programs, including agricultural districts. Forsyth County adopted an ordinance establishing procedures for creating Voluntary Agricultural Districts in 2008. The purpose of the ordinance is to promote the preservation of farmland in Forsyth County so that development and growth will be accompanied by protection of farms from non-farm development and other negative impacts on properly managed farms, recognizing the importance of agriculture to the economic and cultural life of the county.

What is the Agricultural Advisory Board?

The Agricultural Advisory Board (AAB) is composed of seven county residents, including farmers, appointed by the Board of County Commissioners. The AAB reviews and approves applications to the Voluntary Agricultural District program, in addition to advising the Board of County Commissioners on projects, programs, or issues affecting the agricultural economy or way of life within the county.

About the Agricultural Advisory Board.

The Agricultural Advisory Board supports voluntary measures and incentives that will lead to the continued viability of farming in Forsyth County. The goals of rural preservation, including the preservation of prime farmland, the scenic vistas of the agricultural landscape, the family farm tradition, and the economic viability of agriculture in Forsyth County, would be served by keeping agriculture a viable enterprise.



Forsyth County

Forsyth Soil & Water Conservation District
NC Cooperative Extension Service
1450 Fairchild Road
Winston-Salem NC 27105

Phone: 336-703-2840

E-mail: bowmanml@forsyth.cc

Forsyth County

VOLUNTARY
AGRICULTURAL
DISTRICT



For more information please call:
336-703-2840

Your Agricultural Land is a Valuable Asset to the Citizens of Forsyth County.

Citizens of Forsyth County derive many benefits from your farmland: clean water and air, plant and animal habitat, fresh fruits, vegetables, meat and dairy products, horticultural products, and scenic rural vistas. Now you can enroll in a program that demonstrates your pride and commitment to agriculture and celebrates your contribution to the exceptional quality of life in Forsyth County.

Voluntary Agricultural Districts Promote the Pride and Tradition of Forsyth County Agriculture.

Forsyth County's Voluntary Agricultural District Program enhances the identity of the agricultural community by encouraging the voluntary preservation and protection of farmland from non-farm development.

Benefits of Becoming a Voluntary Agricultural District.

Recognition.

The County will place signs (see below) to identify the areas included within the Forsyth County Voluntary Agricultural Districts. These signs will indicate to passersby that you, the farm owner, are committed to the preservation of the agricultural way of life in Forsyth County.



Increased Protection from Nuisance Suits.

Persons buying land in rural areas will do so with the knowledge that a bona fide agricultural operation exists nearby. Agricultural Districts will be identified in the computerized land record system of Forsyth County.

Deferment of Water and Sewer Assessments.

Landowners within Agricultural Districts will not be required to connect to water or sewer systems owned and/or operated by the City/County Utilities Commission, nor will they be assessed water and sewer charges until their property is connected to such service.

Eligibility for Preservation Funds.

Agricultural Districts may be eligible for farmland preservation grants, should funding become available from local, state, or federal sources.

Participation in Agricultural Tourism.

Landowners in a Voluntary Agricultural District may be eligible for the Agricultural Tourism use classification as outlined in the Unified Development Ordinance. Examples of activities allowed under Agricultural Tourism include outdoor special events such as weddings; bed and breakfasts; and limited restaurant and retail uses. These uses would be allowable without a change in zoning. For more information, contact the City/County Inspections Division.

Qualifying Measures to Become a Voluntary Agricultural District.

To become an Agricultural District, a farm must first be certified as Qualifying Farmland.

To secure county certification as qualifying farmland, a farm must be certified by the Natural Resources Conservation Service of the United States Department of Agriculture as a farm on which at least two-thirds of the land is composed of soils that are best suited for agricultural purposes.

The farm must have been actively engaged in agriculture as defined by N.C.G.S. 106-581.1 (1-7) during each of the five previous years, and must have a minimum of 5 acres in agricultural production. The land must be managed, if highly erodible, in accordance with the Natural Resources Conservation Service defined erosion control practices that are addressed to said highly erodible land.

Agricultural District Membership Requires a Voluntary, Non-Binding Conservation Agreement.

A Voluntary Agricultural District member will be subject to a **non-binding** conservation agreement between Forsyth County and the landowner that prohibits non-farm use or development of such land for a period of at least 10 years, except for the creation of not more than three lots that meet applicable county zoning and subdivision regulations. You may revoke the agreement at any time with a 30 day written notice to the Agricultural Advisory Board.

This agreement shall be deemed automatically renewed unless either the Advisory Board or the landowner gives written notice to the contrary no later than thirty (30) days prior to the termination date.