



Customer Focus

Howard & Kelven Braun are brothers who own land in York Township, at the edge of the City of Saline in Washtenaw County, that was selected for a grant of \$540,000 from the federal government to purchase a conservation easement on 270 acres.

Born and raised on the land, the property has been in Braun family since 1907. The Braun brothers had a dairy herd until a few years ago when they switched to a variety of grains and hay. In 1997, the Brauns brothers sought assistance from the Washtenaw Land Trust with the State of Michigan Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) Program. Both brothers wished to apply their entire 500-acre farm into the program, but scored only 14 of 28 points on the soil evaluation, and so were unlikely to qualify. With the Washtenaw's Land Trust's assistance, Howard and Kelven nominated just the flattest 214 acres, scored all 28 soil points and qualified for the program. Their development rights were appraised at \$16,000 an acre then, but they were willing to accept the State maximum of \$5,000 in order to see their family farm protected. That money was used to purchase land in Lenawee County which was then nominated for the State program in 2000.

That same year the Braun brothers also nominated their remaining 270 acres in York Township for the State program. Since it was the highest scoring property statewide, the Washtenaw Land Trust decided to nominate it for the federal FPP in 2001 where it ranked highest as well. Though the development rights are now estimated to be worth in excess of \$20,000 an acre, the Brauns accepted the State maximum of \$5,000. The federal grant stretches limited State funding and ensures that this productive, historic and scenic property will be forever protected in its entirety.

Courtesy of: Barry Lonik, Washtenaw Land Trust, Ann Arbor, Michigan

Farmland Protection Program Michigan Summary

Overview The USDA Farmland Protection Program (FPP) helps farmers keep their productive land in agriculture. The program assists States, Tribes, local governments and non-profit organizations by purchasing conservation easements for the purpose of limiting conversion to non-agricultural uses. NRCS provides up to 50% of the easement cost to the cooperating entity, which acquires, manages, and enforces the easement. Landowners participate voluntarily, and protected farms remain in private ownership. Every protected farm operates under a conservation plan approved by the local Conservation District. Nationally, over \$52 million have been obligated to state and local entities since establishment of the program in 1996. Proposals were accepted in 1996, 1997, 1998, and 2001.

Accomplishments In Michigan, \$3,060,500 in FPP financial assistance and technical assistance funds have been awarded to protect 2,136 acres of valuable farmland on 18 working farms. Applications for funding were received in each of the four years that funds were available. Partnerships are the driving force behind Michigan's Farmland Protection Program. FPP has partnered with six state and local farmland protection programs since the program's inception, including: State of Michigan's Department of Agriculture, Little Traverse Conservancy, Peninsula Township, Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy, Leelanau Conservancy, and the Potawatomi Conservancy. The demand for FPP far exceeds available funds. In fiscal year 2001, Michigan alone requested \$6.2 million dollars to protect 5,644 acres on 23 parcels, over one-third of the FPP funds available to the nation.

Outlook In Michigan, as in many states, prime farmland is being converted at two to four times the rate of other, less-productive agricultural land. In the period from 1992 to 1997, 24,300 acres per year of prime farmland have been converted to non-agricultural uses. More than 53% of all agriculture comes from the 25 urban-influenced counties (Metropolitan Statistical Areas) in which more than 45% of all cropland in Michigan is located. These 25 urban-influenced counties have the greatest development pressure, and combined together represent more than 75% of the total cropland lost from 1992 to 1997. As a result, purchasing of development rights is increasingly viewed as an effective tool to balance the demand for new development with the desire to preserve our best farmland.



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**Farmland Protection
Program
Michigan Easements
(As of December 2001)**

County: Clinton
Acres: 634
Total Easement Cost:
\$2,153,075
Average per acre: \$3,396
Federal payment amount:
\$556,500
Percentage: 26%

County: Grand Traverse
Acres: 695
Total Easement Cost:
\$2,191,500
Average per acre: \$3,965
Federal payment amount:
\$1,334,793
Percentage: 61%

County: Washtenaw
Acres: 807
Total Easement Cost:
\$2,626,768
Average per acre: \$3,255
Federal payment amount:
\$1,047,907
Percentage: 40%

MICHIGAN TOTALS:
Acres: 2,136
Total Easement Costs:
\$6,971,343
Average per acre: \$3,264
Federal payment amount:
\$2,939,200
Percentage: 42%