

# Chatham County Farmland/Working Lands Preservation Program

*Funding Request for Ag Preservation, Protection, and  
Enhancement*

October 17, 2022

# What Ag Looks Like in Chatham



> **\$422M**  
annually

## The Critical Role of Ag

Agriculture and agribusiness industries account for a significant portion of the County's total annual income.

- Average of **\$125M** annually in cash receipts
  - 1,116 farming operations (98% identified as family farms)
  - Over 1/3 of 1,700+ ag producers identify as female
  - Chatham's rankings within the state:
    - 2<sup>nd</sup> in beef cattle production (3<sup>rd</sup> in overall cattle production)
    - 2<sup>nd</sup> in sheep and goat production
    - 3<sup>rd</sup> in equine population
    - 9<sup>th</sup> in hay production
    - 15<sup>th</sup> in dairy cattle population
    - 17<sup>th</sup> in broiler production (and steadily rising)
    - Top county in number of native plant nurseries
- Additional **\$297M** in forestry sector output, supporting 1,297 jobs with annual payroll of \$63M

# Supported by the FPP Framework

The adopted 2009 Farmland Preservation Plan provides a set of recommendations for farmland protection and agricultural development.

- Coordinate farmland protection outreach, education, and policy development
- Develop a forestry and agribusiness retention, expansion, and attraction plan
- Build support for a County Working Lands Protection Program (p.35)
  - *Develop a local funding option (PUV rollback taxes, recording fees, etc.)*

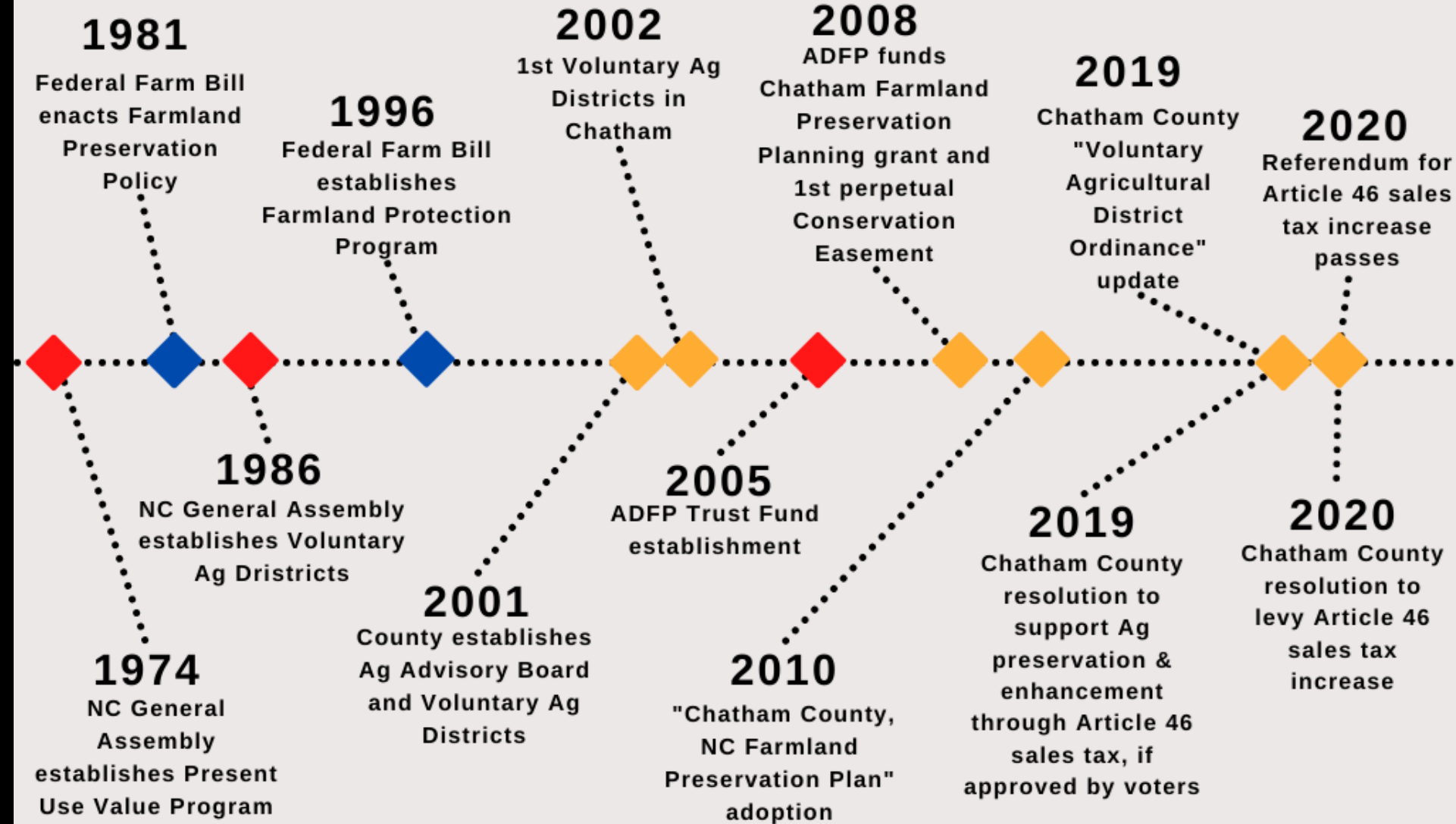
An updated Farmland Preservation Plan is expected to be finalized by the end of 2023.

## The Prominence of Ag

The benefits and importance of agriculture are obvious to many residents and stakeholders who provided input to the existing *Chatham Farmland Preservation Plan* and *Plan Chatham*.

# Farmland Preservation

## County, State, Federal Milestones



History of  
Farmland  
Preservation  
Efforts



# The Prominence of Ag

The benefits and importance of agriculture are obvious to many residents and stakeholders who provided input to the existing *Chatham Farmland Preservation Plan* and *Plan Chatham*.

# Supported by the Comp Plan Framework

The **Comprehensive Plan** provides a set of recommendations for farmland protection and agricultural development:

- **Goal #1:** Preserve the rural character and lifestyle of Chatham County
- **Goal #2:** Preserve, protect, and enable agriculture and forestry
- **Goal #5:** Conserve natural resources

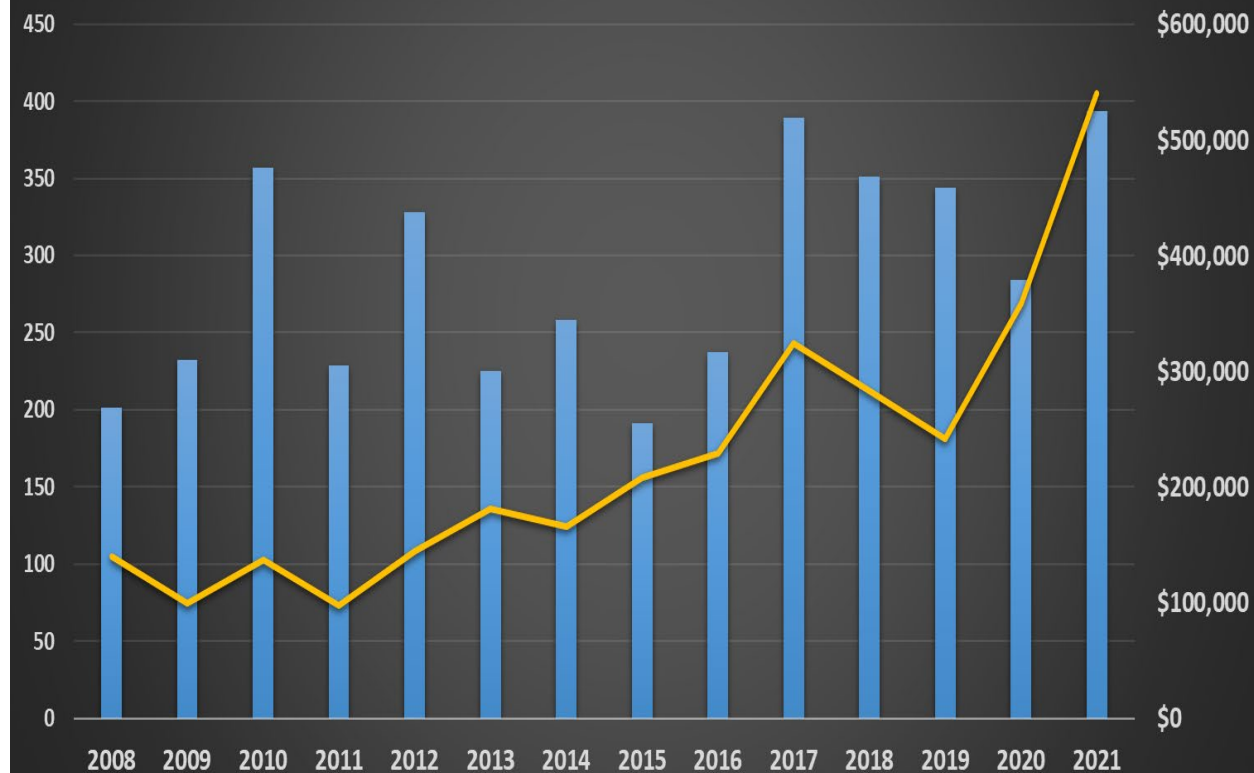
**Recommendation #1:** *Increase education, outreach, and training (p. 94)*

**Recommendation #2:** *Promote agriculture as a key feature of the County and component of the local economy and discourage conversion of areas with viable agricultural operations for development (p. 95)*

- Update and adopt the Farmland Preservation Plan which includes additional land use recommendations to preserve agricultural operations in the county.
- Support the long-term economic viability of agricultural operations.
- Support permanent, voluntary protection of agricultural lands.
- Implement a county-led farmland protection program.

## Parcels out of the PUV program

# of Properties    Rollback Taxes Collected



# A Changing Landscape

North Carolina ranks 2<sup>nd</sup> in the nation in potential agricultural land lost by the year 2040.

# Combattling the Irreversible Loss of A Finite Resource

Developmental pressure has increased significantly.

- NC is projected to lose 1.1 million acres of farmland over the next 20 years.
  - Equates to 9,100 farms, nearly 19,600 jobs, and \$1.25B in farm output (American Farmland Trust, 2020)
- In Chatham, under the “Business as Usual” model, we stand to lose 14,700 acres (American Farmland Trust, 2020).
  - This model **does not** reflect changes from 2017 to current, nor does it include recent megasite development implications.

***In order to protect/preserve our current working lands and support successful pathways for a new generation of farmers, we must act to address this irreversible loss now!***

# Preservation Efforts in Other Counties

## Counties that fund Farmland Preservation efforts:

- **Buncombe County** (the most robust program in the state)
  - \$750,000 annually for easement support and FPP programs
  - 2 dedicated staff
  - Open Space Bond on ballot for Nov. 2022
- **Alamance County**
  - \$180,000 FY22 towards matching funds for perpetual easements
- **Johnston County**
  - \$650,000 FY22 to support local Land Trust initiatives and perpetual easements
- **Wake County**
  - 2022 Launch Farmland Preservation Program and hire full time Coordinator
  - \$30,000 to support local Land Trust initiatives



## Across the State

North Carolina ranks 2<sup>nd</sup> in the nation in potential agricultural land lost by 2040.



The purpose of the fund is to support the farming, forestry, and horticulture communities within the agriculture industry by:

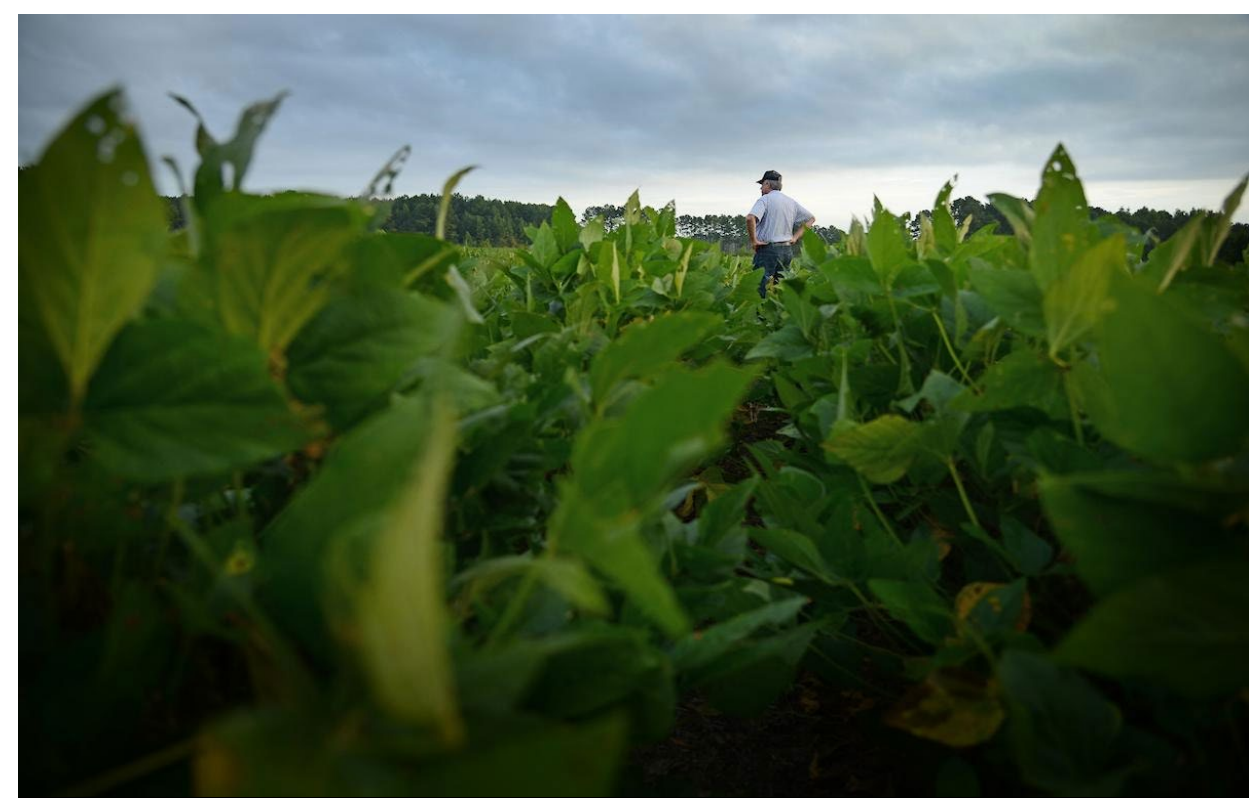
- Supporting the purchase of agricultural conservation easements (on farm, forest, and horticulture lands), including transaction costs.
- Funding public and private enterprise programs that will promote profitable and sustainable family farms through assistance to farmers in developing and implementing plans for the production of food, fiber, and value-added products, agritourism activities, marketing and sales of agricultural products produced on the farm, and other agriculturally related business activities.

The N.C. ADFP recently awarded more than \$10M to help communities across the state protect farmland and promote agricultural enterprises (NCDA&CS Press Release, July 2022):

- Alamance County - \$565,684
- Brunswick County - \$379,332
- Buncombe Soil and Water Conservation District - \$1.118M
- Haywood County - \$534,428
- Hyde County - \$499,997
- Johnston County - \$851,986
- Orange County - \$189,646
- Piedmont Land Conservancy of Guilford County - \$382,701
- Triangle Land Conservancy (serving Chatham and Johnston)- \$693,486

# NC Agricultural Development and Farmland Preservation Trust Fund





# Benefits of Preserving Ag Land

“Conservation of land and conservation of  
people frequently go hand in hand”  
- Eleanor Roosevelt

## Why We Need Ag

- Diverse economy and workforce
- Preserve rural character and lifestyle
- Lower cost of community services and utilities infrastructure
- Local food production, supply, and access
- Open and green space
- Natural Resource conservation
- Wildlife habitats and corridors
- Carbon sequestration
- Less impervious surface
- Resiliency (both short and long term)

# Permanent Funding for Farmland Preservation Programs

- The Conservation Trust of NC recommends that more public funding should be allocated for farmland conservation programs by increasing local government funding for farmland preservation and agricultural development projects (Triangle Farms for Food Strategy & Action Plan, 2017, pg 37).
- **Dire need to set aside source of permanent funding to make progress towards implementing goals and reducing inevitable and irreversible loss of agricultural working lands within Chatham** (Plan Chatham, 2017, p. 93; Chatham Farmland Preservation Plan, 2009, p. 25)

## Safeguarding our Future

Many goals and recommendations set forth in *Plan Chatham* and *Farmland Preservation Plan* adopted by the County require a sound, permanent financial investment.



## What We Aspire To

Our aim is to protect Chatham County agricultural working lands while also addressing the need to help farmers stay in business, both now and for future generations.

## Opportunity

With implementation of the new Sales Tax rate through Article 46 in Oct. 2020, the BoC resolved to allocate that revenue into four (4) specific areas: education, affordable housing, **agriculture preservation and enhancement**, and parks & recreation.

## Thank you!

\$722,000 is the current projected amount of Article 46 funds available for agricultural preservation and enhancement.

Based on a dual strategy approach to help Chatham achieve stated goals, we can:

1. Implement a working lands protection program to assist landowners who are willing to voluntarily protect their working lands in perpetuity.
2. Implement an ag economic development program that assists producers with innovative marketing, education, production, and technical development to increase profitability and sustainability.

# Our Request Today

- **Establish the Chatham Agricultural Preservation & Development Trust Fund**
- **Begin now** with the current Article 46 fund amount of \$722,000
- **Then, fund annually** with Article 46 revenue earmarked for agriculture preservation and enhancement.



**Establish the Chatham  
Agricultural  
Preservation &  
Development Trust  
Fund**



Chatham Agricultural  
Preservation & Development  
Trust Fund

# Chatham Agricultural Preservation & Development Trust Fund

## Initial steps for Fiscal Year 2022-2023:

- Establish Trust Fund with perpetual funding stream
- Begin financing working lands conservation easement support through formal application process
- Work with the current FPP process to assess needs and develop goals and programs for the future

Thanks to the Ag Advisory Board,  
Extension Advisory Council, and the  
Soil & Water Conservation District  
Board of Supervisors for their support!

Questions/Comments?



## Contact Information

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