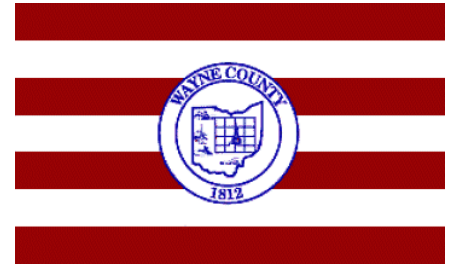


WAYNE COUNTY, OHIO
AGRICULTURAL SECURITY AREA
POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Adopted: 4/26/2006

Amended: 11/12/2008, 8/26/2015, 5/19/2023, 10/28/2024



Introduction

Ohio's Agricultural Security Area (ASA) legislation permits one or more landowners to request from County Commissioners and Township Trustees to enroll at least 500 acres of contiguous farmland in the unincorporated area of the county into an ASA for 10 years. ASA's are voluntary; locally controlled; incentive-based; and respect private property rights.

ASA's provide certain benefits to farmers, including protecting against non-farm development, assembling a critical mass of land to help keep farming viable, and providing a new local tax benefit for investment in new agricultural real property. They are not designed to stop development, but to protect farmland by creating special areas where agriculture is encouraged and protected.

The following information is to provide Wayne County landowners with the requirements of an ASA and to guide them through the application and approval process. **Questions regarding the process should be directed to the Wayne County Planning Department, 428 West Liberty Street, Wooster, OH 44691, by phone at 330-287-5420 or by email to tclark@wayneohio.org.**

Area and Parcel Specifications

- The proposed ASA must be in the unincorporated area of the county.
- The proposed area must consist of not less than 500 contiguous acres of farmland. This threshold can be met by one owner or by multiple contiguous owners. Ohio Revised Code (ORC) Chapter 931 defines "contiguous".
- Land that is a portion of a farm on which is located a dwelling, yard or outbuildings such as a barn or garage counts when meeting the 500-acre requirement.
- The land must be in an Agricultural District as established under ORC Chapter 929.
- The land must be assessed under CAUV pursuant to ORC Sections 5713.30-.38.
- Applicant/Title Holder must have listed, if any, all environmental administrative enforcement orders, violations and/or convictions that have occurred within the 10 years prior to application date.
- The owners must have
 1. a conservation plan on file with the local SWCD/NRCS **OR**
 2. an ASA Best Management Practices Qualification Report which meets the standards and rules of OAC 15-5-02 through 15-5-12 and 15-5-18 approved by the local SWCD/NRCS **OR**
 3. an ASA Best Management Practices Qualification Report *conditionally approved* with a timeline for implementation established by the local SWCD/NRCS.
- Applications for parcels that fall within municipal "three-mile limits" and "201" FPA boundaries will be reviewed on a parcel by parcel basis.

ASA Commitments

- An ASA continues in existence for ten years. The provisions for withdrawal are found in ORC Section 931.07
- Applicants commit not to initiate, approve or, finance any new development for non-agricultural purposes on the land to be enrolled in an ASA for a period of ten years. If a landowner violates this commitment once the ASA is established, a fine of \$500 shall be levied. New development does **not** include such things as exercise of mineral rights, easements, and construction, modification, or the

operation of wind energy producing facilities, including wind turbines and windmills, the grant of easements for or the construction, modification, or the operation of transmission or distribution lines for electricity, gas, or oils, as long as these actions do not make the land ineligible for CAUV.

- Landowners may develop, authorize the development, or, for the purpose of developing, transfer ownership of a portion of the owner's land within an ASA for constructing or otherwise establishing a single-family residence for an individual who is related to the owner. Not more than one such residence can be constructed for each 40 acres the owner has in an ASA.
- An owner of land in an ASA may request permission to operate a business if it does not impair the owner's ability to engage in agriculture and disqualify the land from CAUV. The applicable board of trustees and board of commissioners have authority to approve or reject the request.
- A landowner is required to give notice if his or her land no longer meets the eligibility for an ASA. If notice is not given, the owner is subject to a fine of \$500 for each violation of each section of ORC 931.
- The County and the Township commit not to initiate, approve, or finance any development for residential, commercial, or industrial purposes, including construction of new roads and water and sewer lines for a period of ten years. New development does not include improvement of existing roads if the County Engineer determines that the improvement is necessary for traffic safety and is consistent with the agricultural use of the land in the ASA; the construction, modification, or operation of transmission lines for electricity, gas, or oil or of any gathering or production lines for oil or gas provided that the construction, modification, or operation of the lines does not cause the land to lose its eligibility for CAUV; and the construction, modification, or operation of water or sewer lines if Ohio EPA orders the construction, modification, or operation of the lines so that water and sewer service to areas outside the ASA can be connected (the lines cannot provide service connections to any land within the ASA).

Submitting an Application

Landowners wishing to be considered for enrollment in an ASA should contact the Wayne County Planning Department who will help guide them through the process.

- All landowners must complete "Part II" of the application developed by the Ohio Department of Agriculture. These will be collected and reviewed by the Planning Department to ensure they meet the program requirements and goals outlined in the County's Comprehensive Plan.
- Once the minimum of 500 acceptable, contiguous acres has been identified, landowners will be notified. They will then need to pay a fee of \$40 per application, to the Wayne County Planning Department. Fees will be used to offset to the costs incurred by the County for required public notices and mailings.
- The Wayne County Planning Department will complete "Part I" of the Application for the group of landowners involved and initiate the "Application Review and Approval Process" below.
- The Application is considered complete and "received" on the date when all fees are paid and is now considered a public record.

Application Review and Approval Process

- The Board of Commissioners and the Board of Township Trustees shall hear the application within 60 days (if joint hearing) and within 45 days (if separate hearings) of its receipt. Notice of the joint/separate hearing shall be published in a newspaper of general circulation in the county at least 30 days prior to the date of the hearing. Notice of the joint hearing shall be sent to the following: School Superintendent of each school district within the proposed ASA; County Engineer of each county in which the proposed ASA would be located; any municipality within one-half mile of the boundaries of the proposed ASA; and the Director of the Ohio Department of Transportation.
- In the event of a joint hearing the Clerk of the Board of Wayne County Commissioners shall serve as clerk on behalf of all the boards involved in the hearing. The Clerk's duties shall include providing the public hearing notice, maintaining minutes and a record of the joint hearing proceedings.

- Any comprehensive plan, as applicable, of the municipality, township, and/or county may be considered in the decision to approve or reject the application.
- The boards shall consider any information they possess concerning improvements that are planned to be made during the subsequent 10 years to existing or proposed roads that are located or are to be located within the areas that is proposed for the ASA.
- Voting will occur at separate meetings of the trustees within 45 days after the hearing and then of the county commissioners within 60 days of the hearing. If a board determines that the information in the application is incorrect or incomplete the board shall return the application to the applicant, by certified mail, with an enumeration of the incomplete or incorrect items. The applicant has 15 days after receipt to re-submit. The re-submittal shall be approved or rejected within 30 days. Notice of the decision shall be sent within five days.
- If an ASA is established, copies of the resolution approving the ASA shall be sent to the Director of the Ohio Department of Agriculture; the Director of the Ohio Department of Transportation, the superintendent of the applicable school districts; the County Engineer; and the County Auditor.
- An ASA may be renewed by filing a new application. The application must be filed at least 180 days prior to the expiration of the date of the original enrollment. The requirements are the same as for the original application.

Conditionally Approved Applications

- Applications approved with a time-line to implement B.M.P.'s will be monitored and enforced by the Board of Wayne County Commissioners with the assistance of the local SWCD/NRCS
- If multiple landowners are involved with one or more landowners approved on a conditional basis all applicants are considered "conditionally approved" until the BMP time-line is implemented—unless the other immediately eligible landowners' property meets the 500-acre threshold.
- If conditions are not addressed to the satisfaction of the Board of Wayne County Commissioners within the allotted time-line, that landowner/parcel will be removed from the Agricultural Security Area. If removal of that property takes the entire ASA below the 500-acre minimum criteria, the entire ASA will be dissolved according to ORC 931.07 (C) (a) (b) (c). The landowner whom failed to meet the BMP time-line will be subject to a \$500 fine.

ASA Expansions and Transfers

- Additional contiguous farmland may be enrolled in an existing agricultural security area during a partially elapsed ten-year enrollment period for the remainder of that period. To enroll additional contiguous land, the landowner should follow the process outlined above. In addition to requirements, the landowners interested in joining an ASA must obtain permission from each landowner already enrolled in the existing ASA;
- If an owner of land that is enrolled in an agricultural security area transfers the land to another person during a partially elapsed ten-year enrollment period, the land may remain in the ASA until the expiration of that period, provided that both of the following apply:
 1. The transferee certifies and submits a statement together with the transferee's first, middle and last name and a description of the transferred land, to the appropriate board of township trustees and the boards of county commissioners specifying that in accordance with division (A) (3) of ORC 931, the transferee will not initiate, approve, or finance any new development for non-agricultural purposes on the transferred land during the remainder of the partially elapsed ten-year enrollment period. Upon receipt of this statement, the appropriate boards of township trustees and county commissioners shall adopt a resolution acknowledging the receipt.
 2. The transferred land continues to satisfy all of the previously established criteria implemented for an Agricultural Security Area

- Upon the expiration of the partially elapsed ten-year enrollment period, enrollment in the agricultural security area may be renewed in accordance with section 931.06 of the Revised Code and the local Wayne County Policies and Procedures.

Tax Exemption Policies

One benefit to farmers within an ASA is the eligibility for tax exemption. The exemption is for qualifying agricultural real property which includes a building, structure, improvement, or fixture that is used exclusively for agricultural purposes and is located on land that is enrolled in an ASA.

1. Tax exemption applications can contain up to three years of anticipated investment (Phases). In Wayne County, the minimum new investment qualifying for exemption is \$50,000.
2. When locating new improvements, applicants should be mindful of needs and uses of neighboring properties. Awareness of and respect for nearby homes and businesses is encouraged to assure community compatibility and to avoid conflicts.
3. Applicants are encouraged to consult with OSU Extension Wayne County (OSUE) and Wayne Soil and Water Conservation District (Wayne SWCD) for practices that will help to maintain water and air quality and abate noise. Implementation of the recommended practices could result in a higher exemption (see #7 below).
4. ASA Tax Exemptions can be approved for new constructions that have not yet appeared on the tax duplicate.
5. Renewal of the 10 year ASA commitment will be encouraged if the majority of years of a tax exemption request are to extend beyond the remaining ASA period.
6. The recommended standard exemption will be 50% for 10 years.
7. Township trustees and county commissioners will give special consideration of up to 75% exemption to components of a project which considerably reduce environmental impact and/or public infrastructure impact. Examples include:
 - a. An Anaerobic Digester which would reduce odors and pathogens commonly associated with the land applied manure;
 - b. A Composting Pad and/or Covered Manure Storage Shelter both of which would reduce the volume through either processing or exclusion of water;
 - c. Concrete Manure Storage Shelter projects which have a potentially higher level of containment and have higher tax rates;
 - d. Injection of manure at time of application and/or incorporation of manure into the soil immediately following surface application; and/or
 - e. Landscaping an area between the livestock facility/manure storage area and neighboring residences with trees/shrubs to maintain viewscape and/or dampen noise from the operation.

The implementation and continued use of the environmental air and water quality practices shall be required throughout the life of the exempted project.

8. The applicable Board of Township Trustees and the Board of County Commissioners must approve tax exemptions. Tax exemptions can be granted at the time of the establishment of the ASA; at the time of renewal of the ASA; and/or at any time during which the land is enrolled in an ASA.
9. The tax exemption agreement undergoes an annual review by the Tax Incentive Review Council (TIRC) as established under ORC Section 5709.85. Recommendation to continue, modify, or cancel the exemption will be made by the Board of Township Trustees and the Board of County Commissioners.
10. If the land is withdrawn, removed or converted from an ASA, qualifying agricultural real property shall no longer be exempted from real property taxation. The amount of tax otherwise imposed on the property that was subject to the exemption must be increased by an amount equal to the aggregate multi-year value of the exemption received by the owner. Interest on this amount at the average bank prime rate at the time the property is removed from the exempt list will be charged.