

Ottawa County Farmland Preservation Program Scoring Criteria

Section I Primary Characteristics

These characteristics apply directly to those outlined by the USDA. Furthermore, these primary characteristics makeup 60% of the overall total.

1. AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTIVITY

Priority is placed on prime productive farmland and/or farmland that has *unique or locally significant growing characteristics*. Farmland can be considered prime or unique if it meets the USDA definition for prime and unique or locally significant soils as defined in the USDA Soil Conservation Service Soil Survey.

- a) Points are to be determined by multiplying the percentage of prime, unique, or locally significant acres by 100 to receive a score between 0 and 100.
- b) The percentage of prime, unique, or locally significant farmland is calculated by using the number of prime, unique, or locally significant acres and dividing it by the total acres in the application. Prime, unique, or locally significant acres are to be verified by Natural Resource Conservation Service or Michigan State University Extension staff educators.

Total Points for Item 1: _____

Maximum Points Possible: 100

2. CREATION OF BLOCKS OF PRESERVED LAND

It is important to protect blocks of agricultural land, thus protecting the public investment in farmland preservation, as well as providing for an adequate economic base for continued agriculture in the area. Blocks of farmland also help minimize land use conflicts and help provide a buffer to interior farming operations. Emphasis is placed on farmland located in an area in which the potential for future development of surrounding farmland is restricted.

- a) *Parcel Size – 50 points possible*

Priority is placed on larger parcels to help promote more economically viable agricultural production units. One point is awarded for every two acres over 40, with a maximum of 50 points for parcels 100 acres or larger in size after the forty acre parcel size is deducted from the total.

*Example: 100 acre parcel = 100(parcel size) – 40 (parcel size) = 60 acres
60(acres)/2 = 30 points*

Points for a):

- b) *Proximity to permanently preserved land – 50 points possible*

Parcel is near other permanently preserved farmland, publicly owned land, conservation land, or agricultural conservation easements that will help to enhance other local open space initiatives in the community such as connecting an open space or wildlife habitat corridor, or in preserving unique habitats/natural features that benefit local conservation efforts.

- Parcel is directly adjacent to preserved land with at least 500 feet of shared boundary.....50 pts
- Parcel is not adjacent but within 1/2 mile of preserved land35 pts
- Parcel is not adjacent but between 1/2 to 2 miles of preserved land20 pts

Points for b):

Please list the addresses of the surrounding preserved parcels and the type of preservation that is in place for each parcel:

c) Block Applications – 50 points possible

Emphasis is placed on applications which consist of one or more landowners who create a 300 acre or more block of contiguous farmland. Contiguous blocks of farmland have a greater potential for creating a long-term business environment for agriculture. Parcels included in a block application must be contiguous (touching but may be separated by a road). Each applicant in the block application will receive points for this section.

- One or more landowners apply together to create 1000 or more contiguous acres....50 points
- One or more landowners apply together to create 750 to 999 contiguous acres40 points
- One or more landowners apply together to create 500 to 749 contiguous acres.....30 points
- One or more landowners apply together to create 300 to 499 contiguous acres.....20 points
- Contiguous acreage of 299 acres or less..... 0 points

Points for c):

Total Points for Item 2: _____

Maximum Points Possible: 150

3. CONSERVATION PRACTICES/VALUES

RMSL Soil Conservation Plan in place on parcel –25 points possible

Points are awarded for property that has an approved and implemented Resource Management System Level soil conservation plan adopted by the landowner and USDA-NRCS to help maintain the agricultural productivity and environmental health of the land.

- Implemented RMSL Soil Conservation Plan.....25 points
- No RMSL Soil Conservation Plan Adopted.....0 points

Note: 100 points will be deducted if the farm operation, in the last three years, has been found by the Michigan Department of Agriculture to be in violation (problem not resolved within the allotted time frame) of the Michigan Right to Farm Act or has been found to be in violation of state environmental statutes.

Total Points for Item 3: _____

Maximum Points Possible: 25

Please attach a confirmation letter from USDA-NCRS verifying that a RMSL plan is in place on the parcel.

4. MATCHING FUNDS

Landowners and/or local units of government must secure matching funds in order to be eligible for points under this section. Matching funds may be money contributed by public, private, or non-profit sources or can be via a proposal by the landowner to accept an offer less than the purchase value of the development rights and to donate the remaining portion of their development rights' value. A letter of commitment regarding matching funds must accompany the application. The total number of points possible for this category is 100.

- There is a federal mandated minimum 50% of the purchase price to qualify for USDA grant funds. At least 25% must be as a landowner donation.
- 1 point will be awarded for every 1% in matching funds to a maximum of 100 points.

Example: 1) 25% match = 25 points
 2) 50% match = 50 points
 3) 95% match = 95 points

Total Points for Item 4: _____

Maximum Points Possible: 100

5. MAEAP PARTICIPATION/ORGANIC CERTIFICATION

The MAEAP assists farms in establishing environmentally sound agricultural practices, and Organic farms emphasize the use of renewable resources and the conservation of soil and water to enhance environmental quality for future generations. Farms that are certified under the MAEAP program or the USDA's National Organic Program (NOP) will receive preferential treatment because environmentally sound agricultural practices will contribute to the sustainability of the agricultural operation.

- Points will be awarded if the farm in the grant application is verified through the MAEAP or the USDA's NOP. Applicants may receive points for either MAEAP or organic certification, but not for both.

Total Points for Item 5: _____

Maximum Points Possible: 25

Please attach a copy of certification from MAEAP or the USDA.

6. LOCAL AGRICULTURAL PLANNING

Additional points will be awarded to parcels that are part of a documented, long-range effort or plan for land preservation by the local unit of government in which the parcel is located.

- Parcel is designated as Agricultural in Township Zoning Ordinance (i.e.1 dwelling unit/20 acres or greater).....30 pts
- Parcel is designated as Agricultural in Township Master Plan and within Tier B of the Ottawa County Development Plan.....20 pts

Total Points for Item 6: _____

Maximum Points Possible: 50

7. ENROLLMENT IN PA 116

Emphasis will be given to landowners who have already taken this step to temporarily protect their farmland by enrolling in the state Farmland and Open Space Preservation Act (PA 116). If the entire parcel is enrolled, then the maximum score of 50 points would apply. If only a percentage of the parcel is enrolled, then the percentage is multiplied by the maximum number of points (50) to result in a score.

Example: Two adjacent 50 acre parcels are submitted as part of the same application by the same landowner. Only one 50 acre parcel is currently enrolled (50%). Total points = 25

Total Points for Item 7: _____

Maximum Points Possible: 50

Please provide verification of PA 116 Enrollment.

8. ROAD FRONTAGE

Parcels that include lands along public roads will be given higher priority. Protected road frontage preserves scenic views, reduces development and traffic near productive agriculture and protects the agricultural integrity of the property and the surrounding area.

- No road frontage.....0 pts
- Road frontage less than ¼ mile.....10 pts
- Road frontage is ¼ mile or more but less than ½ mile15 pts
- Road frontage is ½ mile or more, but less than ¾ of a mile25 pts
- Road frontage is ¾ miles or more.....50 pts

Total Points for Item 8: _____

Maximum Points Possible: 50

Please list all roads where frontage exists and the length of frontage on each road:

9. PROXIMITY TO SERVICES

Additional priority is placed on parcels closer to existing community services and/or urban centers. Priority is placed on parcels closer to existing community services with the exception that parcels adjacent to existing sewer and/or water lines should receive the lowest priority for preservation (the public has already made the investment and can be used for higher density development). Linear distance to existing, usable public sanitary sewer and/or water service (transmission lines not included) will result in the following scoring options below.

Proximity to Existing Public Sanitary Sewer and/or Water

- Less than ½ mile from sewer or water.....5 pts
- ½ mile or more but less than 2 miles25pts
- 2 miles or more but less than 5 miles50 pts
- 5 Miles or more.....0 pts

Total Points for Item 9: _____
Maximum Points Possible: 50

Please provide the address of the closest parcel with sewer and/or water lines, and please designate whether the referenced public infrastructure is a water and/or sewer line.

Total Score Awarded for Primary Characteristics (Items 1-9): _____
Total Score Possible for Primary Characteristics: 600

Section II
Secondary Characteristics

These characteristics are not outlined by the USDA. However, they will be used to select suitable applicants for the local program. These characteristics make up 40% of the overall total.

10. TYPE OF AG PRODUCTION/LOCAL ECONOMIC IMPACT

Ottawa County agriculture production is diverse and ranges from commodity-based products, such as corn and soybeans, to fruit and vegetable crops. Ottawa County is ranked second in the state for sales of fruits, tree nuts and berries. These crops are considered “specialty crops” and are economically valuable to the county because of their high value/acre, their connection to local processing, and ability to direct market to the consumer.

a) Specialty Crop – *100 points possible*

A specialty crop (defined as a vegetable, tree fruit, blueberries, or grapes fit for human consumption or nursery crops) is grown on the parcel.

- Points are determined by multiplying the percent of the parcel on which a Specialty crop is grown times 100 to receive a score between 0 and 100

Example: 75% of parcel in specialty crops = .75 x 100 points possible = 75 points

Points for a):

Please list type of specialty crop(s) grown:

Please provide FSA (Farm Services Agency) records listing the crops that were grown in the previous three years. If FSA records are unavailable, please provide personal crop records. The Farmland Preservation Board may request additional records to be provided.

b) Commodity Crop – 100 points possible

Commodity crops (defined as crops which produce feed, food, fiber, or fuel and include hay crops and pastureland) are grown on the parcel.

- Points are determined by multiplying the percent of the parcel on which a Commodity crop is grown times 100 to receive a score between 0 and 100.

Example: 75% of parcel in commodity crops = .75 x 100 points possible = 75 points

Points for b):

Please provide FSA (Farm Services Agency) records listing the crops that were grown in the previous three years. If FSA records are unavailable, please provide personal crop records. The Farmland Preservation Board may request additional records to be provided.

c) Proximity to Existing Livestock Farms –50 points possible

Points are awarded for parcels that are in closer proximity to existing livestock farms, creating an additional buffer between livestock and residential neighbors and protecting a land base that can also be used for feed production or manure disposal. A livestock operation for this purpose means a farm with more than 100 animal units (EPA definition).

- The parcels are an existing livestock operation or are located less than 0.5 miles of an existing livestock operation.....50 pts
- Located between 0.5 miles and 1 mile of an existing livestock operation25 pts
- Located further than 1 mile from existing livestock operation.....0 pts

Points for c):

d) Agricultural Products that Receive an Added Value or are Processed Locally – 50 points possible

Points may be earned for parcels that produce a locally value added/processed agricultural product or service (to include, but not be limited to, crops, livestock, food, fiber or otherwise). The product must receive an added value or be processed within Ottawa County or an adjoining county to receive up to 50 points.

- Points are determined by multiplying the percent of the parcel on which the value added/processed product is produced times 50 to receive a score between 0 and 50

Example: 75% of parcel’s crops are processed locally = .75 x 50 = 37.50 points

Points for d):

Please list the name and address of facility(ies) where products are processed:

Total Points for Item 10: _____

Maximum Points Possible: 300

11. AMOUNT OF LAND IN THE SURROUNDING AREA IN AGRICULTURE USE

Parcels located in areas which are still predominantly in agriculture use will be given a higher priority rather than those parcels which have already become a more isolated “island” of agriculture. A one- mile radius from the center of the parcel (approximately 2,000 acres) will be used to calculate the percentage of land still in agriculture production. This can be measured using township zoning maps along with Geographic Information Systems (GIS) software. Current production standards will be verified by the administering agency in conjunction with the Natural Resource Conservation Service and/or Michigan State University Extension.

Agricultural production means the production of plants and animals useful to humans, including forages and sod crops; grains, feed crops, and field crops; dairy and dairy products; poultry and poultry products; livestock, including breeding and grazing of cattle, swine, captive cervidae, and similar animals; berries; herbs; flowers; seeds; grasses; nursery stock; fruits; vegetables; Christmas trees; and other similar uses and activities.

- 75% or more of the surrounding land area is in agriculture production50 pts
- 50% or more but less than 75% of the surrounding area is in agriculture production.....30 pts
- 25% or more but less than 50% of the surrounding area is in agriculture production.....15 pts
- Less than 25% of the surrounding area is in agriculture production0 pts

Total Points for Item 11: _____

Maximum Points Possible: 50

Please list land owner(s) names and the address of their property which surrounds your farm. Further, please provide the percentage of land in each surrounding parcel that is in ag production.

12. HISTORICAL CHARACTERISTICS

Centennial Farms are eligible for 50 points, whereas farms that are other historically registered sites are eligible for 25 points. Applicants may receive a maximum of 50 points.

- Centennial Farm50 pts
- Other Historically Registered Sites25 pts
- Parcel does not have historical features.....0 pts

Total Points for Item 12: _____

Maximum Points Possible: 50

Please list any historical features of your farm:

Total Score Awarded for Secondary Characteristics (Items 10-12): _____

Total Score Possible for Secondary Characteristics: 400 Points

TOTAL SCORE AWARDED

Primary: _____

+ Secondary: _____

Total Score: _____

Total Score Possible: 1000 points

FOR INTERNAL USE ONLYFarmland Preservation Program Scoring System Overview**Ottawa County**

Primary Characteristics	Points Possible	Points Awarded
1. Agricultural Productivity	100	
2. Creation of Blocks of Preserved Land		
a. Parcel Size	50	
b. Proximity to Permanently Preserved Land	50	
c. Block Applications	50	
3. Conservation Practices/Values	25	
4. Matching Funds	100	
5. MAEAP Participation/Organic Certification	25	
6. Local Agricultural Planning	50	
7. Enrollment in PA 116	50	
8. Road Frontage	50	
9. Proximity to Services	50	
Secondary Characteristics		
10. Type of Agricultural Production/Local Economic Impact		
a. Specialty Crop	100	
b. Commodity Crop	100	
c. Proximity to Existing Livestock Farms	50	
d. Agricultural products that receive an added value or are locally processed	50	
11. Amount of Land in the surrounding area in agricultural use	50	
12. Historical Characteristics	50	
Total Points	1000	