



Oconee County

Board of Commissioners

John Daniell, Chairman
Mark Thomas, Post 1
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FARMLAND PRESERVATION PROGRAM NOTICE OF APPLICATION PERIOD

The Oconee County Board of Commissioners is accepting applications for the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program-Agricultural Land Easements (ACEP-ALE). The ACEP-ALE is a voluntary program that helps farmers keep their land in agriculture. ACEP-ALE is a competitive program, where farms are ranked based on national and state criteria. The National Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is authorized to facilitate and provide matching funds (up to 50%) for the purchase of conservation easements on eligible land that is subject to a pending offer from an eligible entity. These permanent conservation easements prohibit the conversion of farm and ranch land to nonagricultural uses and ensure that the agricultural capacity of the soils remain viable for future generations.

A public meeting will be held on July 10, 2019 at 7:00 p.m. at the UGA J. Phil Campbell Research and Education Center Conference Room, 1420 Government Station Road, Watkinsville, with greater detail for those interested in applying for the ACEP-ALE Farmland Preservation Program.

Applications are available from the NRCS Office, 1291 Greensboro Highway, Watkinsville, or by calling 706-769-3990. The general application submission deadline is July 24, 2019 and may be delivered to Gerald Grace at the NRCS Office, Government Annex, 1291 Greensboro Highway, Watkinsville.

The Oconee County Farmland Preservation Committee will rank the applications for presentation to the Board of Commissioners at the Agenda Setting Meeting on August 27, 2019 at 6:00 p.m. in the Commission Chambers of the Oconee County Courthouse. The Board will consider the Committee's recommendation at its Regular Meeting on September 3, 2019 at 6:00 p.m. The top-ranked farm approved by the Board of Commissioners may complete the required information in cooperation with Athens Land Trust for submittal to compete statewide for federal funding.

For more information on eligibility and the application process, please contact the NRCS Office at 706-769-3990 or the Oconee County Extension Office at 706-769-3946. Further information may also be found at www.nrcs.usda.gov.