

2009  
MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT  
*for the establishment of the*  
**TENNESSEE FARMLAND LEGACY PARTNERSHIP**

PARTIES:

Cumberland Region Tomorrow  
MTSU Center for Historic Preservation  
Tennessee Department of Agriculture  
Tennessee Department of Economic and Community Development  
Tennessee Department of Environment & Conservation  
Tennessee Department of Tourist Development  
Tennessee Farm Bureau Federation  
Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency  
The Land Trust for Tennessee  
The University of Tennessee Institute of Agriculture  
USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (Tennessee)  
USDA Rural Development (Tennessee)

BACKGROUND:

Farming in Tennessee is a \$3.1 billion industry at the farm gate. Agriculture, including forestry, generates more than \$60 billion in total economic activity and provides employment for nearly 500,000 Tennesseans. Agriculture is the main economic driver in rural communities and every farm dollar turns over multiple times in the local economy.

Agriculture not only impacts the cost of food, but farms and forest also contribute to the well-being of our communities in the form of green space, property values and tourism. Consumers value knowing where and how their food is produced and local farms provide assurance of a safe, abundant and affordable supply.

Finding balance among competing land uses in our communities is vital to the future of our state's economy, health and quality of life. Each year, Tennessee loses an average of 1,300 family farms and 100,000 acres of farmland. Much of this land is converted to other uses and is taken out of agricultural production, sometimes unalterably forever. Farmers often find it difficult to pass their farmland to the next generation due to a lack of interest in farming by other family members, a lack of information on succession planning, or due to economic and development pressures. The future of Tennessee agriculture depends on the ability of exiting farmers to transition, without losing

valuable farmland, to new generations of farmers who need access to affordable and productive farmland.

#### PURPOSE:

This Memorandum of Agreement is agreed to by the parties for the purpose of establishing the Tennessee Farmland Legacy Partnership to serve as an authoritative resource, to provide information and assistance, and to encourage both farm level and community planning that promotes the preservation and viability of working farms in Tennessee. The Tennessee Farmland Legacy Partnership seeks to raise awareness among farmers and other landowners, government officials including community planning and zoning officials, developers, business and civic leaders, media and citizens as to the values, needs and opportunities for farmland preservation in the state. The Partnership will also direct farmers and community officials to the technical and financial programs offered by organizations and agencies related to farmland protection.

#### AGREEMENTS:

##### *Cumberland Region Tomorrow*

Cumberland Region Tomorrow is a private sector regional 501(c)3 not-for-profit organization working with the public sector to support and encourage growth planning, with an emphasis on land use, transportation, and preservation of the rural landscape and character of the region's communities. CRT will assist by sharing economic impact information and also information on resources available to landowners and local officials, especially planning community representatives.

##### *MTSU Center for Historic Preservation*

The Center will continue to administer and expand the Tennessee Century Farms program. The Center will also continue to prepare National Register nominations for farmsteads in accordance with the wishes of owners and at the directive of the Tennessee Historical Commission (the State Historic Preservation Office). Center staff will further continue to assess historic architecture, including farm houses, barns, and other outbuildings, at the invitation of owners, for the purpose of providing research on the history and evolution of the properties and guidance in rehabilitation and restoration efforts. The Center, will continue its traditional role as a clearing house in Tennessee for preservation information and will work with its existing statewide network of partners to share appropriate information through publications, workshops, conferences, newsletters (both on-line and printed), and through the data bases of the Century Farms program and the Tennessee Civil War National Heritage Area. For the Tennessee Farmland Legacy Partnership, the Center agrees to provide financial, technical, or in-kind support for events, activities, and publications on farmland preservation issues when they fall within the parameters of the Center's statement of

purpose and its programs, and when such funding is determined available by the Center director.

*Tennessee Department of Agriculture*

Healthy, viable and productive farms are at the core of department's mission to promote the sustainable use of our agricultural and forest resources, build farm income and to ensure safe and dependable food, fiber and fuel. TDA will seek to preserve working farms by helping them first and foremost to remain profitable and viable through marketing, cost share and technical assistance. TDA will serve as host agency for the Partnership by coordinating or facilitating meetings, conferences, workshops and outreach as staff and resources are available. Related to the Partnership, TDA will provide leadership and support to the Tennessee Century Farms program in coordination with the MTSU Center for Historic Preservation. TDA will partner with The Land Trust for Tennessee to support and encourage the preservation of working farms through the use of conservation easements and other tools as appropriate and as funding, staff and resources permit.

*Tennessee Department of Economic and Community Development*

The Department of Economic and Community Development "seeks to foster the creation of better paying and higher-skilled jobs by assisting communities in preparing for the opportunities and challenges of tomorrow through the promotion of quality community development; assisting existing employers to grow and prosper, thereby creating new capital investment and new job opportunities; attracting capital investment and jobs by recruiting new industry to the state; serving as the coordinator of state resources to the job-creating community through the management of the Governor's Job Cabinet; and advocating on issues that impact community development and the state's business climate." The department recognizes farming's impact on the economy of Tennessee and the need to preserve critical agricultural land resources. The department's Local Planning Assistance Section will use its relationship with rural community planning programs to deliver information and encourage thoughtful land use decisions that affect farming and agricultural land conversion.

*Tennessee Department of Environment & Conservation*

As Tennessee addresses the immediate infrastructure challenges of rapid growth, urbanization and aging systems for roads, sewer and water systems, we are faced with the compelling need to balance population and economic growth with effective protection for our natural resources. We value sustainable, prosperous communities that achieve healthy balances between private and public interests, between urban and rural land use, and between developed areas and natural spaces. Our department advocates a comprehensive watershed approach to promote quality growth statewide and effectively address our state's water resource challenges. Watersheds supply drinking water, provide recreation and sustain life for communities. When combined with conservative agricultural practices, properly managed farmland and forestry lands are an integral and fundamental component of watershed protection. These open

landscapes protect ground and surface water through rainwater infiltration, aquifer recharge and filtration of potential pollutants. TDEC is committed to the principles and purpose of the Tennessee Farmland Legacy Partnership and pleased to be included in this important effort.

#### *Tennessee Department of Tourist Development*

The Department of Tourist Development as part of its mission, strives to promote cultural heritage in Tennessee's metropolitan, as well as, rural areas. Through the Discover Tennessee Trails & Byways Program, the Farmland Legacy Partnership will have increased visibility, particularly in rural areas and increased income in those communities. Furthermore, the department's Sustainable Tourism Initiative would allow us to include links from our Sustainable Web site to the Department of Agriculture's information on the Legacy partnerships. Previous workshops have included speakers and presenters that discussed the importance of viewsheds and farmlands. The Department of Tourist Development will support the partnership to market, promote and encourage the preservation of working farms and continually communicate their value for the quality of life for all Tennesseans.

#### *Tennessee Farm Bureau Federation*

The mission of the Tennessee Farm Bureau Federation is to develop, foster, promote and protect programs for the general welfare, including economic, social, educational and political well-being of farm people of the great state of Tennessee. The mission has been in place since 1923. TFBF is very concerned with the loss of farmland. Tennessee is losing valuable farmland to urbanization. TFBF supports the use of farmland protection tools including the federal Farmland Protection Program. Farm Bureau advocated passage and supports the state's agricultural district law as well as the use of farmland trust. Both are voluntary tools for the protection of farmland. Efforts to educate farmers on the availability of these options should be enhanced. Farm Bureau members believe protecting prime agricultural land from development should be a top priority. Decision makers should carefully consider the consequences of each proposed project, which erodes Tennessee's valuable farmland resources and such uses should receive a low priority in consideration of state funding needs.

#### *Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency*

The mission of the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency is to preserve, conserve, protect, and enhance the fish and wildlife of the state and their habitats for the use, benefit, and enjoyment of the citizens of Tennessee and its visitors. The Agency believes that maintaining open farmlands is a vital strategy in combating urban sprawl and providing the habitat needed to support diverse wildlife populations in Tennessee. TWRA employs biologists that provide assistance to landowners and farm operators on managing their lands to integrate wildlife habitat needs into their land management goals. TWRA also works closely with USDA in implementing many of the federal conservation programs that provide habitat for wildlife, along with providing several other TWRA habitat programs for private landowners. The agency will continue to

provide these staff and resources to support the goals of the Tennessee Farmland Legacy Partnership.

*The Land Trust for Tennessee*

The mission of The Land Trust for Tennessee is “to conserve the unique character of Tennessee’s natural and historic landscapes and sites for future generations.”

Contributions to the Partnership include:

- Education and technical assistance on conservation options for landowners
- Promotion and implementation of permanent conservation easements
- Access to professional resources such as attorneys, appraisers, and financial advisors

*The University of Tennessee Institute of Agriculture*

The University of Tennessee Institute of Agriculture is interested in and supports the efforts of the Tennessee Farmland Legacy Partnership. Working with other members of the Partnership, UTIA will provide information and educational programming to increase Tennesseans’ awareness of the issues and possible actions including their potential positive and negative outcomes.

*USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (Tennessee)*

USDA-NRCS administers federally funded programs for landowners of Tennessee directly aimed at protecting working farms, including the Farm and Ranchland Protection Program (FRPP) and Grassland Reserve Program (GRP). The agency also administers other easement programs that offer landowners opportunities to protect their property, including the Wetland Reserve Program (WRP) and the Healthy Forest Reserve Program (HFRP), subject to the availability of funding. The agency will provide staff and resources as available to support the principles and purposes of the Tennessee Farmland Legacy Partnership.

*USDA Rural Development (Tennessee)*

USDA Rural Development Business Programs assist with financial programs relating to business development opportunities for producers. While the agency doesn’t provide direct financial assistance for production agriculture, it does assist with agribusiness ventures relating to value-added processing and agritourism, as well as other related enterprises for individual producers. The agency also directly assists with technical support relating to farmer owned or controlled cooperative business enterprises.

IT IS MUTUALLY AGREED THAT, to the extent allowable and authorized pursuant to any pertinent statutes, regulations, or policies and procedures, the parties named herein support the principles and purpose of the Tennessee Farmland Legacy Partnership and hereby agree to:

- Schedule an organizing meeting for the purpose of establishing a Steering Committee, which will serve as a clearinghouse for information and resources, and will be responsible for providing overall guidance to and developing a strategy for furthering the preservation of working farms in Tennessee.

- Designate a Steering Committee representative, who will regularly attend meetings as determined by the committee in order to participate in the exchange of information and ideas.
- Share information, staff and resources as appropriate and as determined by each party's willingness and ability to do so.
- Assist with the collection and dissemination of information, and to otherwise educate farmers, government officials and other stakeholders, about issues, resources and options that further the preservation of working farms.
- Sponsor, and to otherwise provide financial, technical or in-kind support for workshops and conferences on farmland preservation issues, as appropriate and as determined by each party's willingness and ability to do so.
- Provide information about technical and financial programs offered by private organizations and state and federal agencies, as appropriate and as determined by each party's willingness and ability to do so.

This Memorandum of Agreement represents the intent of the parties to collaborate in providing information and resources to help promote the importance of Tennessee's farms and farmers, protect working farms from development and other land-use pressures in the state of Tennessee and to provide farmland owners more information on and options for passing their land, assets and farming operation to the next generation. Other organizations and agencies whose mission and objectives are consistent with the purpose of the Tennessee Farmland Legacy Partnership may enter into this agreement by approval of respective parties. This Memorandum of Agreement may be modified at any time by agreement of the respective parties and is effective on the day it is signed by the parties hereto.

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**Dr. Bridget Jones, Executive Director**  
Cumberland Region Tomorrow

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**Lacy Upchurch, President**  
Tennessee Farm Bureau Federation

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**Dr. Carroll Van West, Director**  
MTSU Center for Historic Preservation

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**Ed Carter, Executive Director**  
Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency

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**Ken Givens, Commissioner**  
Tennessee Department of Agriculture

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**Jean C. Nelson, President and Executive Director**  
The Land Trust for Tennessee

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**Matt Kisber, Commissioner**  
Tennessee Department of Economic and  
Community Development

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**Dr. Joseph A. DiPietro, Vice President  
for Agriculture**  
The University of Tennessee

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**Susan Whitaker, Commissioner**  
Tennessee Department of Tourist  
Development

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**Kevin Brown, State Conservationist**  
USDA Natural Resources Conservation  
Service, Tennessee

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**Jim Fyke, Commissioner**  
Tennessee Department of Environment  
and Conservation

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**Bobby Goode, State Director**  
USDA Rural Development, Tennessee