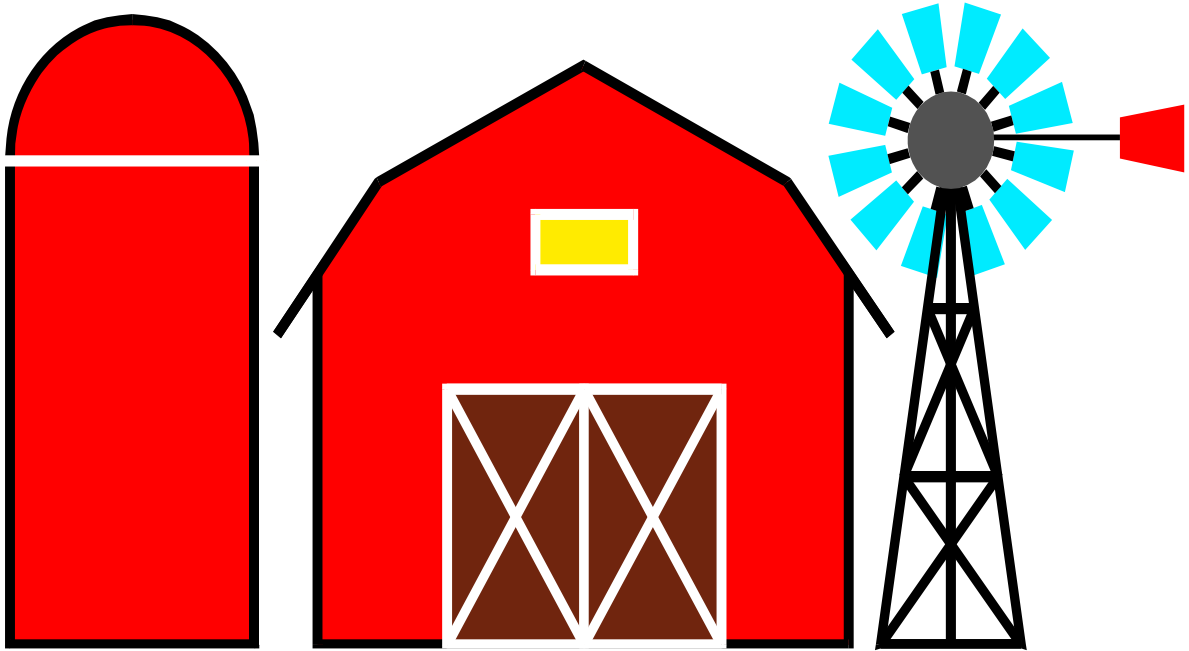


# **PRIME FARMLAND USE IN LEBANON COUNTY**



**A REPORT PREPARED BY THE  
LEBANON COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT FOR  
THE LEBANON COUNTY AGRICULTURAL LAND  
PRESERVATION BOARD AND  
LEBANON COUNTY COMMISSIONERS.**

**REVISED THROUGH JUNE 1, 2009**

## **WHAT:**

A study to determine how much growth in Lebanon County is impacting soils designated by the USDA as **prime farmland** or **other farmland of statewide importance**.

## **WHY:**

### **SOIL FACTS -**

- Soils designated as prime and important are critical for food production.
- Soils are a finite resource.

### **POPULATION FACTS –**

- Lebanon County is growing rapidly, adding approximately 38,081 people to our population since 1960 (approximately 793 new residents a year). This assumes a 2008 population estimate of 128,934 and a 1960 population of 90,853.
- 5,876 people have left the City of Lebanon since 1960 (1960 census was 30,000 - estimated 2007 census was 24,124).

### **DEVELOPMENT FACTS -**

- Residential development costs more in services than it provides in tax revenues (Penn State/Bethel Twp. study). More residential development is occurring on farmland than in our cities and towns. Inefficient residential development increases taxation, gobbles up open space, increases traffic congestion and decreases our quality of life.
- Agriculture contributes more in tax revenues than it demands in services (Penn State/Bethel Twp. study). Agriculture keeps taxes lower by lessening demands for schools, police, sewer, water, roads, etc.
- Based on this annualized study, Lebanon County has lost 11,348.42 acres of farmland since 1990. This represents almost 9% of our County's 126,870 acres of prime and important farmland soils lost in less than 20 years! [Not all prime and important soils are used for agricultural purposes.]
- Farmland is a limited resource. When productive farmland is converted to another use (ex. residential), it is lost and cannot be regained. For example, Jackson Township has lost the most acres of prime and statewide important agricultural land since 1990. Out of 13,482.81 acres of prime and important farmland (88.9% of the township's land), Jackson Township has lost 10.8%, or 1,451.11 acres due to subdivision for land use other than agriculture.

**REVISED THROUGH JUNE 1, 2009**

## **FARM FACTS –**

- Lebanon County has 124,000 acres in farms with an average size of 112 acres (2006-2007 Pennsylvania Agricultural Statistics Summary or PASS).
- Agriculture contributes more in tax revenues than it demands in services (Penn State/Bethel Twp. Study). It keeps taxes lower by lessening demands for other services.
- Agriculture is our county's number one industry contributing \$249,145,000 in cash receipts in 2007. (2007 Statistical Summary Lebanon County Penn State Cooperative Extension)

## **PLANNING FACTS –**

- **Current** data to guide land use decisions by the county and municipalities in many instances does not exist or has not been compiled.

## **VOTING FACTS –**

- Over 60% of Lebanon County residents support farmland preservation.

## **PRESERVATION FACTS –**

- Preserving family farms encourages young people to stay in farming by making farms more affordable to the next generation (since there is only agricultural value).
- Preserving family farms enhances values of other properties nearby and enhances tourism.
- Preserving farms in Lebanon County means preserving some of America's most productive non-irrigated farmland.

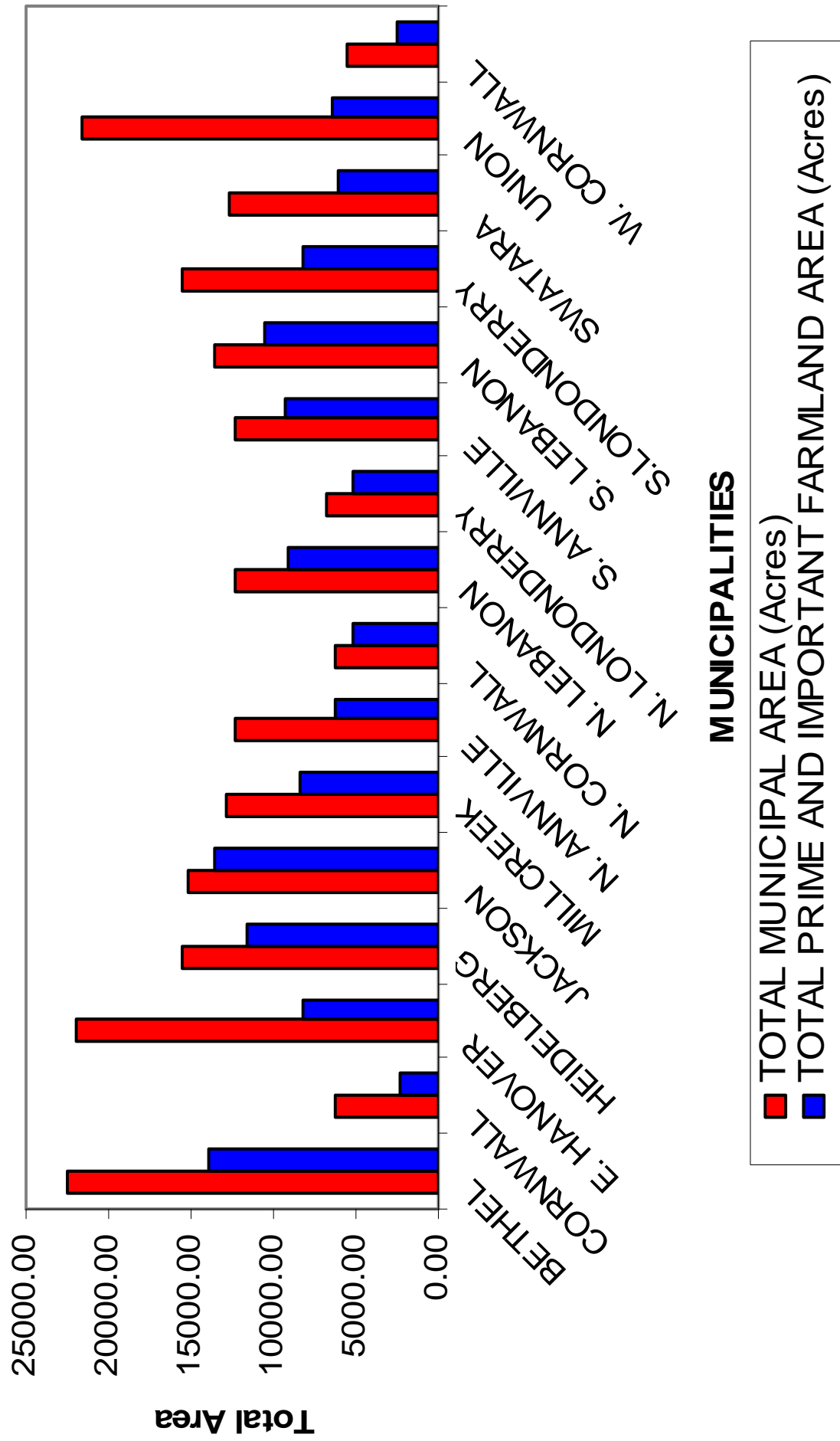
## **HOW:**

- Initially information was researched at the Lebanon County Planning Department and Recorder of Deeds in the Lebanon Municipal Building until the year 2009, when records became available digitally online. Subdivision records from the 16 municipalities with significant agricultural land were researched with the assumption that land undergoing subdivision would be converted to other land uses either now or in the future. This research was used to estimate how much growth has occurred in Lebanon County during the years of the study. Information gathered from the subdivision records contained the name of the owner of the affected area, a description of the type of subdivision, an indication of prime or important farmland lost, and the total acres of impacted area.
- Parcel data from the Lebanon County GIS Department was used to determine the location of the subdivision. It was cross-referenced with another dataset compiled from the former USDA Soil Conservation Service (now the Natural Resources Conservation Service) data to determine whether the impacted area contained prime farmland soils or other soils of additional statewide importance. Results are summarized in the table that follows. Charts that follow graphically depict data from our table of research as well as other research.

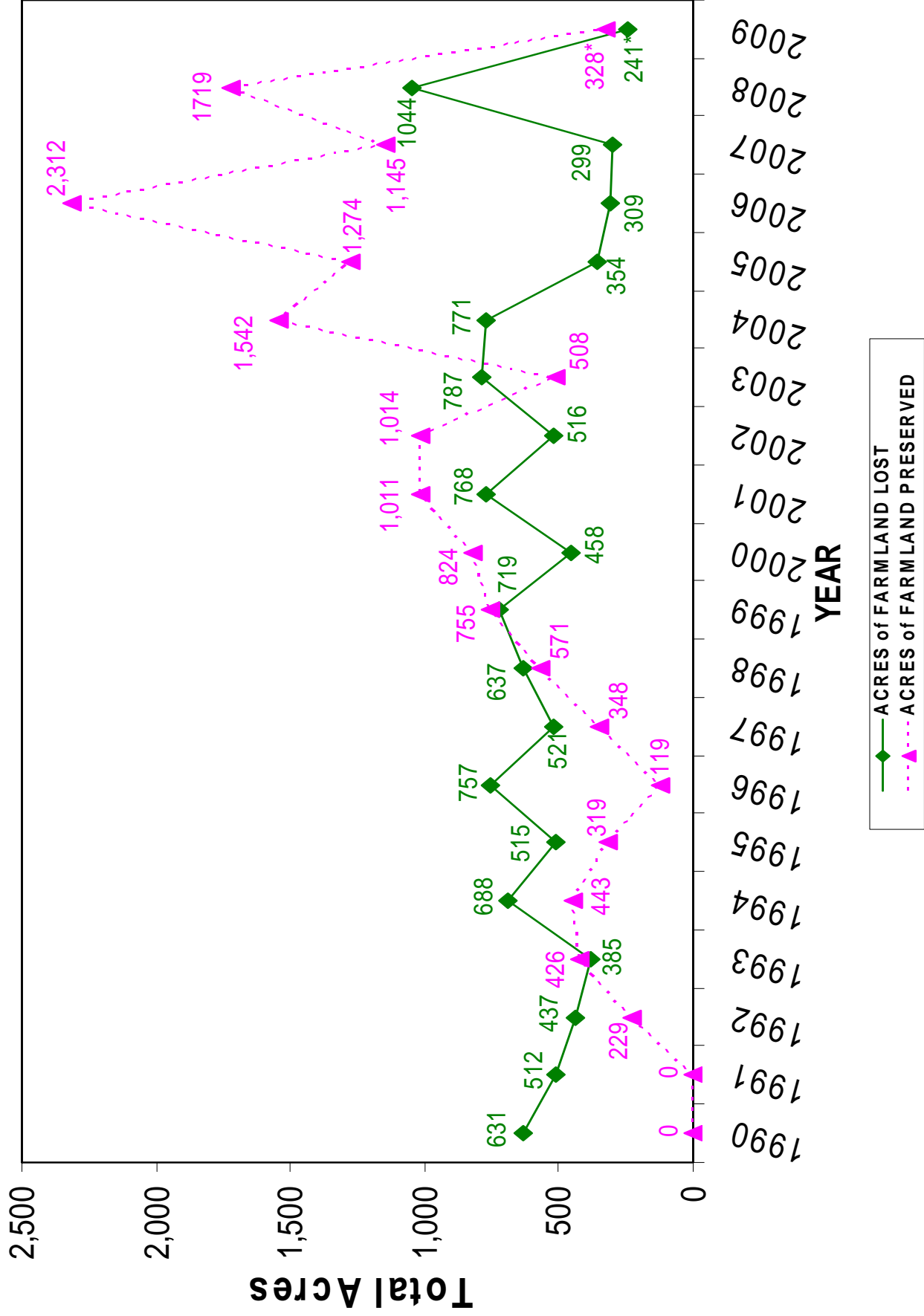
Municipality	Total All Acres	Acres Prime Ag. & as % of Total	Acres Ag. of Statewide Importance & as % of Total	Total Ag. Acres (Prime + Statewide)	Prime Ag. Acres Developed Since 1990 & as % of Total Prime Ag.	St. Impt. Ag. Acres Developed Since 1990 & as % of St. Impt. Ag.	Total Ag. Acres Developed Since 1990 & as % of Total Ag. Acres
Bethel	22,461	5,136.93 22.9%	8,721.69 38.8%	13,858.62 61.7%	526.11 10.2%	861.32 9.9%	1,387.43 10.0%
Cornwall	6,208	1,614.16 26.0%	669.61 10.8%	2,283.77 36.8%	228.81 14.2%	18.50 2.8%	247.32 10.8%
East Hanover	21,969	3,613.67 16.4%	4,635.80 21.1%	8,249.47 37.6%	2.51 0.1%	388.72 8.4%	391.22 4.7%
Heidelberg	15,616	7,401.80 47.4%	4,250.48 27.2%	11,652.28 74.6%	161.85 2.2%	278.64 6.6%	440.49 3.8%
Jackson	15,168	11,008.00 72.6%	2,474.81 16.3%	13,482.81 88.9%	1,215.85 11.0%	235.26 9.5%	1,451.11 10.8%
Millcreek	12,825	6,489.61 50.6%	1,930.51 15.1%	8,420.12 65.7%	543.09 8.4%	47.48 2.5%	590.57 7.0%
North Annville	12,348	2,403.37 19.5%	3,912.51 31.7%	6,315.88 51.1%	93.29 3.9%	107.03 2.7%	200.33 3.2%
North Cornwall	6,204	4,551.93 73.4%	634.25 10.2%	5,186.18 83.6%	728.90 16.0%	21.12 3.3%	750.02 14.5%
North Lebanon	10,329	6,361.41 61.6%	2,738.56 26.5%	9,099.97 88.1%	740.26 11.6%	193.68 7.1%	933.94 10.3%
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>123,128</b>	<b>48,580.88 39.5%</b>	<b>29,968.22 24.3%</b>	<b>78,549.10 63.8%</b>	<b>4,240.67 8.7%</b>	<b>2,151.76 7.2%</b>	<b>6,392.43 8.1%</b>

Municipality	Total All Acres	Acres Prime Ag. & as % of Total	Acres Ag. of Statewide Importance & as % of Total	Total Ag. Acres (Prime + Statewide)	Prime Ag. Acres Developed Since 1990 & as % of Total Prime Ag.	St. Impt. Ag. Acres Developed Since 1990 & as % of St. Impt. Ag.	Total Ag. Acres Developed Since 1990 & as % of Total Ag. Acres
North Londonderry	6,842	3,282.31 48.0%	1,912.94 28.0%	5,195.25 75.9%	946.14 28.8%	300.49 15.7%	1,246.63 24.0%
South Annville	12,348	8,359.52 67.7%	1,010.98 8.2%	9,370.50 75.9%	304.44 3.6%	45.35 4.5%	349.79 3.7%
South Lebanon	13,564	9,597.07 70.8%	910.79 6.7%	10,507.86 77.5%	955.28 10.0%	75.52 8.3%	1,030.80 9.8%
South Londonderry	15,552	3,599.43 23.1%	4,587.18 29.5%	8,186.61 52.6%	528.15 14.7%	259.57 6.6%	787.72 9.6%
Swatara	12,736	2,593.73 20.4%	3,514.31 27.6%	6,108.04 48.0%	172.65 6.7%	447.34 12.7%	619.99 10.2%
Union	21,568	2,403.65 11.1%	4,035.93 18.7%	6,439.58 29.9%	130.71 5.4%	655.91 16.3%	786.62 12.2%
West Cornwall	5,502	1,879.90 34.2%	633.50 11.5%	2,513.40 45.7%	131.45 7.0%	3.00 0.5%	134.45 5.3%
<b>Subtotal</b>	88,112	31,715.61 36.0%	16,605.63 18.8%	48,321.24 54.8%	3,168.82 10.0%	1,787.18 10.8%	4,955.99 10.3%
<b><u>Total</u></b>	211,240	80,296.49 38.0%	46,573.85 22.0%	126,870.34 60.1%	7,409.49 9.2%	3,938.93 8.5%	11,348.42 8.9%

**Figure 1. TOTAL MUNICIPAL AREA & TOTAL PRIME AND IMPORTANT FARMLAND AREA BEFORE DEVELOPMENT (see initial table for data)**



**Figure 2. PRIME & IMPORTANT FARMLAND LOST/PRESERVED**

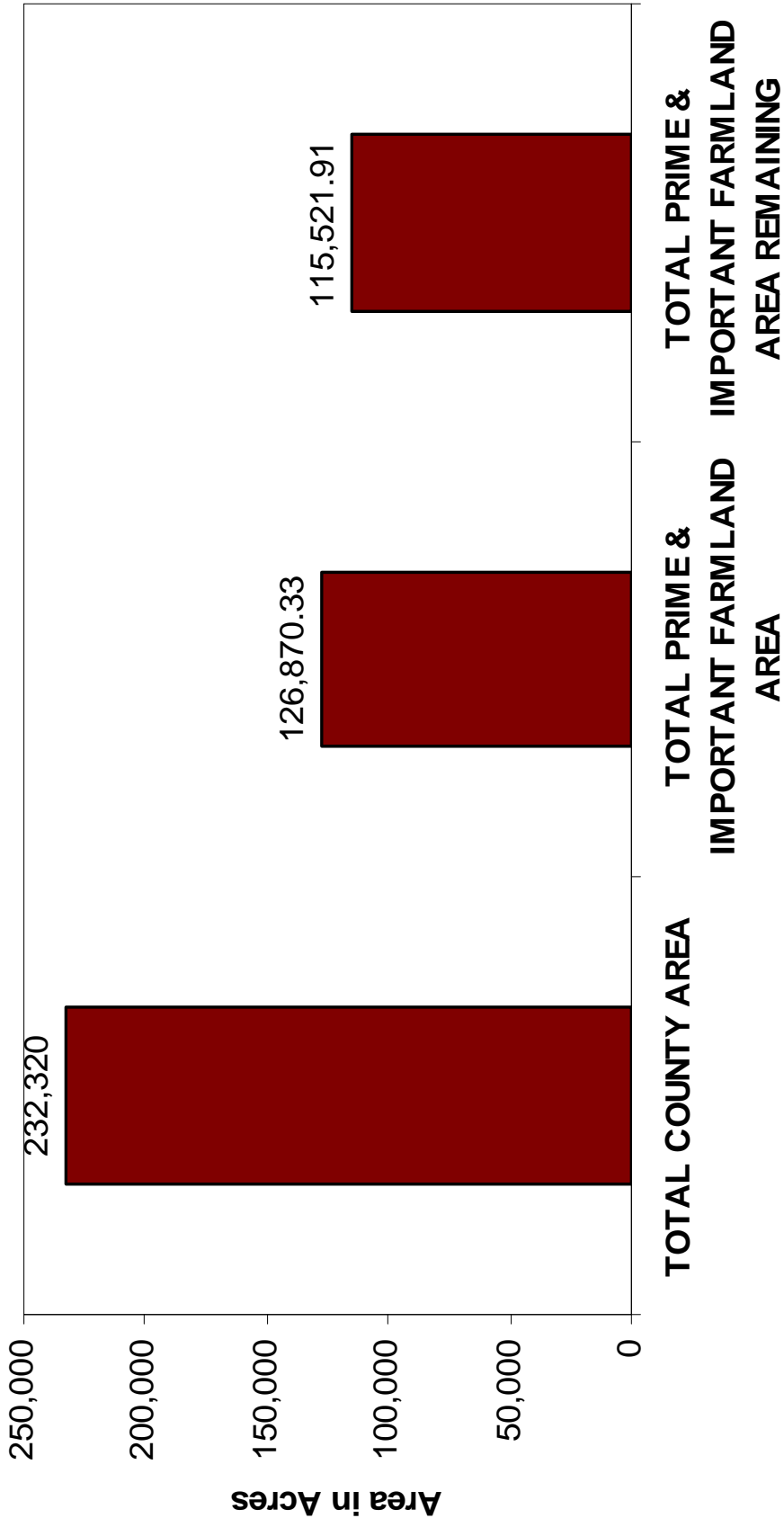


Figures are rounded to whole numbers

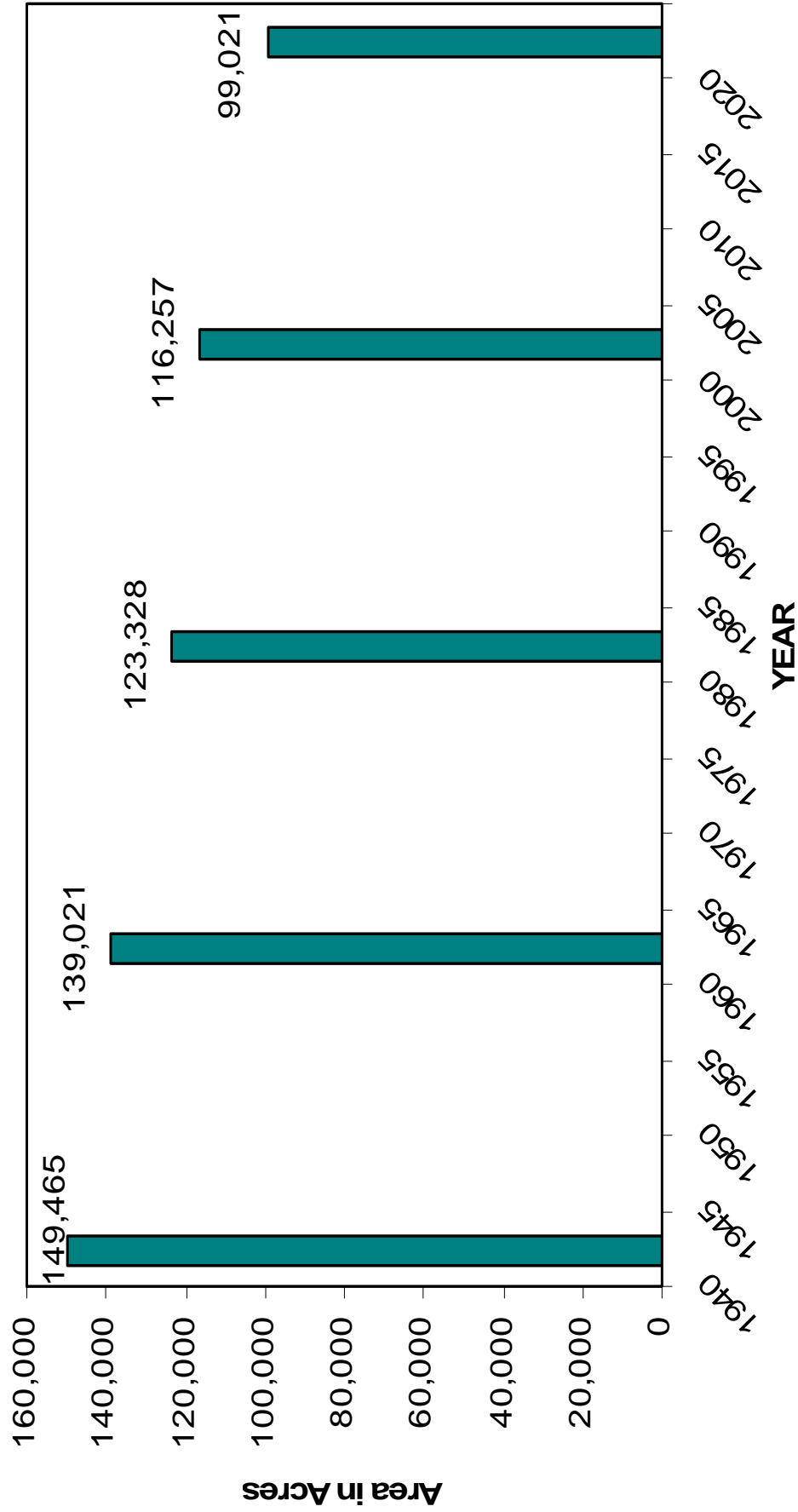
\*Updated as of 6/1/2009 (incomplete year)

Source: Lebanon County Conservation District- Preserved ACE

**Figure 3. TOTAL PRIME & IMPORTANT FARMLAND REMAINING  
AS OF JUNE 2009 (see initial table pages 4-5 for data)**



**Figure 4. ESTIMATED ACRES OF TOTAL FARMLAND (all types included) REMAINING IN LEBANON COUNTY**



The definition was changed to include tree farms and reserve program farms in 1998

Sources: Lebanon County Comprehensive Plan (1940, 1960)

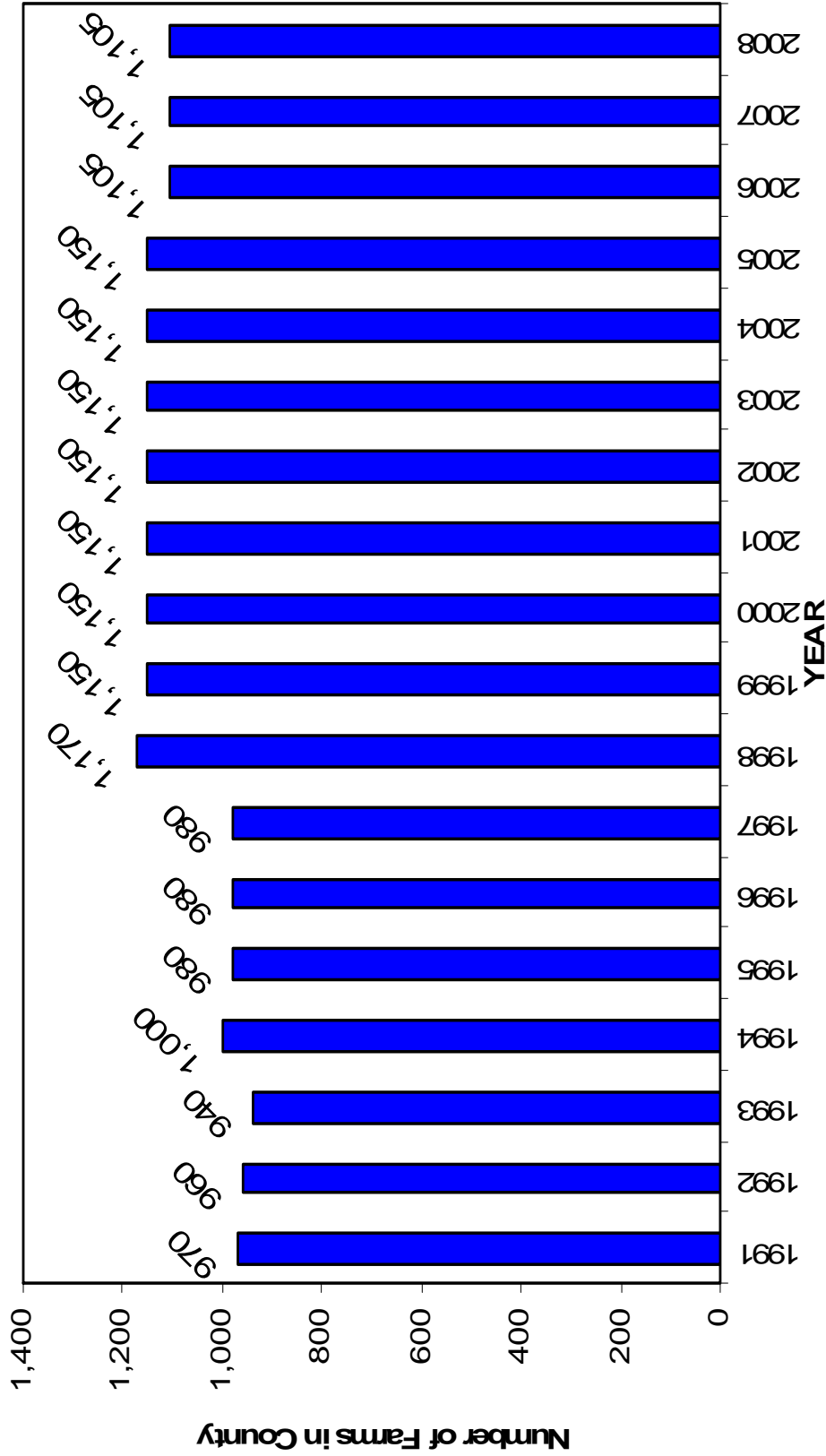
Resource Conservation Agenda 1983

Pennsylvania Agricultural Statistics Manual (2000)

PSU Env. Resources Res. Inst. - Land Use Projections for Pennsylvania (2020)

**Figure 5. NUMBER OF FARMS IN LEBANON COUNTY**

Lebanon County statistics reach as far back as 1850, with 1,449 farms.  
 Other reported statistics from the LCCD Resource Agenda Support File include:  
**1880- 2,475 1910- 2,525 1940- 1,920 1950- 1,826 1960- 1,492 1980- 1,030**

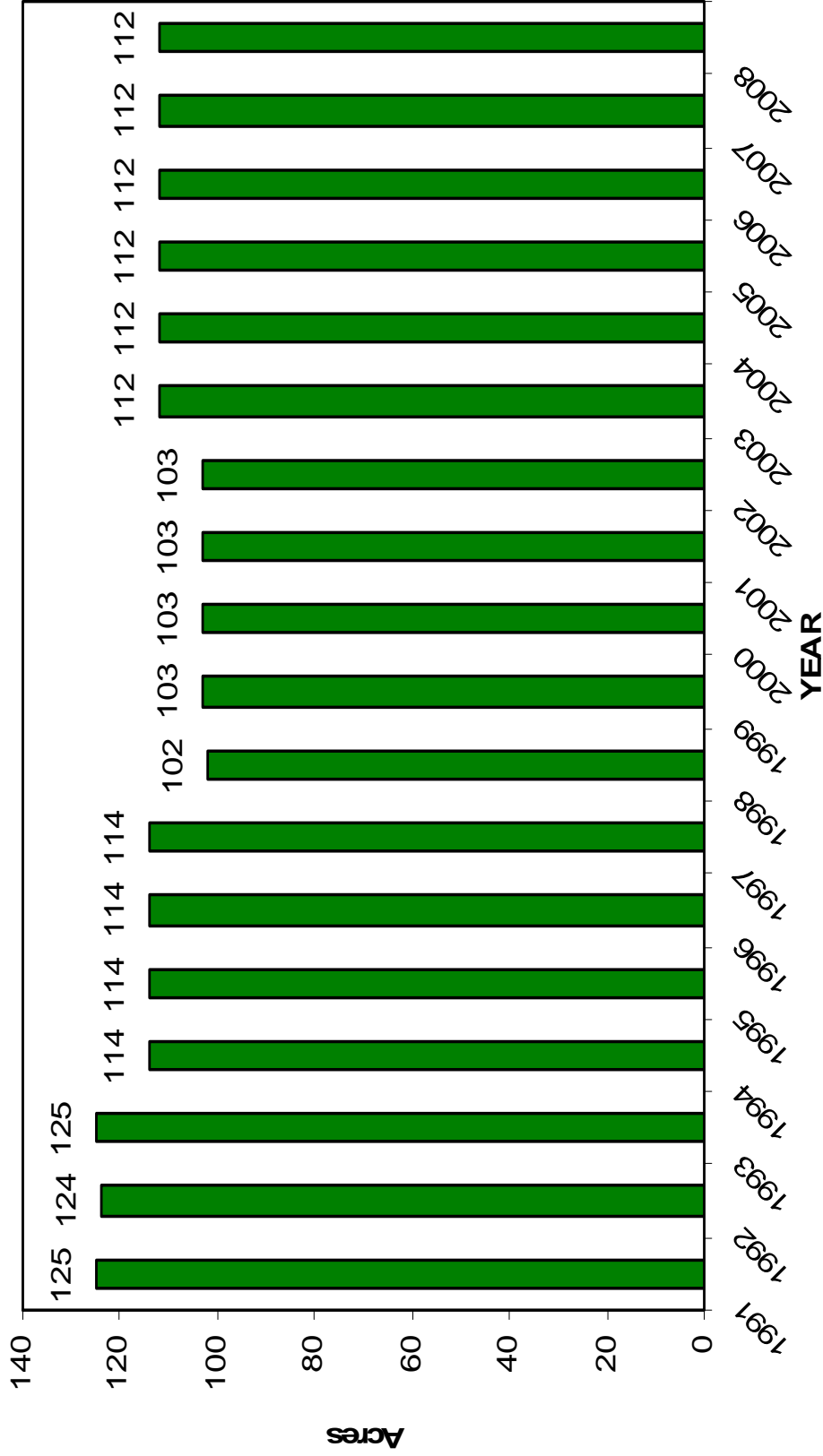


The definition was changed to include tree farms and reserve program farms in 1998  
 Source: Pennsylvania Agricultural Statistics Manual

### Figure 6. AVERAGE SIZE OF FARMS

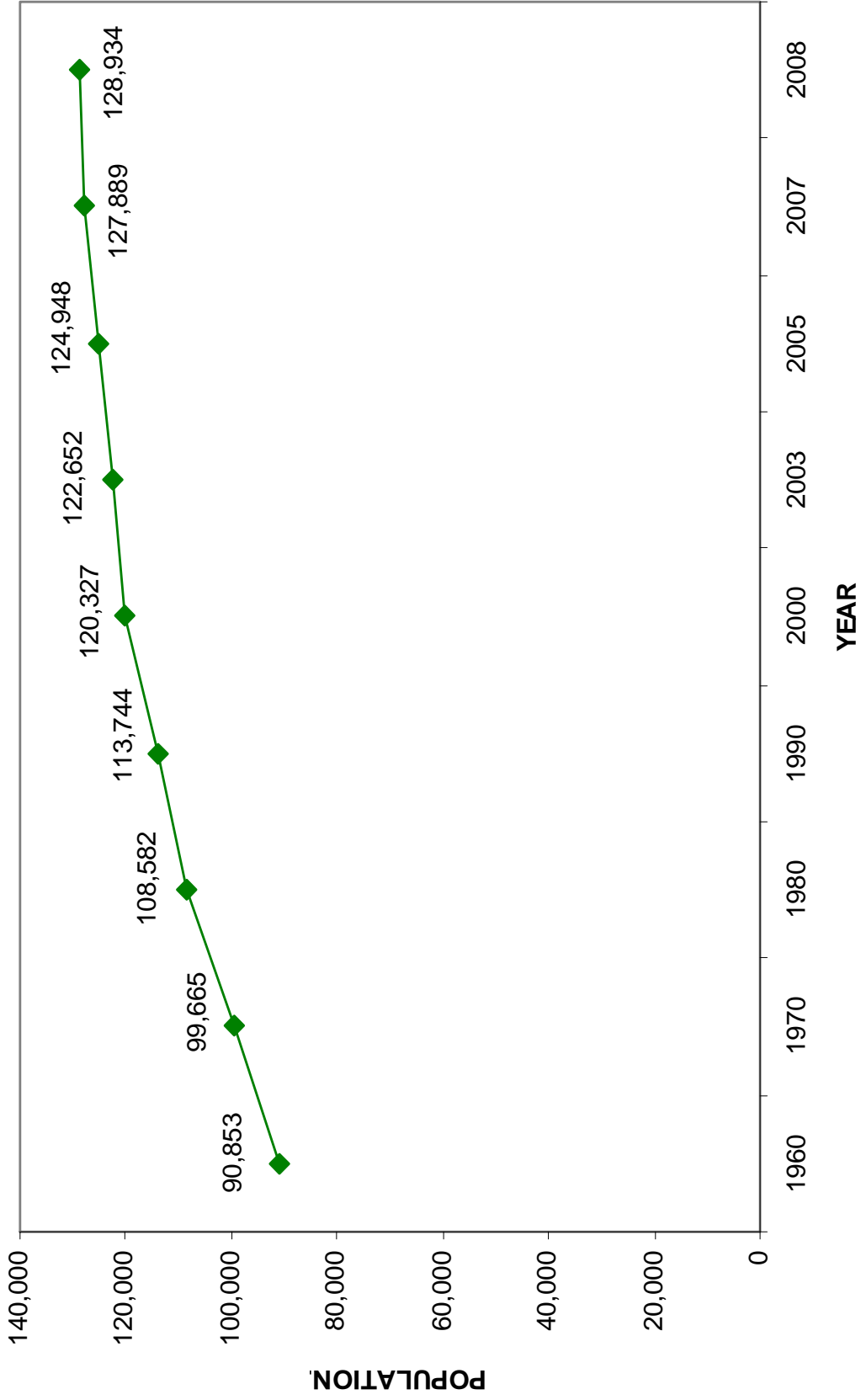
Lebanon County statistics reach as far back as 1880, with an average farm size of 78 acres.

Other reported statistics from the LCCD Resource Agenda Support File include:  
**1910- 69 acres 1940- 78 acres 1950- 82 acres 1960- 93 acres 1982- 124 acres**



The definition was changed to include tree farms and reserve program farms in 1998  
 Source: Pennsylvania Agricultural Statistics Manual

**Figure 7. COUNTY POPULATION**



\* Census data are collected every 10 years.  
The last National Census was in the year 2000.  
Other years are based upon estimates.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

## **RESEARCHERS:**

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Dana Wolf, Intern, Harrisburg Area Community College, 2008  
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## **SOURCES:**

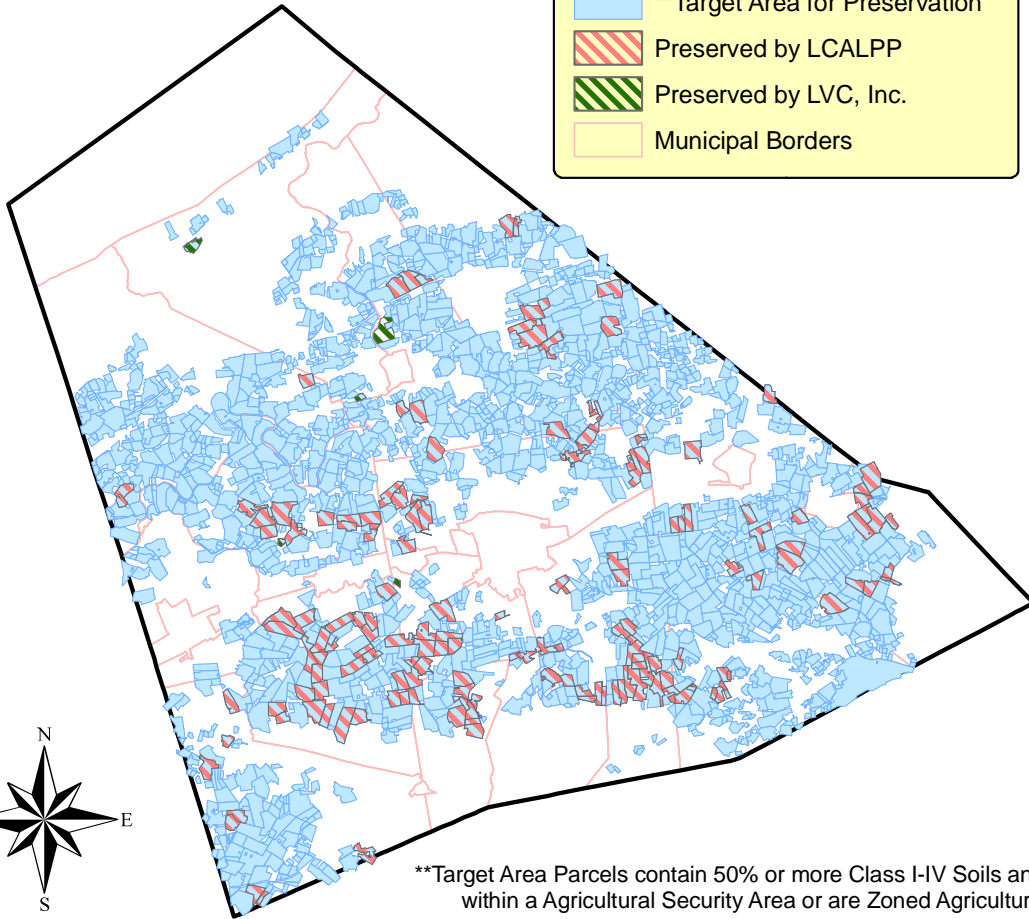
Lebanon Co. Planning Department Subdivision Record Books  
USDA SCS Important Farmlands Map of Lebanon Co (1977)  
Lebanon County Planning Department Road Map  
Lebanon County Conservation District GIS Soils Data  
Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture Annual Reports  
1987 Lebanon County Interim Plan  
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Lebanon County Conservation District Resource Agenda, 1983  
Lebanon County Comprehensive Plan, 1970  
I.A.3. Resource Agenda/Supporting Material: Resource Conservation Agenda 1983  
I.A.3. Resource Agenda/Supporting Material: Comprehensive Plan for the County of Lebanon, PA  
I.A.3. Resource Agenda/Supporting Material: Land Use Projections for Pennsylvania, ERRI, PSU  
Pennsylvania Agricultural Statistics Service Manual  
(<http://www.nass.usda.gov/pa>)  
U.S. Census Bureau

# Target Area for Future Lebanon County Farmland Preservation


By Lebanon County Agricultural Land Preservation Program (LCALPP)  
and the  
Lebanon Valley Conservancy, Inc. (LVC)

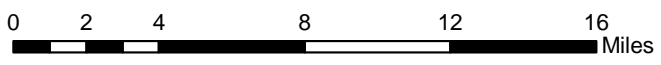
**Legend**

-  \*\*Target Area for Preservation
-  Preserved by LCALPP
-  Preserved by LVC, Inc.
-  Municipal Borders



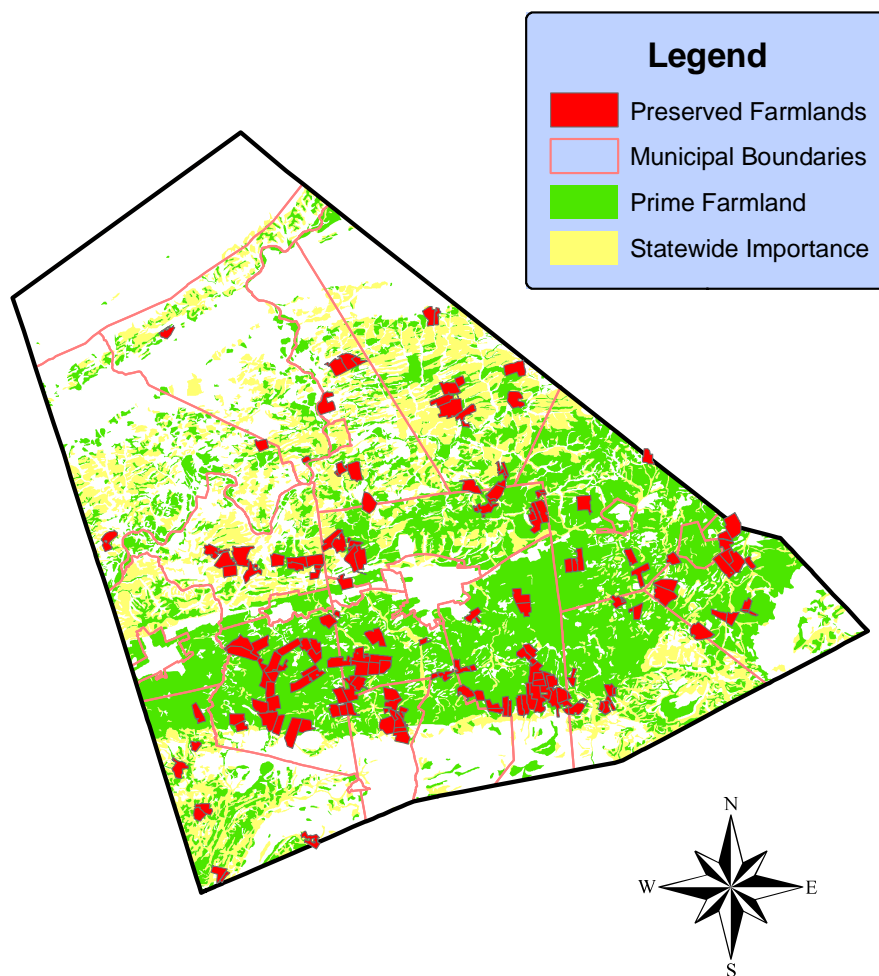
\*\*Target Area Parcels contain 50% or more Class I-IV Soils and are within a Agricultural Security Area or are Zoned Agriculture

 This map was last updated on June, 18, 2009 by the Lebanon County Conservation District



# Lebanon County

## Important Farmlands (Prime Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance and Preserved Easements)



This map was last updated  
on June 15, 2009 by  
the Lebanon County  
Conservation District



*“Lebanon County is presently blessed with an abundance of rich fertile agricultural land and beautiful mountainous woodlands which together comprise some of the most scenic open spaces in Pennsylvania. However, the uncontrolled explosion of residential and commercial development is rapidly deleting the quality of that open space from both the aesthetic and recreational standpoint.”*

*1970 Comprehensive Plan, Page 61*

