



# **POWER** Communication

*Policy Outreach with Effective Results*

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## **POLICY AND ISSUE DISCUSSION SHEET**

### ***Economic Development and Land Use – Balancing Public and Private Interests***

#### ***Defining the Issue***

Property rights and the ability to responsibly use one's land are fundamental principles supported by Farm Bureau members. Collectively, property rights are referenced 80 times in AFBF and OFBF Policies. They are considered essential to the preservation of individual freedom.

For over a century, Farm Bureau members have worked with local government leaders and community stakeholders to employ zoning concepts, economic and community development planning to create effective strategies for land and resource use. These plans start from the ground up with grass roots discussion, employ collaboration and ensure issues and concerns are addressed.

Over the last several years, more residents want to exercise influence and control over land use beyond their property lines, and more farmers feel targeted. Some groups advocate giving local government the ability to impose master plans; skirting the grass roots approach starting with neighborhood discussion. Some master plan provisions being brought forward include:

- Prioritizing scenic attractions and tourism over other types of land use and economic activity, including agriculture.
- Creating urban service boundaries that target rural areas for future development and limit types of land use today.
- Limiting development or land use to a certain percentage of land in a given area.
- Limiting different types of development within the viewshed of cultural or historic sites, as well as current or proposed recreational areas, corridors, and trails.
- Creating setbacks and restrictions from property boundaries, in linear feet and/or miles, from scenic geographic features, sites and attractions.

## ***OFBF Policy***

### **Wild, Scenic and Recreational Rivers and Creeks**

We urge the Department of Natural Resources to be very selective and to proceed very slowly in its program of designating additional wild, scenic and recreational rivers. Before any river is designated, the department should be in a position to enforce the trespassing laws on private property.

We urge farmers to volunteer to serve and to take an active part on scenic river advisory boards.

### **Eminent Domain**

We oppose government entities taking prime farmland for public purposes, including but not limited to public water supplies, public utilities, pipelines, highways, metropolitan parks, linear parks, wildlife areas and trails.

### **Bicycle, Recreational, Equine, Greenway and Water Trails**

When abandoned rail lines or other areas are converted into bicycle, recreational, equine, greenway and water trails, landowners' rights should be protected.

We support:

- Protection of adjoining landowners from liability to trespassers and littering;
- Proper drainage is maintained;
- Landowners maintain access via an easement when trails bisect property;
- Adequate signage including access points and private property designation;
- The use of voluntary incentive-based programs for the creation and management of trails and greenways;
- The adoption of legislation that requires the trail developer to maintain fences, provide drainage and control weeds as required of railroads in Chapter 4959 of the Ohio Revised Code.
- Between the time of abandonment of the railroad line and construction of the trail, the adjoining landowner should be allowed to use the abandoned railroad easement;
- The adoption of legislation that requires that the integrity of the location of the railroad line be maintained during development of the trail.

We oppose:

- The development of bicycle, recreational trails and greenways when the purpose is, in whole or part, to facilitate the annexation of additional tracts of land;
- Legislation that denies or postpones any reversionary property rights or interest of property owners adjacent to railroad, utility, or road right-of-ways that are abandoned for any reason;
- The use of public monies for the construction, improvement, expansion and maintenance of recreational trails.
- Trail expansion until such a time that groups, such as Rails-to-Trails and park districts, can prove necessity through a cost analysis of the economic impact of trail expansions on agricultural activities versus the economic benefit of trail expansion for the local community.

### ***Discussion Questions***

1. What is your community's concept of agriculture? How many community stakeholders do you feel appreciate and prioritize agriculture for scenic and cultural benefits, and how many appreciate agriculture as a driver for additional economic development and growth?
2. Many farming operations are multi-generational, and have been in operation for decades. Some are executing development plans to change or expand operations with investments in newer, larger and/or different types of equipment and infrastructure. What strategies should farm families employ in talking with the neighbors about their plans?
3. Some community stakeholders feel that some property rights extend beyond the physical. They are concerned how potential changes in the viewscape, noise, road use and activity across the fence could impact their holdings. How could all neighbors work together to address these issues?
4. Current zoning guidelines underwritten in the Ohio Revised and Administrative Codes provide exemptions for farming and related practices. Ohio's Ag District program provides additional benefits, too. How many Farm Bureau members know about these programs? How can your community council work with county Farm Bureau leadership to promote these benefits?