



Securing Indiana's Farmland Future

Lessons & Strategies for Farmland Conservation & Access

Indiana Farmland Community of Practice

Eavy Barbieux

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Indiana Small Farms Conference 2024



**CONSERVATION
EASEMENT
BOUNDARY**

**LANDOWNER &
USDA / NRCS
PARTNERSHIP**



Welcome! Who's in the Room?

Hoosier Young Farmers Coalition. Photo by Genesis McKiernan-Allen

Thank you to our sponsor and leaders:



What is the Indiana Farmland Community of Practice?

We're convening 40+ leaders in Indiana's farming and land conservation community.

Together, we'll find a path forward for the future of Indiana's farmland.





NORTH CENTRAL REGIONAL CENTER FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT



State of Indiana Cooperative Invasives Management



THE REJOICING VINE



INDIANA UNIVERSITY BLOOMINGTON



UnderstandingAG



Hoosier Environmental COUNCIL



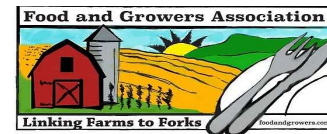
40 + Ag Professionals



Brown Family Farms of Indiana



Lyles Station, Indiana



City Cultivators

CONSERVATION LAW CENTER

What is the Indiana Farmland Community of Practice?

Our Goals:

Year 1: Learn. Understand the issue and learn how other states (and folks in IN) are pushing for farmland conservation and farmland access

Year 2: Act. Find collaborative ways we can make an impact on farmland access and conservation...Our method: Strategic Doing



A long, arched metal structure, likely a greenhouse or tunnel, is under construction in a field. The structure consists of a series of parallel metal arches supported by a central horizontal beam. Several people are visible: one in a white shirt on the left, one in a grey shirt walking a dog in the center, one in a brown shirt on the right, and one in a red plaid shirt on the far right. The ground is dirt with some young plants. The background shows trees and a blue sky with light clouds.

The Problem...and Potential Solutions

Christopher Farm, Modoc IN

Indiana Farmland is at Risk

**On recent trends,
from 2016 to 2040:**

Hoosiers will pave over,
fragment, or compromise

451,100 acres

of farmland.

That's the equivalent of losing

2,200 farms,

\$259 million

in farm output, and

4,400 jobs

based on county averages.¹







71% of the conversion will
occur on Indiana's Nationally
Significant land.²

Projected agricultural land conversion from 2016-2040 in the *Business as Usual* scenario.

Projected Conversion (2040)

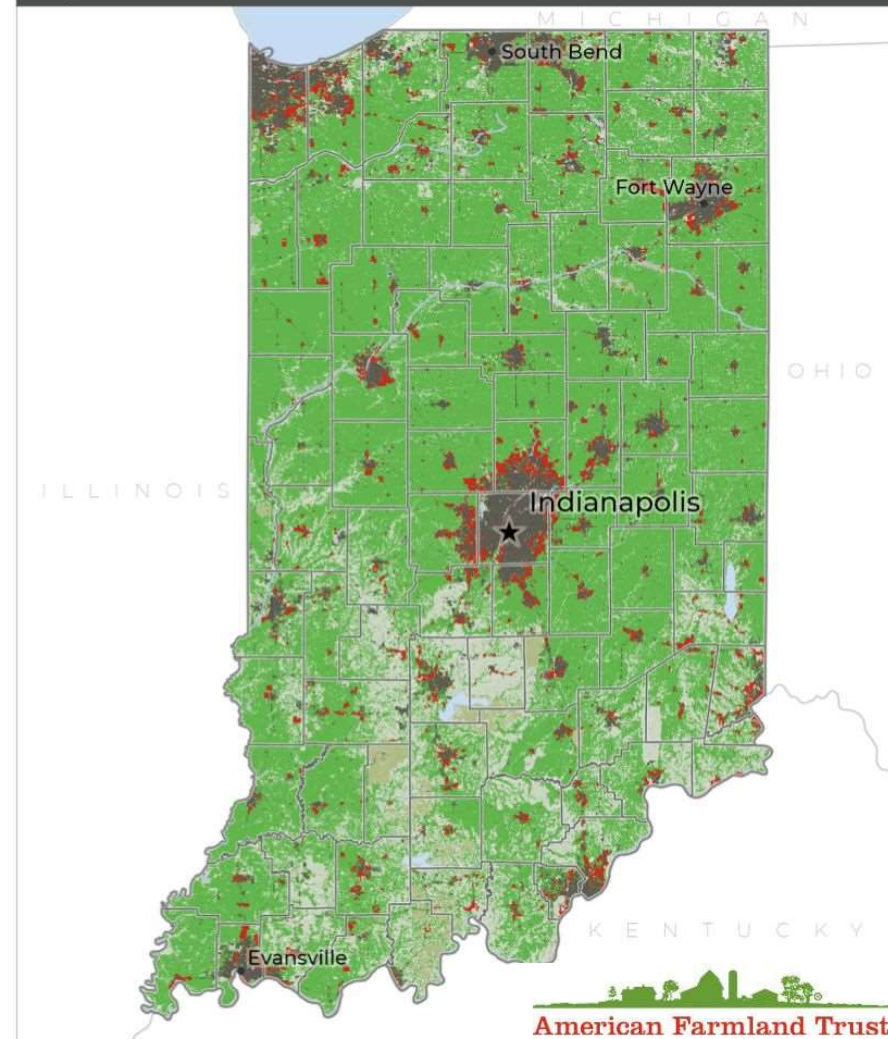
 Urban and highly developed (UHD) and low-density residential (LDR)

Land Cover (2016)

 Farmland*	 Other lands	 Urban areas
 Forestland	 Federal (no grazing)	 Water

*Farmland is composed of cropland, pastureland, and woodland associated with farms.

PROJECTED AGRICULTURAL LAND CONVERSION 2016-2040



Indiana Farmland is at Risk

Indiana's farmland will be converted to:

Urban and highly developed (UHD)

land use includes commercial, industrial, and moderate-to-high density residential areas.

Low-density residential (LDR)

land use includes scattered subdivisions and large-lot housing, which fragment the agricultural land base and limit production, marketing, and management options for the working farms and ranches that remain.

LDR PAVES THE WAY FOR FURTHER DEVELOPMENT

Agricultural land that was in LDR areas in 2016 is

19 TIMES MORE LIKELY

to be converted to UHD by 2040, compared to other agricultural land.

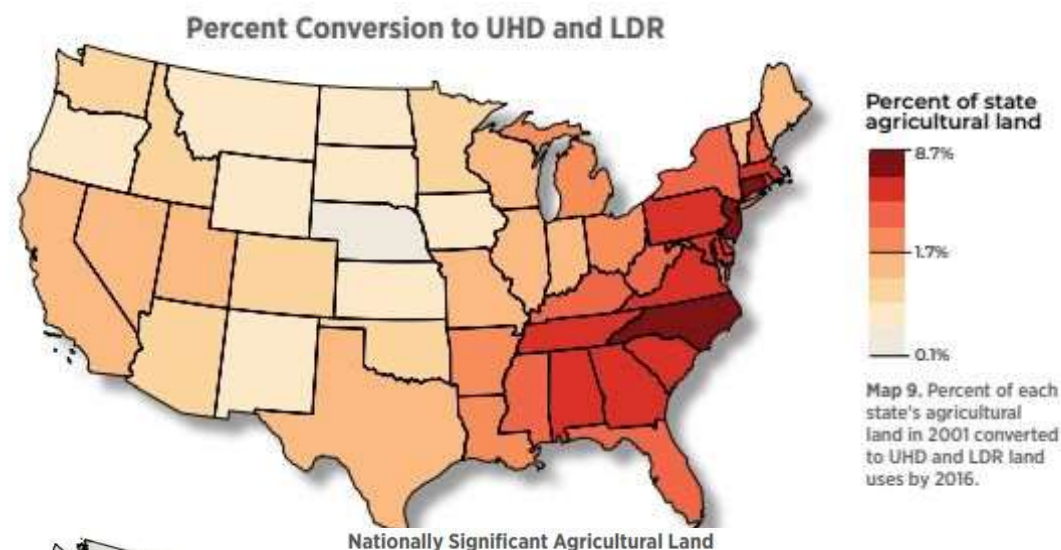
Indiana Farmland is at Risk

Farmland is threatened by both **low & high density development**

HIGH acreage of nationally significant ag land

LOW State Policy Response:

- Indiana is in the **bottom 25%** in State policy responses to Land Conservation
- Primary strategies: (1) Land use planning & (2) property tax relief



Land Access & Transfer Challenges



Farmers

Landowners

Other Challenges

- Economic challenges (High Cost, low ROI)
- Land availability
- Varied needs among farmers
- Access to market

- Mismatch between values & capacity
- Lack of family interest in inheritance
- Knowledge & confidence in land transfer options

- Foreign & absentee ownership
- Urban versus rural challenges
- Ag land conversion (development, solar, wind, etc)



Solutions

1. Market Solutions

2. Policy

3. Connections

Market Solutions: Conservation Easements

What?

An economic and legal tool that protects land as farmland forever.

Why?

Where development pressure is high, it can increase farmland because it keeps farmland value lower than development value.

*So how does it improve
farmland access?*

Credit: Open Space Trust

**Agricultural
CONSERVATION EASEMENT 101**

A conservation easement is a legal agreement between
A LAND TRUST + LANDOWNERS

It protects conservation values on the property such as wildlife habitat, ~~public access for recreation~~, or agricultural activity.
IT ALSO LIMITS OR RESTRICTS DEVELOPMENT.

CONSERVATION EASEMENTS...

- are uniquely written to protect the natural resources of a specific property.
- reduce the property's market value which may lead to tax benefits for the property owner.
- are permanent and stay with the property even if ownership changes.

The infographic features four circular icons: a bird, a crossed-out tree, a forest, and a tractor. The tractor icon is highlighted with a blue circle, while the tree icon is crossed out with a blue 'X'.

Market Solutions: Conservation Easements

How Much Is A Conservation Easement Worth?

\$500,000

fair market value of the
parcel without the
conservation easement/all
development rights intact

-

\$225,000

value of the parcel with
the easement/without
development rights

=

\$275,000

**Value of conservation
easement**

Market Solutions: Conservation Easements

Land Trusts are a key part of the solution in other states.



Market Solutions: Conservation Easements

Land Trusts are a key part of the solution in other states.

A few leading Indiana Land Trusts are already working to protect working farmland, including:

- Shirley Heinz Land Trust (NW Indiana)
- Wood-Land-Lakes Land Trust (NE Indiana)
- George Rogers Clark Land Trust (Southern IN)

There's big potential here because...

Credit: Indiana Land Protection Alliance





Natural Resources Conservation Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

 →

CONSERVATION
BASICS

GETTING
ASSISTANCE

PROGRAMS &
INITIATIVES

RESOURCES

NEWS &
EVENTS

CONTACT

A wide-angle photograph of a rural landscape. In the foreground, there is a lush green field. In the middle ground, a wooden fence runs across the frame. In the background, there are rolling hills and mountains under a bright blue sky filled with large, white, fluffy clouds.

Agricultural Conservation Easement Program


ACEP

Market Solutions: Conservation Easements

The Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP) protect ag viability and conservation values on farms by protecting working farmland.

ACEP has two components:

- Ag Land Easements (ALE)
- Wetland Reserve Easements (WRE)



The USDA will only protect land that has a local 50% match. That's where land trusts come in!

George Rogers Clark Land Trust + Bundle Sticks Farm

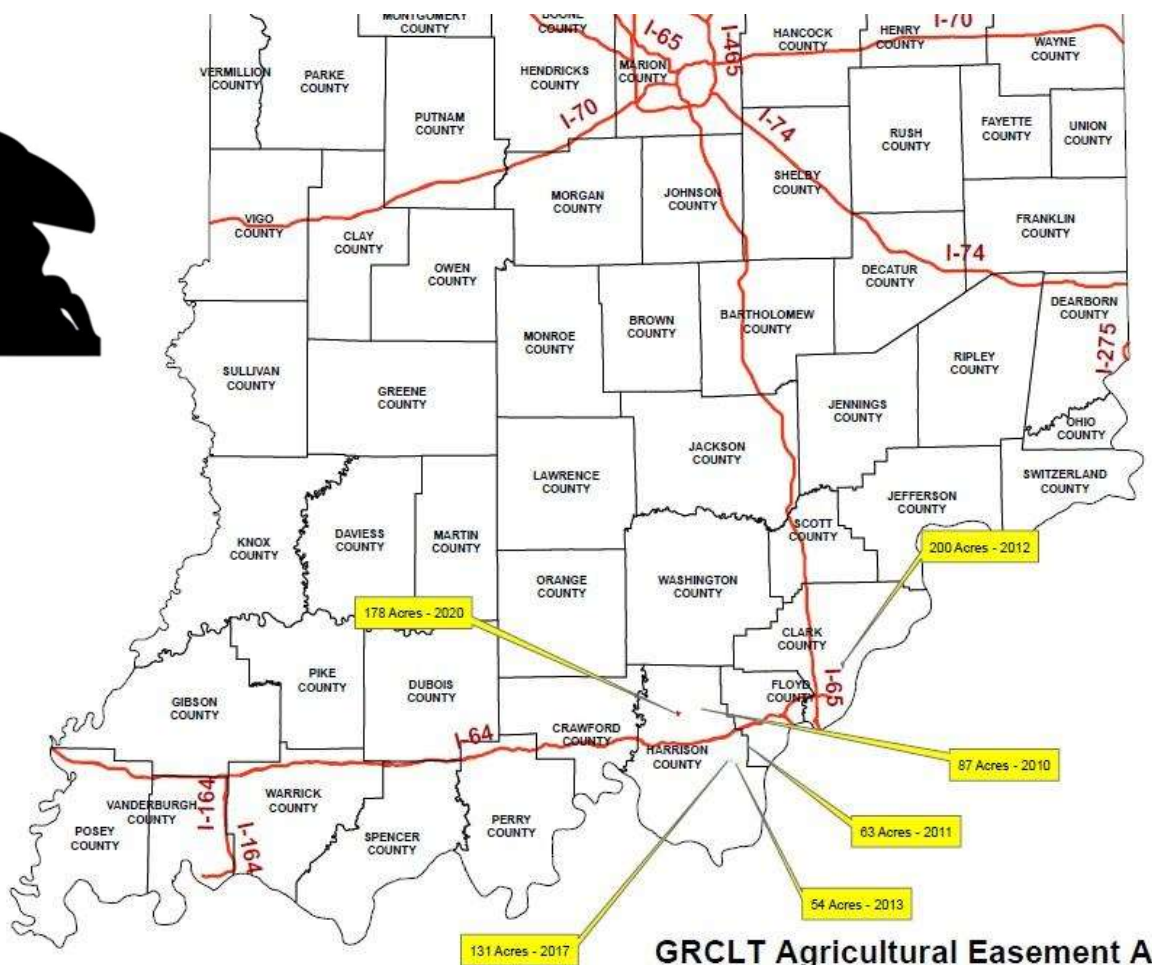


Credit: Bundle Sticks Farm

George Rogers Clark Land Trust + Bundle Sticks Farm



- 713 acres protected
- Six farms protected forever
- Four additional farms under consideration
- Completed first USDA-NRCS Ag Land easement in Indiana

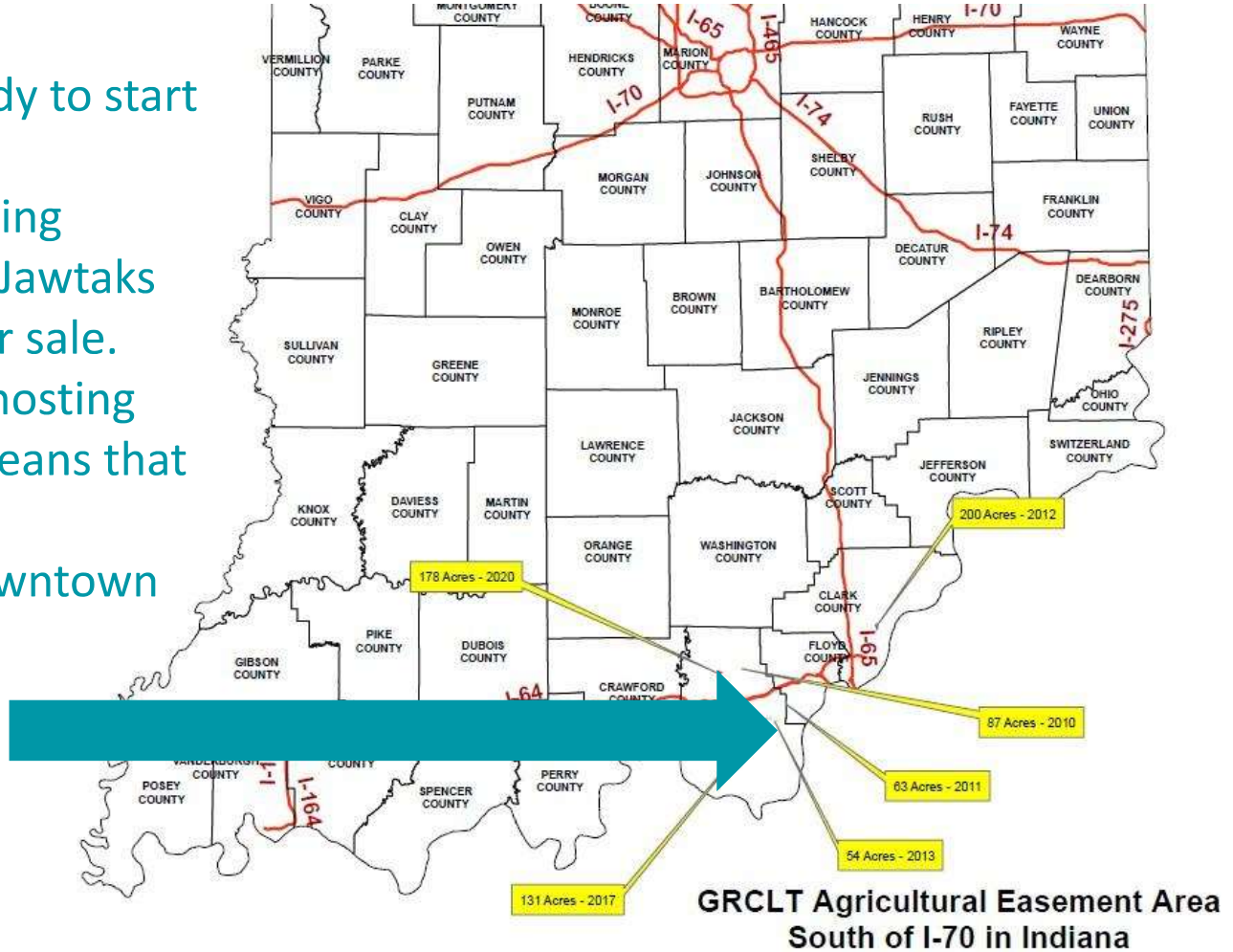


GRCLT Agricultural Easement Area South of I-70 in Indiana

George Rogers Clark Land Trust + Bundle Sticks Farm

- Ag educators who were ready to start their own farm.
- Land was protected as working farmland in 2013. After the Jawtaks passed, the land went up for sale.
- Nonprofit farm focused on hosting workshops and field trips means that proximity to people is KEY.
- Farm is 30 minutes from downtown Louisville

Bundle Sticks Farm



George Rogers Clark Land Trust + Bundle Sticks Farm



“If the land hadn’t been placed in an ag conservation easement we feel certain it would have sold to developers before we even had the chance to look at it. The ag easement also meant we could afford a larger farm, closer to the city that we ever expected.”

“Also, there’s another property in a similar easement just down the road from us, and others in the area, and we love knowing that at least these handful of properties around us will remain farmland and protect the agricultural community in the region into the future. We’d love to see more!”



Policy Solutions

1. Tax Solutions

**2. Zoning & Land-use
Planning**

Policy Solutions

Tax Incentives

State Level Land Access Policy Incentive Programs (LAPIs)

Beginning Farmer Tax Credit (State)

Landowners receive income tax credit in exchange for selling/leasing land to a BFR

Young/BFR Farm Purchase & protection incentives (State)

1) Low or no-interest loan to BFR to help purchase farm; 2) Land placed in CE

Source: Julia Valliant & Marie O'Neill - Sustainable Food Systems Science, Indiana University



~50% of Tax Credits/Incentives result in *new* landowner/farmer relationships

Current LAPI's are positively received by majority of participants

Outlier Farm, Bloomington IN

Policy Solutions: Tax Incentives

Minnesota Beginning Farmer Tax Credit Program

The **Minnesota Beginning Farmer Tax Credit** provides tax credits for the **rent** or **sale** of farm land or a variety of farm assets to beginning farmers.

\$1 million allocated

162 farms sold or rented to beginning farmers

	Tax Credit Amount	Maximum Tax Credit
Cash Rentals	10% of annual rental income	\$7,000
Share Crop Rentals	15% of annual rental income	\$10,000
*Sales	*8% or 12% of sale price	\$50,000
Beginning Farmer FBM tuition reimbursement	Equal to tuition paid (see details below)	\$1,500



Policy Solutions

Zoning, land use planning

What?

Use of municipal or county-level land-use policy to:

- Concentrate urban & residential development
- Incentivize & prioritize ag-use

Policy	How it Works
Agricultural Protection Zoning (APZ)	Designates priority agriculture lands and discourages other land uses. Limits development potential.
Cluster Zoning	Allows or requires higher density housing development.
Urban Growth Boundaries	Define areas intended for future growth, which helps guide infrastructure development decisions
Transfer of Development Rights (or credits)	Transfer development potential from one parcel of land to another (ie. from ag land to designated growth zones).
Mitigation Ordinances (Adapted from American Farmland Trust)	Developers are required to offset impacts of developing farmland via permanent protection of farmland elsewhere

Policy Solutions

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(Adapted from American Farmland Trust)

Policy Solutions- Zoning & land use planning

TABLE 3: GOAL 1: SUPPORT THE LANDSCAPE: POTENTIAL STRATEGIES, TOOLS AND POLICIES

Strategy	Tools and Policies	
1.a. Ensure the viability of the resource economy in the region	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Market Value-In-Use taxation (State-level policy in Indiana) • Tax credits for conservation (State level policy in Indiana) • Right to farm policies (e.g., Notice of Agricultural Activity for rural development) or other policies supporting resource-related industries. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Renewable energy development • Value-added farm and forest products processing • Ecosystem services markets
1.b. Cultivate economic development strategies that rely on traditional rural landscapes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purchase of development rights (TDR/PDR program not currently in Indiana) • Conservation easements • Policies supporting resource-related industries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fee simple acquisition (May not be available in Indiana) • Agritourism and ecotourism
1.c. Promote rural products in urban areas and support other urban-rural links	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct marketing to consumers • Government purchase of local products 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Buy local" campaigns
1.d. Link rural land preservation strategies to great neighborhoods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transfer of development rights (Not currently available in Indiana) • Priority funding areas • Conservation easements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agricultural and/or forestry zoning • Rural home clustering

Adapted from Megan McConville and Lynn Desautels (2013) Strategies for Building New Economic Opportunities - Stronger Economies Together Supplemental Module: Land Use and Economic Development in Rural Areas available online at: http://srdc.msstate.edu/set/sites/default/files/curriculum/phase-vi/land_use/part1_knowledge.pdf





Building Connections

1. Farm Link Programs

Building Connections

Statewide Farmlink Program

Indiana lacks an official platform connecting farm seekers and landowners

A centralized FarmLink Platform can include:

- Advising and legal advice
- Platform for connecting farmers and landowners
- Resources, relevant data, education
- Lending services

Welcome to Illinois FarmLink!



Building Connections

Statewide Farmlink Program

What We Do

California FarmLink creates equitable access to opportunity in support of healthy, local food systems. We help farmers, ranchers, and fishers to access affordable financing, learn how to create business resilience, and secure land for farming and ranching.

Lending

Loans for farmers, ranchers, and fishers.

[Learn More](#) →

Land Access

Services and one-on-one assistance to find land.

[Learn More](#) →

Education

Business courses and resources.

[Learn More](#) →



A close-up photograph of a field of flowers, primarily yellow and pink. The flowers are in various stages of bloom, with some showing dark brown centers. The background is a soft-focus green, suggesting foliage. A semi-transparent, light green rectangular box is overlaid in the center of the image, containing the text "What's Next?".

What's Next?

What's Next?

- **For the Community of Practice: Action**
- **Learning more** → Stay in touch AND Learn from our presenters via the PIFF Resource Hub
- **Other ideas for Y-O-U**
 - Connect with PIFF or your local Extension
 - Contact your local land trust
 - Get involved with zoning in your area



Questions?

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