

Chowan County Voluntary Ag District Program

~Protecting Farmers and Farmland for the Future~



What is a Voluntary Agricultural District (VAD)?

Agricultural land is a vital part of Chowan County's economy and tradition.

Agriculture is the county's number one industry. However, Chowan farmers are faced with increased pressure from rural housing development each year. As people leave cities and move to the country, many do so without understanding or appreciating what living near a farm involves.

Noise, dust, odor, timber cutting, pesticide spraying and early morning/late night field operations are common, but sometimes result in nuisance suits being filed by new residents against their farm neighbors.

The General Assembly of North Carolina has enabled counties to adopt VAD ordinances to encourage the preservation and protection of farmland. Chowan County enacted a VAD ordinance in September 2009.

Who Qualifies? To qualify, a farm must:

- >Be actively engaged in a commercial agricultural enterprise.
- >Manage highly erodible land, if it exists, in accordance with the NRCS erosion-control practices.
- >Agree to 10-year conservation agreements.

A Voluntary Program VAD is a voluntary program. No farm is required to participate. The term of the agreement is 10 years; however, a landowner may revoke this agreement at any time by notifying the Agricultural Advisory Board in writing. The agreement does allow the development of up to four lots on a parcel of land included in the district provided the development meets any applicable zoning regulations.

How will I Benefit from this program? As Chowan County computerizes its land records, you will be afforded record notice in the chain of title. This means anyone considering buying land within a 1-mile radius of your farm will be notified that a working farm is in the area.

The County will notify the public of VADs by posting maps in various county offices including the Register of Deeds and Planning Department offices.

New subdivisions and planned unit developments must note all Agricultural Districts within a 1-mile radius on preliminary and final plat plans.

Anyone applying for a building permit is required to sign a statement acknowledging they are aware of the VAD program and have reviewed current maps.

Landowners within the District will not be required to connect to water or sewer systems owned and/or operated by Chowan County, nor will they be assessed water and sewer charges until their property is connected to such service.

What is the Agricultural Advisory Board? Seven members, at least six that are actively engaged in farming or own farmland, make up the Agricultural Advisory Board. Members are appointed by the County Commissioners.

How to Apply Land included in a Voluntary Agricultural District in Chowan County must be engaged in a commercial agricultural enterprise. A landowner may apply for membership in the VAD program by completing a one page application available at the Cooperative Extension and Soil & Water Offices. The application will be submitted to the Ag Advisory Board for approval. Following acceptance into the VAD program, landowners will be asked to sign a conservation agreement. Participation in the VAD does not become final until your agreement is registered with the Cooperative Extension Service.

For more information please contact:

Scott Alons, SWCD (252) 482-4127 x 3 -or-
Tim Smith, Cooperative Extension Office
730 N. Granville Street~Edenton, NC 27932~(252) 482-6585

Pursuant to:
North Carolina General Statute
106-735 through 106-744
Article 61, Preservation of Farmland