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## ROCK COUNTY PURCHASE OF AGRICULTURAL CONSERVATION EASEMENTS (PACE) PROGRAM – *LAND EVALUATION AND SITE ASSESSMENT (LESA) SYSTEM* FACT SHEET

### GENERAL INFORMATION

The Rock County PACE Program Ad Hoc Committee (Committee) developed a Land Evaluation and Site Assessment (LESA) System to prioritize all agricultural parcels eligible to apply for inclusion in the Rock County PACE Program (Program).

The LESA System concept was first developed by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in the early 1980's as a tool local governments could utilize to aid in land use decision-making. A LESA System provides a comprehensive synthesis of vital land use information, ensuring objectivity and consistency in land use decision-making. Furthermore, the LESA System concept is adaptable, allowing system modification by communities to meet their specific land use goals and objectives.

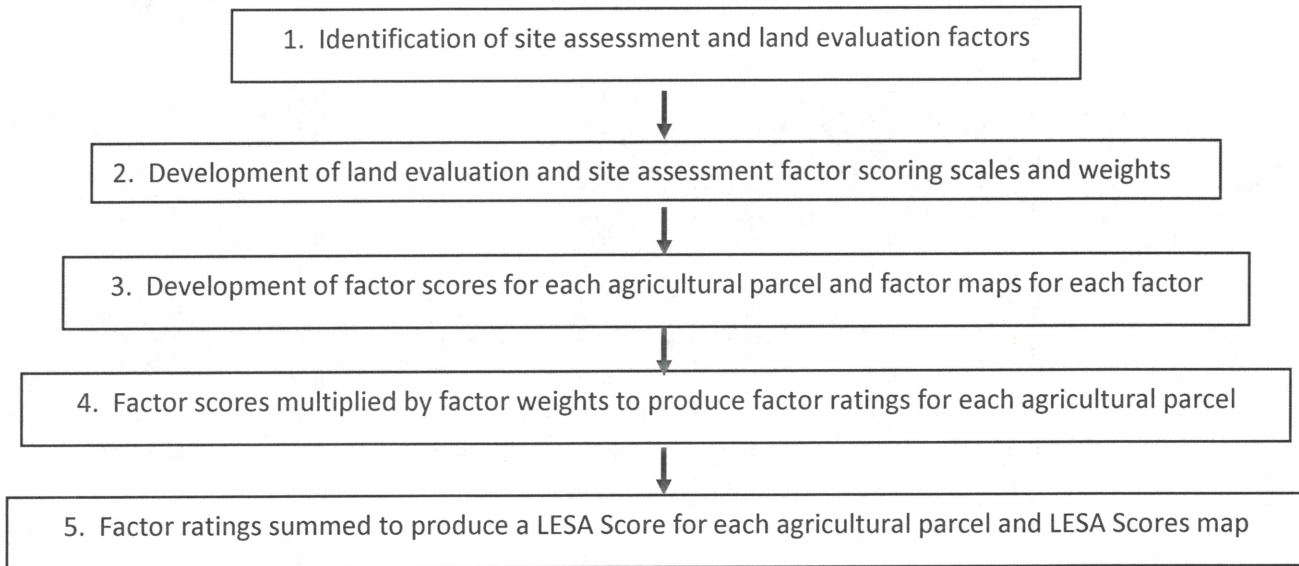
A LESA System develops a LESA Score (0-10) for all designated land parcels, evaluating suitability for various uses. A parcel's LESA Score is then utilized to guide land use decisions regarding the parcel. The higher a land parcel's LESA Score, the better suited it is for a specified use. A parcel's LESA Score consists of two components, land evaluation and site assessment, comprised of various factors within multiple groups. Land evaluation factors evaluate a parcel's soil characteristics, whereas site assessment factors evaluate its various other socio-economic and environmental characteristics. Factors contain both scoring scales, assessing the characteristics of the parcel relative to the factor, and weights, reflecting the relative importance of the factor in comparison to other factors. Factor scoring scales are developed on a scale of 0-10, with higher factor scores indicating lands more suitable for a specified use. Factor weights combine to equal 1, with higher weights indicating a factor more important in determining suitability for a specified use. A land parcel is given a factor score for each factor. Each factor score is then multiplied by the factor weights to produce a factor rating. Factor ratings are then summed to produce a LESA Score for the land parcel.

The Committee developed a LESA System, and LESA Scores, to prioritize agricultural parcels eligible to apply for inclusion in the Program. The land evaluation component of the Program's LESA System consists of one group, soil, and one factor, suitability. The site assessment component of the Program's LESA System consists of three groups, agriculture, development, and natural resources, with eight factors within these three groups.

Figure I identifies the process utilized to develop Program LESA Scores for agricultural parcels eligible to apply for inclusion in the Program.

**GENERAL INFORMATION**

**Figure I:  
Rock County PACE Program: LESA Score Development Process**



The Program’s LESA System developed a LESA Score only for those agricultural parcels eligible to apply for inclusion in the Program, in accordance with the Program Eligibility Criteria. After a LESA Score was developed for each agricultural parcel eligible to apply for inclusion in the Program, the LESA Scores were subjected to statistical analysis, with all LESA scores subsequently grouped into one of three Agricultural Suitability categories. Figure II displays these Agricultural Suitability categories and corresponding LESA Score, along with the percent of total Program eligible parcels and acres within each category.

**Figure II:  
Rock County PACE Program: Agricultural Suitability Category and LESA Score**

Agricultural Suitability Category	LESA Score	Percent of Total Program Eligible Parcels	Percent of Total Program Eligible Acres
Tier I Farmland: Most Suitable	7.3 – 9.0	20%	27%
Tier II Farmland: Suitable	6.1 – 7.2	51%	50%
Tier III Farmland: Least Suitable	3.8 – 6.0	29%	23%

**FURTHER INFORMATION**

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