



# AGENDA MEMORANDUM

**DATE:** June 25, 2026  
**TO:** Forest Preserve District Planning and Utilization Committee  
**FROM:** Patrick Chess, Director of Natural Resources  
Benjamin Haberthur, Executive Director  
**SUBJECT:** Resolution Approving the Agricultural Land Use Policy for the Forest Preserve District of Kane County

**PURPOSE:**

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide the Committee with information to consider amending the District’s Agricultural Land Use Policy.

**BACKGROUND:**

The District currently protects over 24,000 acres of land in Kane County, of which, approximately 5,230 acres is being farmed (primarily row crops and hay) as an interim land management practice until these fields can be ecologically restored. The majority of the District’s farmed acres are under annual Farm License Agreements. Over 35 local farmers have annual license agreements with the District. The District has the responsibility of implementing best management practices and sound stewardship on all its holdings, including farmland. Accordingly, the District implemented an Agricultural Land Use policy in April of 2024 to establish governing rules for the stewardship and licensing of the District’s agricultural lands.

Along with clerical and grammatical updates, three substantive modifications to the current policy are being recommended as follows:

- 1) Modification in rental rate calculation
- 2) Neonicotinoid soybean seed treatment prohibition
- 3) Multi-year license provision

*Rental Rate Calculation Modification*

Current rental rates are based on average yields of non-irrigated corn crops based on the soils present within the field. Changes are proposed to better align with the District’s soil assessment and to set rates for fields not yet a part of the closed bid procurement process to a market rate. New rates would be based on the soil productivity index for Illinois to classify land as Class, A, B, C, or “not prime” soils. The average soil productivity index is then modified by the Illinois Agricultural District Cash Rent Adjustment Factor as produced by the USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service to reach a cash rent rate for each class as follows:

Land Class	SPI	Rent
Excellent (Class A)	133-147 (Ave 140)	\$312.00
Good (Class B)	117-132 (Ave 125)	\$264.00
Average (Class C)	100-116 (Ave 108)	\$210.00
Fair (Not Prime)	<100	\$190.00

*Neonicotinoid Seed Treatment Ban for Soybeans*

Neonicotinoid pesticides, aka “Neonics,” are a class of broad-spectrum insecticides that farmers can purchase as a seed-coating on their soybean seed that distributes throughout the plant as it grows.

This method of delivery distributes neonics throughout the soil and adjacent waterways and has deleterious impacts to our local pollinators and wildlife. Other methods of insecticide control that are more environmentally sensitive are both readily available and effective.

For these reasons, staff are recommending an additional amendment that would prohibit the use of neonicotinoid treated soybean seeds on District property.

#### *Multi-year Licenses*

Currently, all District agricultural licenses, excepting organic operations, are operated under approximately annual licenses. The proposed amendment would allow for the District to utilize multi-year licenses in place of annual licenses. Multi-year licenses offer more economic security to District farmers as well as encourage more sustainable agricultural practices while reducing administrative burden on staff.

#### **FINANCIAL IMPACT:**

The updated cash rent adjustment represents a slight increase from current rates. If applied across all District parcels would result in an approximate 7% increase, or approximately \$87,600 in additional annual revenue.

#### **RECOMMENDATION:**

Staff recommends the Committee approve the amendments to the District's Agricultural Land Use Policy as detailed.

#### **ATTACHMENTS:**

*Agriculture Land Use Policy, Attachment A*  
*Farm License Agreement Sample, Exhibit A*