



NEWS

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SADC Seeks Quality Farms for Expedited Preservation Programs

The State Agriculture Development Committee (SADC) is soliciting applications for the preservation of high-priority farms under the state's acquisition programs, Agriculture Secretary Charles M. Kuperus announced today. Under these programs, the state purchases development rights or farmland directly from landowners.

"The SADC's state acquisition programs focus on preserving the best farms in each county," said Secretary Kuperus, who chairs the SADC. "One of the benefits of these programs is a streamlined preservation process that can be completed in a short timeframe. We welcome and encourage inquiries from any farm owners who may be interested in preservation – either by selling their development rights or selling farmland outright under these expedited programs."

The SADC's Direct Easement Purchase Program enables landowners to capitalize on the development potential of their land by selling their development rights. They retain ownership of the land but agree to deed restrictions that permanently protect the land from non-agricultural development. The SADC's Fee Simple Program buys farmland outright from willing landowners. Those farms then are resold at public auction with deed restrictions permanently preserving them for agricultural use.

Both programs target the preservation of priority farms in each county. Priority farms are those that meet or exceed the county average in size and quality score. Quality score is determined based on a number of factors, including soil suitability, proximity to other preserved farms, and local support for farmland preservation and agriculture.

Minimum acreage requirements for qualifying as a priority farm in each county are: 50 in Atlantic; 10 in Bergen; 92 in Burlington; 35 in Camden; 38 in Cape May; 86 in Cumberland; 7 in Essex; 54 in Gloucester; 54 in Hunterdon; 61 in Mercer; 59 in Middlesex; 39 in Monmouth; 31 in Morris; 42 in Ocean; 16 in Passaic; 96 in Salem; 61 in Somerset; 54 in Sussex; 7 in Union, and 72 in Warren.

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State Acquisition Programs/Add One

The preservation process for the Direct Easement Purchase and Fee Simple programs has been streamlined so that an applicant farm meeting the priority criteria is automatically eligible for preservation, subject to the SADC reaching an agreement with the landowner on value, and funding availability. An important recent change to the program will allow the SADC to hire two independent appraisers immediately after a landowner application is accepted, and base its offer price on their findings. In addition to funding for the preservation of farms statewide, the SADC also has supplemental funding specifically dedicated for the preservation of farms within the Highlands region.

Both programs still will consider applications for farms that do not meet the priority criteria, but those farms will be considered for approval on a case-by-case basis. Therefore, landowners whose farms fall just under the minimum size requirements still are encouraged to apply.

For an application or further information, contact the SADC at (609) 984-2504 or visit its website at www.state.nj.us/agriculture/sadc/sadc.htm.

The SADC administers New Jersey's Farmland Preservation Program. In addition to the Direct Easement Purchase and Fee Simple programs, the SADC also offers three other programs that provide grants to counties, municipalities and nonprofits to help preserve farmland. To date, more than 1,300 farms covering more than 144,000 acres have been preserved statewide.

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