

7/28/05 SADC Meeting Highlights

Executive Director's Report

The State Agriculture Development Committee (SADC) met its \$80 million farmland preservation expenditure goal for fiscal year 2005, an achievement critical to ensuring the continued success of the Farmland Preservation Program. Susan Craft commended county agriculture development board staffs for their efforts, as well as SADC staff, particularly Stephanie Miller, Bryan Lofberg and Antoine Nzima, as well as Bill Schnurr from the Attorney General's office.

Susan Craft will meet with county agriculture development board administrators in August to discuss preliminary recommendations of the process review committee. The process review committee is charged with developing recommendations to the SADC on ways to streamline and improve farmland preservation processes. After the county agriculture development board administrator meeting, the process review committee is expected to meet again in late August to finalize recommendations for presentation to the SADC at its September meeting.

The SADC will distribute the first issue of Farmland Preservation News in August. The newsletter, which will be distributed to landowners in the Farmland Preservation Program, county agriculture development boards and other preservation partners, is intended to provide landowners and other stakeholders with regular updates on the latest developments in the program and other issues that affect them.

Farmland Preservation Maps

The SADC has developed farmland preservation maps to assist its own staff and funding partners in acquisitions and planning. They are available on the SADC website at www.nj.gov/agriculture/sadc/sadc.htm or in hard copy by request.

Agricultural Tourism Agricultural Management Practice

The SADC has directed that a revised draft agricultural management practice (AMP) for agritourism be distributed to county agriculture development boards and other interested parties as a pre-proposal to solicit comments. The AMP would provide Right to Farm Act protections to eligible commercial farms for agritourism activities conducted in accordance with the AMP. The AMP covers agriculture-related educational and farm-based recreational activities that are related to marketing the agricultural or horticultural output of the commercial farm.

The draft contains standards regarding specific aspects of agritourism activities, including lighting, parking areas, hours of operation, signs, sanitary facilities, hand-washing facilities, and visitor safety. It also includes standards for particular agritourism activities, including visitor contact with livestock and other animals, hayride operations, choose-and-cut Christmas tree operations, and corn mazes. Comments on the AMP are due by early September.

Tax Deductions for Charitable Donations

SADC staff secured an interpretation from the Department of Treasury that landowners who sell development easements at below fair-market value are entitled to claim a charitable contribution for the bargain sale. In another matter, Secretary Kuperus sent a letter to New Jersey's Congressional delegation urging that, as lawmakers consider proposed changes to the tax system to eliminate abuse, no action be taken that would discourage landowners from making charitable contributions.