

9/22/05 SADC Meeting Highlights

Process Review Committee Recommendations

The State Agriculture Development Committee directed that findings of the Process Review Committee be distributed to counties for comment. The Process Review Committee was charged with examining all of the SADC's farmland preservation programs to identify ways to streamline and simplify regulatory and administrative procedures to make them more efficient and effective. The committee issued a series of recommendations, including offering a county-wide planning incentive grant program as an alternative to the traditional county grants program. This would eliminate administrative duplication at the state and county levels and provide financial incentives to counties that expend funding as expeditiously as possible. Under the SADC's direct easement purchase and fee simple programs, recommendations call for the SADC to strategically target and solicit farmland preservation applications and conduct appraisals prior to entering into contracts with landowners to ensure a fair negotiation process. The recommendations are available on the SADC's website at www.state.nj.us/agriculture/sadc/rulesnotice.htm.

Impact on Agricultural Development Area, Montville Township Eminent Domain Action

The SADC reviewed planned action by Montville Township, Morris County, to exercise the power of eminent domain to acquire ownership of an existing monitoring well and an access easement on the Lotta Lettuce farm. The SADC determined the action would have unreasonably adverse effects on state agricultural preservation and development policies. Pursuant to the Agriculture Retention and Development Act, the SADC has scheduled a public hearing on the matter for 7 p.m. Thursday, November 3, at the Montville Municipal Building.

Equine Rules

The SADC reviewed draft new rules that would expand the list of protected agricultural activities under the Right to Farm Act to include equine-related service activities and set forth agricultural management practices for commercial equine activities. The SADC directed that the draft rules be distributed to counties and other interested parties as a pre-proposal to solicit comments prior to the SADC considering a formal rule proposal. The draft rules include a sliding scale formula that limits the extent to which equine-related structures or other improvements may occupy available production acreage for a farm to be eligible for protection. The formula is intended to ensure that equine service activities do not override production activities or potential. Comments on the pre-proposal are due to the SADC by November 15th. The pre-proposal is available on the SADC's website at www.state.nj.us/agriculture/sadc/rulesnotice.htm.

Application Deadlines

The SADC established an application deadline of February 6th for the 2007 rounds of both the nonprofit and municipal planning incentive grant programs. In view of the process review committee's recommendations, which would make a county-wide planning incentive grant program available, the 2007 round of the planning incentive grant program is open only to municipalities.