

4/27/06 SADC Meeting Highlights

Executive Director's Report

As the end of the fiscal year approaches, counties are urged to remain focused on closings. SADC staff will continue to coordinate closely with counties to move closings forward as expeditiously as possible.

Susan Craft had a preliminary meeting with Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) staff to discuss the equine agricultural management practice. Another meeting is scheduled to ensure any DEP concerns are addressed.

Chair's Report

The SADC is working to identify an alternative source of funding for the soil and water conservation cost-share program. Funding for this program was not included in the proposed FY07 budget due to the state's fiscal constraints. Approvals of soil and water projects in March depleted current available funding. While landowners can continue to enroll in the 8-Year Program, county agriculture development boards should make sure applicants for that program are aware of the current funding situation.

Two projects were highlighted that exemplify innovative ways to sustain and strengthen New Jersey's agricultural industry. Five clambers in Atlantic County are working to package clams in a consumer pack labeled "Jersey Seafood," while a group of 14 dairy farmers from Sussex County is working to produce Jersey Fresh-branded milk.

Annual Planning Incentive Grant (PIG) Review/2007A Applications

The SADC conducted its annual review of planning incentive grant projects, which encompass 89 project areas in 11 counties and 63 municipalities. Due to limited funding, the SADC reallocated approximately \$10 million in previously allocated but unexpended funds to other project areas where the funding is needed earlier. Under the 2007A round, new applications were received for seven project areas in six municipalities targeting the preservation of 186 farms and nearly 10,000 acres.

Farmland Preservation Funding

The SADC will make an FY07 funding request of \$121.7 million to the Garden State Preservation Trust at its May 16th meeting. The request includes \$45.6 million for county easement purchases; \$30 million for state acquisitions; \$3.5 million for county Pinelands easement purchases; \$22.6 million for planning incentive grants; \$5 million for nonprofit grants, and \$15 million for supplemental Highlands funding to be distributed among the various programs.

Process Review Committee Timeline

SADC staff developed a projected timeline for implementation of recommendations of the Process Review Committee to streamline the Farmland Preservation Program. December 2006 is the earliest possible date for a rule adoption. To allow adequate time for counties to prepare comprehensive farmland preservation plans once the rules have been adopted, the FY2008 county round will be under the traditional program and the first countywide planning incentive grant round will be offered in FY09.

Commercial Nonagricultural Uses/Personal Wireless Facilities

The SADC discussed draft guidelines that would provide for commercial nonagricultural activities and cell phone towers on preserved farmland under certain circumstances. The draft sets forth the eligibility, information required, evaluation criteria, review process and conditions to obtain a special permit to erect a cell tower or conduct a commercial nonagricultural use on a preserved farm. The Committee requested clarification on language describing high-traffic operations and permissible wastewater services and utilities to support nonagricultural uses. The guidelines will be amended to incorporate the Committee's comments and forwarded to the Attorney General's office and Governor's Counsel for review before returning to the SADC for formal rule introduction as early as May 25.

Burlington County

A request by Carl and Michelle Blasig to construction agricultural labor housing on their Chesterfield Township farm was approved.

Hunterdon County

The SADC granted final approval for preservation to the Masfield farm in Lebanon Township and also approved amending the application to increase the size of the nonseverable exception area.

The SADC granted amended final approval to the Pagano Farm in Readington Township to provide the entire cost-share grant at closing rather than through an installment plan.

The SADC granted final approvals for cost-share grants to Hunterdon County to acquire development easements on the following farms under the planning incentive grant program: Rynearson North and South Farms in East Amwell Township (with approval of the North parcel conditioned on relocation of the 2-acre nonseverable exception); Shepherd Farm and Jenness Farm, Holland Township, and Cuchiaro Farm, Readington Township.

Final approval was granted for acquisition of the development rights on the Colonial Sportsman Club in East Amwell under the direct easement purchase program.

The SADC approved Alexandria Township's request to amend its 2003A county easement purchase application and amended its certified fair market value to reflect the change.

Monmouth County

A request by John and Cathy Blackburn and Rachel Robbins to construct agricultural labor housing on their Colts Neck Township farm was approved.

The SADC granted final approval for a cost-share grant to Monmouth County to acquire a development easement on the Infante Farm under the planning incentive grant program.

Salem County

Preliminary approval was granted to the New Jersey Conservation Foundation-Caltabiano easement acquisition application within the Oldman's Creek Project Area under the nonprofit grants program.

Somerset County

The SADC granted amended final approvals to the K. Kiss and Julius Kiss Farms in Franklin Township with new state cost share amounts based on the township's negotiated prices for the farms.

The SADC supported a change in the application for the Riya farm in Franklin Township to allow for a three-acre subdivision and a merger of the remaining two parcels under the planning incentive grant program.

Sussex County

The SADC granted certification of the following agricultural development areas: William Ashley in Sparta Township and N.J. Conference of 7th Day Adventists in Green Township.

Warren County

The SADC approved a \$3 million fee simple grant to Washington Township for the purchase of the AJR Investment Property.