

November 2, 2006 SADC Meeting Highlights

Chair's Report

Governor Corzine announced at an October 16th event at Robson Farm Market in North Hanover Township, Burlington County, that New Jersey has reached the 150,000-acre milestone for preserved farmland. He also announced establishment of the Neil Robson Farmers Fighting Hunger Award, which will be awarded annually to recognize farmers who make outstanding contributions in the fight against hunger. Robson, who passed away suddenly in September, was a major supporter of the Farmers Against Hunger Program.

Executive Director's Report

Proposed rules resulting from the process committee review of the Farmland Preservation Program will be published in the December 4th issue of the New Jersey Register.

Impact on Agricultural Development Area/Preserved Farms: Turnpike Widening

The New Jersey Turnpike Authority has submitted a notice of intent to the SADC and the Burlington, Mercer and Middlesex County Agriculture Development Boards regarding the proposed Turnpike expansion. It is the SADC's understanding that there has not been a final determination as to which farms will be impacted by the Turnpike expansion and that such a determination will not occur until the Department of Environmental Protection reviews the Authority's environmental impact statement. The Committee is withholding formal consideration of the notice of intent until the Authority knows which farms will be impacted. In the meantime, SADC staff will set up a meeting with the Turnpike Authority and the three county agriculture development boards to discuss the project and its potential impact on agricultural development areas and preserved farmland.

Policy: Local Government Acquisition of Lands in Fee Simple Title, Resale and SADC Cost-Share Grant for Development Easement

In some instances, a county or municipality acquiring land in fee simple could be in the position of receiving a "windfall" where the total of proceeds realized from resale of the preserved farm and the SADC's cost-sharing grant exceeds the original purchase price. The SADC has proposed rules to address these situations. In the meantime, until those rules are adopted, the SADC will allow pending transactions to proceed as outlined in prior resolutions of final approval.

Discussion: Auctioneer Services

The Committee authorized staff to explore the possibility of contracting for auctioneer services to auction farms purchased under the fee simple program.

Draft Guidelines for Developing County Comprehensive Farmland Preservation Plans

The SADC reviewed draft guidelines for the development of County Comprehensive Farmland Preservation Plans. The guidelines will be distributed to counties for input. The SADC is expected to adopt the final guidelines as a policy at its December meeting, as well as guidelines for releasing grant funds to counties to assist in the preparation of the plans.

Atlantic County

The SADC approved enrollment in eight-year programs for Louis Condo and two Columbia Fruit Farm applications, all in Hammonton. The landowners have been notified that no soil and water conservation funding currently is available.

The SADC granted preliminary approval to the Consala farm in Buena Borough under the direct easement purchase program and authorized staff to proceed with appraisals and negotiations.

Bergen County

The SADC authorized staff to proceed on an application for the Schwartz farm in Franklin Lakes Borough under the direct easement purchase program. The farm had applied to the 2007 county easement purchase program, but there was insufficient funding available in that round to preserve it.

Burlington County

The SADC amended its previously approved resale conditions for the Russell farm in North Hanover, to include a 6 percent impervious coverage limitation in accordance with requirements for federal cost-sharing and the Committee's prior approval for this farm.

The Committee tabled for further legal analysis Burlington County's application for the sale of a development easement on the Burlington County/Rancocas Valley Regional High School farm through the 2007A county round. The County acquired the property in fee simple in May 2002. SADC regulations require that such applications for the sale of development easements be submitted within three consecutive application rounds. The 2007A round is the fourth consecutive round since the county's acquisition.

Camden County

The SADC granted amendments to the Winslow Township, Camden County, project area to add the Matro and Michael farms to the list of targeted farms.

Cumberland County

The SADC granted preliminary approval to the Morrissey farm in Fairfield Township under the direct easement purchase program and authorized staff to proceed with appraisals and negotiations.

Hunterdon County

The SADC granted final approvals to the DeCroce farm in Kingwood Township and the Schenker farm in Tewksbury under the direct easement purchase program.

The SADC granted an amendment to the Raritan Township, Hunterdon County, planning incentive grant project area to add the Sferra farm to the list of targeted farms.

The SADC authorized requesting the Natural Resources Conservation Service to add the Sekel farm to the list of farms to receive funding through the Federal Farm and Ranchlands Protection Program.

The Committee granted a request to construct a single-family residence on the Blew farm in Franklin Township.

The Committee reviewed a request from Robert and Helen Ribbans, contract purchasers of the former Kanach farm, to exercise an RDSO on the farm. The Committee suggested exploring a township road for the driveway access.

Monmouth County

The SADC authorized staff to move ahead on the planning incentive grant application for the Okerson farm in Howell Township, in which the landowner has requested two severable exceptions.

Salem County

The Committee approved a request to replace the single-family residence on the Hryckowian/Ulmer farm in Pilesgrove Township.

Sussex County

The SADC approved the designation of voluntary agricultural development areas for the Nothstine farm in Stillwater Township and the DeGroat/Billowitz farm in Wantage Township.

Warren County

The SADC accepted the highest bid of \$820,000 offered at an October 18th auction for the AJR farm in Washington Township.

The Committee approved discussions with the Department of Environmental Protection to determine potential Green Acres interest in a portion of the Jayne farm along Pohatcong Creek. The SADC is currently negotiating with the Jayne family to acquire the 128-acre farm in Greenwich Township, Alpha Borough and Pohatcong Township.