

STATE AGRICULTURE DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
Regular Meeting

January 15, 2026

Secretary Wengryn called the meeting to order at 9:08 a.m.

Mr. Roohr read the notice stating that the meeting was being held in compliance with the Open Public Meetings Act, N.J.S.A. 10:4-6, et seq.

Roll call indicated the following:

Members Present

Secretary Wengryn, Chairman
Martin Bullock
Scott Ellis
Jess Niederer
Richard Norz
Charles Rosen
Gina Fischetti (arrived at 9:15a.m.)
Julie Krause

Members Absent

Tiffany Bohlin
Brian Schilling
Lauren Procida

Charles Roohr, SADC Executive Director
Jay Stypinski, Esq., Deputy Attorney General

Minutes

Approval of SADC Open and Closed Session Minutes of December 4, 2025.

It was moved by Mr. Norz and seconded by Ms. Niederer to approve the SADC Open and Closed Session Minutes of December 4, 2025. Mr. Rosen and Ms. Fischetti were absent for the vote. The motion was approved.

Report of the Chairman

Secretary Wengryn announced that the annual Agricultural Convention will be held next week.

Secretary Wengryn reported that two critical bills were passed recently, the Invasive Species Bill and an update to the Farmland Assessment and Woodland Management Act. There was also a bill approved that creates a marketing label for Jersey Fresh aquaculture and allocates a small appropriation to help market and support aquaculture.

Report of the Executive Director

Mr. Roohr reported that Gary Mount, a very prominent member of the agriculture community and a former SADC member, passed away recently. Mr. Roohr stated that there will be a service for Mr. Mount in April and information will be shared for those who need it.

Mr. Roohr announced Mr. Brian Wilson has officially joined the SADC staff as deputy executive director, Ms. Mackenzie Moonan, Esq., has been hired to fill an attorney vacancy and Ms. Jessica Brandeisky recently had her baby and is out on maternity leave.

Mr. Roohr announced that the new legislation pertaining to woodland management will be administered by the SADC. This is an entirely new program that will support preservation of primarily wooded properties.

The second tax and succession planning workshop was held in Salem County where Keith Dickinson from Farm Credit made a presentation. Staff also presented to American Farmland Trust on the Statewide Formula Value. The last outreach event of 2025 will take place this evening at the Warren CADB. Mr. Roohr stated the Schmied Farm auction has been rescheduled for March 5th at the Holland Township Municipal building.

Public Comment

Mr. Kevin Kavanaugh commented on Naturally Nurturing Farm. He expressed several potential public safety risks related to the material on the farm, such as debris sliding off the slope and mulch combustion fires.

Ms. Debbie Norz, Somerset CADB, thanked those who took time out to visit Mr. Patel's farm and that she is available for questions.

Ms. Patricia Springwell stated she advocates for all farmland to be protected in order to provide locally grown food to everyone. She requests that the regulations

for the new Woodland Bill are made with keeping the integrity of the land in mind. She asked the committee to start the year by doing the right thing for the program and the land.

Old Business

Note: Mr. Norz recused himself from this matter.

A. Stewardship – Review of Activities

1. Naturally Nurturing Farm, LLC, SADC ID#18-0097-EP, Block 205.11, Lot 48.05, Hillsborough Township, Somerset County, 46.84 easement acres.

Mr. Roohr provided the committee with the history of this farm and the pilot program approval received in 2020.

Mr. Willmott stated staff visited Naturally Nurturing Farm twice since the December meeting and reviewed pictures of the current state of the farm. He noted the biochar component of the pilot program has not been started. Additionally, Mr. Willmott explained that the hügelkultur practices are located outside of the approved areas as detailed in the pilot program approval and go beyond the scope of the pilot program.

At the July meeting, the committee determined no new wood material could be brought to the farm until the landowner provided an updated conservation plan. Mr. Willmott stated the landowner has been working with the Morris County Soil district and NRCS to update the plan. The committee approved 2,000 cubic yards of woodchips on two acres for the remainder of the growing season, but staff observed that Mr. Patel exceeded those limitations. Mr. Willmott also stated staff observed evidence of burying logs, mostly within the exception area.

After the July SADC meeting, staff hired a soil consultant, Dr. Richard Shaw, to review the natural soil profiles on the farm in comparison to the hügelkultur and mulched areas. Mr. Clapp reviewed the report's findings with the committee, which recommended pausing the addition of more woodchips, obtaining a conservation plan that includes the incorporation of the increased organic matter into the lower soil profiles, and allowing plants to root into the native soil. It was also noted that the removal of the entire subsoil layer and subsidence were concerns where the logs were buried.

Mr. Willmott stated that Mr. Patel had explained that the sawmill and log stockpile would be moved to the exception area which would obviate the need to submit a sawmill plan.

The committee discussed the matter and determined that the burying of logs is a violation of the DOE, limited the spreading of mulch to two to seven inches, and prohibited further wood material from being brought on to the farm until a conservation plan is reviewed by staff. It was also determined that the pilot program has not been utilized properly and that the activities occurring outside the pilot program area are problematic.

After extensive discussion, the committee agreed the SADC is not limiting the CADB's enforcement ability outside of the specific pilot program area.

Ms. Katelyn Katzer, Somerset CADB, provided a brief summary of the CADB's position and concerns and asked the SADC to provide a letter stating the activities occurring outside of the pilot program area are not part of the pilot program and inconsistent with the DOE.

Mr. Rosen recommended allowing the CADB to pursue its violation actions while SADC updates the pilot program with clearly defined parameters. Mr. Roohr stated that staff will work with the county and Mr. Patel to come up with those parameters.

Mr. Patel stated he is a farmer who seeks to improve his land with these ancient practices and looks forward to working with individuals to support his endeavors.

It was moved by Ms. Niederer and seconded by Mr. Rosen that the SADC provide written confirmation to the Somerset CADB acknowledging the board's enforcement rights outside of the pilot program area or to any on-farm activities in violation of the DOE that do not coincide with the parameters set forth in the pilot program. The motion was unanimously approved.

Mr. Rosen stated that he supports Mr. Patel's desire to pursue these important practices and recommended that SADC extend and redefine the pilot program in a way that allows Mr. Patel to continue the work that he's been pursuing without blocking the CADB's current action on the violations.

Secretary Wengryn suggested that the committee make a motion to suspend the pilot program until it is re-organized and new parameters are created.

Ms. Niederer requested a timeline for the suspension and asked for the county to be consulted when developing the new parameters. Mr. Clapp stated experts would need to be consulted and surveys conducted. Secretary Wengryn stated the motion should include a 6-month timeline.

It was moved by Mr. Rosen and seconded by Ms. Niederer to temporarily suspend the pilot program for six months while amended criteria are being developed.

B. Pinelands Formula Base Value Notice of Adoption

Note: Mr. Rosen was absent during this presentation.

Ms. Reynolds presented a notice of rule adoption updating the Pinelands Formula Base Values. The Pinelands formula section in the Garden State Preservation Trust Act was amended with the adoption of the Statewide Formula Valuation to account for inflation. Ms. Reynolds provided a summary of the changes and stated the proposal was published in the NJ Register and no public comments were received. Ms. Reynolds stated staff is seeking approval of the notice of adoption.

It was moved by Mr. Bullock and seconded by Mr. Ellis to adopt the updates to the Pinelands Formula Base Values. The motion was unanimously approved.

New Business

A. and B. Stewardship – FY 2025 Annual Monitoring Report and Guidance Documents

Mr. Jasen Berkowitz reviewed the FY2025 Monitoring Report with the committee. He stated monitoring is conducted by staff of the easement holders or outsourced to the soil conservation districts. He noted the monitoring completion rate for county held easements totaled 99.6%, the nonprofits totaled 100%, and the SADC held easements totaled 100%. The overall monitoring rate for FY2025 is 99.6%, which is the same as FY2024.

Mr. Berkowitz reviewed the areas of concern or violations discovered during the monitoring process: 36.2% of concerns discovered during monitoring were comprised of erosion and water management, overgrown fields consisted of 21% of the concerns; and non-ag use, trash dumping and unapproved solar represented 10% each.

In FY2026, the SADC intends to renew its partnerships with the soil conservation districts with the remainder of the easements being monitored by in-house staff. The plan is to achieve a 100% completion rate and to provide training to partners and monitoring staff to ensure more consistency in monitoring across the state. In an effort to improve the program, a subcommittee has been formed to develop ideas and to improve outreach with a focus on easement compliance and monitoring education. There is also an Easement Post Preservation System being developed to streamline monitoring, reporting and compliance issue tracking.

Staff is also looking to hire a stewardship trainee to help with the growing monitoring workload and enhance stewardship initiatives.

Mr. Roohr reviewed the stewardship guidance documents drafted by staff as a result of the Outreach Subcommittee meeting. He asked the committee to review them and provide staff with any suggestions. The goal of these documents is to improve communication with landowners and partners, and to provide guidance on activities permitted on preserved farms. He also stated staff is exploring other methods of outreach such as pre-recorded videos posted on the SADC's website that will discuss common DOE issues.

Mr. Norz commented that an in-person meeting could be more effective than online modules. Ms. Neiderer suggested both approaches to make information more accessible. Ms. Neiderer commented on the monitoring visit checklist and gave a couple suggestions to staff to make the monitoring checklist more descriptive for the landowner.

It was moved by Mr. Ellis and seconded by Mr. Neiderer to approve the FY2025 Annual Monitoring Report. The motion was unanimously approved.

C. Resolution: Non-Agricultural Development in the ADA, including Condemnation of Preserved Farmland (N.J.S.A. 4:1C-19 and 25)

Mr. Bruder referred the committee to a condemnation request received by Greenwich Township, Warren County. He stated that this project involves the transfer of existing, privately held easement interests and sewer infrastructure, part of which is located on a preserved farm. He reviewed the specifics with the committee and stated staff found the transfer will not cause unreasonably adverse effects on the preserved farm, the ADA, or state preservation and development policies pursuant to sections 19 and 25 of ARDA. Staff recommendation is to approve the request.

It was moved by Mr. Norz and seconded by Ms. Niederer to approve Resolution FY2026R1(1) granting final approval, as presented, subject to any condition of said resolution.

1. Greenwich Township v. Dowel Realty Associates, FY2026R1(1), Greenwich Township, Warren County.

The motion was unanimously approved. A copy of Resolution FY2026R1(1) is attached to and is a part of these minutes.

D. Resolution: Non-Agricultural Development in the ADA, on Preserved Farmland (non-condemnation) (N.J.S.A. 4:1C-19)

Note: Mr. Bullock recused from this discussion.

Mr. Bruder referred the committee to a request to install wireless equipment of T-Mobile on and adjacent to an existing transmission tower located on a preserved farm. He reviewed the specifics with the committee and stated staff found it is necessary to address the gap in service, the existing infrastructure and right of way access will be utilized, the project will be constructed in conformance with the existing JCP&L easement, and there is little or no permanent agricultural effect on the preserved farm. Staff's recommendation is to approve the request.

It was moved by Mr. Norz and seconded by Ms. Fischetti to approve Resolution FY2026R1(2) granting final approval, as presented, subject to any condition of said resolution.

1. T-Mobile Wireless Facilities/JCP&L ROW, FY2026R1(2), Howell Township, Monmouth County.

The motion was unanimously approved. A copy of Resolution FY2026R1(2) is attached to and is a part of these minutes.

2. Agricultural Development Area Criteria Certification – Burlington County

Mr. Allen presented an Agricultural Development Area Certification request from Burlington County to amend their ADA criteria and ADA map. Burlington County passed a resolution in November of 2025 updating their ADA criteria where they defined step by step the land use considerations that SADC uses. Mr. Allen reviewed the updated criteria and stated that staff recommendation is to adopt the new criteria of the county and the ADA area map amendment.

It was moved by Ms. Niederer and seconded by Mr. Ellis to approve the Agricultural Development Area Criteria Certification for Burlington County. The motion was unanimously approved.

3. Resolutions: Final Approval – Municipal Planning Incentive Grant

Mr. Zaback referred the committee to two requests for final approval under the Municipal PIG program. He reviewed the specifics of the requests with the committee and stated that the staff recommendation is to grant approval.

It was moved by Mr. Rosen and seconded by Ms. Niederer to approve Resolutions FY2026R1(3) and FY2026R1(4) granting final approval, as presented, subject to any condition of said resolutions.

1. Robert Scheer, SADC ID#21-0634-PG, FY2026R1(3), Block 1901, Lot 41, Blairstown Township, Warren County, 46.92 acres.
2. Eugene & Deborah Cullen, SADC ID#21-0637-PG, FY2026R1(4), Block 47, Lots 12 & 12.07, Knowlton Township, Warren County, 13.72 acres.

The motion was unanimously approved. A copy of resolutions FY2026R1(3) and FY2026R1(4) are attached to and part of these minutes.

4. Resolutions: Final Approval – County Planning Incentive Grant

Ms. Bacon referred the committee to two requests for final approval under the County PIG program. She reviewed the specifics of the requests with the committee and stated that the staff recommendation is to grant approval.

It was moved by Mr. Bullock and seconded by Mr. Ellis to approve Resolutions FY2026R1(5) and FY2026R1(6) granting final approval, as presented, subject to any condition of said resolutions.

1. David & Randall Reid, SADC ID#03-0456-PG, FY2026R1(5), Block 300, Lots 8 & 8.02, North Hanover Township, Burlington County, 270.87 acres.
2. Kenneth & Beverly Lustgarten, SADC ID# 03-0459-PG, FY2026R1(6), Block 201, Lot 24, North Hanover Township, Burlington County, 167.54 acres.

The motion was unanimously approved. A copy of resolutions FY2026R1(5) and FY2026R1(6) are attached to and part of these minutes.

5. Resolutions: Final Approval – Direct Easement Purchase Program

Staff referred the committee to five requests for final approval under the Direct Easement Purchase program. They reviewed the specifics of the requests with the committee and stated that the staff recommendation is to grant approval.

It was moved by Mr. Ellis and seconded by Ms. Neiderer to approve Resolutions FY2026R1(7) through FY2026R1(11) granting final approval, as presented, subject to any condition of said resolutions.

1. Mecouch Farms 2 LLC, SADC ID#06-0099-DE, FY2026R1(7), Block 20, Lots 11 & 12, Stow Creek Township, Cumberland County, 98 gross acres.
2. Melvin R. Dickinson Jr., SADC ID#06-0098-DE, FY2026R1(8), Block 20, Lots 1, 3 & 15, Stow Creek Township, Cumberland County, 118.06 gross acres.
3. Richard J. & Donna M. Gillespie, SADC ID#11-0041-DE, FY2026R1(9), Block 29, Lot 11, Hopewell Township, Mercer County, 130.14 gross acres.
4. Thomas Meyer, SADC ID#10-0308-DE, FY2026R1(10), Block 42, Lot 7, Franklin Township, Hunterdon County, 102.83 gross acres.
5. Henry Realty Co. LLC, SADC ID#12-0016-DE, FY2026R1(11), Block 2.01, Lot 1, Cranbury Township, Middlesex County, 21.06 gross acres.

The motion was unanimously approved. A copy of resolutions FY2026R1(7) through FY2026R1(11) are attached to and part of these minutes.

Public Comment

Patricia Springwell, Hunterdon County, stated that preserved farmland must be kept affordable for future farmers.

Member Comment

Mr. Rosen commented that farming is rooted in trial and error and that landowners should be commended for trying things and learning from their mistakes. He also wanted to applaud the committee and our partners for trying to work with landowners as they try these innovative practices in responsible ways.

CLOSED SESSION

At 12:30p.m. Mr. Roohr read the following resolution to go into Closed Session:

In accordance with the provisions of the Open Public Meetings Act, N.J.S.A. 10:4-13, it is hereby resolved that the SADC shall now go into executive session to discuss the certifications of values of farm property in Delaware Township, Hunterdon County, Hamilton Township, Atlantic County, and Lumberton

Township, Burlington County; attorney-client privileged communications; and any other matters under N.J.S.A. 10:4-12(b) that arose during the public portion of the meeting. The minutes of such meeting shall remain confidential until the Committee determines that the need for confidentiality no longer exists.

It was moved by Mr. Norz and seconded by Ms. Fischetti to go into closed session. The motion was unanimously approved.

Action as a Result of Closed Session

A. Real Estate Matters – Certification of Values

It was moved by Mr. Ellis and seconded by Mr. Norz to approve the certification of values as discussed in closed session. The motion was approved.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 1:06 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted.



Charles Roohr, Executive Director
State Agriculture Development Committee