

3/23/06 SADC Meeting Highlights

Executive Director's Report

The commercial non-agricultural uses subcommittee met for the first time and identified several issues that require research. The committee is scheduled to meet again April 3rd. The committee is charged with making recommendations on implementing S-206 – which allows farmers to apply for permits to conduct certain nonagricultural activities and erect cell phone towers on eligible preserved farms.

Soil and Water Conservation Cost-Share Grants

The SADC approved 13 requests totaling nearly \$125,000 in soil and water conservation grants. This depleted current available funding for the program. With additional funding not included in the proposed state budget, the SADC is working to identify any available interest earnings from bond funds or previously obligated, unspent funds that can be applied toward future projects, as well as explore any possibilities for a new dedicated funding source. The projects acted on at the March meeting were approved based on the priority system that gives first priority to permanently preserved farms; second priority to 8-Year Program applications that entered before January 1st of the preceding calendar year; and third priority to 8-Year Program applications that entered after January 1st of the preceding calendar year. In light of the limited funding, the SADC intends to re-examine the priority system as well as the 75-percent level of cost-share 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.

Highlands Funding Expenditure Policy

The SADC approved a policy for the expenditure of \$30 million in additional Garden State Preservation Trust funds made available as a result of Public Question #1 in November 2003. The SADC will dedicate those funds to the preservation of farms in the Highlands Region. Priority consideration will be given to farms located in the Preservation Area to maximize the preservation of farmland resources in the area determined by the Highlands Water Protection and Planning Act to be in critical need of natural resource conservation and protection. The funding will be used to support additional applications in each of the SADC's programs where demand has outstripped otherwise-approved SADC monies. Expenditure of these funds will be on a case-by-case basis based on the merits of individual applications.

2007A County Easement Purchase

The SADC certified fair market values of development easements for 2007A County Easement Purchase applicants and allocated a total of \$45 million to the round. The total SADC cost to acquire development easements on all eligible farms would be approximately \$71 million, assuming a 60 percent cost-share grant. Confidential offers from landowners are due to the SADC by noon on May 8th.

Summary of 2007 Grant Round Applications

Five nonprofits submitted applications requesting a total of \$28 million under the Nonprofit program. Eight farms totaling 857 acres – all in Atlantic County – applied for preservation under the Pinelands County Easement Purchase program.

State Acquisition Programs

The SADC is soliciting applicants for its Direct Easement and Fee Simple programs. A press release has been distributed and outreach meetings are being scheduled.

County-Specific Actions

Atlantic County

The SADC approved the following soil and water conservation cost-share grant: Columbia Properties, Hammonton, \$11,957.23.

Mercer County

The SADC certified the county's amended Agricultural Development Area (ADA) to include Lee Turkey Farm, which is the county's highest-ranked application in the 2007A County Easement Purchase round.

A request by Bluestone Farms, Hopewell Township, to replace a single-family residence was approved.

Burlington County

The SADC approved the following soil and water conservation cost-share grants: Doris S. Lamson & Trustees, Chesterfield, \$15,420; Thomas E. & Christine Gerber, Medford, \$17,000.25; and Irving Peter Tallman, Springfield, \$5,265.

The SADC approved construction of a single-family residence on Winged Foot Stables in Chesterfield Township.

Final approval was granted to the Springfield Associates farm in the 2006A Burlington County, Springfield Township, planning incentive grant.

Cumberland County

The SADC approved the following soil and water conservation cost-share grant: Steven DuBois, Jr., Upper Deerfield, \$6,288.30.

Gloucester County

The SADC approved the following soil and water conservation cost-share grant: Leigh and Donna Weiss, Elk, \$4,706.25.

The SADC approved the placement of an additional restriction on the New Jersey Conservation/Pettit Farm, South Harrison Township, to limit agricultural uses within the approximately 30 acres of wetlands to woodlot management, pasturing activities and other agricultural uses that do not interfere with bog turtle habitat. The approval is subject to agreement on language.

Hunterdon County

Final approval was granted to the Kanach Farm under the East Amwell Township, Hunterdon County-2000A planning incentive grant.

The SADC approved a one-year extension on the following soil and water conservation cost-share project: Robert Michisk, Franklin, \$30,345.20 revised maximum grant amount.

Middlesex County

As a result of a right-to-farm hearing, the SADC found that Barton Nursery in Edison Township is entitled to the protections of the Right to Farm Act for the following: drainage and wetlands issues, subject to the nursery being in compliance with relevant State laws and regulations; noise; irrigation practices, subject to a number of conditions; odors; trees on property line; and parking, contingent on the Nursery ensuring trucks do not block the views of drivers turning onto New Durham Road from the right-of-way the Nursery shares with a neighbor. The SADC found that well activity and water allocation are not valid right-to-farm issues insofar as they are regulated solely by State law. In the event a municipality attempts to regulate well activity and water allocation, such issues may be deemed right-to-farm issues. Finally, the SADC made no finding regarding whether Barton Nursery may preempt any municipal ordinances, as there was no testimony or evidence presented regarding relevant ordinances.

Monmouth County

Final approval was granted to the following planning incentive grant farms: the McFie and Restine farms, Millstone Township, Monmouth County, 2001A; the Blanda and Hulder Trust farms, Upper Freehold Township, Monmouth County, 2003A; and the Cuddihy and Buzio farms, Howell Township, Monmouth County, 2005A.

Ocean County

The SADC approved the following soil and water conservation cost-share grant: Hallock U Pick Farms, Plumsted, \$17,731.50.

Salem County

The SADC approved the following soil and water conservation cost-share grants: Rodney Turner, Alloway, \$3,316; Robert and Mary Lou Dubois, Pittsgrove, \$918; Henry DuBois, Jr., and Stephen DuBois, Pittsgrove, \$14,677.80; Raymond and Eileen DuBois, Pittsgrove, \$5,173.80; and George and Marieha Garrison, Pittsgrove, \$5,732.40.

Somerset County

The SADC approved a request to expand the previously approved agricultural labor unit on the Taverner Farm in Branchburg Township to 2,100 square feet.

Warren County

The SADC approved the following soil and water conservation cost-share grant: David and Natalie Flitcroft, Knowlton, \$16,570.