



NEWS

For Release: May 16, 2006

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GSPT Approves \$116.7M for Farmland Preservation Projects Statewide

The Garden State Preservation Trust (GSPT) today approved the State Agriculture Development Committee's funding request for \$116.7 million to build on the momentum of farmland preservation efforts across the state.

"The majority of this funding will be used to provide grants to local and county governments to help purchase the development rights to preserve farmland in their communities," said Agriculture Secretary Charles M. Kuperus, who chairs the State Agriculture Development Committee. "The benefits of this investment in farmland preservation are real and lasting – everything from ensuring access to farm-fresh products for current and future New Jerseyans to retaining privately maintained working landscapes on our local tax rolls."

The approved funding covers a number of programs in which the SADC and county and local governments purchase the development easements (or development rights) on farmland or purchase farmland outright for preservation purposes. Following is a breakdown of SADC program funding approved today by the GSPT:

- \$48.5 million in grants to counties to fund the majority of costs to purchase development rights on individual farms under the latest county easement purchase rounds, plus \$600,000 to provide up to \$30,000 individual grants to counties to help them develop comprehensive farmland preservation plans that will be the basis for providing grants for county easement purchases under an alternate program that will begin in FY2009;
- \$22.6 million in grants to municipalities and counties to preserve farmland in project areas they have identified in 5 new towns and 21 previously participating municipalities under the planning incentive grant program;
- \$30 million for the SADC to purchase development easements or farmland directly from landowners under the State Acquisition Program; and
- \$15 million in supplemental funding for farmland preservation in the Highlands region, to be distributed among all programs to support additional applications in cases where demand has outstripped otherwise-approved funding.

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The request includes \$75 million in new funding and \$32.6 million in reprogrammed funding from unsuccessful projects and other unexpended funds, \$6.6 million in federal funds and an estimated \$2.5 million from anticipated revenues from resales of farms purchased outright for preservation under the state acquisition program. Approximately \$150 million in GSPT funding currently is available. This request, subject to legislative approval, will leave approximately \$75 million remaining.

More detailed information on the SADC's request is available on the SADC's website at www.state.nj.us/agriculture/sadc/sadc.htm.

The SADC administers the state Farmland Preservation Program. To date, 1,386 farms covering more than 146,000 acres have been preserved statewide.