



New Jersey Farmland Preservation Connections

March 2012

On-Farm Direct Marketing Draft AMP Released for Comment

The State Agriculture Development Committee (SADC) on January 11th released for public comment a draft agricultural management practice (AMP) for direct-marketing facilities, activities and events. The draft AMP was developed by an SADC working group that includes farmers and representatives of the State Board of Agriculture, New Jersey Farm Bureau, Rutgers University, county agriculture development boards and the planning community. The draft AMP clarifies terms in the Right to Farm Act and establishes performance-based standards that commercial farms must meet to be eligible for right-to-farm protection for retail farm markets and for various agriculture-related educational and farm-based recreational activities and events. Comments are due by April 15. After considering comments, the SADC expects to adopt a direct-marketing AMP later this year. The draft AMP is available at <http://www.nj.gov/agriculture/sadc/news/hottopics/index.html>.

New Electronic System to Simplify, Standardize Monitoring Reports

The SADC has developed a new electronic reporting system for monitoring and inspections of preserved farms that will standardize the information collected by the SADC, county agriculture development boards and nonprofits; simplify the reporting process; make it easier to retrieve and use the information collected, and establish detailed baseline information for every preserved farm. The inspection “E-form” can be retrieved anywhere web access is available and saved on any device as a writable PDF. This enables users to complete the form on any portable device in any location regardless of web access, including at farms. Once a farm’s baseline information has been entered and submitted, the form will pre-populate that information so that in subsequent years, inspection/monitoring staff will need to enter only baseline changes and certain other limited information. Electronically submitted forms will be automatically downloaded into the SADC’s database where the information can be reviewed, searched and analyzed. The E-form currently is being used by SADC staff for monitoring State-owned easements. The SADC held its first regional meeting to introduce the new E-form to preservation partners on February 22 in Trenton; additional meetings will be held on March 7 in Salem County and March 8 in Warren County. For more information or to RSVP for one of the regional training meetings, contact Charles Roohr at (609) 984-2504.

SADC to Develop New Leasing Guidebook for New Jersey

The SADC is conducting research to develop model land leases that will be useful to anyone seeking to enter into leases of agricultural land or contracts for farming. The information will be assembled into a leasing guidebook for New Jersey. The effort is part of a USDA Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program grant project with the Northeast Organic Farming Association of New Jersey (NOFA). The SADC will reach out to interview farmers (both traditional and organic) and other landowners to solicit feedback on their leasing and contract situations. Anyone who has leased land in the past or is thinking of leasing in the future, and is interested in sharing ideas or experiences, should contact Dave Kimmel at the SADC at (609) 984-2504. More information on the project is available on the SADC’s website at <http://www.nj.gov/agriculture/sadc/farmlink/resources/leasingproject.html>.

Legislative Update

Governor Christie in January conditionally vetoed legislation (A3992) that would have allowed utility-scale wind turbines on preserved farms without SADC or CADB review. The Governor recommended amending the bill to remove preserved farms, citing the bill's potential to undermine the Farmland Preservation Program and jeopardize future funding support. He also recommended changes that would retain local review of wind turbines on nonpreserved farms. The bill's sponsors did not accept the amendments and the bill did not become law.

Clarification Issued Regarding Medical Marijuana on Farms

In response to inquiries, the SADC in December provided clarification on medical marijuana as it pertains to preserved farms and right-to-farm protection. The N.J. Department of Agriculture determined that medical marijuana is a crop based on New Jersey statutes. Therefore, medical marijuana may be grown and processed on preserved farms. However, because it is prohibited at the federal level, the Natural Resources Conservation Service's position is that it will not permit medical marijuana on farms preserved with federal Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program funding. Medical marijuana cannot be sold or distributed from a preserved farm because distribution is tightly controlled and dispensary sites will function not as farm markets but rather as medical treatment facilities. Medical marijuana growing operations are not eligible for right-to-farm protection because the Right to Farm Act requires conformance with all relevant federal laws. For a Q and A on this topic, visit <http://www.nj.gov/agriculture/sadc/news/hottopics/medmarijuanaQA120811.pdf>.

SADC Solicits Nonprofit Applications

The SADC has published a notice in the February 21st *New Jersey Register* seeking applications from nonprofit organizations for new farmland preservation funding. The projects would be funded by the second half of the bond funds approved by voters in 2009. The SADC, which continues to coordinate with the administration on funding availability, is not making any commitment to new funding at this time. However, it is soliciting applications now to ensure that once the new funding is made available it will have a complete appropriation request ready for Garden State Preservation Trust and legislative approval.

Atlantic County Submits Comprehensive Farmland Preservation Plan

Atlantic County submitted a comprehensive farmland preservation plan in December to enable it to participate in the Planning Incentive Grant Program. That means all 18 counties participating in the state Farmland Preservation Program, as well as 46 municipalities, now have adopted comprehensive farmland preservation plans.