



APRIL 2 2014

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CHRISTIE ADMINISTRATION TEAMS UP WITH TPL TO PRESERVE 260-ACRE DAIRY FARM IN 2 ANDOVERS

SITE WILL BECOME PART OF KITTATINNY VALLEY STATE PARK AND HELP PROTECT THE HEADWATERS OF THE PEQUEST RIVER

TRENTON – A scenic 260-acre former dairy farm located in southern Sussex County, at the edge of the Highlands Preservation Zone, and once slated for a major residential and commercial development, will be permanently preserved through a \$5.8 million agreement announced today by project partners, including the Department of Environmental Protection's Green Acres Program and The Trust for Public Land, DEP Commissioner Bob Martin announced today.

The newly preserved site, which is a partially forested tract filled with rolling hills, green fields, and sweeping views of the surrounding countryside, protects the headwaters of the Pequest River. It is bordered on two sides by the Sussex Branch Trail and a recently state-acquired rail-trail (formerly owned by the Lehigh Hudson Railroad), both of which are connectors to the state's Kittatinny Valley State Park, which will gain significant acreage due to this preservation agreement.

"This is an example of Governor Christie's continued commitment to preserving our open and natural spaces in New Jersey," said Commissioner Martin. "Preserving these lands ensures a continued high quality of drinking water for state residents, while safeguarding habitat for many plant and animal species, enhancing recreational opportunities for our residents, and raising the quality of life in our state."

"This preservation effort will allow Andover Borough to maintain its quaint and historic character and our residents will continue to enjoy the small town atmosphere that has existed for over 100 years" said Andover Borough Mayor John Morgan. "We're a small borough – there are only 606 of us, and now we know this beautiful land will be protected."

Francisco Farm, also known as the Beazer Homes development site, is located primarily within Andover Borough, which holds 220 acres. Another 38 acres are located in Andover Township and two acres are in Green Township. It had been targeted for development dating back to the late 1980s and, if built, could have tripled the tiny borough's population. The property was offered to the state for preservation purchase in 2011, prompting a coordinated effort with TPL and other partners to purchase the site from the private landowner.

As part of the preservation effort, the Trust for Public Land worked with Andover Borough to ask voters to approve an open space tax to help finance acquisition of Francisco Farm. Eighty-four percent of voters approved the tax.

Of the 260 acres that were purchased, 222 acres will be added to Kittatinny Valley State Park, 12 acres will be used by Andover Borough for recreational purposes, and 5 acres will be used by Sussex County for future road widening. The remaining 21 acres were sold for non-open space use to help offset the purchase price. Of those 21 acres, 17 were sold to Andover Borough for future borough use, and four acres were sold to neighboring homeowners.

Funding for the acquisition includes: \$4 million in New Jersey Green Acres acquisition funds; \$720,000 in Green Acres grants to project partners; \$400,000 from the Sussex County Open Space Trust Fund; \$150,000 from the Andover Borough Open Space Trust Fund; \$100,000 from the Victoria Foundation; \$75,000 from the Johanette Wallerstein Institute; and \$15,000 from the Trust for Public Land. The Union Foundation also was a partner in the preservation effort.

"Andover Borough is a small community that came together in a big way to conserve Francisco Farm," said Kathy Haake, project manager for The Trust for Public Land. "We thank the residents who took an active role in opposing the development, as well as public and private funders who supported the project."