



NEWS

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New Jersey State Agriculture Development Committee

MULTIPLE PARTNERS WORK TO PRESERVE SALEM COUNTY FARM WITH COMBINED GOAL OF PROTECTING FARMLAND AND SALEM RIVER STREAM CORRIDOR

QUINTON TWP. – Agriculture Secretary Douglas H. Fisher today announced the preservation of Mill Hollow Farms in Quinton Township, Salem County, through a unique partnership that preserves the vast majority of the farm for agriculture while ensuring the permanent conservation of a forested riparian buffer.

“This farm, with its agriculturally productive lands, also has a substantial wooded stream corridor,” said Secretary Fisher. “It was the landowner’s request that we help preserve both, under separate preservation easements. We’re pleased that we were able to accomplish that through a cooperative effort with New Jersey Conservation Foundation and William Penn Foundation funding.”

The State Agriculture Development Committee (SADC) preserved approximately 100 acres of the farm with an agricultural easement that ensures the land always will be maintained for farming purposes. New Jersey Conservation Foundation preserved the farm’s 18-acre forested riparian buffer under a separate conservation easement that requires that the forest be maintained.

This was the first time the SADC has partnered with the nonprofit community to preserve a farm with side-by-side agricultural and conservation easements. Owner Jeffrey Harris applied to the SADC to preserve the farm through its State Acquisition Program in order to preserve the land that has been in his family since 1931. During the course of the farmland preservation process, he discussed with the SADC his interest in permanently protecting the 18-acre forested riparian buffer on the property. Protecting this forested area reduces stormwater flow and filters agricultural runoff into Keasbey’s Creek, which runs into the Salem River and the Mannington Meadows tidal wetlands complex — whose marshes and wetlands are nationally significant habitats for bald eagle, numerous waterfowl and migratory birds — and ultimately the Delaware Bay.

The SADC contacted the Open Space Institute (OSI), which agreed to provide funding to New Jersey Conservation Foundation to preserve the forested riparian buffer. OSI funding was made available through its Bayshore Highlands Grant Fund, which is made possible with funding from the William Penn Foundation. The Bayshore Highlands Fund seeks to accelerate land conservation in the New Jersey Bayshore and the Pennsylvania Highlands. The farmland portion of the property was preserved with State farmland preservation funds.

“This groundbreaking project shows the promise of innovative public-private partnerships in protecting both drinking water and economic opportunity for farmers,” said OSI Executive Vice President Peter Howell. “We commend SADC and New Jersey Conservation Foundation, and look forward to working together to refine this model on other farms across New Jersey.”

“Amid Salem County's vast farm country lie extensive forests and wetlands that provide important wildlife habitat and help to protect the region's water quality," said Michele S. Byers, executive director of New Jersey Conservation Foundation. “We’re very grateful to our partners, and we especially commend Mr. Harris for his dedication to preserving his working farm and his woods, waterways and wildlife.”

The SADC administers New Jersey’s Farmland Preservation Program. More than 2,400 farms covering 223,000 acres have been preserved under the program to date, including 302 farms covering 35,824 acres in Salem County. New Jersey Conservation Foundation (www.njconservation.org) is a private nonprofit that preserves land and natural resources throughout New Jersey for the benefit of all. Since 1960, New Jersey Conservation has protected over 125,000 acres of open space throughout the state, including farms, forests and urban and suburban parks.