



State of New Jersey

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Highlands Council helps preserve nearly 400 acres in Warren County *\$1.37 million transaction marks 300th Preserved Farm in County*

CHESTER, N.J. — The Highlands Council recently provided critical funding to help preserve a 388-acre farm in Franklin Township, Warren County. The Hart Farm, a third-generation family farm, producing primarily corn, soybean, wheat and hay, is the 300th farm preserved in Warren County. The Highlands Council provided nearly \$667,000 of the total \$1.37 million development rights purchase price, with Warren County providing the remaining funding.

“Agriculture is a critical component of the Highlands Region character and economy,” said Lisa J. Plevin, Highlands Council Executive Director. “Protecting working farms like the Hart property advances the goals of both the Highlands Act and the Regional Master Plan. Warren County has been a great preservation partner and we are very pleased to be a part of this milestone achievement.”

Located on the western edge of Franklin Township, bordering Greenwich Township, the property includes three larger parcels and two smaller ones. All five parcels lie within areas classified by the Highlands Council as moderate or high agricultural priority. This means they are among the best farmland in the region, offering the greatest potential for continued commercially significant agricultural production and should be prioritized for preservation.

“It’s impossible to think about the New Jersey Highlands without picturing some of the most beautiful fields of farmland,” said Carl Richko, Highlands Council Chairman. “Despite changing economic conditions, this part of Warren County continues to be under pressure from development due to its proximity to major transportation routes. Our ability to help protect and preserve farms like this is fundamental to the work of the Highlands Council.”

One of the more rural areas in the Highlands region, Warren County holds the distinction of having the most preserved farms and the most total preserved farmland by acreage of any County in the Highlands. Attempts to preserve Hart Farms have been in the works for many years, but hit several snags along the way.

“The Hart Farm preservation project was among the most challenging Warren County has faced,” explained Corey Tierney, Director of Preservation for Warren County. “The County has been trying to preserve this farm for decades and at times it really seemed like it was never going to happen. I cannot thank the Highlands Council enough for not only their financial contribution, but their strong desire to work with us to ensure this project was completed.”

The Highlands Council is a regional planning agency established in 2004 with the passage of the Highlands Water Protection and Planning Act and charged with implementation of the Act. More information is available at www.nj.gov/njhighlands.

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