



## PRESS RELEASE



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### New Program Permanently Preserves 21 Pinelands Farms in 2003

A total of 21 Pinelands farms covering nearly 1,900 acres were preserved in the Pinelands in 2003 under a new state program designed to permanently protect the unique agricultural and ecological resources of the million-acre Pinelands.

The Pinelands Direct Easement Purchase Program is administered by the State Agriculture Development Committee (SADC) in cooperation with the New Jersey Pinelands Commission. It was created as a result of 1999 legislation that encouraged the permanent preservation of more land in the Pinelands.

“Some of New Jersey’s most agriculturally and environmentally important land is located in the Pinelands,” said Agriculture Secretary Charles M. Kuperus, who chairs the SADC. “By permanently preserving these farms, we are ensuring they continue to contribute to the state’s agricultural industry, and at the same time protecting the ecological diversity of this important region.”

Under the Pinelands Direct Easement Purchase Program, the SADC purchases the development rights – including Pinelands Development Credits -- on farmland. Because those credits are permanently retired, the program helps to reduce potential development in Pinelands Regional Growth Area communities – areas where developers can redeem credits to increase housing densities.

In addition to the 21 newly preserved farms, another 8 farms totaling more than 1,000 acres are slated for protection in early 2004 under this first round of easement purchases. The SADC has allocated \$9 million toward the purchase of development rights on farms in this round, while the Pinelands Commission has provided \$2.1 million.

“2003 marked a turning point in the effort to protect farmland in the Pinelands,” said James Florio, Chairman of the New Jersey Pinelands Commission. “With the enhanced coordination of the Farmland Preservation Program, Pinelands Development Credit Program and the agricultural land-use policies of the Pinelands Comprehensive Management Plan, we now have a better set of tools in place to promote the long-term viability of the agricultural industry in the Pinelands.”

## **SADC/Pinelands**

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Prior to last year, of the nearly 800 farms in New Jersey permanently preserved under the state Farmland Preservation Program, only eight of those were in the Pinelands. Of those eight, only one was in a Pinelands management zone where Pinelands Development Credits are allocated.

The SADC administers the state Farmland Preservation Program, which was established in 1983. To date, 1,054 farms covering more than 120,000 acres have been permanently preserved statewide.

The Pinelands Comprehensive Management Plan (CMP), authorized by the State and Federal Pinelands Protection Acts in the late 1970s, sets standards for the protection of Pinelands natural and cultural resources. The CMP establishes special management districts where agricultural land uses are encouraged, including a "right-to-farm" standard that protects farming operations in agricultural zones.

The Pinelands Direct Easement Purchase Program bolsters the CMP by providing economically viable land protection options for Pinelands farmers.

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