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Ralph Siegel 984-4600

Trust board Approves \$22 Million in CBT funds for Farmland Preservation acquisitions, \$1 million for historic site grants

TRENTON – The board of the Garden State Preservation Trust today approved \$22 million to fund Farmland Preservation Program acquisitions plus \$1 million to provide 33 planning and heritage tourism grants for critical historic sites in all parts of New Jersey.

Four of the historic site grants, recommended by the New Jersey Historic Trust, propose to help historic sites in Florence, Mantua, Wayne and Vernon in Sussex County develop heritage tourism resources.

The largest segment of the Farmland Preservation funding proposes to provide \$15 million to 20 municipalities in seven counties which have approved “planning incentive” farmland preservation plans targeting many acquisition projects. These funds propose to keep those local project areas moving forward toward their farmland preservation goals.

There is also funding proposed for four of New Jersey’s most active nonprofit land conservation trusts. These groups have targeted six important farms for permanent preservation in Alloway, Bedminster, Colts Neck, Frelinghuysen, Hopewell Township in Mercer County and Washington Township in Warren County.

The farms once they are preserved remain in private ownership but the land is permanently deed restricted for agricultural use. To support this use, the State Agriculture Development Committee also requested \$709,000 to provide grants so farmers can improve their operations with soil conservation projects or fencing to keep out voracious deer. The GSPT board unanimously approved the request for these grant funds.

The money for these project recommendations comes from the dedication of a 4% share of the Corporation Business Tax to open space, recreation and historic preservation purposes approved by the voters in a 2014 referendum. In Fiscal Year 2020 starting next July 1 this dedication will increase to 6%.

The resolutions approved today by eight board members of the Trust will be introduced as Appropriations bills in the Legislature. If approved by both houses, as expected, the bills will go to the Governor for his signature. Trust approval has been the first step in this process for almost 20 years and so far, all of its appropriations have been approved, often in unanimous votes.

Trust Executive Director Ralph Siegel said New Jersey taxpayers since the first historic preservation grants were issued in 1992 have committed nearly \$142 million to state and local historic preservation efforts. These grants went to 506 historic sites that had in effect doubled the state’s money with their own matching funds. Statewide more than 220 cities and towns in every corner of New Jersey have received such grants, with about 65% of this money going to communities designated as “urban” or as “densely populated.”