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Trust Approves \$52.8 Million to Preserve Farmland

Funding package includes grants for conservation projects, deer fencing

FIRST MAJOR CONSERVATION APPROPRIATION UNDER PANDEMIC CONDITIONS

TRENTON – The board of the Garden State Preservation Trust today approved \$52.8 million for an array of projects and local grants statewide to preserve farmland and improve farm soil conservation.

The board also approved a \$50,000 grant to the Geospatial Lab at Rowan University for the development and maintenance of the New Jersey Conservation Blueprint Web site. (<https://www.njmap2.com/blueprint>)

This is the fifth funding package approved for New Jersey's Farmland Preservation Program since the voters approved a constitutional amendment to dedicate money from the Corporation Business Tax for conservation purposes.

This year, the CBT dedication will provide \$113 million to the broad range of conservation programs: park and natural land acquisitions, conservation, farmland preservation, recreational development, capital projects at State parks and wildlife refuges, and historic preservation grants. This will be supplemented by funds from previous years that had been unused or withheld in a reserve to bring to total available to \$219 million for Fiscal Year 2021.

The largest component of today's approvals was \$23.5 million in Farmland Preservation grants to counties and towns to pay for easement acquisitions in accordance with pre-approved Planning Incentive areas. There were also grants totaling \$3.8 million to four nonprofit land trusts: D&R Greenway Land Trust, The Land Conservancy of New Jersey, the Monmouth Conservation Foundation and the New Jersey Conservation Foundation.

Today's approval includes stewardship funding to provide matching grants to encourage farmland owners to improve soil conservation and irrigation on farms that have already been preserved.

The resolutions approved today by the six board members of the Trust will be introduced as appropriations bills in the Legislature. If approved by both houses, the bills will go to the Governor for his signature.

New Jersey taxpayers since 2000 have committed \$3.2 billion to state and local preservation and conservation efforts. More than 450,000 acres of parks, forests, refuges and private farms have been preserved under GSPT-funded programs since 1999.