



July 18 2018

Press Releases

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100 acres prime Salem County farmland preserved

ALLOWAY - Working hand-in-hand with Alloway Township, New Jersey Conservation Foundation helped preserve three outstanding farms totaling nearly 100 acres.

The three farms, owned by the McAlonan and Robbins families, were preserved under a federal farmland program that emphasizes the protection of water, soil, wildlife and forests. Alloway Township is a rural community in central Salem County with an equal balance of family farms, woods, and quiet lakeside communities.

Other partners in the farmland preservation projects were the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service (USDA-NRCS), the State Agriculture Development Committee and the Salem County Agriculture Development Board.

Robbins Farm

Joe Robbins preserved his 55-acre farm in Alloway after purchasing another preserved farm in nearby Elsinboro Township. "I think the farmland preservation program is beneficial to maintaining farming and the rural character of Salem County," said Robbins. "Retaining Salem County's wide open spaces is a good thing for the county and I want to do my part to help keep it that way."

This farm sits at the headwaters of the Swedes Run stream in a largely forested part of the township. Swedes Run is an important tributary to the Mannington Creek, ultimately flowing to the sprawling Mannington Meadows on the Salem River. Preservation of the Robbins farm helps protect the abundant wetlands and wildlife of the greater Salem River watershed.

McAlonan Farms

On the western side of Alloway, the two newly preserved farms owned by the McAlonan family - totaling 41.7 acres - sit close to the shores of Alloway Creek. The McAlonans grow hay and corn, and raise sheep.

Ray McAlonan stresses the importance of farmland preservation to keeping agriculture sustainable. "This preservation project helps us to reinvest in our farming operations to keep our farms viable. We are fixing old barns and doing other improvements," he said. "These newly preserved properties have been in our family for over 50 years and, thanks to conservation, we can continue to keep our family farming legacy going."

Partners in Preservation

"Partnerships like the one with New Jersey Conservation help towns like Alloway achieve our preservation goals with minimal expense to local taxpayers," said Deputy Mayor Beth F. Reilly, who helps guide the work of the township's Agriculture Advisory Committee.

"Thanks to New Jersey Conservation and others, we can preserve our most productive farms

almost entirely with state and federal grant money," Reilly continued. "That brings public funding back to Alloway and helps maintain agriculture and an important community resource."

Carrie Lindig, New Jersey NRCS State Conservationist said, "These easements in Salem County have key ingredients for success - great farmers with productive agricultural land like the Robbins and McAlonan families' and a great non-federal partner organization like the New Jersey Conservation Foundation. New Jersey will benefit from this coordinated conservation effort for years to come."

"These newly preserved farms are important additions that expand existing blocks of preserved farmland, protecting and enhancing the State's investment to date of nearly \$10 million to preserve farmland and support agriculture in Alloway Township," added state Agriculture Secretary Douglas H. Fisher.

New Jersey Conservation Foundation has partnered with Alloway Township on several previous farmland preservation projects in the past five years.

"In 2013, Alloway Township asked for help with preserving some of the town's most important working farms," explained Michele Byers, Executive Director of the New Jersey Conservation Foundation. "With these three newly-preserved farms, we've now preserved about 190 acres together."

New Jersey Conservation Foundation 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 - from the Highlands to the Pine Barrens to the Delaware Bayshore, from farms to forests to urban and suburban parks.

