

February 22, 2007 SADC Meeting Highlights

Secretary's Report

Secretary Kuperus noted that Governor Corzine sent a letter to the 2007 State Agricultural Convention that recognized the importance of farmland preservation efforts.

The federal Farm Bill is up for reauthorization this year and there is much discussion about what should be included. The N.J. Department of Agriculture is focusing on ensuring that the needs of New Jersey and the rest of the Northeast are included in the new Farm Bill. New Jersey's needs include investing in emerging new markets, connecting urban communities with farmers as much as possible and stimulating an innovative agriculture.

Governor Corzine is announcing an additional \$1 million – for a total of \$4 million – for the N.J. Department of Agriculture's hunger initiative. The initiative allows for purchase of food for the hungry, adheres to national dietary guidelines and focuses on purchasing local foods first.

Executive Director's Report

Many comments were received on the SADC's proposed new and amended farmland preservation rules. Staff would like to arrange for the Process Review Committee to meet and review those comments as soon as a summary of the comments is completed and then come back to the Committee with any recommended changes.

The Garden State Preservation Trust is proposing another series of tax seminars on HR4, which was signed into law in 2006 and significantly expanded federal tax incentives for conservation easement donations.

A presentation on Keeping New Jersey Preserved Farmland Available to Farmers was previewed for Committee members. The presentation will be given to county agriculture development boards and county boards of agriculture to solicit input and recommendations on how to ensure preserved farmland remains available and accessible to New Jersey farmers.

Policy P-50: Transition Policy and Timeline

The SADC adopted a policy and transition timeline that address how it will transition from existing rules to the proposed new and amended regulations, particularly in relation to changes proposed within the county and municipal planning incentive grant programs. The policy details how provisions of the new and amended rules become effective programmatically and what impact they will have on existing, versus future, planning incentive grant appropriations. The policy strongly encourages that closings on all easement purchase applications associated with existing planning incentive grant appropriations granted through FY08 be accomplished by June 30, 2008. Any funds still available within a PIG appropriation in April 2008 that are not associated with a transaction that has a contract of sale or SADC final approval will be at risk of loss through the reappropriation process.

2008 County Easement Purchase Round

The Committee approved rankings for the 2008 County Easement Purchase Round, including re-ranking of the Holland Brook Realty farm in Readington Township, Hunterdon County, to require a 10-acre portion in question to be a severable exception subdivided prior to closing and providing for a two-acre nonseverable exception for a housing unit on the remainder of the farm, subject to a number of conditions.