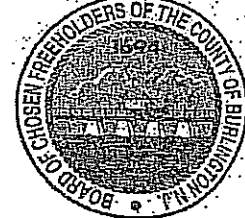


Board of Chosen Freeholders
County of Burlington
New Jersey



Department of Resource Conservation

Mailing Address:

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September 14, 2007

Honorable Robert DePetris
Township of Woodland
PO Box 388, 3943 Main Street
Chatsworth, NJ 08019

**Re: Burlington County Farmland Preservation Program – DRAFT Acquisition Targeting List (ATL)
Request for Municipal Review**

Dear Mayor DePetris:

Burlington County's 1998 Strategic Farmland Preservation Plan is in the process of being revised. The intent of this revision is to create a more comprehensive Farmland Preservation Plan. We are constructively reviewing the strategies that are currently in place to preserve farmland and will be expanding the scope of the Farmland Preservation Program to include implementation of various agricultural economic development strategies. The new Comprehensive Farmland Preservation Plan will rely heavily on the information, public input, and recommendations contained in the "*Agriculture in Burlington County's Route 206 Farm Belt*" Study. You will receive separate notification in the coming weeks of a formal public hearing on the new Comprehensive Farmland Preservation Plan that will take place in conjunction with the November 8, 2007 County Agricultural Development Board (CADB) meeting.

Due to rules recently promulgated by the State Agricultural Development Committee (SADC), Burlington County's Farmland Preservation Program must submit a draft of this new plan to the SADC by **December 15, 2007**. According to N.J.A.C. 2:76-15.6(b), the County shall notify all municipalities in which targeted farms are located within project areas no later than 90 days prior to the date on which it submits its application to the SADC. A "**targeted farm**" is a specific property contained within an approved project area for which the County may seek to solicit an application for farmland preservation through the County Planning Incentive Grant (PIG) Program. The decision to apply to the County's Farmland Preservation Program is still 100% voluntary.

As you may already know, when Burlington County acquires an easement on a farm, it applies to the SADC for cost-share reimbursement. The SADC has defined an "**eligible farm**" for cost-share funding as a targeted farm that has an individual rank score (pursuant to N.J.A.C. 2:76-6.16) equal to or greater than 70 percent of the county's average quality score of all farms granted preliminary approval by the SADC in the previous three fiscal years. In addition to the minimum ranking score requirement, the SADC has also adopted new minimum standards related to farm acreage, tillable land, soil capability, and criteria intended to ensure that the land in question has development potential.

Staff has reviewed these new minimum standards and is in the process of confirming that all farms targeted by the County meet or exceed the new SADC requirements. Staff does not anticipate that these new standards will greatly impact the County's current farmland preservation targets. Long before these recent rule changes, Burlington County's Farmland Preservation Program adopted comprehensive standards ensuring that investments in farmland preservation are strategic and preserve the best farms in areas of the County where the business of agriculture has the greatest chance of remaining operationally viable.

In order for a landowner to be eligible to apply for easement or fee simple sale to the County, the land in question must meet the County's Acquisition Targeting List (ATL) Criteria and be in the County's Agriculture Development Area (ADA). Enclosed is a copy of the County's ATL and ADA Policies.

Please review the attached DRAFT ATL to determine if your municipality continues to promote the preservation of those farms currently listed in your municipality. This list contains various farms that have already submitted applications for farmland preservation and are at various stages of the preservation process. In evaluating the draft ATL, please notify us of any subdivisions that have been approved or are pending for these properties and of any changes in the zoning applicable to them.

Please consider nominating additional farms for consideration that are not currently included on the draft ATL. The CADB plans to evaluate the requests for inclusion on the FINAL ATL and will approve a final list before the end of the year. The final ATL will be sent to the SADC with a draft of the County's new Comprehensive Farmland Preservation Plan. Once approved by the SADC, farms on the ATL will be "pre-approved" as targeted farms, as defined by the new SADC regulations, and will be eligible to apply to the farmland preservation program.

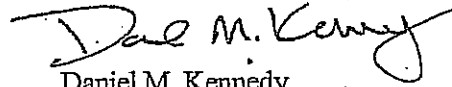
I request that formal comments and/or recommendations regarding the draft ATL be submitted to my attention no later than November 15, 2007. If the draft ATL meets your approval and there are no additional farms suggested, please note that there is nothing further that you need to do at this time. **A formal response to this inquiry is not required.** If an owner of a targeted farm chooses to apply to the County's Farmland Preservation Program in the future, the municipality will be notified and will be required to adopt a resolution of support prior to the County proceeding with the preservation process.

As you may already know, New Jersey's dedicated funding source for farmland, open space, and historic preservation through the Garden State Preservation Trust (GSPT) is dwindling. Though a small step was taken for short-term funding, we are disappointed to report that long-term funding uncertainty still exists. Thankfully, due to the overwhelming support from Burlington County's residents to continue the County's preservation tax, Burlington County will be able to maintain its commitment to preserving the highest quality farms in an effort to sustain a vibrant agricultural industry into the future.

Burlington County has long been acknowledged as the leader in farmland preservation in the "Garden State" and recently was recognized by The Farmland Preservation Report as the 6th best County-based farmland preservation program in the United States. This success is due in large part to cooperative partnerships between the County, the State, and our partner municipalities that have demonstrated strong support for the Farmland Preservation Program. As we prepare for the future, we hope that we can count on your continued support to further our common goals.

Thank you in advance for your assistance in this matter. Please feel free to contact me at the Dept. of Resource Conservation, (856) 642-3850 or via email at dkennedy@co.burlington.nj.us, if you have any questions.

Sincerely,



Daniel M. Kennedy

Farmland Preservation Program Coordinator

Cc: William S. Haines, Jr., Freeholder
Augustus M. Mosca, County Administrator
Mary Pat Robbie, Director, Dept. of Resource Conservation
Mark Remsa, Director, Dept. of Economic Development and Regional Planning
Tim Brill, Planning Manager, SADC
Municipal Planning Board Secretary / AAC Chairman

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