



Board of County Commissioners

County of Hunterdon
71 Main Street, Building #1
PO Box 2900
Flemington, NJ 08822-2900

MEDIA RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Contact: Matt Holt, Commissioner

jmholt@co.hunterdon.nj.us

Hunterdon Farmland Preservation Surpasses 35,000 Acres

460 Farms Now Preserved In County



Hunterdon County achieved a major milestone in farm preservation, surpassing 35,000 acres of permanently preserved farmland with the recent closings on easements for three county farms, County Commissioner Matt Holt reported at the July 20th Commissioner Board meeting.

Holt, the Board's liaison for Planning and Land Use, stated, "Over the years I have served on the Board, since 2007, I have seen the county reach several milestones in farmland preservation, because maintaining the agricultural economy and heritage of the county has long been a priority for this Board.

The first family farm to be preserved in New Jersey was preserved in Franklin Township, Hunterdon County in 1985. Thirty-six years and 460 farms later, agriculture continues to be a viable and integral part of Hunterdon's economy and geography."

Holt reported, "The farms that recently put the county over 35,000 acres preserved include: Raritan Township's nearly 160-acre Bowlby Farm on Reaville Avenue, that was closed on June 24th; Delaware Township's 60-acre Curtis Farm, the last unpreserved farm in the Rosemont Valley, that closed on June 25th and a 34-acre farm on Rainbow Hill, in East Amwell that was closed on June 30th."

Holt added, "All the preservation that has been achieved can be credited to the judicious and strategic use of the county open space fund by the Board, a dedicated staff, great guidance from the County Ag Development Board, a willingness by farm owners to participate in the program, and the development of funding partners that makes preservation continually possible."

Board Director Susan J. Soloway added to Commissioner Holt's report, stating, "Keeping Hunterdon County's agricultural heritage, which includes preserving landscapes and views, and the rural nature of much of the county, will continue to be a priority for this Board.

Land preservation is one of the key reasons why Hunterdon County continues to be recognized as one of the healthiest, safest and best places to live in America."



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According to the County's Planning and Land Use Department, creative use of funding has been a key in the obtaining this milestone. A County Cooperative grant with the State Agriculture Development Committee (SADC) closed three adjacent properties under 3 separate easements on the Bowlby farm in Raritan Township totaling 159.8 acres. A Municipal Planning Incentive Grant in partnership with East Amwell Township and the SADC was used on a 34-acre parcel adjacent to previously preserved land. A Hunterdon County Open Space Grant in cooperation with the New Jersey Conservation Foundation (NJCF) successfully preserved the 60-acre Curtis Farm, the last unpreserved farm in the Rosemont valley in Delaware Township.

"Hunterdon County and its Municipal and Nonprofit preservation partners are to be congratulated on their commitment to preserving such important farmland," said New Jersey Department of Agriculture Secretary Douglas Fisher, who chairs the SADC. "The county has always had a strong participation and partnership with landowners and agriculturalists in this program."

Alison Mitchell, Assistant Director and Acting Director of Development at NJCF added that "beginning with the neighboring Fisher and Plesher farms in the 1980's, there's been a wonderful partnership between NJCF, the landowners, the County, Delaware Township, neighbors, and private supporters working to realize the vision of a preserved farm belt spanning the beautiful scenic, historic valley. The Curtis Farm is the last piece in the puzzle, and it is fantastic to celebrate its protection and the preservation of 35,000 acres in Hunterdon County."

Hunterdon County has leveraged \$36.8 million in County funding with \$269 million in local, non-profit, state, and federal funding to keep preserved farms on the tax rolls and in private ownership while ensuring continued agricultural use. Hunterdon County boasts over 1,600 farms and produces \$92 million in agricultural products each year

The Hunterdon County GIS Division is designing a time lapse web map showing the progression of preserved farmland within the County since that first farm preserved in 1985. A list of preserved farms is maintained on the Hunterdon County Agriculture Development Board (CADB) website at <https://www.co.hunterdon.nj.us/cadb.htm> and the SADC hosts an interactive web map of preserved farms statewide at <https://www.nj.gov/agriculture/sadc/farmpreserve/progress/>.

The CADB continues to work with landowners to preserve farms and is accepting applications, please contact Bob Hornby at CADB@co.hunterdon.nj.us or (908)788-1490 for further information.