

Hunterdon County Agriculture Development Board Meeting
Rt 12 County Complex Building 1 Assembly Room
July 13, 2023 @ 8:00 pm

Members in Attendance:

Dave Bond – Chairman
Susan Blew
Bill Bowlby
Alex Hammerstone
Forest Locandro
John Perehinys
Marc Phillips
Liz Schmid - *via Phone*

CADB Staff Present:

Katrina Campbell, Esq. County Counsel
Katherine Fullerton, Supervising Planner
Bob Hornby, CADB Administrator
Kevin Milz, HCSCD

Open Public Meeting Act:

Chairman Dave Bond opened the meeting at 8:00 p.m. and read the Open Public Meeting Act:

"This meeting is being held in accordance with the provisions of the Open Public Meeting Act. Adequate notice has been provided by prominently posting and maintaining so posted throughout the year on the first floor of the County Administration Building, Main St., Flemington, New Jersey a public place reserved for such announcements, and by mailing on or before January 17, 2023, to The Hunterdon Democrat, Star Ledger, The Trenton Times, The Courier News and The Express Times newspapers and TAP Into it newspaper and designated by the Hunterdon County Agriculture Development Board to receive such notices, and by filing with the Hunterdon County Clerk a schedule of the times and dates of such meetings."

Pledge of Allegiance:

Roll Call: Absent: Bob Hoffman, Christian Bench, Dave Kyle, & Megan Muehlbauer.

Approval of Minutes:

- **Minutes of the June 8, 2023 CADB Meeting** – Bill Bowlby made a MOTION to approve, Liz Schmid SECONDED. All in favor by voice vote

Communications and Administrative Business:

- **CADB Staff Update** –
 - Received a letter from The Land Conservancy of NJ. They have been working with two farms, one in Delaware Twp. and one in Union Twp. They will attend the September meeting to discuss preserving them through the SADC Non-Profit Program. Bob went on a site visit, still a lot of details to work out. Bob asked if any Board members would like to do a site visit ahead of the September meeting. He will set up a date and time. Board members John Perehinys and Liz Schmid expressed interest in a site visit.
 - The Appraisal Formula support letter is in the Packet. No action since the Senate hearing in June.

- **Active Applications**
 - **Amwell Valley Conservancy** (East and West Amwell Twps.) - At June meeting SADC approved the offer on the East half. Should have information from the land owners soon.
 - **Merrywind Farm** (Tewksbury Twp.) – Direct Easement, part of it is in Washington Twp. in Morris County. Closed on June 14th.
- **Special Occasion Events** – Still sorting out the details. Discussion ensued.
- **Monitoring Update:**
 - Bob stated that the season ended June 30th. All the reports were filed with SADC, thanked Kevin for his work. Kevin stated any issues he ran into have been resolved.

State Agriculture Development Committee (SADC) Updates:

Bob spoke on behalf of SADC

- Attended the June 22 meeting, Soil Protection Standards were approved to be released for official public comment.

Chair Comments:

- None at this time

Old Business:

- None at this time.

New Business:

- **Soil Protection Standards** – SADC accepting Public Comment. This is the last opportunity to say something. Permanent disturbance for agricultural purposes is proposed up to the greater of 12% or 4 acres per easement, a waiver of up to 15% for current farms, farms that are over that 15% would get an additional 2% or 1 acre. Rowan University is doing the mapping to be sent to all the landowners Discussion ensued. Chairman Bond asked for a MOTION to provide a comment opposing the retroactive nature of changing the terms of the deed. Forest Locandro made a MOTION, John Perehynys SECONDED. All in favor by voice vote. Motion Carried. Bob will prepare the letter.
- **MOTION to cancel the August CADB meeting.** Chairman Bond asked for a MOTION to cancel the August CADB meeting except in the case of an emergency. John Perehynys made a MOTION, Bill Bowlby SECONDED. All in favor by Voice Vote, Motion Carried.

Right To Farm Matters:

- None at this Time

Public Comment:

- Patricia Springwell, Clinton Twp. – Stated her comments and concerns on the Soil Protection Standards.
- More discussion about the Soil Protection Standards among Board members ensued.

Adjournment:

- MOTION to Adjourn made by Marc Phillips, John Perekhyns SECONDED. All in favor, meeting adjourned at 8:52 pm

Respectfully submitted:

Bob Hornby, CADB Administrator

Prepared with the assistance of Colleen Runge, Planning Department Clerk

Hunterdon County Agriculture Development Board

Hunterdon County Administration Building #1

Route 12 County Complex

PO Box 2900

Flemington, New Jersey 08822-2900

CADB@co.hunterdon.nj.us

(908) 788-1490

June 9, 2023

Senator Turner- 15th District
Senator Zwicker- 16th District
Senator Steinhardt- 23rd District

RE: Senate Bill 3279

Dear Senators-

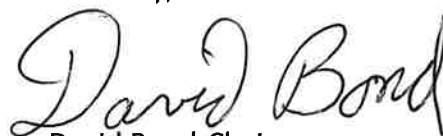
New Jersey is a national leader in Farmland Preservation and Hunterdon County is a leader in New Jersey. New Jersey has preserved 260,000 acres of farmland since 1985 in cooperation with county and municipal partners; 482 preserved farms encompassing over 36,000 acres are in Hunterdon County. This base of preserved land supports \$92 million in annual agricultural economic activity in the County and the continuation of family farms as a viable business model.

In recent years Hunterdon County has seen a dramatic decrease in the number of landowners seeking to preserve their farms. This reduction in applications is attributable to offers for farmland preservation easements being too low for landowners to accept. The current system of real estate appraisals does not consider the agricultural, environmental, and economic benefits of agricultural land. The current process fails to address pressures on the agricultural sector from warehouse and solar development or the purchase and conversation of agricultural land for estate-sized residential use.

The Hunterdon County Agriculture Development Board believes that the way to correct this issue is for the State to adopt an alternative calculation method for determining farmland easement values. Senate Bill 3279 directly addresses this matter and will lead to an increase in both the number and quality of applications received and preserved with public tax money. The Hunterdon County Agriculture Development Board strongly urges the Senate to support this bill.

On behalf of the entire Hunterdon County Agriculture Development Board, we thank you for your continued support of agriculture in Hunterdon and throughout the state.

Sincerely,



David Bond-Chair

Hunterdon County Agriculture Development Board

Hunterdon County Agriculture Development Board

Hunterdon County Administration Building #1
314 Route 12, Hunterdon County Complex
PO Box 2900
Flemington, New Jersey 08822-2900
(908)788-1490
cadb@co.hunterdon.nj.us

August 7, 2023

RE: Proposed New Rules: NJAC 2:76-25.1 and 25A.1; "Soil Protection Standards"
Proposal Number: PRN-2023-079

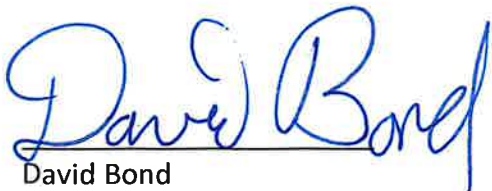
Director Payne and Members of the State Agriculture Development Committee:

The Hunterdon County Agriculture Development Board (HCADB) supports farmland preservation as a public/private working lands initiative. Family farms are a historical and viable \$92 million industry in Hunterdon County. Farmland easements in Hunterdon County cover almost 36,500 acres at a public cost approaching \$305 million. 30% of the Farm Assessed acreage in Hunterdon County is permanently restricted for agricultural use. An additional 1,164 acres are currently in the process of preservation.

The HCADB appreciates the work done by the State Agriculture Development Committee (SADC) on the Soil Protection Standards and commends the SADC Staff in gathering stakeholder comments throughout the process.

The HCADB objects to the retrospective nature of the Soil Protection Standards as they serve to modify the terms of easements that have been previously agreed to by easement holders. Roughly half of the 483 easements in Hunterdon are at least 15 years old. Many easements are no longer held by the original applicant and farm purchasers have made a monetary judgement of value based upon an understanding of the agreed terms. Once a permanent easement has been agreed upon the terms should not be amended. Confidence in the Preservation Program relies on landowners understanding what they are agreeing to. Those terms cannot change over time or with subsequent owners. The HCADB is concerned that the proposed Standards set a precedent to undermine a popular program that has been beneficial to continued viable agriculture in Hunterdon County.

On behalf of the Board, thank you for your time and attention,



David Bond
Hunterdon CADB Chair

Cc: Hunterdon Board of County Commissioners

Hunterdon County Agriculture Development Board

Hunterdon County Administration Building #1
314 Route 12, Hunterdon County Complex
PO Box 2900
Flemington, New Jersey 08822-2900
(908)788-1490
cadb@co.hunterdon.nj.us

August 30, 2023

RE: Proposed New Rules: NJAC 2:76-25.1 and 25A.1; "Soil Protection Standards"
Proposal Number: PRN-2023-079
Request for Public Hearing

Director Payne and Members of the State Agriculture Development Committee:

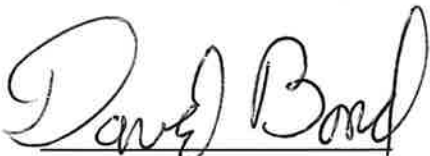
The Hunterdon County Agriculture Development Board (HCADB) requests a public hearing on the proposed Soil Protection Standards. The proposed standards will have substantial effect on the 483 easements in Hunterdon County on close to 36,500 acres at a total cost approaching \$305 million. The HCADB is concerned that the proposed Standards set a precedent to undermine a popular program that has been beneficial to continued viable agriculture in Hunterdon County.

The HCADB supports farmland preservation as a public/private working lands initiative. Family farms are a historical and viable \$92 million industry in Hunterdon County. 43% of Hunterdon County is farm assessed and 30% of the farm assessed acreage is permanently restricted for agricultural use. An additional 1,262 acres are currently in the process of preservation.

The HCADB appreciates the work done by the State Agriculture Development Committee (SADC) on the proposed Standards and commends the SADC Staff in gathering stakeholder comments throughout the process. A public hearing is the logical conclusion to the effort as confidence in the Preservation Program relies on landowners understanding the nature of any restrictions.

The HCADB has previously objected to the retrospective nature of the Standards as they serve to modify the terms of easements. Roughly half of the 483 easements in Hunterdon are at least 15 years old. Many easements are no longer held by the original applicant and farm purchasers have made a monetary judgement of value based upon an understanding of the agreed terms. Once a permanent easement has been agreed upon the terms should not be amended. Those terms cannot change over time or with subsequent owners.

On behalf of the Board, thank you for your time and attention,



David Bond
Hunterdon CADB Chair

Cc: Hunterdon Board of County Commissioners