

## **CHAPTER 4: FUTURE FARMLAND PRESERVATION PROGRAM**

### ***Preservation Goals***

In 2007, the CADB established yearly preservation goals of 1500 acres per year up to the year 2018. Compared to previous years when 1,000 preserved acres in one year would be unimaginable, these yearly acreage goals may seem high. However, the substantial acreage amounts reflect the increased interest in the program as shown by 2007 in which the county has preserved the greatest amount of farms in a given year. The goals are helpful for planning purposes and are a State required component of this Farmland Preservation Plan.

### **Hunterdon County Farmland Preservation Goals**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Preserved Farmland (Acreage)</b>
January, 2008	23,000
January, 2009	24,500
January, 2010	26,000
January, 2011	27,500
January, 2012	29,000
January, 2013	30,500
January, 2014	32,000
January, 2015	33,500
January, 2016	35,000
January, 2017	36,500

To define the CADB's role in farmland preservation and to help guide future policies, the following mission statement and program objectives were adopted by the CADB:

#### **Hunterdon CADB Mission Statement**

“Promote the present and future of Hunterdon County agriculture by preserving agricultural land and by promoting public education and agricultural viability.”

#### ***Program Objectives***

- ❑ Create critical masses of preserved farmland
- ❑ Preserve farms characterized by soils of prime and statewide importance
- ❑ Give priority to farms with implemented soil conservation plans

- ❑ Coordinate CADB preservation efforts with State Agriculture Development Committee (SADC), municipal, and nonprofit organization farmland preservation efforts
- ❑ Promote the education of farmers, government officials, and the public about farmland preservation, the Right to Farm Act, and other pertinent agricultural matters
- ❑ Work with municipal, county, and state agencies and nonprofit organizations to encourage tourism
- ❑ Promote agribusiness opportunities through education and advocacy
- ❑ Promote soil and water stewardship on preserved farms by requiring an implemented soil conservation plan that is periodically updated

### *Achieving CADB Program Goals and Objectives*

The CADB has developed ambitious goals to preserve farmland through its farmland retention programs. Achieving the acreage goals for farmland retention is the CADB's most challenging task. To achieve this goal, the CADB will have to be more aggressive in soliciting new applications that meet the SADC and County minimum requirements for the County PIG program. This can be accomplished using the GIS project area maps and the various brochures and slide presentations that have been prepared by the SADC and CADB. Donations should also be solicited, using a planned and comprehensive approach.

### *Project Areas*

In developing the goals and objectives of the County of Hunterdon, project areas were the ideal way to focus preservation efforts into specific locales. Many factors were considered when developing the project areas for Hunterdon County. The areas were developed using the results of past preservation efforts as well as thoughts of where preservation should go in the future. In many cases, those areas are outside of the ADA in Hunterdon County. With this approach, it allows for the inclusion of those farms that were not previously in the ADA to be considered for preservation. However, they will only be eligible for state cost sharing after the ADA is amended to contain them.

Already preserved farms were the foundation that laid the base for the general areas as the preservation of large tracts of agricultural land. Added to the preserved farms as a criterion were the farms that have already received final approval from the SADC for preservation. After those farms were added to the base layer, farms that are enrolled into the 8-year program were brought in as well. The purpose of focusing on areas in which farms were already preserved is to preserve farms to allow for a more consistent and seamless agriculture land base. This process was an effort to center on farmable soils and the location of permanent agriculture. The locations of parcels that are deed restricted for agriculture as well as Open Space that is compatible with agriculture was also brought in as a factor to adjust the boundary lines to further develop the project areas around land uses that allow for more of an agriculturally friendly atmosphere and environment.

Finally, public input was sought on the development of the project areas to determine the areas in which the farming community feels is valuable in the contexts of agriculture. Through this course of action, seven project areas were identified. The seven areas are as follows:

1. North
2. South
3. East
4. West
5. Lebanon

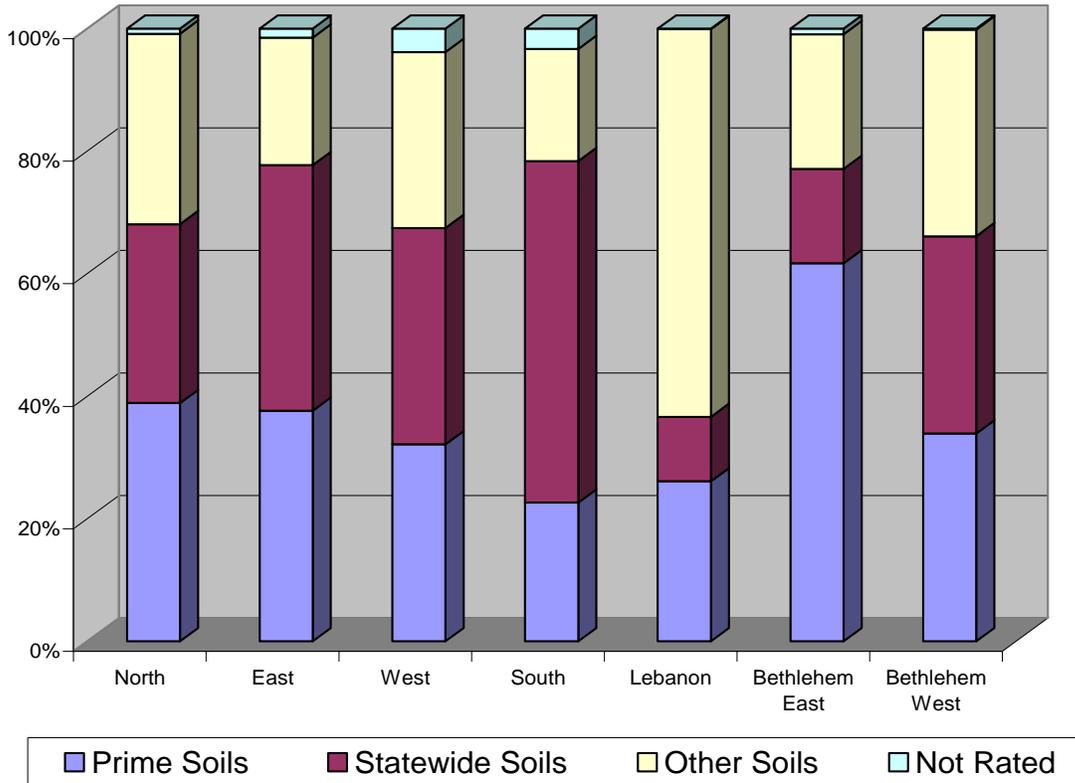
- 6. Bethlehem East
- 7. Bethlehem West

Because agricultural land in Hunterdon County is so widespread in some areas, project areas were designed to reflect that aspect. In other parts of the county, where agricultural areas are more defined, the project areas are more closely tailored. This provides a better focus to coordinate preservation efforts with municipalities as well as provide flexibility for Hunterdon County landowners that may have previously been disinterested in preservation. As a prerequisite for inclusion in the ADA is landowner consent, those landowners that are new to the area or perhaps were not interested in inclusion in the ADA previously, with project areas that encompass more area than the previously defined ADA it allows for preservation opportunities that would not normally be available to those landowners located outside of the ADA. In order to be eligible for state cost sharing, the ADA must still be amended however.

For each project area, an analysis was completed to identify the amount and density of preserved farmland, pending applications, and publicly owned open space within the area. Given the small amount of areas actually accessed by public sewer and the limited amount of capacity that those areas have, sewer service areas were not a significant factor in determining the project areas. A soils analysis was done as well to determine the exact soils make up. The tables below represent those figures.

	Total Area Acreage:	Total Acres Preserved:	Total Acres, Applications Pending:	Open Space Acreage:	Total Acres Remaining:
North	16164	1093	220	1832	13019, 80%
South	88235	10389	1647	5460	70739, 80%
East	14030	3234	674	1315	8807, 63%
West	54085	4558	627	2744	46156, 85%
Lebanon	1450	44	162	-	1244, 86%
Bethlehem East	2482	799	-	569	1114, 45%
Bethlehem West	1389	178	214	34	963, 69%
Totals:	177835	20294	3544	11954	142043, 80%

## Project Area Soils



## Soils Breakdown Chart

	North	East	West	South	Lebanon	Bethlehem East	Bethlehem West	Total: 177715
<b>Prime Soils:</b>	6281	5279	17373	19967	378	1527	471	51276
Percentage of total Acreage:	39%	37%	32%	23%	26%	62%	34%	29%
<b>Statewide Soils:</b>	4715	5621	19095	49139	152	381	447	79553
Percentage of total Acreage:	29%	40%	35%	56%	10%	15%	32%	45%
<b>Other Soils:</b>	5023	2921	15536	16130	917	544	468	41539
Percentage of total Acreage:	31%	21%	29%	18%	63%	22%	33%	23%
<b>Not Rated:</b>	132	202	2057	2922	1	22	2	5338
Percentage of total Acreage:	<1%	1.5%	4%	3%	<1%	<1%	<1%	3%

Source: NRCS SSURGO Version 2 Soils

A map of the Hunterdon County Project Areas may be found in the appendix (Map 5).

## Project Area Soils in Active Agricultural Lands

	North	East	West	South	Lebanon	Bethlehem West	Bethlehem East
Prime Soils:	3976	3170	10388	11489	288	1397	266
Percentage of total Acreage:	67%	48%	46%	33%	36%	66%	38%
Statewide Soils:	207	2373	8326	20345	198	430	295
Percentage of total Acreage:	3%	36%	37%	58%	25%	20%	42%
Other Soils:	1730	962	3465	2830	316	274	135
Percentage of total Acreage:	29%	15%	15%	8%	39%	13%	19%
Not rated:	6	42	215	197	0	2	0
Percentage of total Acreage:	0%	1%	1%	1%	0%	0%	0%
<b>Total:</b>	<b>5919</b>	<b>6548</b>	<b>22394</b>	<b>34860</b>	<b>803</b>	<b>2104</b>	<b>696</b>

Source: 2002 DEP LULC

### ***Minimum Eligibility Criteria***

The SADC has created minimum criteria to designate what qualifications a parcel need to adhere to in order to be considered for a cost share by the SADC. The SADC has split the qualifications up into two general land sizes: farms that are 10 acres and less and farms that are greater than 10 acres.

#### **For farms that are Less than or equal to 10 Acres**

- Farm must Produce \$2,500 worth of agricultural or horticultural products annually
- At least 75% of the property, or a minimum of 5 acres tillable, which ever is less
- That tillable acreage must consist of soils that are capable of supporting agricultural or horticultural production such as Prime and Statewide soils
- Further, the land must have development potential. To determine development potential:
  - The municipal zoning ordinance for the property as it is appraised must allow additional development (at least one residential site beyond what is the sites potential)
  - There must be access to the property that allows further development. If that access is only available through an easement, that easement must specify that further subdivision is possible.
  - If access is through an easement, and it is subject to ordinances governing allowable subdivisions, common driveways and shared access, it must be confirmed in writing by a municipal zoning officer or planner.

- 80% or more of the soils cannot be classified as freshwater or modified agricultural wetlands according to the DEP.
- 80% or more of the land cannot have slopes greater than 15% as identified by the NRCS soils map 2.2

**OR**

- If the farm does not meet the previous criteria, BUT the land is eligible for allocation of development credits from a transfer of development potential program that has been authorized and adopted by law, then it is eligible to enter the preservation process.

**For Farms that are Greater than 10 acres**

- At least 50% of the property or a minimum of 25 acres tillable, which ever is less
- That tillable acreage must consist of soils that are capable of supporting agricultural or horticultural production
- The land must have development potential. To determine development potential:
  - Municipal zoning ordinance for the property as it is appraised must allow additional development (at least one residential site beyond what is the sites potential)
  - There must be access to the property that allows further development. In the case that access is only available through an easement, that easement must specify that further subdivision is possible.
  - If access is through an easement, and it is subject to ordinances governing allowable subdivisions, common driveways and shared access, it must be confirmed in writing by a municipal zoning officer
- Land that is less than 25 acres must not contain more than 80% soils that are classified as freshwater or modified agriculture wetlands according to the DEP
- Land that is less than 25 acres, 80% or more of the land cannot have slopes greater than 15% as identified by the NRCS soils map 2.2

**OR**

- The land is eligible for allocation of development credits from a transfer of development potential program that has been authorized and adopted by law

Lands that do not meet the minimum requirements are not eligible for a State cost share grant for farmland preservation purposes.

The CADB has adopted their own criteria in addition the state’s minimums in an effort to tailor down the applications to those that represent productive farms that are an asset to Hunterdon County’s agriculture community, and will continue to be once preserved. The criteria for the County PIG program can be found in the Appendix. The CADB has approved a policy in regards to the minimum acreage for County Planning Incentive Grant applications. This policy requires that the minimum size of a County PIG application be 40 acres unless the application directly adjoins a preserved farm. The CADB will also examine each application that is less than 40 acres on a case by case basis. These criteria are used to score all perspective farms in order to place each farm in an overall ranking to determine which farms will be preserved. The amount of funding available in a given year will determine how many farms on the ending ranked list get funded and thereby preserved.

An outline of the Hunterdon CADB scoring criteria can be found in the appendix.

### ***County Targeted Farms***

In keeping with Hunterdon County's Farmland Preservation Plan and planning for future preservation, a list of targeted farms has been developed. This list has been compiled as a result of farmer's inquiries and interest in farmland preservation as well as coordination with Municipal PIG programs. This outreach to municipalities has been instrumental in targeting those farms that will fit well into the previous preservation efforts of the County and the municipalities. With over 23,000 acres preserved, the focus has been to fill in contiguous blocks of preserved farms along with making preserving large tracts a priority. The targeted farms are listed as potential applications within the designated County Project Areas. The eligibility of the specific farms have yet to be determined, and will be addressed at the time an application is submitted to the Hunterdon CADB.

Please see the Targeted Farms list located in the appendix.

### ***CADB Policies***

#### ***Housing***

Residential opportunities on permanently preserved farmland are severely limited because the developments rights on the farm have been purchased. However, there are special situations where a new residence may be warranted given the size of the farm and the nature of the operation. For these reasons, the CADB and the SADC permit housing on preserved farmland provided they meet the stringent criteria for "residential dwelling site opportunities", agricultural labor housing, or are located on exception areas. Although, there is one area in regards to housing where the views of the Hunterdon CADB and the SADC differ. The SADC does not permit on-site housing for family members on preserved farms; conversely the CADB feels that this is detrimental to the farming family, as it leaves no opportunity for children to stay on the property to continue farming. The CADB is bound by the state regulations however and is only permitted to approve housing opportunities as allowed by the deed of easement.

#### **▪ RDSO's**

SADC regulations permit up to one dwelling unit per one hundred acres of vacant farmland including existing dwellings, referred to as a Residual Dwelling Site Opportunity (RDSO). The allocation of an RDSO must be approved by the CADB and the SADC. The value of an RDSO is evaluated at the time that the property is appraised, early on in the process. After the farm is preserved, the landowner may apply to exercise the RDSO. For RDSO approval, CADB and SADC criteria must be satisfied which generally requires that the RDSO has a minimal impact on the existing agricultural operation.

When farms apply to programs that are governed by CADB oversight and are eligible for an RDSO, the CADB generally tries to discourage RDSO use, but is accepting of those applications that choose that option as long as the applicant understands that the location must be approved by the CADB when the applicant chooses to exercise the RDSO option.

#### **▪ Agricultural Labor Housing**

The requirements for constructing agricultural labor housing are much less stringent than RDSOs, provided the house is for non-family related farm labor. Any number of agricultural units may be constructed on permanently preserved farmland provided at least one tenant/resident actively works on the farm and there are no blood relatives to the landowner

residing in the house. Any existing agricultural labor housing that is destroyed may be reconstructed. Once an agricultural labor unit is no longer inhabited by an agricultural laborer, the unit must be vacated. This policy prevents abuse of the program where the units could be rented out to non farm related tenants.

When agriculture labor housing issues are brought up before the CADB, the board is extremely scrutinizing of the application because of the high potential for abuse.

#### ▪ **House replacement**

The CADB is understanding when it comes to housing replacement as long as the applicant is not excessive in the choice for a replacement house. The Board feels that the house should meet the needs for the farm and not create an estate-like situation with an excessively larger footprint than what was there previously. The need for expansion is realized; however the board feels that it should be within reason. The CADB review each application in a case by case basis and has no maximum square footage percentage standard.

#### ***Divisions***

Due to the agricultural trends over the last few decades towards smaller, more productive farms, there are opportunities for a landowner to divide a permanently preserved farm provided the division is for agricultural purposes and both parcels result in agriculturally viable tracts. An agriculturally viable parcel has been defined as a farm that is of sufficient size and soil quality such that it can accommodate a variety of agricultural uses suitable for the County. The CADB follows the State rules when taking into consideration agricultural subdivision applications and adheres to the criteria as it pertains to the purpose of the subdivision and the resulting parcels remaining agriculturally viable.

#### ***Exceptions***

An exception allows a landowner to remove a portion of the farm from the deed restrictions prior to closing. There are severable and non-severable exceptions. Some landowners may prefer to remove the land immediately under the existing house so that there is no confusion in the future about possible additions or permitted uses in the house. These requests are considered on a case by case basis. This is a type of a *non-severable exception*. Another type of non-severable exception is the location for a future house. The CADB typically approves this type of nonseverable exception when a farm is vacant and is less than 100 acres (and therefore not eligible for an RDSO). This reflects the CADB's belief that a farm with a residence will be better managed than a vacant farm parcel. In both cases, the excepted land cannot be severed or subdivided from the farm. Non-agricultural uses are also reasons for the granting of exception areas, both severable and non-severable, as the CADB recognizes the landowners ability to enjoy their own property. This also applies to proposed or future non-agricultural uses that may occur on the property.

The other reason for an exception is to locate a buildable lot upon which a home might be constructed in the future. In this case, the land may be severed from the farm with the necessary local planning approvals, and is therefore referred to as a *severable exception*. The size of the exception is typically the minimum lot size for that zoning district. The severable exception can present a problem because it introduces a new housing unit to the farm area that is not related to the farm itself. The CADB has specific criteria for approving an exception, including the size of the exception, its impact on the existing agricultural operation, and the number of existing housing units already existing on the farm. Each application is reviewed differently as the layout

of the property demands different treatment. Right to Farm language is also included on all deeds, should the exception be severed from the farm. In all of the above cases, the acreage of the exception is deducted from the final purchase price of the easement.

The CADB looks at all applications individually, however, they do encourage all applicants to take a non-severable exception area around the dwelling or existing structures on the property. This is due to the potential for future conflicts if left under the easement. Severable Exceptions are generally discouraged by the CADB as this breaks up large tracts of farmland and provides an opportunity for conflicts between farmers and non-farmers.

### ***Funding Plan***

The Agriculture Retention and Development Act of 1983 established New Jersey's Farmland Preservation Program. Even earlier, Hunterdon County had begun what would become one of the most successful farmland preservation efforts statewide. In 1980, voters approved a \$2.2 million bond referendum for farmland preservation.

Recognizing the need for a stable source of funding, the Hunterdon County Board of Chosen Freeholders asked County voters in November 1999, whether the County should have a dedicated open space/farmland preservation tax of up to \$0.03 per \$100 assessed valuation to fund the preservation programs. County voters approved this tax by a two to one margin.

For the first five-year period, commencing January 1, 2000 and ending December 31, 2004, Hunterdon County has collected a total of \$23,718,415.72, which has been successfully used and leveraged by the County to acquire approximately 2,430 acres of additional parkland and open space and preserve another 7,384 acres of farmland. Of the total collected, Hunterdon County allocated \$2,371,841.57 each to its municipalities and to area nonprofit organizations for additional open space preservation. Thus far, nineteen (19) municipalities have received a total of \$1,949,572.89 from their respective allocation of County funds to preserve approximately 3,211 acres for farmland and open space preservation including the preparation of relevant plan elements of municipal master plan and other eligible project expenses. Seven (7) municipalities have requested their allocation of funds be reserved and banked for future year considerations. Similarly, six (6) nonprofit organizations have individually applied and submitted fourteen (14) applications, in the total amount of \$2,097,069.88, to preserve approximately 1,103 acres of more land for open space preservation and conservation purposes. The lands that have been preserved by nonprofit organizations constitute a total market value of \$10,501,858.18. Generally speaking, the County and municipalities split 40% of the cost. The remaining 60% is paid by the State.

Hunterdon County allocated an additional \$1,984,500.00 in 2006 for its municipalities and area nonprofit organizations for continued open space preservation purposes. This amount constitutes 15% of the total tax collected in 2005, which was previously authorized in the amount of \$6,315,000.00 during the beginning of 2004, and as part of the second five-year Open space Tax Referendum and approved Question. The remainder of Hunterdon County's Open Space Tax revenue will be used to continue funding the County Farmland Preservation Program acquiring lands for the Hunterdon County Park System and to preserve, renovate and restore County-owned historic structures, sites and facilities.

For Historic Preservation, The Hunterdon County Open Space Trust Fund may be used for the "historic preservation of County historic properties, structures, facilities, sites, areas or objects."

Since the Trust Fund accrues a limited amount each year, the expenditure of these funds must be considered. The following criteria ensure that the facilities are “historic and that the expenditure of County monies is an efficient and appropriate use of public dollars.

- County owned historic facilities may be considered for the Trust Fund if they are listed, eligible or potentially eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.
- Projects that are unlikely to receive funding through any other program should be given priority.
- Projects that may leverage monies for other program, i.e. matching grants, should be given priority.
- Properties that need to replace or repair structure elements that will contribute to their historical significance should be given priority

Source: 2007 Hunterdon County Growth Management Plan  
2000 Hunterdon County Open Space, Farmland and Historic Preservation Trust Fund Plan

Thus far, a total of \$37 million has been collected for the preservation of over 22,203 acres of farmland, 2939 acres of County parkland, and 5622 total acres of municipal and nonprofit land acquisitions. Prior to the passage of the Hunterdon County Open Space, Recreation, Farmland and Historic Preservation Trust Fund in 1999, the County spent over \$23.5 million from capital funds on the purchase of approximately 5,400 acres of parkland. Most of these purchases were fee simple, rather than easements, and averaged \$4000 per acre in County contributions.

As of August 24, 2007, there have been 252 farms preserved in Hunterdon County. Since the first farm was preserved in 1985, the County has invested an estimated \$27 million in total costs to preserve a total of over 22,203 acres of farmland. This can be seen geographically in Map 4 in the appendix. This success has been made possible through partnerships with municipalities and the state who have contributed over \$26 million and \$118 million respectively.

Many municipalities have adopted municipal dedicated taxes to fund preservation programs. While this is a positive commitment towards the farmland preservation program, many of the municipalities have a low tax base and the tax revenue will not cover the entire municipal cost share of easements. Many municipalities have seen the need to bond monies in order to match the tax revenue. A few municipalities have also used bonding as a way to be proactive in acquiring farmland parcels that are in immanent danger of being developed. Because a municipality has greater flexibility when giving payouts, this becomes an attractive solution to the landowner looking for a fast payout and at the same time looking to preserve their farm. The municipality then has the option to enter the farm into a preservation program in order to recoup approximately 80% of the upfront easement cost associated with buying a development easement without the state or county cost share. The table below illustrates the municipal tax information that is available in regards to open space and farmland dedicated tax dollars.

### **Municipal Specific Open Space And Farmland Taxes**

Municipality	Open Space or Farmland Dedicated Tax	2007 Tax Rate	2007 Tax Revenue Collected	2007 Percent dedicated to farmland preservation	Comment
Alexandria Township	Yes	\$ 0.04	\$323,471.00	35%	Twp data incomplete
Bethlehem Township	Yes	\$ 0.05	\$263,531.00	N/A	
Clinton Township					No data from Twp
Delaware Township	Yes	\$ 0.06	\$537,000.00	100%	
East Amwell Township	Yes	\$ 0.04	\$314,523.00	49%	
Franklin Township	N/A				
Holland Township	Yes	\$ 0.02	\$600,000	95%	
Kingwood Township	Yes	\$ 0.03			Twp data incomplete
Lebanon Township					No data from Twp.
Raritan Township					No data from Twp
Readington Township	Yes	\$ 0.02	\$564,182.00	60%	

Those municipalities not listed above do not have a dedicated open space for farmland tax; however residents to contribute significantly to the County open space tax.

Based on a formula that commits the state to pay a higher percentage of lower cost per acre easements, the SADC provides between 60% and 80% of the funds to acquire a development easement on a farm. Hunterdon County and the municipality, in years past, have equally split the difference, typically 20% municipal and 20% county funds. The County now employs a modified cost share formula based on the appraised value of the farm to determine how the cost share amount is split between the county and the municipality. The formula is shown below:

<u>Appraisal value in \$/acre</u>	<u>% Increase in municipal cost share</u>
5,000 or less	0
5,001 to 7,000	1
7,001 to 9,000	2
9,001 to 11,000	3
11,001 and greater	4

This allows for a more even distribution of county dollars so that municipalities that garner a higher per acre value do not absorb the majority of county money available. The reverse of this is also true; municipalities with lower per acre prices will not suffer under this sliding scale system.

With the CADB goals for preservation on the 1, 5 and 10 year horizons, it is estimated that it will take a total of \$14,400,000.00 to preserve 1500 acres within one year. To preserve 7500 acres at the 5 year mark, it will take a total of \$72,000,000.00. At the 10 year horizon \$144,000,000.00 will be needed from all funding partners to preserve the goal of 15,000 acres.

### ***Hunterdon County's Participation***

The overall role of the CADB is to administer the State farmland preservation program at the local level. Final approval of applications rests with the County Board of Chosen Freeholders who have the sole authority to authorize county funding. The CADB works closely with the Freeholders so that their goals are synonymous and the approval process is predictable.

The Hunterdon County Board of Chosen Freeholders is responsible for the appointment of CADB members and the final approval and funding of farmland preservation applications. The Freeholders have historically supported agriculture and farmland preservation. They have cost-shared on farmland preservation applications since the first program in 1983. The Freeholders budget for two CADB full time employees – offices are within the Hunterdon County Planning Department. The eight person Planning Department staff provides support for the CADB and the farmland programs when appropriate.

County Counsel is appointed as counsel for the CADB and provides all legal support for all matters that come before the Board. County Counsel's office also provides legal support for all matters concerning specific farmland applications and closings. Hunterdon County has set up monthly meeting with the municipalities with County Counsel present to discuss all farmland applications and facilitate communication between all contributors to the farmland process. These status meetings have been an invaluable tool in maintaining order and momentum within the program.

A further step that was implemented by the County was the creation of a database to allow for the tracking of files through the preservation process. This database allows for multiple users to easily access the data, organized in a central location. From this central location, file information is able to be updated continuously as it comes in, allowing for up to date information available instantly to all users. Status reports on each farm are then able to be printed out and sorted. Closing costs are also easily tracked with survey information input and exact cost share amounts for all parties involved. This prevents errors when calculating the costs involved, especially when there are multiple partners and types of funding scales involved.

### ***GIS Mapping***

#### ***General Uses of GIS Mapping***

The farmland preservation program is fortunate to have at its disposal a seamless parcel map detailing every tax lot in Hunterdon County. The parcel map was developed by the Hunterdon County Division of Geographic Information Systems (GIS), and is widely employed by various County agencies. The parcel map has revolutionized the way the program communicates to the public its current activities and goals.

The maps generated from the parcel map are a tremendous benefit in describing the progress of the Hunterdon County farmland preservation program. In general, the public responds better to graphical representations than tables of statistics, and as a rule, the maps elicit a favorable

response from an audience. The greatest feedback usually comes from preserved landowners or their neighbors, who observe the amount of preservation activity going on in their neighborhood. It has been the experience of CADB staff that following a township meeting at which the map was displayed, prospective applicants contact the CADB office to inquire about the program, usually referencing where their property is located on the map.

Geospatially referenced mapping has also streamlined the application evaluation process and reduced the potential of human error in the scoring process. The new GIS method has changed a hand-drawn calculation of farm boundaries to a computer generated map with supporting data. Each bordering property use is measured digitally and entered into a digital form that calculates the score and saves it in a database. Soils data is also computed digitally to find the percentages of different soils coverage types. This provides an accurate tool to rate the assets that are inherent to the land. There still exists an opportunity for errors, even with the assistance of GIS technology; nevertheless, it is a significant improvement on the former method. As the farmland preservation program continues to grow, the need for rapid and accurate evaluations of farm properties as well as the need for accurate maps will be critical.

#### *GIS Mapping of Project Areas*

GIS technology has also proven beneficial in identifying regions of particular importance to agriculture. Geospatial analysis has helped the farmland preservation process in the development of “project areas” as spoken about earlier in this plan to consider for the County Planning Incentive Grant program. The resulting map showed all properties that have been preserved, have pending applications, have current enrollment in the 8 year program and publicly owned open space. A buffer of 1 mile around these parcels was created to better help identify close knit areas of prior preservation activity. These maps were presented to the public the better guide input into the development of the project areas. While the maps were helpful in developing areas in which the County will focus its interest, applications from individual landowners in areas not indicated will not be turned away. These applications will be addressed as the necessary changes in either the ADA or the project areas are made. The county ADA will also serve as a guide as to where agriculture is encouraged within the county. The project areas were developed to help focus resources and develop more complete clusters of preserved farmland.

Please see the Project Area map located in the appendix as Map 5.

#### ***Factors Limiting Farmland Preservation Implementation***

There are obstacles that can make it difficult to attain the projected goals for farmland preservation, the biggest of which is funding. The county and municipal funding sources have been constant; however land prices have continued to regularly go up. This will create a discrepancy if current trend of the amount of preservation per year is kept up and the funding sources are not raised to relative levels. Regular annual adjustments as well as revaluations do not compensate fully for the jump in land prices seen recently. Public support for farmland preservation is essential to increasing the flow of funding into preservation programs at all levels, the local level especially. Local support for preservation also drives municipalities to pass ordinances and change zoning in order to slow development in areas where the agriculture community is prevalent. These measures are also a response to high development pressures as the population of the county grows.