

Part 3. Agricultural Resources

Agricultural Sustainability, Viability, and Stewardship

Issue Overview

Agriculture, if it is to remain viable in the New Jersey Highlands, requires a sustainable land base. The Highlands Region contains over 859,000 acres of land of which over 118,000 acres consisted of agricultural land in 2002. Since the inception of the State Agriculture Development Committee's Farmland Preservation Program approximately 33,765 acres of agricultural land in the Highlands Region have been preserved for agricultural use. Agricultural land in the Highlands Region is an important resource that provides economic benefits to New Jersey in the form of agricultural production and agri-tourism, provides a local food source to area residents using less energy than would be required to import produce from other regions, and helps maintain the Highlands rural character. In order to preserve and sustain agricultural resources and enhance the viability of the agricultural industry, preservation of farms throughout the Highlands Region must be encouraged and funded. Programs are needed that focus more on the practices farmers can use to achieve sustainable profitability, sustainable stewardship practices for agricultural and natural resources, and sustainable coexistence with non-farmers in a densely populated state.

The preservation of agricultural land and the viability of the agricultural industry in the Highlands Region are two essential objectives of the Highlands Act. The New Jersey Legislature declared that the agricultural lands in active production in the Highlands Region are important resources of the State that should be preserved, and that the agricultural industry in the Highlands Region is a vital component of the economy, welfare and culture of the Garden State. The Legislature also declared that the maintenance of agricultural production and a positive agricultural business climate should be encouraged to the maximum extent possible wherever appropriate in the Highlands. To sustain and enhance agricultural resources and the viability of the agricultural industry, it is necessary to provide incentives and funding opportunities, to not only preserve agriculture, but to encourage land stewardship through best management practices (BMPs) that enhance the resources of the Highlands Region. As stewards of the land, many farmers already implement BMPs. The Agricultural Resources Program seeks to reward these individuals with incentives and funding opportunities.

Program Summary

This program inventories existing and preserved agricultural lands and evaluates the resource value of agricultural lands, in order to assess agricultural resources and the agricultural industry in the Highlands Region. The resource value of agricultural lands was developed by utilizing ranking criteria from the New Jersey Department of Agriculture State Agriculture Development Committee's Farmland Preservation Program and the County Agriculture Development Board farmland preservation programs. In order to maximize the preservation and stewardship of agricultural land the program shall coordinate with existing federal, State, county and non-profit farmland preservation and agricultural stewardship programs and develop alternative or innovative programs appropriate to the New Jersey Highlands Region. These programs are essential to the farmers and residents of New Jersey to sustain and enhance agricultural resources, to enhance the viability of the agricultural industry, to provide local

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**RMP Policies and
Objectives Addressed**

availability of agricultural products, and maintain the Highlands rural character.

Policy 3A1. To create and maintain an inventory of preserved farms, farmland assessed lands, other lands in agricultural use, and undeveloped vacant lands which contain soils which are highly suitable for agricultural use in the Highlands Region.

Policy 3A4. To promote farmland preservation and limit non-agricultural uses within the Agricultural Resource Areas and accord priority to the preservation of agricultural lands within Agricultural Priority Areas, through fee simple acquisition, less than fee acquisition, Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) and other agricultural land conservation techniques.

Objective 3A4a. Create and maintain a confidential inventory of agricultural lands in the Agricultural Priority Areas, in coordination with the New Jersey Department of Agriculture and the State Agriculture Development Committee, to prioritize the preservation of farmland.

Objective 3A4b. Implement through Plan Conformance Agriculture Retention/Farmland Preservation Plan elements and development regulations promoting preservation in the Agricultural Resource Areas (ARA) and limiting non-agricultural uses within the ARA to those uses that support the preservation of farmland, avoid conflicts with agriculture, maintain and enhance the sustainability and continued viability of the agricultural industry, protect Important Farmland Soils, and meet resource management and protection requirements of the RMP.

Policy 3A5. Where it is not feasible to preserve agricultural lands within the Agricultural Resource Area (ARA) by such methods as fee simple acquisition, easement acquisition, or a TDR Program, require mandatory clustering through Municipal Plan Conformance, local development review and Highlands Project Review for residential development in an ARA. Cluster development within the Planning Area that incorporates public or community on-site wastewater utilities shall meet the requirements of Policy 2J4 with Objectives 2J4a through 2J4d, and Policy 2K3 with Objectives 2K3a through 2K3e, and within the Preservation area shall meet the requirements of Policy 2I1 and Objectives 2I1a and 2I1b, and where reliant on septic systems shall meet the requirements of Objective 6G1b.

Objective 3A5a. Implement regulations requiring that cluster or conservation design development proposed within an Agricultural Resource Area support the preservation of farmland, avoid conflicts with agriculture, maintain and enhance the sustainability and continued viability of the agricultural industry, protect Important Farmland Soils and meet resource management and protection requirements of the RMP.

Objective 3A5b. Implement regulations requiring that all cluster or conservation design development proposed in an Agricultural Resource Area be buffered appropriately with existing natural resources, such as hedgerows or trees, or with new buffers to avoid conflicts between non-agricultural development and agricultural activities, and to protect existing agricultural uses and sensitive environmental resources.

Objective 3A5c. Implement regulations requiring that all land preserved in perpetuity for environmental protection or agricultural purposes as a result of clustering be subject to a conservation easement enforceable by the Highlands

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Council and at least one of the following: the appropriate municipality, for agricultural purposes the County Agriculture Development Board or the State Agriculture Development Committee, and for environmental purposes Green Acres or a qualified non-profit land trust organization.

Objective 3A5d. Where the preserved land in the cluster project area is dedicated to agricultural purposes support continued agricultural viability of the agricultural land and require the implementation of best management practices through the cluster development ordinance and an Agriculture Retention/Farmland Preservation Plan, including development and implementation of a Farm Conservation Plan that addresses the protection of water and soil resources prepared by the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Technical Service Provider (TSP), appropriate agent or New Jersey Department of Agriculture (NJDA) staff, and approved by the local Soil Conservation District (SCD).

Policy 3A6. To permit through local development review and Highlands Project Review limited development, including family and farm labor housing in Agricultural Resource Areas which are necessary to support the viability of the agricultural operation, in coordination with the NJDA and the SADC, and subject to compliance with the resource management and protection requirements of the RMP.

Policy 3A8. To serve as a regional clearinghouse for information regarding agriculture preservation programs and funding sources, protection and enhancement of the agricultural industry, agriculture stewardship programs, and technical assistance for public and private organizations in order to maximize agriculture preservation efforts in the Highlands Region.

Objective 3A8a. Encourage coordinated activities of representatives of appropriate federal, State, county, municipal, and non-profit representatives for agriculture preservation and funding programs, and technical assistance in order to maximize agriculture preservation efforts in the Highlands Region.

Objective 3A8b. Coordinate with the State Historic Preservation Office and the State Agriculture Development Committee to include historic structures in tax incentive and adaptive reuse funding programs.

Policy 3B1. To encourage private and public owners of lands within an Agricultural Resource Area to lease open lands to farmers and/or to manage open space lands in a manner which is compatible with adjoining agricultural uses.

Policy 3B2. To promote research and study, and support proposals to enhance the long-term viability of the agricultural industry in the Highlands Region through innovative programs, including, but not limited to, health care, banking practices, housing, food distribution, education, energy, and labor.

Policy 3B3. To seek additional funding from any and all state and federal funding programs to maintain and enhance sustainability and continued viability of the agricultural industry within the Highlands Region.

Policy 3B4. To support incentives and funding opportunities for the control of invasive species, white-tailed deer reduction programs, and the water value of well-managed agricultural lands.

Policy 3B5. To promote and enhance innovative agricultural practices and

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programs that promote long-term viability of the agricultural industry including, but not limited to, direct marketing, organic farming, agri-tourism such as farmers markets and road side stands, niche markets, and community supported agriculture.

Policy 3C1. To prohibit through Plan Conformance, local development review and Highlands Project Review the development of additional water and wastewater infrastructure in a Agricultural Resource Area (ARA) within the Conservation and Protection Zones of the Planning Area, unless they meet the requirements of Policy 2J4 with Objectives 2J4a through 2J4d, and Policy 2K3 with Objectives 2K3a through 2K3e, and will maximize the preservation of agricultural lands within the ARA.

Policy 3D1. To work with the State Agriculture Development Committee and the Garden State Preservation Trust to establish incentives for any landowner in the Highlands Region seeking to preserve land under the farmland preservation program that would be provided in exchange for the landowner agreeing to permanently restrict the amount of impervious surface and agricultural impervious cover on the farm to a maximum of five percent of the total land area of the Farm Management Unit.

Policy 3D4. To promote the use of appropriate alternative and innovative wastewater treatment systems to provide enhanced protection of surface and ground water quality in Agricultural Resource Areas of the Conservation Zone.

Policy 3D5. To promote efforts to increase the use of USDA NRCS and Farm Service Agency cost-share programs, Integrated Pest Management, and Integrated Crop Management programs and other innovative management techniques, in coordination with the NJDA and Rutgers Cooperative Extension, that reduce pesticide and fertilizer use and promote best management practices in conjunction with agricultural activities.

Policy 3D6. To identify subwatersheds with elevated nitrate levels and develop and implement management plans to enhance water quality in these subwatersheds while maintaining and enhancing agricultural viability.

Policy 3E3. To require conforming municipalities and counties, with farmland preservation programs or a significant agricultural land base, to incorporate Right to Farm provisions, in accordance with N.J.S.A. 4:1C-1 et seq. and N.J.A.C. 2:76-2, in their master plans and development regulations.

Policy 3E4. To address agricultural or horticultural development and agricultural or horticultural use through Plan Conformance in accordance with the Right to Farm Act, N.J.S.A. 4:1C-1, and in coordination with the New Jersey Department of Agriculture, the State Agriculture Development Committee (SADC), and the County Agriculture Development Boards.

Objective 3E4a. To cooperatively develop, in coordination with the SADC, specific Agricultural Management Practices that address air and water, quality control, noise control, pesticide control, fertilizer application, integrated pest management, labor practices and other related activities consistent with the resource management and protection requirements of the RMP.

The loss of farmland over recent decades emphasizes the crucial need to promote the preservation of contiguous acres of agricultural land to sustain agricultural resources and ensure a positive agricultural business climate. In order to

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**Implementation of
Strategies to Promote
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Agricultural Priority
Areas**

accomplish this goal, the Highlands Council, collaborating with the New Jersey Department of Agriculture (NJDA), the Highlands County Agriculture Development Boards (CADBs) and the State Agriculture Development Committee (SADC), must first identify and inventory the scope of the agricultural industry in the Highlands Region, through the use of existing data. This assessment will be completed using the NRCS Soil Survey Geographic (SSURGO) Database for farmland soils, data on preserved farms, tax assessor records for farmland assessment, NJDEP land use/land cover data, aerial photography, agricultural surveys and other data sources.

To promote long-term sustainability of agricultural resources and the viability of the agricultural industry in the Highlands Region a healthy agricultural environment and an agricultural land base are necessary. To continue to achieve the objective of preserving farmland in the Highlands Region, the Council will identify productive agricultural lands within the Agricultural Resource Area (ARA) through an assessment of agricultural resource values in order to prioritize agricultural lands for preservation. The purpose for assigning values to agricultural resources enhances the goal to preserve a primary agricultural land base that is being used for, or offers the greatest potential for continued, commercially significant agricultural production. Municipalities and counties involved in the Plan Conformance process will be required to implement Agriculture Retention/Farmland Preservation Plan elements and development regulations promoting preservation in the ARA and limiting non-agricultural uses in the ARA to those that sustain and enhance agricultural resources.

In order to determine the priority areas for farmland preservation, the Highlands Council, in coordination with the NJDA and SADC, utilized the results of the agricultural resource assessment to identify those lands within the Highlands Region which have the highest agricultural resource values. The figure *Agricultural Priority Area* displays the relative value of these agricultural resources in order to provide a prioritization mechanism for future farmland preservation activities in the Highlands Region. The *Agricultural Priority Area* figure also identifies lands preserved in perpetuity as farmland to show contiguity between preserved farmland and priority agricultural lands in the Region. In coordination with the NJDA and the SADC, the Council will create and maintain a confidential inventory of agricultural lands in the Agricultural Priority Area (APA). This inventory will also be analyzed using the Highlands CADB priorities to maximize preservation efforts in the Highlands Region. The identification of the APA and of the confidential inventory of agricultural lands in the APA is described in the *Sustainable Agriculture Technical Report*. In addition to promoting preservation and limiting non-agricultural uses in the ARA, the Highlands Council will coordinate with the NJDA and SADC to encourage private and public owners of lands in the ARA to lease open lands to farmers and manage adjacent open space lands in a manner that is compatible with adjoining agricultural uses to minimize Right to Farm conflicts.

**Cluster/Conservation
Design Development**

Due to limited funding and program opportunities not all agricultural lands worthy of preservation can be preserved through fee simple acquisition, easement acquisition, or TDR. The NJDA SADC Farmland Preservation Program includes outright purchases of development rights to preserve farmland under the Direct Easement and the Fee Simple Acquisition Programs. In both cases the land is permanently deed-restricted for agricultural use, but when the

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SADC purchases a farm outright through fee simple, the farm is resold at public auction as a permanently preserved farm, deed-restricted to agricultural use. The landowner that purchases the farm at auction must adhere to the deed restrictions, which is no different than easements acquired through the CADB process.

State, county, and local farmland preservation programs have funding constraints and as a result techniques such as clustering that accommodate limited growth and preserve agricultural lands are necessary. In an Agricultural Resource Area (ARA), where other land preservation techniques are not feasible, clustering will be mandatory for residential development through Municipal Plan Conformance, local development review, and Highlands Project Review. The use of clustering must preserve at least 80 percent of the total cluster project area in perpetuity in agricultural use or for environmental protection. A set aside of 80 percent for preservation will prevent the fragmentation of agricultural land allowing for contiguous areas of agriculture to sustain and enhance agricultural resources. Preservation of up to 90 percent of the cluster project area will be achieved where feasible. The agricultural land set aside in the cluster project area must be preserved in perpetuity for agricultural use through a deed of easement enforceable by the Highlands Council and the municipality, the CADB, or the SADC.

The Highlands Council will develop Cluster Development Conformance Standards and Cluster/ Development Design Guidelines that support the RMP and take advantage of, but are not limited to, techniques such as contiguous and non-contiguous residential clustering and lot--averaging. Such programs will require the implementation of an Agriculture Retention/Farmland Preservation Plan element and a cluster ordinance that supports the continued viability of the agricultural land and requires the implementation of best management practices including an NRCS Farm Conservation Plan for the cluster project area dedicated to agricultural use.

The cluster development in the Planning Area should use public water and sewer systems where feasible and appropriate (i.e., not in the Preservation Area) to maximize the amount of open space, eliminate the impact of septic systems, and reduce the need for additional water and wastewater infrastructure in the ARA. There may be instances when clustering will require new water and wastewater infrastructure. The use of alternative and innovative wastewater treatment systems will be promoted in the ARA of the Conservation Zone to provide enhanced protection of surface and ground water quality. (see the *Cluster/Conservation Design Development Program*)

**Serve as a Regional
Clearinghouse for
Farmland Preservation,
Stewardship and
Technical Assistance**

The Highlands Council, in cooperation with other entities, will serve as a regional clearinghouse for farmland preservation, stewardship and technical assistance. One of the fundamental elements of the Highlands Act is the emphasis on farmland preservation to ensure that public funds and other resources are focused on protection of critical Highlands resources. The *Sustainable Agriculture Technical Report* identifies nine federal, State, county, municipal, and nonprofit farmland preservation funding programs. The Highlands Council will encourage coordinated activities with agencies (in particular the NJDA and the SADC), local governments, and local organizations for agriculture preservation, funding, and stewardship programs, and for technical assistance in order to maximize

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	agriculture preservation efforts in the Highlands Region.
Willing Sellers	The Garden State Preservation Trust legislation requires that direct acquisitions by Green Acres and the SADC be from willing sellers. The Highlands Council will coordinate with Green Acres and the SADC to identify willing sellers and coordinate outreach and education to Highlands landowners for land preservation funding opportunities and incentives.
Funding Opportunities	Twenty-eight Highlands municipalities do not have open space and farmland trust funds to preserve farmland and open space. The municipalities and counties that have trust funds may not be maximizing their potential. In coordination with other entities, the Council shall encourage creating or amending open space and farmland trust funds. Additionally, the Highlands Council will coordinate with the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) and the SADC to include historic structures in tax incentive and adaptive reuse funding programs. Such programs could provide funding to farmers for restoration or rehabilitation of historic barns used for agricultural production.
Monitoring	Land acquisition by fee purchase or by easement is a major tool to protect agricultural lands. Typically the SADC, the CADB, a municipality, or a non-profit entity holds the easement on a permanently preserved farm and is responsible for monitoring the farm and ensuring the land remains in agricultural use in perpetuity. In some instances the individual retaining ownership of the land may not be a long-time farmer. Guaranteeing that these resources remain intact and viable is an overarching responsibility of the landowner and the easement holder. The Highlands Council will coordinate with the NJDA, the SADC, the CADBs, municipalities, and non-profit organizations on monitoring, landowner/user relations, and enforcement of deed-restricted agricultural easements.
Stewardship	The <i>Sustainable Agriculture Technical Report</i> also identifies 16 federal, State, county, municipal, and nonprofit conservation and stewardship funding programs. The Highlands Council will collaborate and coordinate with the NJDA, SADC, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and Farm Service Agency (FSA), the North Jersey Resource Conservation and Development Council (NJRC&D), Rutgers Cooperative Extension, local Soil Conservation Districts (SCD), local governments, and local non-profit organizations to properly manage and enhance preserved agricultural land. This effort is necessary to sustain and enhance agricultural and natural resources and enhance the viability of the agricultural industry through productive and cost-effective Best Management Practices (BMPs). Also, such efforts help to ensure that agricultural and natural resources targeted for acquisition are not later compromised through inappropriate stewardship.
Establishment of Alternative/Innovative Agriculture Preservation Programs	In addition to maximizing existing farmland preservation and stewardship programs and funding opportunities, the Highlands Council will encourage establishment of alternative and innovative programs to enhance farmland preservation and stewardship. The SADC, the CADBs and municipalities preserve farmland through the purchase or transfer of development rights by deed restricting the land in perpetuity for agricultural purposes. Where existing programs may not be a viable option for the landowner, the need will exist for alternative or innovative tools to create incentives for landowners to voluntarily

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keep their land in agriculture. The *Land Preservation Program* lists a broad range of options and programs, developed by other states, for the Highlands Council to examine and assess for use in the Highlands Region. Many of these tools are used specifically for agriculture, such as the Next Generation Farmland Acquisition Program, land preservation tontines, and Agricultural Conservation Pension. All of these programs are described in the *Land Preservation and Stewardship Technical Report*.

One criterion for prioritizing farmland preservation is the percentage of tillable land or land in crop production. As a result, a farm that is heavily forested may not be considered a priority for preservation by the SADC. Additionally, lots that are entirely forested and farmland assessed with Woodland Management Plans are not considered priorities for State, county and municipal farmland preservation programs. However, such lands are productive woodlands and also critical to the protection of Highlands water and natural resources. The Highlands Council will collaborate with the NJDEP Green Acres and the NJDA SADC to develop an adequate method to preserve forested lands through easements to allow them to remain in private ownership and be properly maintained through woodland management. The Highlands Region is over 50% forested and maintaining forest land is important to protecting water quality. In addition to the Highlands regional TDR Program and the Cluster/Conservation Development Program; a program specifically for purchasing forest land easements should be available.

**Establishment of
Alternative/Innovative
Agriculture Stewardship
Programs**

As introduced above there are numerous existing programs that promote incentives and funding opportunities for agricultural stewardship through the use of BMPs. The Highlands Council will collaborate with the NJDA, the NJDEP and all of the entities described above to develop and promote existing and alternative funding incentives and cost-share programs for BMPs that sustain and enhance agricultural and natural resources. The programs below are described in the *Sustainable Agriculture Technical Report*. For long-term sustainability of natural and agricultural resources in the Highlands Region, stewardship and implementation of BMP programs should include, but not be limited to:

- White-tailed deer reduction programs, control of non-native species and enhancing the water value of well-managed agricultural lands
- Reduction in forest fragmentation and the creation of incentives for landowners to retain land in its natural or agricultural state
- Innovative management techniques that reduce pesticide and fertilizer use and promote best management practices such as USDA NRCS and FSA cost-share programs, Integrated Pest Management and Integrated Crop Management
- Other innovative programs such as the NJRC&D River Friendly Farm Certification Program, the regional Dairy of Distinction Program, and the national American Farmland Trust Steward of the Land Award that seek to reward farmers who promote land stewardship.
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The Highlands Council will provide and encourage technical assistance, cost-share funding opportunities, and grant funding for the use of land stewardship through BMPs. Additionally, intrinsic values for forests and agriculture including

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water quality protection shall be established.

The Highlands Council will coordinate with the NJDA, the New Jersey State Board of Agriculture, the New Jersey Farm Bureau and the New Jersey Agricultural Society to promote existing programs that sustain and enhance the viability of the agricultural industry in the Highlands Region. In addition, the Council will promote research and study for innovative programs, including, but not limited to health care, banking practices, housing, food distribution, education, energy and labor. Innovative programs, such as the USDA national initiative Agriculture in the Classroom, the New Jersey Farmers Against Hunger food recovery program, and the use of agricultural production for bio fuels will be addressed in the *Sustainable Agriculture Technical Report*.

In order to enhance agricultural viability, agricultural operations need to evolve over time to meet ever changing market demands. The Highlands Council will promote and encourage innovative agricultural practices including, but not limited to direct marketing, organic farming, agri-tourism such as farmers markets and road side stands, niche markets and community supported agriculture businesses. Additional business opportunities should be provided to the owner/operators of farms to increase the economic potential of the farm unit.

The ability of a farm family to add business opportunities to their agricultural operation such as a farmers market, a bed and breakfast an agricultural product processing facility, or an artisan or craft business that employs several farm laborers other than family members enhances the agricultural operation. The enhancement of these operations may also require additional family and farm labor housing. In coordination with the NJDA and the SADC, and in accordance with the Right to Farm Act, the Council will ensure opportunities through local development review and Highlands Project Review for family and farm labor housing that is necessary to support the viability of the agricultural operation.

**Identification of
Subwatersheds with
Elevated Nitrate Levels
& Development of
Management Plans**

The Highlands Council will identify subwatersheds with elevated nitrate levels, develop management plans for restoring water quality, and implement those plans in ways that enhance agricultural viability through focused application of stewardship programs, such as those described above and in the *Sustainable Agriculture Technical Report*. (See *Water Quality Restoration Program* for more details.)

**Establish Incentives for
Voluntary Impervious
Cover Limitations on
Agricultural Lands**

The preservation of contiguous acres of farmland and Important Farmland Soils is vital to sustain and enhance agricultural resources in the Highlands Region. Incentives are necessary to maximize the utilization and preservation of agricultural soils. The creation of extensive impervious coverage on Highlands farms will result in significant environmental impacts, similar to the increase of impervious cover from residential and commercial development and infrastructure associated with this development. In addition, impervious cover that involves soil compaction and concrete pads can permanently damage soil productivity. Intensive impervious cover can harm the rural nature of agricultural areas. As a result, impervious cover limits on farmland through incentives, voluntary programs and easements that supplement SADC easement purchases should be made available. These voluntary impervious cover limits are distinct and separate from the Highlands Act and the RMP requirements for the implementation of conservation plans with increased impervious cover for farms

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in the Preservation Area and the Planning Area..

The Council will seek to limit impervious cover on farmland through such initiatives, including but not limited to the use of federal USDA Farm Bill programs. One such program is the Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRPP), a federal program managed by the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) that protects farm and ranch lands that contain prime, unique, or statewide and locally important soils or historic and archaeological resources from conversion to non-agricultural uses. Landowners who agree to accept federal funds are required to include deed restrictions that are specific to the federal FRPP. One of the requirements is a restriction on impervious coverage allowed on the farm. The amount of impervious cover allowed is imposed on a sliding scale and varies between two and six percent. The FRPP is described in detail in the *Sustainable Agriculture Technical Report*.

Right to Farm

The Right to Farm Act (N.J.S.A. 4:1C-1 et seq.) and the NJDA Right to Farm Rules (N.J.A.C. 2:76-2) are important provisions to sustain and enhance agricultural operations and maintain public health and safety in the Highlands Region. The Right to Farm Act protects responsible commercial farmers from unduly restrictive municipal regulations and public and private nuisance actions. Through the Plan Conformance process the Highlands Council will coordinate with the NJDA, SADC, and the CADBs to require municipalities and counties with farmland preservation programs or significant agricultural land bases to incorporate Right to Farm provisions in their master plans and development regulations. Municipal Right to Farm ordinances can be less restrictive of agricultural activities, but not more restrictive, than the Right to Farm Act. In addition, through the Plan Conformance process, municipalities and counties shall address agricultural or horticultural development and agricultural or horticultural use in accordance with the Right to Farm Act and in coordination with the NJDA, SADC, and CADBs.

The SADC also manages a Right to Farm Program in partnership with the CADBs and has developed a model Right to Farm ordinance. Under the Right to Farm Program, the SADC helps to educate farmers, residents, and municipalities about the Right to Farm Act, the Act's formal conflict resolution process, and strategies for resolving agricultural conflicts and maintaining a positive agricultural business environment that enhances New Jersey's agricultural industry. The SADC has also adopted standards for nine Agricultural Management Practices (AMPs). The Highlands Council, in coordination with the SADC, will develop specific AMPs where appropriate and necessary to address agricultural or horticultural development or uses to be consistent with the resource management and protection requirements of the RMP.
