



NEWS

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State Agriculture Development Committee Earns Environmental Achievement Award From N.J. Chapter of American Planning Association

The State Agriculture Development Committee (SADC) today received the New Jersey Chapter of the American Planning Association's outstanding environmental achievement award for encouraging counties and municipalities to comprehensively plan to protect farmland and support agriculture as a condition of farmland preservation funding.

"The SADC's award-winning efforts implement our Agricultural Smart Growth Plan, which recognizes that to retain agriculture as a strong, vital industry, we need to do more than just protect the land. We also need to ensure that agriculture is able to thrive on that land," said Agriculture Secretary Charles M. Kuperus, who chairs the SADC. "While other states may have agricultural smart growth plans, I know of no other state where a plan has been implemented at this scale at the county and municipal level," he said.

Specifically, the award recognizes the SADC's planning incentive grant program and the county and municipal farmland preservation planning process that is a requirement of that program. Under the planning incentive grant process, counties and municipalities seeking farmland preservation funding are required to develop comprehensive farmland preservation plans. These plans explore several components beyond farmland preservation goals, including agricultural land use planning that helps accommodate growth in ways that consume less land; agricultural economic development so farms have more opportunities for success; natural resource conservation to protect the resources that sustain agriculture; and overall support for agriculture.

Fifteen counties have developed comprehensive plans to participate in the new county planning incentive grant program in this first year. Coordinated with those plans are 37 municipal plans developed under the municipal planning incentive grant program. Altogether, plans under the two programs target the preservation of more than 240,000 acres and explore a wide range of strategies to help sustain agriculture, ranging from

promotion of community farmers markets to assisting farmers in diversifying their production to meet new markets.

The New Jersey Chapter of the American Planning Association's 2008 Elwood "Woody" Jarmer Award for Outstanding Environmental Achievement is intended to recognize exceptional creativity in balancing environmental concerns with the realities of real estate development. The award was presented at the APA-NJ/Rutgers University Annual Planning Conference in New Brunswick.

The SADC administers New Jersey's Farmland Preservation Program. To date, more than 1,700 farms covering approximately 170,000 acres have been permanently preserved statewide.

For more information on the planning incentive grant process, visit the SADC's website at www.nj.gov/agriculture/sadc/farmpreserve/programs/countyPIG.html. For more information on the award, visit the APA-NJ's website at www.njapa.org.

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