INTRODUCTION

This Farmland Preservation Plan has been prepared to maximize the opportunities to retain agricultural lands and the industry of agriculture in Bernards Township, which is located in a highly developed portion of Somerset County, New Jersey. Proximity to interstate and local highways, superior schools, and open spaces that protect wildlife and encourage recreation entice newcomers to reside in the Township and long-time residents to stay. With a population of about 28,000 and the threat of development encroaching into unprotected open areas, the Township is preparing this plan to establish goals for farmland preservation in this rapidly urbanizing area of central New Jersey. (Figure XII-1)

Bernards Township history is rooted in agriculture; however postwar development and recent development trends have had the effect of transforming Bernards’ once vast agricultural landscape into desirable suburban neighborhoods. Nodes of agricultural areas remain among the Township’s neighborhoods. Farms and agricultural uses primarily remain in the Township’s southwesterly and south-central portion of the Township, as well as in the northeasterly portion of the Township. In the southwest, farmland and agricultural areas generally remain in areas that are not currently served by the municipal centralized sewer system. Within this portion of the Township, some preserved lands located in proximity to remaining agricultural lands contribute to a less developed character.

In Bernards Township, agricultural practices on the town’s current farms are in full swing. In an effort to educate the public about agriculture in the community, the Township’s Agricultural Advisory Committee hosted a booth at this year’s Charter Day. Bernards is home to farms that produce apples, maple syrup, produce such as vegetables, chickens and eggs, while other farms in the town are pasturelands where cows, goats and sheep graze. This is a fairly similar outlook to that of the County’s farms and has been a trend for at least the past twenty years.

There are a variety of farmlands in the region; however, Bernards Township does not host the same amount of horses as much of the rest of the County farms. There are also not many agricultural related industries present in Bernards Township. However, the sense of community amongst Bernards farmers makes up for what little active farmland is present compared to the rest of the County.

As stated by many of the farmers in town, if they need equipment they borrow from each other. Bernards farmers are aware of equipment and supply providers outside of the Township, and do utilize them, but it is more likely that they will help each other out within their own community.

Bernards’ planning policy is generally supportive of agriculture. The Township with this Farmland Preservation Plan is aiming to create a better environment for agriculture to continue as a business through a variety of means. First and foremost, the Township will seek to preserve as many agricultural operations as possible, utilizing a variety of land preservation techniques. Recognizing that land preservation is only the first step, the Township will analyze issues affecting the survival of economically viable agricultural and undertake a variety of additional measures to help support the survival of economically viable agricultural operations and family farms. In addition to preservation, strategies focused on maintaining agricultural activities in the community include promoting farming, encouraging future farmers and citizenry to participate in this necessary industry.

Bernards Township 2010 Master Plan Update
The Township will focus preservation activities in the area of existing agricultural operations and seek to retain farms that have survived the suburban development pressures that have contributed so heavily to the loss of agriculturally productive lands. By retaining core areas of preserved farmland, agriculture can be sustained into the future. Preservation of agricultural lands provides other significant benefits including the protection of scenic rural landscapes, groundwater recharge areas and wildlife habitat. Preservation of farmland and agriculture will also assure that the precious remaining pieces of the Township's rural fabric are not lost forever.

The Township has created an Agriculture Advisory Committee (A.A.C.) to guide municipal farmland preservation efforts and assist with development and implementation of agriculture retention strategies. The Committee will assist in prioritizing farmland easement acquisition, conducting information outreach to the township community, as well as establish communication with Bernards’ agricultural community. This will assist the Township with the formulation of public policy meaningful to farmers and their interests.¹

On December 4, 2006, revised State Agriculture Development Committee (SADC) Rules were published for comment. The revised rules are expected to take effect on about June 20, 2007. These rules established new requirements for municipal farmland preservation plans to address eligibility for funding under the SADC’s Planning Incentive Grant (PIG) Program. The SADC is currently preparing a guidance document for municipalities that wish to establish PIG Programs under the revised rules and receive funding through the SADC’s Planning Incentive Grant Program.

STATUTORY AUTHORIZATION

The Municipal Land Use Law (N.J.S.A. 40:55D-1 et seq.) provides for preparation and adoption of a farmland preservation plan (FPP) element (N.J.S.A. 40:55D-28b.13.) as follows:

(13) A farmland preservation plan element, which shall include:

1. An inventory of farm properties in the entire municipality and a map illustrating significant areas of agricultural lands;
2. A detailed statement showing that municipal plans and ordinances support and promote agriculture as a business;
3. A plan for preserving as much farmland as possible in the short-term by leveraging monies made available by the Garden State Preservation Trust Act, N.J.S.A. 13:8-1 et seq., P.L. 1999, c. 152 through a variety of mechanisms including but not limited to:
   i. Option agreements;
   ii. Installment purchases; and
   iii. Encouraging donations for permanent development easements.

¹ Bernards Township Farmland Preservation Plan Executive Summary, 2005
I. BERNARDS TOWNSHIP’S AGRICULTURAL LAND BASE

Over the last 20 years, Bernards has seen an increase of the amount of land developed into non-agricultural uses. Medium sized farms saw the greatest decline. However, lands that have remained in agriculture have held their own by developing agricultural programs that serve the community. From apple-picking to maple syrup harvesting to farm stands, Bernards farms provide not only produce, but also an experience to both residents and visitors alike.

Of the 1,364 farmland-assessed acres in Bernards, 82% (1,134 acres) are located within the proposed boundaries of the CR-1 and CR-2 districts. Farmland-assessed lands throughout the Township make up 26% of the 4,320 acres included in the CR districts. (2003, Master Plan).

The following information includes a number of maps and tables providing information on the soils, water sources, farmland assessment and census statistics, farm sizes in the Township and in the County, and the agricultural use of farms in the Township and in the County.

A. Location and Size of Agricultural Land Base

Bernards Township overall does not have a large amount of land in farms, but farms that are in operation in the town are part of an active market in the region. Approximately 11% of the Township’s total 14,350.57 acres (1,509.38 acres) qualify for reduced tax assessment under the Farmland Assessment Act of 1964 (Figure XII-2). Table XII-1 identifies farmland-assessed and farm-qualified parcels within Bernards, according to the 2007 MOD IV tax data.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Residential</td>
<td>5,982.15</td>
<td>4.35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Property</td>
<td>2,619.11</td>
<td>18.25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farm Assessed</td>
<td>485.45</td>
<td>3.38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farm Qualified</td>
<td>1,023.93</td>
<td>7.14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roadways</td>
<td>199.45</td>
<td>1.39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industrial</td>
<td>1,118.74</td>
<td>7.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commercial</td>
<td>135.21</td>
<td>.94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public School</td>
<td>1,490.78</td>
<td>10.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rail Road</td>
<td>198.85</td>
<td>1.39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private School</td>
<td>180.91</td>
<td>1.26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church</td>
<td>14.85</td>
<td>.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apartment</td>
<td>153.13</td>
<td>1.07%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Data</td>
<td>624.37</td>
<td>4.35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cemetery</td>
<td>123.64</td>
<td>.86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>14,350.57</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3 Somerset County GIS Dept.
4 Farmland assessed parcels are those that have been given farmland status through a tax assessment.
5 Farmland qualified parcels are those that have the qualities of farmland, but have not gained farmland status via tax assessment.
The Township has identified a proposed project area and farms targeted for preservation (Figure XII-3). The project areas totals 3,708.64 acres and is located in the southern portion of the Township, straddling Route 78. The proposed project area represents the lands with the highest concentration of farm assessed/qualified land and public property (Table XII-2). Of the total project area, 27.02% (approximately 1,000 acres) are farm assessed/qualified and about 8% (293.5 acres) are public property. This totals approximately 35% of the project area as farm and preserved lands. (See also Figure XII-4.)

Table XII-2: Property Class for Bernards Township Proposed Project Area

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Acres</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Farm Qualified</td>
<td>645.12</td>
<td>17.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Property</td>
<td>293.46</td>
<td>7.91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farm Assessed</td>
<td>356.79</td>
<td>9.62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residential</td>
<td>1,109.4</td>
<td>29.91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private School</td>
<td>173.45</td>
<td>4.68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industrial</td>
<td>4.87</td>
<td>0.13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commercial</td>
<td>391.65</td>
<td>10.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vacant</td>
<td>323.26</td>
<td>8.72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Exempt</td>
<td>120.77</td>
<td>3.26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Data</td>
<td>289.87</td>
<td>7.82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>3,708.64</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The nature of the Township is further highlighted by the 2002 Land Use/Land Cover data (Figure XII-5). Table XII-3 identifies the Land Use/Land Cover for the entire Township. There are 694 acres (4.84%) of the Township classified as Agricultural.

Table XII-3: 2002 Land Use/Land Cover for Bernards Township

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>6,922.74</td>
<td>48.24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>694.44</td>
<td>4.84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forest</td>
<td>3,542.56</td>
<td>24.69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wetlands</td>
<td>2,811.38</td>
<td>19.59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barren Land</td>
<td>291.29</td>
<td>2.03%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water</td>
<td>88.14</td>
<td>.61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>14,350.55</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Focusing the 2002 Land Use/Land Cover on the Township’s proposed project area, the agricultural land totals 12.6% (470 acres) of the area.

Table XII-4: 2002 Land Use/Land Cover for Bernards Proposed Project Area

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>470.5</td>
<td>12.66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wetlands</td>
<td>650.00</td>
<td>17.49%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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6 Somerset County GIS Dept.
7 NJDEP
8 NJDEP
Table XII-5 identifies the amount of cropland and pastureland identified by the 2002 Land Use/Land Cover for both the entire Township and the Proposed Project Area (Figure XII-3). As shown above, the total area of cropland is concentrated in the proposed project area.

Table XII-5: 2002 Land Use/Land Cover Cropland and Pastureland

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Acres</th>
<th>Percentage of Area</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Township Wide Cropland and Pasture Land</td>
<td>554.7</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Township Project Area Cropland and Pasture Land</td>
<td>386.71</td>
<td>10.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To date, Bernards has participated in three farmland preservation efforts where development rights were purchased. These included:

- English Farm lot, Valley Road
  - Block 9301, lot 9.01
  - 64.298 ac.

- English meadow lot, Valley/Mount Airy Roads
  - Block 7703, lot 22
  - 16.281 ac.

- English wood lot, Allen Road
  - Block 11201, lot 1
  - 58.596 ac.

The proposed project focuses preservation on farms that not only address the SADC criteria for preservation, but are clearly active farms in the Township. These target farms, and those already acquired, will establish a baseline of preserved farmland and create large contiguous areas of active and preserved farms. These targets will be discussed further in Sections 4 and 5 below but are noted here to show the proximity and nature of the Township’s proposed Project Area (Figure XII-3).

B. Distribution of Soil Types and Their Characteristics

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) categorizes farm capable soils into five areas: Prime, Statewide, Local, Unique and Other soils. Below is a brief description of each category.

**Prime Soils**
Prime farmland is land that has the best combination of physical and chemical characteristics for producing food, feed, forage, fiber, and oilseed crops and that is available for these uses. In general,

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9 NJDEP
prime farmland has an adequate and dependable water supply from precipitation or irrigation, a favorable temperature and growing season, an acceptable level of acidity or alkalinity, an acceptable content of salt or sodium, and few or no rocks. Prime farmland is not excessively eroded or saturated with water for long periods of time, and it either does not flood frequently during the growing season or is protected from flooding.

Statewide Important Soils\(^{11}\)
Farmlands of statewide importance include those soils that do not meet the criteria as Prime Farmland. These soils are nearly Prime Farmland and economically produce high yields of crops when treated and managed according to acceptable farming methods. Some may produce yields as high as Prime Farmland if conditions are favorable.

Locally Important Soils\(^{12}\)
Farmland of local importance includes those soils that are not prime or statewide importance and are used for the production of high value food, fiber or horticultural crops.

Unique Soils\(^{13}\)
Land other than prime farmland that is used for the production of specific high-value food and fiber crops...such as, citrus, tree nuts, olives, cranberries, fruits, and vegetables. (7 U.S.C. 4201(c)(1)(B))

Other Farmland Soils\(^{14}\)
This category of soils typically includes soils of a hydric nature. These soils do not typically appear in Bernards or nearby Somerset County areas.

Less than 50% of soils found in the township are suitable for farmland, while less than 25% of soils in the project area are suitable for farmland (Table XII-6). This information is also shown on Figure XII-6, Farm Capable Soils in the Township with the proposed project area highlighted. Table XII-7 below shows the amount of farmland in the proposed project area that has soils capable of supporting farming activities.

### Table XII-6: Farm Capable Soils for Bernards Township

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Soil</th>
<th>Acres</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Cropland and Pastureland</th>
<th>Orchards/Vineyards/ Nurseries/ Horticultural Areas</th>
<th>Other Agriculture</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prime Soils</td>
<td>3,385.56</td>
<td>21.79%</td>
<td>181.17</td>
<td>18.4</td>
<td>22.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statewide Important</td>
<td>1,334.09</td>
<td>8.59%</td>
<td>110.71</td>
<td>3.25</td>
<td>4.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Locally Important Soils</td>
<td>156.4</td>
<td>1.01%</td>
<td>4.97</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>10,661.43</td>
<td>68.62%</td>
<td>15,240.63</td>
<td>15,515.83</td>
<td>15,510.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>15,537.48</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>15,537.48</td>
<td>15,537.48</td>
<td>15,537.48</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{11}\) [http://www.nj.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/soils/importantfarm.html]
\(^{12}\) [http://www.nj.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/soils/localfarm.html]
\(^{13}\) [http://recreation.usgs.gov/env_guide/farmland.html]
\(^{14}\) [http://www.nj.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/soils/hydric.html]
### Table XII-7: Farm Capable Soils for Bernards Proposed Project Area

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Soil Description</th>
<th>Acres</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Cropland and Pastureland</th>
<th>Orchards/Vineyards/Nurseries/Horticultural Areas</th>
<th>Other Agriculture</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prime Soils</td>
<td>564.04</td>
<td>14.36%</td>
<td>151.67</td>
<td>18.4</td>
<td>8.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statewide Important</td>
<td>235.83</td>
<td>6.00%</td>
<td>68.21</td>
<td>3.25</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Locally Important Soils</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>3,127.77</td>
<td>79.63%</td>
<td>3,707.76</td>
<td>3,905.99</td>
<td>3,914.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3,927.64</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>3,927.64</td>
<td>3,927.64</td>
<td>3,927.64</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Soils descriptions

Bernards has three major soil groups in the township: Neshaminy-Mount Lucas-Amwell Association; Penn-Klinesville-Reaville Association; and Parsippany-Landsdowne-Watchung Association. They are described below.

*Neshaminy-Mount Lucas-Amwell Association* – Gently sloping to very steep, deep, well-drained to somewhat poorly drained, loamy, gravelly, and very stony soils that have bedrock mainly below a depth of 4 feet on uplands.

*Penn-Klinesville-Reaville Association* – Nearly level to very steep, moderately deep and shallow, well drained to somewhat poorly drained loamy and shaly soils underlain mainly by red shale; on uplands.

*Parsippany-Landsdowne-Watchung Association* – Nearly level to gently sloping, deep, very poorly drained to moderately well drained loamy soils underlain mainly by shale, granitic gneiss, diabase, and basalt; on lake plains.

The Township’s Project Area consists of a combination of these three soil types, with the majority of the project area made up of the Neshaminy-Mount Lucas-Amwell association. This soil type, as described above, can vary from very deep, gently sloping and well-drained to very stony with bedrock only four feet below the surface. In general, limitations to farming would be the wetness of soils after heavy rains.

### C. Number of Irrigated Acres and Available Water Sources

Bernards has a total of 11 irrigated acres in the township. Two acres are used for fruit and nine acres are used for vegetables. According to the Highlands Regional Master Plan, Bernards Township is mostly within the 0.10-0.39 mgd range of water availability (highest water availability) and there are a few areas south of Route 78 that fall within the -0.09-0.00 mgd range, with the lowest water availability. With regard to the target farms identified in this plan they mostly fall within these ranges, with the majority in the higher range.

Field crops such as corn, grass, alfalfa, and small grains typically rely on groundwater resources and require no additional irrigated water sources. As described above, most of the soils in the township

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15 SSURGO
18 New Jersey Highlands Council, 2007 and New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, 2006
are deep and moderately well drained, allowing for the soils to retain water longer than a well-drained soil.

### Table XII-8: Irrigated Acres

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Field crops</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fruit</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ornamental</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vegetables</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL IRRIGATED ACRES</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>139%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### D. Farmland Assessment and Census of Agriculture Statistics and Trends

The information listed below gives a comparison of farmland in the County and the Township over the past 20 years.

Table XII-9a shows that the number of farms in the Township have decreased significantly, while the farms in the County have increased only a small amount.

### Table XII-9a: Number of Farms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2002</th>
<th>1982</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Somerset County</td>
<td>442</td>
<td>414</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bernards Twp</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>178</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the same respect, the number of smaller farms in the County has increased, while the number of larger farms has decreased over the last two decades. (Table XII-9b).

### Table XII-9b: Farms by Size – Somerset County

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2002</th>
<th>1982</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 to 9 Acres</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 to 49 Acres</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>168</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50 to 179 Acres</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>180 to 499 Acres</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>500 to 999 Acres</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1,000 to 1,999 Acres</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2,000 Acres or More</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table XII-10, Average and Median Farm Size, shows that again, the numbers have decreased only slightly in the County over the past 20 years. In the Township, the average farm size is much smaller than the County average, but the median farm size is comparable to the County median farm size. This information was not available for the Township in 1982.

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Table XII-10: Average and Median Farm Size

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2002</th>
<th>1982</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Average (ac)</td>
<td>Median (ac)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somerset County</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bernards Twp</td>
<td>24.2</td>
<td>18.51</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table XII-11 describes again how the amount of land harvested, pastured or in woodlands has decreased over the past 20 years. The only category of agricultural lands that has increased are lands used for equine facilities. This information is displayed in Figure XII-7, Cropland and Pastureland in the Township.

Table XII-11: Cropland Harvested, Pasture, Woodland, Equine, Total for Agricultural Use

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Somerset County</th>
<th>Bernards Township</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cropland Harvested (ac)</td>
<td>17,876</td>
<td>28,980</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cropland Pasture (ac)</td>
<td>2,013</td>
<td>5,209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Permanent Pasture (ac)</td>
<td>6,532</td>
<td>8,425</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attached Woodland (ac)</td>
<td>10,430</td>
<td>10,643</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unattached Woodland (ac)</td>
<td>5,832</td>
<td>8,615</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equine (ac)</td>
<td>357</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total for Ag Use (ac)</td>
<td>43,040</td>
<td>61,873</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

II. MUNICIPALITY’S AGRICULTURAL INDUSTRY – OVERVIEW

A. Trends in Market Value of Agricultural Products

According to the 2002 USDA Census of Agriculture, agriculture accounted for more than $15.1 million in sales during 2002. The total amount of revenue generated by farms in Bernards Township is hard to identify. As stated in the Somerset County Draft plan, the use of the United States Department of Agriculture’s National Agriculture Statistics Service (NASS) is tabulated annually with certain crop yields recorded in recent years that were not precisely recorded. Additionally, trends in the market value are not compiled annually at the County level, but rather reported every five years as part of the National Census of Agriculture. The next Census report will be available at the beginning of 2008. While these statistics are available at the County level, they are not typically available at the municipal level. However, much of the trending visible at the County level correlates to the Township level.

The Agricultural Advisory Committee has stated that currently, support services for agriculture do not exist in the Township. Farmers in Bernards typically use regional contacts or the internet to obtain supplies and to locate facilities for services such as processing, fuel oil distribution, and bulk distributors. Most farmers will travel between central NJ and eastern Pennsylvania to pick up products, if needed. Others travel to West Milford, NJ to the garden centers and equestrian facilities.
Some of the active farms in the community include:

- The **English Farm** is located at Liberty Corner and offers produce such as vegetables, flowers, eggs, pork, beef, hay straw and mulch during seasonal hours of operation. Their website [www.Englishfarm.org](http://www.Englishfarm.org) for more hours and details.
- **Harrison Brook Farm** is also located at Liberty Corner and offers produce including Dorset mix sheep and lambs, bantam chickens, bantam eggs, and herbs, plants and cuttings.
- **Shannon Hill Farms**, also at Liberty Corner specializes in the sale of horses and ponies.
- **The Anderson Farm** is located in Basking Ridge and sells apples at a farmstand in the fall.
- **Ripple Hill Farm** sells peaches, apples and tomatoes and offers Pick Your Own activities seasonally.

According to the Census of Agriculture, as identified in the Somerset County Draft Plan, County sales from “crops, including nursery and greenhouse” category, which had steadily increased from 1987 to 1997, were down 27% from $10.5 million in 1997 to $8.3 million in 2002. Similar declines were seen across New Jersey due to the severe drought conditions that were observed during the 2002 Census year. “Livestock, poultry and their products” from Somerset County produced $6.8 million in sales during 2002, up 66% from $4.1 million in 1997. This trend is seen in Bernards Township as lands devoted to cropland have generally decreased.

### B. Crop/Production Trends Over the Last 20 Years

As identified in the previous section, production trends have been decreasing throughout the State over the past 20 years. Bernards Township has also become subject to this decline. For the most part, all agricultural production units have been on the decline with the exception of Christmas Trees and a small population of livestock. Table XII-12 identifies the 20 year trend of acres devoted to field crops such as barley, grains, grasses and soybeans. In each case, acres devoted to field crops have been on the decline.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Barely</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grain Corn</td>
<td>203.37</td>
<td>71.0</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-203.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silage Corn</td>
<td>35.0</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-35.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grass Silage</td>
<td>8.04</td>
<td>104.0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-8.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alfalfa Hay</td>
<td>172.0</td>
<td>56.0</td>
<td>14.0</td>
<td>15.0</td>
<td>-157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Hay</td>
<td>485.86</td>
<td>344.0</td>
<td>216.0</td>
<td>208.0</td>
<td>-277.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oats</td>
<td>58.0</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>-51.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rye Grain</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>40.0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>-17.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sorghum</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soybeans</td>
<td>23.0</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-23.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wheat</td>
<td>12.0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-12.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cover Crop</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Field Crops</td>
<td>37.0</td>
<td>12.0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>-8.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table XII-13 identifies acres devoted to fruit productions. Apples, peaches, and other mixed fruit continue in production and only the total number of acres for mixed fruit has increased. All other categories of fruit have either decreased or are completely gone.

Table XII-13: Bernards Township Fruit Production (Acres)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Apples</td>
<td>28.63</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>-9.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grapes</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peaches</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>-1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strawberries</td>
<td>1.28</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-1.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blackberries/Raspberries</td>
<td>0.25</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-0.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Fruit</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>+8.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table XII-14 depicts the amount of farm acres devoted to vegetable production. Asparagus, Sweet Corn, Pumpkins, Tomatoes, and Mixed Vegetables are still in production in the Township. Pumpkins had a major decrease in just the past few years, going from 40 acres to just one acre. These vegetables target a specific niche group usually sold at farmers market, farm stands and seasonal demand.

Table XII-14: Bernards Township Vegetable Production (Acres)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Asparagus</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lima Beans</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Snap Peas</td>
<td>1.45</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-1.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cabbage</td>
<td>0.35</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-0.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweet Corn</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>+6.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cucumbers</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eggplant</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lettuce</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melons</td>
<td>0.71</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-0.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Onions</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peas</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peppers</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweet Potatoes</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pumpkins</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spinach</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Squash</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tomatoes</td>
<td>3.52</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-2.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed Vegetable Crops</td>
<td>9.29</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-7.29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table XII-15 identifies nursery and tree stock acres produced in the Township. This category has only seen an increase in Christmas Trees. Trees and Shrubs have decreased significantly, while all other categories of nursery stock have been completely removed.
Table XII-15: Bernards Township Nursery and Tree Production (Acres)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bedding Plants</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cut Flowers</td>
<td>0.63</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-0.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trees &amp; Shrubs</td>
<td>105.51</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>-97.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sod</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christmas Trees</td>
<td>14.23</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>+2.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Nursery</td>
<td>15.0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pond Fish</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-1.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table XII-16 identifies timber and woodland production and areas in the Township. As woodland management is continually important to the overall health of natural systems, woodland areas continue to be preserved. However, the number of acres of woodlands has decreased dramatically over the last 20 years. In the cases of State, Federal and Private Woodlands Plans and programs, these categories have been completely erased.

Table XII-16: Timber and Woodland Product and Areas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fuelwood (Cords)</td>
<td>273</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>-177</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pulpwood (Cords)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timber (Board Feet)</td>
<td>124,029</td>
<td>38,138</td>
<td>51,430</td>
<td>3,000</td>
<td>-121,029</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other wood (Board Feet)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woodland State Plan (Acres)</td>
<td>243.86</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>-243.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woodlands Private Plan (Acres)</td>
<td>651.34</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>-651.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woodland No Plan (Acres)</td>
<td>746.86</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>-746.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land in Federal or Government Program (Ac)</td>
<td>29.60</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-29.60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The last trend analyzed is livestock and poultry product (Table XII-17). Only the “Other Livestock” category has seen an increase, of about 76%. All other categories have decreased, and dramatically. In particular, over the last 20 years, the number of Meat Chickens has been completely removed, while the number of Laying Chickens has only decreased about 14%. Goats, Pigs, Beef Cattle, Rabbits and Turkeys saw the greatest declines. Alternative livestock such as Bee Hives and the number of Ponies and Horses has also decreased, but are still fairing well amongst other livestock.

Table XII-17: Bernards Township Livestock and Poultry Products (head)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Beef Cattle</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>-73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bee Hives</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>-8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mature Dairy</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young Dairy</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ducks</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Overall the trends witnessed in the Township reflect the trends of the County. As identified in the Somerset County Draft Comprehensive Farmland Preservation Plan, total land area and total net production has been decreasing over the last 20 years. Development pressures and land costs have forced out many farms, especially farms devoted to livestock.

### C. Support Services within Market Region

The Somerset County Draft Comprehensive Farmland Preservation Plan identified a variety of local support services in the Region. Overall, large production farmers in the County generally rely on mail order for special items and will travel to Pennsylvania or other large agricultural areas to purchase large scale items such as tractors and other heavy equipment. This has lead to a decrease in retail stores specializing in farm supplies in the County.

However, there are still retailers that tailor to farm supplies. As identified in the County Plan some farmers will still shop locally for small items such as seeds and large equipment parts. Other niche markets have opened up to address a growing equine base in the County. Hillsborough and Bedminster have stores that cater to horse supplies. Grain and feed stores are found in Hackettstown and Bernardsville, and Branchburg has a supplier catering to turf and irrigation supplies. Table XII-18 is taken from the Draft County Plan and discusses local retailers.

### Table XII-18: Local Farm Supply Retailers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Supplier</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Town</th>
<th>Phone</th>
<th>Webpage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Coach Stop Saddlery Limited</td>
<td>244 Lamington Rd</td>
<td>Bedminster, NJ 07921</td>
<td>908-234-2640</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Binder Machinery</td>
<td>2820 Hamilton Blvd</td>
<td>South Plainfield, NJ 07080</td>
<td>908-561-9000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somerset Grain, Feed, &amp; Supply Corp</td>
<td>74 Mine Brook Rd</td>
<td>Bernardsville, NJ 07924</td>
<td>908-766-0204</td>
<td><a href="http://www.somersetgrain.com">www.somersetgrain.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Storr Tractor Company</td>
<td>3191 Route 22</td>
<td>Somerville, NJ 08876</td>
<td>908-722-9830</td>
<td><a href="http://www.storrtractor.com">www.storrtractor.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Horse and Rider Shop</td>
<td>284 Route 206</td>
<td>Hillsborough, NJ 08844</td>
<td>908-281-5333</td>
<td><a href="http://www.thehorseandridershop.com">www.thehorseandridershop.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raritan Agway</td>
<td>77 Thompson St</td>
<td>Raritan, NJ 08869</td>
<td>908-725-9252</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Local farmers also take advantage of agricultural organizations such as the Somerset County Board of Agriculture and Agriculture Development Board, the New Jersey Farm Bureau, Rutgers Cooperative Extension of Somerset County, Somerset 4-H Club, Duke Farms, Somerset-Union Soil Conservation District, and the Natural Resource Conservation Service. These types of agricultural organizations can help farmers in a variety of ways.

Farmers markets are also valuable tools to the retention and promotion of agriculture. Local resident’s who frequent farmers’ markets appreciate locally grown products and can be the largest advocates for the retention of agriculture in an area. The following Table XII-19, taken from the County’s draft plan, identifies local farmers’ markets.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Market:</th>
<th>Bernardsville Farmers’ Market</th>
<th>Bound Brook Farmers’ Market</th>
<th>Franklin Township Farmers’ Market</th>
<th>Montgomery Farmers’ Market</th>
<th>North Plainfield Farmers Market</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Address:</td>
<td>Rt. 202 &amp; Clairmont Road, Bernardsville</td>
<td>Main Street - NJ Transit Parking Lot</td>
<td>720 Hamilton Street, Franklin Township</td>
<td>Route 206 &amp; Route 518, Montgomery</td>
<td>Somerset &amp; Race Streets, North Plainfield</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phone:</td>
<td>(908) 766-5836</td>
<td>(908) 894-0515</td>
<td>(732) 873-2500, x 362</td>
<td>(908) 359-9665</td>
<td>(908) 755-1526</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact:</td>
<td>Christa O’Conner</td>
<td>Karen Fritz</td>
<td>Efren Dato</td>
<td>Kim Rowe</td>
<td>Doug Singletary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open:</td>
<td>June 9 – November 24, Saturdays, 9 am - 2 pm</td>
<td>June 23 – October 27, Saturdays, 9 am - 2 pm</td>
<td>May 12 – November 17, Saturdays, 9am 2 pm</td>
<td>June 14 – October 25, Thursdays, 12:30pm - 6:30pm</td>
<td>July 14 – September 27, Saturdays, 9am - 2pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Products:</td>
<td>Variety of fruits and vegetables</td>
<td>Variety of fruits and vegetables</td>
<td>Variety of fruits and vegetables</td>
<td>Variety of fruits and vegetables</td>
<td>Variety of fruits and vegetables</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other:</td>
<td>WIC and Senior FMNP checks accepted by some farmers</td>
<td>WIC and Senior FMNP checks accepted by some farmers</td>
<td>WIC and Senior FMNP checks accepted by some farmers</td>
<td>WIC and Senior FMNP checks accepted by some farmers</td>
<td>WIC and Senior FMNP checks accepted by some farmers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

III. LAND USE PLANNING

A. State Development and Redevelopment Plan

The State Development and Redevelopment Plan (SDRP) establishes policies to guide the formulation of land management and natural resource conservation strategies (Figure XII-8). The State Development and Redevelopment Plan provides a balance between growth and conservation by designating planning areas that share common conditions with regard to development and environmental features:

- **Areas for Growth**: Metropolitan Planning areas (Planning Area 1), Suburban Planning Areas (Planning Area 2) and Designated Centers in any planning area.

---

20 The WIC & Seniors Farmers’ Market Nutrition Programs (FMNP) provide locally grown unprepared fresh fruits, vegetables and herbs to nutritionally at-risk pregnant, breast-feeding, or post-partum women, children 2-5 years old as well as eligible seniors 60 years of age and older.

http://www.state.nj.us/agriculture/divisions/md/prog/wic.html
**XII. Farmland Preservation Plan Element**

- **Areas for Limited Growth:** Fringe Planning Areas (Planning Area 3), Rural Planning Areas (Planning Area 4), and Environmentally Sensitive Planning Areas (Planning Area 5). In these planning areas, planning should promote a balance of conservation and limited growth - environmental constraints affect development and preservation is encouraged in large contiguous tracts.

- **Areas for Conservation:** Fringe Planning Area (Planning Area 3), Rural Planning Areas (Planning Area 4), and Environmentally Sensitive Planning Areas (Planning Area 5).21

The SDRP also identified five types of Centers where development is encouraged: Urban, Regional, Town, Village, and Hamlet. Developing in any of these types of centers allows for better conservation of the Environs of the town. The environs are the land outside Centers, including farmland, greenbelts, open space and large forest tracts, that are protected from inappropriate development.22

The Township contains Suburban (PA2), Fringe (PA 3), Rural Planning Area (PA4), Rural Environmentally Sensitive (PA4B) and Environmentally Sensitive (PA5). However, the entire Township’s project area is designated as Rural Planning Area (PA4) and Environmentally Sensitive Planning Area (PA5). These designations recognize the valuable agricultural resources and environmentally sensitive natural features that Bernards Township seeks to protect from development pressure within the region and can transform valued agricultural areas.

SDRP guidance for management of the Rural Planning Area has been provided, as follows:

> “Prudent land development practices are required to protect these resources and retain large contiguous areas of agricultural land. If a viable agricultural industry is to be sustained in the future, the conversion of some of the lands to non-farm uses must be sensitive to the areas predominant rural character and agricultural land base. Throughout New Jersey, some Rural Planning Areas are subject to greater development pressure than other areas. Without greater attention to maintaining and enhancing our rural areas, these economic activities are at risk. Tools and techniques need to be tailored to address the distinctive situation. In particular, new development may require additional attention in areas with environmentally sensitive features.”

For the Environmentally Sensitive Planning Area, the State Plan offers the following:

> “The Environmentally Sensitive Planning Area contains large contiguous land areas with valuable ecosystems, geological features and wildlife habitats. . . The future environmental and economic integrity of the state rests in the protection of these irreplaceable resources. . . Environmentally Sensitive Planning Areas are characterized by watersheds of pristine waters, trout streams and drinking water supply reservoirs; recharge areas for potable water aquifers; habitats of endangered and threatened plant and animal species; coastal and freshwater wetlands; prime forested areas; scenic vistas; and other significant topographical, geological or ecological features, . . . These resources are critically important not only for the residents of these areas, but for all New Jersey citizens.

The Environmentally Sensitive Planning Area is highly vulnerable to damage of many sorts from new development in the Environs, including fragmentation of landscapes, degradation of aquifers and

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21 http://www.state.nj.us/dca/divisions/osg/plan/
potable water, habitat destruction, extinction of plant and animal species and destruction of other irreplaceable resources which are vital for the preservation of the ecological integrity of New Jersey’s natural resources. . . New development in these Environs has the potential to destroy the very characteristics” (environmental sensitivities) “that define the area”.

The SDRP promotes the retention of large open land areas in PA4B & 5, and the Plan defines “large contiguous area”.

"When applied to habitat, (large contiguous area) means the area of undisturbed land required to maintain a desired community of plants and animals”, and “when applied to farmland, large contiguous area means the amount of contiguous farmland usually considered necessary to permit normal farm operations to take place on a sustained basis.”

The Township is endowed with large contiguous land areas with valuable ecosystems, geological features and wildlife habitats that support critical habitat. Whether it is the maintenance of these large contiguous areas for farmland or protection of environmentally-sensitive areas, Bernards’ stewardship of these areas requires policies and management techniques to sustain the landscape in such a way that the long-term viability and function of these lands and natural systems may be assured. Bernards seeks to manage these resources consistent with the SDRP policy orientation for the Environmentally Sensitive Planning Area.

SDRP Policies seek to maintain the viability of agricultural areas and the function of natural systems through strategies aimed at the protection of these resources and coordinated growth policies that orient new development adjacent to either Centers or existing developed areas with infrastructure capable of supporting development. Development should be compact and innovative development approaches, such as clustering or open lands zoning, will be needed to discourage sprawl-type patterns of development that typically fragment and destroy the very resources that the Rural and Environmentally Sensitive Planning Area designations seek to protect.

B. Special Resource Areas

The entirety of Bernards Township is located within the Highlands Planning Area (Figure XII-9). The Highlands Regional Master Plan (RMP) works to further the goals and requirements of the Highlands Act and focuses on two areas of action to address the need to protect Highlands’ agriculture resources. These areas are:

- Identify high quality agricultural lands in need of preservation; and
- Develop a process to ensure sufficient financial and institutional resources are available for agriculture protection and sustainability in the Highlands Region.

Development pressure in the Highlands, in general, is great and while the average size of a preserved farm in the Highlands is only 55 acres, the need to keep these lands in agriculture is also great and is a significant factor in Highlands planning and preservation, alike. Although the Highlands Agricultural Priority map shows farm assessed properties south of Route 78 as low or moderate priority farms, the Township Agricultural Advisory Committee is concerned that the RMP has the
potential for increased development which would threaten the town’s remaining farmland – preserved or not.

C. Bernards Township Master Plan and Development Regulations

Bernards Township, although possessing a small number of farms, has long recognized the value of agricultural resources in the town. With a few family farms settled in the Township for five or more generations, it is evident that these families have chosen to remain in the area to continue their family tradition and livelihood into the future. Not only is protection of farmers’ livelihoods an important aspect of this effort, but there is also consideration for the natural environment and those elements that support Bernards’ Township as a place to live and to visit.

Bernards’ 2003 Master Plan states that “Farmland and agricultural activities are an important part of the rural character that remains in Bernards Township. Preserving and protecting farmland offers many economic and environmental benefits, since farms require less in municipal services; farmers manage the land at no cost to the taxpayers; and the most scenic byways are those roads passing through active farming landscapes. Agricultural activities create and maintain rolling fields, hedgerows and wooded stream corridors. The County Master Plan cites agriculture as an important long-term land-use. Supportive municipal planning and zoning are fundamental to farm viability.”

(Table XII-20 and Figure XII-10). The farms targeted for preservation in this plan are located within the R-1 District (three acres/unit) or the 2-acre R-2, and R-3 districts. All three of these zones have minimum lot area requirements that are designed for residential uses. While farming, agriculture and horticulture are permitted in these zones, raising and keeping of livestock are conditional uses and should be in compliance with Section 21-12 of the Township’s Land Development Ordinance.

Table XII-20: Existing Zoning for Proposed Project Area

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Zone</th>
<th>Acres</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Highway Corridor</td>
<td>108.3200</td>
<td>2.85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-4</td>
<td>10.4500</td>
<td>0.28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E-2</td>
<td>157.7300</td>
<td>4.15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E-3</td>
<td>221.1000</td>
<td>5.82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P-1</td>
<td>111.8200</td>
<td>2.94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PUD-5</td>
<td>260.5600</td>
<td>6.86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R-1</td>
<td>995.6800</td>
<td>26.22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R-2</td>
<td>413.2900</td>
<td>10.88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R-3</td>
<td>1,343.2100</td>
<td>35.37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R-4</td>
<td>54.1500</td>
<td>1.43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RC-2</td>
<td>43.5900</td>
<td>1.15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RC-3</td>
<td>78.1000</td>
<td>2.06%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>3,798</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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D. Current Land Use and Trends

The Township’s development and land use trends have resulted in a loss in agriculture, but also a decrease in urban lands. Typically in the county and state there has been a trend of loss of agricultural lands due to encroaching urban and developed areas. For the most part, Bernards is following that trend, as the table below shows. Table XII-21 shows the breakdown of the land use cover from 1986 to 2002. Figure XII-5 graphically depicts current land use.

Table XII-21: Land Use/Land Cover Change 1986 to 2002

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1986</th>
<th></th>
<th>1995</th>
<th></th>
<th>2002</th>
<th></th>
<th>Percent Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Acres</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Acres</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Acres</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>1,248</td>
<td>8.71</td>
<td>916</td>
<td>5.89</td>
<td>694</td>
<td>4.84</td>
<td>-44.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barren Land</td>
<td>560.88</td>
<td>3.91</td>
<td>447.23</td>
<td>2.87</td>
<td>291.29</td>
<td>2.03</td>
<td>-48.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forest</td>
<td>4,297.49</td>
<td>29.97</td>
<td>4,357.96</td>
<td>28.03</td>
<td>3,542.56</td>
<td>24.69</td>
<td>-17.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>5,260.6</td>
<td>36.69</td>
<td>6,693.28</td>
<td>43.05</td>
<td>6,922.74</td>
<td>48.24</td>
<td>-31.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water</td>
<td>70.15</td>
<td>0.49</td>
<td>74.87</td>
<td>0.48</td>
<td>88.14</td>
<td>0.61</td>
<td>+24.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wetlands</td>
<td>2,901.67</td>
<td>20.24</td>
<td>3,057.2</td>
<td>19.66</td>
<td>2,811.38</td>
<td>19.59</td>
<td>-3.21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>14,339.16</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>15,547.4</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>14,350.55</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0.08%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

E. Sewer Service Areas

There are four major sewer service areas in the Township (Figure XII-11). The Bernards Township Sewer Authority comprises the majority of the land area in the Township and encompasses the Veterans Administration service area. The next largest is the Environmental Disposal Corp (EDC), followed by the SRVSA. Small portions of the Bernards Township Sewer Authority and the EDC are located within the PIG Project Area, while the entirety of the SRVSA is in the Project Area. None of the targeted farms are located within a service area.

F. Bernards Master Plan and Zoning Overview

1. General Lot Size Categories and Distribution throughout the Township

The same development pattern emerges when viewing lot comparison (Figure XII-12). The central portion of the Township is mainly comprised of low, medium, and high density residential areas with sewer service. A portion of the proposed Project Area is located within the Environmental Disposal Corporation’s service area, but the majority of the proposed Project Area is not located within any sewer service area. (Table XII-22).

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Table XII-22: Lot Comparison

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lot Size</th>
<th>Acres</th>
<th>% (from Acres)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lots less than 1 acre (serviced by sewer)</td>
<td>2,300.4</td>
<td>16.03%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lots greater than 1 acre (serviced by sewer)</td>
<td>29.72</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lots between 1 and 5 acres (septic/well)</td>
<td>3,576.82</td>
<td>24.92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lots between 5 and 10 acres (septic/well)</td>
<td>1,146.71</td>
<td>7.99%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lots greater than 10 acres (septic/well)</td>
<td>7,296.92</td>
<td>50.84%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As depicted on Table XII-22, 83.75% of the total land area is lots serviced by on-site septic systems with 50.84% of the total lots greater than 10 acres serviced by on-site septic systems. The majority of targeted farms are greater than 10 acres in size; however there are a few between 5 and 10 acres. There are no farm parcels targeted for preservation that are less than five acres in size.

2. Innovative Planning Techniques
Where the following planning techniques are considered in the Township, the agricultural community has expressed their desire to ensure that the look and feel of a farming community is maintained. In addition, they would like to ensure that the viability of farming is maintained as these techniques may be utilized for development and preservation.

*Cluster Zoning.* Bernards Township’s CR-1 and CR-2 (Conservation Residential) Zones allow for planning techniques other than the conventional. Although the term “clustering” is not used in the Land Use Plan element of the Township’s Master Plan, flexibility is given to these zones to provide a reduction in lot size and an increase in the amount of land conserved. Techniques such as “open lands” zoning permit a 50% open lands conservation density increase over the number of units possible in a fully conforming plan. This density is permitted when at least 33% to 50% of a tract remains in one large “open-lands” parcel, deed-restricted to permit no more than one single-family dwelling (and its accessory uses and structures) with the balance to be used for natural resource conservation and/or agricultural uses. To achieve the desired pattern of development, the conservation subdivision would permit lots as small as three (3) acres.

*Non-contiguous Cluster Zoning.* Non-contiguous clustering is a technique that allows creation of a non-contiguous tract for development purposes, and allows preservation of farmland or other resource lands as a by-product of development. The Township does not currently have a non-contiguous cluster zoning provision. The Township’s densely developed central area does not lend itself naturally to a non-contiguous zoning provision. The northern and southern portions of the Township, where large contiguous farm and open space areas exist, could benefit from this technique.

*Lot Averaging.* Lot averaging is a development technique that allows the sizes of lots within a subdivision to vary, provided the overall development density for the tract remains unchanged. This allows the creation of a number of small lots along with some large remaining lands parcels. This is another area that the Township has not explored and again the densely populated central area of the town would not lend itself to this type of zoning. The larger lands in the northern and southern most

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parts of the township might benefit from this type of zoning, but only when preserving the land outright is not an option.

Transfer of Development Rights. The Township currently does not have a TDR program. The Planning Board has determined that TDR is not an appropriate tool for use in Bernards.

Use of Mandatory vs. Voluntary Options. As stated above, the Open Lands option for zoning in the CR-1 and CR-2 districts is a voluntary option for the landowner.

3. Description of Buffer Requirements
The Township’s Land Development Ordinance defines buffer to “mean a strip of land of specified width containing natural woodlands, earth mounds or other planted screening material, and separating one kind of land use from another or separating a planned development from any other form of development.” There are currently no provisions for a required buffer area between agricultural uses and non-agricultural uses. The Township does subscribe to the Right to Farm Act and adopted a Right to Farm ordinance in 2004.

4. Discussion of Development Pressures and Land Value Trends
As identified in the previous sections, development pressures have resulted in a greater urgency to protect farmland in the Township. Bernards has recently purchased some open space as well as preservation easements. The preservation easements have been valued at 80% of the land value. One cause of this increased value is that the State has also allowed the use of approved lot values versus raw land per acre value. In dollar amounts, the Township has seen appraisals of about $375,000 per proposed lot for preservation easements.

As undeveloped land in the State, and the Township, becomes more and more scarce, farmland becomes an attractive opportunity for further development. This trend can be seen in Table XII-23 below. While the number of new building permits has declined significantly from year to year, the number of alterations and additions has increased. Additions especially increase the density of a site, creating the feeling of a more urbanized area. The combination of these factors has resulted in an increase in land value and an increase in the desire to maintain a rural character through farmland preservation.

| Table XII-23: Building Permits Issued (2000-2007) |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| New Buildings               | 292                        | 225                        | 140                        | 83                          | 92                          | 81                          | 97                          | 75                          |
| Alterations                 | 1302                       | 1478                       | 1366                       | 1362                        | 1425                        | 1610                        | 1728                        | 1890                        |
| Additions                   | 67                         | 62                         | 91                         | 97                          | 106                         | 107                         | 123                         | 112                         |
| Total Permits               | 1486                       | 1696                       | 1522                       | 1510                        | 1567                        | 1754                        | 1859                        | 1921                        |

30 Township of Bernards Engineer, Peter Messina
31 Township of Bernards Construction Official, Dennis Bettler
G. Transfer of Development Rights Opportunities

Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) is a planning tool that allows the movement of development rights from an area where development is not suitable (sending area) to an area where development is more compatible (receiving area). TDR programs allow land owners to profit from the sale of their land while moving that development to more suitable areas. The goal of a TDR program is to channel development away from valuable resource areas to areas where development is more suitable.

Pinelands Development Credit Program

Transfer of development rights was first authorized in the state in 1981 with the Pinelands Development Credit (PDC) Program. The PDC Program is a component of the Pinelands Comprehensive Management Plan (CMP) created to regulate development in the Pinelands region. The program was enacted to offset the severe development restrictions imposed within the Preservation Area District, Agricultural Production Areas and Special Agricultural Production Areas designated by the CMP, and to transfer development out of these sensitive areas. Development potential is transferred to infrastructure-supported areas designated by the CMP as Regional Growth Areas. Before property owners may sell PDCs, they must first be certified by the Pinelands Development Credit Bank.

The PDC program is administered by the Pinelands Commission and the Pinelands Development Credit Bank. As of December 2006, this regional TDR program had resulted in the preservation of more than 49,000 acres, according to the Pinelands Development Credit Bank.

The New Jersey State Transfer of Development Rights Act (N.J.S.A. 40:55D-140) is the enabling legislation that authorizes the transfer of development rights by municipalities and outlines procedures to adopt or amend a TDR ordinance. The New Jersey Highlands Council is currently establishing a regional TDR program that will be open to all Somerset County municipalities. Through the Highlands program, landowners may sell the development rights on their lands at pre-Highlands Act prices to a Highlands TDR Bank, which will then allocate them to voluntarily designated receiving areas throughout the seven-county region.

IV. BERNARDS TOWNSHIP’S PLAN TO PRESERVE FARMLAND

A. Somerset County Agricultural Development Areas

The Somerset County Draft Comprehensive Farmland Preservation Plan has identified one ADA in Bernards Township (Figure XII-3). The project area is located in the southern portion of the Township and is identified as the Northern Bernards ADA. All currently preserved farmland in Bernards Township is situated within the proposed ADA, where several additional farms are targeted for preservation over the next decade.

Individual farm characteristics are provided on the enclosed tables. The tables show that the farms targeted for preservation in Bernards Township are mostly made up of “other soils”. Three farms are more than 50% Prime Farmland soils, while only one farm is more than 50% Statewide Important soils (Table XII-23).
Prime Farmland is land that has the best combination of physical and chemical characteristics for producing food, feed, forage, fiber and oilseed crops and is also available for these uses. It has the soil quality, growing season, and moisture supply needed to economically produce sustained high yields of crops when treated and managed according to acceptable farming methods, Prime Farmlands are not excessively erodible or saturated with water for a long period of time, and they either do not flood frequently or are protected from flooding.\textsuperscript{32}

Farmlands of state\textit{wide importance} include those soils in land capability Class II and III that do not meet the criteria as Prime Farmland, These soils are nearly Prime Farmland and economically produce high yields of crops when treated and managed according to acceptable farming methods, Some may produce yields as high as Prime Farmland if conditions are favorable.\textsuperscript{33}

\textbf{B. Bernards Township Farmland Preservation Strategies}

The following sections will identify the various types of farmland preservation programs that the Township can use as it moves forward with efforts to protect active farmland.

1. County Easement Purchase
The County Easement Purchase Program allows a farmer within the County's Agricultural Development Area (ADA) to sell their development rights to the County and retain ownership of the farm. The farmer is able to continue to farm the land and even sell the property at any time, but they must agree to permanent deed restrictions that allow only agricultural use. In order to enter into the program a landowner must submit an application to the County where it is reviewed and a site inspection conducted. Approved applications are then sent to the State. Two independent appraisals of the property are conducted to determine the land’s fair market value, and one to determine its agricultural value. The difference between these two is the price of the farm’s "development rights," also known as the easement value. This is the price that is offered to the landowner.

2. County Planning Incentive Grants
The County Planning Incentive Grants (PIGs) program is intended to protect and preserve large pieces of contiguous farmland through the purchase of development easements. In order to qualify for PIGs, the County must create an agricultural advisory board and must also maintain a dedicated funding source to purchase farmland. County PIG’s require that the County and Township applications correlate with county comprehensive farmland preservation plans. Bernards Township is developing this Comprehensive Farmland Preservation Plan in order to conform to these policies.

3. Municipal Planning Incentive Grants
The Municipal Planning Incentive Grants (PIG’s), like the County PIG’s program, have similar requirements. Municipal PIG’s require the adoption of a Farmland Preservation Plan, an Agricultural Advisory Board and a standing commitment for preserving farmland. Grants for a municipal PIG are provided by the SADC to purchase development easements. As identified in this Plan, several target farms have been identified by the Township for future preservation efforts. These targets will continue to be updated as farmer interest changes and farms are either preserved or are removed

\textsuperscript{32} USDA,NRCS NJ Important Farmlands Inventory  http://www.nj.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/soils/primefarm.html

\textsuperscript{33} USDA,NRCS NJ Important Farmlands Inventory  http://www.nj.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/soils/importantfarm.html
due to ineligibility. Somerset County requires matching funding (50:50) between the County and the municipality, as part of a municipal PIG.

4. SADC Direct Easement Purchase
Another option for farmland preservation is the SADC Direct Easement Program. The State Agriculture Development Committee (SADC) purchases development rights or farmland outright for preservation purposes under its state acquisition program. Landowners can sell the development rights to their land and continue to own and farm the land, or sell their land outright. In both cases, the land is permanently deed-restricted for agricultural use. When the SADC purchases farms outright, it resells them at public auction as permanently preserved farms.

The SADC provides direct cost share funding to purchase farms and development easements from landowners. Landowners do not have to be within an ADA if they are making an application directly to the State. In most cases, the State will pay up to 100% of the certified appraised easement value in the direct easement purchase program. By participating in this program, the landowner still retains ownership of their land, but agrees to restrict land use to agricultural purposes. The Direct Easement Program does not receive monetary contributions from the County.

5. SADC Fee Simple
The SADC fee simple acquisition program involves an entire property being purchased directly by the State. The SADC pays the survey and title costs, the landowner is exempt from paying rollback taxes for farmland assessment and the transaction can be completed in a matter of months. The SADC negotiates a purchase price subject to recommendations of two independent appraisers and review by a state review appraiser. The land becomes restricted so that it becomes permanently preserved for agriculture. In this type of acquisition, the landowner does not retain any rights. The property is then resold at auction; the SADC does not retain ownership. To qualify to participate in this program, the farmland must be within an ADA and be eligible for Farmland Assessment.

6. Nonprofit Grant Program
Nonprofit organizations have also been able to help achieve farmland preservation goals. Grants can be leveraged from SADC to fund up to 50% of the fee simple or development easement values on farms. The SADC reviews and ranks applications based on the following criteria: percentage of high-quality soils; percentage of tillable acres; suitable boundaries and buffers, such as other nearby preserved farms and open space; the local commitment to agriculture (e.g., right to farm ordinances, community financial support); size of the farm; agricultural density of the area, and imminence of development.

These grants help to preserve farmland throughout the County. Generally, these transactions involve properties with both agricultural and environmental significance. As with other programs, grants are obtained through an application process, in which the land is valued by independent appraisers. Bernards Township may seek to preserve farms in this manner and continually look for alternative funding source to help achieve farmland preservation goals.

7. Transfer of Development Rights
The transfer of development rights is a growth management tool that transfers development rights from one location, a preservation area, to another, an identified growth area. The development rights are used to allow for development at a higher density than what the previous zoning of the receiving
area allowed. To date, this program has not been used to preserve farmland in the Township and is not currently recommended for use in Bernards Township.

C. Consistency with the SADC Strategic Targeting Project

The purpose of the SADC Strategic Targeting Project is to prioritize farmland to be preserved by targeting farms for preservation based on specific criteria, including the prioritization of prime and statewide soils in agricultural production outside sewer service areas. According to the SADC, the Strategic Targeting Project has three primary goals. These are as follows:

- The coordination of farmland preservation and retention of agricultural practices “with proactive planning initiatives.”
- To update and create maps which serve as a tool for more accurate preservation targets.
- To coordinate different preservation efforts, such as open space, with farmland preservation.

Through the use of the Strategic Targeting Program, the SADC hopes to more efficiently target and designate farmland for preservation and, by doing so, boost the State’s agricultural industry. Bernards Township has identified target farms that meet the SADC primary goals (Figure XII-3) and continues to update all available information, through GIS, statistical data and the like, in order to maintain a data base of potential target farms for preservation efforts. Currently, the A.A.C. Chairperson occupies a seat on the County Agricultural Development Board and hopes to retain that seat.

D. Eight Year Programs

The 8-Year Farmland Preservation Program is a cost sharing programs for soil and water conservation projects. Landowners receive no direct compensation for participating but are eligible to apply to the State Agriculture Development Committee (SADC) for grants that fund up to 50 percent of the costs of approved soil and water conservation projects. Farmland owners agree to voluntarily restrict nonagricultural development for a period of eight years in exchange for certain benefits. There are two types of eight-year programs: municipally approved programs, which require a formal agreement among the landowner, county and municipality, and non-municipally approved programs, which require an agreement between only the landowner and county. The landowner must sign an agreement that restricts the land to agricultural use for eight years. A farm must be located within an ADA to qualify for the program.

E. Coordination with Open Space Preservation Initiatives

Bernards Township has partnered with Green Acres and Somerset County to preserve key properties in the Township. Partnering with a variety of agencies allows the Township to leverage funds from various sources to help achieve open space preservation. As seen on Figure XII-13, Somerset County and Green Acres both hold the rights to large parcels in the Township. These parcels help to create larger contiguous tracts of land to maintain the rural character that is cherished by Township residents. These areas also help to promote natural resource conservation by preserving large areas that create a buffer between open areas and more developed regions. The Township will continue to
support the preservation of open space especially if it is able to compliment farmland preservation efforts.

F. Farmland Preservation Program Funding Expended to Date

To date, Bernards has participated in three farmland preservation efforts where development rights were purchased. These included:

- English Farm lot, Valley Road
  Block 9301, lot 9.01
  64.298 ac.

- English meadow lot, Valley/Mount Airy Roads
  Block 7703, lot 22
  16.281 ac.

- English wood lot, Allen Road
  Block 11201, lot 1
  58.596 ac.

The easement on the English Farm was purchased for just under $9.7 million, with 60 percent of the funding coming from the township and 40 percent from Somerset County. The easement legally requires the owners of the farm – now and in the future – to maintain it for agricultural use.

The township also used its open space and farmland preservation fund to pay $3 million to acquire the Sons of Liberty Farm.

G. Monitoring of Farmland Preservation

Most farms in New Jersey have been preserved through the County Easement Purchase Program, but the agency holding the easement is responsible for annual monitoring. Currently the Township is developing an easement monitoring plan, and an educational program is evolving to promote stewardship of land easements. Prior to developing the monitoring plan, the Township will notify the responsible agency if violations are expected on preserved land. Should the Township consider creating an easement monitoring plan, the checklist would include the following:

- change in ownership since the previous inspection
- evidence of non-agricultural development (approved or otherwise)
- use of the premises for agricultural activities
- presence of expansion of non-agricultural activity since the previous inspection
- if the non-agricultural practice has been abandoned
- evidence of mining or removing of materials such as sand, gravel, rock, etc
- evidence of dumping
- whether or not the farm has an approved conservation plan
- any improvements to farm buildings and residences
XII. Farmland Preservation Plan Element

- any new agricultural buildings erected

H. Coordination with Transfer of Development Rights Programs

Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) are sometimes used in conjunction with the traditional Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) program; these two programs are not mutually exclusive. As noted previously, the Planning Board does not recommend the use of TDR in Bernards Township.

V. Future Farmland Preservation Program

One criterion for protecting farmland and receiving funding for the effort requires the township establish the A.A.C.. The Township did this by passing a resolution that identifies the responsibilities of the A.A.C. as:

- Continuing the sustainable use of economically viable farmland for agricultural production;
- Preserving large, contiguous and economically viable tracts of agricultural land;
- Encouraging appropriate conservation strategies and agricultural activities;
- Promoting interest in township children in 4-H and other related agricultural activities; and
- Promoting local farming through municipal avenues, such as websites, the municipal cable channel, guidebooks, community events, schools, etc.

Bernards Township in assessing the farm parcels within the Northern Bernards ADA has determined that the following parcels are targeted for preservation. (Table XII-24)

| Name                                | Block | Lot | Acres | Prime Soil Acres | % Prime Soil | Statewide Important Soil Acres | % Statewide | Other Soils | % Other |
|-------------------------------------|-------|-----|-------|------------------|--------------|-------------------------------|-------------|------------|---------|---------|
| HARRISON BROOK LLC                  | 9301  | 49  | 09.22 | 4.54             | 49.22        | 2.12                          | 22.99       | 02.56      | 27.79   |
| BLACK, PATRICK & ENGLISH, C W       | 9301  | 31  | 7.53  | 2.31             | 30.66        | 2.54                          | 33.72       | 2.68       | 35.62   |
| SORGE, JOSEPH M & CATHERINE A       | 11401 | 42  | 36.85 | 2.3              | 6.24         | 0                             | 0           | 34.55      | 93.76   |
| MAOLUCCI, VINCENT J                 | 11501 | 3   | 37.05 | 0                | 0            | 0                             | 0           | 69.03      | 100.0   |
| MILITO, JEAN B                      | 10901 | 43  | 15.28 | 3.59             | 23.50        | 0                             | 0           | 11.69      | 76.5    |
| MILITO, EUGENIA                     | 10901 | 42  | 11.29 | 1.41             | 12.48        | 0                             | 0           | 9.88       | 87.52   |
| ANDERSON, EDWARD & MARIE            | 11401 | 2   | 43.99 | 15.27            | 34.71        | 0                             | 0           | 28.72      | 65.29   |
| PINSON, ELLEN                       | 9401  | 8   | 37.9  | 15.95            | 42.06        | 2.95                          | 7.78        | 19.02      | 50.16   |
| SCHEHERAZADE ENTERPRISES INC        | 9401  | 7   | 43.6  | 4.46             | 10.47        | 5.52                          | 12.95       | 32.64      | 76.58   |
| TSAKIRIS, ANDY & DINAPOLI, JOHN     | 4301  | 35  | 8.73  | 0.0              | 0            | 0                             | 0           | 8.73       | 100.0   |
| TSAKIRIS, ANDY &                     | 4301  | 34  | 11.29 | 0.05             | 0.44         | 0.02                          | 0.18        | 11.22      | 99.38   |

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A. Preservation Goals (1, 5 and 10 year acreage targets)

The Township has determined preservation goals based on active farmland in the community and current farmer interest. Although Bernards currently has seen roughly 140 acres of farmland preserved to date, the goal of preserving 702.5 acres over the next ten years is nonetheless ambitious. However, reaching that goal would mean ensuring that more farmland is protected from encroaching development. Table XII-24 highlights the acreage goals over the first year, in five years, and then at the 10 year point.

Table XII-25: Preservation Goals by Year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Acres</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>265</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>270</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>702.46</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
B. Bernards Project Area Summary

The Northern Bernards Project Area seeks to establish the Township’s preservation efforts and will also establish Bernards’ goal of creating a viable agricultural base by creating preserved farmland, especially where contiguous farm parcels currently exist in the southern portions of the Township. The Township’s Northern Bernards Project Area includes active farmland and dedicated open space (Figure XII-3). In order to ensure that farmland meets the criteria for preservation funding, the Township Agricultural Advisory Committee developed the following list as a preliminary ranking system:

- Tenure – long-term ownership of the farm;
- Likelihood of continued farming in the future;
- Productivity.

In addition, the Township A.A.C. recommends discussing the following, to advance the efforts to establish a local farmland preservation program:

- Quality of soils (prime, statewide important, locally important);
- Adjacent land use character – if developed as residential, identify density of adjoining residential development;
- Type of agriculture conducted – i.e. market driven production vs. federally subsidized crops;
- Proximity to active farmland;
- Proximity to preserved farmland, open space, recreation lands, land under conservation easement.

A Task Force of the A.A.C. developed a report to document the priorities of farmland preservation in the Township and the important considerations for the ranking criteria. Excerpts from that report include:

- A priority in preservation / retention of economically viable working farms in the Township;
- Farmland preservation efforts should be focused on economically viable working farms.
- Imminent threat – potential for loss of farmland to suburban development in the near future;
- Retention of scenic rural landscapes that reinforce community character, from which residents derive a strong sense of community;
- Retain aspects of the Township’s historic, agricultural heritage and remaining elements of the agricultural heritage, which survives in the community today.
- Potential for supplementing a “farmland preservation” component of a tract, with an open space land preservation component – potential for public access.

In a solicitation letter to landowners, the Township stated the intent to permanently preserve active viable farmland, encourage the continuation of agriculture and farming in the community, and thereby maintain the Township’s remaining rural character.
C. Municipal and County Minimum Eligibility Criteria Coordination

N.J.A.C. 2:76-6.20 identifies minimum eligibility criteria that all farms participating in the program must satisfy. The criteria differentiate between farms that are less than or equal to 10 acres in size and farms that are greater than 10 acres in size, as follows:

- For lands less than or equal to 10 acres in size, the land must produce agricultural or horticultural products of at least $2,500 annually; at least 75 percent of the land must be tillable or a minimum of five acres, whichever is less; at least 75 percent of the land, or a minimum of five acres, whichever is less, must consist of soils that are capable of supporting agricultural or horticultural production; and the land must exhibit development potential based on certain standards.
- For lands greater than 10 acres in size, at least 50 percent of the land or a minimum of 25 acres, whichever is less, must be tillable; at least 50 percent of the land, or a minimum of 25 acres, whichever is less, must consist of soils that are capable of supporting agricultural or horticultural production; and the land must exhibit development potential based on standards set forth in the rule.
- Lands that do not meet the minimum criteria are not eligible for a State cost share grant for farmland preservation purposes.

D. Municipal and County Ranking Criteria Used to Prioritize Farms

Somerset County and Bernards utilized the minimum eligibility criteria as outlined in the state regulations § 2:76-6.16 – Criteria for evaluating development easement applications. The evaluation is based on the merits of the individual application with a weighted factor assigned to each criterion. These include soil quality, tillable acres, boundaries and buffers, local commitment, size of farm and density of lands dedicated to farmland preservation, local factors encouraging agriculture and threat of development. A brief overview of the SADC minimum eligibility criteria under NJAC 2:76-6.20 indicates that the State ranks farms in the following manner:

*For lands less than or equal to 10 acres*

1. The land produces agricultural or horticultural products of at least $2,500 annually;
2. At least 75% of the land is tillable or 5 acres, whichever is less;
3. At least 75% of the land or a minimum of 5 acres, whichever is less, consists of soils that are capable of supporting agricultural or horticultural production;
4. The land must exhibit development potential based on a finding the following standards are met:
   i. The municipal zoning ordinance for the land as it is being appraised must allow additional development, and at least one additional residential site beyond that which will potentially exist on the premises.
   ii. Where the purported development value of the land depends on the potential to provide access for additional development, the municipal ordinances allowing further subdivision of the land is possible. If access is only available pursuant to an easement, the easement must specify that further subdivision to the land is possible.
   iii. The land shall not contain more than 80 percent soils classified as freshwater or modified agricultural wetlands according to the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) wetlands maps. If the DEP wetlands maps are
in dispute, further investigation and onsite analysis may be conducted by a certified licensed engineer or qualified wetlands consultant and/or a letter of interpretation issued by the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, may be secured and used to provide a more accurate assessment of the site conditions, provided, however, that nothing herein shall require the Committee to conduct such additional investigation.

For lands greater than 10 acres:
1. At least 50% of the land, or a minimum of 25 acres, whichever is less, is tillable;
2. At least 50% of the land, or a minimum of 25 acres, whichever is less, consists of soils that are capable of supporting agricultural or horticultural production; and
3. The land must exhibit development potential based on a finding that all of the following standards are met:
   i. The municipal zoning ordinance for the land as it is being appraised must allow additional development, and at least one additional residential site beyond that which will potentially exist on the premises.
   ii. Where the purported development value of the land depends on the potential to provide access for additional development, the municipal ordinances allowing further subdivision of the land is possible. If access is only available pursuant to an easement, the easement must specify that further subdivision to the land is possible.
   iii. The land shall not contain more than 80 percent soils classified as freshwater or modified agricultural wetlands according to the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) wetlands maps. If the DEP wetlands maps are in dispute, further investigation and onsite analysis may be conducted by a certified licensed engineer or qualified wetlands consultant and/or a letter of interpretation issued by the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, may be secured and used to provide a more accurate assessment of the site conditions, provided, however, that nothing herein shall require the Committee to conduct such additional investigation.

As noted above, Bernards based its proposed preservation efforts on the State regulations. The Township established a ranking system in the event that several farms became available for preservation at the same time and funding decisions need to be made. This ranking system follows the State and County criteria and may be impacted local factors including limited funding for preservation efforts. The Township has prioritized their goals for farmland preservation based on the above criteria, but also with the potential of limited funding in mind. Circumstances under which waivers would be considered include imminence of a farm to change to a non-agricultural land use in situations where an individual farm is highly productive.

E. Municipal and County Policies Related to Farmland Preservation Applications
The Township abides by the SADC’s policies, including those regarding housing opportunities, division of premises and approval of exceptions. As previously stated, the Township’s farms are not of an appropriate size to accommodate housing for farm labor. The A.A.C.’s perspective for each of the sections below is that the need for this type of housing has not presented itself within the Township. The A.A.C. does however have an indirect obligation to COAH to provide affordable housing. This is discussed in the Township’s Housing Plan Element.
The draft Somerset County Comprehensive Farmland Preservation Plan provided a brief summary of the state policies for each of these issues:

**Approval of Housing Opportunities**

*Agricultural labor housing:* The State of New Jersey does not currently protect agricultural labor housing. However, the State Agricultural Development Committee understands the need for this type of housing and does have a policy that a landowner may refer to in order to construct labor housing. These applications are reviewed by the State Agricultural Development Committee. The Township A.A.C. should be consulted by the permitting authority before agricultural labor housing and other farm housing is constructed, with the preference of locating housing within exception areas as much as possible. The Planning Board recommends that the Township develop policies and possibly regulations regarding farm labor housing.

*House replacement:* The policy of the State Agricultural Development Committee on house replacement is that requests for replacement of a residence on permanently preserved land must be reviewed and approved on an individual basis by the CADB and the SADC. The Township A.A.C. should be consulted before any housing is constructed, with the preference of locating housing within exception areas as much as possible so as to locate the new residence where it has a minimum impact on any agricultural operation. The Planning Board recommends that the Township develop policies and possibly regulations regarding farm labor housing. Presumably, the Township A.A.C. and CADB will review each housing case as it arises.

*Residual dwelling site opportunity allocation:* Residual Dwelling Site Opportunities (RDSOs) are lingering potential housing prospects located within a deed-restricted farm. By designating an area as an RDSO, the landowner is implying that the land will be used for a residential unit or other structure as referred to in N.J.A.C. 2:76-6.17. These prospective residential units can be allocated to parcels that are up to 100 acres in size. The purpose of the building in question must be for “single-family residential housing and its appurtenant uses.” To qualify as an RDSO, the SADC requires that the use of the residential unit be for agricultural purposes and “at least one person residing in the residential unit shall be regularly engaged in common farm site practices.”

**Division of the Premises.** The goal of the State Agricultural Development Committee is to preserve large tracts of farmland and, therefore, a division of the premises is not an encouraged practice. A landowner wishing to divide permanently preserved farmland must submit a written request. The application must be approved, in writing, by both the State Agricultural Development Committee and the CADB.

**Approval of Exception.** Exceptions are defined by the SADC as “acres within a farm being preserved” which are “not subject to the terms of the deed of easement.” When an exception is made, the landowner does not receive any compensation in the excepted area. Exceptions are not a practice that is encouraged by the SADC and, when they occur, it is recommended that they should be as small as possible. There are two types of exceptions that can occur; severable and non-severable.

*Severable:* A severable exception is defined by the SADC as an “area which is part of an existing Block and Lot owned by the applicant that will be excluded from the restrictions of the Deed of...
Easement and may be sold as a separate lot in the future.” A severable exception is made “if a landowner wants to be able to sell the excepted area separate from the deed-restricted farm.”

Non-severable: Non-severable exceptions are defined by the SADC as “area which is part of an existing Block and Lot owned by the application that will not be subject to the restrictions of the Deed of Easement but cannot be sold separately from the remaining premises.” Unlike a severable exception, a non-severable exception is “always attached to the protected farm.” Exceptions made to farmland have the potential to impact the value of the property. When an appraisal occurs, both severable and non-severable exceptions are considered in the determination of the restricted/after value of the property.”

F. Funding Plan

1. Description of Municipal and County Funding Sources

Bernards Township has a healthy tax ratable base, collecting $0.04 / $100 for a total annual revenue of $3,029,522 in 2007. As established by ordinance, $11 million of past and future open space revenues will be dedicated to farmland preservation. The Township also receives funding from the State, County, and from interest earned on the Open Space Trust Fund.

Somerset County’s 2006 Open Space Inventory shows that approximately 9,800 acres have been preserved in permanent open space. Approximately $81 million dollars from the County Open Space Trust Fund has been spent to date in acquiring these open spaces for Somerset County residents. These open spaces range from areas where active recreation is prevalent, such as parks and various sports fields, to lands of passive recreation with trails and natural features. Somerset County has also provided financial assistance for municipalities to pursue preservation of over 250 acres with nearly $11 million dollars in funding through the County/Municipal Open Space Partnership Program, which began in 1999. Through this program, municipalities submit applications to Somerset County, which are reviewed by staff and a series of committees formed through the Somerset County Planning Board and Somerset County Park Commission. The Somerset County Board of Chosen Freeholders offers final approval on applications, and awards are then distributed to the respective municipalities. Municipalities often seek the technical and advisory assistance of nonprofits during this process.34

2. Financial Policies

Bernards Township’s plan for farmland preservation for the Northern Bernards Project Area will combine a variety of techniques to encourage as many landowners as possible to preserve their farms. These efforts will include encouraging farmers to enter their farms into Municipally Approved Farmland Preservation Programs, entering into option agreements for easement purchase with landowners, installment purchase agreements and direct development easement purchase.

Preservation of all farms in the project area is being sought for this application. Assuming inclusion in the PIG budget, including local, county and state contributions, it is hoped that the majority of parcels identified can be preserved. This total amount can be expanded through the use of option agreements and installment purchases, which will be determined after negotiations with landowners. Options for

34 http://service.govdelivery.com/docs/NJSOMER/NJSOMER_38/NJSOMER_38_20070720_en.pdf
funding from the County and State include the following policies. County match policies are dollar for dollar with farms that are greater than 25 acres, unless the property in question is situated adjacent to a preserved farm or open space. The SADC also has a sliding scale for easement acquisition where the committee established the percent cost share based on the land owner’s asking price and certified value of the easement on a per acre basis. As the value of the easement increases, the percent SADC cost share decreases.35

Upon approval of this Planning Incentive Grant Application, Bernards will correspond with all property owners of the targeted properties in the Northern Bernards Project Area and advise them of the parameters of the program. Bernards will encourage property owners to consider the financial and other advantages of participation in the Farmland Preservation Plan, and outline the per acre maximum easement value to be offered. Additionally, owners will be encouraged to assist in leveraging available funding through donations of easements, partial donations of easements and/or bargain sales of development rights.

In order to maximize preservation opportunities, Bernards Township will utilize option agreements or installment sales where possible for easement purchases. These vehicles will allow the Township and property owners to develop agreements regarding price and terms that maximize the amount of farmland which can be brought into the preservation program in the early period.

3. Cost Projections and Funding Plan

Somerset County has established a county average of easement costs of $15,788 per acre. Because Bernards Township has preserved only one farm (three parcels), the Township has relied on the cost of the easements purchased as part of the English Farm. The per acre easement value for the three English parcels (see Table XII-24) have been estimated at $100,000-$125,000 per acre and $80,000 per acre for the woodlot. Therefore the Township of Bernards estimates that the per acre value of development easements in the Northern Bernards Project area will be roughly $75,000. Table XII-26 below reflects these numbers.

The total target farm acres located in the project area is 702.46 acres. Given a per acre value of $75,000 the total cost to preserve all the target farms would be approximately $55,345,000 (Table XII-26).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Acres</th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>STATE Cost-Share</th>
<th>COUNTY Cost-Share</th>
<th>MUNICIPAL Cost-Share</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>$15,220,000</td>
<td>$8,873,000</td>
<td>$3,044,000</td>
<td>$3,302,740</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>265</td>
<td>$19,875,000</td>
<td>$11,587,000</td>
<td>$3,975,000</td>
<td>$4,312,875</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>270</td>
<td>$20,250,000</td>
<td>$11,806,000</td>
<td>$4,050,000</td>
<td>$4,394,250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>700</td>
<td>$55,345,000</td>
<td>$32,266,000</td>
<td>$11,069,000</td>
<td>$12,010,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Assuming an SADC cost-share of 58.3%, a County cost-share of 20% and 21.7% Municipal cost-share, over the ten year preservation period the Township is in need of $32,266,135 from the State, $11,069,000 from the County CADB and the Township will have to provide $12,009,865 over the course of ten years. The Township’s goal over the ten years could be achieved through the use of their

35 SADC Section 2:76-6.11(d)1.

Bernards Township 2010 Master Plan Update
open space fund, which in 2009 collected $2,729,430, and still be able to share funding with open space preservation efforts. Bernards may need to extend the open space tax in order to achieve the Township’s preservation goal.

4. Other Financial Information

G. Farmland Preservation Program and A.A.C. Resources

1. Municipal Staff and Consultant Resources
The Bernards Township Planning Board and Governing Body participate and authorize the Agricultural Advisory Committee. The Agricultural Advisory Committee meets every third Thursday of the month. The Agricultural Advisory Committee receives consulting services, through the Township's Planner, Banisch Associates, Inc. and from Laura Szwak with the New Jersey Conservation Foundation (NJCF).

2. Legal Support
Legal support for the Township's farmland preservation program is provided by the Township's Attorney John Belardo, Esq. with the firm McElroy, Deutsch, Mulvaney, and Carpenter, LLP.

3. Database Development and Geographic Information System Resources
The Township's Planning Consultants, Banisch Associates, Inc currently provide database management, mapping and GIS resources for the Township. The Township also has GIS capability through Peter Messina at the Township's engineering department.

H. Factors Limiting Farmland Preservation Implementation

1. Funding
Funding for farmland preservation within the Township is dependent on the amount and timing of funding sources on the State and County level. The Township should look to continue their relationship with the County to preserve additional properties. The Township is able to produce enough funding through the collection of the Open Space Tax to meet their require 20% match, but these funds are a shared resource with open space preservation efforts and can not fund entire projects on their own and require the assistance of County and State matching funds. Therefore the limiting factor for funding is dependant on matching funds for the County and State.

2. Projected Costs
The Township has been able to identify a reasonable per acre value that can be projected out through the 10 year funding cycle. Given the $75,000 per acre value and the amount of income generated in the Township for preservation efforts, the Township should be able to meet its preservation goals.

3. Land Supply
Bernards Township finds that land supply is always a limiting factor. Development pressure in the town has been increasing. However a strong agricultural base exists in the Township with an active community of farmers and supportive land owners. This has resulted in a continued land supply of agricultural areas that can still be brought under the farmland preservation program.
4. Landowner Interest
Bernards is fortunate to still have actively farmed areas with landowners dedicated to the promotion of agricultural retention. Currently, the Township has five landowners who have displayed interest in placing their land in farmland preservation and the town anticipates talking with more landowners. These farms are at the top of the priority list for preservation in the proposed project area.

5. Administrative Resources
The Agricultural Advisory Committee and the NJCF have been extremely proactive in promoting farming activities, as well as farmland preservation in the Township. Landowners have been able to contact the A.A.C. and/or NJCF for assistance in preparing applications for farmland preservation. Administrative resources are not a limiting factor to the Township’s preservation efforts.

VI. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The Bernards Township farming community is a tight-knit one. They have worked to promote local farm stands and farmer’s markets and to support each other through their own resources. They want to keep Bernards farmers and farm stands providing to Bernards residents and visitors.

Preserving farmland and providing a positive climate for the business of farming has been a major concern of the Somerset County Agriculture Development Board (CADB) from the inception of its agricultural retention program in 1983. The CADB’s position reflects the full intention of the “Agriculture Retention and Development Act,” which gives viability the same level of importance as easement purchase. The Somerset County Freeholders, Planning Board and its sub-board, the CADB, support the long-term use of agricultural land in the County. They recognize the need to provide an atmosphere in which agriculture can continue to be a viable industry, contributing not only aesthetically and environmentally but also economically to a healthy and inviting county, one that balances the needs for development, open space and quality of life.

Working with the CADB, Bernards will ensure the preservation and enhancement of farming in the township. Work will focus not only on acquisition but also on monitoring farms, creating farm friendly atmospheres, and coordinating with county- and state-level and other organizations to maximize the agricultural potential of the town, including an awareness of the need to support agriculture from an economic development perspective. To that end, the plan includes the latest requirements of the State Department of Agriculture relative to economic development and what can be done going forward to strengthen the business of agriculture in the County.

A. Consistency with NJ Department of Agriculture Economic Development Strategies and Other Regional Economic Development Plans and Initiatives

At the state level, New Jersey offers Somerset County farmers a number of support services and programs ranging from technical advice to farm loans. While Bernards Township does not participate in many State programs, local initiatives identify and propose methods to expand and enhance various subsets of the agriculture industry in Bernards, including produce, horticulture, dairy, livestock and poultry, field crops, organic, equine, and agritourism. The NJDA observes that “local access to large affluent markets has long been an advantage for the marketing of (those) products.
While our markets are still there, competition for those markets has become tougher. New Jersey’s (produce) industry must continually work to rediscover its competitive advantages, improving access to nearby markets and strengthening consumer loyalty.³⁶

Bernards Township farmers continue to look for ways to reinvent themselves and their products, and to explore new markets and new methods for promoting their businesses. Some participate in the Jersey Fresh program, selling produce to warehousing operations. However, many of Bernards’ farms are too small to produce enough to make it worth selling to warehouses. Bernards farmers agree that any initiatives that work to preserve the history and character of the town are highly desirable to the A.A.C. New ideas are shared at the community’s Charter Day each spring and new farmers recruited from the local Future Farmers of America organization.

It is important that the Bernards’ focus remains on ways to help farmers increase their profitability and coordinate with federal, state and county agencies other organizations, both in the public and private sector to find solutions. These include workshops, newsletters and other opportunities for farmers to continue to educate themselves about:

- Better ways to manage their farm as a business;
- Trends in agriculture;
- Ways to diversify, add value, and maximize profitability;
- Technical advice and assistance with choosing and marketing their products; and
- Advances in technology that may help them farm more efficiently and productively.

Using the recommendations outlined above, Bernards can investigate ways to expand and/or diversify into more profitable sectors and continue to utilize county and state programs to ensure sustainable agriculture practices and profitability. The following is a brief discussion of each of the sectors of Bernards’ agriculture industry.

**PRODUCE.** Bernards Township is working to promote the farms in town that operate farm stands and pick your own establishments. In 2005, Bernards vegetable growers produced fruits and vegetables on 2 farms covering 12 acres.³⁷ Major efforts by the NJDA are directed at increasing the demand for New Jersey grown produce through branding, agritourism, farm direct sales programs, and farm markets. The NJDA 2007 Economic Development Strategies include all of these activities. Bernards promotes agritourism through programs such as the town’s Charter Day, the distribution of printed materials, and other forms of advertisement. Bernards Township farms with appropriate activities, as well as roadside stands and pick-your-own farms, can benefit from this promotion. NJDA’s Jersey Fresh and Jersey Grown labels program is undergoing strengthening throughout the state.

Bernards can continue to develop strategies to promote produce, increase marketing opportunities, and encourage farmers by:

- Investigating the feasibility of diversifying into different vegetable and/or fruit production. While diversifying requires upfront expenses to establish new operations, equipment, and marketing materials, the payback for increased sales and visibility will increase.
- Continuing to promote existing community/farmers’ markets, farm/roadside stands and pick-your-own operations and seeking to introduce new outlets such as community events through

³⁶ NJDA 2007 Economic Development Strategies
³⁷ Somerset County Agricultural Profile, 2007
websites and press releases; coordinate between state, county and regional/association websites and literature to achieve consistency, inclusiveness and up-to-date, accurate information;

- Ensuring that residents outside the township and in urbanized areas of the county and the region are aware of the farming community, its products and benefits, through publicity and product offerings on a regular basis at urban community events such as farmers markets, street fairs, festivals and other public events, with the goal of getting urban consumers to depend on and value Bernards’ products and, thus, support its farmers and farming initiatives;
- Exploring expansion/diversification into value-added produce products, in concert with the NJDA and Rutgers and ensuring farmers awareness of these opportunities through workshops and direct communications;
- Continually seek out availability of state promotional campaigns and free signage; and
- Encouraging more participation in the Jersey Fresh Hospitality Program from County restaurants, hotels, specialty and grocery markets, and institutional food services such as schools, hospitals, and prisons; help County farmers connect with these outlets.

**NURSERY, GREENHOUSES, FLORICULTURE, AND SOD.** This is the highest ranking category of agricultural commodities in Somerset County in 2002, bringing in $6.1 million, representing 74% of total crop sales and 40% of total agricultural sales, versus 54% and 48% statewide. In Bernards Township, this category produces only a handful of total acreage. Trees and Shrubs account for 8 acres in the township, while Christmas Trees account for 17 acres. A total of 25 acres in Bernards Township is used for the sale of this type of agriculture.\(^{38}\)

For farmers who want to expand their existing practices into this area, some strategies to follow are:

- Explore the feasibility of more diversifying a portion of their output into this sector, including ways to deal with the challenges of irrigation needs/expenses, increased labor demands and short-term lease issues versus the start-up costs to change over;
- Increase consumer awareness of the Jersey Grown brand;
- Seek contracts with large box store operations such as Home Depot and Lowes’;
- Promote “drive up” operations where consumers can buy directly from the nursery or greenhouse; and
- Encourage a) research into alternative water management strategies, such as drip tape and b) municipal support for irrigation (often necessary for sod and other crop cultivation in this area).

**DAIRY.** In 2002, dairy ranked as the second highest sales producing sector in Somerset County, at $1.3 million. This $1.3 million represents a small percentage of the state’s sales, reported at $29.1 million. Bernards Township does not contribute to any of these statistics, as there are no dairy cattle in the Township.\(^{39}\) Should a farmer decide to explore the possibility of expanding their current operations, some strategies for shifting into the dairy industry might include:

- Exploring various additional products and markets for dairy, including local restaurants and grocery markets;
- Promoting Jersey Fresh dairy products locally and statewide;

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\(^{38}\) Ibid.

\(^{39}\) Ibid.
• Working to ensure the health of the dairy industry, and the quality of raw and processed milk;
• Working to bring more livestock veterinarians back to the area. This strategy may include economic incentives, as many veterinarians prefer to treat house pets (dogs, cats, etc.) to increase profitability; and,
• Aggressively marketing value-added dairy products.

**FIELD AND FORAGE CROPS.** Bernards Township farmers grow a combination of alfalfa, oats, rye, hay, and other field crops for a total of 258 acres dedicated to this category. The advantages to Bernards Township farmers are that these crops are suitable products for farming land that is on a short-term lease since they are fairly easy crops to grow and do not require the additional start-up expenses or ongoing irrigation needs and labor expenses of more intensive crops such as vegetables and fruits. The disadvantages lie in their lower profitability, since more of the output is sold at wholesale, rather than retail level, and in increasing crop loss due to wildlife damage; the soybean crop, according to Mark Kirby, Chair of the Somerset CADB, is particularly vulnerable. (Mark Kirby)

Strategies for Bernards Township to consider include:
• Working with the County to develop improved management practices and ways to improve yield per acre;
• Alerting farmers to any available workshops on pasture and cropland management;
• Encouraging diversification to row crops that meet newly emerging markets or markets with increasing demand (such as spelt as a dietary substitute for wheat) or lend themselves to value-added marketing opportunities (such as sorghum for homemade jams and jellies that can be marketed from roadside stands, at community markets and over the Internet);
• Encouraging transition to certified organic or naturally grown bean and grain crops to increase their value;
• Researching participation with the Somerset County Business Partnership in a campaign to promote the County as a site for construction of biofuels processing plant(s) by connecting with the multi-agency working group that is carrying forward the NJDA initiative to create a biofuels plant. The NJDA sees biofuels – ethanol, biodiesel and biogas – as an excellent opportunity for farmers in New Jersey to develop new markets for their agricultural products, byproducts and waste-stream items;
• Hosting educational workshops on:
  o The availability of state-sponsored grain marketing;
  o The role of crop insurance in mitigating marketing risk; and
  o The availability of free deer fencing programs, as well as other measures for deterrence of wildlife.

**LIVESTOCK AND POULTRY.** Operations include cattle and calves, sheep and goats, hogs, poultry, and a new category on the 2002 Census of Agriculture, horses, ponies, mules, burros and donkeys. However, the equine industry is discussed in a later section, in keeping with the categories put forward by the NJDA in its economic development strategies. Livestock historically has been a strong agricultural sector in Somerset County. In 2002, total livestock sales came in at $6.8 million, versus $4 million in 1997, and, represented 45% of total agricultural sales for the County.

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40 Ibid.
In Bernards Township, the breakdown of livestock and poultry is as follows: there are 22 head of beef cattle; 22 head of sheep; 8 head of swine; 13 bee hives; 11 goats; 203 egg chickens; 10 turkeys; and 17 other livestock. There are also 42 horses, but they are discussed later.

To strengthen and expand its place in the County economy, some non-dairy cattle, sheep, hogs, and poultry strategies may include:

- Ensuring animal health, including investigating incentives for bringing large animal veterinarians back to the area;
- Exploring various additional products and markets, including local hospitals and assisted living operations, restaurants and grocery markets, and increased outlets for meat sales at community markets and special events;
- Investigating outlets for dairy products for goats, and educate farmers about the benefits of diversifying into this sector, especially considering the development of value-added dairy products for goats;
- Assisting farmers with farming techniques, regulatory requirements and the latest research for livestock and poultry, including continued and additional cooperation with the RCRE, NJDA and Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS); and
- Promoting the agritourism portion of livestock, including exotic animals and poultry, such as “looking” zoos and educational school tours.

**Organic Farming.** Organic crops and animals have the potential to be an important market for Bernards Township. With a base of affluent and educated consumers in the town and the surrounding region and increased consumer awareness regarding food production, organic products and the markets that support them should continue to gain a stronghold and become more “mainstream” as people demand high quality, readily accessible and affordable organic products. Certification of organic farms is regulated by the U.S. Department of Agriculture via the Organic Food Production Act of 1990.

Below are a few examples of organic farms in Somerset County:

- **Sun Meadow Farm in Neshanic Station**
- **Pitspone Farm in Kendall Park**
- **Carriage Farm in Hillsborough**
- **Runnin’ Free Organic Farm in Hillsborough.** This farm is a good example for any farm that wants to explore expanding their market. For instance, they have a farm stand open seasonally and they sell only what they produce. They provide their organic produce to restaurants in the area – namely, The Ryland Inn in Whitehouse NJ, and The Bent Spoon and Small World Coffee both in Princeton NJ. They also provide their organic produce wholesale to markets such as the Whole Earth Center in Princeton NJ, Health Shoppe in Morristown NJ & Chester NJ, Princeton Health Foods in Princeton NJ, George Street Co-op in New Brunswick NJ, Balance Health Foods in Clinton NJ, and JB’s Natural Foods in Somerset NJ.

Increased interest by consumers in organic produce and animal products may encourage Bernards Township farmers to expand or diversify into this sector. They may look to:

- Improve marketing of organic and natural produce;
• Explore various additional markets, including local restaurants and grocery markets and cooperative farm stands at County events;
• Explore feasibility of establishing licensed food preparation facilities and meat processors in the County to facilitate growth of value-added products in this sector;
• Promote agritourism for organic and natural farms stands;
• Promote the Jersey Organic Brand when established by the NJDA;
• Educate growers about organic and natural regulatory and certification requirements and about the availability of federal funds to help offset certification costs; and,
• Explore ways to support organic food growing and processing, such as assisting growers, with the help of the NJDA and the Rutgers Extension, to identify products that can benefit as organic (high value/high demand products).

**Equine.** The 2002 Census of Agriculture reported some 1,046 horses and ponies on 123 farms in this small but viable agriculture sector in Somerset County. Sales of horses, ponies, mules, burros and donkeys combined totaled $661,000, or 5% of total agricultural sales. Many of the equine farms in Somerset County consist of pasture and stable horses, some provide riding lessons and others are breeding farms, which can make use of the Jersey Bred logo when marketing their animals.

Bernards Township is home to 42 horses. 11 acres of the township are used for boarding facilities and 6 acres are used for equine training. To continue to retain and grow its market share in the state and regional equine industry, Bernards Township can:

• Ensure the health of equine animals, including investigating incentives for bringing large animal veterinarians back to the area, particularly with the potential for growth in the equine sector;
• Educate farmers about the benefits of the new equine rules, when adopted, to commercial and preserved equine operations, and educate municipalities about the rights of equine farmers;
• Promote the industry at shows and festivals, such as the annual Somerset County 4-H Fair;
• Promote the industry through enhanced listings of County equine events in state, regional and county website and print listings; and
• Promote the agritourism aspect of the equine industry through farm tours, horse and pony rides, and boarding and riding lessons.

**Agritourism.** This sector can benefit agriculture in the Bernards both from an individual farmer’s perspective and from the perspective of increased visibility for, and understanding and appreciation of, farming by Bernards residents and visitors. It can be an important contributor toward the long term sustainability of the town’s agricultural industry. According to the State’s 2007 Economic Development Strategies, “Agricultural tourism draws upon two great strengths of the Garden State, a rich agricultural heritage and a large population of affluent consumers,” and “…Agritourism is critical to ensuring the future viability of agriculture in the state.” Agritourism can draw its clientele not only from the county and region but also, across state borders, from New York and Pennsylvania.

Agritourism in Bernards Township is evidenced in its farm stands, pick your own farms, and seasonal activities like Christmas Trees. A few farms offer other on-site activities, such as hay rides, corn mazes and farm tours. Some of these activities are listed on the Visit NJ Farms and the Things to Do Calendar at the County. Other websites and publications also list these and/or other, similar operations and Bernards farmers should look to promote their farm activities in these areas.
A highly successful example of agritourism in the County is the three-day Somerset County 4-H Fair held in August at North Branch Park in Milltown. The fair, which celebrated its 60th birthday in 2007, draws an estimated 60,000 visitors each year. Free to the public, it showcases the accomplishments of more than 1,000 Somerset County 4-H members, as well as offering food by more than 20 community organizations and exhibits by other organizations in the County, including Somerset County Government, Raritan Valley Community College and the Rutgers Cooperative Research & Extension. The table below shows a variety of agritourism opportunities currently available in Somerset County and the website or publication sources that promote these operations.

**Table XII-27: Agritourism Opportunities in Somerset County**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>NJDA website</th>
<th>Somerset County Things to Do</th>
<th>Skylands Brochure</th>
<th>Visit NJ Farms</th>
<th>Local Harvest</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>Source</th>
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<td>Community Markets</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>NJDA: <a href="http://www.jerseyfresh.nj.gov">www.jerseyfresh.nj.gov</a></td>
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<td><a href="http://www.njchristmastrees.org">www.njchristmastrees.org</a></td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Other: <a href="http://www.nofanj.org">www.nofanj.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-H Fair3</td>
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<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><a href="http://www.jerseyequine.nj.gov">www.jerseyequine.nj.gov</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organic</td>
<td></td>
<td>1(cert.) 1 (non)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Other: <a href="http://www.nofanj.org">www.nofanj.org</a></td>
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</table>

Notes:
1 Farms may be listed in more than one category
2 VisitNJFarms is accessible from the N.J. Travel and Tourism website as a link on the left nav bar on the Outdoor Adventures and 101 Fun Things to Do pages; it is not shown on the Attractions sidebar; it is also accessible from the agritourism events & attractions page (http://www.state.nj.us/jerseyfresh/agritourismhome.htm ) on the Jersey Fresh website
3 Somerset County 4-H Fair is not listed on the N.J. Travel & Tourism calendar of events, even though other county fairs are
The Opportunity for Agritourism Development in New Jersey, a report prepared for the NJDA by two independent consultants and personnel from the Food Policy Institute at Rutgers, defines agritourism as “the business of establishing farms as travel destinations for educational and recreational purposes.” The report states that “agritourism represents an opportunity [for the farmer] to generate supplemental income during periods when land and equipment may be underutilized or idle and afford the opportunity for feedback from consumers regarding preferences for various farm products and services.” In addition it “can create positive interactions between non-farmers and farmers,” helping to reduce right to farm conflicts and garnering support for farm retention policies”; it “contributes to and enhances the quality of life in communities” and provides consumers with “direct access to fresh, locally-produced farm products” (page 2). The New Jersey State Board of Agriculture formally recognized agritourism development as a strategy for “bolstering the viability of New Jersey agriculture” and in 2005, New Jersey’s Secretary of Agriculture, Charles Kuperus, convened the New Jersey Agritourism Industry Advisory Council.

Among the series of recommendations included in this report are:

- Develop a centralized promotion system, agritourism marketing website, better inclusion and integration of agritourism on the N.J. Division of Travel and Tourism marketing materials; stronger links between farmers and WIC, Senior and school lunch nutritional programs; and assisting counties with funding for agritourism promotion;
- Support a New Jersey Agritourism Limited Liability act modeled after laws in Virginia and North Carolina and explore ways to reduce cost of liability insurance;
- Support a state level Agritourism Industry Development program to enhance regional agritourism initiatives and to assist operators with marketing and promotion;
- Regulatory Guidance for Operators – include proactive communication about relevant regulations, and education about requirements and protections under the Right to Farm Act; address impediments to signage;
- Municipal Outreach – support fellow farmers to learn about building agricultural retention elements and regulations supportive of agritourism into their master plans and ordinances;
- Training and Information Workshops for Farmers – include hospitality training, marketing strategies and other, issue specific workshops such as liability, grant, traffic, signage; offer a forum for farmers getting into agritourism to interact with those who already are involved;
- Work with the CADB to examine preservation policies to identify and address any restraints to agritourism development; provide outreach to operators and municipal officials; develop model long-term leases for farmers renting preserved farmland; host open houses and tours at agritourism operations “such as those offered by the Somerset CADB and County Board of Agriculture”; encourage municipal adoption of model Right to Farm ordinance;
- Continue to seek out resources that provide model programs, innovation fund providing grants or low interest loans, technical assistance for farmers in identifying and obtaining grant funding, and
- Support a farm-related curriculum for different grade levels; provide opportunities for farmers to participate in school programs; and develop “fast facts” to educate farm visitors.
The study concludes that farmers have, over the years, adopted a range of agritourism activities that show agritourism is financially beneficial to both the farmer and the economy and farmers need specific assistance and resources in order to be successful at integrating agritourism activities into their operations.  

Farmers can again work with the CADB, the State, other agencies, and organizations to take an active interest in the recommendations to affect a strong agritourism presence in the Township. Strategies may include:

- Establishing a permanent, three season farmers’ market, which may assist local farmers in selling farm and value-added products, strengthening the business of agriculture within the County;
- Establishing cooperative farm stands at community events in the County, to continue promoting farming and increasing opportunities for product sales;
- Organizing farm tours as part of the County’s Heritage Trail Association Bus & Walking Tours in the fall or creating a farm tour as a separate event. This might be similar to the “On the Rails” event scheduled for November 2007, where tour participants “can ride the rails and learn all about the role railroads played in our County’s history in this fun-filled intergenerational program.” The Association also may serve as the point of contact linking farmers and schools;
- Submitting township agri-events to the Skylands Visitor and/or finding sponsorship for advertising the County’s agricultural highlights in the Skylands Visitor magazine as a farm destination;
- Establishing a working farm devoted to public education;
- Implementing a permanent signage program to alert and direct tourists and local residents to agritourism destinations will help increase business and income for these farming establishments;
- Working with schools and farmers to develop and promote an expanded curriculum of opportunities for school tours to farms and for farmer visits to schools, maintaining a list of available farmers, and acting as a clearinghouse or coordinating link between schools and farmers; and
- Exploring growth in other sections of agritourism such as hunting, fishing, and trapping. The 1999 survey indicated that many farmers do not charge for these privileges, perhaps, in part because of liability issues.

Liability also has become an issue for petting zoos, causing some farmers in other areas to repurpose to “looking zoos” to avoid the safety and health issues that can ensue from interaction between farm animals and visitors. If the Limited Liability protection mentioned above were enacted, farmers might feel freer to generate income from these activities. Successful expansion of agritourism in Somerset County could be supported by:

- Making long-term leases for farmers who rent more readily available, allowing farmers to make long-term investments in crop diversification;
- Providing tools for farmers to engage in a variety of agritourism markets, so as not to become a saturated market; and
- Providing more recognition for agriculture in regulations and master plans, and including municipal, federal or state regulations that may encourage farmers to participate.

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41 The Opportunity for Agritourism Development in New Jersey, p. 84
**General Strategies.** Working with the CADB, local agencies involved with the business of agriculture can make sure that messages about the availability of tools for helping farmers with the business of agriculture reach the farmers. One way to implement this is to expand the frequency and distribution of a quarterly newsletter published by the township, keeping the website updated. A grant or other sponsorship could enable an increase in the frequency from quarterly to six times a year and may cover the cost of print distribution to local farmers. Advertisements from local suppliers and processors also would enhance this program and may offset the cost of mailing.

Other ways to communicate to farmers include press releases to local papers and handouts developed for distribution at venues where farmers congregate, such as public meetings, farm organization meetings, fairs, workshops. Some of the general strategies that can be helpful to farmers include:

- New Market Opportunities (drawn from projects within the Economic Development Workgroup and disseminated directly to growers through Rutgers’ plant and pest advisory) – Organizations at the County level, such as the CADB and the RCRE, can supplement the state’s efforts, by providing other vehicles for communicating the availability of this list to the farmers;
- Farmland Assessment and Crop Insurance and Technical Assistance – Publicizing these programs also will help improve farmers’ financial health; programs include the Jersey Crop Insurance Education Initiative, technical assistance with the N.J. Uniform Construction Code, interpretation of the Real Property Appraisal Manual, Farm Building Section, motor vehicle regulations for farm vehicles, financing and developing business plans for their farms; and,
- Processed Foods – The focus here can be on connecting County growers with processors who are seeking local sources of food and agricultural products, as well as on publicizing state outreach programs that educate farmers about government grants and services (including technical support services for those entering into new agribusiness with value added agricultural commodities).

**Other Documents that Address Agricultural Economic Development.** Several documents that address agricultural economic development in Somerset County include the 1987 Somerset County Master Plan and 1998 Master Plan Re-examination Report, the 2007 Somerset County Smart Growth Strategic Plan (SGSP), which is currently being drafted and will update the 1987 Master Plan, and the planning objectives outlined as a result of the 2001 Agriculture Retention & Development Plan, which fall into the following main categories:

- Strengthen agricultural viability as a land-based economic enterprise
- Retain agriculture as an economic sector and industry;
- Preserve agriculture as a lifestyle and increase the viability of agriculture;
- Maximize farmland preservation; and
- Strengthen the agricultural preservation program.

Although a lot of these recommendations are focused on the Highlands, they are suggestions that any community can adopt as practices. Some of these recommendations include:

- Develop Long Term Goals to
  - Increase farmer access to local markets
XII. Farmland Preservation Plan Element

- Explore agricultural sustainability through value-added programs to provide farmers with tools to enhance their profitability. Such programs could include:
  - Deer Fencing Program – provides fencing materials and 30% of the line posts to qualified farmers to assist in preventing crop damage from deer
  - Value-Added, USDA Rural Development – provides equity and technical Assistance to finance and foster growth in homeownership, business development and critical community and technology infrastructure
  - Value-Added Producer Grants – financial assistance for independent producers and producer groups for feasibility studies, business plan development or working capital for start-ups
  - Value-Added Tools for Agricultural Products – Agricultural Marketing Resource Center website to help producers create or expand value-added agricultural businesses and attract buyers
  - Farmer/Grower Grants – help farmers shift to practices that are environmentally sound, profitable and beneficial to the wider farm community (i.e. successful projects offer an innovative approach that could be adopted by other farmers)
  - NJDA Farm Link Program – resource and referral center for new farmers, farmers seeking access to land and farming opportunities, landowners seeking farmers, and farmers working on estate and farm transfer plans; linking service provides listings of farms available for lease or sale and listings of farmers seeking land
  - Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) – regional program supporting research and education that helps build future economic viability of agriculture in the U.S.
  - Partnership Grants – for Cooperative Extension, Natural Resources Conservation Service, nonprofits and agricultural consultants who work directly with farmers; supports on-farm research and demonstration projects
  - Farmers Market Promotion Grants – targeted to help improve and expand domestic farmers markets, roadside stands, community-supported agriculture programs and other direct producer-to-consumer market opportunities
  - Farmers Market Resource Guide – lists grants, programs, and other financial and informational resources available from public and private organizations
  - Jersey Fresh Matched Funds Program – agricultural organizations may apply for grants to be used to adapt the Jersey Fresh program to their individual advertising and promotion of New Jersey agricultural products

B. Agricultural Industry Retention, Expansion and Recruitment Strategies

As previously stated, Bernards farmers are continually looking for ways to expand their operations within this agricultural market. It is this commitment that portrays the Township’s support for retention, expansion and recruitment strategies for agriculture as an industry. This is also expressed in the way the Township and the A.A.C. supports farmers with marketing of their products, continuing education, and market, product, and technical research. Still, many farmers feel that the
size of farms in the Township limits interest in farming. Some farmers expressed interest and described previous efforts to engage youth in farming activities.

1. Institutional

**Farmer Support (e.g., Farm Link Program, Estate Planning).** Farmers in Bernards can benefit from the support and knowledge of the experienced farmer who owns a multigenerational farm and is concerned about farm succession, to a tenant farmer who seeks ways to maximize his profitability, to a young would-be farmer looking for guidance on how to break into agribusiness. There are a variety of resources at the state level, published on the SADC website. One such program, *Farm Link*, serves as a resource and referral center for new farmers, farmers seeking access to land and farming opportunities, landowners seeking farmers, and farmers working on estate and farm transfer plans. The following programs and resources can offer a farmer a wealth of support and information:

- On the FarmLink website
  - Estate Planning Tools
  - First Pioneer Farm Credit
  - Information on everything from deer fencing to farmers' market assistance
- New Jersey Department of Agriculture Strategic Plan
- Rutgers Cooperative Research and Extension (RCRE)
- New Jersey Agricultural Leadership Development Program

**Marketing/Public Relation Support (e.g., Local Use of the Jersey Fresh Promotional Program, Agritourism).** Marketing and advertising are critical to profitability. According to the 1999 Survey of Somerset County Farmland Owners, some Somerset County farm operations market their crops to regional wholesale outlets (grain elevators, such as Perdue in south Jersey and Penfield in New York State and the Livestock Cooperative Auction in Hackettstown, which deals in crops and eggs as well as livestock). Many more directly market to consumers from farm stands or more often out of the barn on the farm. Some market through participation in community markets as well.

**Advertising.** According to survey results and direct conversations with farmers, few farmers take the route of individually advertising their product in print, although many of those involved in on-site direct marketing do maintain websites. There are a variety of free promotional channels such as the Jersey Fresh, Jersey Bred, Jersey Grown and Jersey Equine websites, and various agritourism websites that the Township can tap into for promoting their farm produce and operations. Working with the CADB to ensure the websites and promotional materials are up to date, the township can benefit greatly as visitors and residents seek out farm activities.

**Direct Marketing.** For those direct marketers who want to consider paid advertising and garner media coverage, Web resources can help with the planning. One Bernards farmer participates in the WIC and Seniors Farmers’ Market Nutrition Programs (FMNP) to deliver fresh produce to facilities that accept payment through these programs. This farmer also delivers produce directly to senior care facilities where seniors are not able to get out and purchase it themselves. WIC and FMNP provide locally grown unprepared fresh fruits, vegetables and herbs to nutritionally at-risk pregnant, breast-feeding, or post-partum women, children 2-5 years old as well as eligible seniors 60 years of age and older. Some farmers use the Jersey Fresh program to sell produce to warehousing
operations, but again the CADB and the State can both be instrumental in assisting Bernards to move forward with additional marketing strategies.

**Visibility at Community Events.** Bernards holds an annual Charter Day that exhibits local businesses and organizations. This past year the township Agricultural Advisory Committee was present at the event and received much attention from residents. Many people wanted to know more about farming in Bernards, what products are sold and what hours the farms are open to the public. Events such as community events are valuable and valid marketing tools. The town can work more with the CADB to refine the presentation of farming at such community events. For farmers who do produce their own brochures or flyers, these events could be a valuable distribution point for disseminating this information.

**Festivals and Tours.** Some recommendations for Bernards to consider include:

- Promoting the seasons with festivals in the summer, spring and fall;
- Working with a nonprofit organization to organize a farm tour as a fundraiser; and
- Reaching out to schools to build farm tours into their curriculum. According to the 1999 survey, schools are more than willing to pay $2-3 per person for these tours. In addition, once a child has visited a farm, they often bring the family back for another visit.

**Signage.** There is a critical need for signage in Somerset County since the numerous state and county highways that transverse the County take away from the visibility of agriculture. Signage promotes visibility and for farmers who qualify for the Jersey series of marketing programs, signage is free. For farmers who want to use their own signs, the township will need to consider this in their sign ordinances.

Jersey Fresh point-of-sale signs and other materials, both free and fee-based, can be ordered from the NJDA’s Marketing and Development Web pages.

**Learning from Others.** Sussex County is one example of a successful agritourism program from which Bernards can take a cue. The County has made agritourism a major focus. Bernards might be able to glean helpful strategies from a study of how Sussex County is promoting agritourism.

**Getting the Word Out.** For Bernards Township, getting the word out does not seem to be a major issue. As previously stated, the Township is a tight knit community, the farmers, especially. From talking to neighbors in the grocery store or at the local coffeeshop, we have learned that residents in Bernards share information about farming in the community. The County and the RCRE can also play helpful roles in getting the word out throughout the region about agricultural activities and opportunities in Bernards.

Examples include notification on the Somerset County website, development of media contacts at local papers and follow-up with those contacts to encourage publication of the information, submitting articles to Green and Growing and submitting listings to the RCRE website, and updating listings on the Visit NJ Farms website.

**Information Outlets.** For Bernards farmers to gain even more visibility in the county and state, the following venues for listing information can be very useful. Currently the English Farm and Ripple
Hill Farms are listed on the Visit NJ Farms website where there is much information about the type of farm, their hours, and other useful information. Township farmers use the New Jersey Fresh website and the township newsletter to place ads about events and keep the community informed about agricultural activities.

Other useful portals for Bernards farms include:

- **State** – Travel and Tourism websites for listings of roadside stands, community markets, pick your own, on-site farm activities, Christmas tree farms, equine events and activities and other agriculture-related events
- **Regional** – Skylands website and the quarterly Skylands Visitor Guide. The website lists Somerset County farming operations and the appropriate County office should provide additional listings to match the County Things to Do / Agricultural Activities page and the state’s listings of roadside stands, pick your own operations and Christmas tree farms.
- **County** –
  - Somerset County Business Partnership website as a way to promote the business of farming.
  - The Things to Do Tourism Guide includes an Agricultural Activities page. It is available from the county website email subscription page under Events and by email subscription
  - Green and Growing a quarterly newsletter by the RCRE is listed on the RCRE website and on the county website email subscription page under Newsletters, and is available by email subscription
- **Private publications** -- According to Linda Van Zandt, in the county office of public information, many newspapers, such as the Princeton Packet and the Star-Ledger, go to the county website and grab information off of it for publication.

**Community Farmers Markets.** Currently, the Township has a few farms where produce can be purchased on site. The Crane, English, Sorge, and Anderson farms all sell produce grown on their farms. With vegetables in the summer, apple picking in the fall and soon maple syrup in the late winter/early spring, the combination of these markets will ensure that farm stands are open practically year round.

The Township does not have plans at the moment to host a community farmers market that would be held on a weekly or monthly basis. If the township were to consider this, a review of the local ordinances would be necessary to ensure farm markets are a permitted use for the town. If they are not and the township decides to move forward with the idea, then an ordinance amendment might be called for.

**Community Supported Agriculture.** The issue of Community Supported Agriculture in Bernards has been discussed and the consensus among the farmers is that the township is too small to accommodate an operation that could prove too large. Again, if the township were to consider this, a review of local ordinances would be necessary for issues such as parking, signage, hours of operation, farm labor, etc.

**Agricultural Education and Market Research Coordination.** Bernards Township farmers are aware of the need to keep up to date with the latest information on agricultural practices and new market
opportunities, as they strive to maximize their profitability and achieve their farming goals. Some recommendations to keep informed include:

- Coordinate with the CADB, Rutgers Extension and NJDA to research and market agricultural education;
- Seek grants to fund farmer education; and
- Work with nonprofit organization(s) to develop a teaching farm on preserved land. The goal here is to instill an understanding and appreciation for agriculture among the non-farming community. This will help them to support an industry that provides a ready market for those who are aware of it and support it.

**New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station (NJAES) and Rutgers Cooperative Research and Extension.** According to the NJAES website *Jersey Fresh* Information Exchange, Rutgers Cooperative Extension launched an innovative produce distribution and merchandising pilot project in 2004 to help New Jersey farmers get their products into new retail locations, such as white-table restaurants and grocery chains. Bernards Township farmers should consider selling produce to local restaurants and grocery stores.

**Rutgers School of Environmental and Biological Sciences.** The Bernards Township Agricultural Advisory Committee should subscribe to the Rutgers newsletter, *Green and Growing*, to keep farmers informed of any upcoming special workshops or information or appropriate continuing education curriculum. Members of the farming community have worked with this organization and have attended workshops.

**Other.** Other avenues of promotion and marketing include reaching out to the County’s vocational/technical school and Raritan Valley Community College regarding the feasibility of expanding or introducing agricultural curriculum, linking agriculture students (the vocational/technical school has a horticultural course at the high school level) with farmers and nurseries for intern/apprenticeship learning experience (transportation logistics may be an issue). Bernards township farmers have employed youth for farm work to generate an interest in farming among the younger generations.

The township can support and encourage the County to continue the Future Farmers of America program at the vocational/technical school and promote attendance at the Annual Livestock Symposium, designed to encourage young farmers.

2. Businesses

**Input Suppliers and Services.** Many Somerset County farmers obtain farm supplies from a number of sources in and near the County, such as Belle Mead Farmers Coop; Neshanic Home & Garden; Somerset Grain, Feed & Supply, Bernardsville; and the Raritan Agway. Additional Agways are nearby and Bernards Township farmers say they look to the internet for supplies and equipment and travel as far as West Milford, New Jersey to find supplies they need. They also tend to look to each other for resources when needed. Bernards farmers tend to be satisfied with the resources they have, but have expressed that if resources were within a closer proximity to the Township it would be much more convenient.
**PRODUCT DISTRIBUTORS AND PROCESSORS.** The same can be said for these services. Many Bernards farmers go to nearby resources or to the internet when supplies are low. As stated in the County plan, hay and other forage crops are often sold locally, to other farms, equine operations, landscapers and nurseries as baled straw, or used for the farmer’s own livestock and other uses. Some grain crops also are sold locally to small farmers with a few animals.

A state initiative that could be an opportunity for grain farmers in the township is the construction of biofuels facilities. The Somerset County Business Partnership is looking to promote Somerset County as a site for such a facility.

3. Anticipated Agricultural Trends

**PRODUCT DEMAND.** As biofuel processing is studied more and becomes more of a reality in New Jersey, this should serve the County well, since it would serve as an additional outlet for the grain sector, which has been in steady decline for the past 30 years. The combination of high crop loss from wildlife damage and high input costs for fertilizers would have to be addressed before farmers might be willing to invest more acreage in such crops. While there is concern for growing grain for fuel rather than for people, this might be a viable option for the small farms in Bernards.

In the livestock sector, one avenue for diversifying is to look into exotic animals, which are marketable from an agritourism perspective as part of “looking” or “petting” zoos and whose byproducts, such as alpaca fur, can provide value-added direct marketing products, e.g., the sheared wool itself or clothing and other products made from that wool. As the County’s plan states, sheep and goats may offer the advantages of value-added marketing opportunities as well, in the form of goat cheese and products made from sheep’s wool. Another opportunity for expansion may be in the area of supplying goat meat, which has seen a rise in demand due to the growing ethnic populations in the County and region.

In Bernards Township vegetable and fruit crops make up a small sector of the town’s agricultural output, this is certainly not from a lack of demand. Some challenges farmers face includes short-term leases versus high upfront costs, the cost of labor and difficulty getting labor to the farm site. New challenges for those considering selling homemade food products at farmers markets is the need to have the goods prepared in inspected facilities. However, there are the advantages of selling from your own location rather than having to pay transport costs, and there are advantages to generating additional income by developing value-added products such as pies, cheeses, jams, honey, and other products. These products serve the increasing numbers of customers who want the advantages of ready-made.

Consumers are also increasingly aware of the locally-grown and organic foods. As the demand increases farmers may be encouraged to adopt more natural farming methods. This shift in practices not only has a benefit to the consumers, but also to the land. Not applying fertilizers and pesticides increases water quality and only contributes to the health of consumers. However, a farm does not have to become a certified organic operation to have a positive effect. Farmers are increasingly adopting natural practices that have the same positive effect, but are not certified. Certification does instill confidence in the consumer that products were grown organically, but it is not essential to operating a healthy farm facility.
Other avenues to explore include the following areas put forth in the 2001 ARDMP:

- **Changing the Farm Operation’s Mix of Products**
  - Consider new crop opportunities such as tree nut crops, organic or low input produce or meat products, aquaculture, biotechnical and pharmaceutical use of farm products or animals (this concept should be introduced to the Somerset County Business Partnership, which is pursuing the development of a Biotechnology center in the County), and ethanol production (the construction of an ethanol plant in New Jersey is being actively pursued by a working group that includes the state and the Farm Bureau).

- **Value-adding**
  - Marketing livestock as dressed meat on a retail basis (certain farms already do this)
  - Fresh herbs, sold at retail, in bunches or as potted plants
  - Vineyard development – poorly draining soils, cost of land acquisition and long lead time before first harvest (several years) could be deterrents, but state wine production exceeds the state-grown supply of grapes, creating a ready market for an operator with enough carrying capital

- **Economic Development through Preservation** – Selling a development right is cashing in a non-performing asset which can create new options for the farm, including transferring property to the next generation, creating new markets, improving the existing operation, or expanding into new ones.

**MARKET LOCATION.** Certainly from a market location perspective Bernards Township is in a strong position and has the clientele to support agricultural businesses. In the 1990s Somerset County was one of the fastest growing counties in the state and the second most affluent county in the United States according to the U.S. Census Bureau’s *2004 American Community Survey.*

In addition, the Bernards Township and Somerset County are centrally located in a metropolitan area that includes New York and Philadelphia and other affluent New Jersey counties. Bernards’ close proximity to major highways and affluent neighborhoods is an incentive to market products to populations outside the township as well as to the Township’s own population. Residents nearby may be inclined to travel for locally grown produce.

4. **Agricultural Support Needs**

Any municipality engaging in a farmland preservation program needs to understand the emotional, as well as economic connection farmers have to their land. Support from the town and county should respect that and should support the farmers with their vision to maintain the property as the farmer sees fit. A lot of support measures have been identified here and the township should be prepared to help the farmer with as much of it as possible. Bernards farmers have expressed that continued financial and programming support from the County and State are incentives to continue farming.

That support could include:
- A positive municipal regulatory environment is much needed, according to the 1999 Survey of Somerset County farmland owners.
- Encourage farming by supporting agricultural economic development activities.
- The effective use of marketing and advertising to raise farm sales and productivity while also increasing the visibility of Bernards Township farms.
- County and municipal support for irrigation and greenhouse additions as ways to intensify farm production. Will require an analysis of a farm’s cropping and management can result in changing the product mix to include more valuable crops. Financial and regulatory support will be necessary to bring about suggested changes.
- Connection needs to be made between state value-added agricultural programs and Somerset County farm operations.

- Explore the following sectors:
  - Nursery, greenhouse and Christmas tree production (and sod)
  - Cash grains and field crops
  - Vegetables and fruit
  - Dairy and beef
  - Equine
  - Other livestock (poultry, sheep, goats)
  - Wood products

In addition, the municipality should strive to “educate other business leaders about the extent and character of agriculture in the town, and the potential business activities that might be created or attracted to serve these farm operations.

Fortunately, in New Jersey the state and the RCRE are actively involved in this process and, often times, Bernards should work with the CADB to find ways to bring farmers together with resources, to get the word out that help and alternatives are available.

**AGRICULTURAL FACILITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE.** As stated previously, additional community market-type opportunities could help support increased produce production; hospitals, assisted living facilities and other operations with food services are other prospective outlets that could support produce sector growth, in addition to any state or county correctional institutions and school district facilities, restaurants and gourmet and other food stores. Bernards should consider working with the CADB to provide produce to these facilities.

Additional support could come from a concerted effort to promote agritourism through signage, publications, website and media promotion.

**FLEXIBLE LAND USE REGULATIONS**

**State level** – The 2006 Agricultural Smart Growth Plan for New Jersey, prepared by the NJDA, identified flexibility in government regulation as an important component relative to farm viability. (*Agricultural Smart Growth Plan 2006*)

**Municipal level** – Bernards can work with local residents toward understanding the importance of agriculture to the economy of the town and the importance of an agriculture-friendly environment to increase support. Right to Farm and accommodations for agricultural vehicle
movement and the building of an awareness of and provisions supportive of agriculture into municipal master plans and zoning ordinances go a long way towards the kind of support agriculture needs in order to be an economically viable sector.

Other areas where municipal sensitivity to the land use needs of agriculture can be helpful include consideration of the following issues when creating municipal ordinances and regulations:

- Setting specific buffer standards for non-farm development adjacent to working farms that help to limit trespassing and littering and also protect the residential landowner from dust and spray materials spread during farming activities, thus minimizing potential Right to Farm conflicts;
- Code or ordinance provisions requiring developers to notify purchasers of the proximate existence of active agriculture;
- Exemptions for certain farm structures from building height restrictions;
- Allowing additional principal dwelling units on farms in order to meet the needs of farmers for additional housing for their children or for farm managers;
- Exemptions from setback requirements when farmers seek to expand an existing nonconforming structure;
- Flexible fencing ordinances that make allowances for types of fencing on farms that might not be desirable in residential zones, in consideration of the farmers needs to prevent wildlife damage; and
- Construction fee reduction for agricultural buildings.

**Agriculture Representation in Economic Development Organizations:** The following Somerset County organizations support the agricultural community and Bernards Township should either build or maintain relationships with each:

- **Somerset County Business Partnership** – Leads efforts to ensure that smart growth programs/initiatives create economic vitality for Somerset County businesses and communities. This Chamber focuses upon business retention, expansion, and attraction, smart targeted development, infrastructure investment, workforce development, and our One Stop Center for Business and Municipal Assistance.
- **Somerset County Agricultural Development Board** – Lead organization in farmland preservation and sustainability and Right to Farm mediation. Agricultural representation: Chair: Mark Kirby, farmer; Vice Chair: Peter Staats, farmer; Richie Norz, farmer; John Higgins, farmer.
- **Somerset County Board of Agriculture** – composed of volunteers who are individuals or representatives of corporations and associations willing to promote sustainable agriculture in Somerset County; President: Joanne Powell; Treasurer: Paul Smith (Duke Farms); Secretary: Ed Pierce.
- **Rutgers Cooperative Research and Extension Service** – Nick Polanin, certified tree expert
- **Somerset-Union Soil Conservation District** – Ernie Thurlow, soils specialist

5. Agricultural Support Implementation

Suggestions for future agricultural support have been mentioned throughout this document, including workshops and other educational opportunities at the state and county level. Some of these
opportunities will require funding through the many state and federal programs, of which the Township should take advantage. In addition, support for the implementation and monitoring of farmland preservation, one of the chief ways to protect and ensure the continued presence of agriculture in the township, is done by the county. Funding for this program comes from the County’s open space trust fund, local contributions from municipalities, SADC dollars through programs such as Planning Incentive Grants and soil and water conservation grants and federal dollars from federal programs such as the Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program.

Agricultural support for implementation mostly comes from the CADB. The County works to maximize the amount of land it preserves by encouraging applicants to donate a portion of the land preserved through the traditional easement program and to accept a lower amount for the land than the certified market value. This benefits the preservation program by enabling the acquisition of property it might not otherwise have been able to acquire, while at the same time providing the landowner with tax benefits. The CADB also reassesses on an annual basis all available funding opportunities to optimize money available for both the acquisition of farmland and the support of county farmers. The CADB currently is in the process of seeking a grant that would provide money for workshops and other tools that will be helpful to its farm community.

The CADB is seeking to expand its staff to be able to provide more outreach to farmers and municipalities. They are also looking to expand marketing efforts and awareness of agriculture as a valuable contributor to the economy and quality of life in Somerset County. Where possible, Bernards should work with the County to develop these plans and ensure that farming in Bernards gains more awareness and provides the best market possible for the residents.

Listed below are County organizations that support or potentially can offer support to the Bernards’ business of agriculture:

- Planning Division and CADB
- Rutgers Cooperative Extension.
- Soil-Conservation District.
- Somerset County Vocational and Technical Schools.
- Somerset County Business Partnership (SCBP).
- Cultural & Heritage Commission.

VII. NATURAL RESOURCE CONSERVATION

The Somerset County Draft Plan provided information on various services involved in farmland preservation and natural resources protection. The following section has been provided by the County Draft Plan. Bernards Township has made an active commitment, and will continue to, provide education and outreach opportunities to farmers and to the community. This is represented in a few ways. One is the Township’s work with Ms. Laura Szwak of the New Jersey Conservation Foundation. Ms. Szwak is employed by the Township to reach out to landowners in the Township to inquire about their interest in preserving their land through either open space or farmland preservation funding.

The Township also seeks to increase communication with the Natural Resource Conservation Service.

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42 Somerset County Draft Farmland Preservation Plan, September 2007
(NRCS) and the Somerset County Soils District to encourage agricultural retention and best management practices by local farmers. Please refer to the full County Draft Plan for additional information.

A. Natural Resource Protection Coordination

1. Natural Resource Conservation Service

The local NRCS office serving Somerset, Hunterdon and Union Counties is located at 687 Pittstown Road, Suite 2 in Franklin Township (mailing address of Frenchtown). Somerset County farmers may utilize this local NRCS office for technical assistance with conservation issues. NRCS will also reach out directly to landowners if they know of a farmer who is in need of assistance, or can use the guidance of the NRCS staff. The local NRCS office also helps to prepare Conservation Plans for Somerset County farmers. These Conservation Plans nearly always include strategies to conserve soil and water, but may also include conservation practices for flora, fauna and clean air. If all five elements are included, they are referred to as Resource Management Plans.

Conservation Plans are a prerequisite for those who wish to sell their property or sell a development easement via the Farmland Preservation Program, or apply for natural resource conservation program grants such as the WHIP and EQIP. The plans are required within one year after closing on a farm property. The local NRCS office administers these conservation program grants, which offer financial incentives to support conservation projects, including stream riparian buffers and wildlife habitat. Administration of these grant programs includes field visits to prepare the Conservation Plans, preparation of grant program contracts, assistance with installation of contract conservation practices, and inspection of farms to verify contract conservation practices are implemented and maintained. It should be noted that the Somerset County Soil Conservation District gives final approval on all Conservation Plans and program contracts, and the USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) assists NRCS in administration of an additional natural resource conservation program entitled Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP). The phone number for the local NRCS office is (908) 782-4614, and the District Conservationist is Gail Bartok.

The Landowner Incentive Program (LIP), through the NJDEP’s Division of Fish and Wildlife, is another partnership that can provide private landowners interested in conserving threatened and endangered species on their property with financial and technical assistance. It is the goal of LIP to work with private landowners to protect important habitats so our children and great grandchildren can benefit from our conservation efforts. The NJ Division of Fish & Wildlife, through the Nongame and Endangered Species Program (ENSP), administers this program. ENSP was successful in its 2007 grant request to US Fish and Wildlife Service and was awarded $849,510 for landowner projects. ENSP will make $774,510 available for grants beginning in 2009 to landowners. $75,000 will be used for a small grants (under $5,000) program.43

2. Somerset County Soil Conservation District

An additional partner in the conservation of agricultural resources is the New Jersey Department of Agriculture, Division of Agricultural and Natural Resources. Among its responsibilities, the Division implements natural resource conservation programs, administered by the State Soil Conservation Committee (SSCC). These programs “provide engineering services and regulatory guidance to soil

43 http://www.state.nj.us/dep/fgw/ensp/lip_prog.htm
conservation districts, homeowners, engineers, planners and virtually all development activities. The Division provides technical standards applicable to construction and mining sites regulated by the Soil Erosion and Sediment Control Act program ..."

The SSCC coordinates and supports the work of the state’s 15 local soil conservation districts (SCD), one of which is the Somerset County SCD. The Somerset County SCD is charged with reviewing and approving natural resource conservation and assistance program grants, implementing agricultural conservation planning assistance, agricultural conservation cost-sharing program grants, application of organic materials on agricultural land, agricultural water supply and management, soil erosion and sediment control, storm water discharge authorization, and soil surveys.

The Somerset County SCD office is located in the 4-H Center at 308 Milltown Road in Bridgewater. Somerset County Farmers may approach this local SCD office (as well as the local NRCS office) with a Request for Assistance (RFA), to apply for funds from natural resource conservation grant programs such as WHIP and EQIP. If approved, the RFA is forwarded to the local NRCS office in Franklin Township for processing. The administration of the RFA includes preparation of a Conservation Plan and grant program contract, as previously described. The Somerset County SCD is involved in review of Conservation Plans and grants program contracts, and must give final approval to both.

The phone number for the Somerset County SCD office is (908) 526-2701, and the District Manager is Ernest Thurlow.

**B. Natural Resource Protection Programs**

The following section is taken from the Somerset County Draft Comprehensive Farmland Preservation Plan. The Township and local farmers are encouraged to use any available grant program to retain agricultural production in the Township. The Township will seek to provide additional support to local farmers in educating and outreach to ensure that land owners are aware of all the support opportunities available to them. The follow is an outline of some of the grant opportunities provided by the State and Federal programs.

**NJDA Soil and Water Conservation Grants.** The New Jersey Department of Agriculture, State Agriculture Development Committee (SADC) has in the past provided soil and water conservation grants to farms that are permanently preserved, or are enrolled in the eight year preservation program, with priority for preserved farms. The eight year program is currently unfunded, but efforts are underway to restore such funding. The purpose of the grants and program is to protect Somerset County agricultural lands from soil erosion.

These grants fund soil and water conservation projects approved by the Somerset County Soil Conservation District (District), with the program administered by both the district and the local NRCS office in Franklin Township. Once the District deems the conservation project necessary and feasible, applications are forwarded to the N.J. State Soil Conservation Committee, which recommends projects to the SADC for funding approvals. Traditionally 50% of the costs of approved soil and water conservation projects are paid with grant funds, but up to 75% has also been approved in the past. Hopefully these funds will be restored so that conservation projects can continue in Somerset County.
The types of soil and water conservation projects funded by SADC include soil erosion and sediment control systems (terrace systems), control of farmland pollution (stream protection; sediment retention, erosion or water control systems; animal waste control facilities; and agri-chemical handling facilities), the impoundment, storage and management of water for agricultural purposes (diversions; water impoundment reservoirs; irrigation systems; and, drainage systems), and management of land to achieve maximum agricultural productivity (land shaping or grading).

**Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) and Conservation Reserve Program (CRP).** Through CREP and CRP, agricultural producers voluntarily retire land to protect environmentally sensitive areas, decrease soil erosion, provide and restore wildlife habitat, and protect ground and surface water. Examples of conservation practices include riparian buffers and filter strips for water quality, and contour buffer strips to reduce soil erosion. With incentive payments for farmers to fully implement a CREP contract, payment for this program can be fully funded by NRCS and NJDA. Within Somerset County, CREP has been “slow getting started” due to strict eligibility requirements. This includes requirements that the land must have been cropped for 4 of the 6 years between 1998 and 2002, and detailed paperwork documentation is required when applying. CRP is more widely used in Somerset County than CREP.

**Conservation Innovation Grant Program (CIG).** The aim of the CIG program is to stimulate the development and adoption of conservation approaches and technologies which are innovative, in conjunction with agricultural production. Funds are awarded as competitive 50-50 match grants to non-governmental organizations, tribes, or individuals. At present, CIG is not being used in Somerset County.

**Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP).** EQIP is a conservation program in which farmers receive financial and technical assistance with structural and management conservation practices that address soil, water, and grazing land concerns. EQIP is the most popular and widely used conservation program in Somerset County, and is the most well funded of all the programs, receiving approximately $4 million statewide on an annual basis. Nationally, the proposed 2007 Farm Bill would raise authorized EQIP funding to $1 Billion. In Somerset County, between 2005 and 2007 there are 2,056 contracted acres, with 10 active contracts. However, newly enrolled acreage has declined from 2005 to 2006, and again from 2006 to 2007.

**Farm and Ranch Land Protection Program (FRPP).** FRPP provides up to 50% matching funds to purchase development rights and conservation easements to keep farm and ranchland in agricultural use. The USDA partners with state, tribal, or local governments, and non-governmental organizations. Farmers accepting funds through this program must adhere to strict impervious surface limitations. In New Jersey, this program receives approximately $500,000 to $1 million annually. The local NRCS office prepares the Conservation Plans used in the Program, which is then administered by the NJDA. To date, acreage in Somerset County is not available for this report. Nationally, the proposed 2007 Farm Bill would raise authorized FRPP funding to $300 million.

**Grassland Reserve Program (GRP).** GRP offered landowners the opportunity to protect, restore, and enhance grasslands on their property, which play a vital role in protecting water quality and providing wildlife habitat. This program was coordinated through several federal agencies, but has become inactive in Somerset County. The proposed 2007 Farm Bill would provide only minimal funding for GRP.
Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP). WRP offers farmers payments for restoring and protecting wetlands on their property that had been previously drained for agricultural use. Wetlands help reduce flooding, filter pollutants from water, provide critical wildlife habitat, and protect open space. Payment by NRCS is based upon appraised agricultural land value. With appraised values from $100 to $2000 per acre, many farmers are not willing to create wetlands on otherwise productive agricultural lands. As a result, the WRP has not been used in Somerset County.

Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP). WHIP provides technical and financial assistance for creating, enhancing, and maintaining wildlife habitat. The State Technical Committee for WHIP in New Jersey awards project contracts for designated wildlife habitat categories. Since its inception in 1998, WHIP has been a popular program for non-federal landowners interested in wildlife habitat management in New Jersey. WHIP is second only to EQIP in use for Somerset County, with 1,800 contracted acres and 8 active contracts since 2005.

C. Water Resources

Competition for water will increasingly become problematic for the agriculture industry in the Township and in the Region in years to come. First and foremost, NJ farmers should practice water conservation and research innovative water technologies such as greywater reuse and drip irrigation. Much of the active farmland in the Township relies on groundwater and rainwater recharge. Prudent use of water helps to maintain aquifer recharge and groundwater supplies. The following section is a brief description of the local water supply characteristics and conservation strategies relevant to the Township as provided by the Somerset County Draft Plan.

Supply Characteristics. The physiographic and geologic layout of Somerset County dictates water supply, availability and recharge, as well as location of agriculture. As discussed in the Natural Resource Inventory for Somerset County, New Jersey, the County "... exhibits four distinct geologic regions which are reflected in its topography". The Somerville Lowlands are located within Branchburg Township. These lowlands are a local division of the Piedmont Province. These lowlands are underlain mainly by red shale, sandstone, and lesser areas of limestone. The terrain is generally of low relief, low rolling hills, and wide valleys.

The major (water) aquifer in Somerset County is known as the Brunswick Shale. It has a limited capacity for water storage, and is usually filled during periods of normal precipitation. The limited ability of this aquifer to accept and transmit water is exhibited in the extreme differences between minimum and maximum flow in streams overlying the shale. In areas underlain by highly fractured shale containing mineral voids, the groundwater storage capacity is moderately high. Large diameter industrial wells in the Brunswick Formation of the Raritan Valley typically yield over 200 gallons per minute, and can exceed 500 gallons per minute.

Groundwater recharge within Somerset County is derived primarily from the local region. It comes either from precipitation falling on intake or outcrop areas, vertical leakage from nearby runoff, or from infiltration from adjacent water bodies. Variables such as depth to water table, runoff, vegetation, soil type, soil thickness, temperature, and topography can affect the amount of water available and able to enter the aquifer. Most of the natural infiltration in Somerset County occurs between late fall and early spring, when the ground is not frozen and vegetation is in early growth or
dormant. It is possible for the prolonged withdrawal of water to exceed the recharge potential in an aquifer, resulting in diminution of available water which can be economically pumped. Over-development can cause a serious and continuous decline in the water supply.

Natural groundwater quality is considered to be generally good in Somerset County. However, this quality can be affected by infiltration from surface sources, particularly in populated and industrialized areas. Contamination can come from such diverse sources as malfunctioning or improperly designed septic systems; infiltration of agricultural fertilizers such as nitrates, and pesticides; salt run-off from winter road de-icing; gas and oil products from leaking underground storage tanks; leachate from landfills; and, industrial discharges.

**Water Conservation Strategies.** An adequate water supply is important to successful agriculture operations in Somerset County. Droughts in recent years have highlighted the precarious nature of the agriculture (and general) water supply, and the need for water conservation systems and regimens.

The State Agriculture Development Committee, through its Agricultural Smart Growth Plan, encourages farmers to “… work to accelerate the use of efficient water conservation technologies, such as drip irrigation. Identify and promote new and efficient methods to conduct water distribution on farms, utilizing farm ponds and water reuse options.”

The dominant field crops in Somerset County are corn, soybean and hay. These crops rely on rain and some groundwater for water needs, and as such water conservation strategies per se are difficult to implement. With nursery and greenhouse, sod, and vegetable farming, it is possible to implement conservation strategies such as drip irrigation, or watering crops in the cooler parts of the day so as to minimize evaporation. Water re-use is another possible option. For livestock, floats and timers in watering troughs can conserve water by negating the need for constantly running water to keep troughs full. Somerset County farmers should implement water conservation strategies whenever feasible, and include such in Conservation Plans whenever practicable.

**D. Waste Management and Recycling**

Waste management for the Township exists on several levels. Field crop production and nursery stock can create a large amount of agricultural byproducts. Additionally livestock production creates a great deal of organic waste byproducts that need to be carefully disposed of to avoid pollution issues. The following section, as provided by the Somerset County Draft Plan, highlights the current strategies employed by the County that are also subscribed to by the Township.

Management of livestock waste has serious implications for the quality of ground and surface waters. Unchecked, or poorly managed, these wastes can cause serious water quality problems by the introduction of unwanted microorganisms into natural systems. Poor management of animal waste can also cause disease among farm animals. Proper animal waste management is not only required, but is also a sign of good environmental stewardship, as is recycling of farm by-products whenever possible.

**Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations & Animal Feed Operations.** Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFO) are defined at N.J.A.C. 7:14A-2.13 (New Jersey Pollutant Discharge Elimination
System (NJPDES) as:

- Operations with more than 1,000 slaughter or feeder cattle, 700 dairy cattle, 2,500 swine, 500 horses or other animal populations. Somerset County does not have any operations that fit into this category; or,
- Operations with more than 300 slaughter or feeder cattle, 200 dairy cattle, 750 swine, 150 horses or other animal populations, and which discharge pollutants directly to state waterways either through manmade devices or as a result of water passing through the facility or having direct contact with confined animals. A number of Somerset County farms do fit into this latter category, and are required to have waste management plans to ensure that animal wastes are properly managed. In addition, any livestock operation receiving EQIP funds must have a waste management plan.

CAFOs and Animal Feeding Operations (AFO) have the potential to, or do cause, water pollution through the collection of large amounts of animal waste in relatively small areas. Mismanagement of the animal waste has the potential to cause large amounts of soil and groundwater contamination via introduction of the bacteria, fecal coliform, a known contaminant from animal farming operations. The state’s agricultural community bears a responsibility to help protect and restore natural resources for which they are the stewards.

The NJDEP has outlined a statewide strategy to manage and regulate these operations. The strategy calls for NJDEP to administer CAFO permits and NJDA to administer the appropriate measures for AFOs. The permits and measures require development and implementation of comprehensive waste management plans, utilizing “animal waste standards”, proposed by NJDA for adoption in late 2007. The strategy emphasizes the use of cost-effective voluntary measures, limiting the need for permits.

**NJDEP, Division of Water Quality - CAFOs.** To protect the quality of surface and groundwater in and around animal farming operations, the NJDEP has adopted a general permit for managing and regulating CAFOs. The permit is administered through the New Jersey Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NJPDES) regulations at N.J.A.C. 7:14A-2.13, under authority of the Water Pollution Control Act. In general, the permits require CAFOs to comply with the federal effluent limitation guidelines that prohibit discharge to state waters.

The New Jersey Department of Agriculture, State Soil Conservation Committee, Natural Resources Conservation Service and New Jersey Soil Conservation Districts have partnered with NJDEP to implement the general permit as part of a statewide strategy to control pollution from CAFOs.

**Recycling.** Recycling is an important part of natural resource conservation for the agriculture industry. Recycling saves natural resources, and also saves farmers money through creative reuse, such as using leaves and grass clippings to mulch and fertilize farm fields, and saving on solid waste disposal costs. Recycling reduces the amount of refuse finding its way to limited landfill space. Corn, soybeans and hay, the dominant field crops in Somerset County, use limited products which can be recycled, and as such limit recycling opportunities.

However, the nursery and greenhouse industry in the County does offer recycling opportunities for such things as nursery film, and potting and pesticide containers. Discussions with the Somerset County Solid Waste Management Division indicate that the County does not do any type of
agricultural recycling, and has no plans to do such. One of the reasons cited is lack of space at County facilities to operate such a recycling program. However, it was indicated that Somerset County may be interested in partnering with a neighboring county if it is logistically feasible to transport materials from Somerset County to the partner county.

E. Energy Conservation

Energy conservation has wide ranging implications, not only on the local environment but on a global scale. Climate change has been on the forefront of the world stage and strategies to combat the resulting issues have been promoted and encouraged. One such strategy is to conserve energy and find alternative energy production that does not further degrade the environment. The following section has been prepared as part of the County Draft Plan and reflect the hopes of the Township to encourage alternative energy sources and energy conservation practices. To date the Township has not amended or created new policies directly related to energy conservation. However, installation of alternative energy infrastructure (solar, wind) should not be permitted on the deed-restricted portion of a preserved farm.

SOLAR ENERGY. Solar energy can be harnessed via the installation of solar panels. This harnessed or stored energy can then be used to create electricity and provide heat. If excess electricity is generated, it can be sold back to the electric grid for a profit. The overall use of solar panels has greatly increased in New Jersey. EQIP does provide some funding for solar panels, and farmers interested in using this alternate energy source can contact the local NRCS office in Franklin Township for more information. This technology is being used in Bernards Township at a growing number of locations, including the Verizon campus, Fellowship Village and the Sorge Farm, which has produced solar powered electricity for a number of years, and sets an example for homeowners in the township.

WIND ENERGY. The power of a strong wind can be captured by turbines or windmills, turning such power into electricity. Expanding and evolving technology is making this option more attractive to farmers as a way to cut energy costs. According to the NJDA the northwestern part of New Jersey, which includes Somerset County, has ample and consistent enough wind power to make turbine energy feasible. One possible roadblock to use of wind turbines, is that few, if any, municipal ordinances allow the use of wind turbines.

ETHANOL. Ethanol is a renewable fuel “made by distilling the starch and sugar in a variety of plants.” It can then be blended into gasoline as an “oxygenate”, reducing air pollution. Its use may also reduce dependence on foreign oil, and the harmful environmental effects of oil drilling. Also, unlike the gasoline additive MTBE, Ethanol will not contaminate groundwater. Corn, a dominant field crop in Somerset County (along with hay and soybeans), could position Somerset County farmers to financially capitalize on the spreading movement towards ethanol-blended fuels. More study would need to be done on whether this would be profitable for County farmers, and how it would affect other local agriculture industries (for instance, how it would affect the dairy industry’s supply of, and price for, feed corn).

BIO-diesel. Petroleum diesel is an emitter of sulfur emissions, a major air pollutant. Bio-diesel, made from the oils of soybeans, is an alternative to petroleum diesel. This organic fuel can be blended and used in diesel engines without modification. The result is a significant reduction of the harmful fumes produced by pure petroleum diesel. As of 2004, there were 866 acres of soybeans that were farmland
assessed in Somerset County.

**Renewable Energy Grant Programs.** The NJDA provides the following information on renewable energy grant programs, which can help encourage the use of these energy sources:

**New Jersey’s Clean Energy Program.** Administered by the New Jersey Board of Public Utilities, this program provides financial incentives to install clean energy systems, including fuel cells, solar energy, small wind and sustainable biomass equipment. Financial incentives are in the form of rebates, grants and loans. Additional information is at [www.njcep.com/](http://www.njcep.com/).

**Renewable Energy Systems and Energy Efficiency Improvements Program.** As part of the 2002 Federal Farm Bill, this program “funds grants and loan guarantees to agricultural producers for assistance with purchasing renewable energy systems and making energy efficiency improvements”. Final rules for loans and grants were adopted by the U.S. Department of Agriculture in July 2005. The proposed 2007 Farm Bill would reportedly continue this funding. Additional information can be found at the following website: [www.rurdev.usda.gov/rbs/farmbill/index.html](http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/rbs/farmbill/index.html).

**Biomass Research and Development Initiative Grants.** The United States Departments of Agriculture and Energy support development of biomass energy. Grants are available for research, development and demonstrations on bio-based products, bio-energy, bio-fuels, bio-power and additional related processes. In the recent past, grants have focused on development and demonstration projects that lead to greater commercialization. Additional information is available at the following website: [http://www.state.nj.us/agriculture/news/hottopics/topics060222.html](http://www.state.nj.us/agriculture/news/hottopics/topics060222.html).

**F. Outreach and Incentives**

The Township’s plan, prepared under the supervision of the A.A.C., is coordinated with the County FPP as the basis for the plan. As previously mentioned, the Township A.A.C. is working with groups such as the NJCF to ensure landowners in the town are aware of the preservation program, funding, and other assistance that may be available to them. According to the A.A.C., existing farmers are satisfied with programs available to them, but would like to see more assistance where environmental regulations may hinder farming activities. A request for tools to work with or around constraints would be appreciated.

**VIII. Agricultural Industry Sustainability, Retention and Promotion**

**A. Existing Agricultural Industry Support**

1. **Right to Farm**

New Jersey has enacted a strong right-to-farm statute, which applies statewide and the Township adopted a Right to Farm ordinance in 2004 that is consistent with the NJ SADC model ordinance. Member of the A.A.C. stated that since the adoption of the ordinance, they have not had any farmer, non-farmer conflicts.

New Jersey’s Right-to-Farm Act provides commercial farm owners or operators with certain protections from restrictive municipal ordinances and public and private nuisance actions. Protected
agricultural activities include production, processing and packaging of agricultural products, farm market sales and agriculture-related educational and farm-based recreational activities. Commercial farms are also protected from unduly restrictive municipal regulations and public and private nuisance lawsuits.

These protections are available to commercial farms which:

- are operated in conformance with federal and state laws, agricultural management practices recommended by the New Jersey State Agricultural Development Committee (SADC) or site specific agricultural management practices;
- are not a direct threat to public health and safety; and
- are located in an area where agriculture was a permitted use under municipal zoning ordinance; or
- were operating as of December 13, 1997

The SADC seeks to preserve agricultural viability, an individual parcel's ability to sustain “a variety of agricultural operations that yield a reasonable economic return under normal conditions . . .”. However, to maintain the agricultural viability of a region or sector, smaller agricultural parcels, which may continue in agriculture through hobby-farming or other forms of household subsidy, remain an important part of the fabric of the agricultural landscape. Both the SADC and the State Planning Commission seek to retain large masses of viable agricultural land. SADC policies recognize that agricultural parcels may become less viable if reduced in size.

While the New Jersey right-to-farm statutes extends protection to all farms in the State, incorporating right-to-farm language into the municipal ordinance makes a strong statement to those developing lands within the Township. Continuing development will undoubtedly be at odds with existing agricultural operations and nuisance conflicts will arise.

The Township helps to avoid conflict by informing residents of the benefits of farming to the community and offers mediation where needed. The A.A.C. uses community events such as Charter Day as an opportunity to educate the public and to talk with farmers about the preservation program. Members of the A.A.C. and farmers have also visited Township schools to talk to students about farming in Bernards Township.

2. Farmland Assessment

The Somerset County Draft Plan identifies the following summary on the Farmland Assessment Act of 1964:

“The Farmland Assessment program is a tax incentive which reduces property taxes on active commercial farmed land, thereby assisting farmers with a critical financial aspect in helping to keep land in farms. This tax incentive is made possible by the Farmland Assessment Act of 1964, N.J.S.A. 54:4-23.1 et seq.”

The County further identifies the eligibility requirements as:

- The applicant must own the land;
- The property owner must apply annually for Farmland Assessment on or before August 1
of the year immediately preceding the tax year;

- Land must be devoted to agricultural and/or horticultural uses for at least two years prior to the tax year;
- Land must consist of at least five contiguous farmed and/or woodland management plan acres. Land under or adjoining a farmhouse is not counted towards the minimum five acres;
- Gross sales of products from the land must average at least $500 per year for the first five acres, plus an average of $5.00 per acre for each acre over five. In the case of woodland or wetland, the income requirement is $.50 per acre for any acreage over five. Dependent on the agricultural or horticultural products being produced, the farmer can also offer clear evidence of anticipated yearly gross sales, payments, or fees within a reasonable period of time; and,
- The property owner must represent that the land will continue in agricultural or horticultural use to the end of the tax year.

The Township uses the 1964 Farmland Assessment Act and subscribes to the eligibility standards it uses. As mentioned in previous sections, the Township currently has 1,134 acres under farmland assessment. Members of the A.A.C. have expressed the importance of Farmland Assessment as an incentive to continue farming. Especially in Bernards where the farming community is particularly small, farmers rely on assessment to continue their practices.

B. Additional Strategies

The following strategies for retaining farmland in the Township again exemplify the A.A.C.’s commitment to staying current with the changing needs of the agricultural industry. In addition, the Township supports and promotes the Jersey Fresh, Jersey Grown, and other state marketing materials, that bring attention and awareness to the Township’s farming community, and help to preserve the history and character of the town.

1. Permit Streamlining

Municipalities play a key role in the preservation of farming as an industry. Without strong and active support from municipal governments, farming can be too costly and burdensome to be profitable or worthwhile. The viability of farming in New Jersey is impacted by many issues, including government regulation, development pressures and the economics of the marketplace. While land preservation is vital for maintaining a sufficient land base suitable for farming, sustaining a community’s agricultural base requires support on many fronts, one of which is flexibility in government regulation. The Township’s Right to Farm Ordinance is an active example of the municipality’s commitment and support for agriculture. Support of municipal governments must also be actively practiced so that agriculture is seen as an important and permanent part of the community as a whole. An example of this support is advertising local farm stands and seasonal events and activities on Bernards’ farms. This assists farmers in running their agriculture business and creates an atmosphere favorable to agriculture, its economics and profitability.

2. Agriculture vehicle movement

Bernards farmers have expressed the fact that there are no farms requiring signage for agricultural vehicle movement. There are few, if any, farms that require use of roadways for accessing farm fields. Should traffic ever become a problem and farmers find themselves dealing with conflicts with
suburban dwellers, signage can be installed to alert drivers to slow moving vehicles. The Township’s Right to Farm ordinance also recognizes as a specific right the operation and transportation of large, slow moving equipment over roads.

3. Farm Labor Housing/Training
Labor supply in Bernards is not as integral to farming as it is in most communities. As many of the farmers in the Township have expressed, their operations are not of an appropriate size for housing agricultural labor. Crops in the Township occupy far less land than in most other communities and therefore, the need for housing labor is not as crucial.

4. Wildlife Management Strategies
Management of nuisance and crop damaging wildlife is critical to the short and long term sustainability of Bernards’ agriculture industry. Crop damage from wildlife leads to economic loss for the farmer and/or land owner, and is a serious problem in the Township. Most damage is caused by a multitude of insects, as well as deer, turkey, Canada Geese and other wildlife. It is imperative to not only control and manage damage to crops, but also to do it in a manner which creates the least amount of collateral natural resource damage (i.e. limit pesticide use to the greatest extent possible, using natural pest control). State, county, and local government units must be sensitive to the negative economic impacts caused by crop damage, and support efforts to control it through education, technical and financial assistance, and regulatory flexibility.

Deer exclusion fencing may be effective for protecting produce, since produce is grown on relatively small plots of land. One key way for Bernards farmers to control damage from deer is through hunting of crop damaging animals. This hunting is allowed on private lands through depredation permits, issued by the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection’s (NJDEP) Fish and Wildlife Program. In many instances, this is the only short term solution to control damage of crops by what is widely considered an excessive deer population in the Township and the County. Bernards farmers continue to work with the NJDEP and NJDA, as well as counties and municipalities, to implement wildlife control strategies on privately and publicly owned land. One example of this cooperation is coordinated hunting of nuisance animals on county owned lands.

Another example of a coordinated effort to control nuisances is between municipalities and the New Jersey Department of Agriculture’s Division of Plants Industry. This department works to safeguard New Jersey’s plant resources from injurious insect and disease pests. The Division implements several programs for detection, inspection, eradication and control of insect pests, which helps to ensure that the public can enjoy high quality, pest-free agricultural products. In addition, “the Division oversees programs that certify plant stock for interstate and international shipments, protects forested communities from tree loss caused by the gypsy moth and Asian long-horned beetle, inspects honeybees for harmful bee diseases and pests, regulates the quality of plant seeds, and produces and releases beneficial insects to reduce crop and environmental damage and decrease dependence on chemical pesticides.

Protection of forest resources is important to Bernards farmers who harvest wood as part of woodland management plans on their farmland assessed properties. One important example of the Division of Plant Industry’s work is in control of the gypsy moth. The gypsy moth is considered the most destructive defoliation forest insect pest in New Jersey. The Division’s Gypsy Moth Suppression Program is a voluntary cooperative program involving local governments, county and state agencies,
as well as the USDA Forest Service. The Division promotes an integrated pest management approach, which “encourages natural controls to reduce gypsy moth feeding and subsequent tree loss.”

5. Agriculture Education and Training
The Township currently supports the efforts of the Rutgers Cooperative Research and Extension. The following is an outline provided by the county on the RCRE efforts:

“One educational link for Somerset County agricultural land owners and operators is to collaborate with the Rutgers Cooperative Research and Extension (RCRE) of Somerset County (associated with Cook College, Rutgers University). There is not a minimum or maximum size farm to which the RCRE will lend assistance, so long as it is farmland assessed.

RCRE of Somerset County also provides practical assistance to farmers. Examples include:

- Assistance in obtaining water certification and registration permits from the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, for groundwater and/or surface water allocations;
- Soil testing for fields and pastures;
- Assistance with obtaining farmer certificates for N.J. Division of Motor Vehicle registrations;
- Assistance with applications for “Outstanding Young Farmer” (OYF) nominations. OYF is a state award given annually by the NJDA which “recognizes the outstanding achievements of a young person engaged in farming in New Jersey” (Outstanding Young Farmer’s Award);
- Assistance with grant applications to the NJDA for various types of economic assistance. Examples include “Jersey Fresh” grants to advertise;
- Distribution of “Jersey Fresh” and “Jersey Grown” promotional material such as bumper stickers, banners and t-shirts;
- Assistance to connect owners of farmland with tenant farmers, so that land may stay in farmland assessment;
- Assist new farmers with various regulatory requirements, and acquaintance with various farmer organizations;
- Provide outreach through the RCRE of Somerset County Website, and at the annual 4-H Fair; and,
- Joint publication with the Somerset County Board of Agriculture of the quarterly “Green and Growing” newsletter, which is mailed to County farmers, and is also available at the RCRE of Somerset County website (http://somerset.rcre.rutgers.edu/ag/greenandgrowing.html).

IX. CONCLUSION

The Agricultural community, and its continued contribution to the quality of life in Bernards Township, is continually supported through farmland preservation, agricultural viability advocacy and public education efforts. The Bernards Township A.A.C. strives to identify issues facing local agricultural enterprises and provide recommendations for resolution; continue the sustainable use of economically viable farmland for production through farmland preservation options; promote local
agriculture through municipal activities; provide education to agricultural community to meet future economic challenges; promote community interest in agriculturally related activities; foster responsible stewardship of land; promote communication and cooperation among farmers and the public; communicate, educate and promote contributions made by agriculture to the local community.\textsuperscript{45}

\textsuperscript{45} Mission Statement and Goals of the Bernards Township Agricultural Advisory Committee