

5.0 Farmland Preservation

Master Plan Recommendations Updates

Recommendation 5.1: Maintain and update, as needed, the *Monmouth County Farmland Preservation Plan (2008)* as a component of the *Monmouth County Master Plan (Continuous)*. Staff drafted an update to the County Planning Incentive Grant (PIG) Target Farms List for FY2019, adding and deleting some farms, and adjusting the boundaries of the Wall and Upper Freehold-Western Millstone project areas. (See Figure 5.4)

Recommendation 5.2: Manage and coordinate the purchase of agricultural easements, as guided by the *Monmouth County Farmland Preservation Plan (Continuous)*. As of June 30, 2018 there are 15,317 acres of permanently preserved farmland with State Agriculture Development Committee (SADC)-format deeds of easement.

Recommendation 5.3: Continue to provide professional and technical assistance to the Monmouth County Agriculture Development Board (MCADB), municipal partners, and other agricultural community stakeholders (Continuous). The agricultural specialists and Environmental Planning staff continue to provide support to the MCADB and work closely with a number of municipalities including Upper Freehold, Millstone, Howell, Colts Neck, Marlboro, Manalapan, Holmdel, Wall, and Freehold.

Recommendation 5.4: Continue annual monitoring of preserved farms to ensure deed compliance and respond to post-closing requests (Continuous). Planning staff is responsible for monitoring over 200 easements on an annual basis. Each July, staff submits an annual monitoring summary report to the SADC. Post-closing requests over the past two years span agricultural labor housing, correction of a scribe's error on a deed, a division of premises, and the handling of a potential deed violation.

Recommendation 5.5: Continue to hear right-to-farm complaints, review requests for Site-Specific Agricultural Management Practice (SSAMP) recommendations, and provide program resources to support the Right to Farm Act (Continuous). Right to Farm has been a very busy area of the program. The MCADB has been deliberating on numerous conflict resolution matters and SSAMP requests, and the courts and SADC have recently handed down decisions that will impact the program going forward. Staff has been conducting research to assist municipal partners and hosted a right-to-farm outreach event earlier in 2018. Follow-up meetings are being planned. The MCADB updated its SSAMP and Conflict Resolution forms in the last year to clarify deadlines and procedures.

5.2 Existing Conditions

- 15,317 acres are permanently preserved farmland as of June 30, 2018;
 - Previously, 14,890 acres were preserved by December 2015
 - Previously, 10,602 acres were preserved by June 2007.
- 212 agricultural easements as of June 30, 2018
- 2012 Agricultural Census reported there were 823 farms totaling 38,961 acres of land in Monmouth County. This was down from 932 farms totaling 44,130 acres in 2007.
- Contrary to the Agricultural Census findings, the Monmouth County Tax Classification Table (see Figure 2.12) shows a slight increase in the amount of farm qualified properties, from 48,529 acres in 2015 to 50,027 acres in 2018.
- Per state regulations, the Planning Division submits annual updates of its 2008 *Farmland Preservation Plan* to the SADC each December. The updates include revisions to the County PIG Target Farms List, project areas, grant application and associated maps.

5.4 Stakeholders Action and Efforts

- **Agricultural Development Areas** | In 2018, staff is embarking on an update of Monmouth County's Agricultural Development Areas (ADA) to align our GIS layer with current land use patterns and a December 2016 clarification of the county's ADA criteria. This is a time-consuming process for which intern assistance is being used.

Updated Figures for Chapter 5.0 Farmland Preservation

Figure 5.1 | Preserved Farms in Monmouth County

■ Includes newly acquired preserved farmland since 12/31/15.

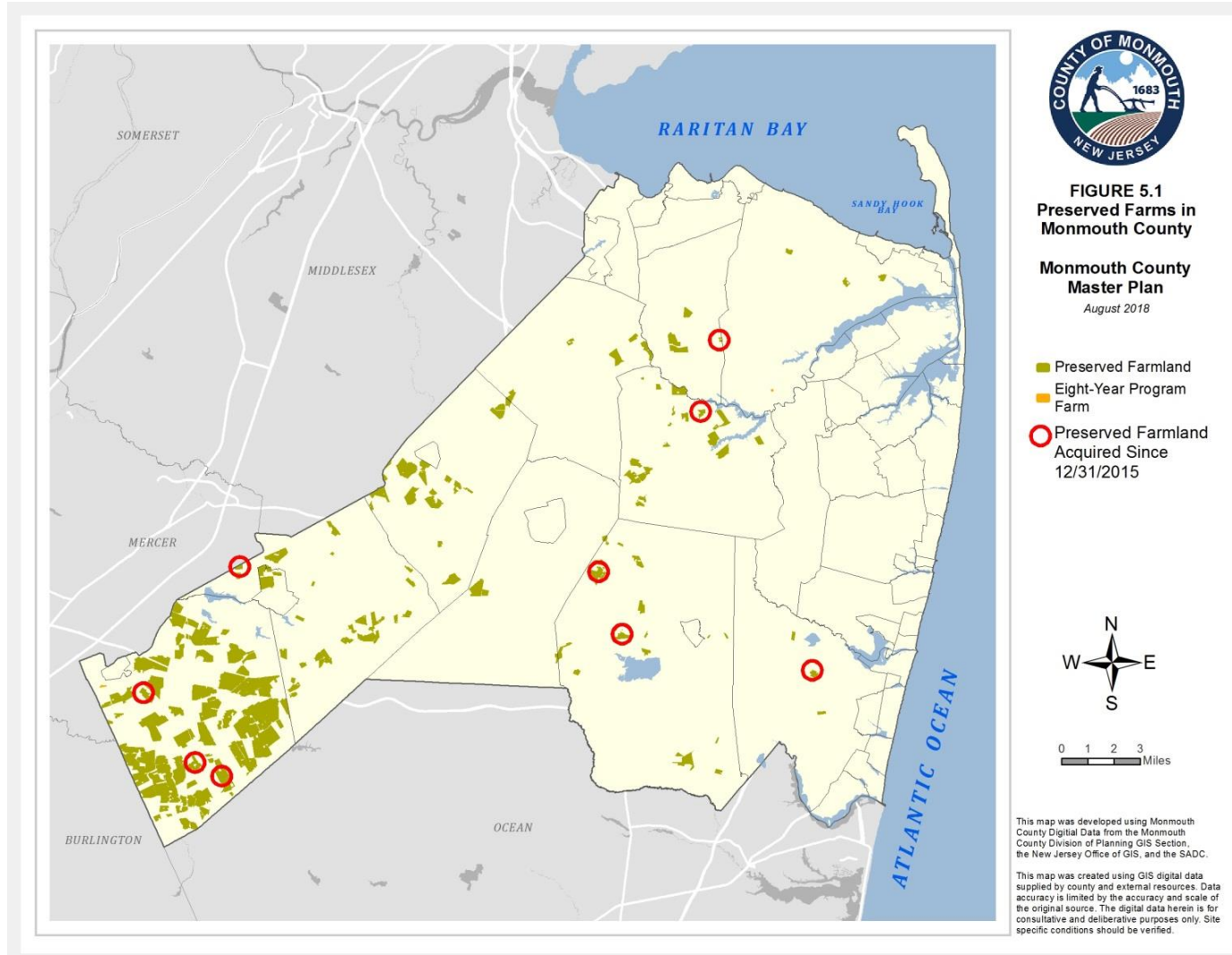


Figure 5.3 | Easements Acreage Totals per Grant Program

■ This table compares total acreage between three years (2007, 2015 & 2018).

Figure 5.3 Easement Acreage Totals Per Grant Program			
Grant Program	June 2007 Acres	December 2015 Acres	June 2018 Acres
County Easement Purchase Program	7527	8507	8507
County Planning Incentive Grant Program	0	645	749
Municipal Planning Incentive Grant Program	1465	2829	2980
Direct Easement Program	1218	2378	2539
Fee Simple Program	249	249	249
Interagency Transfer	110	110	110
Preserved by Municipality	10	10	10
Preserved by Monmouth County	23	23	23
Grants to Nonprofits Program	0	105	138
Preserved by MCADB	0	36	36
Permanently Preserved Acreage	10,602	14,892	15,341

Figure 5.4 | Monmouth County PIG Project Areas and Target Farms Map

- This map reflects expanded PIG Project Areas in Wall and Upper Freehold Townships.

