Bergen County
COMPREHENSIVE FARMLAND PRESERVATION PLAN UPDATE

DRAFT--JANUARY 2026

THE LAND CONSERVANCY
OF NEW JERSEY

Adopted by

planning board:

Month, Year

Approved by

the SADC:

Month, Year

BERGEN COUNTY

January 7, 2026 - DRAFT

COMPREHENSIVE FARMLAND PRESERVATION PLAN UPDATE

THE LAND CONSERVANCY OF NEW JERSEY

19 Boonton Avenue
Boonton, NJ 07005
PH: (973) 541-1010
tlc-nj.org

The Land Conservancy of New Jersey
David Epstein, President
Barbara Heskins Davis, PP, AICP, Vice President, Programs
Kenneth Fung, Senior GIS Manager
Planning Team:
Jake Gerardi, Heather Korzun, Jonah McDowell, Grace Nelson, and Cassady Turnbach - Planning Fellows

The original document will be appropriately signed and sealed in accordance with Chapter 41, Title 13 of the State Board of Professional Planners upon adoption by the Planning Board.

Barbara Heskins Davis, PP, AICP - NJ Professional Planner
(License No. 5926)

Date: _____

Acknowledgments

Bergen County Department of Parks
One Bergen County Plaza
Hackensack, NJ 07601
PH: 201-336-6000

County Executive
James J. Tedesco, III

Board of County Commissioners
Mary J. Amoroso, Chairwoman
Steven A. Tanelli, Vice-Chairman
Dr. Joan M. Voss, Chair Pro Tempore
Rafael Marte
Germaine M. Ortiz
Thomas J. Sullivan
Tracy S. Zur

Bergen County Agriculture Development Board (CADB)
Evelyn Spath-Mercado, Chairwoman
Shergoh Alkilani, Vice-Chairman
James Abma, Sr.
Angelo Caruso
Joseph Dillon
Violet Reed
Darryl Secor

Bergen County Staff
Craig Dorsett, Acting Director of Parks
Adam Strobel, Director, Division of Land Management
Kenneth Aloisio AICP/PP, CADB Administrator

New Jersey State Agriculture Development Committee
Steven Bruder and Thomas Allen

The Bergen County Comprehensive Farmland Preservation Plan Update was prepared with funding from the New Jersey State Agriculture Development Committee.

Table of Contents

Cover Photo:
Twinbrooks Farm
Closter Borough
Source: Twinbrooks Farm Instagram

Executive Summary:
Abma's Farm
Wyckoff Township
Source: Abma's Farm Facebook

Maps

1. Farmland

Referenced in Chapter I, Section A and Chapter IV, Section A

2. Land Use/ Land Cover

Referenced in Chapter I, Section A

3. Agricultural Soils

Referenced in Chapter I, Section B

4. Agricultural Development Area

Referenced in Chapter IV, Section A and Chapter V, Section A

5. Target Farms

Map 5 referenced in Chapter V, Section C

Regional Target Farm Maps: Maps 6 through 10

Maps 6-10 referenced in Chapter V, Sections A and C

All maps were developed using the NJDEP Geographic Information System (GIS) digital data, but this secondary product has not been verified by the NJDEP and is not state-authorized. These maps are to be used solely for planning purposes, and they do not take the place of a professional survey. Data sources include County of Bergen, NJOGIS Open Data, NJGIN Road Centerline 2021, NJDEP Land Use/Land Cover 2020, and NRCS Soil Survey 2023.

Farmland data used in the Bergen County Comprehensive Farmland Preservation Plan was derived from different sources, each with its own purpose and use. In most cases, the numbers can vary slightly from source to source, which is typical for this type of analysis. Sources include:

- MODIV tax assessor database (used by the GIS software).
- Farmland assessment (provided by the SADC).
- Census of Agriculture (as reported by the individual landowner applications).

Acronyms

CADB: County Agriculture Development Board

- ADA: Agriculture Development Area
- RTF: Right to Farm

NJDEP: New Jersey (NJ) Department of Environmental Protection

- LU/LC: NJDEP Land Use/Land Cover data

NJGS: NJ Geological Survey

NJDA: NJ Department of Agriculture

- SADC: State Agriculture Development Committee
- PIG: Planning Incentive Grant
- SFV: Statewide Formula Value
- SSCC: State Soil Conservation Committee

NJAES-RCE: NJ Agricultural Experiment Station-Rutgers Cooperative Extension

NJ SDRP: State Development and Redevelopment Plan

TDR: Transfer of Development Rights

USGS: US Geological Survey

USDA: US Department of Agriculture

- USDA NRCS: Natural Resources Conservation Service
- USDA NASS: National Agriculture Statistics Service
- SCD: Soil Conservation District
- USFS: US Forest Service
- FSA: Farm Service Agency

Executive Summary

Bergen County has seven preserved farms, permanently protecting 335 acres. Milestones for Bergen County's farmland preservation program include:

- 1998: Bergen County Open Space, Recreation, Floodplain Protection, Farmland and Historic Preservation Trust Fund established.
- 2000: Agricultural Development Area (ADA) map published for Bergen County.
- 2002: First farm preserved in Bergen County, totaling 216 acres in Mahwah Township.
- 2014: Farmland Preservation Plan adopted.
- 2015: 17 acre farm preserved in Saddle River, the most recent farm protected in Bergen County.

Five towns have preserved farms: Closter, Franklin Lakes, Hillsdale, Mahwah, and Saddle River. A total of $19,752,944 has been spent to preserve the farms in Bergen County:

- $10,866,840 (55%) came from the state.
- $8,886,103 (45%) was contributed by Bergen County.
- $467,868 came through the federal Farm & Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRPP) for the farms in Closter and Franklin Lakes in 2004.

There are 41 farms remaining in Bergen County which are not preserved. The Bergen County Agriculture Development Board (CADB) completed an analysis of these remaining farms to determine their agricultural viability and potential eligibility for preservation through state and county programs. As a result of this study, the CADB recommends a three tiered approach to preserving the remaining farms, diversifying the program to include those farms which are productive but may not meet state criteria, and those farms which are locally important but are outside of the eligibility provisions. The tiers include (1) Farms which meet state eligibility; (2) Productive farms which fall immediately outside of current state criteria; and (3) Locally important farms which are ineligible for state funding but contribute to urban agriculture and/or agritourism.

Using the inventory of farmland eligible for preservation, landowner interest, and the amount of potential funding available, the Bergen CADB would like to see the continued preservation of farms over the next ten years. This will involve a collaboration between agencies (state and county) to expand opportunities for hybrid projects, combining farmland and open space priorities in the most populous county in the New Jersey.

Included within this plan is a white paper on Urban Agriculture. Following **Chapter V**, it explores funding, opportunities, and locations in the state where urban farming is a growing resource for the local community. It explores how this could be replicated in Bergen County and diversity options for agriculture and preservation in this busy corner of the state.

A series of public meetings were held on the update to the plan. In addition to the public meetings, the Bergen County Agriculture Development Board (CADB) conducted a public survey about local farms and farmland preservation. After two months of outreach, the survey received a total of 454 responses. Responses were received from nearly all municipalities in Bergen County:

- 77% of the respondents purchase products from farmers markets.
- 91% of the respondents purchase produce at these markets.
- 36% of respondents purchase products once a week.
- 42% of respondents attend pick your own at local farms. This includes apples, pumpkins, peaches, strawberries, and flowers.
- 47% hear about local farm events through social media.
- 92% are concerned about the loss of farmland in Bergen County, that agritourism is necessary for the health of the farming community (94%), and that protecting Bergen County's farms is important to their community (93%).
- 65% feel residential development is the greatest threat to county farmland.

The survey results are included on the following pages. Materials prepared for the survey and public meetings are included in **Appendix A** of this report.

This update is required for continued participation in the State Agriculture Development Committee (SADC) Planning Incentive Grant (PIG) program, an important source of funding for the county. Bergen County's Board of Commissioners remain committed to preserving the agricultural economy and legacy of the County and support the efforts of the CADB to preserve farmland in Bergen County.






Bergen County 2025
Farmland Preservation Survey

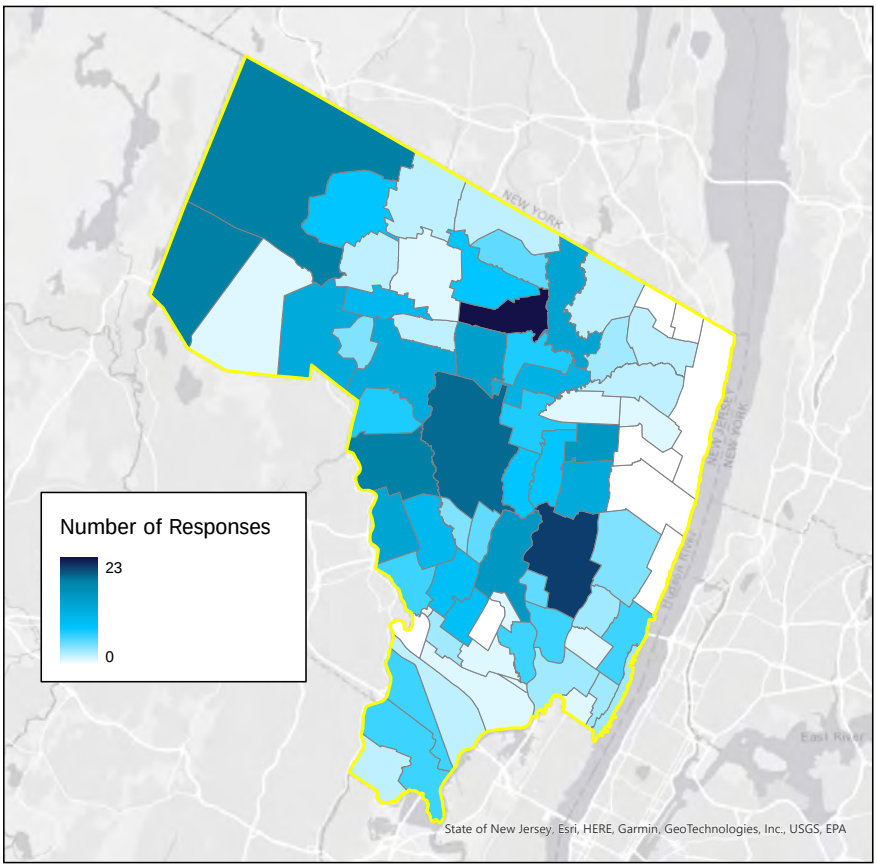
The Bergen County Agriculture Development Board (CADB) distributed an online public survey to collect resident feedback about participation in local agriculture and farmland preservation. The survey was advertised on the county website and on Bergen County Park System's social media. After two months of outreach from February 28 to April 28, 2025, the survey received a total of 454 responses. These responses are summarized below.

Although the responses are limited by those who self-selected to complete the survey, its findings offer a valuable insight into public attitudes and can help inform future farmland preservation efforts.

1. Which municipalities were respondents from?

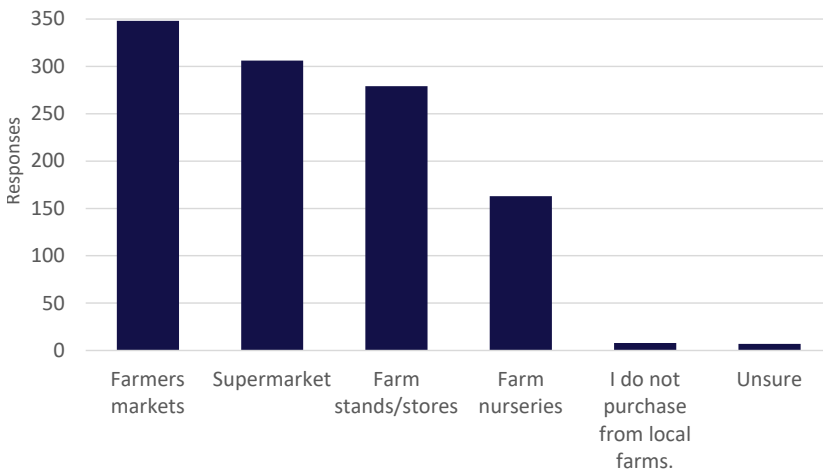
Responses were received from nearly all municipalities in Bergen County. Hillsdale Borough had the most responses submitted (23), followed by Teaneck Township (21).

Responses by Municipality



Photos from left to right: Stokes Farm; Closter Farm (top); Stokes Farm (bottom); Ramsey Farmers Market; Abma's Farm (top); Closter Farm (bottom)

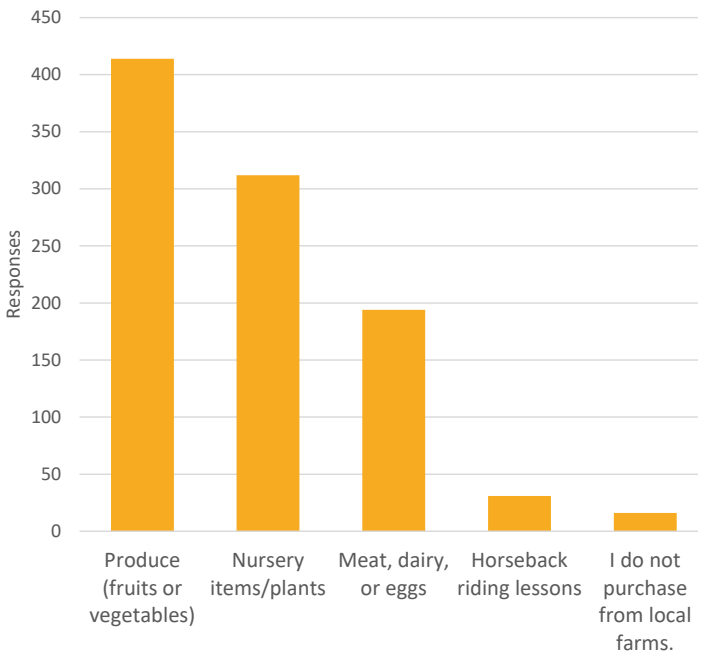
2. Where/how do you purchase products from local farms?



This question allowed respondents to select multiple answers. 77% of respondents purchased products from *farmers markets*, closely followed by 67% from *supermarkets*, and 61% from *farm stands/stores*. In addition to the options presented, several respondents indicated that they purchased local farm products through a *CSA/co-op* (9 respondents) or through an *online service* (4 respondents).

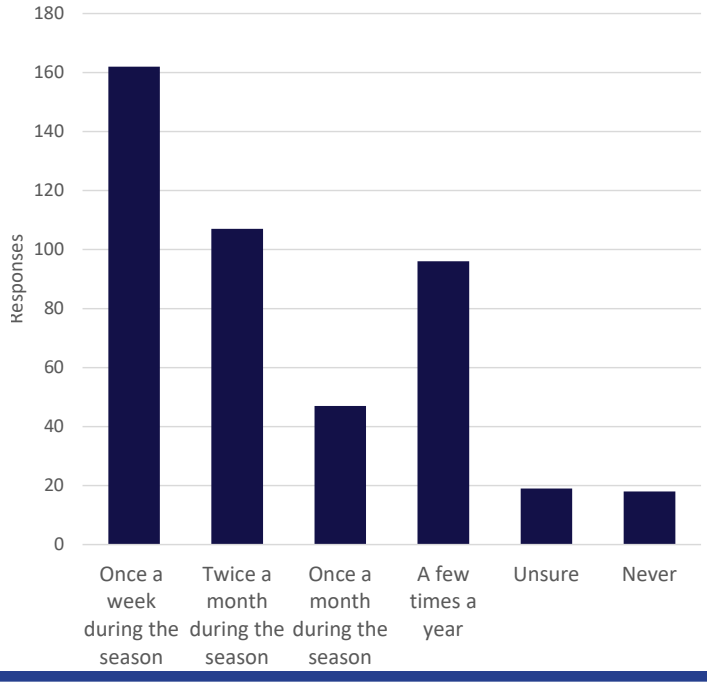
3. What agricultural products/ services do you purchase from local farms?

This question allowed respondents to select multiple answers. *Produce* was the most common answer (91% of respondents) followed by *Nursery items/ plants*. Most respondents (71%) reported purchasing from more than one category of products. While not the largest category, *Horseback riding lessons* were reported by 31 respondents. *Other* responses included baked goods, honey, jam/jelly, and entire meals.



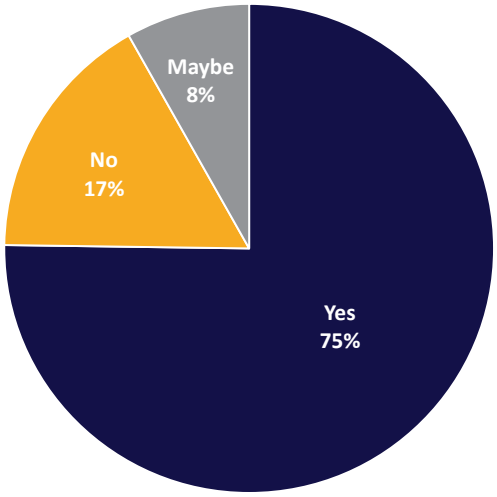
4. How often do you purchase agricultural products from Bergen County farms?

This question did not allow respondents to choose multiple answers. 36% of respondents reported purchasing agricultural products *Once a week during the season*. Of these once-a-week customers, 99% reported purchasing *Produce* and 82% reported purchasing *Nursery items/plants*.



5. The Jersey Fresh logo indicates if a fruit or vegetable was grown in New Jersey. Are you familiar with Jersey Fresh?

Most respondents (75%) reported that they were familiar with the Jersey Fresh logo.



6. Have you attended events or programming at Bergen County farms?

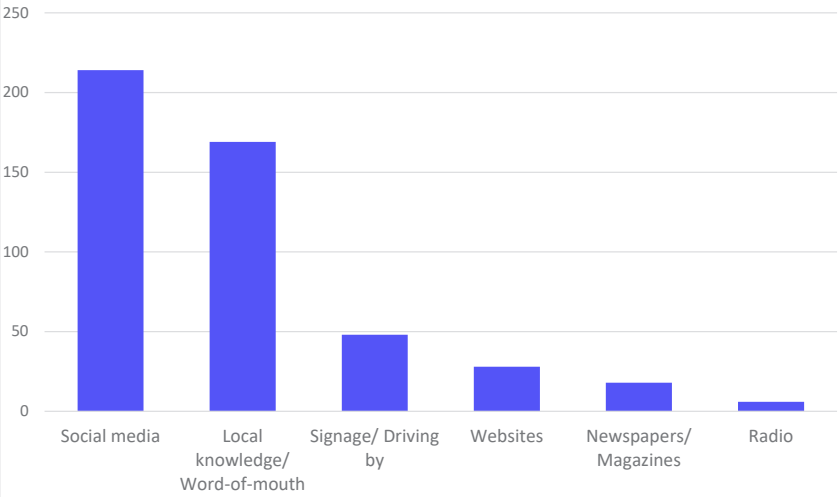
Most respondents (71%) reported attending events at Bergen County farms.

7. If so, what kind of events?

This open-ended question allowed respondents to describe the events they attend at Bergen County farms. Responses were sorted by predominant themes. For example, the theme *Fall/Halloween events* includes responses such as “Autumn activities,” “Halloween events” and “Hayrides.”

Pick your own was the most common event theme reported by respondents (42%), followed by *Fall/ Halloween Events* (28%) and *Festivals/holidays* (15%). Products commonly mentioned in many *pick your own* responses included apples, pumpkins, peaches, strawberries, and flowers.

Two themes that stood out were *Equestrian events or lessons* and *Christmas/Halloween lights,* like the drive through Orchard of Lights that Demarest Farms puts on for Christmas and Halloween. These less common farm events were reported by 24 and 15 respondents, respectively. Other interesting events included *Educational events, Music, Easter events,* and *Drive in movies.*



8. How did you find out about local farms that sell products or host events?

This multiple-choice question asked respondents to indicate the primary way they find out about local farm products and events. The most common response was *Social media* (47%) followed by *Local knowledge/Word-of-mouth* (37%).

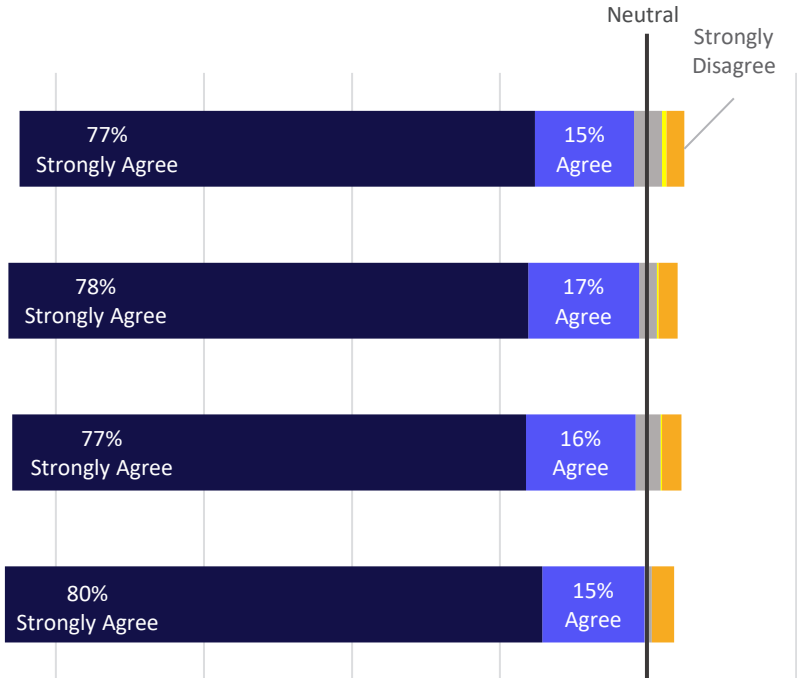
9. How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements:

I am concerned about the loss of farmland in Bergen County.

I believe that agritourism is necessary for the health of the farming industry.

Protecting Bergen County's farms is important to my community.

Protecting Bergen County's farms is important to me/my family.



Respondents were generally aligned across all four statements. An overwhelming percentage of respondents agree or strongly agree that they are concerned about the loss of farmland in Bergen County (92%), that agritourism is necessary for the health of the farming community (94%), and that protecting Bergen County's farms is important to their community (93%) and themselves/their family (96%).

10: What is the greatest threat to farmland in Bergen County?

Similarly, most respondents (65%) agreed that *Residential development* was the greatest threat to county farmland. *Cost of living* scored a distance second at 15% of responses.

Abma's Farm, Wyckoff Township
Source: Abma's Farm

Chapter I.

Agricultural Land Base

A. Agricultural Landscape

Bergen County's farming dates back to the 1600s. In 1860, agricultural land reached a peak of 123,160 acres, accounting for 78% of the County. By 1940, agriculture had declined to less than 16,000 acres (ten percent of the County). Development pressure increased rapidly after World War II. Due to the County's proximity to New York City, the demand for housing rose and took place on formerly active farmland.[1] From 1982 to 1992, the land in farms remained steady, at 2,600 acres. Another shift in development in the late 1990s cut the County's total farmland in half (**Figure I-1**).

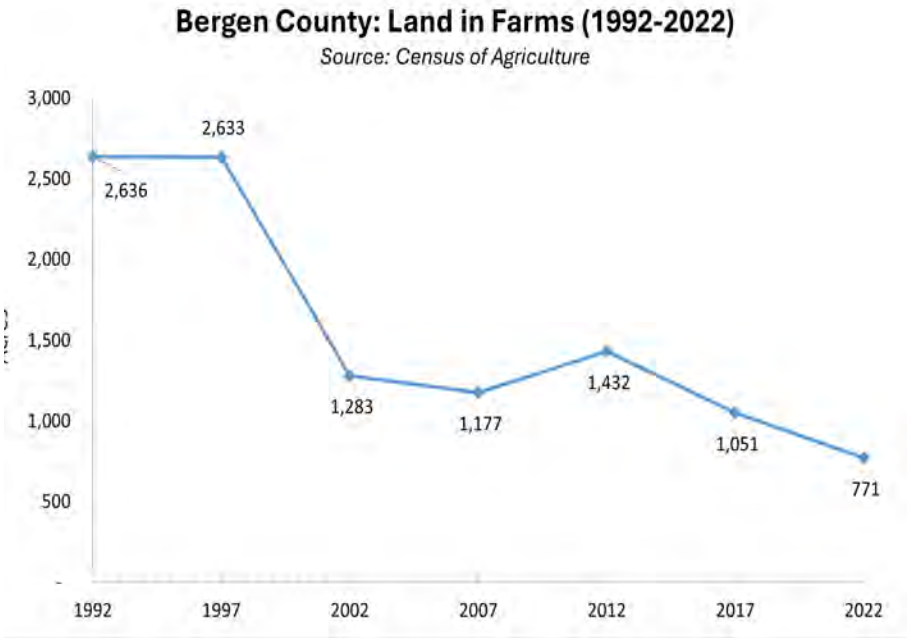


Figure I-1. Bergen County Land in Farms (1992-2022)

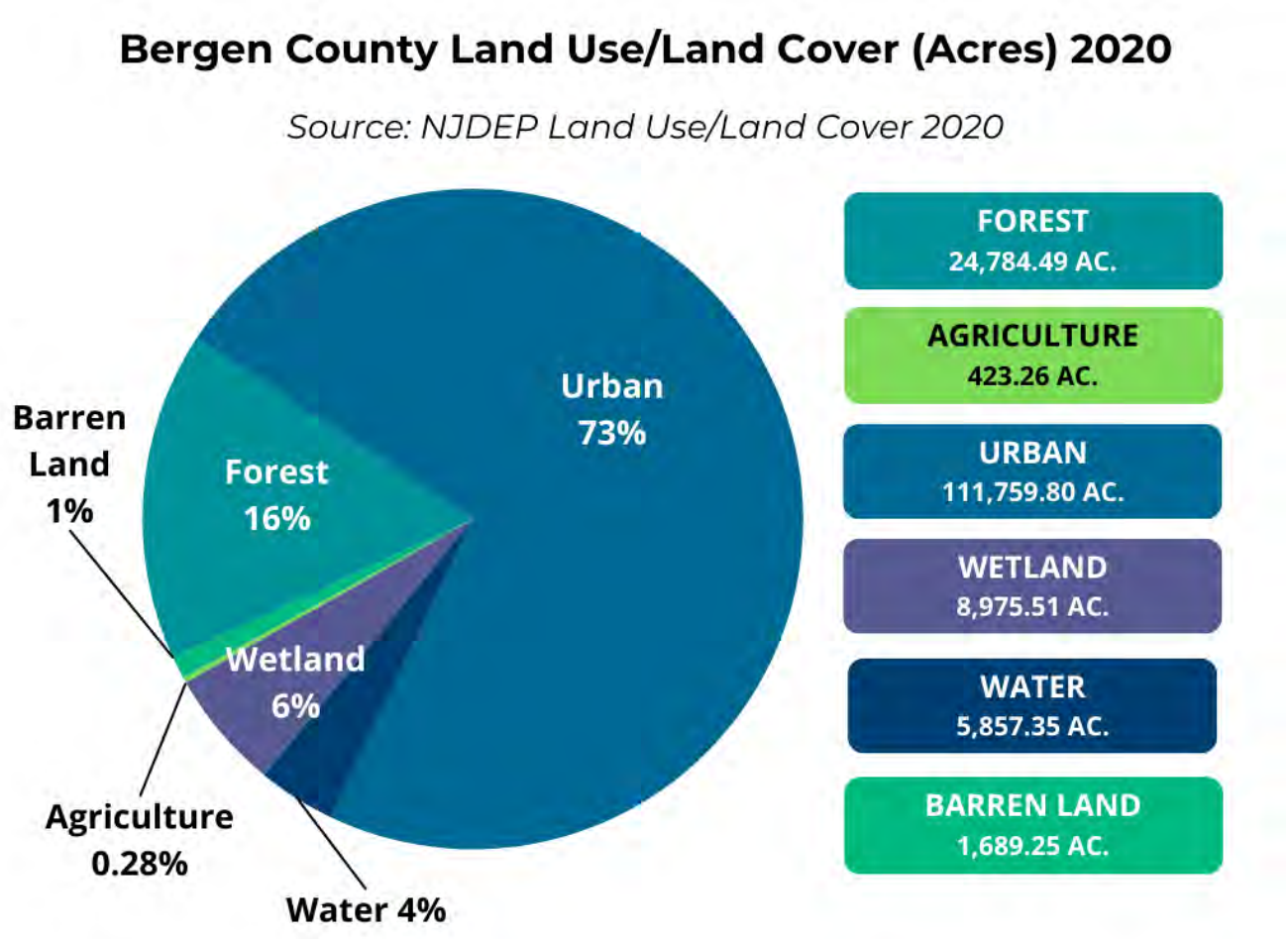


Figure I-2. Bergen County Land Use/Land Cover

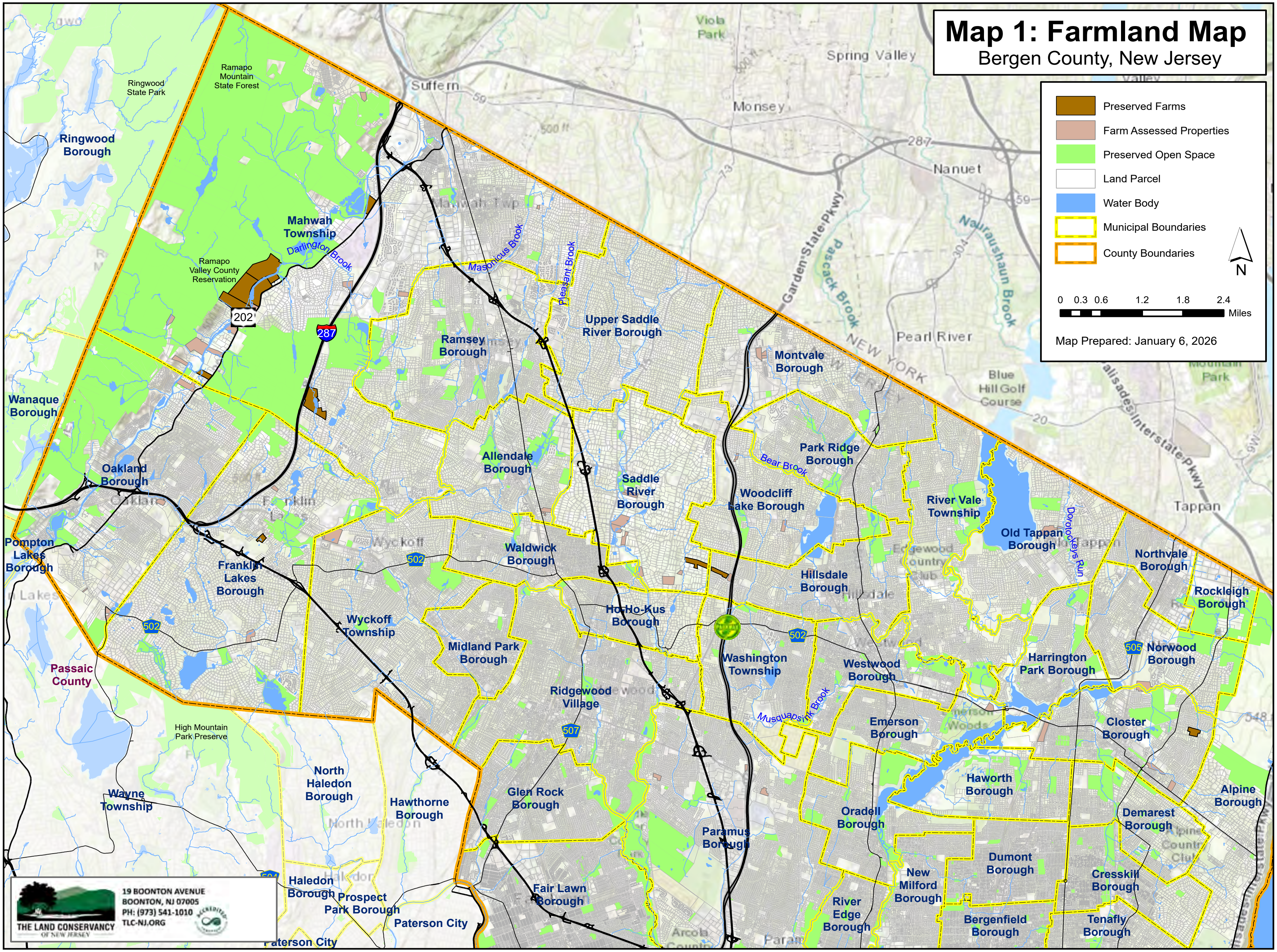
Land Use/Land Cover

Between 1992 and 2022, land in farms declined from 2,636 acres to 771 (**Figure I-1**). Agricultural lands constitute less than one percent of the County (**Figure I-2**). Most of Bergen County's agricultural lands are found in the northwest corner of the County (**Map 1**). According to the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) Land Use/Land Cover (LU/LC) data, agriculture accounted for 0.3% of its land use, or 423 acres (**Table I-1** and **Map 2**).[2] The most recent data shows that Bergen County is experiencing a continued increase in urban land cover and a corresponding decline in forest cover and agricultural land.

Table I-1. NJDEP Land Use/Land Cover

Category	1986	1995	2002	2007	2012	2015	2020
Forest	18%	17%	18%	17%	16%	16%	16%
Agriculture	**0.45%**	**0.31%**	**0.35%**	**0.30%**	**0.29%**	**0.29%**	**0.28%**
Urban	68%	69%	69%	72%	73%	73%	73%
Wetland	7%	7%	6%	6%	6%	6%	6%
Water	6%	6%	6%	4%	4%	4%	4%
Barren Land	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%

Source: NJDEP Land Use/Land Cover data


Map 1: Farmland Map
Bergen County, New Jersey
Preserved Farms
Farm Assessed Properties
Preserved Open Space
Land Parcel
Water Body
Municipal Boundaries
County Boundaries
N
0 0.3 0.6 1.2 1.8 2.4
Miles
Map Prepared: January 6, 2026
Ringwood State Park
Ramapo Mountain State Forest
Ringwood Borough
Mahwah Township
Ramapo Valley County Reservation
Darlington Brook
Masonicus Brook
Pleasant Brook
Upper Saddle River Borough
Ramsey Borough
Montvale Borough
Wanaque Borough
Allendale Borough
Park Ridge Borough
Bear Brook
Oakland Borough
Saddle River Borough
Woodcliff Lake Borough
River Vale Township
Old Tappan Borough
Dorotockeys Run
Northvale Borough
Pompton Lakes Borough
Franklin Lakes Borough
Waldwick Borough
Hillsdale Borough
Rockleigh Borough
Wyckoff Township
Ho-Ho-Kus Borough
Midland Park Borough
Washington Township
Westwood Borough
Harrington Park Borough
Norwood Borough
Passaic County
Ridgewood Village
Musquapsink Brook
Emerson Borough
Closter Borough
High Mountain Park Preserve
North Haledon Borough
Glen Rock Borough
Haworth Borough
Alpine Borough
Wayne Township
Hawthorne Borough
Oradell Borough
Paramus Borough
Demarest Borough
Dumont Borough
Cresskill Borough
Haledon Borough
Prospect Park Borough
Fair Lawn Borough
New Milford Borough
River Edge Borough
Bergenfield Borough
Tenafly Borough
Paterson City
Suffern
Monsey
Spring Valley
Nanuet
Pearl River
Tappan
Garden State Pkwy
Pascack Brook
Nauraushaun Brook
NEW YORK
NEW JERSEY
Palisades Interstate Pkwy
19 BOONTON AVENUE
BOONTON, NJ 07005
PH: (973) 541-1010
TLC-NJ.ORG
THE LAND CONSERVANCY OF NEW JERSEY

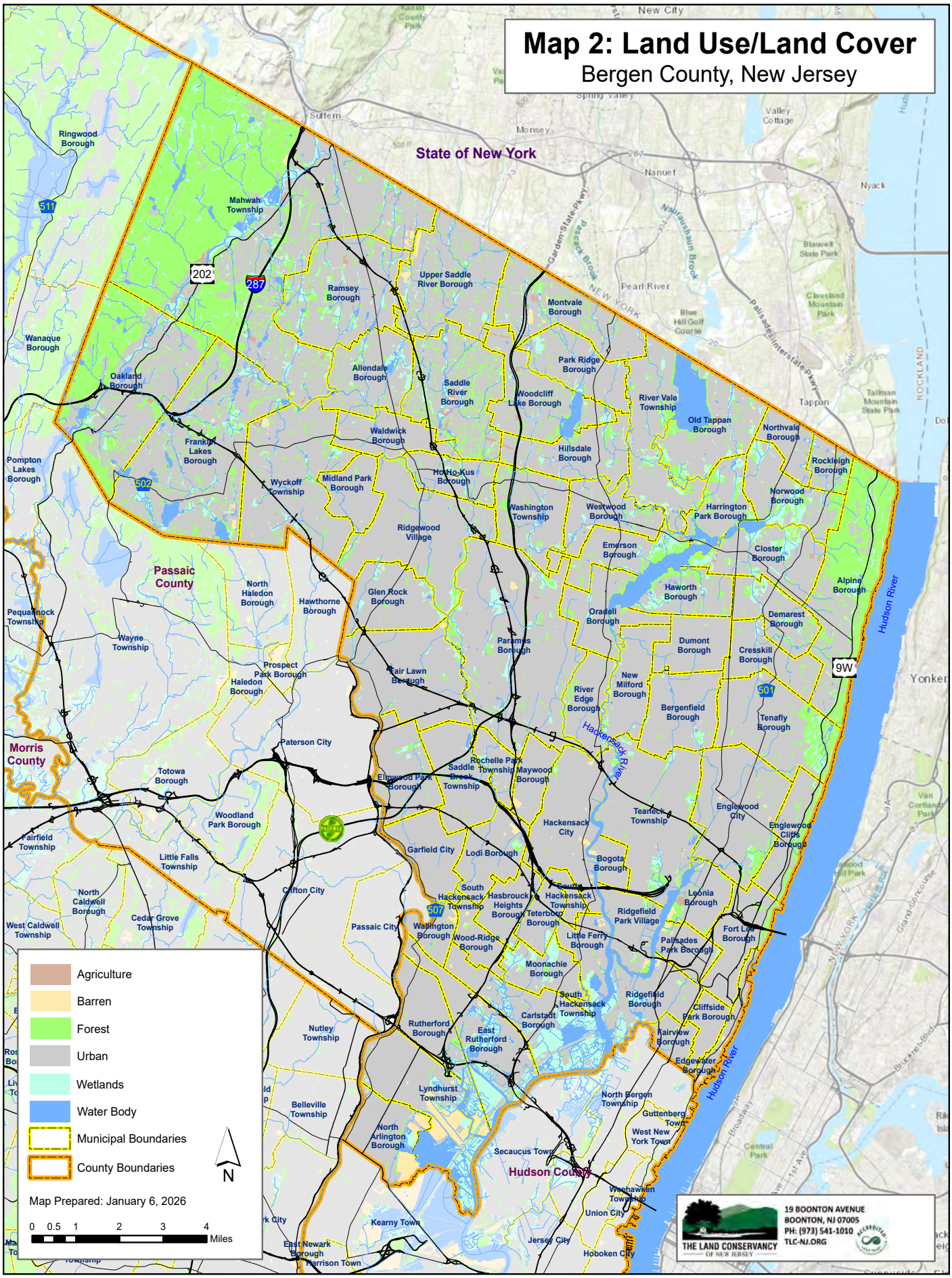

Map 2: Land Use/Land Cover
Bergen County, New Jersey
State of New York
Passaic County
Morris County
Hudson County
Hudson River
Agriculture
Barren
Forest
Urban
Wetlands
Water Body
Municipal Boundaries
County Boundaries
N
Map Prepared: January 6, 2026
0 0.5 1 2 3 4
Miles
THE LAND CONSERVANCY OF NEW JERSEY
19 BOONTON AVENUE
BOONTON, NJ 07005
PH: (973) 541-1010
TLC-NJ.ORG

Table I-2. Agricultural Soils and Land in Active Agriculture, Bergen County					
Soil Classification	**Acres**	**% of County**	**Acres in Active Agriculture**	**% of Soil Type in Active Agriculture**	**% of Acres in Active Agriculture**
Prime Farmland Soil	7,331	5%	129	2%	27%
Soils with Statewide Importance	7,687	5%	67	0.9%	14%
Soils with Unique Importance	3,735	2%	0.74	0.01%	0.15%
Other Soils	134,713	88%	281	0.002%	59%
Total	153,466	100%	478*	0.003%	100%

Source: NRCS Soil Data Access 2023; 2020 NJDEP Land Use/Land Cover data

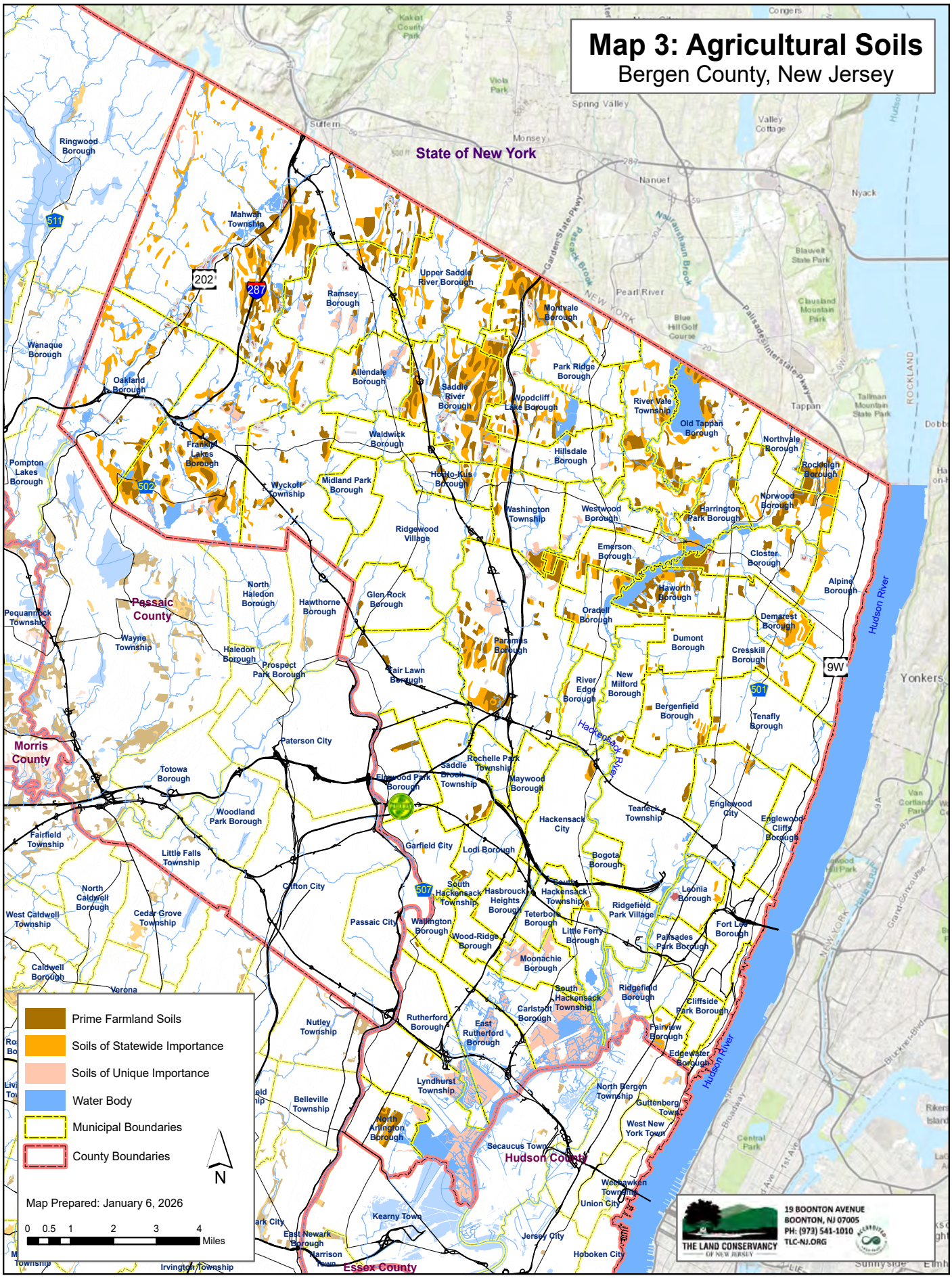
**Statistics may differ within this report due to the inclusion of agricultural wetlands as active agriculture in this chart.*

B. Soils

The combination of chemical composition, texture, depth to bedrock, organic material, drainage, and pH of the County's soils determines their suitability for agricultural production. Based on these features, the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) classifies soils as prime, of statewide importance, and unique, because they exhibit an exceptional capacity for supporting agricultural production:

- **Prime farmland soils** rest on land that has the best combination of physical and chemical characteristics for producing food, feed, forage, fiber and oilseed crops. They have the quality, growing season, and moisture supply to sustain high yields when managed according to acceptable farming methods. Prime soils are not heavily eroded or saturated for a long period of time, and they either do not flood frequently or are protected from flooding. In Bergen County, 7,331 acres (5% of the County) are classified as prime farmland soils (**Table I-2**).
- **Farmland soils of statewide importance** are nearly prime, producing high yields of crops when treated and managed according to acceptable farming methods, and some may produce yields that are as high as prime soils if conditions are favorable. 7,687 acres of soils of statewide importance are located in Bergen County (five percent).
- **Unique soils** exhibit specific qualities that may be favorable to the production of specialized crops, such as blueberries or cranberries. In Bergen, 3,735 acres are classified as unique soils (two percent).
- **Other soils** encompass all soil types that are not classified as prime, statewide important, unique, or locally important. The capacity of these soils for supporting agriculture should be assessed on a site-specific basis. This category also includes areas of water. This totals 88% of Bergen County.

Farmland soils cover 18,753 acres (12%) of Bergen County (**Table I-2, Figure I-3**, and **Map 3**).[3] Most are found on the northern border of Bergen County near New York


Map 3: Agricultural Soils
Bergen County, New Jersey
State of New York
Passaic County
Morris County
Hudson County
Essex County
Prime Farmland Soils
Soils of Statewide Importance
Soils of Unique Importance
Water Body
Municipal Boundaries
County Boundaries
N
Map Prepared: January 6, 2026
0 0.5 1 2 3 4
Miles
THE LAND CONSERVANCY OF NEW JERSEY
19 BOONTON AVENUE
BOONTON, NJ 07005
PH: (973) 541-1010
TLC-NJ.ORG

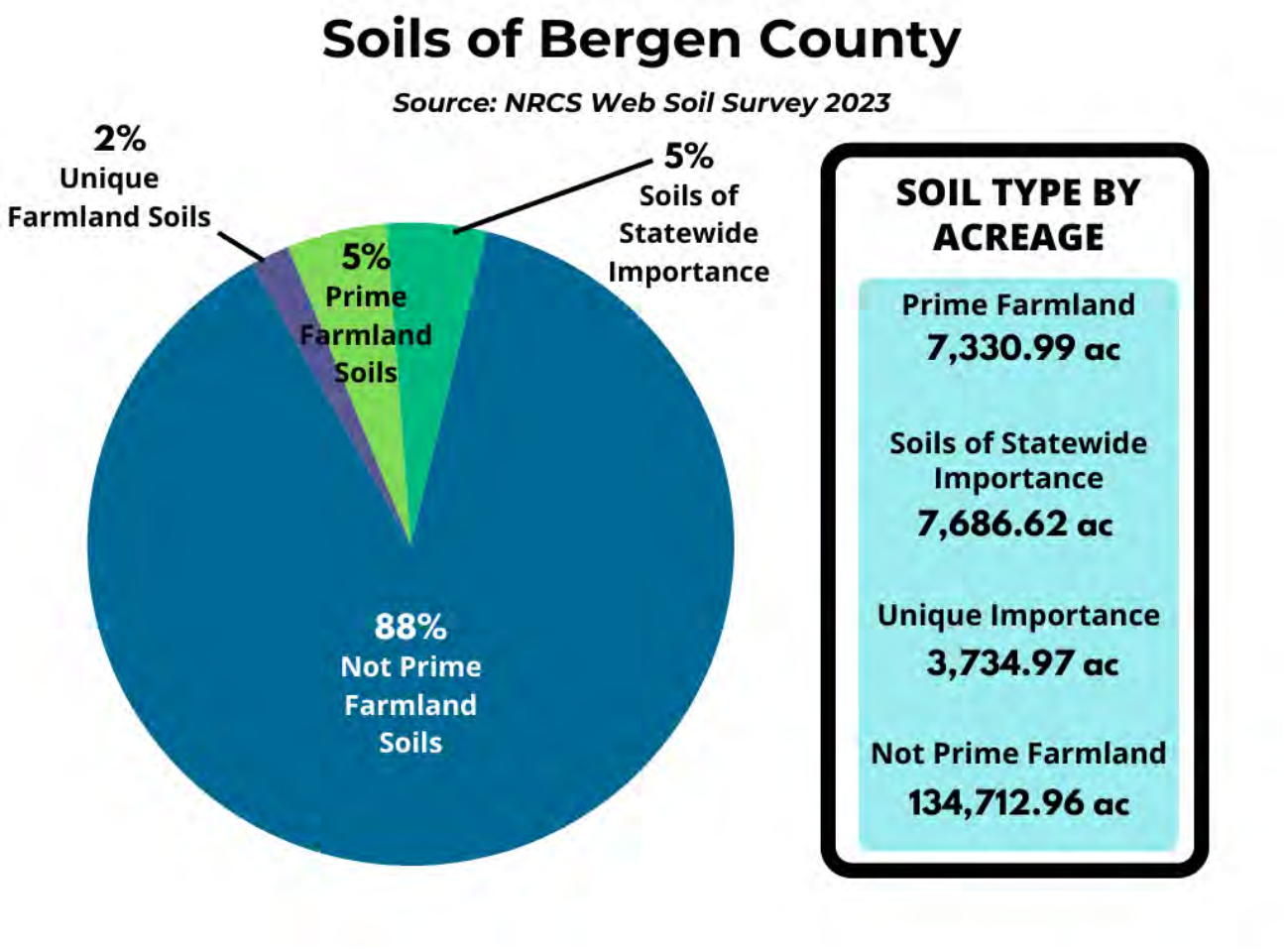


Figure I-3. Soils of Bergen County (2023)

and Sussex County. Some of the towns with higher concentrations of agricultural soils include Mahwah Township, Saddle River, Rockleigh, and Montvale Boroughs.

Also included in **Table I-2** is the acres of land in active agriculture. Two percent of land in active agriculture has prime farmland soils (129 acres). **Appendix B** includes a detailed listing of all soils in the County.

C. Irrigated Land & Water Sources

Irrigated land is defined by the Census of Agriculture as all land watered by any artificial or controlled means. Included are supplemental, partial, and pre-plant irrigation, as well as livestock lagoon waste water distributed by sprinkler or flood systems.[4]

Irrigation plays an important role in the agricultural industry of Bergen County. Some of the County's sandier soils are easily over-dried and require irrigation to maintain adequate growing conditions. Many of the County's staple crops, including vegetables, ornamentals, and fruit, need well-irrigated soils to develop. According to the NJ Farmland Assessment for 2019, the majority of irrigated acres were planted with vegetable, ornamental, or fruit crops in Allendale, Mahwah, Montvale, Old Tappan, Paramus, Ramsey, and Wyckoff Boroughs. There are no towns with field crops in irrigation since at least 1997. Fruit has stayed the same over the last 25 years. Irrigation for ornamental and

vegetables have both increased since 2000. (**Table I-3**).[5]

Since 1997, there has been a downward trend in the use of irrigation in Bergen County:

- The number of farms with lands in irrigation has decreased by 46%.
- Total acreage on farms with irrigation (including portions not irrigated) has decreased by 66%.
- The number of acres in irrigation has decreased by 65%.
- Irrigated farmland as a percentage of all county farmland and total acres irrigated were highest in 2007, at 17%, while the number of farms with irrigation continued to decline.
- In 2022, 27 farms irrigated 90 acres, 12% of all farmland (**Table I-4**).

Bergen County rests upon a number of highly productive aquifers. Unfortunately, many of these aquifers are experiencing increased development within their recharge areas. These are zones where surface waters filter into the aquifers, and there is risk of contamination. The aquifers are especially important during the dry season and development puts these aquifers at risk.

Table I-3. Irrigated Land (acres), Crop Type, Bergen County

	2000	2005	2010	2015	2019
Field Crops	0	0	0	0	0
Fruit	2	2	10	0	2
Ornamental	16	17	13	23	35
Vegetables	0	8	9	0	26
Total	18	27	32	23	63

Source: Farmland Assessment

According to the United States Geological Survey (USGS), there are two principal aquifers within New Jersey, Coastal Plain aquifers and Non-Coastal Plain aquifers.[6] Bergen County falls into the Non-Coastal Plain aquifer zone. Within this zone, there are several smaller aquifers. **Figure I-4** shows the aquifers across the state.

Bergen has aquifers predominantly within the Newark Group. These aquifers are in the Piedmont physiographic province, and they consist of shale and sandstone. Water is usually found in weathered joint and fracture systems in the first 200 or 300 feet. Below 500 feet, fractures are typically fewer and smaller, and water availability is reduced. The shale and sandstone of

Table I-4. Bergen County Farms with Land in Irrigation

	1997	2002	2007	2012	2017	2022	% Change 1997-2022
# of Farms	50	43	50	27	31	27	-46%
Land in Irrigated Farms	1,048	332	491	324	296	352	-66%
Harvested	(D)	(D)	173	94	(D)	80	-
Pasture/Other	(D)	(D)	123	0	(D)	10	-
Total Acres Irrigated	260	170	196	94	110	90	-65%
Percent of Total Farmland	10%	13%	17%	7%	10%	12%	

Source: Census of Agriculture

Note: The abbreviation of 'D' indicates data not disclosed by individual farms.

the Newark Group are among the most productive aquifers and yield as much as 1,500 gallons per minute (gpm).

The second category of aquifers in Bergen County is the Highlands crystalline units. These cover a small portion of the County and extend into Passaic County to the northwest. Within these aquifers, water is available in weathered and fractured zones, usually within 300 feet of the land surface. Except for carbonates, yields from other consolidated sedimentary rocks (poorly fractured sandstones and shales) and crystalline rocks are limited by the degree of weathering and do not exceed more than a few hundred gpm.

D. Farmland Trends and Statistics

According to the 2022 Census of Agriculture, in Bergen County:

- 73 farms average 11 acres in size, which is lower than the state average of 71 acres.
- The median farm in Bergen County is 5 acres, indicating that most of the County's farm units are much smaller than the average 11 acres.
- The majority of farms are between one and 50 acres, which has been a trend in the County since at least 1992. Since 2012, the total number of farms has been steadily increasing, with the same distribution of farm sizes (**Figure I-5**).

According to the 2023 Farmland Tax Assessment data, there are 924 acres of farm-assessed land in the County. Of this:

- 298 acres (32%) are harvested cropland.

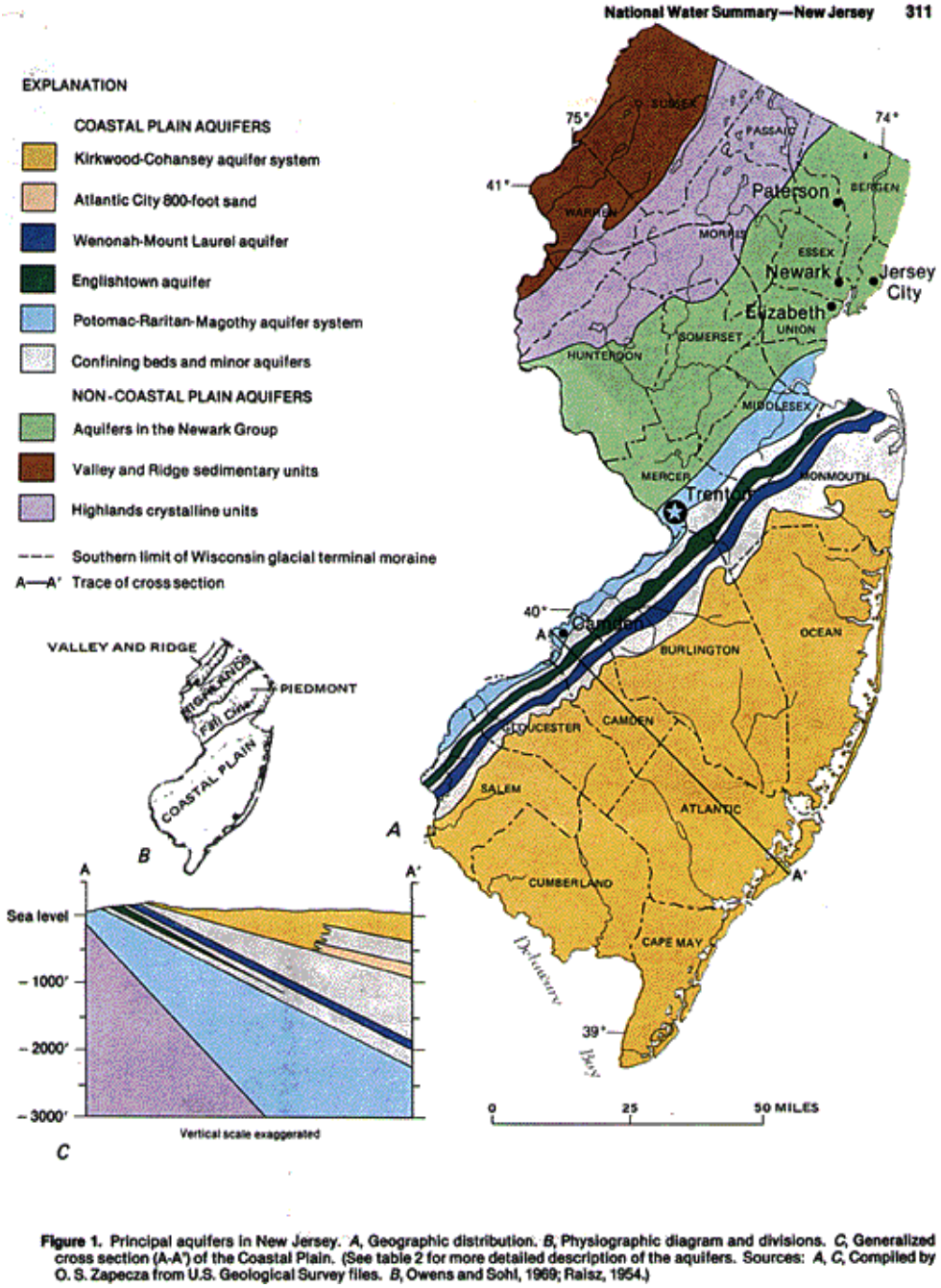


Figure 1. Principal aquifers in New Jersey. *A*, Geographic distribution. *B*, Physiographic diagram and divisions. *C*, Generalized cross section (A-A') of the Coastal Plain. (See table 2 for more detailed description of the aquifers. Sources: *A*, *C*, Compiled by O. S. Zapecza from U.S. Geological Survey files. *B*, Owens and Sohl, 1969; Raisz, 1954.)

Figure I-4. New Jersey Aquifers (USGS)

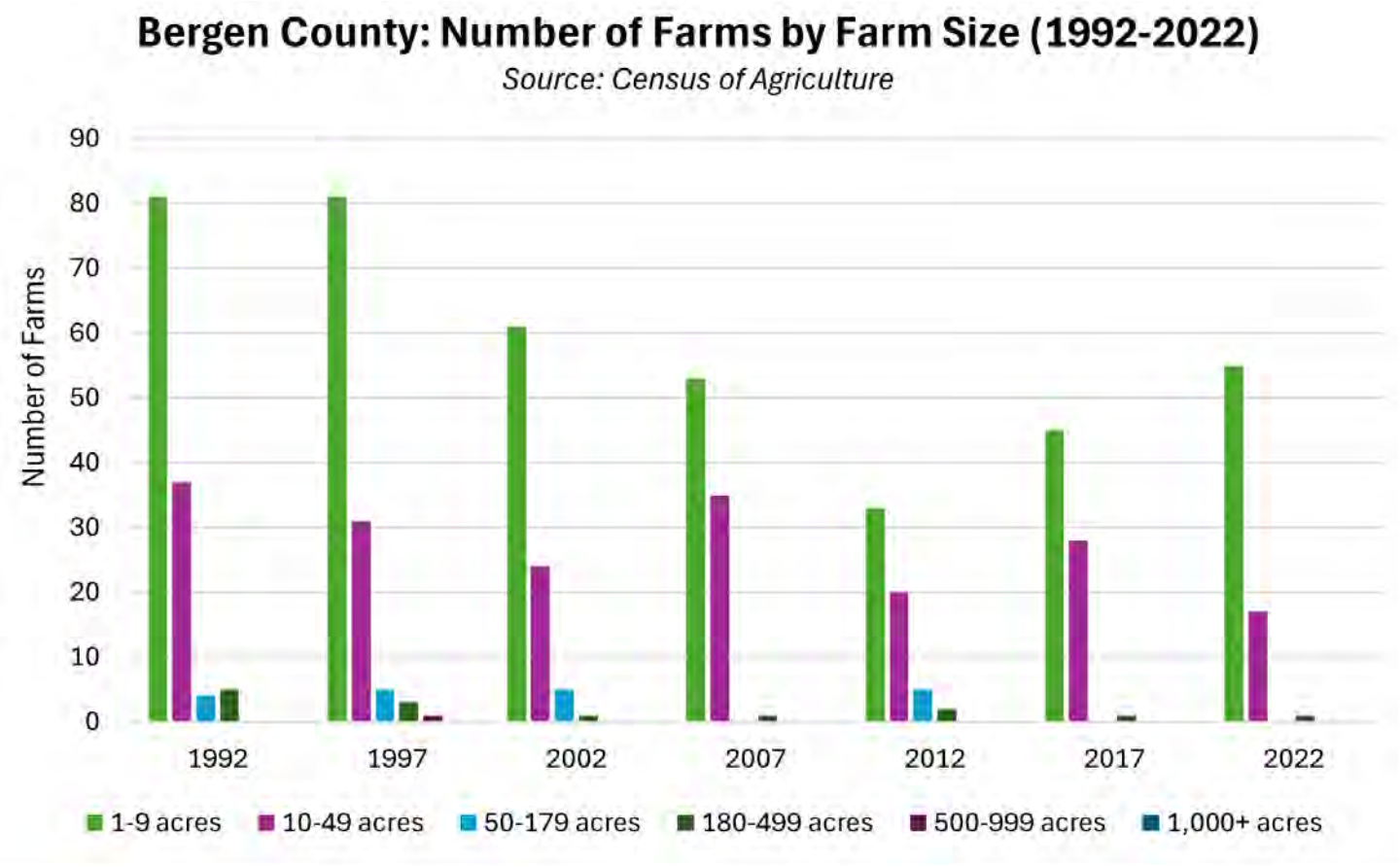


Figure I-5. Bergen County Farms by Size

- 43 acres (five percent) are cropland pasture.
- 148 acres (16%) are permanent pasture.
- 435 acres (47%) are woodland/or wetlands (**Figure I-6**).

The loss of farm acreage in Bergen County has been seen across all categories. The total amount of farm-assessed land has declined 25% from 2000, when it totaled 967 acres:

- Harvested cropland decreased 39%.
- Pastured cropland decreased 40%.
- Permanent pasture decreased 22%.
- Woodland/wetland increased by 112%.

In Bergen, the only category of farmland to increase in acreage between 2000 and 2023 was woodland/wetland. This increase in woodland may be due to cropland left fallow for extended periods, which undergoes ecological succession into forested land.

Land in active agriculture is defined by the NJ Farmland Tax Assessment as cropland harvested, cropland pasture, and permanent pasture. The total land in active agriculture in the County is 489 acres. Active agriculture includes the following NJDEP LU/LC types:

- Agricultural wetlands.
- Cropland and pastureland.
- Former agricultural wetland.
- Orchards/ vineyards/ nurseries.
- Other agriculture.

The active agricultural area declined less than overall farm-assessed acreage, with a 35% decrease for Bergen County. The largest loss was found in cropland pastured with a 40% decrease (**Table I-5**).

The Farmland Tax Assessment report for 2023 breaks down the acreage of active agriculture by municipality. There are fifteen municipalities with farm-assessed land in Bergen County out of the 70 existing municipalities. Mahwah Township has the most land in active agriculture with 213 acres (**Table I-6**).

The increasing costs of farming and farmland in the state and the County may compel the remaining farmers to sell their land to some of the larger farms, as well as developers. As farmers retire, current small operations struggle to purchase non-preserved farmland as the economic pressure from other industries may be too high.

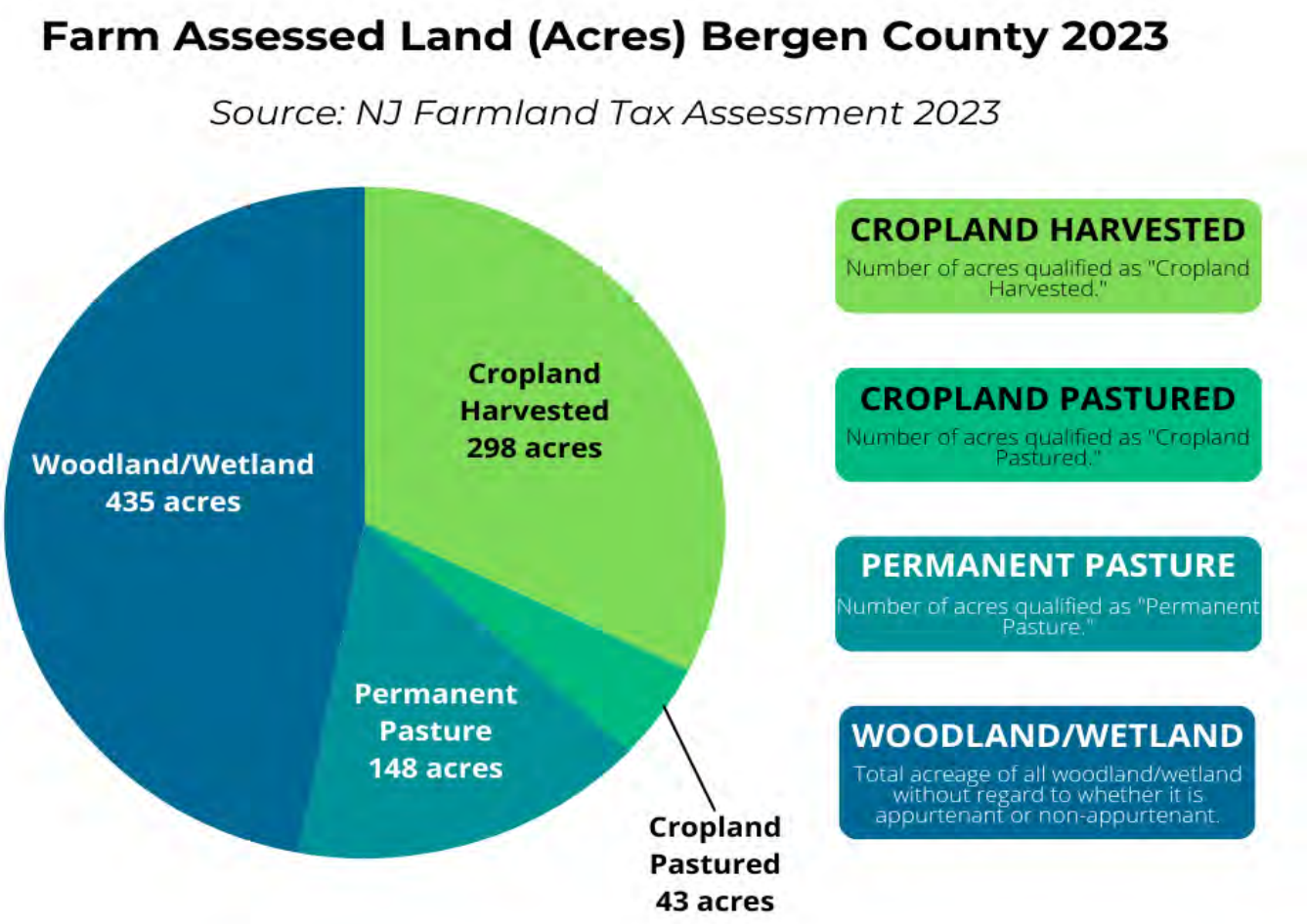


Figure I-6. Farm Assessed Land, Bergen County

Table I-5. Active Agriculture: Bergen County (2000-2023) (acres)				
Year	**Cropland Harvested**	**Cropland Pastured**	**Permanent Pasture**	**Total Active Agriculture**
2000	487	72	189	748
2005	337	12	164	513
2010	367	35	190	592
2015	247	11	143	401
2019	287	35	166	488
2023	298	43	148	489
% Change	-39%	-40%	-22%	-35%
Source: NJ Farmland Assessments[7]				

Table I-6. Acres of Active Agriculture by Municipality (Bergen County)		
Municipality	**Acres of Active Agriculture**	**Acres in Taxing District**
Allendale Borough	7	1,792
Closter Borough	40	2,029
Emerson Borough	5	1,504
Franklin Lakes Borough	12	6,016
Hillsdale Borough	15	1,856
Mahwah Township	213	16,064
Montvale Borough	10	2,560
Norwood Borough	10	1,856
Oakland Borough	36	5,824
Old Tappan Borough	20	2,496
Paramus Borough	16	6,528
Rockleigh Borough	16	640
Saddle River Borough	56	3,136
Woodcliff Lake Borough	12	2,400
Wyckoff Township	20	4,806
Total	**489**	**150,452***
Source: NJ Farmland Tax Assessments 2023		

Literature Cited

Chapter 1

1 Bergen County Department of Planning and Economic Development. Bergen County Farmland Preservation Plan. (2014). Accessed November 2024.

2 NJDEP Bureau of GIS. Land Use/Land Cover of New Jersey (2020). Retrieved from https://gisdata-njdep.opendata.arcgis.com/datasets/njdep::land-use-land-cover-of-new-jersey-2020/about Accessed November 2024.

3 USDA, Soil taxonomy. Natural Resources Conservation Service. Accessed November 2024, from https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/resources/guides-and-instructions/soil-taxonomy.

4 Census of Agriculture, Appendix B: General Explanation and Census of Agriculture Report Form, https://www.nass.usda.gov/Publications/AgCensus/2022/Full_Report/Volume_1,_Chapter_2_County_Level/New_Jersey/njappxb.pdf Accessed October 2024.

5 State of New Jersey Farmland Assessment. (rep.). Data From FA-1 Forms For 2023 Tax Year (Vol. Fifty-eight report). https://www.nj.gov/treasury/taxation/pdf/lpt/2023farmland.pdf Accessed November 2024.

6 USGS, Major aquifers in New Jersey. (1984) https://www.usgs.gov/centers/new-jersey-water-science-center/major-aquifers-new-jersey Accessed, November 2024.

7 New Jersey Department of Agriculture, State Agriculture Development Committee. New Jersey Farmland Assessment. Gloucester County Summaries for 2000, 2005, 2010, 2015, 2019, and 2023.

Fresh Fancy Farms, Borough of New Milford
Source: Fresh Fancy Farms

Chapter II.

Agricultural Industry

The Census of Agriculture reports on the market value of agricultural sales. Statewide, Bergen County ranks eighth in average sales per farm by county (**Figure 11-1**). Agriculture accounted for more than $10.6 million in sales during 2022. This compares to:

- $5.1 million in 2012.
- $8.6 million in 2007.[1]

With a 46% decrease in the amount (acres) of farmland in Bergen County between 2012 and 2022, the jump in sales (a 104% increase) indicates the viability and profitability of farming in Bergen County. Statewide, farmland declined by 0.5%, while sales rose by 48%. From 2012-2022 only grains saw a major decrease in sales.[2]

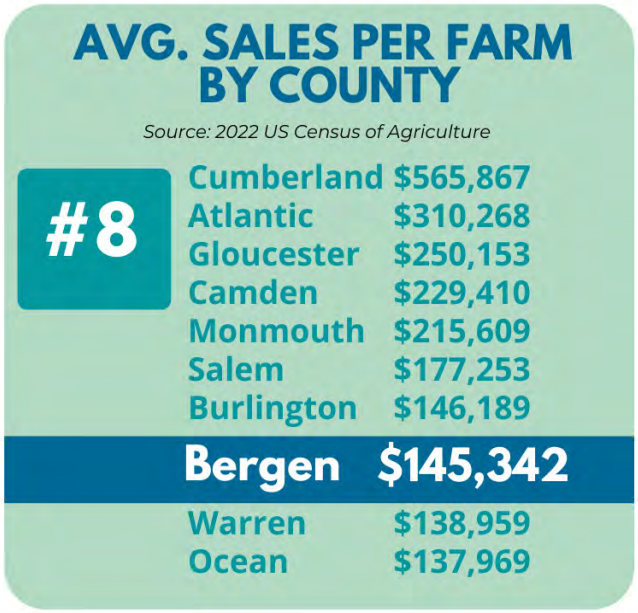


Figure II-1. Average Sales Per Farm by County

The agricultural industry in Bergen County has been able to effectively diversify its activities in response to changing market conditions, including thriving agritourism operations. Farms provide indirect support to the local economy as well. They offer seasonal employment opportunities for young residents and temporary workers who, in turn, patronize local stores and businesses.

In 2023, the NJ Legislature passed a Special Occasions Event Bill that allows farmers to hold events on their farms. With the importance of agritourism to Bergen County, farmers can take advantage of the new opportunity for events at their farm.

Additionally, farms generate a positive cash flow to the Bergen County economy by selling their products to buyers based outside the County. Farmers spend the revenue earned from these sales locally, which supports the County's economy. Retailers, wholesalers, and tourists from the greater New York City region produce a large demand for locally grown farm goods. This market will help sustain agriculture in Bergen County. However, many of Bergen County's farmers are facing the challenge of rising prices, increased transportation costs, broker fees, and higher wages at all levels.

This rise in prices may ensure that the agricultural industry may turn to small-scale, urban farms. The creation of local, small urban farm operations, community gardens and co-ops may become the standard for Bergen County as population density continues to grow and competition for the remaining land increases.

Statistical Resources

Agricultural production and market value trends were calculated using data from the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) National Agriculture Statistics Service (NASS), including the census that is undertaken every five years. The 2022 Census was released in February 2024. The agricultural yields for many products have been tabulated annually since 1953, while the yields of other products have been recorded in more recent years. Historical pricing information for some of these products is also available. These historical trends are supplemented by weather and production information from the annual reports of the NJ Department of Agriculture (NJDA).[3] NJ Farmland Assessment data, which quantifies the land area devoted to agricultural uses and products by county and municipality, is also referenced in sections of this document.

A. Trends in Market Value of Agricultural Products Sold

Due to the scarcity of land for farming, Bergen County's farms are small. The County relies upon its staple nursery and vegetable crops, but also produces harvests of other crops such as fruit. These products can generally be grown on less land, unlike grains or hay, which the County has very little of.

Farm Units

The 2022 Census of Agriculture reports:

- 73 farm units in Bergen County, up from 60 in 2012 and down from 74 in 2017.
- These farms decreased in average size between 1997 and 2007 (**Figure II-2).**
- Farm size increased in 2012 and dropped in 2017 and 2022.
- 46 farms, or 63% of the farms in Bergen County, produce less than $10,000 in agricultural products each year.

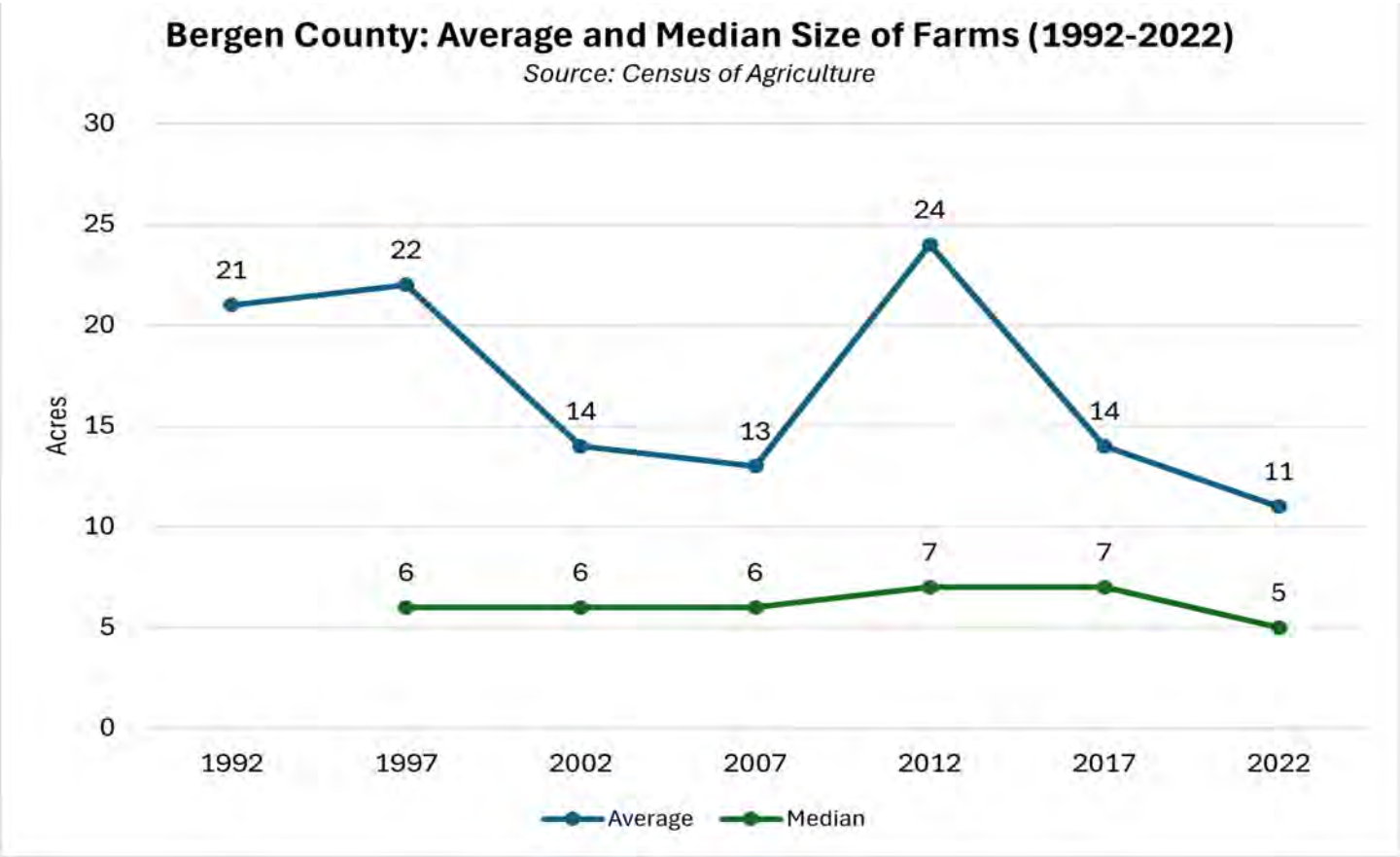


Figure II-2. Average and Median Size of Farms (1992-2022)

- These farms together account for over one percent of the total agriculture sales in the County in 2022 (**Figure II-3**).
- Comparatively few, 13, (18%) high-earning farms sell more than $100,000 worth of goods annually.

Labor is seen as the highest input cost for fruit, vegetable, nursery, and greenhouse farmers. Energy is the other main input cost and has stifled farm incomes. Development pressure and lack of farming interest can also contribute.

Record high land values during the early 2000s prompted many farmers to subdivide and sell portions of their properties while continuing to farm on their remaining lands. Today, the majority of the County's farms are small (median size 5 acres).

Agricultural Sales

The Census of Agriculture separates agricultural activities into two categories:

- Crops, including nursery and greenhouse, and
- Livestock, poultry, and their products.

Bergen County sales of crops have varied:

- $6.1 million in 1992.
- $8.8 million in 1997.
- Sales dropped in 2002 to $7.3 million due to drought conditions that year.
- Rose to $8.3 million in 2007.
- Fell to $5 million in 2012.
- Continued to fall in 2017, to $4.9 million.
- Crop sales rose to $10.3 million in 2022.

Crop sales accounted for 97% of the County's total agricultural sales, which is higher than the state average of 91%.

Sales from livestock, poultry, and their products for the same period yielded:

- $477,000 in 1992.
- $290,000 in 2022. (**Figure II-4**).

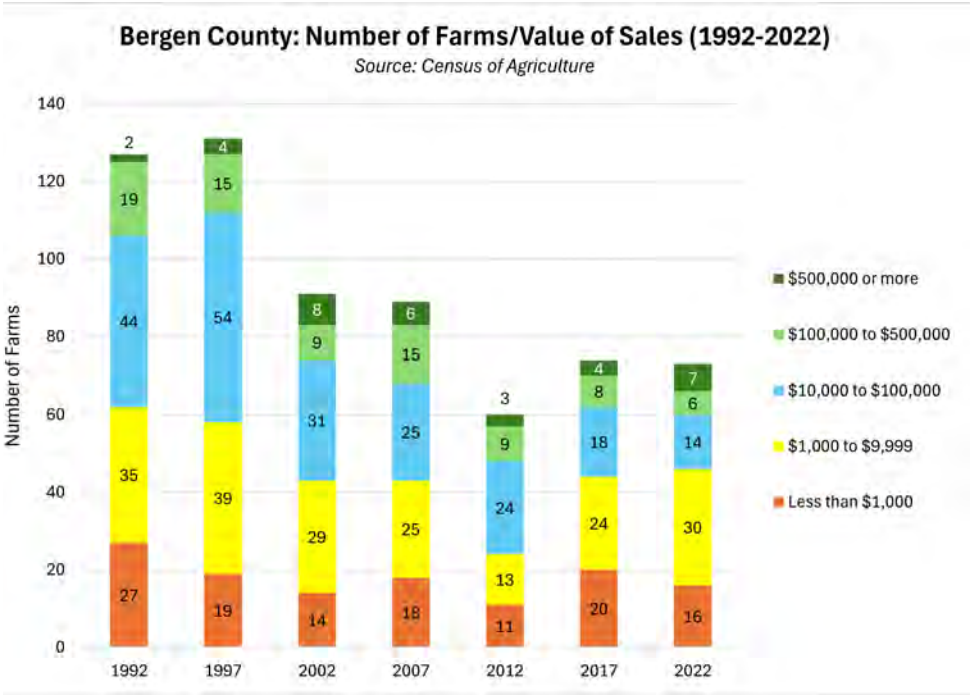


Figure II-3. Number of Farms/Value of Sales (1992-2022)

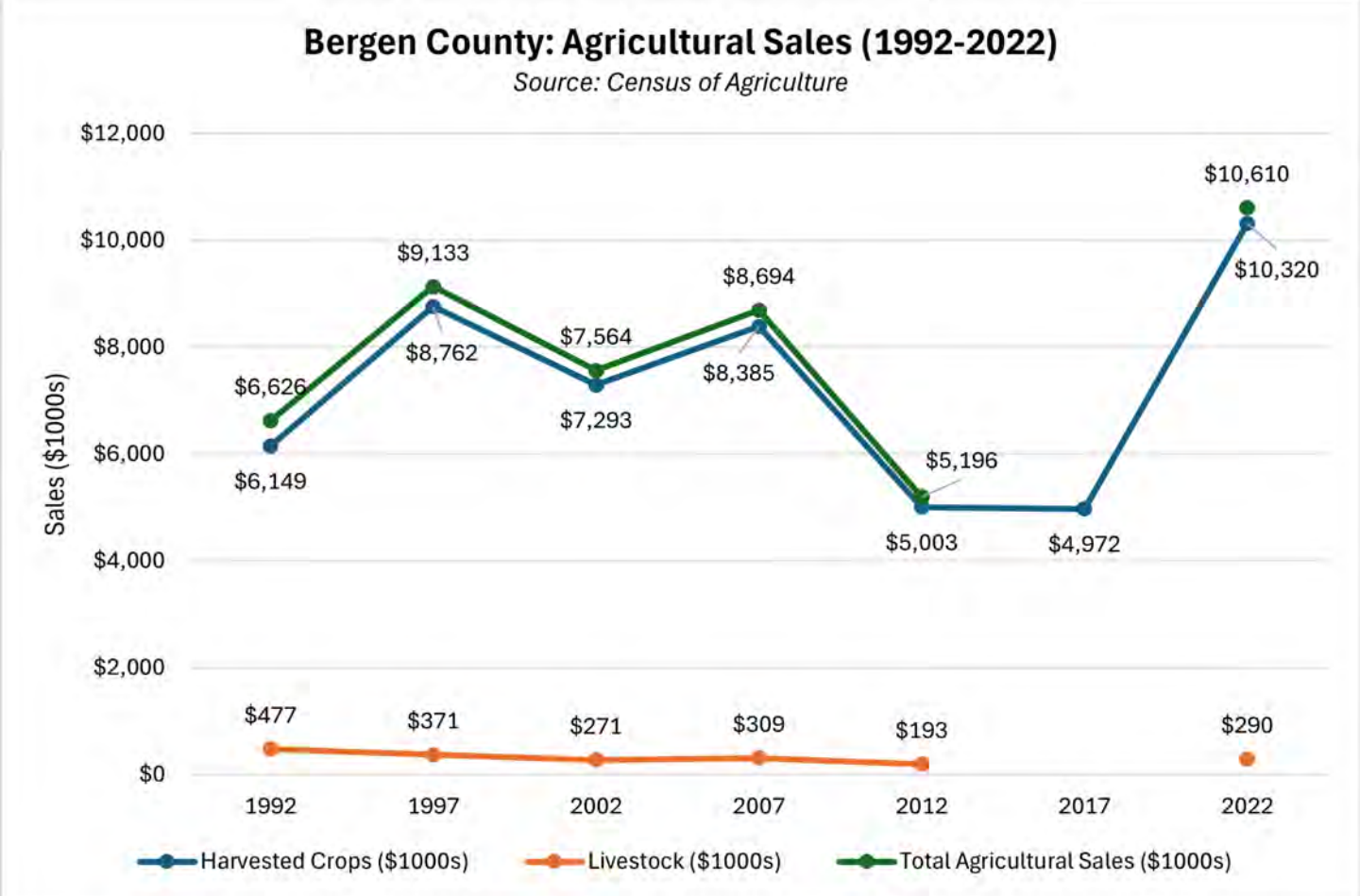


Figure II-4. Agricultural Sales (1992-2022)

B. Crop Sales and Production Trends

The Census of Agriculture divides crops into several general commodity categories:

- Vegetables.
- Nursery/Greenhouse.
- Fruits, Nuts and Berries.
- Grains, Oilseeds, Dry Beans, & Peas.
- Hay & Other Crops.
- Cut Christmas Trees & Short-Rotation Woody Crops.

Reported crop sales by categories are shown in **Figure II-5** and **Figure II-6**. **Figure II-5** displays sales trends in nearly all categories over the past 30 years. Sales records for short-rotation woody shrubs were not recorded until 2002, but have not been reported in Bergen County. Nursery/greenhouse crops have seen a 46% increase since 1992.

The highest increase in sales was for fruits and nuts with total sales rising dramatically since 1997. **Figure II-6** shows the percent breakdown of crop commodities within the County for total agricultural products in 2022:

- 72% of all crop sales is nursery and greenhouse crops.
- 25% is fruits and nuts.
- Three percent of all agricultural sales is livestock and poultry.

Vegetables

Vegetable sales are less than three percent of the County's total harvested crop sales. This is much lower than the statewide average of 22% of crop sales and 20% of all agricultural sales:

- In 2017, vegetable sales were $267,000 and took up five percent of the County's sales that year.
- Sales in 2012 were $652,000 and held 13% of the County's harvested crop sales.
- Vegetables made up seven percent of all harvested cropland across the County in 2022.

About 20 types of vegetables, herbs, melons, and potatoes were harvested from 13 acres in 2022, down from 44 acres in 2017. Vegetable acreage has been consistently declining since 1992. The full breakdown can be seen in **Table II-1**.

Bell peppers were the most common vegetables in Bergen County, grown on six farms and taking up two acres. Other vegetables grown in Bergen County include tomatoes (six farms), parsley and radishes (four farms), green onions, herbs, spinach and peas (three farms). One farm harvested vegetables for processing, and six farms harvested for market.

Vegetables require comparatively higher input costs, which reduce their net value. Economy-of-scale production

Table II-1. Vegetables

Census Year	1992	1997	2002	2007	2012	2017	2022
Number of Farms	28	28	19	20	10	14	6
Total Acreage	229	243	161	136	71	44	13
Sales ($1000's)	$600	$691	$831	D	$652	$267	D

Source: Census of Agriculture
D: Not Disclosed

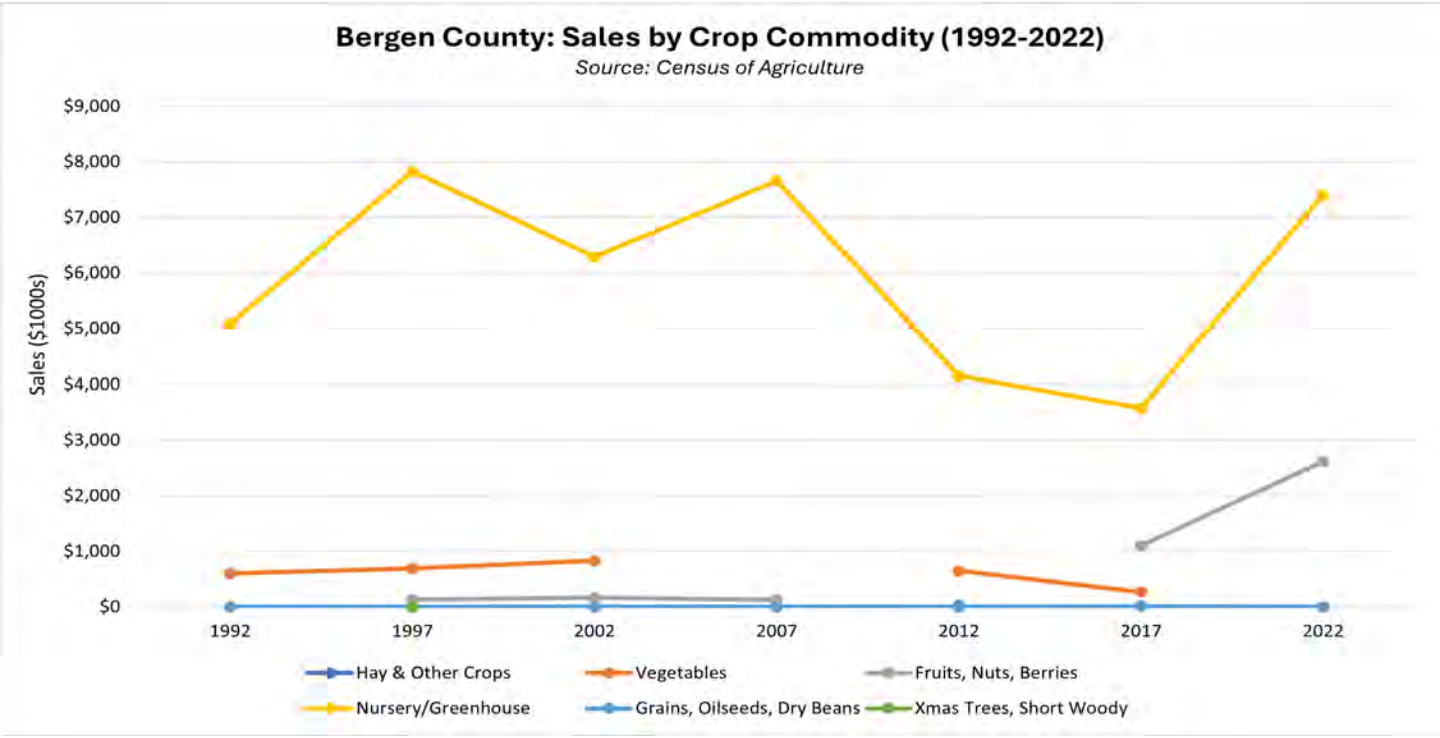


Figure II-5. Sales by Crop Commodity (1992-2022)

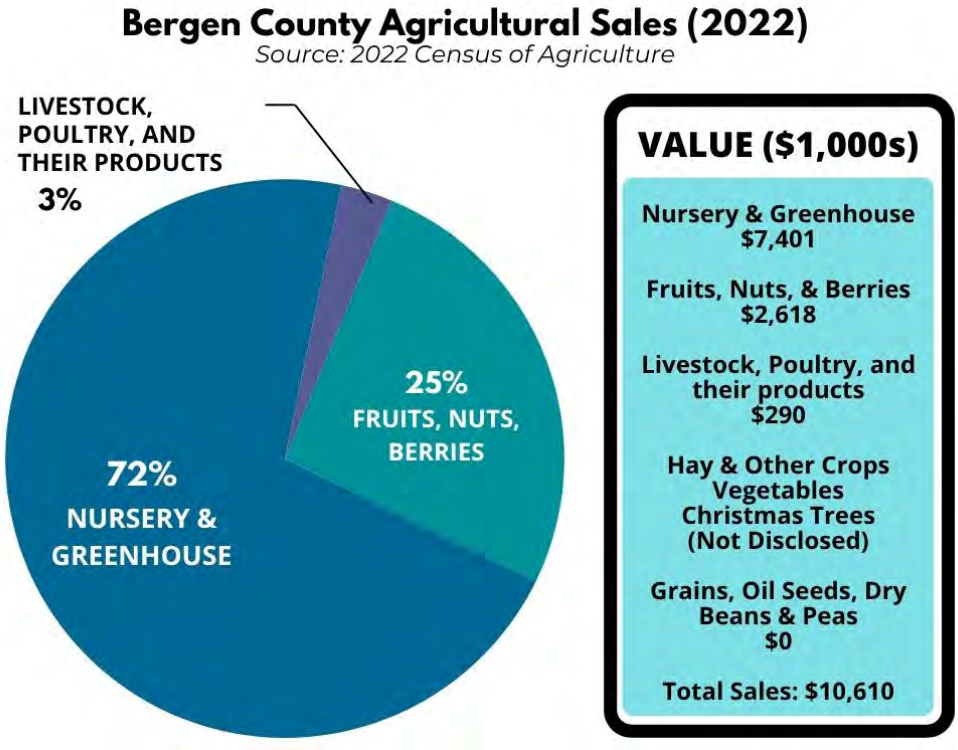


Figure II-6. Bergen County Agricultural Sales (2022)

infrastructures, such as irrigation systems, are best able to maximize the net sales revenue that farms take in from producing and selling vegetable products. These costly, high-capital production methods are affordable primarily to larger agricultural operations, and therefore the larger operations are the most common producers of these high-intensity products. Vegetable producers within the County are also hurting financially due to competition from imports, mainly from South America. In Bergen, vegetables are a hard crop commodity to maintain where most operations are at a smaller scale.

Nursery/Greenhouse

The nursery, greenhouse, floriculture, and sod sub-sector – which encompasses flowers, flower seeds, landscaping plants, trees/shrubs, and other products – was by far Bergen County's most important crop commodity. It was the highest-grossing crop category in 2022. Sales of these products totaled $7.4 million, up 78% from 2012 and 46% from 1992. The nursery sector accounted for 72% of the County's crop sales and 70% of its overall agricultural sales (**Figure II-5** and **Figure II-6**). The market share of Bergen County agricultural sales comprising nursery and greenhouse products is much higher than the 49% for New Jersey as a whole. In 2022, in Bergen County, this sector was:

- Second to all other categories in sales per farm, with an average of $370,050 versus $374,000 for fruit, tree nuts, and berries.
- Overall average per farm of $145,342.
- Accounts for 15% of county cropland.

Nursery/greenhouse farms take in almost three times the County average in sales earnings and require comparatively little land to do so (**Figure II-7**).

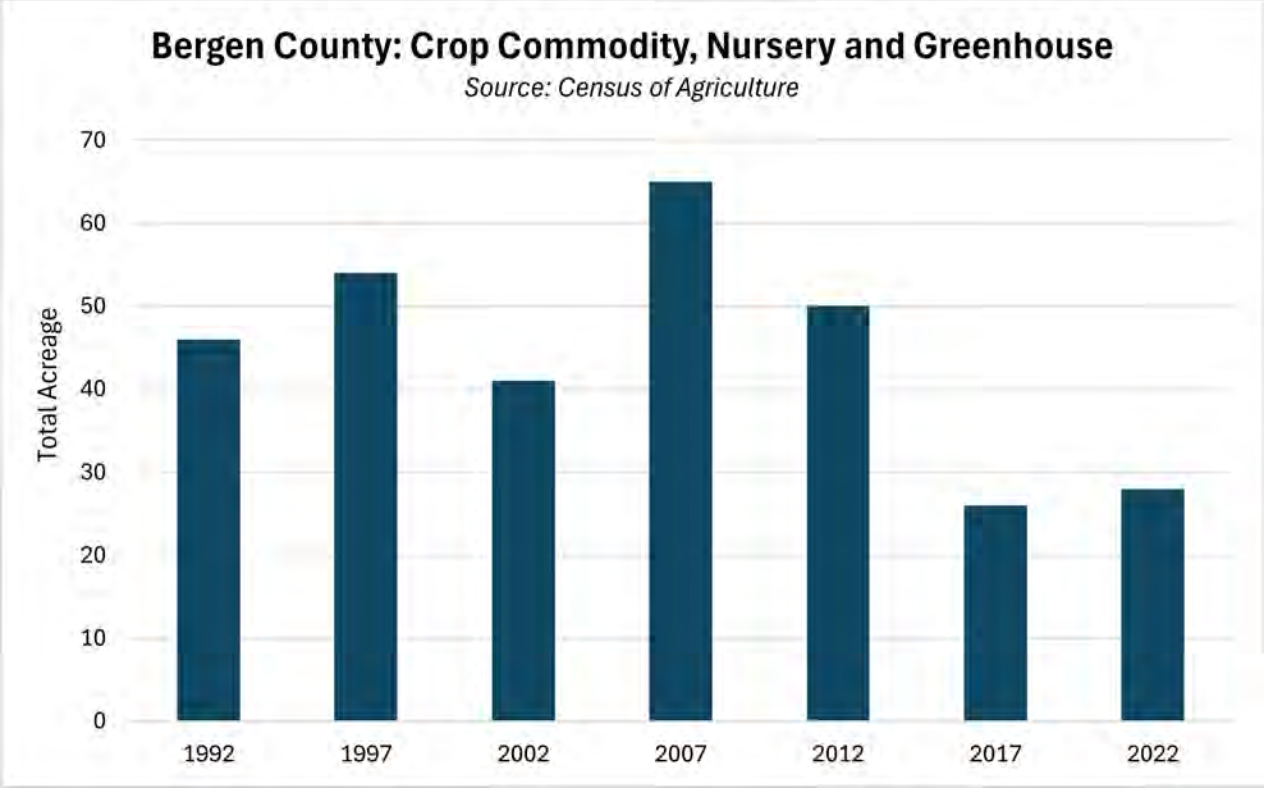


Table II-2. Nursery and Greenhouse Acreage (1992-2022)

- Nursery/greenhouse land takes up 405,959 square feet under cover (9.3 acres) and 19 acres in the open, for a total of 28 acres.
- Production of Nursery/ greenhouse crops peaked in 2007 and has since declined. However, they are on the rise again in 2022.
- Bedding/garden plants were by far the largest category of plants grown under cover, occupying nine acres in the open and grown on 17 of 18 farms with nursery/greenhouse crops.
- Cut flowers and florist greens were harvested by two farms in the County.
- Two farms grew vegetables and/or herbs.

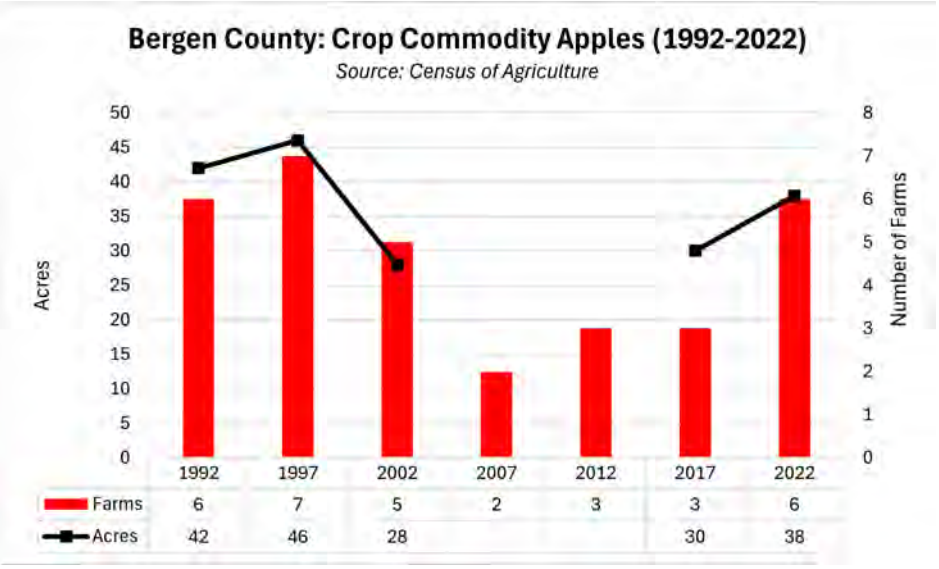


Figure II-7. Crop Commodity Apples (1992-2022)

Nursery, greenhouse, and sod goods have higher market values than most other agricultural goods but also require comparatively higher input costs. Nursery stock, such as trees and shrubs, requires costly chemical inputs, such as fertilizers and pesticides, as well as enough labor capacity to maintain and package them for sale. Economy-of-scale production methods, which are mostly utilized by large-scale operations, capture the highest profit margins among producers of greenhouse/nursery goods. However, based on the population density and development of Bergen County, it is likely that this commodity will continue to lead the County in terms of sales and growth.

Fruits, Tree Nuts & Berries

Fruits, nuts, and berries sales totaled $2.6 million in 2022. This was up 137% from 2017 as the sales totaled $1.1 million:

- Since 1997, sales of fruits, nuts, and berries are up 1,854% from $134,000.
- In 2022, there were seven operations with fruit, tree nut, and/or berry sales, versus five in 2017 and six in 2012.

The share of agricultural sales that come from fruit has increased since 1997. At that time, fruit accounted for 1.5% of the County's crop sales compared to 22% in 2017 and 25% in 2022. Total acreage for this sector is not disclosed for confidentiality purposes.

Apples

Apples – the County's most important fruit product – have experienced a slight downward trend since 1992 (**Figure II-8**). 2007 and 2012's acreage is not disclosed. This trend has been observed across New Jersey and is attributable largely to stiffening competition from growers outside the state. Acreage devoted to apple production totaled 38 in 2022 down from 42 in 1992; operations have remained

steady over the last 30 years. Apples make up 20% of the total harvested acres in Bergen County.

Peaches

Peaches are the second strongest contributor to the fruit industry in Bergen County:

- In 2017, there were 18 acres attributed to peach production.
- This is down from 79 acres in 1992.
- In 2002 peaches totaled 30 acres.
- The number of operations decreased from seven in 2002 to four in 2022.
- Peach production has been fluctuating since 1992 with its peak in farm usage in 2002, and its peak in acreage in 1992. (**Figure II-9**).

Tree fruit has been on the decline due to low prices, competition from imports and other U.S. regions, and a high cost of inputs. Like vegetables and nursery products, fruit crops require significant investments to maximize profitability. Regular applications of pesticides are particularly important for growing peaches and apples, and agricultural labor is usually required for harvesting, packaging, and selling. These make this fruit more suitable for larger farms. However, fruit is also a popular product among smaller operations that support agritourism facilities, such as pick-your-owns and roadside farm markets, which is an important part of Bergen County's agricultural industry.

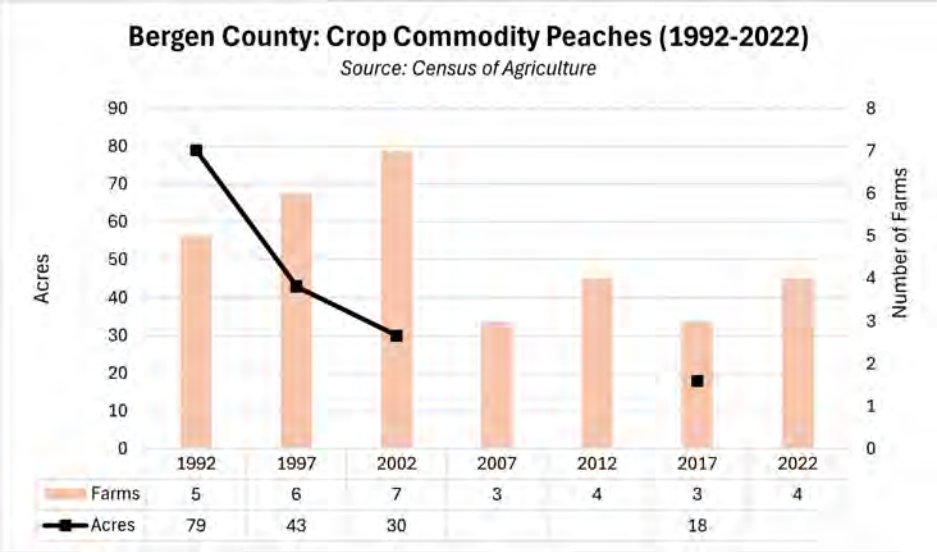


Figure II-8. Crop Commodity Peaches (1992-2022)

Grains, Oilseeds, Dry Beans and Dry Peas

There were no grains, oilseeds, dry beans, or dry peas sold or grown in Bergen County in 2022:

- In 2017, corn and soybeans were grown.
- Corn was grown on six farms covering 36 acres.
- Soybeans were grown on six farms covering 36 acres.
- 2017 was also the only year grains registered sales in Bergen County in at least 30 years, totaling $15,000.

Hay and Other Crops

Sales of hay and other crops have not been disclosed since 2012, when they totaled $20,000, with four farms reporting sales:

- In 2022 and 2017, the number of farms reporting sales of hay and other crops totaled seven and four respectively.
- In 2012, hay and other crops made up 0.4% of crop sales within the County.

- As of 2022, the County's hay and other crops did not make up more than 3% of sales.
- Two operations reported harvesting hay and/or haylage in 2022 versus four in 2017 and four in 1992.
- Acres harvested in 2022 and 2017 were not disclosed, but 209 acres were reported in 2012.

Hay is a low-intensity crop to grow because it does not require the substantial inputs of fertilizers, irrigation, or labor that are necessary with other field crops. In Bergen County there is not much space for field crops such as hay.

Cut Christmas Trees and Short Rotation Woody Crops

Two farm operations had sales in this sector in 2022 versus three in 2017.

Livestock

The livestock sector in Bergen County is composed of sales from dairy, cattle, hog/pig, equine, poultry, and other livestock operations. Bergen County livestock products sold for $290,000 in 2022, or 3% of the County's total agricultural sales (**Figure II-10**). The livestock industry consumes other agricultural products, such as feed crops, and uses a wide range of agricultural services including large animal veterinarians, creameries, and processing plants.

The number of farms in the production and sale of livestock & poultry products is on the decline, contributing to the recent decline in total farms county-wide. Since 1992, all major livestock categories have experienced a net decrease in participating farms. (**Figure II-11**).

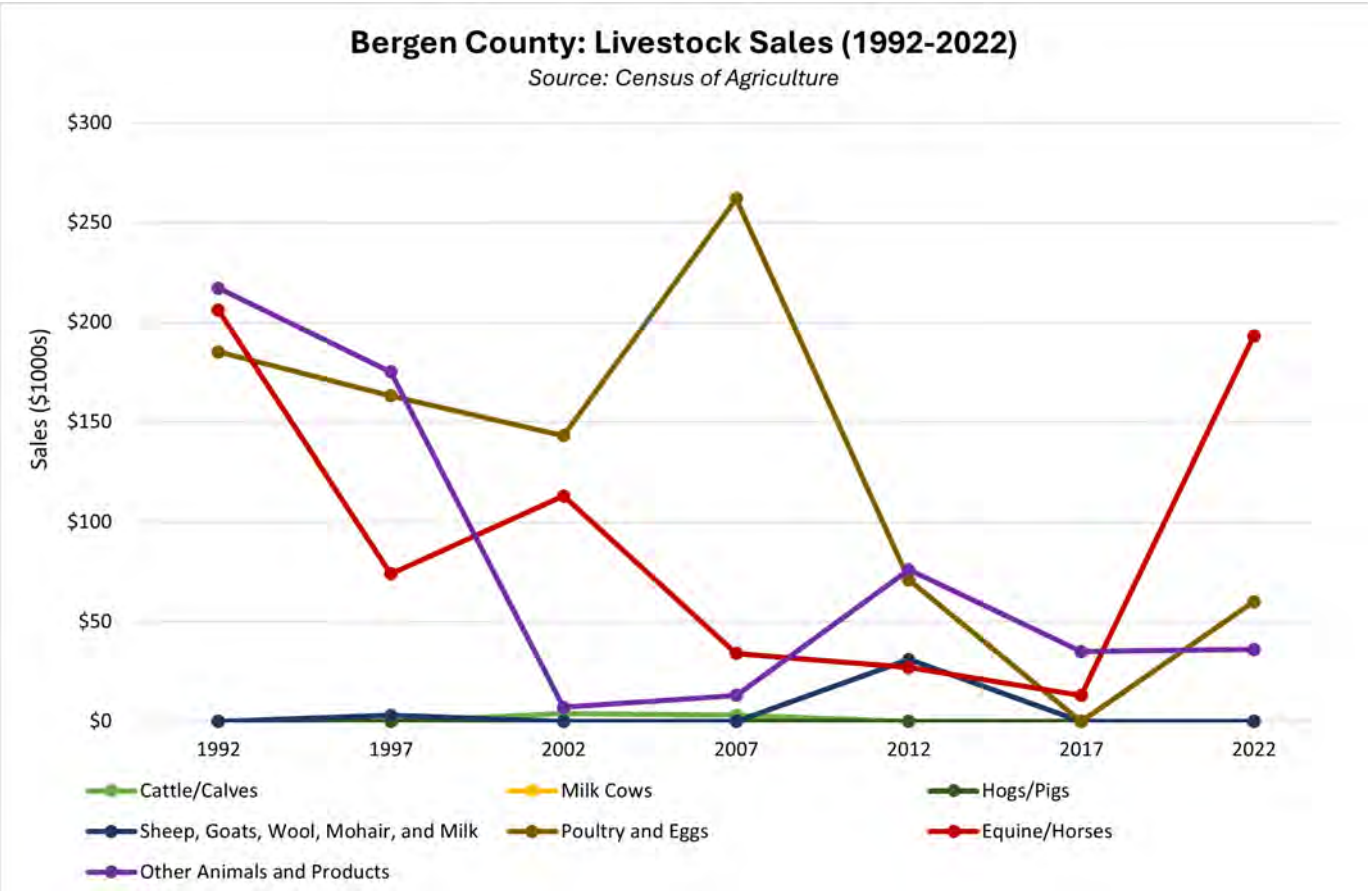


Figure II-9. Livestock Sales (1992-2022)

Equine and horses are the most common livestock in the County in 2022. They are also the most consistent over the last 30 years. The general trend within the livestock industries is a decline in the number of farms, animal inventory, and overall sales. Sheep/lambs have also declined since 1992 but have remained the second most popular livestock category in the County. All industries fell by at least 30%, with the biggest decrease seen in beef cows with a loss of 94% of the inventory from 1992 to 2022 (**Figure II-12**).

Dairy and Milk Cows

In 2022, there were no sales of milk from cows (dairy) in the County. There have not been any statistics on dairy and milk cows in at least 30 years, dating back to 1992.

Cattle/Calves

There were no cattle and calves sales reported in 2022 for Bergen County. While the number of farms with cattle inventory has declined 43% from seven in 1992 to four in 2022, the inventory has declined by 89% from 123 in 1997 to 14 in 2022. (**Figure II-13**).

The number of farms producing beef cows has fallen from six in 1992 to four in 2022. This is a 33% decrease. The total inventory of beef cows has decreased by 94% from 252 in 1992, to 14 in 2022. Beef cows have been the only type of cows in the County for at least 30 years. (**Figure II-14**).

Equine

The equine sector, horses and ponies, accounted for 67% of livestock sales in the County.

- Sales in this category totaled $113,000 in 2002.
- Declined to $13,000 in 2017,

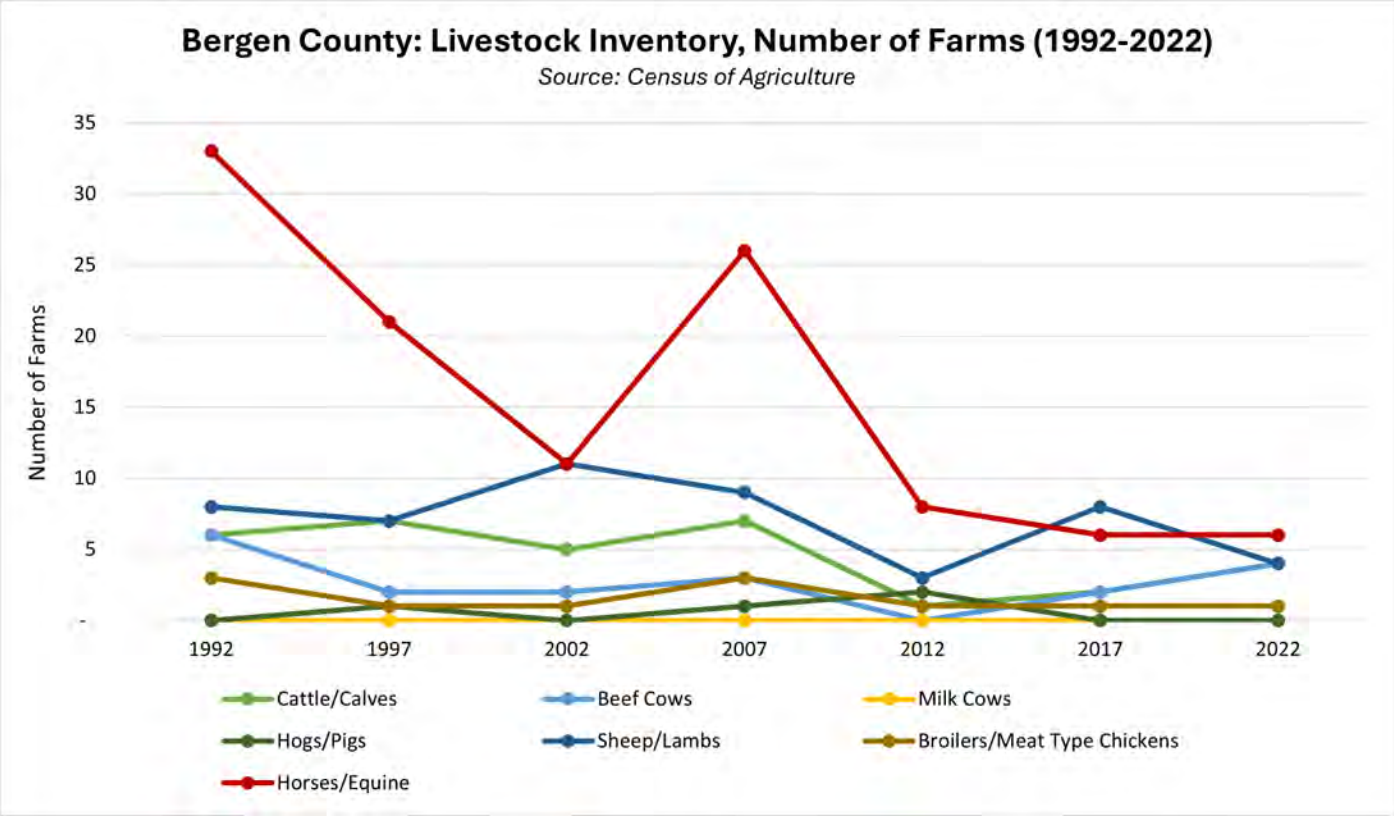


Figure II-10. Livestock Inventory, Number of Farms (1992-2022)

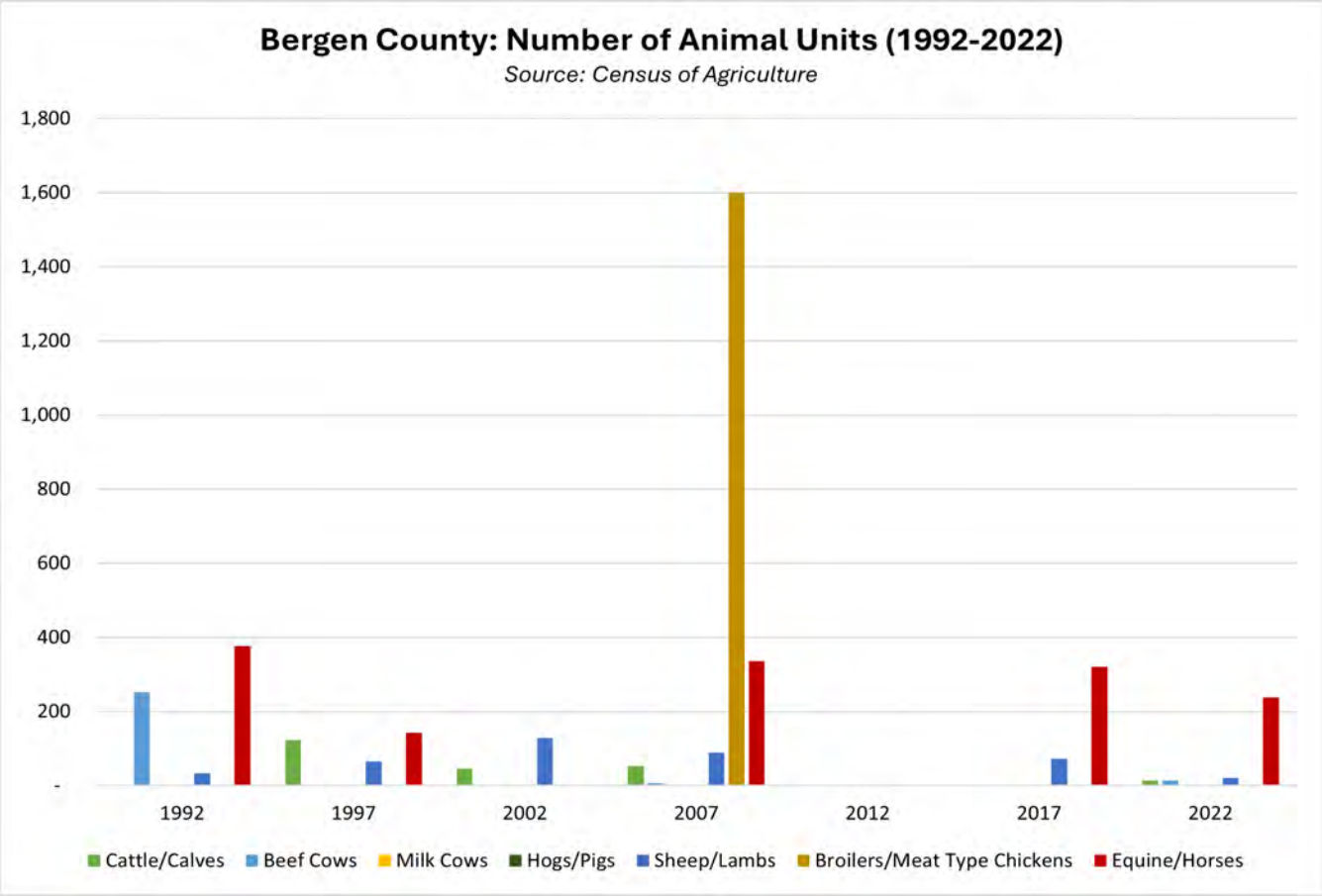


Figure II-11. Number of Animal Units (1992-2022)

- Increased to $193,000 in 2022.
- Sales have decreased by six percent, from $206,000 in 1992.
- The number of animals sold has dropped since 1992, from 60 to nine in 2022.
- Nine of the County's 13 farms that keep horses sold them during 2022. The remaining farms boarded horses, provided riding lessons, or offered other equine services. The earnings from these activities are not embedded within the equine figures (**Figure II-15**).
- Inventory levels fluctuated from 1992 to 2007, but have been declining since, from 336 in 2007 to 238 in 2022.

Hogs and Pigs

In 2022, there were no recorded sales of hogs and pigs, and there were no farms which reported owning hogs or pigs. The last recorded sales numbers are from 2007. The last recorded number of farms owning hogs or pigs was two farms in 2012.

Sheep and Goats

There were no sales numbers recorded for sheep and goats in 2022. This is a decline from 2012 when sales totaled $31,000:

- There were four farms with sheep and lambs in Bergen County in 2022. These farms held 20 sheep. None of these sheep were sold.

- The number of sheep has varied since 1992, with the peak being 129 sheep in 2002.
- That number has steadily declined yearly to where it stands today, at 20.
- The number of sheep sold has typically not been disclosed, however, in 1997, 80 sheep were sold. (**Figure II-16).**

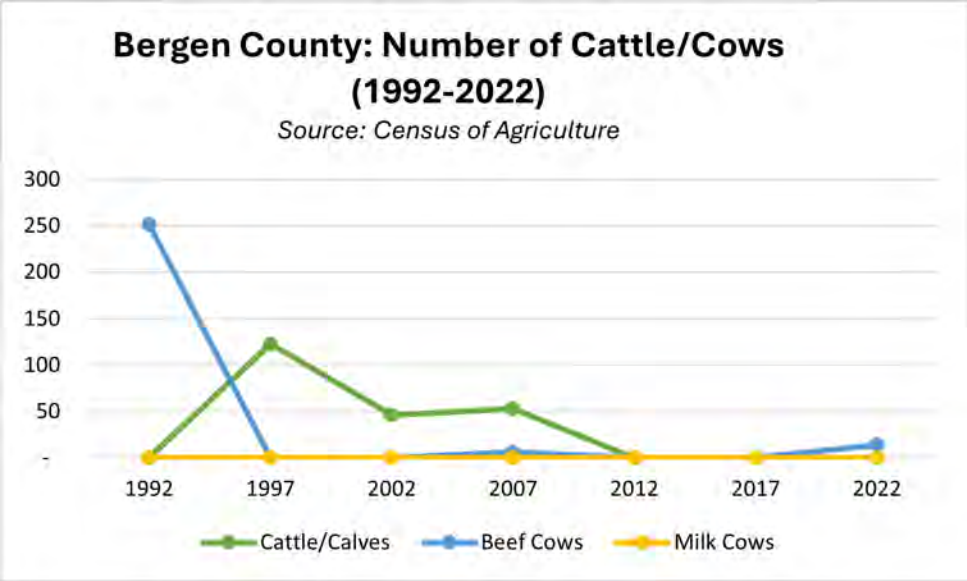


Figure II-12. Number of Cattle/Cows (1992-2022)

The Census began publishing the total number and inventory of goats and goat farms in 2007. It breaks goats into three types: milk, angora, and meat goats, and began recording sales data from all goats in 2012:

- In 2007, nine farms reported raising goats.
- By 2022, no farms with goats were reported.

Like the sheep and lamb sub-sector, market value data on goat sales were not recorded until 2012. No goats have been sold during this time. (**Figure II-16).**

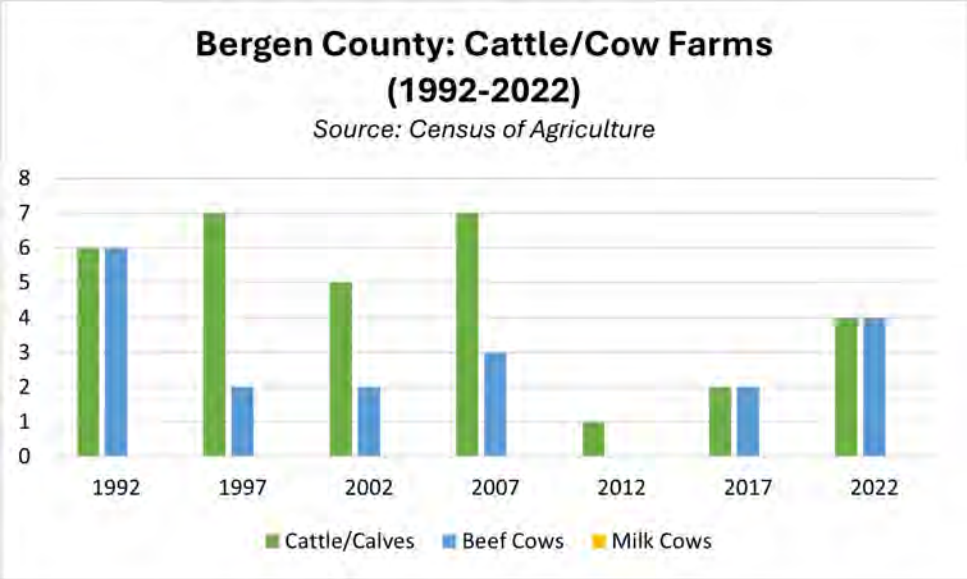


Figure II-13. Cattle/Cows Farms (1992-2022)

Poultry and Eggs

The poultry and egg category made up 21% of livestock sales for 2022, making it the second highest-earning livestock category in Bergen County. Sales in this category totaled $185,000 in 1992 and have consistently decreased over the last 30 years to its current total of $60,000. This is a decrease of 68%. (**Figure II-10**)

The number of animal units in the County is not clear due to the nondisclosure of the category for many years. Broilers/ meat chickens were at their highest in 2007, when they totaled 1,600, but have not been recorded since. The number of farms with poultry has decreased since 1992 from three farms to one, a decrease of 67%.

Other Animals

Other animals made up 12% of Bergen County's livestock sales. Since 1992, sales have decreased 83% from $217,000 to $36,000 in 2022. These sales have fluctuated over the last 30 years but have not returned to their high from 1992.

The livestock industry is not a major part of Bergen County's agricultural industry. Farmers in the County maintain a small number of livestock for meat production. In particular, the steadiness in the number of beef cattle and swine may be indicative of a small but significant trend. The continued production of livestock in a suburban context remains a unique and interesting component of the County's agricultural industry.

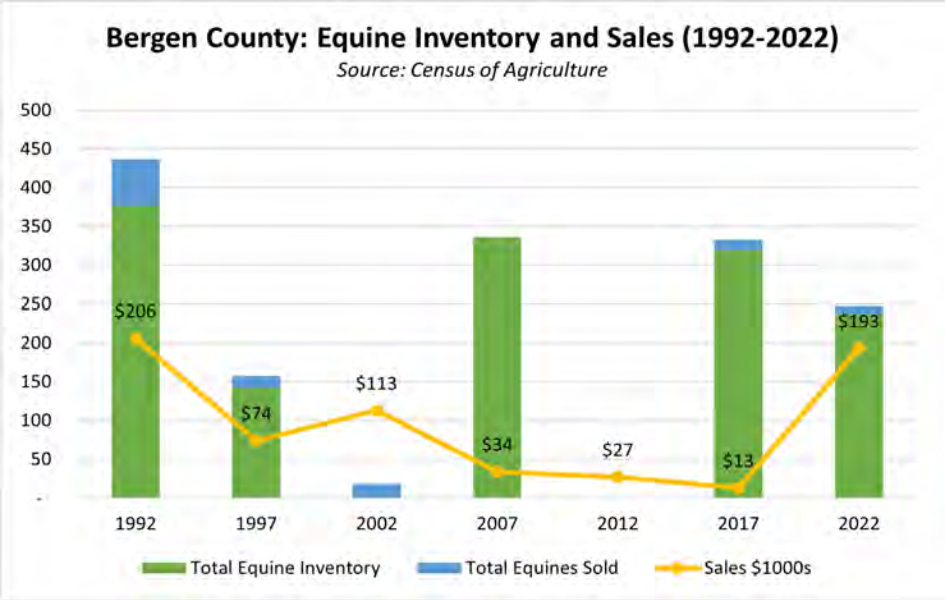


Figure II-14. Equine Inventory and Sales (1992-2022)

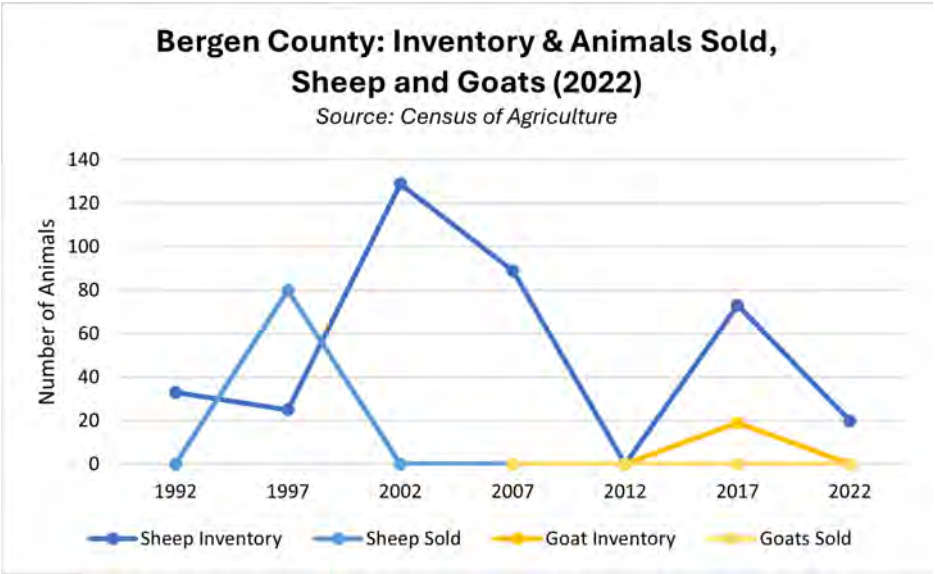


Figure II-15. Inventory of Animals Sold, Sheep and Goats (1992-2022)

C. Support Services within Market Region

Bergen County farmers patronize a select few agricultural businesses in towns within the County. However, farmers predominantly rely on businesses in other parts of New Jersey, New York and Pennsylvania. Processing facilities, such as creameries, meat processing plants, and lumber mills, are not found in Bergen County and any relevant products must be processed outside the County.

Local support businesses are often insufficient to meet the supply and repair needs of Bergen County's agricultural community. As is the case across the state, Bergen County's farmers rely heavily upon mail-order retailers and non-local processing facilities in Pennsylvania. Some farmers have found that reliance upon non-local suppliers imposes high shipping and transportation costs that can cut

into the profitability of their operations. Farmers tend to specialize in some kind of agricultural repair and supplement their incomes by offering their services to other farmers.

There have been numerous resource documents that provide information about the agricultural businesses and support services available to Bergen County's farmers.

Other Agricultural Related Industries

The agricultural economy extends further than crop and livestock production. Pick-your-own farms and farmers markets connect residents and visitors with farmed products, Farmers markets provide residents with access to locally grown, fresh, nutritious produce and farm products. Often farmers markets offer value-added farm items to be sold, including honey, candles, sauces, fibers, and crafts.

Future of Agriculture

Bergen County has been losing farms and farmland at a rapid rate. This is in part due to high land values, taxes, operation and maintenance expenses, and competition for land from residential and commercial developers. Farmers are often using farming as a secondary enterprise rather than their main source of income, especially on smaller operations. Younger generations pursue more lucrative occupations, making it difficult for farmers to pass their land on to the next generation. Long-term farms are being sold for development, especially near major highway corridors. Farmland has consistently been an easy target for housing and business development, and warehousing projects.

It is expected that agritourism will continue to thrive in the County. Urban-style farms may need to be looked at to grow the agricultural industry in the County. Small-scale farms or community farms/gardens are an opportunity to grow the industry in Bergen County.

Literature Cited

Chapter 2

*Used Census of Agriculture from 1992-2022.

1 United States Department of Agriculture: National Agricultural Statistics Service, *2022 Census of Agriculture*. https://www.nass.usda.gov/Publications/AgCensus/2022/Full_Report/Volume_1,_Chapter_2_County_Level/New_Jersey/ Accessed December 2024.

2 U.S. Census of Agriculture. 2022. (referenced above).

3 New Jersey Department of Agriculture. Annual Reports. https://www.nj.gov/agriculture/pub/general.html Accessed January 2025.

Demarest Farms, Borough of Hillsdale
Source: Demarest Farms

Chapter III.

Land Use Planning

A. State Development and Redevelopment Plan Planning Areas, Designated Centers, and Endorsed Plans.

On December 17, 2025 the New Jersey State Planning Commission adopted the State Development and Redevelopment Plan (SDRP). This update to the 2001 State Plan sets ambitious goals concerning environmental justice, climate change, development, economic growth, affordability, and preservation.[1]

New Jersey State Development and Redevelopment Plan (2025)

The State Plan identifies:

- Planning Areas where different sets of goals and guidelines are considered appropriate to determine development activities. These include Metropolitan, Suburban, Fringe, Rural, Environmentally Sensitive and Parklands. The acreages for each of these areas in Bergen County are included in **Table III-1**.
- Designated Centers where future development and redevelopment activities are most appropriate and will be actively promoted.

The State Plan map for Bergen County is shown in **Figure III-1.** There were no changes in planning area designations or acreages between the 2001 and 2025 State Plans.

Planning Areas

Metropolitan Planning Areas (PA1) comprise the most densely developed regions. Most of Bergen County (112,927 acres) is located within PA1. The two

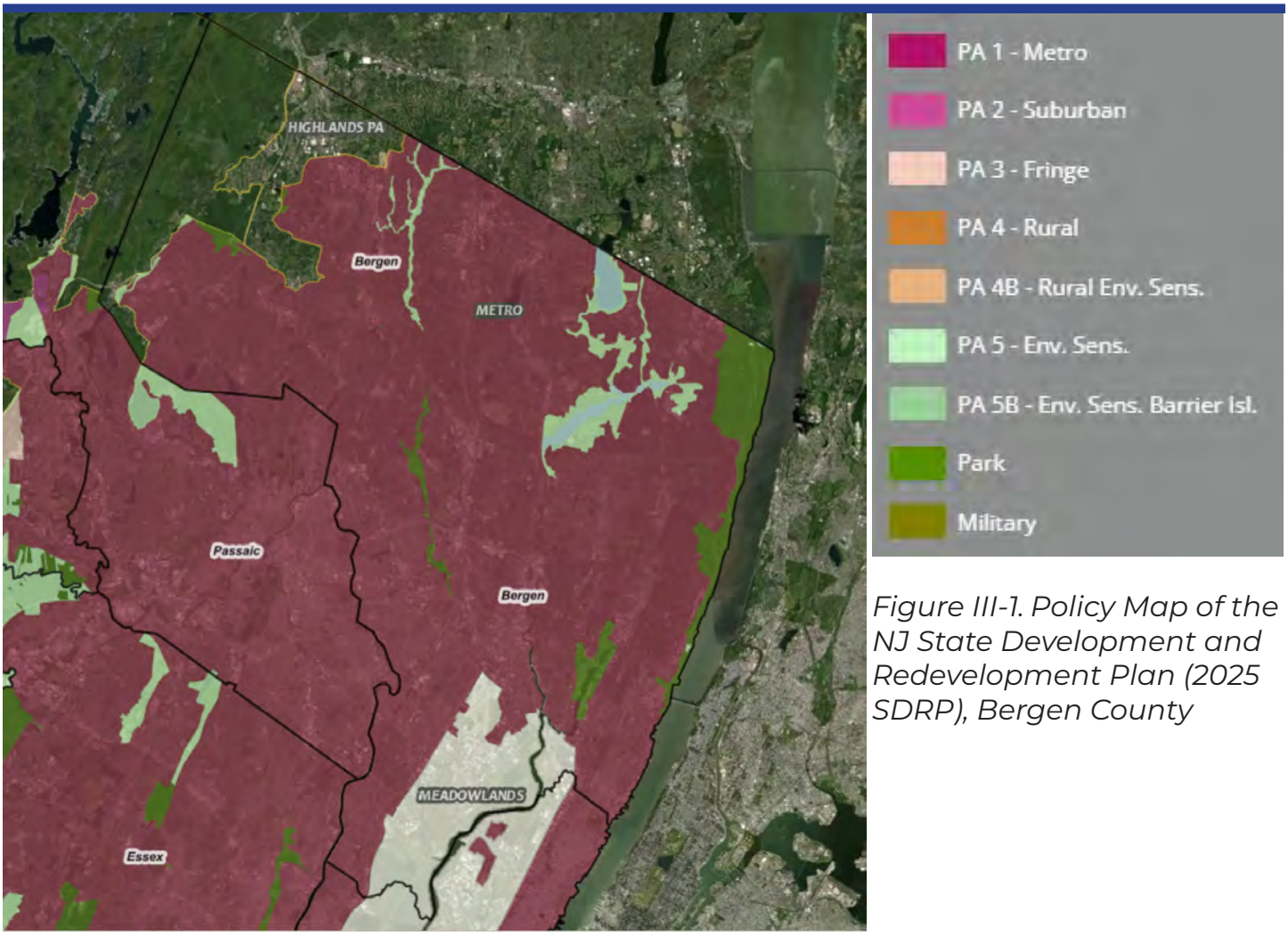


Figure III-1. Policy Map of the NJ State Development and Redevelopment Plan (2025 SDRP), Bergen County

largest exceptions are in the Highlands and Meadowlands. The Highlands encompasses all of Mahwah Township and some of Oakland Borough, and the Meadowlands encompass areas of ten towns bordering the Hackensack River.

Suburban Planning Areas (PA2), **Fringe Planning Areas** (PA3), and **Rural Planning Areas** (PA4): There are no planning areas of these designations in Bergen County.

Environmentally Sensitive Planning Areas (PA5) contain lands where natural resource preservation should be the primary planning consideration. A total of 3,687 acres are designated as PA5 in Bergen County. These areas surround water resources such as Oradell Reservoir, Lake Tappan, Crystal Lake, parts of Saddle River, Hackensack River, Dorotockey's Run, Dwars Kill, and Ramapo River.

Parks and Natural Areas comprise Planning Area Eight (PA8). These areas total 6,135 acres in Bergen County and occupy lands that are permanently deed restricted for open space or natural resource preservation. PA8 surround Overpeck Creek, parts of Saddle River, and adjacent to Campgaw Mountain Reservation in Oakland and Franklin Lakes Boroughs.

Lands in Active Agriculture

Bergen County has a total of 478 acres of active agriculture. 257 acres are in the PA1 and 103 are in the Highlands Preservation Area. The distribution of active agricultural land is shown in **Table III-1**.

B. Special Resource Areas

Highlands Regional Master Plan

The Highlands Region, an area of 859,358 acres, includes 88 municipalities and portions of seven counties. Recognizing the necessity to protect and preserve environmental resources and drinking water supplies within this region, the State Legislature enacted the Highlands Water Protection and Planning Act in 2004. The 2008 Highlands Regional Master Plan (RMP) identifies all lands within the Region as either a Preservation Area (in which conformance with the RMP is mandatory) or in a Planning Area (in which conformance is voluntary).

Mahwah Township and Oakland Borough in Bergen County are located in the Highlands Region. As shown in **Table III-1**, 12,075 acres are located in the Preservation Area, and 7,082 are in the Planning Area.

Meadowlands District

The Meadowlands District is located along the southern tip of Bergen County into Hudson County. Surrounding the Hackensack River, this area contains the largest remaining complex of brackish tidal wetlands in the New York and New Jersey Harbor Estuary. Much of the wetlands were filled and polluted by the mid 1900s, leading to the creation of the district by the Hackensack Meadowlands Reclamation and Development Act of 1968. The District is managed by the New Jersey Sports and Exposition Authority (NJSEA), which aims to balance the restoration and preservation of the area's natural resources with economic growth and redevelopment.

NJSEA holds jurisdiction over zoning in portions of municipalities located within the Meadowland's boundaries. The towns of Secaucus and Kearny have chosen to opt-out of most of NJSEA's zoning requirements upon the provision that they follow they land use provisions of the Meadowland's zoning regulations.

Table III-1. State Designated Areas in Bergen County

	Total Acres (% of County)	Active Agriculture (acres) in each Planning Area	Active Agriculture (percent) in each Planning Area
Metropolitan (PA1)	112,927 (75%)	257	54%
Suburban (PA2)	-	-	-
Fringe (PA3)	-	-	-
Rural (PA4)	-	-	-
Environmentally Sensitive (PA5)	3,687 (2%)	23	5%
Parks and Natural Areas (PA8)	6,135 (4%)	35	7%
Highlands Preservation Area	12,075 (8%)	103	21%
Highlands Planning Area	7,082 (4%)	60	13%
Meadowlands	9,473 (6%)	-	-
Total:	151,379	478	100%

Source: NJ Office for Planning Advocacy, NJDEP Land Use/Land Cover

C. County Master Plan and Development Regulations

2023 Master Plan

Bergen County's most recent Master Plan was adopted in 2023.[2] Acknowledging the importance of farming in Bergen County - especially the nursery plan industry and agritourism activities - the plan discusses how local farms connect residents to the agricultural industry, lower property taxes, and provide jobs. To protect these activities, Bergen County uses its Open Space, Recreation, Floodplain Protection, Farmland, and Historic Preservation Trust Fund to support its Farmland Preservation Easement Purchase Program, enforces the NJ Right to Farm Act, and engages in educational programing to promote agriculture. Specifically:

Goal 10: **Protect and Support Agriculture and Agriculture Areas**. This goal establishes the following county-wide objectives for farmland preservation:

- Preserve remaining agricultural land and activities.
- Increase opportunities for community agriculture.
- Increase awareness of agriculture and its importance.

2014 Bergen County Farmland Preservation Plan

By 2014, Bergen County preserved one-third of its farmland, most of which was located in Mahwah Township. One of the key aspects of the 2014 Farm Plan was the framework it provides for preserving agricultural lands.[3] The Farm Plan notes the conversion pressure upon the County's farmland due to high land value, location, and limited support.

The County's few working farms are dispersed in the north. Since Bergen's farmland is sparse and not contiguous, the plan recommends that the CADB work with the state to expand the farmland eligibility criteria and/or grant exemptions to help Bergen County preserve its remaining farms. Bergen County's ranking criteria for evaluating farmland included:

- Farm size and density
- Soil quality
- Tillable acres
- Boundaries and buffers between residential and commercial development
- Proposed land use compatibility
- Community value
- Agricultural sustainability
- Local commitment
- Imminence of change
- Easement price
- Proposed exceptions/details

2020 Farmland Analysis

In 2020, Bergen County analyzed its remaining farmland to determine their potential eligibility for preservation. The report identified 40 unpreserved farms, two of which may qualify for state matching grants.

The analysis recommended that the County explore farmland preservation beyond land currently eligible under state criteria. Additional farms may qualify if the SADC allows tillable land to be used as the measure of "soils supporting agricultural production." Furthermore, if the State and County considers accepting farms that fall within 75% of the state eligibility requirements for soils and/or tillable land, then additional farms may qualify for state funds and be preserved.

2024 Open Space and Recreation Plan Update

The County updated its Open Space and Recreation Plan in 2024, echoing many of the open space goals established in the Open Space section of the Master Plan. Preserving farmland can help the County meet its goals to preserve and balance open spaces, improve the connectivity of public lands, and steward environmental resources.[4]

The Open Space Plan particularly highlights the role that urban agriculture plays in fostering community engagement while providing access to food and strengthening natural resources.

D. Current Land Use and Trends

In the 19th century, most of Bergen County was composed of agricultural land. Stimulated by its proximity to New York City, and high housing demand, the County experienced rapid development that left less than 1,000 acres of farmland by the 1980s. Since the 1980s, agriculture, forest, water, and wetlands land uses have fallen, with the greatest losses experienced by forests (more than 4,000 acres). At the same time, urban and barren land uses have increased by approximately 4,300 and 900 acres, respectively.

Figure III-2 shows land use and land cover in Bergen County as of 2020. Urban land use makes up 73% of all land in the County, followed by 16% forests. Encompassing 423 acres in 2020, agriculture makes up the smallest proportion of land use in Bergen County at 0.28%.

Bergen County's urban development has been accompanied by steady population growth since the 1990s, as depicted in **Figure III-3**. The County's population has grown from 825,380 residents in 1990 to 947,736 in 2023 (a 16% population gain):

- 2000 (3.3% gain),
- 2010 (1.2% gain), and
- 2020 (2.3% gain).

Some of the County's largest population centers experienced the most growth. Hackensack City gained 8,821 residents, Fort Lee Borough gained 8,157 residents, and Garfield City gained 5,828.

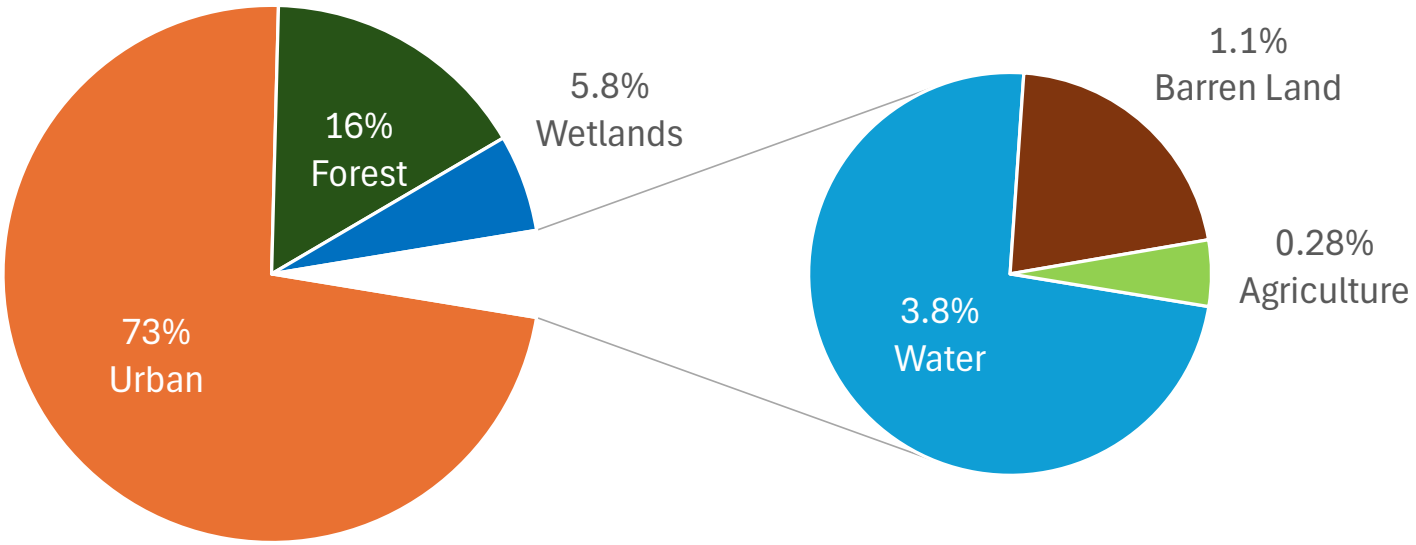


Figure III-2. Land Use and Land Cover in Bergen County, 2020, NJDEP Land Use and Land Cover Data

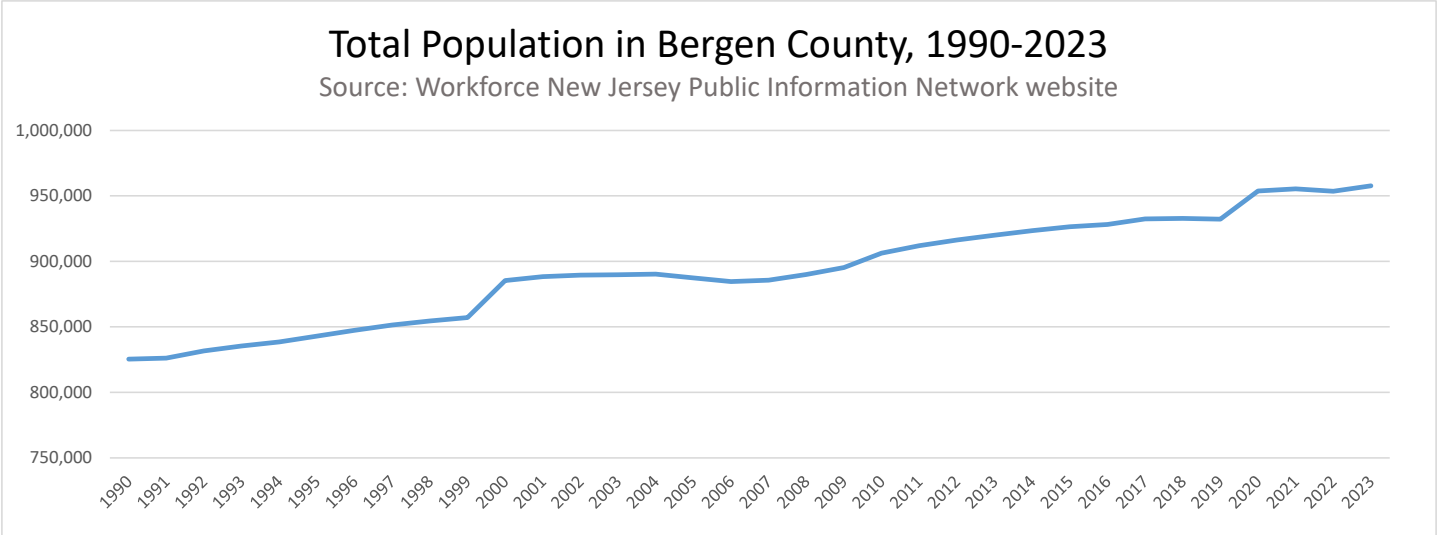


Figure III-3. Total Population in Bergen County, 1990 to 2023, Workforce New Jersey Public Information Network website

Additional population growth came from the municipalities of Mahwah Township and Edgewater Borough. These towns experienced high growth rates. Edgewater Borough's population grew by 194%, gaining 9,487 residents from 1990 to 2023. Mahwah Township's population grew by 41%, gaining 7,418 residents over the same time period.

The development of Bergen County's land can also be seen in the increase in the number of building permits across the County, depicted in **Figure III-4**. The number of authorized residential building permits per year rose from 817 in 1990 to 2,031 in 2024. The biggest year for building permits was in 2022, when 4,065 new permits were authorized.

This area of New Jersey is responsible for much of the state's growth in building permits. Over the past 34 years, Bergen County has been responsible for an average of eight percent of the state's new building permits per year.

E. Sewer Service Areas/Public Water Supply Areas

Sewer Service Areas

The primary wastewater utilities authorities serving Bergen County are the Bergen County Utilities Authority and the Northwest Bergen County Utilities Authority. Ridgewood Village has its own utility, and many of the municipalities bordering Passaic County are served by the Passaic Valley Sewerage Commission. The areas of Bergen County that fall outside the sewer service areas are concentrated in the western reaches of Mahwah Township and Oakland Borough, and much of Alpine and Rockleigh Boroughs (**Figure III-5**). Most of Bergen County's farmland is within the sewer service area, increasing farmland conversion pressure.

Public Water Supply Service Areas

Figure III-6 depicts Bergen's public water suppliers and service areas. Veolia is the primary water supplier in the County,

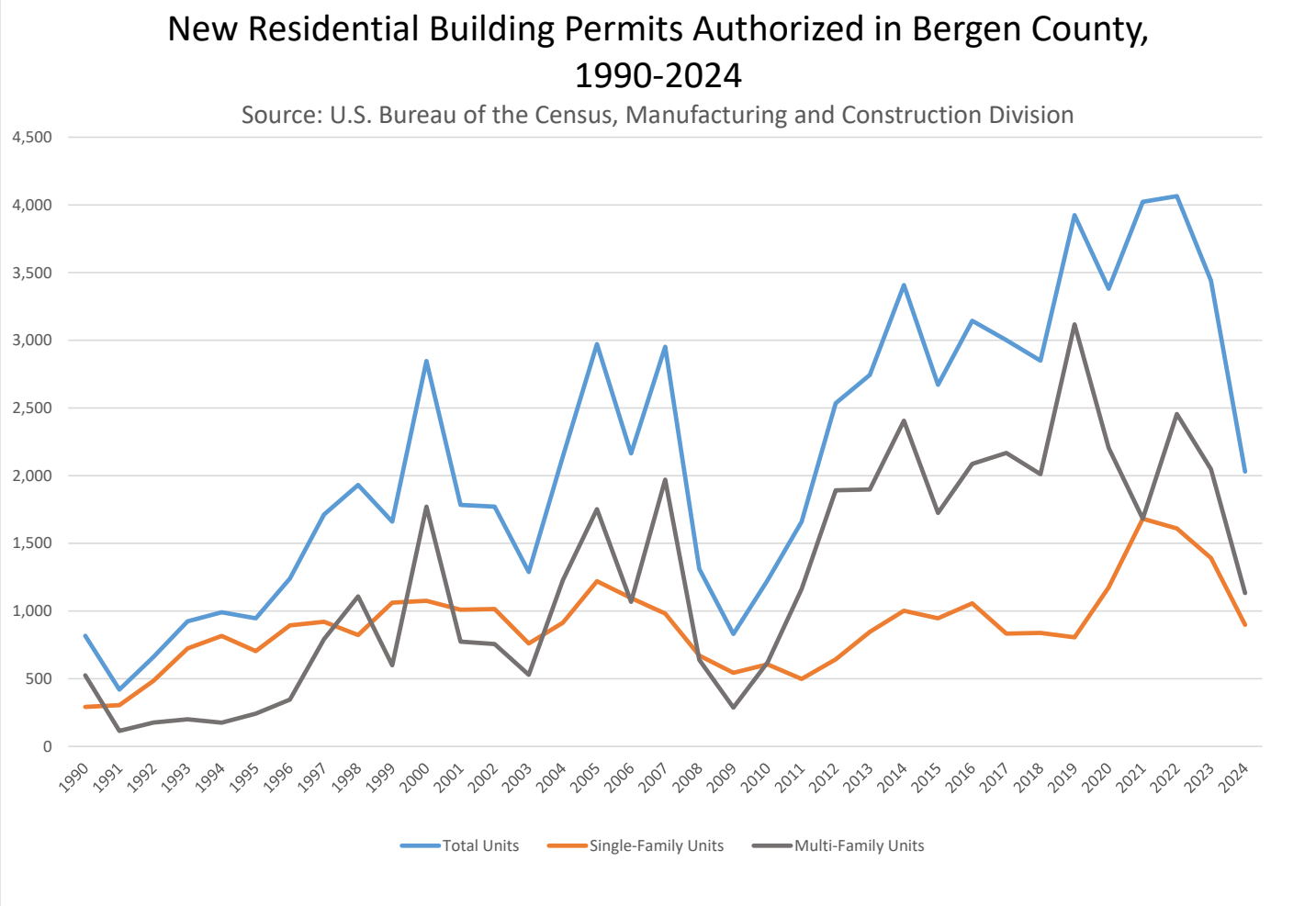


Figure III-4. New residential building permits authorized in Bergen County, 1990-2024, US Bureau of the Census, Manufacturing and Construction Division

serving much of the central and eastern municipalities.

United Water NJ supplied water to this area before it became a subsidiary of Suez North America and then a part of Veolia when Suez NA and Veolia NA merged. Veolia also operates systems in Montvale, Franklin Lakes, and Allendale.

Municipal water systems serve Park Ridge, Saddle River, Ramsey, Oakland, Waldwick, Ho-Ho-Kus, Fair Lawn, and Elmwood Boroughs, as well as Mahwah Township, Saddle Brook Township, Ridgewood Village, and Garfield City.

F. Municipal Master Plan & Zoning

Municipal Planning

Land use in Bergen County is generally managed by municipalities, with the exception of the ten municipalities that are partially zoned by NJSEA because of their location in the NJ Meadowlands District.

Municipalities often used zoning to discourage development in environmentally sensitive areas. Open space zones often restrict permitted uses to conservation or recreation.

Some municipalities will also establish conservation zoning districts, which include large minimum lot sizes for residential development to discourage development. Conservation zones that include such lot size restrictions include Mahwah Township, Emerson Borough, and Oakland Borough.

Mahwah Township's Conservation Zone is designed to protect natural resources within the Ramapo Mountains, protect the recharge areas of the Ramapo River, and prevent flooding and erosion. Permitted principle uses include agriculture, municipal facilities, open space, and single-family detached residences with 200,000 square feet minimum lots. Within Mahwah's Conservation Zone, disturbance is restricted to 20% of each lot, applications must include an environmental impact statement, and applicants must ensure that erosion, damage to vegetation, and pollution are adequately controlled for. Additionally, development in this area is not permitted to connect to the sewer system to prevent additional disturbance.

Emerson Borough's Open Space Conservation Zone limits permitted uses as well, requiring a minimum residential lot size of 60,000 square feet and a lot size for all other uses of five acres, along with additional size restrictions and restrictions on impervious lot coverage.

Oakland Borough's Conservation District restricts permitted uses to recreation, public use, or single-family residential. Residences have a minimum lot size of

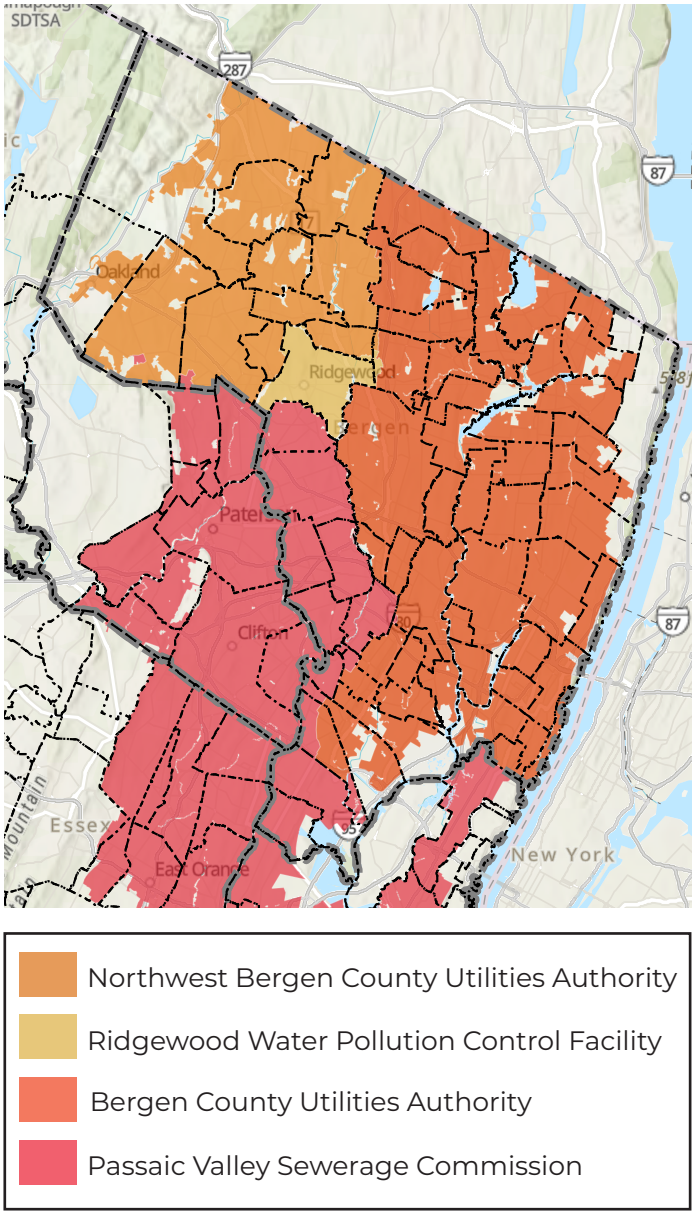


Figure III-5. Bergen Sewer Service Areas, NJDEP Bureau of GIS[8]

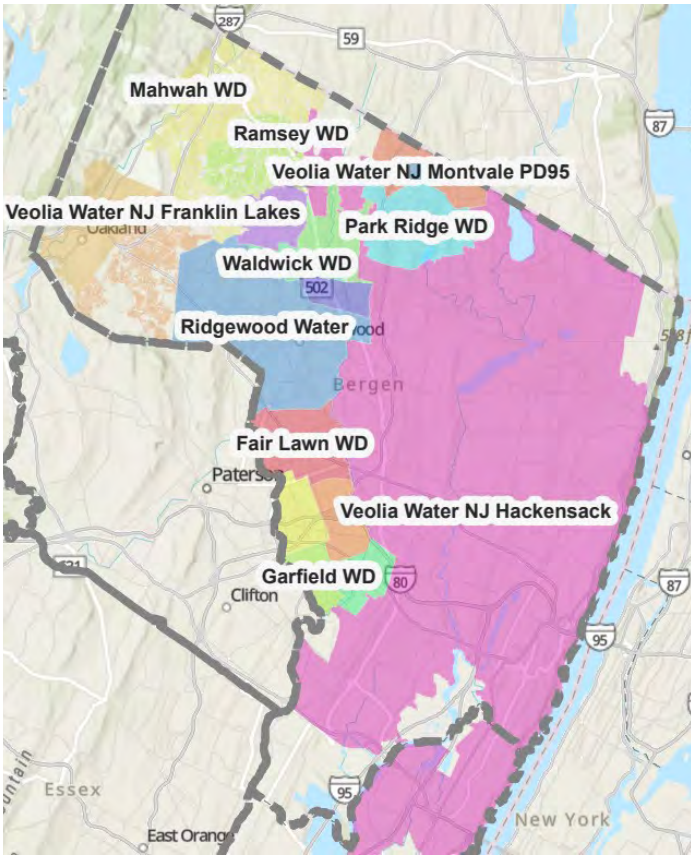


Figure III-6. Bergen Public Water Supply Service Areas, NJDEP Bureau of GIS

five acres. The Borough requires that, within this district, 40% of each tract should be retained as open space. Areas in this district that are not development lots or owned by Oakland are designated open spaces as well.

Similarly, the Borough of Old Tappan has designated an Environmentally Sensitive District, which restricts permitted uses and mandates a minimum lot size of 100,000 square feet.

The consequence of large-lot zoning is that residential developments that do occur take up more land and that the development value of agricultural land can be impacted, making farmland easements and clustering development the preferred preservation methods of Bergen County.

No municipality in Bergen County has a local farmland preservation program.

Innovative Planning Techniques

The viability of farming in Bergen County maybe maintained and advanced by implementing innovative preservation techniques that minimize conflict between farmland and development and contribute to the positive impacts that farming has on local economies. On August 7, 2013, Governor Christie signed into law the Cluster Development Act (P.L.2013, c.106), which amends the Municipal Land Use Law to make it easier for municipalities to control growth and preservation in their towns. These changes modified the process by which existing tools work, strengthening municipal authority.[5] The three tools include lot-size averaging, contiguous cluster and noncontiguous cluster.

Cluster Zoning: Cluster zoning is a tool that allows builders to reduce the overall area of their projects without reducing the number of structures they construct. The open area of the parcel must remain in an undeveloped state in perpetuity, but may be used for farming. Clustering has limited applications in Bergen County because its farmland is not primarily located in an undeveloped corridor. Clustering may be considered on a case-by-case basis if one portion of a farm may be developed in exchange for preservation of the remainder.

Lot Size Averaging: Similar to cluster zoning, lot size averaging is a planning technique that authorizes deviation from standard lot sizes within a subdivision to protect features existing on a particular tract of land. Lot size averaging allows a tract to be developed with lots of varying sizes, some of which can be large enough to continue to support agriculture and retain some of the agricultural characteristics that would otherwise be lost with development. As long as the average is consistent with standard sizes, the development is permitted.

Non-contiguous Cluster Zoning: In contrast to cluster zoning, non-contiguous cluster zoning permits the transfer-of-development density between instead of only within parcels. Non-contiguous clustering allows for development to be concentrated into more appropriate and desirable locations. The possibility for landowners and developers to utilize non-contiguous clustering is affected through amending the municipality's master plan and development ordinances.

Transfer-of-Development Rights (TDR): A TDR program is a realty transfer tool that allows owners of land suitable for preservation to separate the development rights of their property from the property itself and sell them for use elsewhere. Developers who purchase these development credits may then develop areas deemed appropriate for growth at densities higher than otherwise

permitted by zoning ordinances. Once the development rights of a property are sold, the land is permanently restricted from further development.

Transfer-of-development rights can be used as a tool to advance both redevelopment and preservation efforts. Redevelopment areas can benefit from being designated as receiving zones, which would allow them to accept additional development density beyond what is permitted by existing zoning. Transit-oriented developments and apartment/condominium projects in growth centers are particularly suitable as receiving areas. Simultaneously, TDR facilitates the preservation of land within designated sending areas by prohibiting future development there.

The New Jersey State Transfer-of-Development Rights Act (N.J.S.A. 40:55D-140)21 authorizes the transfer-of-development rights by municipalities and outlines what a town must do in order to adopt or amend a TDR ordinance.[6] A town must receive approval from the State Planning Commission to adopt the TDR ordinance. (N.J.S.A. 40:55D-140)

In regional TDR programs, development density is transferred from areas with significant agricultural or natural resource lands to existing centers within a geographically defined region. Sending and receiving areas are often located in different municipalities. A tax-based revenue sharing system, such as that run by the New Jersey Meadowlands Commission, can help balance municipal expenditures between sending and receiving communities.

Mandatory vs Voluntary Options: Mandatory TDR involves allocating credits in the sending area based on the zoning prior to TDR enactment. To encourage TDR participation and discourage new development in sending areas, those sending areas are downzoned. Under a voluntary TDR program, there is no associated downzoning and TDR becomes another preservation option for landowners.

The New Jersey Highlands Council established a regional TDR program that allocates Highlands Development Credits (HDCs) to landowners sending zone property owners. Lots are eligible to apply for HDC allocations if they are located in the protection or conservation zones in the Highlands preservation area and meet some additional criteria. HDCs may then be sold to developers and used to increase the densities at which they can build in appropriate voluntary receiving zones.[7]

The New Jersey State TDR Bank offers Planning Assistance Grants to municipalities looking to establish municipal TDR programs, and directly funds some purchases of development credits. The State TDR Bank can also provide financial backing on loans secured using development credits as collateral, and keeps records of all development credit transfers in the State.

Buffer Requirements: Buffers are areas, structures, or objects that separate distinct land uses. Agricultural buffers specifically help mitigate conflict between agricultural and non-agricultural land uses.

A review of local ordinances indicated that there are no agricultural buffer requirements in the County. Municipalities may adopt agricultural buffer requirements around farms targeted for preservation to increase land use compatibility and support the Right-To-Farm Act.

Literature Cited

Chapter 3

1 New Jersey Update to State Development and Redevelopment Plan. https://www.nj.gov/state/bac/planning/state-plan/development/. Accessed January 2026.

2 Bergen County Master Plan. 2023. https://bergencountynj.gov/bergen-county-department-of-planning-engineering/bergen-county-master-plan/. Accessed October 2025.

3 Bergen County Farmland Preservation Plan. 2014. https://bergencountynj.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/Bergen_County_Farmland_Preservation_Plan_FINAL_June_2014_20140724100603257l.pdf. Accessed October 2025.

4 Bergen County Open Space and Recreation Plan Update. 2024. https://bergencountynj.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/bergen-county-osrp-draft-iii-11.28.2023.pdf. Accessed October 2025.

5 New Jersey Future. Noncontiguous Cluster Development. https://www.njfuture.org/issues/environment-and-agriculture/land-preservation/tdr-clustering/noncontig-cluster-development/.

6 New Jersey State Transfer of Development Rights Act. https://www.nj.gov/agriculture/sadc/documents/tdr/tdract/tdract.pdf. Accessed October 2025.

7 NJ Highlands Council. Highlands Regional Master Plan. https://www.nj.gov/njhighlands/master/rmp/final/highlands_rmp_112008.pdf.

8 NJDEP Bureau of GIS. https://dep.nj.gov/gis/. Accessed October 2025.

Secor Farms, Mahwah Township
Source: Secor Farms

Chapter IV.

Farmland Preservation Program

There are 335 acres of preserved farmland in Bergen County (**Map 1** in **Chapter I, Figures IV-1** to **IV-4**). There have been eight closings, and two were for one farm which straddles two towns, for a total of seven preserved farms. The county easement program was responsible for the first seven closings. The most recent was done through the SADC Planning Incentive Grant (PIG) program. Keeping the County plan updated every ten years will ensure Bergen remains eligible for PIG funding.

Bergen County is the most populous county in New Jersey. Its median home value ($615,300) is higher than the state's median ($461,000) and double the United States ($340,200).[1] Land values are high, development pressure is intense, yet farms remain a viable part of the landscape. The Bergen CADB is committed to supporting both their farmers and their farms.

Bergen County has 41 unpreserved farms encompassing 587 acres.[6] Through partnerships with the SADC, the County has preserved 335 acres, permanently protecting approximately one-third of its remaining agricultural land.

In 2015, Bergen County preserved an additional farm in Saddle River Borough totaling 17.4 acres. Since the completion of the 2014 Farmland Plan, this has been the only farm preserved, despite efforts to enroll additional farmland in the program. Farmers have either been unwilling to accept what the state has offered to preserve their land, or the farms have not met state criteria for preservation.

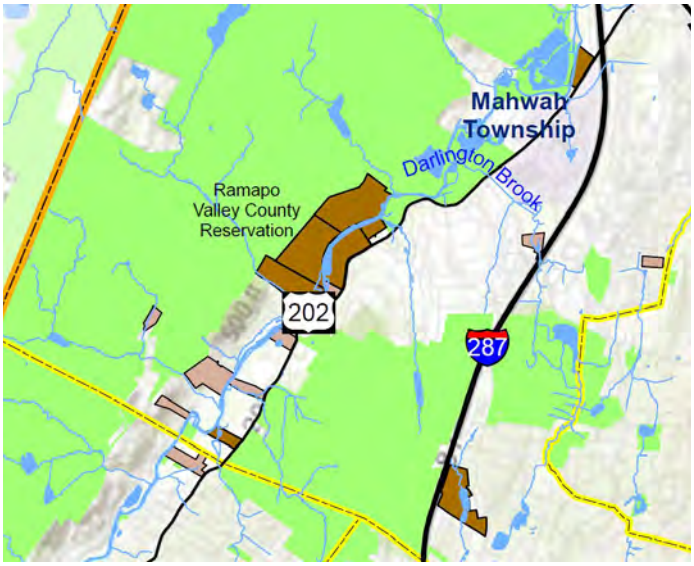


Figure IV-1. Preserved Farms in Mahwah Township, located along Ramapo Valley Road, Campgaw Road, Bear Swamp Road.

Figure IV-2. Preserved Farm in Saddle River Borough (off of Glenwood Drive) and Hillsdale Borough on Wierimus Road.

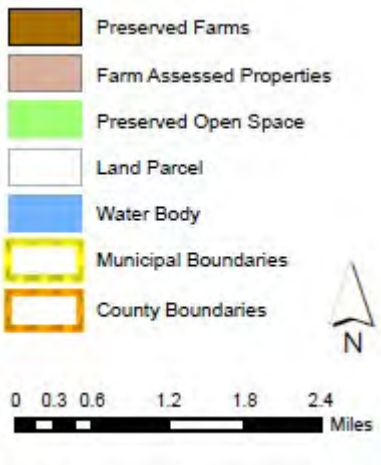


Figure IV-3. Preserved Farm in Closter Borough on Hickory Lane.

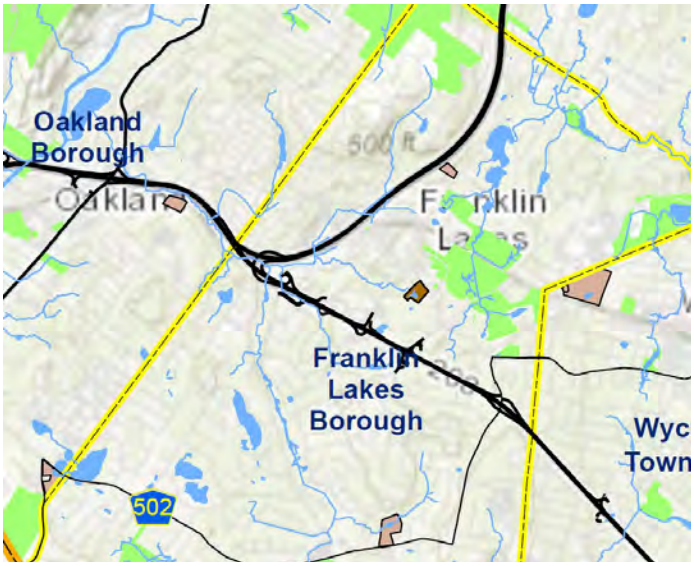


Figure IV-4. Preserved Farm in Franklin Lakes Borough on Franklin Avenue.

A. Bergen County Agricultural Development Area (ADA)

To qualify for the SADC PIG program, farms must be located within Bergen County's Agricultural Development Area (ADA) which designates land that has the potential for long-term agricultural viability. The Bergen County Agriculture Development Board (Bergen CADB) determines which lands fall within the County's ADA based upon statutory and County criteria. By New Jersey statute (NJ Rev Stat 4:1C-18), agriculture must be the preferred, but not necessarily the exclusive use, as long as that land meets the following criteria:

- Encompasses productive agricultural lands which are currently in production or have a strong potential for future production in agriculture and in which agriculture is a permitted use under the current municipal zoning ordinance or in which agriculture is permitted as a non-conforming use;
- Is reasonably free of suburban and conflicting commercial development; and
- Comprises not greater than 90% of the agricultural land mass of the county.

There are five additional criteria which are not mandatory, but included in the statute. In instances where land has been excluded from an ADA but is exceptionally good for agricultural production, one or more of these criteria may be waived and that land may be included in the ADA:

- Predominance of prime agricultural soils or of statewide importance or can easily support agricultural production.
- At least five contiguous acres.
- Qualifies for farmland assessment.
- Woodland areas that follow farm management plans.
- Agriculture is the preferred, but not necessarily the exclusive use.

All preserved farmland is included within the ADA. The Bergen CADB includes within its ADA all farmland currently in agricultural production or land that has a strong potential for agricultural production or is farm assessed through a woodland management plan.

The ADA is parcel-based, as the farms are scattered throughout the County and in many instances, are isolated from one another. The ADA is shown in **Map 4**.

Project Areas

The boundaries of the ADA and Project Areas are synchronous, as shown in **Map 4**. This will reduce the need for future amendments to the ADA and increase transparency as to what is in and outside of the ADA.

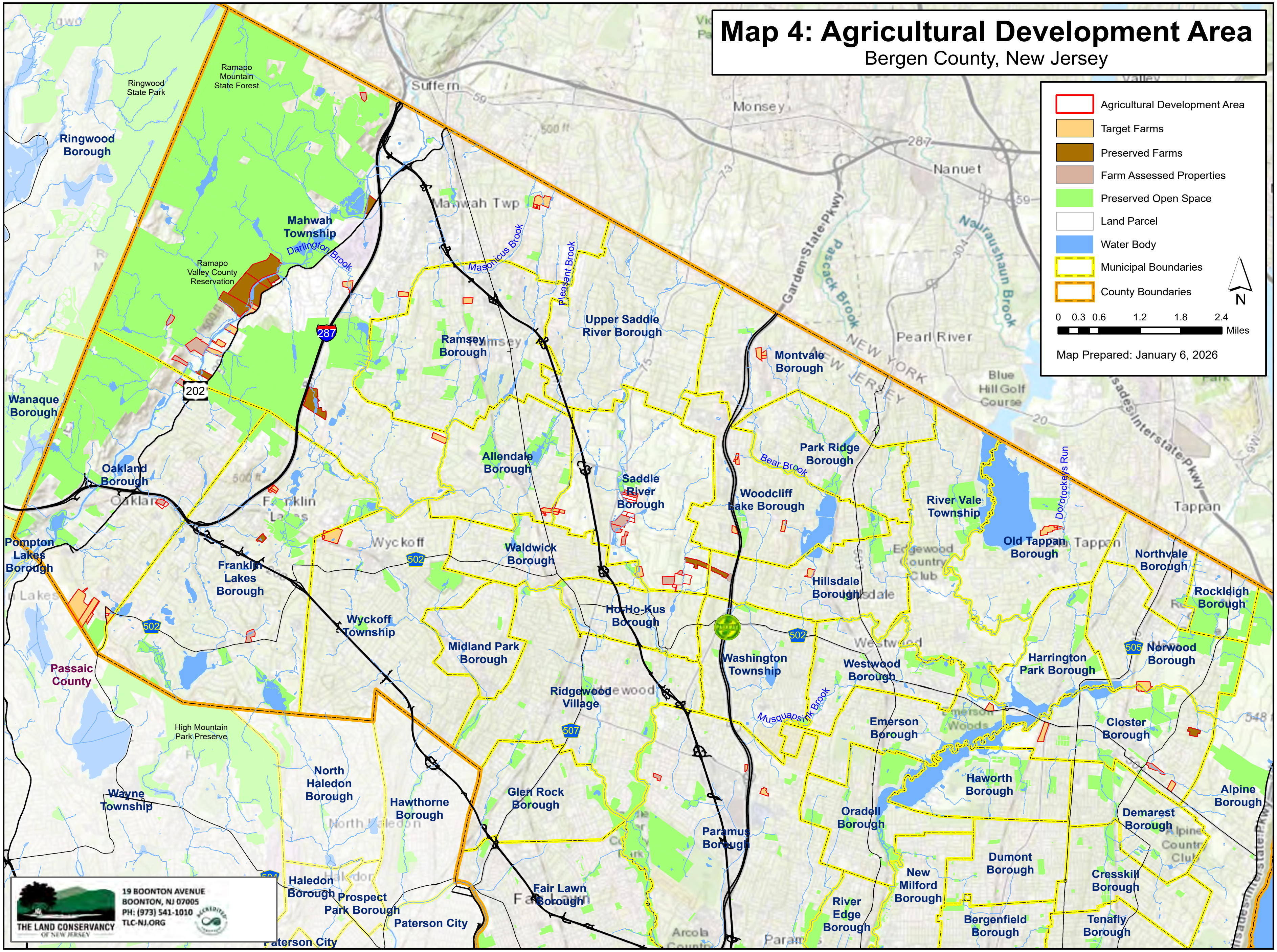
Geographic Information Systems (GIS) Mapping and the ADA

The ADA in Bergen County includes 587 acres, or 41 farms, which are not preserved. And, it includes seven farms totaling 335 acres, which are permanently protected.

B. Farmland Preserved to Date by Program

The first farm preserved in Bergen County was in Mahwah Township in 2002. It is the largest preserved farm (216 acres) in the County. In Bergen County:

- Four farms are preserved in Mahwah Township, totaling 291 acres. Located in the Highlands Region, three are in the Preservation Area, and the fourth is in the Planning Area.
- Five towns have preserved farms: Closter, Franklin Lakes, Hillsdale, Mahwah, and Saddle River.


Map 4: Agricultural Development Area
Bergen County, New Jersey
Agricultural Development Area
Target Farms
Preserved Farms
Farm Assessed Properties
Preserved Open Space
Land Parcel
Water Body
Municipal Boundaries
County Boundaries
N
0 0.3 0.6 1.2 1.8 2.4 Miles
Map Prepared: January 6, 2026
Ringwood Borough
Mahwah Township
Ramsey Borough
Upper Saddle River Borough
Montvale Borough
Wanaque Borough
Oakland Borough
Allendale Borough
Saddle River Borough
Park Ridge Borough
Woodcliff Lake Borough
River Vale Township
Old Tappan Borough
Northvale Borough
Rockleigh Borough
Pompton Lakes Borough
Franklin Lakes Borough
Waldwick Borough
Hillsdale Borough
Wyckoff Township
Ho-Ho-Kus Borough
Midland Park Borough
Washington Township
Westwood Borough
Harrington Park Borough
Norwood Borough
Passaic County
Ridgewood Village
Emerson Borough
Closter Borough
Haworth Borough
Alpine Borough
Wayne Township
North Haledon Borough
Hawthorne Borough
Glen Rock Borough
Oradell Borough
Paramus Borough
Demarest Borough
Dumont Borough
New Milford Borough
Cresskill Borough
Haledon Borough
Prospect Park Borough
Paterson City
Fair Lawn Borough
River Edge Borough
Bergenfield Borough
Tenafly Borough
THE LAND CONSERVANCY OF NEW JERSEY
19 BOONTON AVENUE
BOONTON, NJ 07005
PH: (973) 541-1010
TLC-NJ.ORG

- The Demarest Farm in Saddle River was preserved in 2015 with the highest county cost share (69%) of the seven farms preserved in Bergen County.
- The 216 acre preserved farm in Mahwah Township was protected an 80% cost share from the SADC, the highest of the farms preserved in Bergen County.

A total of $19,752,944 has been spent to preserve the seven farms in Bergen County.

- $10,866,840 (55%) came from the State.
- $8,886,103 (45%) came from the County.
- $467,868 came through the Federal Farm & Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRPP) for the farms in Closter and Franklin Lakes in 2004.

Table IV-1 and **Table IV-2** provide more information on the farms preserved in Bergen County. The sections below detail the funding programs available to protect farmland.

Table IV-1. Preserved Farms in Bergen County

Municipality	Block and Lot	Date Closed	Program	Acres
Mahwah Twp.	B 1 / L 145, 146, 147; B 19 / L 12, 16, 17	4/26/2002	County EP	216.10
Franklin Lakes Boro.	B 1424.01 / L 3	2/06/2004	County EP	6.25
Closter Boro.	B 2102 / L55	6/29/2004	County EP	10.75
Hillsdale Boro.	B 202 / L 1	4/04/2005	County EP	10.10
Mahwah Twp.	B 17 / L 11	5/25/2006	County EP	16.50
Mahwah Twp.	B 25 / L 14	6/20/2006	County EP	11.00
Mahwah Twp.	B 147 / L 23.01	1/17/2007	County EP	47.13
Saddle River Boro.	B 2101 / L 13	3/02/2015	County PIG	17.38
Total:				**335.21**

Source: SADC and Bergen County CADB
County EP: County Easement Purchase program

Table IV-2. Total Dollars Spent to Preserve Farms in Bergen County

Municipality	Closed	Acres	Total Cost	State	County	Federal
Mahwah Twp.	2002	216.10	$3,362,940.00	$2,677,792.00	$685,148.00	$0.00
Franklin Lakes	2004	6.25	$988,132.00	$592,879.20	$395,252.80	$199,115.76
Closter Boro.	2004	10.75	$2,544,993.82	$1,654,245.98	$890,747.84	$268,752.52
Hillsdale Boro.	2005	10.10	$3,354,196.00	$1,677,098.00	$1,677,098.00	$0.00
Mahwah Twp.	2006	16.50	$1,320,654.00	$545,081.25	$775,572.75	$0.00
Mahwah Twp.	2006	11.00	$580,250.00	$345,512.50	$234,737.50	$0.00
Mahwah Twp.	2007	47.13	$3,864,906.00	$2,227,034.25	$1,637,871.75	$0.00
Saddle River	2015	17.38	$3,736,872.00	$1,147,197.20	$2,589,674.80	$0.00
Total:	**8 farms**	**335.21**	**$19,752,943.82**	**$10,866,840.38**	**$8,886,103.44**	**$467,868.28**
		average cost/acre:	**$58,926.72**	**% cost share: 55%**	**% cost share: 45%**	

Source: SADC and Bergen County CADB

Table IV-3. Farmland Preserved By Program in Bergen County				
Program	**Number of Farms**	**Acreage**	**Percent**	**Total Cost**
County Easement Purchase	7	317.83	95%	$16,016,017.82
County Planning Incentive Grant	1	17.38	5%	$3,736,872.00
Source: SADC and Bergen County CADB				

County Programs

County programs have preserved 100% of all farms protected in Bergen County.

County Easement Purchase: County Easement Purchases (EP) and Independent Easement Purchase (IEP) involve the sale of farmland development rights to the county by the landowner. To be eligible for the EP program, the land must be in the ADA and be eligible for farmland assessment. In the traditional EP program, the SADC cost shares with the county on the purchase of the easement. A farm preserved through the county's IEP does not include state funds as part of the acquisition.

Seven farms have been preserved through the County EP program, totaling 317.83 acres, 95% of the total acreage preserved and 81% of the total funding expended (**Table IV-3**).

County Planning Incentive Grant: The goal of the County PIG program is to protect and preserve large pieces of contiguous farmland through the purchase of development easements. Bergen County completed its 2014 Farmland Preservation Plan to bring the county into compliance with the PIG program. Per NJAC 2:7-6-6.11, the state cost-share can be more or less than 40% depending on the cost per acre. One farm, totaling 17.38 acres (five percent of the preserved acreage), has been preserved through the County PIG program.

State Programs

SADC Fee Simple: An SADC fee simple acquisition 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 property is then resold at auction, and the SADC does not retain ownership. To participate in the program, the farm must be in the ADA and be eligible for farmland assessment.

SADC Easement Purchase: The SADC EP program allows a landowner to apply directly to the SADC for the sale of development rights. In most cases, the state will pay up to 100% of the certified appraised easement value.

Municipal Programs

Municipal Planning Incentive Grants: Municipal PIGs are similar to the County PIGs in their goals, requirements, and implementation. Municipal PIGs require a local financial commitment for preserving farmland. To qualify for this program, the municipality must have an agricultural advisory board and a source of funding for farmland preservation. Municipal PIGs also must establish and maintain a dedicated source of funding for farmland preservation pursuant to P.L.1997, c.24 (C.40:12-15.1 et seq.). Farms to be preserved through a municipal PIG need to be approved by the CADB.

The SADC employs a sliding scale funding policy for County and Municipal PIGS (SADC regulation NJAC 2:76-6.11(d)) which is dependent on the overall cost per acres value, farm size and criteria ranking. The SADC typically funds 60% and may contribute as much as 80% of the funds to acquire a farm's development easement. Agricultural easements valued lower than $50,000 per acre are funded at a higher rate, up to 80%, and easements valued at over $50,000 per acre are funded at a lower rate. The county typically shares the remaining local cost share on a 50-50 basis.

There are no towns in Bergen County in the Municipal PIG program.

Non-Profit Programs

Grants are provided to non-profit organizations by the SADC, and fund up to 50% of the fee simple or development easement values on farms. In order to qualify for State and County cost share, farms preserved through the non-profit program must fall within the ADA and County project area and meet the other minimum eligibility criteria set forth by the SADC and CADB.

C. Term Farmland Preservation Programs

Term Farmland Preservation Programs preserve land for a predetermined period of time. These are cost sharing programs for soil and water conservation projects, in which the farmer receives up to 50% of the costs for these projects, as well as protection against nuisance complaints, emergency fuel and water rationing, zoning changes and eminent domain actions. In return, the farmer signs an agreement that restricts the land to agricultural use for a predetermined period of time (eight or 16 years).[2]

For entrance into these programs and to qualify for benefits, a farm must be located within the County ADA. Technical assistance for the soil and water practices comes through the NRCS. The CADB views the Term Programs as a stepping-stone to preservation, introducing participants to preservation and allowing them to participate in grants for needed projects. There are currently no farms enrolled in the term preservation programs in Bergen County.

D. Coordination with Open Space Preservation Initiatives

The coordination of farmland preservation with open space planning efforts is supported by the CADB. Appropriate measures need to be taken to separate the pubic portion of the preserved land (open space) from that which remains in private ownership (farmland). This type of cooperative partnership involves a strong working relationship between the landowner and the agency which owns and manages the open space. There projects leverage County farmland collars and make use of open space funds and grants.

These hybrid projects are an opportunity to use traditional open space funds to help preserve farm properties, especially where those properties are a mixture of cropland and woodland areas. To date, no open space purchases have been completed as part of a farmland project. Bergen County strives to avoid conflicts between agricultural operations and adjoining public open space and supports buffers between adjacent land uses. Trail easements and adjacency to proposed and existing active recreational facilities are potential areas of concern for farmers.

E. Farmland Preservation Program Funding Expended to Date by Source

The Bergen County Open Space, Recreation, Floodplain Protection, Farmland & Historic Preservation Trust Fund was approved by voters in 1998.[3] County voters approved the creation of this Trust Fund by a two-to-one majority, and at a rate not to exceed one cent per $100.00 of County equalized real property valuation. The Trust Fund is split into two categories - the County Program and the Municipal Park Improvement Program.

- County Program: Uses dollars at the county level to preserve land, maximize recreational opportunities, acquire flood-prone properties, and preserve farmland and historic areas. 70% of open space tax revenue each year is dedicated to this program.
- Municipal Park Improvement Program: Every one of Bergen County's municipalities can apply to this program for funding to improve their municipal open space and recreational facilities. 30% of open space tax revenue each year is dedicated to this program.

In the 2025 budget[4] for Bergen County:

- Rate assessed: $0.01 (one cent).
- Total tax collected to date: $352,649,206.
- Total expended to date: $288,995,411.
- Total acreage preserved to date: 10,309 acres.

Municipalities in Bergen County have established local open space trust funds. Twenty-seven municipalities collect a total of $7.3 million in annual revenue to improve parks and acquire land for open space and farmland in Bergen County.[5]

F. Monitoring the Easements

Monitoring is the responsibility of the easement holder. The County is only responsible for easements preserved under the county EP and PIG program. The SADC is responsible for SADC Direct Easement and Fee Simple farms and non-profits must monitor easements they hold. The inspectors take note of the following:

- Change in ownership since the previous inspection.
- Changes in residential, agricultural and non-agricultural uses.
- Evidence of mining or removing of materials such as sand, gravel, rock, etc.
- Evidence of dumping or fallow fields.
- Whether or not the farm has an approved conservation plan.
- Any issues which may be in violation of the deed of easement and determination of what corrective actions may be necessary.

G. Coordination with Transfer of Development Rights Programs

No municipalities in Bergen County have implemented a transfer-of-development rights (TDR) program.

Literature Cited

Chapter 4

1 United States Census. Census Report. Bergen County, NJ. https://censusreporter.org/profiles/05000US34003-bergen-county-nj/. Accessed October 2025.

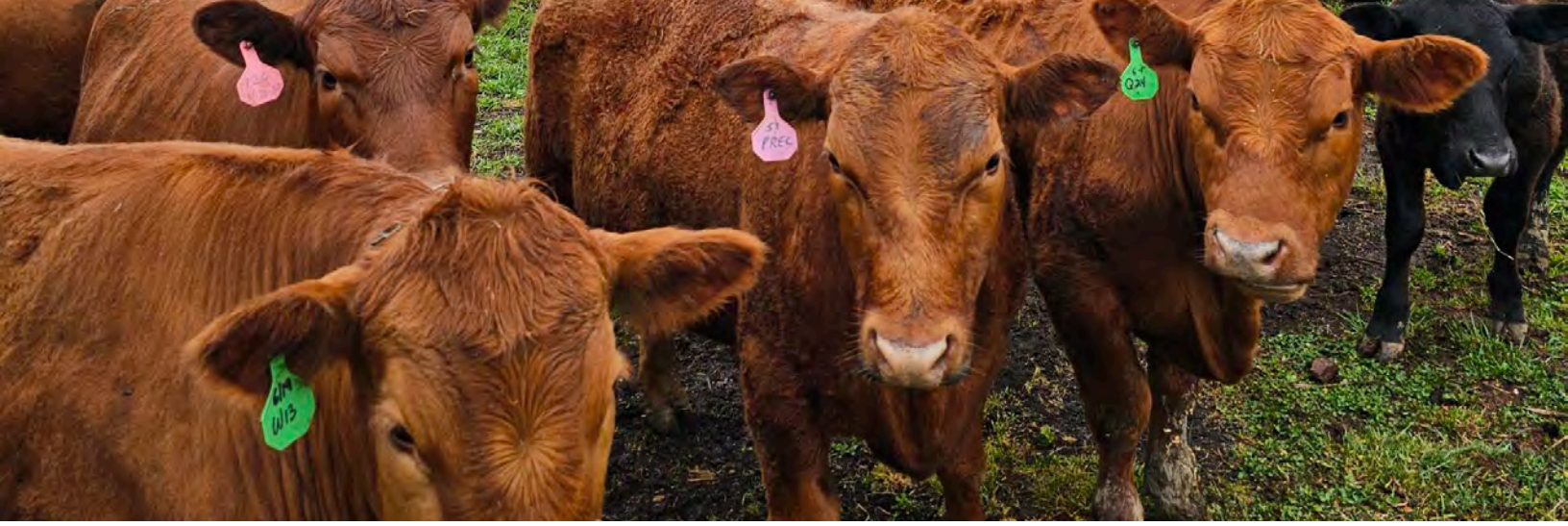
2 Natural Resources Conservation Service. NJ Wetland Reserve Easements. https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs-initiatives/wre-wetland-reserve-easements/new-jersey/new-jersey-wetland-reserve-easements. Accessed April 2025.

3 Bergen County Open Space, Recreation, Floodplain Protection, Farmland & Historic Preservation Trust Fund. Program Statement. https://bergencountynj.gov/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/programstatement.pdf. Accessed October 2025.

4 2025 Bergen County Adopted Budget. https://bergencountynj.gov/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/0200_certifiedadoptbudget_2025.pdf. Accessed October 2025.

5 Sussex County Board of Taxation. 2024 Abstract of Ratables. https://www.sussex.nj.us/documents/TaxBoard/2024/2024CountyAbstractOfRatables.pdf. Accessed April 2025.

6 The assessment acreage data for **Chapter IV** and **Chapter V** was derived using ArcGIS mapping. The data is accessed via the New Jersey Geographic Information Network (NJGIN) Open Data portal (njogis-newjersey.opendata.arcgis.com).



Abma's Farm, Wyckoff Township
Source: Abma's Farm

Chapter V.

Future Farmland Program

A. Preservation Goals

Bergen County has seven preserved farms, permanently protecting 335 acres. Milestones for Bergen County's farmland preservation program include:

- 1998: Bergen County Open Space, Recreation, Floodplain Protection, Farmland and Historic Preservation Trust Fund established.
- 2000: ADA map published for Bergen County.
- 2002: First farm preserved in Bergen County.
- 2014: Farmland Preservation Plan adopted.
- 2015: 17 acre farm preserved in Saddle River, the most recent farm protected through the county/state programs.

Using the inventory of farmland eligible for preservation, landowner interest, and the amount of potential funding available, the Bergen CADB would like to continue to preserve farms over the next ten years. This will involve a collaboration between agencies (state and county) to expand opportunities for hybrid projects, combining farmland and open space priorities in the most populous county in the New Jersey.

Project Area Summaries

The Bergen County projects areas are parcel-based and synchronous with the ADA (see **Map 4** in **Chapter IV**). The ADA/ Project Area includes the remaining 41 unpreserved farms (totaling 587 acres) in Bergen County. **Maps 6** through **10** in **Chapter V** detail the ADA, by region, in Bergen County.

B. SADC Minimum Eligibility Criteria

Minimum Eligibility Criteria are based upon the SADC's rules for farmland preservation and project eligibility (Adopted by the SADC May 21, 2007 and July 25, 2019). In order to be eligible for preservation the site must be developable, have soils capable of supporting agricultural or horticultural production, and meet minimum tillable land standards (N.J.A.C. 2:76-6.20).

To determine farms that are potentially eligible for preservation, a series of queries were made using ArcGIS digital mapping software for soils and tillable land. The minimum eligibility analysis involved a parcel-based screen of tax lot characteristics. Farmland preservation applications often include multiple lots; combining these lots may increase the acreage eligible for SADC cost share funding in Bergen County. **Appendix C** describes the state's requirements and the methodology for mapping these on the ArcGIS.

For a farm application to qualify for SADC cost share, the farm must have at least one parcel listed on the targeted farm list; comprise an assemblage of substandard parcels which together meet SADC minimum standards; or have sufficient justification by the CADB that the parcels were not identified as targeted due to a specific mapping issue or other error.

C. County Ranking Criteria

The Bergen CADB uses the SADC's ranking criteria as the basis for qualifying farms for preservation. The CADB supplements this ranking with an on-site visit for each applicant. Determination whether an application will be submitted to the County PIG program, to other SADC programs or through independent preservation strategies without state cost share, is made on an application by application basis as to which program is most suited for that project

The County Commissioners are committed to preserving as much of the agricultural land base as possible and supports innovative funding mechanisms and preservation tools.

Strategic Preservation

In 2020, the Bergen CADB completed an analysis of the remaining farmland to determine their agricultural viability and potential eligibility for preservation through state and county programs. It looked at soils, tillable lands, and zoning. This study was revisited in 2025 where the County looked at each of the remaining 41 farms to determine their agricultural productivity, soils, tillability (using both the ArcGIS software and aerial mapping), zoning, and level of soil disturbance (this information was provided by the SADC).

The CADB recommends a three tiered approach to preserving the remaining farms, diversifying the program to include those farms which are productive but may not meet state criteria, and those farms which are locally important but are outside of the eligibility provisions. On the following pages is a description of the County criteria and mapping (**Map 5** through **Map 10**) which shows the target farms and where they are located in Bergen County. The three tiers include:

- Tier I: Meet SADC eligibility criteria: two farms, 30 acres.
- Tier II: Productive farms, outside of SADC criteria: eight farms, 65 acres.
- Tier III: Locally important farms, ineligible for state funding: 17 farms, 269 acres.

BERGEN COUNTY
2025 FARMLAND PRESERVATION PLAN
STRATEGIC PRESERVATION

Bergen County has preserved 7 farms, and 41 farms remain. Traditionally, the County has preserved farms in partnership with the State of New Jersey, prioritizing land that meets the state's eligibility criteria. This has proved challenging for Bergen County, where many farms do not meet state requirements.

As part of the Farm Plan Update, the CADB recognizes the agricultural value of farms that may not meet the state criteria but contribute to the economy, both through tourism and through products valued by residents. There may be additional options not typically considered in a traditional farm preservation program that the County can use to make a meaningful difference in the landscape. To address this, the CADB recommends diversifying its program to include farms that may traditionally qualify for funding and lands that could serve as future urban agriculture sites.

Bergen County's Agriculture Development Area (ADA):

1. TARGET FARMS: Farms that meet or are close to meeting state and county thresholds for preservation.
2. STRATEGIC CONSERVATION: Integrating partnership and innovation. This includes farm assessed land that does not meet current state or county preservation criteria.

COUNTY CRITERIA: TARGET FARMS

TIER I. FARMS THAT MEET STATE CRITERIA FOR PRESERVATION
- 2 Farms (30 acres) in Bergen County

TIER II. FARMS CLOSE TO OR BELOW STATE PRESERVATION CRITERIA
- 8 farms (65 acres) in Bergen County

TIER III. LOCALLY IMPORTANT FARMS, DO NOT MEET STATE THRESHOLDS
- 17 farms (269 acres) in Bergen County

COUNTY CRITERIA: ADA

TIERS I, II, III: TARGET FARMS
- 27 target farms (365 acres) in Bergen County

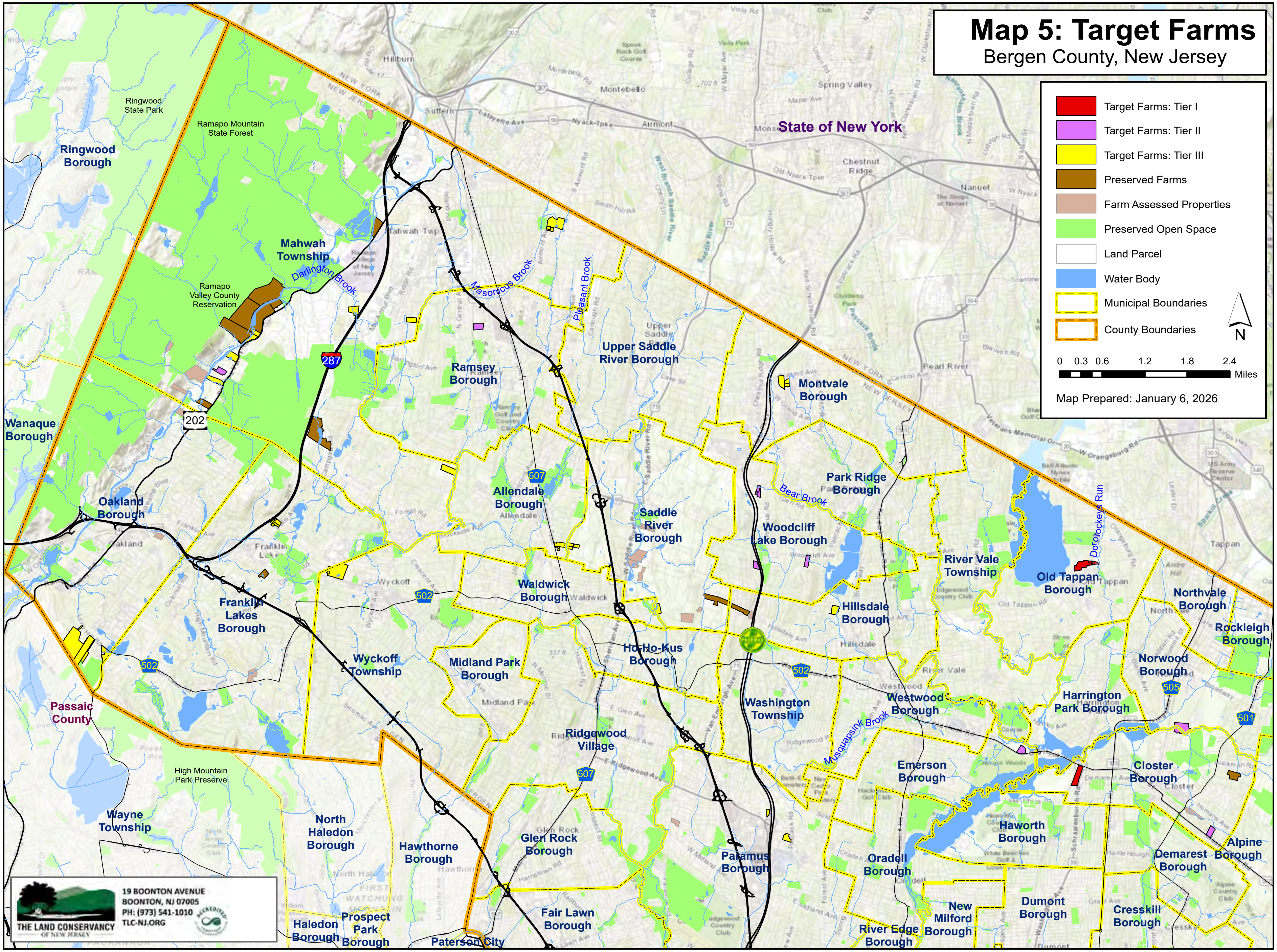
FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES FOR SUPPORTING URBAN AGRICULTURE
- Remaining farm assessed land: 14 farms (222 acres)

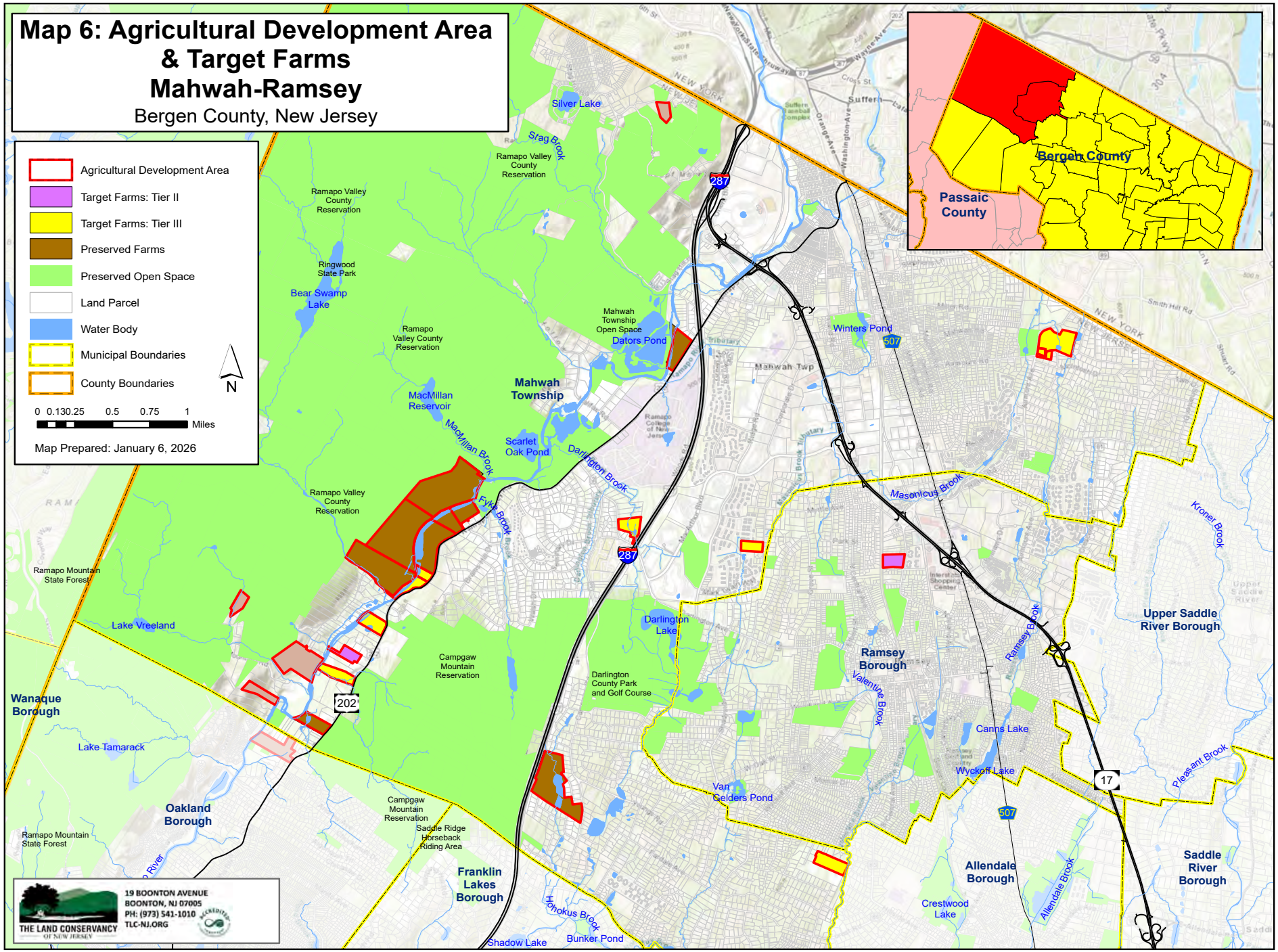
FAST FACTS:

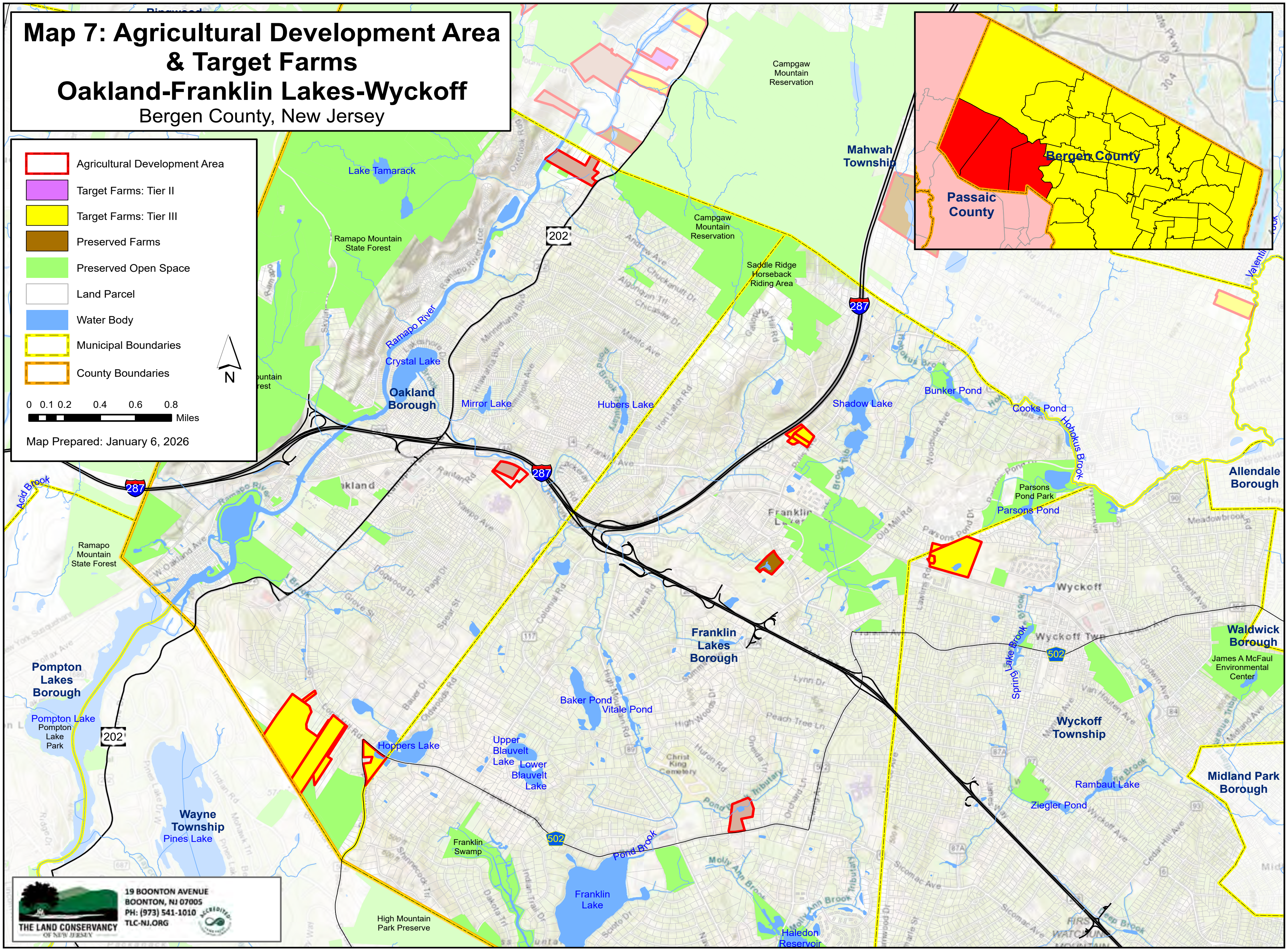
41 farms (587 acres) are not preserved in Bergen County.

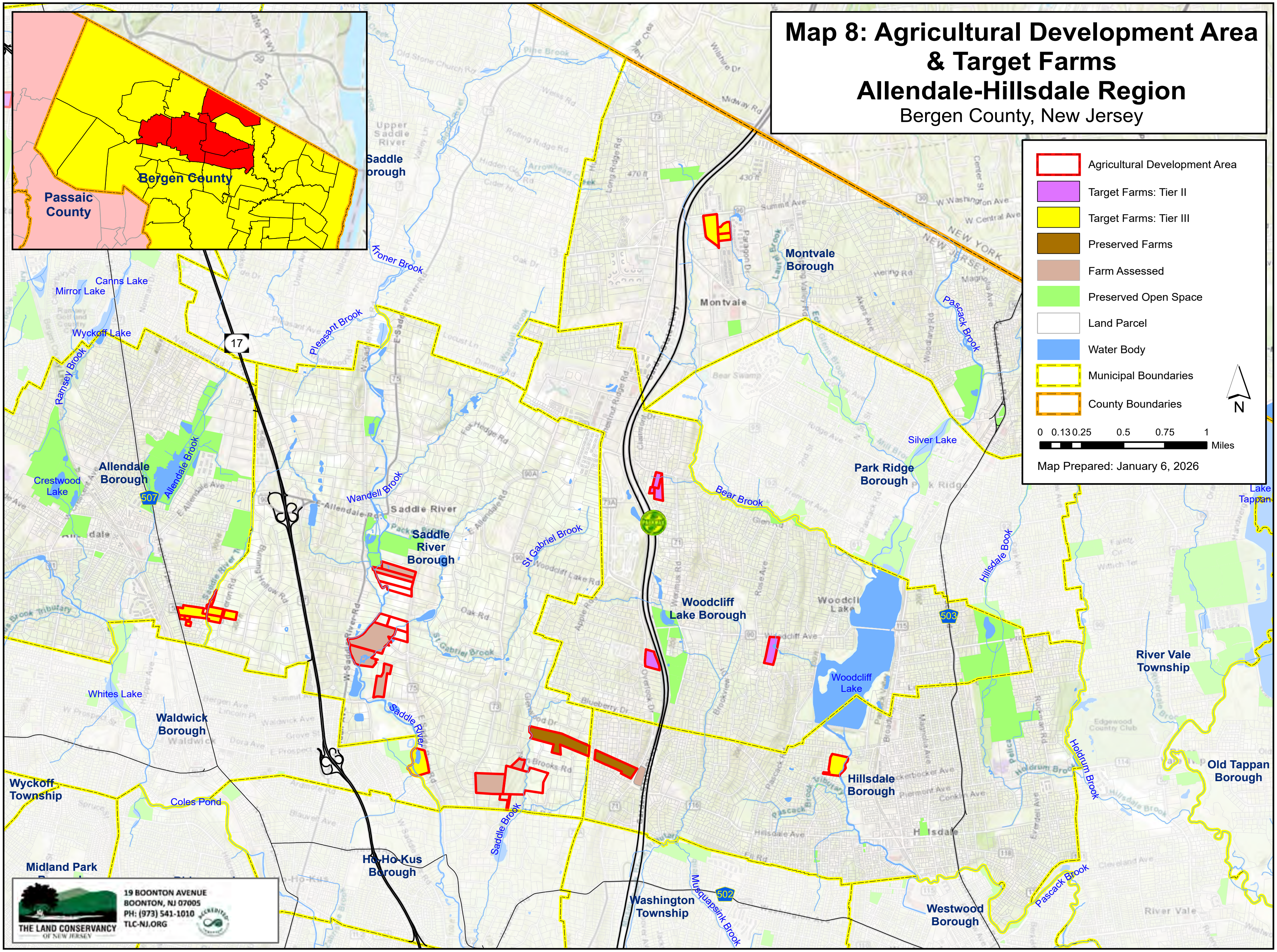
335 acres (7 farms) are preserved.

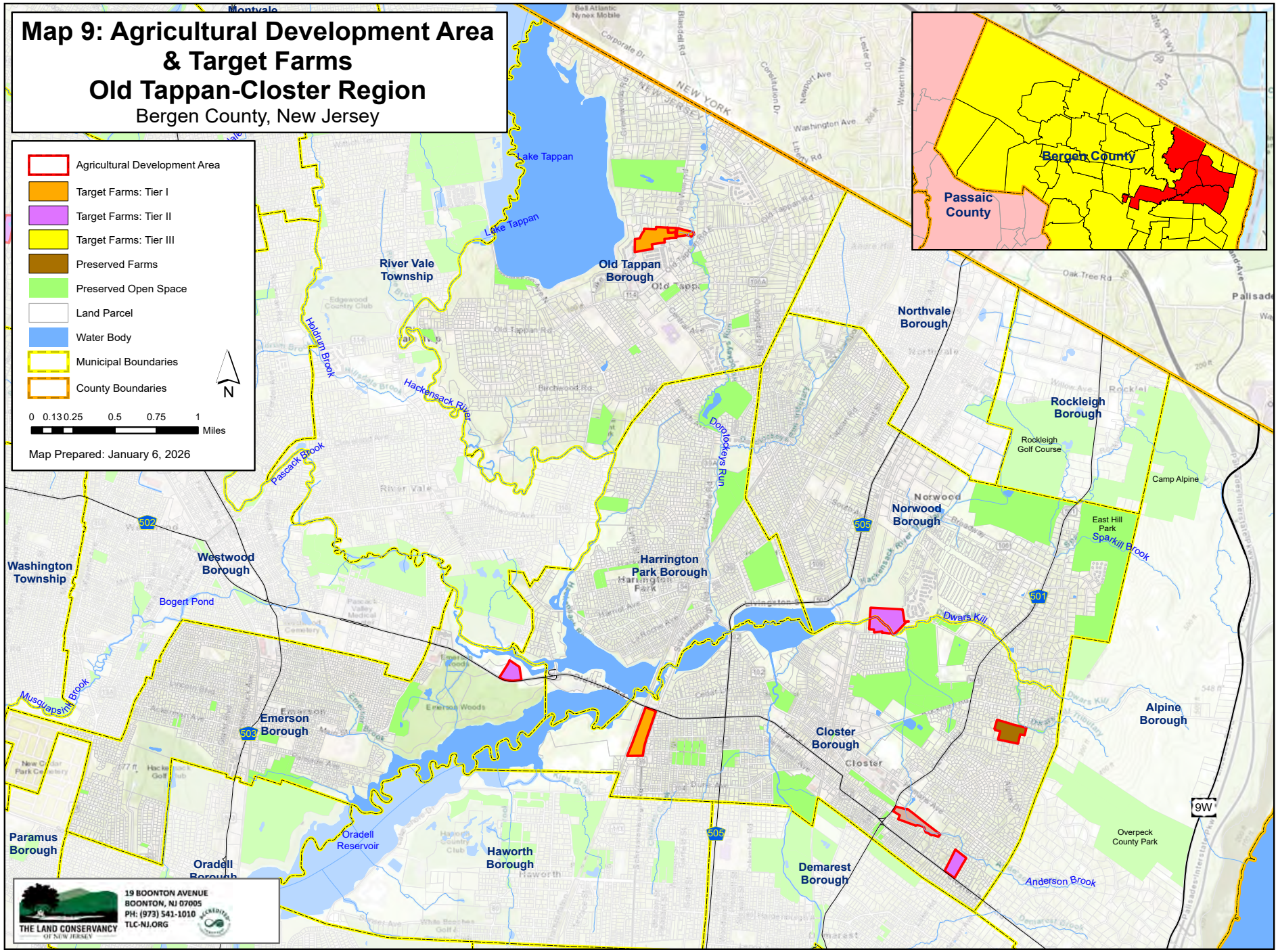
18,431 acres are preserved in Bergen County as parks & open space.

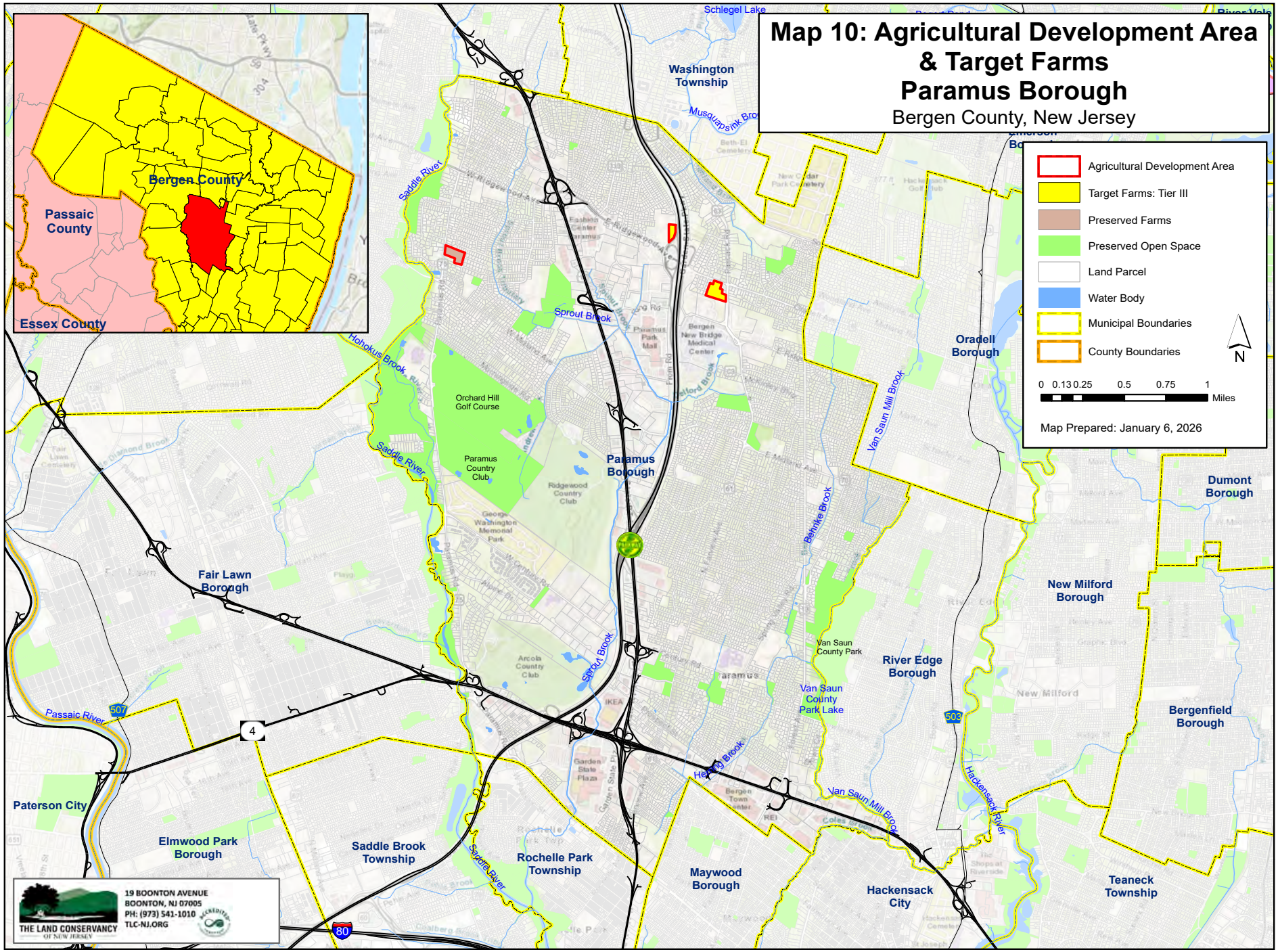

Map 5: Target Farms
Bergen County, New Jersey
Target Farms: Tier I
Target Farms: Tier II
Target Farms: Tier III
Preserved Farms
Farm Assessed Properties
Preserved Open Space
Land Parcel
Water Body
Municipal Boundaries
County Boundaries
N
0 0.3 0.6 1.2 1.8 2.4
Miles
Map Prepared: January 6, 2026
State of New York
Ringwood State Park
Ramapo Mountain State Forest
Ringwood Borough
Mahwah Township
Ramapo Valley County Reservation
Darlington Brook
Masonicus Brook
Pleasant Brook
Ramsey Borough
Upper Saddle River Borough
Montvale Borough
Wanaque Borough
Oakland Borough
Allendale Borough
Saddle River Borough
Park Ridge Borough
Bear Brook
Woodcliff Lake Borough
River Vale Township
Old Tappan Borough
Dorotockeys Run
Franklin Lakes Borough
Waldwick Borough
Hillsdale Borough
Northvale Borough
Rockleigh Borough
Wyckoff Township
Midland Park Borough
Ho-Ho-Kus Borough
Washington Township
Westwood Borough
Norwood Borough
Harrington Park Borough
Passaic County
Ridgewood Village
Musquapsink Brook
Emerson Borough
Closter Borough
High Mountain Park Preserve
Wayne Township
North Haledon Borough
Hawthorne Borough
Glen Rock Borough
Paramus Borough
Oradell Borough
Haworth Borough
Demarest Borough
Alpine Borough
Haledon Borough
Prospect Park Borough
Paterson City
Fair Lawn Borough
River Edge Borough
New Milford Borough
Dumont Borough
Cresskill Borough
19 BOONTON AVENUE
BOONTON, NJ 07005
PH: (973) 541-1010
TLC-NJ.ORG
THE LAND CONSERVANCY OF NEW JERSEY


Map 6: Agricultural Development Area & Target Farms
Mahwah-Ramsey
Bergen County, New Jersey
Agricultural Development Area
Target Farms: Tier II
Target Farms: Tier III
Preserved Farms
Preserved Open Space
Land Parcel
Water Body
Municipal Boundaries
County Boundaries
N
0 0.130.25 0.5 0.75 1
Miles
Map Prepared: January 6, 2026
Bergen County
Passaic County
Silver Lake
Srag Brook
Ramapo Valley County Reservation
Ringwood State Park
Bear Swamp Lake
Mahwah Township Open Space
Dators Pond
Winters Pond
Mahwah Township
MacMillan Reservoir
MacMillan Brook
Scarlet Oak Pond
Darlington Brook
Fyke Brook
Masonicus Brook
Kroner Brook
Ramapo Mountain State Forest
Lake Vreeland
Campgaw Mountain Reservation
Darlington Lake
Darlington County Park and Golf Course
Ramsey Borough
Ramsey Brook
Valentine Brook
Upper Saddle River Borough
Wanaque Borough
Lake Tamarack
Canns Lake
Wyckoff Lake
Van Gelders Pond
Pleasant Brook
Oakland Borough
Saddle Ridge Horseback Riding Area
Franklin Lakes Borough
Allendale Borough
Allendale Brook
Saddle River Borough
Crestwood Lake
Hohokus Brook
Shadow Lake
Bunker Pond
287
202
17
507
Mahwah Twp
19 BOONTON AVENUE
BOONTON, NJ 07005
PH: (973) 541-1010
TLC-NJ.ORG
THE LAND CONSERVANCY OF NEW JERSEY


Map 7: Agricultural Development Area & Target Farms
Oakland-Franklin Lakes-Wyckoff
Bergen County, New Jersey
Agricultural Development Area
Target Farms: Tier II
Target Farms: Tier III
Preserved Farms
Preserved Open Space
Land Parcel
Water Body
Municipal Boundaries
County Boundaries
N
0 0.1 0.2 0.4 0.6 0.8
Miles
Map Prepared: January 6, 2026
Bergen County
Passaic County
Campgaw Mountain Reservation
Mahwah Township
Lake Tamarack
Ramapo Mountain State Forest
Saddle Ridge Horseback Riding Area
Ramapo River
Crystal Lake
Oakland Borough
Mirror Lake
Hubers Lake
Shadow Lake
Bunker Pond
Cooks Pond
Hohokus Brook
Allendale Borough
Parsons Pond Park
Parsons Pond
Acid Brook
Wyckoff
Waldwick Borough
James A McFaul Environmental Center
Franklin Lakes Borough
Pompton Lakes Borough
Pompton Lake
Pompton Lake Park
Baker Pond
Vitale Pond
Hoppers Lake
Upper Blauvelt Lake
Lower Blauvelt Lake
Spring Lake Brook
Wyckoff Township
Midland Park Borough
Rambaut Lake
Ziegler Pond
Wayne Township
Pines Lake
Franklin Swamp
Pond Brook
Franklin Lake
Haledon Reservoir
High Mountain Park Preserve
287
202
502
19 BOONTON AVENUE
BOONTON, NJ 07005
PH: (973) 541-1010
TLC-NJ.ORG
THE LAND CONSERVANCY OF NEW JERSEY


Map 8: Agricultural Development Area
& Target Farms
Allendale-Hillsdale Region
Bergen County, New Jersey
Agricultural Development Area
Target Farms: Tier II
Target Farms: Tier III
Preserved Farms
Farm Assessed
Preserved Open Space
Land Parcel
Water Body
Municipal Boundaries
County Boundaries
N
0 0.13 0.25 0.5 0.75 1
Miles
Map Prepared: January 6, 2026
Bergen County
Passaic County
Allendale Borough
Saddle River Borough
Montvale Borough
Park Ridge Borough
Woodcliff Lake Borough
River Vale Township
Hillsdale Borough
Old Tappan Borough
Waldwick Borough
Wyckoff Township
Midland Park
Ho-Ho-Kus Borough
Washington Township
Westwood Borough
19 BOONTON AVENUE
BOONTON, NJ 07005
PH: (973) 541-1010
TLC-NJ.ORG
THE LAND CONSERVANCY OF NEW JERSEY


Map 9: Agricultural Development Area & Target Farms
Old Tappan-Closter Region
Bergen County, New Jersey
Agricultural Development Area
Target Farms: Tier I
Target Farms: Tier II
Target Farms: Tier III
Preserved Farms
Preserved Open Space
Land Parcel
Water Body
Municipal Boundaries
County Boundaries
N
0 0.13 0.25 0.5 0.75 1
Miles
Map Prepared: January 6, 2026
Bergen County
Passaic County
Lake Tappan
River Vale Township
Old Tappan Borough
Northvale Borough
Rockleigh Borough
Rockleigh Golf Course
Camp Alpine
Norwood Borough
East Hill Park
Sparkill Brook
Harrington Park Borough
Dwars Kill
Washington Township
Westwood Borough
Bogert Pond
Musquapsin Brook
Emerson Borough
Closter Borough
Alpine Borough
Paramus Borough
Oradell Reservoir
Haworth Borough
Demarest Borough
Overpeck County Park
Anderson Brook
Holdrum Brook
Pascack Brook
Hackensack River
Doro tookeys Run
19 BOONTON AVENUE
BOONTON, NJ 07005
PH: (973) 541-1010
TLC-NJ.ORG
THE LAND CONSERVANCY OF NEW JERSEY


Map 10: Agricultural Development Area & Target Farms
Paramus Borough
Bergen County, New Jersey
Agricultural Development Area
Target Farms: Tier III
Preserved Farms
Preserved Open Space
Land Parcel
Water Body
Municipal Boundaries
County Boundaries
N
0 0.13 0.25 0.5 0.75 1
Miles
Map Prepared: January 6, 2026
Bergen County
Passaic County
Essex County
Washington Township
Oradell Borough
Paramus Borough
Dumont Borough
New Milford Borough
Bergenfield Borough
River Edge Borough
Fair Lawn Borough
Paterson City
Elmwood Park Borough
Saddle Brook Township
Rochelle Park Township
Maywood Borough
Hackensack City
Teaneck Township
Saddle River
Hohokus Brook
Sprout Brook
Van Saun Mill Brook
Berrike Brook
Passaic River
Hackensack River
Orchard Hill Golf Course
Paramus Country Club
Ridgewood Country Club
Arcola Country Club
Van Saun County Park
Van Saun County Park Lake
Garden State Plaza
IKEA
Bergen New Bridge Medical Center
Paramus Park Mall
THE LAND CONSERVANCY OF NEW JERSEY
19 BOONTON AVENUE
BOONTON, NJ 07005
PH: (973) 541-1010
TLC-NJ.ORG

Appendix D includes a listing of the three tiers of farms in Bergen County. The Bergen CADB understands that the SADC will participate on those farms that meet current state guidelines for preservation (Tier I).

For those farms that fall close to the SADC criteria (Tier II), which are tillable but do not have agricultural soils, or they meet the criteria but local zoning does not support agriculture, the CADB will work with the towns, owners, and SADC to seek eligibility through the state and county funding programs.

For those farms that do not meet the state criteria (Tier III) the CADB will work with the County Open Space Committee, Staff, and County Commissioners to determine opportunities for preservation as hybrid projects - combining farmland objectives with open space funding. The CADB is committed to preserving local farms and local agriculture through collaboration, partnership, and innovative funding.

Accompanying **Chapter V** is a white paper on urban farming - its benefits and opportunities. It explores how this could be replicated in Bergen County and diversity options for agriculture and preservation.

D. Municipal and County Policies Related to Farmland Preservation Applications

The Bergen CADB follows the SADC's policies regarding housing opportunities, division of premises and exception areas; there have been no changes to these policies since the 2014 Farmland Preservation Plan. Below is a brief summary of the state policies for each of these issues.

1. Approval of Housing Opportunities

Residential opportunities on preserved farmland are limited because the development rights on the farm have been purchased. The CADB policies closely follow those of the SADC, which restrict residential opportunities on preserved farmland and govern division of premises, agricultural labor housing, and exception areas. Housing opportunities are subject to municipal approval. Since the publishing of the 2014 Farmland Preservation Plan, there have been limited changes to the state and county policies regarding these policies.

a. Agricultural labor housing

The requirements for constructing agricultural labor housing are less stringent than Residual Dwelling Site Opportunities (RDSOs), provided that the house is for non-family related farm labor. Any number of agricultural units may be constructed on permanently preserved farmland as long as the number of units are commensurate with the agricultural production need. It must also be approved by the Grantee and the SADC, and is consistent with the state's requirements, including the updated soil standards.

Once an agricultural labor unit is no longer inhabited by an agricultural laborer, the unit must be vacated. When labor housing issues are brought up before the CADB, the board looks closely at the application to prevent potential misuse.

b. House Replacement:

The CADB is understanding when it comes to housing replacement on preserved farmland, so long as the applicant is not excessive in their choice for a replacement house. When the existing dwelling is

located on the preserved portion of farmland, the request for replacement must first go through the local entity which holds the easement and then submitted to the SADC for approval.

While the CADB understands that there may be a need for expansion of the house footprint, it should be within reason. It will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis by the CADB and SADC.

The location of the proposed replacement dwelling also plays a role in the approval for replacement. It should be sited in such a way that minimizes the impact on the current and future agricultural activities and refrains from taking farmland out of efficient production.

If the dwelling being replaced is located on an exception area, the replacement will not need approval from the CADB or SADC but will be required to comply with local zoning regulations, local approval is always required.

c. Residual Dwelling Site Opportunity Allocation: Residual Dwelling Site Opportunities (RDSOs)

SADC regulations permit up to one dwelling unit per 100 acres of undeveloped farmland including existing dwellings, an RDSO. 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 NJAC 2:76-6.17. The RDSO must be approved by the CADB and SADC and the purpose of the building must be for single-family residential housing and its appurtenant uses only.

To qualify as an RDSO, the SADC requires that the use of the residential unit be for agricultural purposes where at least one person residing in the residential unit is regularly engaged in common site farm practices. After the farm has been preserved, the landowner may exercise the RDSO, where the location of the dwelling must first be approved by the CADB to ensure it will have minimal impact on the existing agricultural operations.

2. Division of the Premises

The deed of easement sets forth legal restrictions that apply to a farm once it is preserved. Even if the farm consists of multiple lots, whether they are contiguous or not, the farm is effectively tied together under one deed. The goal of the SADC is to preserve large tracts of farmland and, therefore, a division of the premises is not an encouraged practice. However, when division does occur, it must be for agricultural purposes and must result in agriculturally viable land parcels.

When reviewing an application for division, the SADC and CADB consider total tillable acreage, quality of soils, configuration of new parcels, existing agricultural infrastructure, proximity to other farms, proposed agricultural uses, and the benefit to production agriculture. The proposed division will have to pass the SADC's agricultural purpose test and agricultural viability test which examine how division will impact production activities such as agricultural expansion or diversification, and how viable each parcel will be at sustaining a variety of agricultural operations.

3. Approval of Exception

An exception area is a portion of the farm that is removed from the deed restriction. An applicant may be interested in providing for an exception area if their plans for the future include any non-agricultural production activities such as providing a building lot for a child, operating a non-agricultural business out of the home or a barn, or

having the flexibility to replace the home without preservation program approvals. Without an exception area, existing non-agricultural uses cannot be expanded in the future even if they are recognized and allowed at the time of preservation.

There are two types of exception areas: severable and non-severable. Once the farm is preserved, the exception area cannot be moved or expanded, so it is important for landowners to select a location for the exception area that addresses their current and future needs The landowner may also consider multiple exceptions so long as the number is not excessive, the size of exceptions is reasonable, and the purpose and planned use of the exception area is sensitive to the farming operation and will not negatively impact the farming use. In all cases, the acreage of exception areas are not included in the final purchase price of the easement.

a. Severable:

Severable exception areas can be subdivided and sold separately from the farm provided it meets local subdivision requirements. While it is not necessary to sever or subdivide the severable exception area prior to preservation, the area should have access to a street with a driveway included in the exception. The lot size of the severable exception area is typically the minimum lot size for the zoning district in which the property is in. Severable exceptions may present a problem because it introduces a new housing unit which is not necessarily related to the farm itself. Each application is reviewed individually for its suitability on the farm.

b. Non-severable:

The SADC defines non-severable exception areas as areas of the farm which are exempt from the easement restrictions, but which remain tied to the farm and therefore cannot be subdivided, transferred, or conveyed separately from the farm.

A landowner may want to create a non-severable exception area for the land immediately under the existing farmhouse to remove any questions in the future about possible additions or permitted uses in the house. In some cases, a non-severable exception area may be for a future house location, although it is important to consider the feasibility of that location as it pertains to septic suitability, ability to obtain water, road access, wetlands, wetland buffers and special regulations that may apply.

E. Funding Plan

County Funding Sources

As discussed in **Chapter IV**, Bergen County's Open Space, Recreation, Floodplain Protection, Farmland & Historic Preservation Trust Fund was approved by voters in 1998. The Trust Fund is at a rate not to exceed one cent per $100.00 of County equalized real property valuation, and is rated at one cent for 2025. The Trust Fund is split into two programs, the County Program, which receives 70% of the Fund's revenue, and the Municipal Park Improvement Program, which receives the remaining 30%.

As of 2025, $352,649,206 has been collected through the tax:

- $288,995,411 has been spent helping to preserve 10,309 acres of land for parks and open space.
- $8,886,103 has been spent by Bergen County to preserve 335 acres of farmland (seven farms) in five towns.

State Funding

Through the Corporate Business Tax, the SADC has a dedicated source of funding, whereby, from 2020 onward, the disbursement for farmland preservation will be 31% or approximately $50.8 million. Of this, 96% will be allocated for easement acquisition (approximately $48.7 million) and up to 4% will be provided for stewardship soil and water grants (at the SADC's discretion to allocate less). Per the SADC regulation, NJAC 3:76-17A.8, this establishes a competitive pot of funds for county and municipal PIGs to access.

In late 2023, the State legislature approved P.L. 2023, c. 245, to amend the Garden State Preservation Trust (GSPT) Act (C.13:8C-38) to authorize the SADC to adopt rules establishing at Statewide Farmland Preservation Value ("statewide formula value, SFV") as an alternative method for valuation of farmland when being preserved. It is anticipated that the new SFV will generate additional interest in the farmland program. The SADC is encouraging those interested in preserving their farms to apply now, allow the state to review the farm and process the application, and then close once the SFV is adopted.

Financial Policies – Cost-Share Requirements

Municipal contributions are not required in the County Easement Purchase or County PIG programs.

Donation/Bargain Sale and Installment Purchase

The CADB is supportive of donation/ bargain sales and has not preserved farms using an installment purchase. Both of these tools serve to leverage limited funding resources.

Cost Projections and Funding Plan Associated with Preservation Goals

Bergen County is committed to farmland preservation. Typically, when the state is a partner, the County contributes 40% of the cost of an easement with the State paying the remaining share. As seen in **Table V-1**, the average cost share has varied over the years. Over the course of the program, Bergen County has contributed 45% of the total cost shareand the SADC has provided the balance necessary (55%) to close on the farms.

Tax Levy: Over the past five years the amount raised by the tax levy has grown, on average, approximately five percent per year:

- $22,824,029 raised in 2024
- $21,167,685 raised in 2023
- $18,634,305 raised in 2022
- $18,617,168 raised in 2021
- $18,458,056 raised in 2020
- $18,032,815 raised in 2019

It is estimated that a similar pattern will follow over the next ten years. The County Commissioners have consistently supported the farmland program and it is anticipated that this will remain unchanged over the next ten years.

Cost Per Acre: Over the course of the program, the average cost per acre has varied depending on the location of the farm. This trend will continue within the County, where farms located in municipalities with higher home/lot values will have a correspondingly higher per acre cost.

Debt Repayment: The County does not have any debt repayment for past

Table V-1. State and County Cost-Share to Preserve Farms in Bergen County

Municipality	Closed	Acres	Total Cost	Cost per Acre	State		County	
					Funding	%	Funding	%
Mahwah Twp.	2002	216.10	$3,362,940	$15,562	$2,677,792	80%	$685,148	20%
Franklin Lakes	2004	6.25	$988,132	$158,000	$592,879	60%	$395,253	40%
Closter Boro.	2004	10.75	$2,544,994	$236,827	$1,654,246	65%	$890,748	35%
Hillsdale Boro.	2005	10.10	$3,354,196	$332,000	$1,677,098	50%	$1,677,098	50%
Mahwah Twp.	2006	16.50	$1,320,654	$80,064	$545,081	41%	$775,573	59%
Mahwah Twp.	2006	11.00	$580,250	$52,750	$345,513	60%	$234,738	40%
Mahwah Twp.	2007	47.13	$3,864,906	$82,000	$2,227,034	58%	$1,637,872	42%
Saddle River	2015	17.38	$3,736,872	$215,000	$1,147,197	31%	$2,589,675	69%
Total:	**8 farms**	**335.21**	**$19,752,944**	**average $58,926.72**	**$10,866,840**	**55%**	**$8,886,103**	**45%**
Source: SADC and Bergen County CADB								

farmland projects. The Commissioners may consider bonding if the need arises.

Cost Shares: Utilizing the SADC sliding scale for cost-sharing, and the estimated per acre value of the purchase of a farmland easement in Bergen County, it is likely that the state will contribute 60% of the funding on a PIG project with the County contributing the remaining 40%. Completing this Farmland Plan Update continues the County's efforts to remain eligible for state funding.

F. Administrative Resources

Staff/Consultant Resources

Bergen County Department of Parks, and Division of Land Management provides staff to the CADB and manages the farmland preservation program. The CADB has regulatory oversight for the farmland program and also hears County Right-to-Farm cases.

Legal Support

Legal support for Bergen County's farmland preservation program is provided by the Office of County Counsel who works with the Department of Parks.

Database Development and Geographical Information System Resources

The Department of Parks tracks all farmland preservation projects. The Department of Planning & Engineering maintains and updates GIS data and applications for planning and engineering projects, including farmland projects.

G. Factors Limiting Farmland Preservation Implementation

Funding and landowner interest are the limiting factors for the County's farmland preservation program. The implementation of the state's value-based formula for appraising farmland is expected to generate new interest and excitement in the program. The County Commissioners are supportive of protecting the agricultural economy and the farmer in the County. Development pressure is the single largest threat to the agricultural economy and integrity of Bergen County.

Urban Farming for a Greener, Healthier, and More Sustainable Future

What is Urban Agriculture?

Urban agriculture includes the cultivation, processing, and distribution of agricultural products (food or non-food) in urban and suburban areas.[1]

Farming in urban areas requires an understanding of small-scale and intensive design systems while also managing risks that are unique to urban environments. These challenges range from zoning and policy issues to production and marketing challenges. Microclimates and soil health management can impact yields and the quality of food grown in urban settings and they can differ greatly from rural farming practices. Contamination in urban soils, particularly from heavy metals, must be evaluated and remediated properly prior to any food being grown in and around cities.[2]

A Future for Urban Agriculture in Bergen County

The 2023 Master Plan for Bergen County addresses priorities for strengthening the agricultural sector, along with improving access to healthy, local foods.

Urban agriculture presents opportunities to improve food security and diversify agricultural activity. Neighborhood farms and community gardens in highly developed areas foster connections within the community and promote resiliency in a time of increasing awareness of the benefits of locally grown food. Land availability, cost, and development pressures are common barriers to establishing urban agriculture sites. Many projects look to undeveloped, underused, and contaminated land to revitalize them as urban green spaces for food production and community gathering.

Technical assistance, grants, and support are available from various state and federal agencies to aid in the remediation of brownfields, and municipalities can facilitate this process through an Adopt-A-Lot program. New Jersey hosts a variety of thriving urban agriculture projects, from large-scale urban farms to small gardens stewarded by community members. In addition to food production, many of these projects serve as community hubs, hosting social events, volunteer opportunities, workshops, educational and professional development programs, and agritourism activities.

From the 2023 Master Plan for Bergen County:

Goal 10: Protect and Support Agriculture and Agricultural Areas.

1: Preserve remaining agricultural land and activities.

2: Increase opportunities for community agriculture.

3: Increase awareness of agriculture and its importance.[21]

Developing Resilient Food Systems in New Jersey

Urban agriculture is cited as a "Sustainable and Inclusive Development Priority" in the Draft Final New Jersey State Development and Redevelopment Plan (September 15, 2025).[3] Urban agriculture in New Jersey contributes to several of the State's goals: economic development and employment, protection and strengthening of the agricultural sector, adaptation of food production to climate change, and fostering local food production to promote food security and healthy communities. Urban farming initiatives such as rooftop farms and community gardens are cited as example measures to address food deserts and highlight the benefits of healthy diets.

2025 New Jersey State Development and Redevelopment Plan:

"All levels of government should partner to encourage economic development and employment opportunities that enhance the viability of agriculture, retain, and expand key services and industries that underpin our agricultural sector, such as regional food hubs, food processing facilities, agricultural equipment suppliers, and urban agriculture, as an industry."

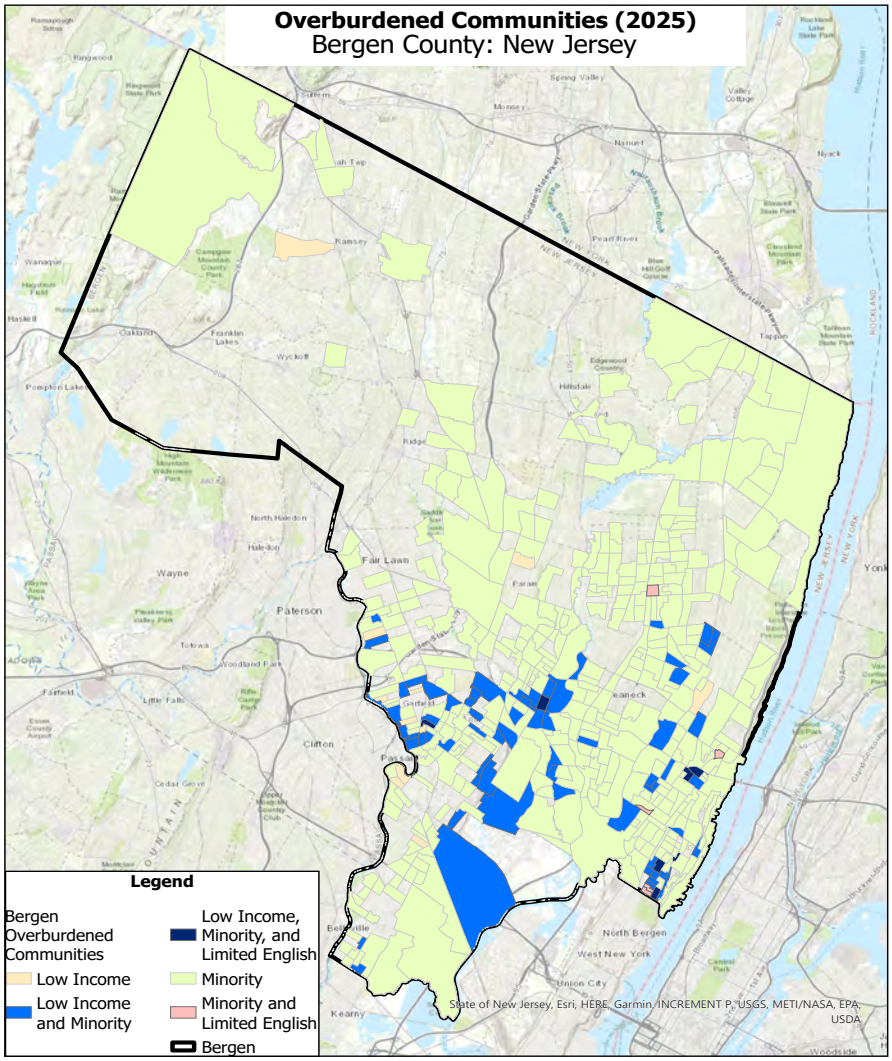
-September 15, 2025

The Office of the Food Security Advocate (OFSA) was created in 2022 to facilitate the cooperation of state, community, and research partners in strategy to address gaps in the food system and address insecurity.[4] The OFSA has adopted the definition of United Nations panel on Food Security and Nutrition to frame these issues and guide work towards food security in the state. The six dimensions outlined in this definition are availability, access, utilization, stability, agency, and sustainability.[5]

The New Jersey Food Democracy Collaborative (NJFDC) is a food policy council that is fostering cross-sector collaboration to create a more equitable, resilient, and coordinated food system across the state. Legislative priorities include mechanisms for building infrastructure for community and regional food systems, advancing opportunities for farmers and food workers, promoting resilient and regenerative environmental practices in food systems, and enhancing environmental justice-based approaches in food access and incentive programs.[6]

In 2022, the NJFDC published the Roadmap for Food System Resilience, highlighting systemic issues related to food insecurity and strategies for the development of sustainable systems. In the report, diversity is emphasized as a core strength of a resilient and regenerative food system: diversity in the scale of farms, in crops produced, in markets and revenue streams, in options for consumers, for food utilization, disposal and redirection of excess food.[7] Urban agricultural activities, not limited to urban farms, orchards, community gardens, green roofs, hydroponic and aquaponic systems, are diverse modes of production that contribute to a more resilient landscape of food production. One of the core opportunities identified by the NJFDC is to bolster infrastructure for local food economy initiatives, particularly in food insecure communities. This means investment in urban farms and land tenure, funding for local and regional infrastructure such as land, irrigation systems, productive and storage facilities, and market spaces.

The NJDEP Environmental Justice Advisory Council (NJAC) identifies several barriers to urban farming and agriculture, along with recommendations for navigating these challenges. Barriers include a lack of technical assistance and training, absence of communication platforms for connecting stakeholders and government resources, difficulties with land access and tenure, and the lack of legal structures to address urban agriculture, i.e., no legal definition of urban agriculture within state and municipal legislature, which affects zoning and commercial activity. Existing structures for protecting commercial farmland do not extend to urban agricultural endeavors.[8]



Fifty-six municipalities (50% of Bergen County's land area) are identified by the NJDEP as "overburdened communities," in which at least 35% are low-income households, or at least 40% of the residents identify as minority, or at least 40% of the households have limited English proficiency.

Urban Land Use Opportunities

One key barrier to the development of urban agriculture in New Jersey is the high cost of land, limited open space, and intense development pressure that characterize the state. On top of this, urban lands that are vacant or underutilized tend to require costly remediation. Urban parks grants have begun tackling this issue, incentivizing grant applications for projects that improve access to public spaces in Overburdened Communities.[9]

Brownfields

In highly urbanized landscapes, vacant land may take the form of brownfields. These sites often have contaminated soils from previous industrial or commercial uses, historic fill placement, or surrounding contamination that complicate efforts to repurpose the land. Abandoned or underutilized urban land presents opportunities for the development of large-scale urban agriculture projects. The NJDEP's EJAC Land Working Group is making efforts to identify specific issues that impact the protection, recovery, and appropriate stewardship of open space in communities with a history of environmental degradation.[10]

There are multiple routes to investigation and funding of brownfield remediation projects. The NJDEP's Hazardous Discharge Site Remediation Fund (HDSRF) provides grants for environmental investigations and matching grants for remediation. The United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) also issues Brownfield Assessment and Cleanup Grants to eligible entities that can be foundational to urban agriculture projects in environmental justice communities (EJC). In addition to HDSRF grants, the NJDEP Office of Brownfield Reuse and the NJDEP Community Collaborative Initiative (CCI) can provide technical input into challenging sites for urban agriculture development. The CCI is working with communities in Camden, Trenton, Perth Amboy, and Bayonne to target local priorities, improve urban food access, and tackle barriers of brownfield reclamation.

The USEPA has a guide to best practices regarding brownfield remediation for urban agriculture: Brownfields and Urban Agriculture: Interim Guidelines for Safe Gardening Practices.[11]

Land Management

The EJAC report on Urban Agriculture in New Jersey recommends setting aside land explicitly for the purpose of food production in urban areas. Non-profit land trusts and "ag parks" managed by municipal parks and recreation departments are identified as possible mechanisms for protection and management of urban farms. The EJAC urban agriculture symposium identified several possible funding sources for purchasing, remediating, and protecting vacant lots for urban farming: Garden State Preservation Trust (Green Acres), Neighborhood Revitalization tax credits, NJDEP HDSRF grants, USEPA Brownfield Assessment Grants and Brownfield Cleanup Grants, crowd sourcing platforms, and non-profit organizations/private donors.

Bergen County Master Plan

Agriculture is a focus in the 2023 Open Space, Agriculture, Park & Recreation Element of the Master Plan. The amount of land area dedicated to farming has declined sharply over the last decades. The plan notes the presence of vacant or underused commercial and industrial sites in the County with potential for remediation as public space. Particularly in overburdened communities in the southern portion of the County, there is an opportunity to recover unused land for urban green space. The development of urban agriculture projects in these areas would contribute to the diversity of agriculture operations in the County, strengthening local food systems. Urban agriculture development is aligned with several goals and objectives of the Master Plan:

- Goal 10: Protect and Support Agriculture and Agricultural Areas. Three objectives: To preserve remaining agricultural land and activities, to increase opportunities for community agriculture, and to increase awareness of agriculture and its importance. Urban agriculture tends to be community-centered with various modes of engagement and can be coupled with educational programs to increase the connectedness of people with food systems.

- Objective 10.2 identifies community supported agriculture as a mode of increasing access to local, seasonal produce directly from farmers, which mutually supports food producers and consumers.[12]

- Goal 5: Improve Amenities and Infrastructure, Objective 10.3 Social Amenities: Community gardens are identified as a source of public benefit. The Rutgers Agricultural Experiment Station's Cooperative Extension (RCE) of Bergen County provides training on community garden development, in addition to other programming focused on wellbeing, agriculture, the environment, and youth development. These are resources currently in place to aid in the development of urban agricultural efforts.

Successful Urban Agriculture Projects

Morris County, Town of Morristown

Grow It Green (GIG) operates community-centered farms and gardens to provide healthy produce to urban communities and increase equitable food access in the Morristown area.[13] In addition to farming and community supported agriculture (CSA), Grow It Green operates educational programs, bringing people of all ages to discover where and how their food is grown. With 15 years of operation, the organization continues to expand its scope and reach. In 2024, GIG provided hands-on learning opportunities to over 6,500 students and donated over 6,000 pounds of fresh food to families in need. Farmers markets and CSA accept SNAP and Good Food Bucks incentives.

Passaic County, City of Clifton

City Green Farm Eco-Center is a five-acre site located on Grove Street in Clifton, between Route 46 and the Garden State Parkway.[14] The farm was preserved as open green space in 2005 with support from Passaic County Open Space and Green Acres funding. Operated by the nonprofit City Green, the eco-center property includes several acres of organic food production, a Learning Farm, an outdoor kitchen, and other community amenities. The site is a hub of agricultural and environmental education as well as recreation, hosting field trips, educational and family programs, and a wide range of events. The produce grown at City Green farms is distributed to the local community via networked farmers markets and delivery sites with the "Veggie Mobile." The goal of these programs is to increase access to farm-fresh food alongside meaningful work and volunteer opportunities in agriculture. City Green's points of sale accept SNAP and Good Food Bucks, doubling the value of each dollar spent on locally grown organic produce.

- Urban farm, educational programs, field trips, high school internships, afterschool programs, network of community gardens, Dig In! Grants for garden projects, workshops and technical assistance, seasonal farmstands, Veggie Mobile, horticultural therapy, School Garden services for Passaic County.

Hudson County, Jersey City

Brunswick Community Garden was established in 2000 through Jersey City's Adopt-A-Lot program, which allows non-profit organizations to create collectively managed spaces on dormant city-owned property. Several community gardens currently operate under the program.[15] The lot was originally contaminated with lead from the NJ Turnpike, and the soils have been replaced and remediated over the years with the help of sunflower plantings.[16] The garden gained traction in 2008, adding new plots and growing initiatives. Today the Brunswick Garden is a designated wildlife habitat, with a robust pollinator garden, urban food forest, vegetable and ornamental plant plots. Community members can join the Brunswick Garden for a small annual fee, adopt a garden plot, and gain access to the common green space for recreation and enjoyment.

- Community garden, pollinator habitat, beekeeping, workshops, composting and residential compost drop-off.

Riverview Community Garden is a non-profit organization which formed through Jersey City's Adopt-A-Lot program in 1995. The garden is stewarded by community members, who grow fruits and vegetables as well as pollinator-supporting species. The garden is focused on youth involvement as well as community health and wellness, as a partner of the Healthier JC initiative.[17] The Youth Urban Farm Club, sponsored by the RCE of Hudson County, invites local youth to learn technical and leadership skills from urban farmers while stewarding the garden. Workshops on horticulture, native plants, at-home food processing, medicinal plants, and beekeeping are offered throughout the year. Through the Community Food Share, fresh fruit and vegetables are distributed free to the public. Becoming a member of the garden enables daily access to community areas, and members are encouraged to help maintain the food share, medicinal, and pollinator plots.[18]

- Urban gardens, Community Food Share, Green Ambassadors program / 4-H Urban Farm Club, composting and residential compost drop-off, beekeeping, community health and wellness programs.

Essex County, Newark City

Jannah on Grafton began with the adoption of a vacant Lot in Newark by the consulting firm Al-Munir LLC. As in Jersey City, the Adopt-A-Lot program in Newark has enabled the growth of community gardens and urban farming initiatives. Al-Munir puts placemaking as a central force in the project. Since its rehabilitation, the 24x80 square foot lot serves as a garden and social hub with community programming.[19] The initiative has grown over 5,000 lbs. of fresh produce for local families. It also offers training programs in urban agriculture and sustainability with the aim of youth development and cooperative participation. The Newark City Council approved the sale of a municipal lot to Urban Seeds Grow, the non-profit organization that has backed Al-Munir's urban agriculture and community development initiatives. Future activities will focus on cooperative economic development, as the farm expands its activities (greenhouses and value-added products).

- Community gardens, youth employment programs, sustainability and wellness workshops, agritourism, entrepreneurial development.

Union County, Elizabeth City

Groundwork Elizabeth is a nonprofit organization that builds partnerships with the City of Elizabeth and the community to establish micro-farms and micro-forests with the goal of increasing climate resilience, community health and wellbeing.[20] The dense urban neighborhoods of Elizabeth face environmental challenges related to lack of green space and tree canopy, which leave the City vulnerable to heat and flooding. With the NJ Conservation Foundation, Groundwork began the project of micro-foresting in 2021, planting concentrated forests on small lots throughout the city. The Elizabeth MicroFarm was established on a three-quarters acre lot behind the Elmora Public Library, where the City property serves as a site for agricultural production and research. The garden explores a variety of urban growing strategies, including in-ground gardens, an apiary, and a food forest. Adjacent to the MicroFarm is a former brownfield site that the City helped to remediate. The site now has an office, garden shed, and 50 community garden beds supported by the Come Grow With Us! urban agriculture initiative. Groundwork Elizabeth has created a network of over 150 community gardens at schools, housing authority properties, and senior centers. The MicroFarm produces approximately 10,000 lbs. of food per year; the entire network produces over 30,000 lbs. of food per year.

- Community gardens, fruit orchards, urban forests, beekeeping, conservation education, agritourism, outdoor classroom, field trips, training in cultivation and food preparation, network of gardens.

Acronyms

- NJDEP: NJ Department of Environmental Protection
- NJDA: NJ Department of Agriculture
- OFSA: NJDA Office of the Food Security Advocate
- NJFDC: New Jersey Food Democracy Collaborative
- EJAC: NJDEP Environmental Justice Advisory Council
- HDSRF: NJDEP Hazardous Discharge Site Remediation Fund
- CCI: NJDEP Community Collaborative Initiative
- USEPA: United States Environmental Protection Agency
- EJC: Environmental Justice Communities
- CSA: Community Supported Agriculture
- RCE: Rutgers Cooperative Extension

Literature Cited

Urban Agriculture White Paper

1 USDA. National Agricultural Library. Urban Agriculture. https://www.nal.usda.gov/farms-and-agricultural-production-systems/urban-agriculture. Accessed January 2025.

2 NCAT. ATTRA Sustainable Agriculture. Urban Agriculture. https://attra.ncat.org/topics/urban-agriculture/. Accessed January 2025.

3 Draft Final New Jersey State Development and Redevelopment Plan. New Jersey State Planning Commission. https://nj.gov/state/bac/planning/documents/update-to-state-plan/dfsdrp_20250915.pdf. Accessed October 2025.

4 New Jersey Office of the Food Security Advocate. https://www.nj.gov/foodsecurity/about/office/. Accessed October 2025.

5 New Jersey Office of the Food Security Advocate. About Food Security in New Jersey. https://www.nj.gov/foodsecurity/food-security/about/. Accessed October 2025.

6 Advancing New Jersey's Food System: An Update on NJFDC's Legislative Priorities for 2024. https://static1.squarespace.com/static/66a40c9e49e6b01c3917f58c/t/670a8c6a6355be10c162c20b/1728744558505/Advancing+New+Jersey%E2%80%99s+Food+System+An+Update+on+NJFDC%E2%80%99s+Legislative+Priorities+for+2024-5.pdf. Accessed October 2025.

7 NJ Roadmap for Food System Resilience. New Jersey Food Democracy Collaborative. https://static1.squarespace.com/static/66a40c9e49e6b01c3917f58c/t/670a838578d2e23ca43e87d0/1728742280058/NJ%2BRoadmap%2Bfor%2BFood%2BSystem%2BResilience%2BFINAL%2B3.8.22.pdf. Accessed October 2025.

8 NJDEP EJAC. White Paper Urban Agriculture. 2019. https://dep.nj.gov/wp-content/uploads/ej/docs/ejac-urban-agriculture-white-paper.pdf. Accessed October 2025.

9 New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP). Urban Parks Grants. https://dep.nj.gov/wp-content/uploads/greenacres/pdf/2023-urban-parks-press-package.pdf. Accessed October 2025.

10 NJDEP EJAC. White Paper Urban Agriculture. ejac-urban-agriculture-white-paper.pdf. Accessed October 2025.

11 United States Environmental Protection Agency. Brownfields and Urban Agriculture: Interim Guidelines for Safe Gardening Practices. https://www.epa.gov/system/files/documents/2024-11/bf_urban_ag.pdf. Accessed October 2025.

12 Bergen County. Open Space, Agriculture, and Parks & Recreation. https://bergencountynj.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/Open-Space_Agriculture_Parks-Recreation.pdf. Accessed October 2025.

13 Grow it Green. Morristown. https://www.growitgreenmorristown.org/. Accessed October 2025.

14 City Green. Growing Healthy Cities Since 2004. https://www.citygreenonline.org/the-farm-eco-center-clifton. Accessed October 2025.

15 Jersey City. Adopt-A-Lot Program. https://www.jerseycitynj.gov/cityhall/DPW/recycle/adopt-a-lot#:~:text=Jersey%20City's%20Adopt%2DA%2DLot,%2C%20vegetables%2C%20flowers%20or%20plants. Accessed October 2025.

16 Brunswick Community Garden. https://www.brunswickcommunitygarden.org/. Accessed October 2025.

17 Parternship for a Healthier JC. Riverview Community Garden. https://healthierjc.com/partners/riverview-community-garden-parks/. Accessed October 2025.

18 Jersey Cares. Riverview Community Gardens. https://www.jerseycares.org/organization/0013l00002Q0wVyAAJ?. Accessed October 2025.

19 Placemaking and Urban Farming by Jennifer Poroye. https://www.al-munirconsulting.com/al-munirarticles/placemaking-and-urban-farming#about. Accessed October 2025.

20 Elizabeth, New Jersey. Groundwork Elizabeth MicroFarm. https://www.goelizabethnj.com/directory/groundwork-elizabeth-microfarm/. Accessed October 2025.

21 Bergen County. 2023 Master Plan. https://bergencountynj.gov/bergen-county-department-of-planning-engineering/bergen-county-master-plan/. Accessed October 2025.

Stokes Farm, Borough of Old Tappan
Source: Stokes Farm Facebook

Chapter VI.

Economic Development

A. Economic Development Strategies

The Bergen CADB and the Division of Land Management are directly involved with the preservation and sustainability of farming in the County. The Bergen County Tourism website includes a page for agritourism, with spotlights on produce and nursery products and "pick your own" events.[1] Agritourism opportunities listed on the Bergen County website include those at Abma's Farm, Demarest Farms, and Secor Farms. These locations provide hayrides, pumpkin picking, petting zoos, apple picking, birthday parties, and more.

The NJDA Smart Growth Tool Kit provides information to support government, businesses, non-profits, and local citizens in their efforts to achieve the goals and objectives outlined in the NJDA Agricultural Smart Growth Plan for New Jersey.[2] The Tool Kit embraces the five linked components that have been identified by NJDA as critical for the future of farming:

- Farmland Preservation
- Innovative Conservation Planning
- Economic Development
- Agriculture Industry Sustainability
- Natural Resource Conservation

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 is committed

to promoting agritourism through the Jersey Fresh website[3] and collaboration with Rutgers University through the New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station (NJAES-RCE), and promotion of the NJ Farmers Direct Marketing Association. The NJAES-RCE continues research on new varieties of crops resistant to pests and disease and identify new methods of pest control.

The *2011 Economic Development Strategies* for produce, focused on the Jersey Fresh program and food safety.[4] NJDA's Jersey Fresh labels program is promoted throughout the state, to strengthen the appeal of the Jersey Fresh brand to supermarket chains and other retailers. This has been largely successful, with major retailers such as Wegmans, ShopRite, Trader Joe's, Target, ACME, and Foodtown (among others) carrying and promoting produce from Jersey Fresh.

As agritourism continues to grow as an element of Bergen County's agricultural economy, the introduction of new events to draw in residents and visitors can be centered around agriculture. Behind-the-scenes tours, "pick-your-own" activities, hayrides and party rooms for birthdays and other celebrations, are activities that draw residents and tourists to spend money within the County's agricultural system.

Opportunities for promoting produce (and, in many cases, numerous other agricultural products) include:

- There are currently twelve listed farmers markets in Bergen County on the website.[5] They can be found here. They also give anyone the ability to add a farmers market that is missing from the list by going to their contact page. Each farmers market can upload a brief description and include information such as location, website, and schedule.
- NJDA Jersey Fresh.
- Rutgers New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station Cooperative Extension (NJAES-RCE) created an educational website dedicated to agritourism for the public, planning and policy professionals, farmers, and educators.[6] A training website was also developed by the Rutgers Agritourism Team for farmers.[7]

The NJDA identified the following strategies to support farmers:

- *Farmland Assessment*: Supporting farmers in filling out applications, and tax assessors in determining eligibility.
- *Crop Insurance*: Implementing an education initiative with the USDA Risk Management Agency and Rutgers Cooperative Extension to increase knowledge among farmers.
- *Technical Assistance*: The NJ Uniform Construction Code for farm buildings and the Real Property Appraisal Manual.
- *Recycling and Food*: Increasing participation in agricultural plastics recycling programs and finding markets for soon-to expire and expired foods.
- *Motor Vehicle Requirements:* Information about regulations, license plates for farm vehicles, and vehicle related provisions.
- *Financing*: Information on federal, state, and commercial lending institutions financing agricultural loans.

B. Agricultural Industry Retention, Expansion, and Recruitment Strategies

Using the diversity of agricultural commodities to broaden the agricultural base would help address any economic

downswing in either the general economy or a specific sector Bergen County's agriculture industry.

1. Institutional

a. Farmer Support

The NJDA Farm Link Program serves as a resource and referral center for farmers seeking access to land and landowners who have farmland and business opportunities available. Both farmers and landowners can use the resource pages to find more information on getting started in farming, leasing land, finding farmers/landowners, and developing farm transfer and succession plans.[8]

The Farm Link Program through NJDA supports farm transfer, succession, and retirement planning. Two other resources available to farmers through the SADC are a *New Jersey Farmland Leasing Guidebook*,[9] created as part of the Beginning Farmer Grant Project,[10] and the *New Jersey Agricultural Mediation Program Handbook*, subtitled "A Guide for Farmers, Neighbors and Municipalities."[11]

The SADC introduced a new program in 2024 to help new and beginning farmers address the challenges they face when getting started and to help them establish viable farming options. The Next Generation Farmers Program's goal is to develop and implement a comprehensive system to identify, train, equip, and support the next generation of farmers. The SADC released a report in March 2025 highlighting the challenges and barriers faced by next-generation farmers, their current landscape of support, and recommendations for addressing those challenges.[12]

In addition, the state, NJAES-RCE, Northeast Organic Farming Association of New Jersey (NOFA-NJ) and supply companies, provide seasonal workshops for farmers. NOFA-NJ hosts an annual conference, monthly open houses, and weekly technical assistance meetings.[13]

Another opportunity is the NJ Agricultural Society's New Jersey Agricultural Leadership Development Program (NJALDP), administrated by Burlington County College.[14] NJALDP is a two-year professional development program for individuals in farming and agribusiness. NJALDP participants explore various agricultural topics and establish an agricultural network throughout the State.

An education experience for youth is the School Gardens initiative funded by Team Nutrition Training mini-grants provided by the USDA, the NJDA and Grow Healthy, a program of the NJAES-RCE. This is a hands-on way to educate children about the importance of farming. Reflecting these values, during the 2023-2024 school year Dogwood Hill Elementary School in Bergen County was awarded the "Best in New Jersey Farm to School Award" by the NJ Department of Agriculture. Dogwood Hill students learned about gardens in class and took field trips to better understand composting and planting.[15] Expanding this program to more schools in Bergen County would be a great way to increase the awareness of both students and their parents about the benefits and value of the agricultural industry in the County.[16]

b. Marketing / Public Relations Support

The Bergen County Division of Land Management, the NJAES-RCE, and the state can help by communicating to farmers the availability of various free promotional channels such as the Jersey Fresh, Jersey Bred, Jersey Grown, Jersey Equine, Visit NJ Farms[17], the New Jersey Tourism site[18], and the Bergen County tourism website. For those

farmers who want paid advertising or free media coverage, web resources can help with the planning. For example, the New Jersey State Horticultural Society website publishes ad rates for its quarterly newsletter, Horticultural News.[19] Community Involved in Sustaining Agriculture[20], a nonprofit organization in western Massachusetts, offers a Basic Marketing Practices manual, and the Agricultural Marketing Resource Center devotes an entire section to promotion, including web promotion, advertising, publicity and promotional materials.[21]

Signage- Municipal considerations of the farmer needs when drafting their sign ordinances can help support efforts to promote agricultural products. Signs that give directions to the farmstand and let customers know what's available. Having farm-friendly ordinances in place can make it easier for farmers to promote their products and can minimize right-to-farm complaints. Farm signage also can benefit the municipality by drawing more visitors to the area.

For farmers who qualify for the Jersey Fresh marketing programs, signage is available. Jersey Fresh point-of-sale signs and other materials, both free and fee-based, can be ordered using the point-of-purchase application on the NJDA's Marketing and Development Jersey Fresh page.[22]

Getting the Word Out. The County and the NJAES-RCE can help promote agricultural activities. Examples include:

- Bergen County's Division of Senior Services website explains that those who qualify for the Senior Farmers Market Nutrition were eligible to receive $40 at five different farmers markets in 2025.[23]
- Bergen County Agritourism website provides information on agricultural activities and events
- Bergen County Department of Parks website provides a large amount of information on the County's parkland and open space, while also hosting information on upcoming events in the County.
- Development of media contacts at local and online websites, and follow-up with those contacts to encourage publication of the information.
- The NJAES-RCE distributes press releases and publishes them on its website and via Facebook.
- The County Office of Public Information can promote press releases to the media and post them on the website.
- Inclusion on the "Bergen County 4-H" newsletter.
- State agencies, such as the SADC Jersey listings, the Visit NJ calendar of events, and the Visit NJ Farms website.

c. Community Farmers Markets

Community Farmers Markets and farm stands eliminate the need for distributors and help farmers realize a more direct profit from on-farm and market sales. Farmers markets create a centralized location for local farms and businesses. The Bergen County website lists 11 farmers markets, including Ridgewood Farmers Market, Oradell Farmers Market, and Tenafly Farmers Market. Their operating season and hours vary.

d. Community Supported Agriculture

Advantages of a farm which has a CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) include time efficiency, eliminating or minimizing labor and transportation costs of selling at community markets, or the time and labor of running a farmstand. A

CSA can control scheduling of pick-ups to utilize existing farm personnel in labor downtimes. Similar to farmers markets, CSAs have been gaining in popularity for locally grown, accessible food.

In Morristown, Grow it Green is a very active CSA that focuses on education, community, and sustainability. According to their website, they engaged over 6,500 students in 2024, spanning pre-K to college aged students. Grow it Green also provides eight paid high school intern positions and farm apprentice positions to historically underrepresented populations in agriculture and environmental careers. The organization grew and donated over 6,000 pounds of produce to NJ families in need in 2024.[24]

e. Agricultural Education & Outreach

Rutgers Cooperative Extension of Bergen County (RCE)

The goals of the RCE are to ensure healthy lifestyles, productive futures, protection, and enhancement of environmental resources, ensure economic growth and agricultural stability, and improve food safety and nutrition.

The Department of 4-H Youth Development provides educational outreach programming for children grades K-13 through 4-H clubs, special interest programs, school enrichment, and after school childcare and education programs. Clubs tailor their programs to promote activities and education that expose youth to agriculture and farming.

The Cooperative Extension assists commercial agriculture operations through research and demonstrations related to tree fruit, small fruit and vegetable crop management, and implementation of Integrated Pest Management Systems (IPM). This program also provides soil testing, plant diagnostics, pesticide manuals, and offers various educational and networking events throughout the year.

NJ Agricultural Experiment Station (NJAES)

Programs focus on commercial agriculture and horticulture, fisheries and aquaculture, environmental and resource management, farm business development and marketing, pesticide safety training, IPM, and other related subjects. Educational sessions and workshops are offered as well as consultations in coordination with the Cooperative Extension County Offices.

The Office of Continuing Professional Education (OCPE) provides educational opportunities for adults and adolescents through short courses, workplace training, and youth services. Extension Specialists throughout the state generate research-based information and solutions in the areas of agriculture, food and nutrition, environmental sciences and natural resources, and youth development. Their expertise and programs are delivered through NJAES in Clarksboro.

Rutgers University School of Environmental and Biological Sciences

The School of Environmental and Biological Sciences (SEBS) includes undergraduate study programs in agriculture; biology, ecology, and environmental sciences; food, nutrition, and health. The Department of Animal Sciences offers a Farm Tour Program for young children and adults to learn about their cattle, goats, horses, pigs, and sheep facilities. Also at Rutgers University, the Equine Science Center at SEBS develops and shares equine-related research with

the public and equine community. They are recognized locally and globally as a neutral, credible source regarding the economic impact of horses and the equine industry as it relates to horse racing.

2. Business

a. Input Suppliers and Services

Thirty-eight County operations are listed on the Jersey Grown website as certified suppliers of nursery products. The NJ Nursery & Landscape Association's "Find-a-Member" search option lists 17 growers, nurseries, landscapers, and related establishments in Bergen County.

The New Jersey Department of Agriculture's County Animal Response Team (CART) program is designed to help communities prepare for and respond to animal-related emergencies during disasters. Bergen County, and every county in the state, has its own CART that operates under the local Office of Emergency Management and follows FEMA's Incident Command System. These teams consist of trained volunteers and professionals who work together to protect animals during events such as floods, fires, and evacuations.[25] Farmers are encouraged to get involved with their local CART to strengthen community resilience and contribute to animal protection efforts during emergencies. Bergen County has a number of veterinary offices and animal hospitals. The New Jersey Veterinary Medical Association maintains a list of emergency practices in the County.[26]

b. Product Distributors & Processors

Field and forage crops – Sales of hay and other forage crops have not been disclosed since 2012. However, seven farms reported selling hay and other crops in 2022. These crops have generally been sold locally to other farms and equine operations, to landscapers, nurseries and farmstands as baled straw, or kept for the farmer's own livestock and other uses. Majority of field and forage crop sales are within Bergen County.

Produce – Most farmers sell produce onsite through farm stores or stands. Only a few participate in offsite farmers markets. These include Fresh Roots Farm, which sells at Ramsey Market, and Stokes Farm, which sells at Union Square Market.

3. Anticipated Agricultural Trends

a. Market Location and Product Demand

According to the US Census of Agriculture, crop sales, primarily from nursery & greenhouse crops and vegetables grown within the County, generated over $10 million in 2022. While some farms also sell Christmas trees and flowers, these items are largely sourced from outside the County and do not reflect local agricultural output. Overall, vegetable farming represents the majority of County-grown revenue and remains the core of its agricultural activity. Livestock production is not a significant contributor to the County's agricultural economy.

Please see **Chapter II** for more information on current agricultural trends.

b. Potential Growth

Value-added products can bring additional income to farms involved in direct marketing through farm stands and websites. Direct marketers can capitalize on the advantages of selling at retail rather than wholesale, selling from their location rather than having to pay transport costs.

Farmers may also adapt to increased demand for organic and natural goods. Rather than undertake the three-year

process for federal organic certification, many farmers may lean toward "natural" farming methods for food crops and livestock. Similarly, an increase in interest in locally grown products may encourage more farmers to have farm stands and on-farm markets and include value-added home-made items.

c. Other Potential Improvements

Using computer programs that help track production and expense data and test alternative variables will help increase profitability:

- FINPACK, Financial Software for Agricultural and Farm Management, evaluates a farm's financial position, explores alternatives, and makes farm management decisions. The software can conduct commercial and agricultural credit analysis, loan portfolio stress testing, create accurate pictures of financial situations, projections of future financial scenarios, and import data directly into plans.
- UltraFarm software exports to FINPACK and Microsoft Excel and is an accounting software that handles inventories for crops and livestock, payroll, and check writing. The software also can perform a complete enterprise analysis and uses both book and market values for products.
- FBS Systems Inc. Agriculture XPRT, is an agriculture accounting software, crop production software, livestock production software, and financial analysis software. Field application and harvest data can be imported from third party technologies to create field and crop histories and inventories. For livestock operations, the software offers tools for record-keeping, production analysis, and planning, tracing animal inventories and feed movement, and reporting information to accounting software.
- CenterPoint Accounting for Agriculture is a Redwing software with accounting capabilities, a general ledger, production analysis tools for detailed crop and livestock information on a cost-per-unit basis, budgeting and forecasting tools, asset and liability tracking, inventory management, sales order, and purchase order modules.
- EasyFarm offers a service to track livestock and crop production and sales, check writing, payroll, and farm management. This software also allows users to print tax reports, manage liability accounts, manage asset accounts record current values, and manage household expenses separate from the farm.

Value Added Products is one of the best strategies farmers can employ to improve net profitability, open new markets, enhance the public's appreciation for the farm, and extend the marketing season. The key benefit in value-added products is that it offers farmers the potential to capture a larger share of the food dollar.

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.

Agricultural Enterprise District (AED): AEDs began in Cumberland County and are included in the *Cumberland County Farmland Preservation Plan* as a potential preservation mechanism. Modeled after Urban Enterprise Zones, an AED would provide economic development advantages, particularly to preserved farms, and use taxes from farm-

assessed land to seed the formation of an economic development corporation and a program to support agriculture. It can be created by a county or a municipality and is designed and run by farmers and provides a mechanism to do so through specially conceived agricultural economic development.

4. Agricultural Support Needs

The American Farmland Trust considers a full-time agricultural economic development effort within a farmland preservation program essential to ensure the viability of farm operations into the future, finding ways to assist farmers in diversifying, changing crops, developing business plans, and helping them incorporating new or value-added crops and direct marketing, encouraging the continued development of agritourism and focusing on ways to reduce the costs of production. Fortunately, the state and the NJAES-RCE are actively involved in this process.

a. Agricultural Facilities and Infrastructure

Regulatory and technical assistance is of most importance to farmers:

- Municipal support through flexible land use regulations and ordinances that take into consideration the special needs of the agricultural operations.
- Help with financial and planning matters through workshops and other educational and counseling services.
- Support and encouragement of agricultural suppliers in Bergen County.
- Solution based planning between local, county and state regulators to ensure adequate water resources to meet the needs of county farmers now and in the future.

b. Flexible Land Use Regulations

The *State Plan* is currently in the process of being updated and should be completed by the end of 2025. Among the goals it sets forth include the following focused on agriculture:[27]

- Maintaining the long-term viability of the agricultural industry.
- Utilizing preserved land to mitigate climate change impacts through carbon sequestration and improved land management practices.
- Fostering local food production to address food insecurity and promote healthy communities. Additionally, preserving farmland contributes to the conservation of biodiversity, protects natural water resources, and helps maintain scenic landscapes, thereby enhancing the overall quality of life for residents and promoting tourism opportunities.

In conjunction with the *State Plan*, the NJDA's *Smart Growth Plan*[28] connects farmland preservation efforts with economic development strategies and marketing opportunities. Ensuring regulations and programs are flexible and supportive of the farming community will also ensure the strength of the food and agriculture industry statewide. Examples where regulatory flexibility is important are the:

- NJDEP's Freshwater Wetlands Protection Act Rules (N.J.A.C. 7:13-et. seq.), which grants exemptions for agricultural activities, and the
- Flood Hazard Area Control Act Rules (N.J.A.C. 7:13). The latter was adopted in 2007 and amended last in June 2019, with amendments for agriculture effective June 2016, including numerous agricultural permits.

The *Cluster Development Bill* (August 2013) amends the Municipal Land Use Law (MLUL) to provide municipalities with more effective, fair, and affordable tools to plan for livable neighborhoods and districts while preserving farmland, open space, and historic sites. Under this bill, municipalities are authorized to specify minimum and maximum lot sizes and dimensions allowing for more compact development forms and choosing options for permanent preservation of land.

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 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.
- Construction fee reduction for agricultural buildings.

Planning and zoning to maintain and enhance agricultural viability is critical to preserving both farmland and agricultural operations.

5. Agricultural Support Implementation

The NJAES-RCE continues to be a source of support to local farmers, helping them adapt to new technologies, introducing new farming practices to improve efficiency, and keeping farmers up to date with market trends. With the rise of online shopping, more and more people are choosing to order products, including agricultural products, from their own homes. The NJAES-RCE can work with local farmers in expanding their presence to the web.

Information regarding services tends to be dispersed throughout different organizations. Streamlining access to resources would improve the visibility of available resources and improve access to information and assistance programs.

Federal agriculture support can be found on the USDA's Grants and Loans webpage ranging from farm loans, housing assistance, rural development loan and grant assistance, beginning farmers and ranchers, livestock insurance, specialty crop block grant program, the farmers market promotion program, and the organic cost share program. In a number of these federal programs, the government will assist farmers in the design, implementation, and cost of projects.[29] As of October 2025, new farmers (with less than ten years of farming experience) have access to webinars, lectures, and service centers to help their business. Similarly, small-to-mid-sized farmers also have access to educational resources,

as well as financial assistance programs such as the Farm Storage Facility Loan (FSFL), microloans, Value Added Producer Grants, and Socially Disadvantaged Group Grants. Organic farmers can access the Organic Certification Cost Share Program (OCCSP), in which farmers may receive up to 50% of their certification costs. Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) is a USDA competitive grants program that helps build the future economic viability of agriculture in the United States. These funds provide grants for farmers.

State agriculture support includes the 2025 Specialty Crop Block Grants, Wine Industry Project Grants, Soil and Water Conservation Grants, Risk Management and Crop Insurance Education, Junior Breeder Loan Fund, Organic Cost Share, and Farm to School Mini-Grants. More information can be found through the NJDA and on its website.[30]

The **New Jersey Farm Bureau** is a private, non-profit membership organization that represents the agricultural producers and enterprises in New Jersey at all levels of government. The NJFB advocates for farmland preservation, environmental regulations, wildlife and water issues, and legislation relating to agricultural labor and the Right to Farm. Through grants, initiatives, and partnerships, the NJFB educates the public about the agricultural industry and offers farmer training and education programs.

Literature Cited

Chapter 6

1 Bergen County Tourism. https://bergencountynj.gov/tourism/outdoor-activities/agri-tourism/. Accessed June 2025.

2 New Jersey Department of Agriculture. Agriculture Land Use Planning. Planning for Agriculture Toolkit. http://www.nj.gov/agriculture/divisions/anr/agriassist/smartgrowth_toolkit.html Accessed June 2025.

3 Jersey Fresh. https://findjerseyfresh.com/JerseyFresh

4 New Jersey Department of Agriculture (NJDA). 2011 Economic Development Strategies.http://www.nj.gov/agriculture/pdf/11EcoDevStrategies.pdf Accessed June 2025.

5 Bergen County Tourism: Farmers Markets. https://bergencountynj.gov/tourism/outdoor-activities/farmers-markets/. Accessed June 2025.

6 NJAES-RCE. *New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station.* https://njaes.rutgers.edu/ Accessed June 2025.

7 NJAES-RCE. *Extension Training for Agritourism Development*. https://agritourism.rutgers.edu/training/modules.html Accessed June 2025.

8 Farm Link. http://www.nj.gov/agriculture/sadc/farmlink/ Accessed June 2025.

9 New Jersey Farmland Leasing Guidebook. https://www.nj.gov/agriculture/sadc/documents/farmlink/resources/leaseguide2.pdf Accessed June 2025.

10 NJDA. SADC. *Project to Enhance Leasing and Linking Resources*. http://nj.gov/agriculture/sadc/farmlink/resources/leasingproject.html Accessed June 2025.

11 NJDA. SADC. Agricultural Mediation Program. *Agricultural Mediation Program Handbook*. http://nj.gov/agriculture/sadc/agmediation/ Accessed June 2025.

12 NJDA SADC, *The Next Generation of Farming in New Jersey*, https://nj.gov/agriculture/sadc/documents/publications/NJNextGenReport.pdf Accessed October 2025.

13 NOFA-NJ. *Events*. https://nofanj.org/events/ Accessed July 2024.

14 New Jersey Agricultural Society. *New Jersey Agricultural Leadership Development Program (NJALDP)*. https://www.njagsociety.org/ldp-graduation.html Accessed July 2024.

15 NJ Department of Agriculture. Best in NJ Farm to School Award: Dogwood Hill Elementary. https://www.nj.gov/agriculture/farmtoschool/programs/best-in-nj/. Accessed October 2025.

16 Healthy Bergen. Community Health Improvement Partnership of Bergen County. https://www.healthybergen.org/about-the-chip vAccessed July 2025.

17 Visit NJ Farms. https://visitnjfarms.org/. Accessed June 2025.

18 New Jersey Tourism Research and Information. https://visitnj.org/new-jersey-tourism-research-and-information. Accessed June 2025

19 New Jersey State Horticultural Society. http://www.horticulturalnews.org/advertising.pdf. Accessed June 2025.

20 CISA (Community Involved in Sustaining Agriculture). Resources for Farmers. Tipsheets and Resources. https://www.buylocalfood.org/resources-for-farmers/tipsheets/. Accessed June 2025.

21 Agricultural Marketing Resource Center, https://www.agmrc.org/. Accessed July 2025.

22 NJDA Marketing and Development. JerseyFresh. https://www.nj.gov/agriculture/divisions/md/prog/jerseyfresh.html. Accessed June 2025.

23 Bergen County Divison of Senior Services. https://bergencountynj.gov/division-of-senior-services/nutrition-and-wellness/. Accessed June 2025

24 Grow it Green, Morristown, NJ. https://www.growitgreenmorristown.org/. Accessed October 2025.

25 NJDA. New Jersey Animal Emergency: County Animal Response Teams (CART). https://www.nj.gov/agriculture/animalemergency/cart/. Accessed July 2025.

26 New Jersey Veterinary Medical Association. Emergency Veterinary Facilities. https://njvma.org/emergency-veterinary-facilities/. Accessed July 2025.

27 2025 NJ State Development and Redevelopment Plan. https://nj.gov/state/bac/planning/state-plan/development/. Accessed October 2025.

28 NJDA. Agricultural Smart Growth Plan for New Jersey. (2006). https://www.nj.gov/agriculture/pdf/smartgrowthplan.pdf. Accessed June 2025

29 U.S. Department of Agriculture. Grants and Loans. https://www.usda.gov/farming-and-ranching/financial-resources-farmers-and-ranchers/grants-and-loans. Accessed October 2025.

30 NJDA. Grant Information. https://www.nj.gov/agriculture/grants/. Accessed August 2025.

Demarest Farms, Borough of Hillsdale
Source: Demarest Farms Facebook

Chapter VII.

Natural Resource Conservation

When monitoring preserved farms, the County takes advantage of the opportunity to discuss the importance of natural resource conservation and the programs available to help farmers protect the land and water.

A. Natural Resource Protection Coordination

1. Natural Resources Conservation Service

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) helps conserve natural resources on private lands throughout the country through its programs and initiatives. They provide education, cost-sharing, and financial incentives.[1] The local NRCS office serving Bergen County is located at 101 Bilby Road in Hackettstown. Bergen County farmers may contact this NRCS office for technical assistance with conservation issues.[2] NRCS personnel also will reach out directly to landowners if they know of a farmer who requires assistance or can use the guidance of their staff.

Within one year of selling their development easement, owners of preserved farms are required to submit a Conservation Plan. This plan is also required to apply for NRCS conservation programs. The NRCS helps to prepare these plans for farmers. It

is a record of management decisions and conservation practices planned for the farm. After soil, water, air, plant, and animal resources on the property are inventoried and evaluated, the NRCS Soil Conservationist will review alternatives with the landowner. If all five elements are included, they are referred to as Resource Management Plans. This becomes a tool for better management of the natural resources on the property and can be used to direct the landowner to available programs, such as the Farm Bill Programs (see **Resource Protection Programs and Funding** below), designed to help implement conservation on private lands.

The local NRCS office administers the conservation programs, which offer financial incentives to support conservation projects, including riparian buffers and wildlife habitat. The Bergen County Soil Conservation District (SCD) approves all Conservation Plans and program contracts.

NRCS technical guides used in each field office are localized so that they apply specifically to the geographic area for which they are prepared.[3] Conservation practices pertinent for, and used in Bergen County, include:

- Riparian buffers, including necessary buffer widths and appropriate plant species;
- No-till and minimum-till practices;
- Soil erosion predictions; and
- Nutrient management, including manure and fertilizers

2. Bergen County Soil Conservation District

The NJDA Division of Agricultural and Natural Resources implements the Natural Resource Conservation Program administered by the State Soil Conservation Committee (SSCC). The Division provides technical standards to sites regulated by the NJ Soil Erosion and Sediment Control Act program, and policies and procedures associated with the Stormwater Permitting program.[4]

The SSCC coordinates and supports the work of the state's 15 local soil conservation districts (SCDs).[5] The SCD programs and services include agricultural conservation planning assistance, agricultural conservation cost-sharing programs, application of organic materials on agricultural land, agricultural water supply and management, soil erosion and sediment control, stormwater discharge authorization, and soil surveys.[6]

The Bergen SCD works with the NRCS, providing survey assistance, engineering design, and plans. The Bergen SCD implements two major programs:

- Soil Erosion & Sediment Control Act
- Riverbank Restoration

NJ Agricultural Experiment Station, Rutgers Cooperative Extension of Bergen County (NJAES-RCE)

The NJAES-RCE provides both field and technical research that is focused on best management practices (BMPs) for farmers, to ensure the long-term viability of both the agricultural economy and the natural resources upon which it is based. Its Agriculture and Natural

The Bergen County SCD office is located at 700 Kinderkamack Road, Suite 103 in Oradell. The phone number is (201) 261-4407, and they can be reached at info@bergenscd.org. Additional staff contacts can be found on the SCD website.

Resource Management program assists with soil testing, identification of plant pests, agricultural marketing education, pesticide safety, water resources, farm management, and other land use topics.[7] The Bergen CADB includes a representative from both the SCD and the RCE. They have a non-voting member seat in the CADB.

The NJAES-RCE of Bergen County is located in the One Bergen County Plaza at 1 Bergen County Place in Hackensack. They may be contacted by email at bergen4h@njaes.rutgers.edu or by phone at 201-336-6780. As of October 2025, the long-term agricultural agent for the County retired and the position has not been filled.

NJ Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) Division of Parks and Forestry

New Jersey bill (S699/A682) aims to protect privately owned woodlands from overdevelopment by creating a state-managed Woodlands Protection Fund. This fund would use federal, private, and legislative resources to purchase development easements from landowners, allowing forests of at least five contiguous acres to remain undeveloped. As of October 2025, the bill passed in the State Senate.[8]

Properties in Bergen County that are farmland assessed may include woodland tracts. Such tracts were added as farm products in the 1970s. The NJ Farmland Assessment program tracks the stewardship and management of privately owned productive forest lands under farmland assessment. This totaled 228,000 acres in 2020. Properties actively engaged in agriculture may be assessed at their productivity value instead of their development value. The Division of Parks and Forestry, Bureau of Forest Management (BFM), reviews farmland assessment applications that include Woodland Management Plans (WMPs).

There are two classifications of woodlands: appurtenant (or attached) and non-appurtenant (or unattached):

- Non-appurtenant woodlands must be utilized by the farmer as a sustainable "product" and require WMPs to qualify.
- Non-appurtenant woodlands are woodland acreage on a farm over and above total farmed acreage (tilled and pasture). If 50 acres of a farm are tilled or pastured, and there are 125 acres of woodlands on the farm, 75 acres of woodlands would be non-appurtenant (125 woodland acres minus 50 tilled acres).[9]
- Appurtenant woodlands are where the wooded acerage is less than or equal to the functional agriculture land. In the preceding example, 50 of the 125 woodland acres would be appurtenant. Appurtenant woodland acres do not require a WMP to qualify for farmland assessment.[10]

According to the 2022 Census of Agriculture, Bergen County reported a total of 389 acres of non-appurtenant woodland. There were no recorded acres of appurtenant woodland in the County during that census period.[11]

USDA Forest Service Forest Stewardship Program

The USDA Forest Stewardship Program provides technical and financial management assistance for the stewardship of forest resources. This program is sponsored through the US Forest Service (USFS) and administered locally by the NJFS. Through the program, woodland owners may be eligible for reduced property taxes if they follow a

state-approved forestry plan written by a consulting forester.

In the summer of 2017, the FSP transitioned to a new program that eliminated income requirements and enhanced the monitoring and management of enrolled acres. This program, when fully funded, offers landowners cost-share initiatives of up to 75% of the cost of a new or revised plan to allow the landowners to fully follow the guidelines in their plan.

Private Nonprofit Groups and Local Community Support

Bergen County has the support of a variety of organizations, including the Hackensack Riverkeeper, Mahwah Environmental Volunteer Organzation (MEVO), Bergen County Agriculture Development Board, New Jersey Farm Bureau and 4-H (including the annual 4-H Fair). Local, regional, and statewide nonprofit organizations also contribute to the permanent protection of farmland. These groups include The Land Conservancy of New Jersey, The Nature Conservancy, the New Jersey Conservation Foundation, Bergen County Audubon Society, Fyke Nature Association, and Tenafly Nature Center.

B. Natural Resource Protection Programs

1. SADC Soil and Water Conservation Grant Program

The SADC has provided soil and water conservation grants to farms that are permanently preserved or are enrolled in the term preservation program, with priority for preserved farms. The purpose of the grants is to protect agricultural lands from soil erosion. These grants fund soil and water conservation projects approved by the Bergen County SCD.[12]

Generally, up to 50% of the approved costs for a project, based on established cost tables, are paid with grant funds. A permanent source of funding must be put in place to ensure that farmers can continue to participate in these beneficial programs.

Use the application at the SADC's website to apply for a Farmland Stewardship cost-share grant, and other cost-sharing grants, for the installation of deer fencing.

2. SADC Deer Fencing Grant Program

The SADC estimates that in some areas of the state the deer population is more than ten times the carrying capacity of the land, and damages due to deer populations are estimated between $5-10 million. Farmers can apply to the SADC for cost-sharing grants for the installation of high-tensile woven wire deer fencing on permanently preserved farms.[13] Farmers who are successful in their applications can cover up to 50% of the cost of materials and installation. Assistance for this program is capped at a total grant amount of $50,000. Farmers are eligible if they can demonstrate minimum gross sales of $10,000 from agricultural or horticultural products grown or derived from farm operations the preceding year. Applicants are required to keep the land in agricultural or horticultural production for eight years following receipt of the grant.

An established farmer is defined as an owner-operator or immediate family member of the owner-operator of a family farm who actively participates in the operation and management of a farming operation, is a resident of the State of New Jersey, spends a substantial portion of time in carrying out a farming operation and planted a crop or acquired livestock or aquatic organisms which were on the farm at the time of the completion of the feasibility plan application.

If the applicant is a cooperative, a corporation, a partnership, or a joint operation, it must be primarily engaged in farming, that is, the applicant entity must derive over 50 percent of its gross income from all sources from its farming operation and its principal place of business shall be in New Jersey.

Source: SADC. Farmland Stewardship Wildlife Fencing Program.[46]

In January of 2022, legislation S4231 was passed to create a deer fencing grant program through the NJDA.[14] This grant creates a program similar to the SADC program where the NJDA will provide matching grants for:

1. Unpreserved farmland;
2. Farms for which Pinelands development credits have been sold or otherwise conveyed under the Pinelands Development Credit Bank Act; or
3. A farm that is located in a sending zone according to Section 13 of the Highlands Water Protection and Planning Act.

Access the New Jersey State Legislature's Bill S4231 on the Deer Fencing Grant Program on their website.

3. Federal Conservation Programs

The Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002 (2002 Farm Bill) was landmark legislation, with much of its focus on conservation funding and environmental issues. Since 2002, the legislature has drafted and instituted new Farm Bill programs in 2008, 2014, and 2018. Programs relevant to New Jersey, and Bergen County, include:

- Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP),
- Conservation Innovation Grant Program (CIG),
- Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP),
- Farm and Ranch Land Protection Program (FRPP),
- Grassland Reserve Program (GRP), and
- Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP).

These programs were continued under the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (2008 Farm Bill), renewed in 2014 and 2018, with the most recent legislation being the Agricultural Improvement Act of 2018 (2018 Farm Bill). The 2018 Farm Bill will be active through FY2024. As in the past, these programs are administered by the local NRCS office and the SCD.

In 2014, the USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) added two new programs: Price Loss Coverage (PLC) and Agricultural Risk Coverage (ARC), which are continued through the 2018 Farm Bill. These

programs pay producers with eligible historical base acres when prices and/or yields of covered commodities fall below a certain amount, regardless of their current planting decisions.

Highlights of the 2018 Farm Bill include:

- Increasing mandatory funding for conservation programs by about two percent from 2019-2023.
- Increasing Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) acreage cap from 24 million acres to 27 million acres by 2023.
- Continuing the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), but at a reduced funding level, and replacing an acreage cap with a funding cap.
- Increases funding for the EQIP, Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP), and direct funding for the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP).

Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) is a land conservation program where farmers enroll on a volunteer basis to remove environmentally sensitive land from agricultural production. In exchange, participating farmers plant species that improve the environmental health of the land and receive a yearly rental payment. The contract period is between ten and fifteen years.[15]

Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) is a partnership between the USDA and the state targeted to address environmental impacts related to agricultural practices. The program aims to maintain and improve water quality by reducing agricultural pollutants in streams, enhancing farm viability, and contributing to the State's open space goals. In exchange for removing environmentally sensitive lands from production and introducing conservation practices, agricultural landowners are paid an annual rental rate. Participation is voluntary, and the contract period is typically 10-15 years. The program targets 30,000 acres of agricultural lands throughout the state, requesting $100 million in federal funds and a state match of $23 million over the life of the program. 100% of the cost is paid to establish the conservation practices and annual rental and incentive payments to the landowner.[16]

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) provides financial and technical assistance to agricultural producers and non-industrial forest managers and landowners to implement management practices and address natural resource concerns on their lands. Participation in this conservation program is voluntary.[17] Many of these practices are eligible for cost-sharing. Some of the program benefits include reduction of contamination from agricultural sources such as feeding operations, efficient utilization of nutrients that reduce input costs and nonpoint sources of pollution, and increasing soil health to help improve drought resiliency. All private land in production is eligible, including cropland, pastureland, and nonindustrial private forests with a forest management plan.

For woodland to qualify for EQIP, they must be large enough to be managed as a production unit, typically larger than five acres, with projects offering the greatest environmental benefits receiving the funding. Participants are subject to the Adjusted Gross Income limits of the Farm Bill, are contracted on a basis of one to ten years, and may be eligible for flat rate payments based on the average costs of their forest management practices.

EQIP funds have not been distributed in Bergen County, despite the program's broad availability and use elsewhere.

Conservation Incentive Contracts (CIC) are an option under EQIP with a focus on climate-smart forestry, agriculture, and drought resilience management practices. Conservation Evaluation and Monitoring Activities (CEMA) are also offered to participants to help report the outcomes of practices. Five to ten year contracts are held with producers to manage, maintain, and address natural resource concerns and build on existing conservation efforts. EQIP-CIC practices eligible for assistance include, but are not limited to conservation crop rotation, amending soil properties with gypsum products, irrigation water management, grazing land mechanical treatment, nutrient management, waste recycling, on-farm recharge, soil health testing, and pest management conservation systems.[18]

Funded by EQIP, the aim of the **Conservation Innovation Grant** (CIG) is to stimulate the development and adoption of innovative conservation approaches and technologies in conjunction with agricultural production. Funds are awarded as competitive 50-50 matching grants to non-governmental organizations, tribes, or individuals for projects with a 1–3-year duration.[19]

For more information on eligibility, the application process, and types of conservation practices NRCS can help plan and implement, visit the USDA NRCS NJ Environmental Quality Incentives Program webpage.

The Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) provides technical and financial assistance to manage and maintain existing conservation systems, implementing additional conservation activities on land currently in production. CSP provides two types of payments through 5-year contracts: annual payments for installing new conservation activities and maintaining existing practices, and supplemental payments for adopting a resource-conserving crop rotation. Participants earn payments for conservation performance – the higher the performance, the higher the payment. Participants can apply for renewal at the end of the five-year contract.[20]

The Working Lands for Wildlife (WLFW) program provides technical and financial assistance to agricultural producers to assist in the implementation of conservation practices that benefit target species and priority landscapes.

The **Agricultural Conservation Easement Program** (ACEP) merges three former programs – the Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP), the Grassland Reserve Program (GRP), and the Farm and Ranch Land Protection Program (FRPP).[21] It has two components:

- Agricultural Land Easements (ALE) to prevent the loss of working agricultural lands for nonagricultural uses. NRCS may contribute up to 50% of the fair market value of the easement.
- Wetland Reserve Easements (WRE) provide habitat for fish and wildlife and improve water quality through restoration and enhancement. There are two types available in New Jersey: permanent (100% of the value and 50-75% of restoration costs) and 30-year easements (50-75% of the value and the restoration costs). Land eligible for participation in WRE includes privately held farmland or converted wetlands that can be successfully and cost-effectively restored. Applications for land where an easement will protect and enhance the habitats for migratory birds and other wildlife are prioritized.

In February 2021, the USDA released a final rule to update ACEP as directed by the 2018 Farm Bill. Landowners who enroll in ACEP retain private ownership of their land, but certain land use requirements will apply such as agreeing to cease agricultural activity on wetlands under easement or agreeing to limit non-agricultural uses on land under easement.

The Inflation Reduction Act included $1.4 billion in additional funding for ACEP over five years and it also revised ACEP authority. This funding is expected to back easements that will reduce, capture, avoid, or sequester greenhouse gas emissions, and extend regular program funding through fiscal year 2031. On March 13, 2024, NRCS announced it will invest about $138 million of financial assistance from the Inflation Reduction Act in 138 new climate-smart conservation easements, through which farms and ranchers are conserving wetlands, grasslands, and prime farmlands. As of October 2025, there have been no changes to the NRCS's earlier investment announcement.

The **Regional Conservation Partnership Program** (RCPP) encourages the formation of partnerships to increase the restoration and sustainable use of soil, water, wildlife, and related natural resources on regional or watershed scales. The partnerships can be formed by agricultural producer associations, farmer cooperatives, municipal entities, and non-government organizations.[22] There are two funding categories: critical conservation areas (New Jersey does not fall in one of these eight areas), and state/multistate. To apply for state funding, the project must address at least one of the national or state priorities of soil erosion, soil quality, water quality, and wildlife habitat.

The **Healthy Forests Reserve Program** (HFRP) helps landowners restore, enhance, and protect forest resources on private land through easements and financial assistance. The program provides landowners with 10-year cost-sharing restoration agreements, and 30-year or permanent easements for specific conservation actions. The objectives of HFRP are to promote the recovery of endangered & threatened species, improve plant and animal biodiversity, and enhance carbon sequestration. Under HFRP landowners may avoid regulatory restrictions under the Endangered Species Act by restoring or improving habitat on their land for a specific period.[23]

The **Agricultural Management Assistance** (AMA) program targets beginning and limited-resource farmers, small farms, and producers who have had limited participation in other USDA financial assistance programs. AMA provides financial and technical assistance to agricultural producers to address water management, water quality, and erosion control by incorporating conservation into their farming operations. Producers may improve water use efficiency through the construction of efficient irrigation systems and irrigation water management practices, reduce nonpoint source pollutants through filter strips and nutrient management, and improve habitat conservation through conservation cover and windbreak establishment. Payments can be up to 75% of project costs and are limited to up to $50,000 per participant per year.[24]

C. Water Resources

1. Supply Characteristics

The physiographic and geologic layout of Bergen County dictates water supply, availability, and recharge, as well as the location of agriculture. Bergen County

is in the Newark Basin of New Jersey, which underlies about 20% of the state. It is primarily flat, with the topography changing on the western side of the County where the Highlands begin.[25]

Watersheds

Within Bergen County, there are eight watersheds (**Figure 1**), which are located in the Lower Hudson Basin, meaning that all waterways eventually enter the Hudson Rivers.[26] The Eight HUC11 watersheds are listed below:

- Hackensack River (above Hirshfeld Brook)
- Hackensack River (below/incl Hirshfeld Brook)
- Hudson River
- Passaic River Lower (Nwk Bay to Saddle)
- Passaic River Lower (Saddle to Pompton)
- Ramapo River
- Saddle River
- Wanaque River

Aquifers

The geology of Bergen County resembles a "tilted layer cake," with different layers, or strata, of siltstone, shale, and sandstone. The siltstone and shale have a low permeability, resulting in significant surface flow and high drainage density. The more permeable sandstone, allows for water to pass through into aquifer cavities below. The permeability of sandstone is affected by its texture and size. When confining layers overlay the more permeable layers, they protect aquifers from contamination that might seep into groundwater from the land surface. Bergen County has three aquifers:

- Brunswick Aquifer
- Ramapo Aquifer
- Ridgewood Aquifer

Please refer to **Chapter I** for more information. As more development occurs, the increased impervious surfaces prevent water from soaking into the ground, causing more runoff into the streams and rivers of the watershed and diminishing the capacities of the area's aquifers to recharge. The aquifers provide both residential and agricultural water supplies. It is important to balance development with the capacity of the natural resources to serve the area's needs now and in the future.

2. Agricultural Demand & Supply Limitations

Adequate water supplies are necessary for the success of agriculture operations in Bergen County. Obtaining permits for new wells from the NJDEP and approval from municipalities is a challenging and time-consuming process. For farmers who may be introducing crops that require irrigation, permits, and approvals could be a limiting factor.

The NJDEP Division of Water Supply's Bureau of Water Allocation requires that an Agricultural Water Usage Certification or Agricultural Water Use Registration be obtained from the County agricultural agent if a person withdraws ground and/or surface water over 100,000 gallons per day for agricultural, aquacultural, or horticultural purposes, or if the property falls within the New Jersey Pinelands Commission.[27] Farmers are also competing with a growing residential and commercial base for existing water resources. The County's population increased by 5% or 50,612 people between 2010 to 2020.[28]

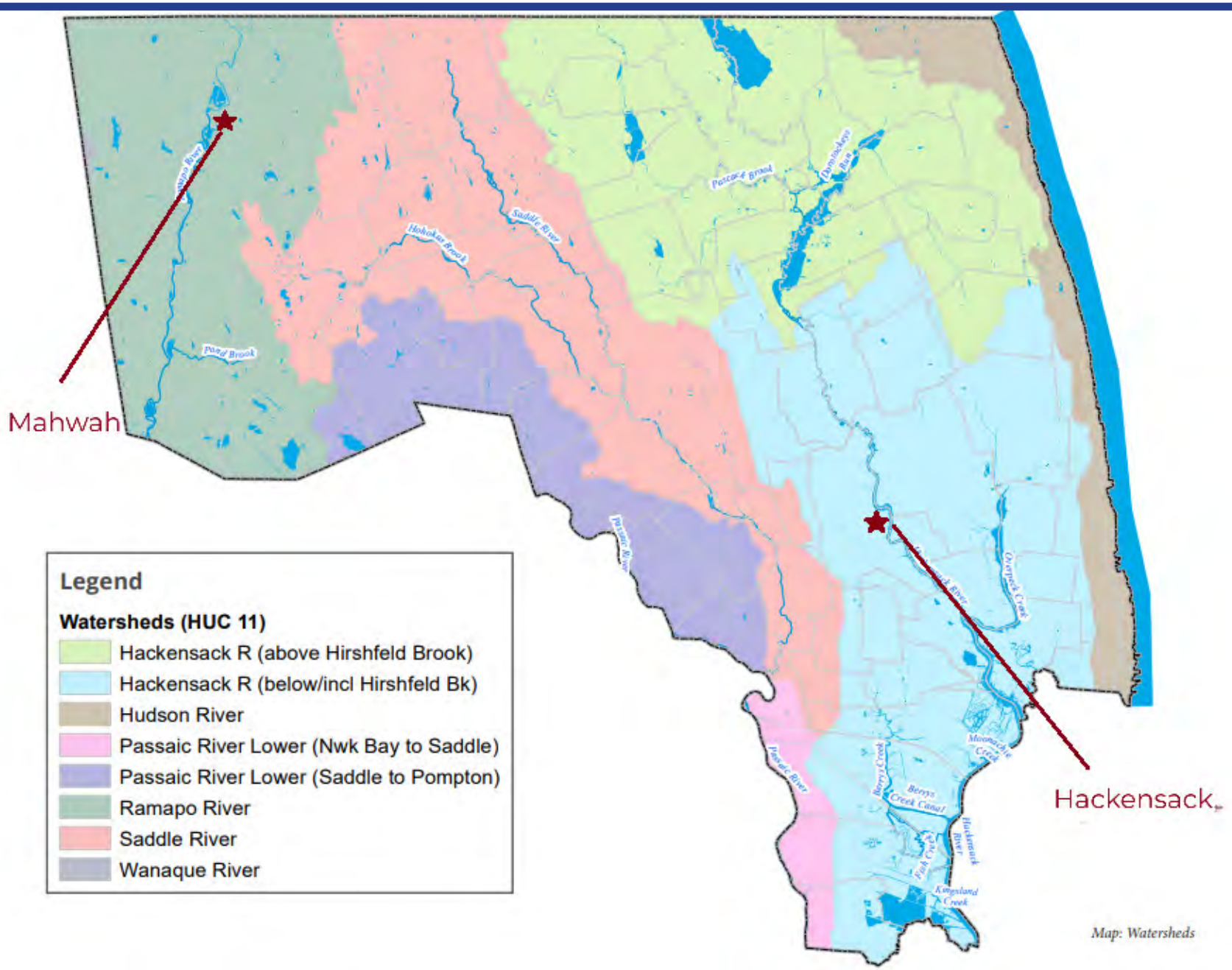


Figure VII-1. Bergen County's Watersheds

Source: Bergen County Environmental Natural Resources Division

Climatic changes, as well as increased development, will have impacts on the availability of water resources. Periods of drought will also pose a risk to farmers. Lower rainfall leaves less water available for groundwater and surface water sources.

The U.S. Drought Monitor is a national map created by the National Drought Mitigation Center, USDA, and NOAA. Historic records are available as well, depicting drought conditions that have occurred since 1895. The intensity of drought across the County is depicted using a five-category system, from Abnormally Dry (D0) conditions to Exceptional Drought (D4) conditions.[29]

- D0 - Abnormally Dry conditions: Crop growth is stunted, planting is delayed, fire danger is elevated, lawns brown early, and gardens begin to wilt.
- D1 - Moderate Drought: Irrigation use increases, hay and grain yields are lower than normal, honey production declines, and wildfires and ground fires increase.
- D2 - Severe Drought: Specialty crops are impacted in both yield and fruit size, producers begin feeding cattle, and hay prices are high. Warnings may be issued on outdoor burns and air quality is poor.
- D3 - Extreme Drought: Widespread crop loss, Christmas tree farms are stressed, dairy farmers are struggling financially, well drillers and bulk water haulers see increased business, water recreation, and hunting are modified, and wildlife disease outbreak is observed.
- D4 - Exceptional Drought conditions have had minimal or no impact on New Jersey, so the Drought Impact Reporter does not have impacts to report for the D4 category.

Figure VII- 2 shows droughts by level of intensity, based on data collected weekly from 2000 through August of 2024. The x-axis represents the duration of the drought event while the y-axis shows the percentage of acreage within Bergen County affected by the drought event. D1 Conditions were recorded several times in the past two decades including in 2001-2002, in 2005, 2010, and 2012, for periods between 2015- 2017, and briefly in 2019, 2022, and 2023. D2 incidents of Severe Drought were most notably recorded in 2016-2017 and most recently in 2024. D3 Conditions of Extreme Drought occurred in 2002. As of October 2025, D1 and D2 Drought Conditions were present in Bergen County.

Farmers in Bergen County can view data on how drought periods are affecting popular crops and livestock commodities. Data from the USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) are overlayed on the Drought Monitor reports to create maps of affected farmland and summaries of affected farm operations.

The National Integrated Drought Information System (NIDIS) and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) publish data on drought conditions by state and county on their webpage, Drought.gov. Offering information regarding drought conditions, short and long-term drought indicators, acres of agriculture affected by drought, water supply stream flow conditions, 1-month precipitation outlooks, and historical drought conditions, this webpage is an asset for Bergen County farmers.

3. Conservation & Allocation Strategies

An adequate water supply is important to successful agriculture operations in Bergen County. Droughts in recent years have highlighted the precarious nature of the agricultural (and general) water supply and the need for water conservation systems and regimens.

Corn and hay rely on rain and some groundwater for water needs. As such, water conservation strategies are difficult to implement, given that water usage largely depends on the amount of rainfall during a given growing season. With the more water-intensive nursery and greenhouse operations and produce farming, it is possible to implement conservation strategies such as drip irrigation, water reuse, or watering crops in the cooler parts of the day. However, since vegetable, fruit, and nursery agriculture are minor in terms of acreage when compared to corn and hay, the positive effects of county-wide water conservation efforts are minimized.

The faculty of NJAES-RCE publishes annual crop production recommendation guides for multiple crop groups that include irrigation guidelines and recommendations. These guides include tips for maximizing irrigation efficiency, such as optimizing irrigation scheduling, selecting appropriate growing mediums, planning and installing irrigation systems that provide efficient water use, managing stormwater runoff, and collecting and recycling irrigation water.

The Office of the New Jersey State Climatologist at Rutgers University, School of Environmental and Biological Sciences, operates the NJ Weather and Climate Network of weather monitoring stations. Stations in Bergen County provide weather data such as air temperature, precipitation, wind speed, and gusts. Farmers can set favorite locales and view charts and tabular data.

D. Waste Management Planning

With farming, waste management includes planning for livestock and animal

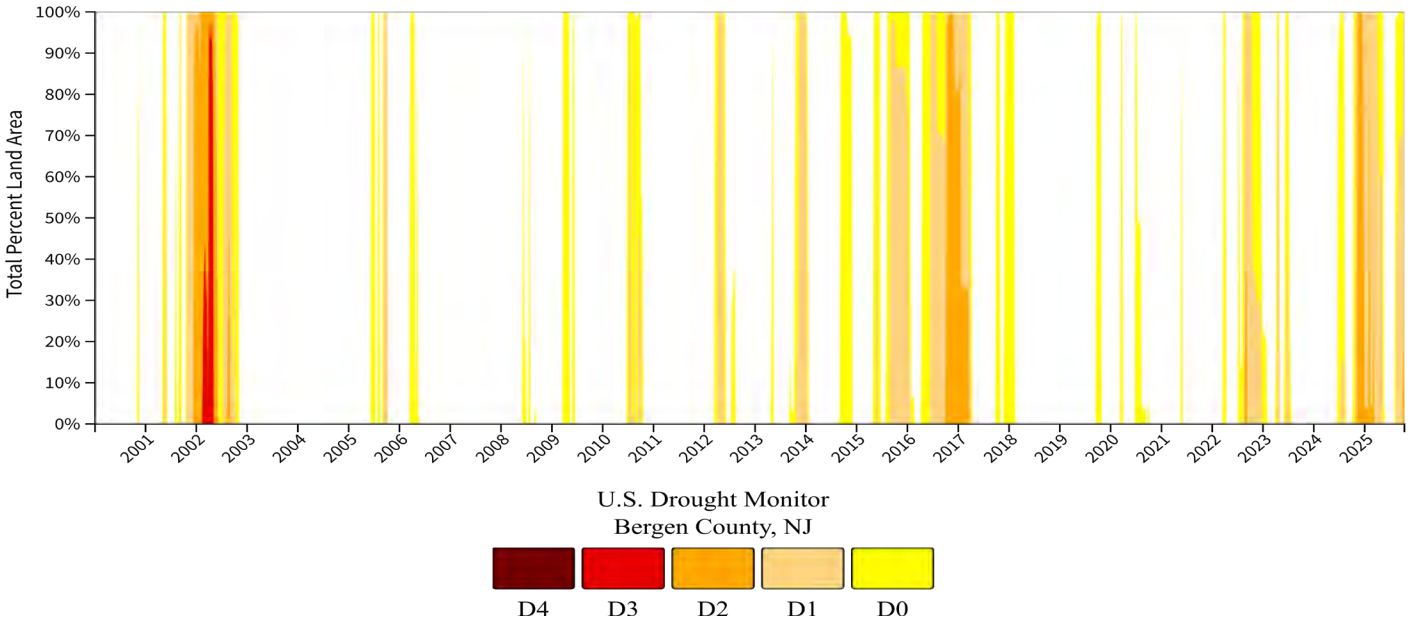


Figure VII-2. U.S. Drought Monitor for Bergen County 2000-Present (National Integrated Drought Information System, NIDIS)

waste, general operational and machinery waste, crop by-products, and pollutant runoff.

Animal Waste

Farmers should have Nutrient Management Plans based on crop yield goals, soil tests of available field nutrients, and nutrients from legumes and manure application on fields.[30] Proper nutrient management reduces input costs and protects water quality by preventing over application of commercial fertilizers and animal manure.

Livestock production is a major producer of waste materials that requires management. Wastes from livestock can include manure, wastewater from sanitizing operations, unused pesticide mixes and pesticide containers, and residue from food processing operations. Poor management of animal and livestock waste can introduce unwanted microorganisms into natural systems and cause disease among farm animals.

Horse farms particularly have waste management concerns because of their relatively high density of animals per acre of land, and regular maintenance and collection of animal wastes, bedding materials, and wastewater. Cattle and dairy farms tend to occupy acreage at lower densities, making it possible to spread animal waste for nutrient recycling more efficiently and safer for health on fields.

The Agricultural Waste Management Field Handbook (AWMFH), produced by the NRCS, provides specific guidance for planning, designing, and managing systems where agricultural wastes are involved. Topics covered in the AWMFH include incorporating manure nutrients into crop nutrient budgets and properly disposing of waste materials that cannot easily be recycled. The AWMFH can be used to create a Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plan (CNMP) to manage and maintain the resource base of producers. All activities outlined in a CNMP must comply with NRCS standards and specifications.[31]

The Agricultural Waste Management Field Handbook can be found here.

Other waste management planning tools include the creation of an Animal Waste Management (AWM) Plan. AWM can be used for animal feeding operations to estimate the production of manure and necessary animal bedding, and process water to determine the size of storage and treatment facilities. The evaluation includes existing facilities, herd size, local climate, and details about bedding, washing, and flush water. Producers can assess their existing and planned storage & treatment facilities, develop a monthly water and waste budget, assess gross nutrient balance from target yields and crop acreage, and receive a schematic drawing for treatment and storage components.[32] AWM Plans apply to all livestock farms, including equine operations, and require farms to follow these general requirements:

- Animals in confinement areas only have controlled access to water.
- Manure storage areas must be at least 100 feet from water and on slopes of less than five percent.
- Land application of manure must follow Best Management Practices.
- Livestock contagious disease must be reported to the State Veterinarian.

In addition to regulations on animal waste management, the NJDEP has implemented programs targeting

Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs) to protect water quality from waste nutrients associated with livestock farming. The NJDEP implemented a statewide stormwater permitting program for CAFO and designated animal feeding operations (AFO), as required by the Environmental Protection Agency. Farms that qualify as concentrated animal feeding operations must apply for a permit if they discharge pollutants into a state waterway.

Recycling

The Bergen County Utilities Authority (BCUA) has limited recycling opportunities specifically related to agriculture. It does accept agricultural plastics at its landfill, but not as a recycling operation. There are currently no plans to implement an agricultural plastics recycling program in the County.

The NJDA website lists several commercial recyclers who accept nursery/greenhouse film (year-round), pesticide containers (seasonal), agricultural plastics – mulch film, drip irrigation tape – and/or plastic nursery pots, plug trays, and flats.

Since 1995, the BCUA has sponsored an annual Municipal Tire Recycling Program. The 2025 Municipal Tire Recycling Program consists of four one-day amnesty collection days where residents can drop off tires at two locations[33]:

- Bergen Community College, 400 Paramus Road, Paramus
- Bergen County Campgaw Mountain Reservation, 200 Campgaw Road, Mahwah

Farmers traditionally use tires to hold down their plastic tarps, but due to the need for mosquito control, the NJDEP determined that the tires pose a threat.

For household hazardous waste (HHW), the BCUA sponsors three collection days for residents (commercial businesses prohibited. The collected materials are recycled and reused (e.g., motor oil, gas cylinders) or disposed of in an environmentally sound manner (e.g., solvents, fertilizers, weed killers, pesticides).[34]

On-farm recycling is an important consideration too, and can include composting, recycling leaves on the property, using the culled product from vegetable harvesting and other food waste to feed the soils or animals, and collecting animal waste in temporary waste containers (to prevent it from polluting runoff into water bodies) and using it as fertilizer.

E. Energy Conservation Planning

The state's Clean Energy Act of 2018 instilled these changes in its Renewable Portfolio:

- Standard: Establishes one of the most ambitious in the country by requiring 35% of the energy sold in the state to come from qualifying energy sources by 2025 and 50% by 2030.
- Solar: Accelerates the solar renewable portfolio standards to 5.1% by 2021 and establishes a Community Solar Energy Pilot Program.
- Offshore Wind: Codifies the Governor's goal of 3,500 megawatts (MW) of offshore wind by 2030 and reinstates an expired program to provide tax credits for offshore wind manufacturing activities.
- Energy Efficiency: Requires each utility to implement energy efficiency measures to reduce electricity usage by two percent and natural gas usage by 0.75%.

- Energy Storage: Codifies the governor's goal of achieving 600 MW of energy storage by 2021 and 2,000 MW by 2030

In 2019, Governor Phil Murphy signed the Updated Global Warming Response Act seeking to reduce greenhouse emissions 80% by 2050. Green energy policy is also echoed in Governor Murphy's *Energy Master Plan*, in which the state seeks to transition to 100% clean energy by 2050. The Rural Energy for America Program (REAP) funds grants and loan guarantees to agricultural producers for assistance in purchasing renewable energy systems. Renewable energy systems include generation from biomass, geothermal, hydropower, hydrogen, wind, and solar.

The NRCS has the authority to use EQIP to implement Agricultural Energy Management Plans (AgEMP) to address energy conservation concerns. As a part of the EQIP On-Farm Energy Initiative, these plans are designed to evaluate energy use and efficiency within farming operations. These energy audits can qualify a farmer for financial assistance to implement process recommendations.

The EQIP natural resource conservation program pays for some energy production programs, such as the replacement of older, dirty polluting working diesel engines, with newer, more efficient, cleaner-burning diesel engines that will meet EPA Tier requirements for the program year. The NJ Board of Public Utilities offers rebates for solar electric, wind, and sustainable biomass systems if funding is available.

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 increased in New Jersey.[35] New Jersey's Clean Energy Program offers registration in the Solar Renewable Energy Certificate (SREC) Registration Program (SRP), which allows owners of registered, installed systems to enter energy generated into an SREC tracking system; these SRECs can be sold to generate revenue during the first 15 years of the solar operation. The SREC SRP program closed for new applicants April of 2020. The 2018 Clean Energy Act required the NJ Board of Public Utilities to close to new registrations upon the attainment of 5.1% solar electricity generation.[36] SREC has since been replaced by the current program, SREC-II, which pays a fixed rate of $85 for every 1,000 kilowatt-hours of solar energy producted for the next 15 years.[37] Solar energy is a fast-growing sector in the alternative energy market. In 2021, the state government enacted the Dual-Use Solar Energy Pilot Program, to pilote the installation of solar panels on farming lands. This program is conducted in an agreement with the Rutgers University Agrivoltaics Program (RAP).[38]

Wind Energy

The power of a strong wind can be captured by turbines or windmills, turning such power into electricity. Expanding and evolving technology makes this option more attractive to farmers to cut energy costs, but adequate wind speeds are requisite to make this a successful alternative. New Jersey farmers might take advantage of a distributed or "small" wind system, which uses 100 kilowatts or smaller turbines to power a home, farm, or small business directly.

The NJDEP Division of Land Use Regulation supports wind turbine projects within developed areas of the State to limit impacts on the natural environment.[39]

The SADC does permit wind energy projects according to NJSA 4:1C-32.4, but they are required to review and approve applications proposed on preserved farmland whether the project is proposed on preserved land or any exception area. Respective CADBs will also have a say in the project review and approval to determine if the use is suitable for the preserved farmland. New Jersey's Clean Energy Program provides a model small wind ordinance for municipal adoption. New Jersey's Clean Energy Program incentives for wind energy installations have been on hold since 2011.[40]

Incentives and assistance for small wind systems include the Renewal Energy Incentive Program (REIP) and the Anemometer Loan Program, administered by Rutgers and four other state universities.[41] The program is funded by the US Department of Energy Wind Powering America Program and funds provided by the NJ Board of Public Utilities Office of Clean Energy Program. By measuring wind power at the target location, the anemometers help determine the economic feasibility of wind turbine installation. Target markets include municipalities, farms, residential, and small commercial customers. Both Rutgers and Rowan University have waiting lists for anemometer loans.

Biopower

According to the U.S. Department of Energy's Biomass Program, after hydropower, biopower provides a larger share of the world's electricity than any other renewable energy resource. Biopower can be used in combined heat and power (CHP) systems to generate both heat and electricity and it can be sourced from any organic matter such as wood, plants, agricultural waste, and other materials.[42] Agricultural producers can serve as a source for biomass fuels and, potentially, an end user. Starting in 2017, biopower projects are incentivized through the Combined Heat and Power Program (CHP). Program participants are eligible to receive financial incentives for CHP installations to further enhance energy efficiency in their buildings through on-site power generation and using distributed generation to provide reliability solutions for New Jersey while supporting the state's *Energy Master Plan*.

Ethanol

Ethanol is a renewable fuel made by distilling starch and sugar in a variety of plants. It can then be blended into gasoline as an oxygenate, reducing air pollution. Unlike the gasoline additive MTBE, ethanol will not contaminate groundwater. As uses for corn depart from being feed products for cattle and dairy, corn production can carry on as a way to meet demands for ethanol production.

Biodiesel

Petroleum diesel is an emitter of sulfur emissions, a major air pollutant. Biodiesel, 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.

Biogas

Agricultural waste and manure are among the variety of waste that could be used to create energy through anaerobic digestion, with the added benefits of reducing landfills and producing a nutrient-rich fertilizer that could be used by farmers. Fats, oils and greases, and food waste produce the most biogas. New Jersey ranks 30th nationwide in biogas production. Out of 59 operational systems,

down from 62 in 2015, 22 are landfill systems, 32 are wastewater systems, and five are food waste systems.[43] The American Biogas Council has identified 144 potential new projects statewide, unfortunately, they see little potential for agriculture-based biogas systems; the vast majority of potential projects deal with wastewater and food waste.

Switchgrass Pellets

Switchgrass is a tall, warm-season perennial grass used for summer hay and pasture, soil conservation, and wildlife habitat. It has also gained recent attention as a biomass energy crop either for direct combustion in stoves or power plants or for cellulosic conversion to ethanol. Switchgrass is adaptable to harsher conditions where other grasses may suffer. The NJAES-RCE has developed a fact sheet that further explains Switchback production and use within New Jersey.[44]

Renewable Energy Grant Programs

New Jersey's Clean Energy Program: Administered by the Board of Public Utilities, this program provides financial incentives to install clean energy systems, including fuel cells, photovoltaics (solar electricity), small wind and sustainable biomass equipment. Financial incentives are in the form of rebates, grants, and loans. Additional information is at www.njcep.com.[45]

F. Outreach and Incentives

The Bergen CADB, the NJAES-RCE of Bergen County, and regional agencies such as the NRCS, SCD, and FSA local service centers stand ready to educate and assist farmers regarding natural resource conservation and agricultural productivity. The CADB supports and encourages the implementation of programs to aid in natural resource conservation in the County.

> See the NJAES-RCE crop production recommendation guides on their website.

Literature Cited

Chapter 7

1 USDA. Natural Resources Conservation Service. https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/. Accessed July 2024.

2 Natural Resource Conservation Services, *New Jersey NRCS Directory*. https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/sites/default/files/2023-07/Employee%20Directory%20July%202023.pdf Accessed July 2024.

3 USDA. Natural Resources Conservation Service. *Field Office Technical Guide*. https://efotg.sc.egov.usda.gov/#/state/NJ/documents/section=1&folder=9847 Accessed June 2025.

4 New Jersey Department of Agriculture. *Agricultural and Natural Resources*. https://www.nj.gov/agriculture/divisions/anr/. Accessed July 2024.

5 New Jersey Association of Conservation Districts, Natural Resources Conservation Service, NJDA, State Soil Conservation Committee. (March 2024). N*ew Jersey Conservation Partnership Congressional Report*. https://web.njacd.org/pdf/NJ-Conservation-Partnership_Congressional-Report_2024-03.pdf. Accessed June 2025.

6 Bergen County Soil Conservation District. https://bergenscd.org/ Accessed June 2025.

7 Rutgers New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station, Cooperative Extension of Bergen County. Agriculture and Natural Resources. https://bergen.njaes.rutgers.edu/ Accessed June 2025.

8 Legiscan. New Jersey Senate Bill 699. https://legiscan.com/NJ/bill/S699/2024. Accessed October 2025.

9 New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection. Division of Parks & Forestry *Farmland Assessment Program*. http://www.nj.gov/dep/parksandforests/forest/njfs_farm_assess.html Accessed June 2025.

10 State of New Jersey: Department of the Treasury. *Guidelines for Generally Accepted Agricultural/Horticultural Practices Under Farmland Assessment*. https://bergencountynj.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/Guidelines.pdf Accessed June 2025.

11 United States Department of Agriculture. 2022 Census of Agriculture. https://www.nass.usda.gov/AgCensus/. Accessed July 2025.

12 New Jersey Department of Agriculture, *Soil and Water Conservation Grants*. http://www.state.nj.us/agriculture/grants/soil.html Accessed June 2025.

13 NJDA. New Jersey Department of Agriculture Announces Enhanced Wildlife Fencing Grants. https://www.nj.gov/agriculture/news/press/2024/press240216.html

Accessed June 2025.

14 NJDA Agricultural Assistance. *Wildlife Fencing*. https://www.nj.gov/agriculture/divisions/anr/agriassist/deerfencing.html Accessed June 2025.

15 USDA. *Conservation Reserve Program*. https://www.fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/conservation-programs/conservation-reserve-program/index Accessed June 2025.

16 USDA. *Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program*. https://www.fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/conservation-programs/conservation-reserve-enhancement/index Accessed June 2025.

17 USDA. *Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQUIP)*. https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs-initiatives/eqip-environmental-quality-incentives Accessed June 2025.

18 USDA. *EQIP Conservation Incentive Contracts*. https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs-initiatives/csp-conservation-stewardship-program/eqip-conservation-incentive-contracts Accessed June 2025.

19 USDA. *Conservation Innovation Grants*. https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs-initiatives/cig-conservation-innovation-grants Accessed June 2025.

20 USDA. *Conservation Stewardship Program*. https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs-initiatives/csp-conservation-stewardship-program Accessed June 2025.

21 USDA NRCS. *Agricultural Conservation Easement Program*. https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs-initiatives/acep-agricultural-conservation-easement-program Accessed June 2025.

22 USDA NRCS. *Regional Conservation Partnership Program*. https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs-initiatives/rcpp-regional-conservation-partnership-program Accessed June 2025.

23 USDA NRCS. *Healthy Forests Reserve Program*. https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs-initiatives/hfrp-healthy-forests-reserve-program Accessed June 2025.

24 USDA NRCS. *Agricultural Management Assistance*. https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs-initiatives/ama-agricultural-management-assistance Accessed June 2025.

25 NJDEP Bureau of GIS. *Physiographic Provinces of New Jersey*. https://gisdata-njdep.opendata.arcgis.com/datasets/20377d0dc1fe41f1ab2d9d0897844441_20/about Accessed June 2025.

26 Bergen County. Environmental Natural Resources. https://bergencountynj.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/Environmental-Natural-Resources-Part-2.pdf Accessed July 2025.

27 NJDEP, *Agricultural, Aquacultural, and Horticultural Water Use Certifications & Registrations*. https://www.nj.gov/dep/watersupply/a_ag.html Accessed June 2025.

28 United States Census, *Bergen County*. https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/bergencountynewjersey,NJ/PST045224 Accessed June 2025.

29 U.S. Drought Monitor. *New Jersey*. https://droughtmonitor.unl.edu/CurrentMap/StateDroughtMonitor.aspx?NJ Accessed June 2025.

30 FARM, *Nutrient Management Fact Sheet*, https://nationaldairyfarm.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/New-Jersey-2.18.22.pdf Accessed June 2025.

31 USDA, Agricultural Waste Management Field Handbook, (2013). https://efotg.sc.egov.usda.gov/references/public/IA/AWMFH_Amendment_IA-3_July_2013_Complete.pdf Accessed August 2024.

32 SADC, *Animal Waste Management*. https://www.nj.gov/agriculture/divisions/anr/agriassist/animalwaste.html Accessed June 2025.

33 Bergen County Utilities Authority, *Tires*. https://www.bcua.org/index.asp?SEC=11D-46FE5-D89A-4156-A0AD-966CE76197A0 Accessed June 2025.

34 Bergen County Utilities Authority, *Household Hazardous Waste*, https://www.bcua.org/index.asp?SEC=B57513DC-5789-4617-8427-EB9D21DBD40A Accessed June 2025.

35 New Jersey Department of Agriculture. *Agriculture and Green Energy*. https://www.nj.gov/agriculture/news/hottopics/topics060222.html Accessed June 2025.

36 State of New Jersey, Board of Public Utilities. NJBPU to Close State's Solar Renewable Energy Certificate Registration Program on April 30, 2020. https://www.nj.gov/bpu/newsroom/2020/approved/20200406.html#:~:text=Trenton%2C%20N.J.%20%E2%80%93%20The%20New%20Jersey,Program%20effective%20April%2030%2C%202020. Accessed October 2025.

37 Public Service Solar. The 2025 Guide to NJ's SREC-II Program. https://publicservicesolar.com/the-2025-guide-to-njs-srec-ii-program/. Accessed October 2025.

38 NJDEP. New Jersey's Clean Energy: Solar. https://dep.nj.gov/cleanenergy/technologies/solar/#dual-use-solar-pilot. Accessed June 2025.

39 NJDEP. *Wind Turbines*. https://dep.nj.gov/wlm/lrp/common-projects/wind-turbines/ Accessed June 2025.

40 New Jersey's Clean Energy Program. Renewable Energy Incentive Program. *Wind*. https://njcleanenergy.com/renewable-energy/technologies/wind/wind Accessed June 2025.

41 New Jersey's Clean Energy Program, Renewable Energy Incentive Program. *Anemometer Loan Program*. https://www.njcleanenergy.com/renewable-energy/technologies/wind/small-wind-systems/anemometer-loan-program Accessed June 2025.

42 U.S. Department of Energy. *Biopower Program*. https://www1.eere.energy.gov/

bioenergy/pdfs/biopower_factsheet.pdf Accessed June 2025.

43 American Biogas Council. *New Jersey*. https://americanbiogascouncil.org/resources/state-profiles/new-jersey/ Accessed June 2025.

44 OK State, *Switchback Production and Use in New Jersey*. http://switchgrass.okstate.edu/other-information-sources/switchgrassproductionnewjersey.pdf Accessed June 2025.

45 New Jersey's Clean Energy Program. https://www.njcleanenergy.com/ Accessed June 2025.

46 SADC *Farmland Stewardship Wildlife Fencing Program Application for Cost-Share Grant Funding for the Installation of Wildlife Fencing on Permanently Preserved Farmland*. https://nj.gov/agriculture/sadc/documents/farmpreserve/postpres/wildlifefencingapplication.pdf Accessed June 2025.

Stokes Farm, Borough of Old Tappan
Source: Stokes Farm Facebook

Chapter VIII.

Agricultural Industry Sustainability, Retention, & Promotion

A. Existing Agricultural Industry Support

1. Right to Farm

To ensure farmers can continue accepted agricultural operations, the State Legislature enacted the Right to Farm Act in 1983 and amended it in 1998. The Act provides "protection of commercial farm operations from nuisance action, where recognized methods and techniques of agricultural production are applied, while, at the same time, acknowledging the need to provide a proper balance among the varied and conflicting interests of all lawful activities in New Jersey." (4:1C-2)

The 1983 Agriculture Retention and Development Act created the SADC, and authorized counties to create CADBs to establish agriculture retention and development programs. At present, there are eighteen CADBs. Both the SADC and CADB implement the Right to Farm Act.[1]

Currently, none of the municipalities in Bergen County have an established Right to Farm Ordinance (RTFO).[2] All municipalities within Bergen County that have commercial farms are encouraged to adopt an RTFO and to update any existing ordinances to align with the SADC model ordinance. If a municipality has an RTFO on file with the CADB, that ordinance is referenced during any Right

to Farm (RTF) hearings. If not, the CADB refers to the State's model language. The CADB contacts municipalities periodically regarding RTFOs.

To maximize protections for commercial farmers under the Right to Farm Act, the SADC develops Agricultural Management Practices (AMPs), tracks RTF cases, offers a conflict resolution process, and reviews proposed rules from other state agencies to assess their impact on agriculture.

As of 2024, the SADC had 12 AMPs in place, the latest being an AMP for On-Farm Direct Marketing Facilities, Activities, and Events, adopted on April 7, 2014. AMPs clarify standards for RTF protection.[3]

When a RTF issue surfaces, the CADB first encourages the parties to use the State's Agricultural Mediation Program through which the SADC will provide mediation or conflict resolution at no cost to the participants.[4] If the CADB determination does not resolve the issue, either party in the dispute may take the matter for a subsequent appeal first to the SADC and then to the NJ Superior Court, Appellate Division.[5]

If a complaint is filed with the CADB and it concerns a type of issue the CADB has not heard before, the CADB may send it to the SADC for a determination as to whether the farm falls within the parameters established by the Act for RTF protection.

Once either the SADC or the CADB has determined that the complaint falls within the RTF parameters, and any additional fact-finding and technical review takes place, the issue is given a public, quasi-judicial hearing at the county level. After all the information has been considered, the CADB will determine whether the RTF Act protects the agricultural activity or whether changes to the operation will be required.[6]

The CADB began hearing Right to Farm cases with the implementation of the Right to Farm Act and has seen the number of cases increase over the years, as development has encroached on agricultural areas.

Municipalities can and should limit the number of RTF complaints and encourage

The SADC lists three conflict resolution determinations for Bergen County, all of which have been resolved by the Bergen CADB).[33]

- 9/6/2017: Demarest: Off-site parking; On-Farm Direct Marketing AMP.
- 7/28/14: Metropolitan Farm: Tree clearing and soil movement related to greenhouse construction.
- 4/11/06: Abrams-Demaree Farm: Installation of DEP monitoring well, procedural jurisdiction.

To qualify for Right to Farm protection, a farm must:

- Meet the definition of a "commercial farm" in the Right to Farm Act.
- Be operated in conformance with federal and state law.
- Comply with AMPs recommended by the SADC, or site-specific AMPs developed by the Bergen County Agriculture Development Board (CADB) at the request of a commercial farmer.
- Not be a direct threat to public health and safety.
- Be in an area where agriculture is permitted under municipal zoning ordinances.[34]

farming as an industry by:

- Adopting comprehensive Right to Farm ordinances as outlined by the SADC;
- Making agriculture a permitted use in all appropriate zones;
- Requiring buffers between new non-agricultural development and adjacent existing farmlands; and
- Requiring notification to homeowners purchasing a home in a new subdivision where active agriculture occurs on adjacent property.

2. Farmland Assessment

The Farmland Assessment program is a tax incentive that reduces property taxes on active commercially farmed land. Land in active agricultural or horticultural use can be assessed on its productivity and soil capability values rather than its market value. This program offers financial incentives to encourage farmers to keep land in agricultural production. This tax incentive is made possible by the Farmland Assessment Act of 1964, N.J.S.A. 54:4-23.1 et seq. Its provisions were updated by legislation that was signed into law in 2013, becoming effective in tax year 2015.

The Farmland Assessment program does not apply to farm structures, such as barns and storage facilities. It has been proposed that additional tax incentives are necessary that encourage farmers to maintain their buildings in good working order as part of active farm operations, and that do not financially penalize them for renovating, or replacing, old or unsafe structures.

Basic eligibility requirements for farmland assessment include:

- Applicants 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, and effective as of tax year 2015, must submit proof of sales or clear evidence of anticipated gross sales along with the FA-1 application form.
- Land must be devoted to agricultural and/or horticultural uses for at least two years before the tax year the applicant is applying for.
- Land must consist of at least 5 contiguous acres being farmed and/or under a woodland management plan. Land under or adjoining a farmhouse is not counted towards the minimum 5 acres.
- Effective as of tax year 2015, gross sales of products from the land must average at least $1,000 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 $500 for the first five acres and $0.50 per acre for any acreage over the five. Depending 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.
- The property owner must represent that the land will continue in agricultural or horticultural use to the end of the tax year.

There are additional requirements for the boarding, training, or rehabilitation of livestock and woodlands under a woodland management plan.[35]

In determining the area of eligible land for farmland assessment, all the land under barns, sheds, seasonal farm markets that sell predominantly agricultural products, silos, cribs, greenhouses and like structures, lakes, dams, ponds, streams, irrigation ditches and like facilities are included, provided that their use is related to agriculture or horticulture. Appurtenant woodland acreage that is equal to or less than the acreage in cropland and pastureland is also counted. Preserved farmland must still meet the criteria and filing prerequisites of the Farmland Assessment Act to receive preferential reduced farmland taxes.

Ineligible land area is land under the farmhouse and additional land used in connection with the farmhouse, including but not limited to, land used for lawns, flower gardens, home outdoor entertainment spaces (such as residential pool areas and patios), recreation, and for like purposes. This land will not be counted towards the five-acre minimum requirement for Farmland Assessment eligibility. All farm buildings and structures used for agricultural and horticultural purposes are taxable as real property, even though the land underneath qualifies them for Farmland Assessment.

Bergen County is 148,992 acres, of this, 771 acres, or 0.5% of the County, were farm land assessed in 2022. Farmland assessed acres have dropped from 1,283 acres in 2002 to 771 acres in 2022, a 39% decrease. (**Chapter I**).

Additional Strategies to Sustain, Retain, and Promote Agriculture

1. Permit Streamlining

Municipalities play a key role in the preservation of farming as an industry. Municipal agricultural zoning ordinances protect farm activities and farmland from non-farm uses, prevent conflict between agricultural and other land uses and protect open land uses to foster growth more selectively. The viability of farming is impacted by government regulation, development pressures, and the economics of the marketplace. While land preservation is vital for maintaining a sufficient land base that is suitable for farming, sustaining that base requires support on many fronts. Municipal and zoning support is one, but the flexibility of government regulation can also offer support to farmers and farmland.[7]

Municipalities have created problems for farmers over zoning issues, particularly with down zoning, thereby devaluing the land in the eyes of the bank or other financial institutions and making it harder

Flexibility in Government Regulation

Positive and supportive public policy: This includes legal protection (right to farm), priority in decisions on taxation (farmland assessment), regulation exemptions, and financial incentives (planning incentive grants).

Flexibility: State agencies should consider the NJDA *Agricultural Smart Growth Plan* when making decisions regarding existing and proposed infrastructure, developing, and amending regulations and programs, and protecting environmental and historical resources. These agencies should coordinate with NJDA to ensure that regulations and programs are attuned to the needs of farmers.

Agriculture-Friendly Zoning: This refers to a comprehensive land use practice that coordinates zoning and land use policy in a proactive way which encourages agribusiness, while at the same time reducing the incidence of farmer-homeowner nuisance issues.

for farmers to use their land as collateral in obtaining loans. Other issues are signage, building codes, health issues, and disputes with homeowners on property lines, fences, spraying, and noise. The municipality can help by having farm-friendly ordinances in place. It is important for municipalities to better understand farming practices and the regulations regarding preserved farms. The SADC has recently passed a regulation to allow special events on farms. The New Jersey Special Occasion Events (SOE) law allows weddings, milestone celebrations, and other cultural or social events to be held on preserved farmland, provided the farm remains primarily agricultural and the event has minimal impact on farming operations.[8]

2. Agriculture Vehicle Movement

Since many farm vehicles travel over local municipal roads, municipalities should continue to support local agricultural businesses' right to do so. The SADC model Right to Farm ordinance recognizes the operation and transportation of large, slow-moving farm equipment over roads as a specific right.

In January 2017, the NJ Motor Vehicle Commission (MVC) updated its agriculture-related regulations to reflect current industry practices with input from the Division of Highway Traffic Safety, the NJDA, and the NJ Farm Bureau. The update changed the following:

- Allows vans and sports utility vehicles to purchase "farm truck" license plates.
- Increases the hours a registered farm vehicle may be operated on State roadways to three hours before sunrise to three hours after sunset provided that the vehicle is equipped with proper safety lighting.

Regulations for Motor Vehicles for Farmers

- *Farmer Plates*: Farmers may be granted a license plate marked "farmer" to indicate motor trucks engaged in carrying or transportation of farm products and farm supplies.
- *Farm Use, Tractor Plates, and Tractor Registration Exemptions* can be issued for farm trucks and farm tractors. Motor vehicles that are used exclusively as farm tractors, traction equipment, farm machinery, or farm implements that cannot be operated at a speed over 20mph do not have to be registered.
- *Farmer and Farm Use Regulations* - limitations on operations between farms, hours of travel, distance of travel, speed limitations, vehicle dimension, and other regulations apply to farm vehicles.
- Before securing a Farmer or Farm Use plate from the local Motor Vehicle Office, a "*Farmer's Certificate*" from the Rutgers Cooperative Extension is needed.
- Commercial Driver's License (CDL) - if a farmer is traveling intrastate within 150 miles of their farm and not hauling for hire, federal regulations and NJ statute exempt farmers from CDLs.
- *Student Agriculture License* - a Class G Agricultural License allows individuals between 16 and 17 years of age to operate vehicles registered for farm use.
- *Diesel Emissions* - diesel-powered motor vehicles registered with "farmer" or "farm use" plates are exempt from the periodic diesel emission inspection.

- Requires registration for vehicles with a 35-mph threshold speed capacity (which was increased from the previous 20-mph capacity).
- Requires that all self-propelled sprayers be registered with the MVC and that they be issued "farm use" license plates.
- Requires that any motor vehicle, not for hire and used exclusively for farming purposes or farming equipment drawn by a motor vehicle must have a slow-moving vehicle emblem affixed to the rear when operated on roadways.
- Requires motor vehicles that are traveling in the same direction as a slow-moving vehicle to reduce their speed to that of the slow-moving vehicle before passing, unless in an area where there are two or more lanes of traffic flowing in the same direction. (NJSA 39:3-24.4)[9]

Farmers that secure "farmer" or "farm use" plates for their vehicles and equipment can be exempt from typical motor vehicle requirements and relaxed interstate travel regulations may apply.[10]

3. Agricultural Labor Housing, Training

The U.S. Census of Agriculture figures for 1992 through 2022 show that farm labor costs in Bergen County have hovered around 22%-40% of total farm production expenses as seen in **Figure 1** (note, not all farms require hired labor). In those 30 years, the number of farms requiring hired labor as a percentage of all farms has risen slightly, from 25% to 26%, while the cost has increased 98%, to $28.4 million. Overall production expenses rose 107%, from $43.1 million in 1992 to $100.3 million in 2022.[11]

An adequate labor supply is integral to farming, especially in labor-intensive sectors such as produce farming, equine, and agritourism operations. At the local level, interest in farming as an occupation has slowed, creating a need for industry support and hired farm workers. As the average age of farmers in Bergen County rises, and their children seek jobs outside of the industry, gaps in labor need to be filled. Farm owners can lease their land to farmers, but there are not enough farmers to lease all of the land available. Managing fragmented farm properties and transporting equipment to various locations is another limiting factor for farmers leasing land.

Attracting new farmers and farm workers to the field is only half of the battle. There needs to be education, training, and support from local and state governments to sustain the agricultural workforce in a changing economy. Rising production costs, wages, labor availability, property taxes, and on-farm housing are some of the factors affecting the agricultural workforce in Bergen County.

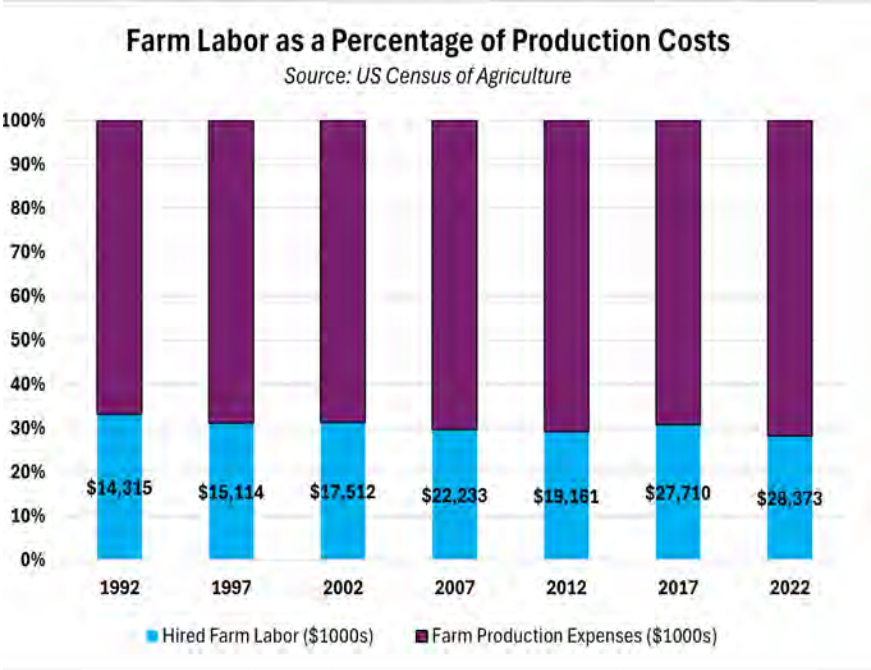


Figure VIII-1. Farm Labor Cost Percentage of Production Costs

On-farm housing is an added benefit, beyond wages, that can be attractive to agricultural laborers and seasonal farm workers as it relieves employees, especially those who are seasonal, from finding affordable housing and transportation to their place of work. Certain on-farm housing is a protected right under the NJ Right to Farm Act and farmland-assessed properties may also provide seasonal agricultural labor housing to farm employees, however, compliance with state regulations and local ordinances may dictate how that housing is supplied.

Residential opportunities on permanently preserved farmland are limited because the development rights on the farm have been purchased during preservation. Even so, there are special situations where a new residential structure may be warranted given the farm size and the nature of the operation. The CADB and the SADC do permit housing on preserved farmland provided they meet the criteria for residential dwelling site opportunities (RDSO), agricultural labor housing, or housing located in exception areas.

While farm worker housing availability and permanency remain an ongoing discussion, other labor issues include worker education and training, modernization and streamlining of the immigration process, and wages.

New Jersey raised the minimum wage on January 1, 2025, to $15.49/hour, an increase of 36 cents from January 2024. However, agricultural workers are guided by a separate minimum wage timetable and were given until 2027 to reach the $15/hour minimum wage. Employees who work on a farm for an hourly or piece-rate wage saw their wages increase by 59 cents to $13.40/hour in January of 2025. Also, seasonal workers saw their wages increase to $14.53/hour at the start of 2025.[12]

The NJ Board of Agriculture (BOA) issued an opinion on agriculture and the minimum wage following the 2022 State Agricultural Convention. This addressed the growing need for hired farm labor and the wages that workers are paid. The concern is that labor-intensive operations are commonly family-owned, and hired labor is needed to complete tasks that family and aging farmers can not complete on their own. Many produce farmers pay a "piece-rate" where workers are paid based on the number of fruits or vegetables they pick, so during peak harvest, efficient workers can make more than minimum wage, but during other seasonal fluctuations, there may not be enough crops to pick to maintain that wage rate. They stated that all workers wages, regardless of how many crops are picked, must be equal to at least the minimum per-hour wage.

The BOA created a list of steps to bolster the industry's economic viability in response to the passage and signage of the new minimum wage in the state:

- *Tax Credits for Farmworker Housing and Transportation*: Credits to help offset the cost of provisions that benefit farmworkers beyond their base wages.
- *Accelerated Depreciation Allowances*: Adopt federal tax allowances for New Jersey business tax returns to allow for more rapid depreciation of capital expenses, especially for equipment that will improve efficiency.
- *Expand Property Tax Exemption for Single-Purpose Agricultural Structures*: Extend the types of buildings under the current definition of "Exempt Structures" to lower a farm's tax burden.
- *Farmworker Job Retention Incentives*: Annual incentives to farmers based on the difference between the 2013 constitutionally mandated minimum

wage levels and the newly scheduled increases for workers.

- *Labor Tax Credits*: Help offset increased unemployment insurance payments, state disability insurance payments, and workers compensation insurance costs, resulting from minimum wage increases, as these payments and costs are wage-based and automatically increase as the minimum wage increases.

At the same Agricultural Convention, the BOA addressed labor-intensive agricultural industries, including those operations that require daily care of plants and animals, and harvesting of fruits and vegetables. The resolution states that to ensure the future of its agriculture, New Jersey must not only preserve its farmland but address the needs of its farm workforce and "ensure the availability of adequate, legal farm labor" on both the state and federal levels. The resolution calls for the establishment of an earned adjustment of status program and reforms to the current practices for obtaining temporary agricultural worker visas.

The BOA would like to see reforms that establish a clear path to legal status and provisions for an adequate seasonal and year-round workforce through guest worker programs. Labor supply and training are key for sustaining and growing the industry in New Jersey, and the BOA encourages programs that support worker training, health and safety, and address housing issues.

Through its Division of Agriculture and Natural Resources, Natural Resource Conservation Program, the NJDA offers technical, financial, and regulatory assistance, and provides educational outreach to landowners throughout the state.[13]

The NJ Department of Labor (DOL) is a useful resource for employment and training services targeted at farm workers.[14] Agriculture labor education and training are funded through the Workforce Development Programs. These programs can help assist in upgrading the skills and productivity of the agricultural workforce.

The NJ DOL has programs such as Learning Link which offers classes for upgrading basic skills and to help obtain a GED, and SkillUp New Jersey which is a free online training program offering more than 5,000 skillset courses at https://nj.metrixlearning.com/.

New and Beginning Producers

The *2022 Agricultural Census* recorded seven young producers on seven farms in Bergen County, making it the 19th-ranked county in the state in terms of young producers. Hunterdon County is number one in the state, with 245 young producers on 178 different farms, while Hudson County is last in the state with two young producers on two farms.[15]

Bergen County is 18th in the state for most farms with new and beginning producers where, as reported in the *2022 Agricultural Census*, the County had 51 new and beginning producers on 34 farms. Hunterdon County is first again with 1,073 new and beginning producers on 631 farms.[16] These numbers may increase, if county, state, and federal regulations can maintain the flexibility needed to encourage new and young farmers to join the industry and support their endeavors as they navigate the ever-changing agricultural field.

4. Wildlife Management Strategies

Management of nuisance and crop-damaging wildlife is critical to the short and long-term sustainability of the agriculture industry. Crop damage from

wildlife and insects leads to economic loss for the farmer and/or landowner. A range of insects, deer, bears, turkeys, geese, and groundhogs are major contributors to the ever-increasing problem. So is residential/ industrial development, which narrows the habitat for the nuisance animals and their predators, increasing the densities of the unwanted animals and pushing the predators to seek other territories.

Deer fencing may be effective for protecting produce since produce is grown on relatively small plots of land. However, it is not cost-effective to erect deer fencing on large tracts of land. Farmers can apply for depredation permits (issued by the NJDEP Protection Fish and Wildlife program) that allow them to hunt out of season. As farms become smaller and residential developments are built nearby, hunting is increasingly restricted, even for the farmers themselves, due to proximity to neighboring homes. County farmers continue to work with the NJDEP and NJDA, to implement wildlife control strategies on privately and publicly owned land.

Insects also cause crop loss. The pesticides used to control them may cause other kinds of damage, possible health concerns for the applicator and end user of the product, and pollution of the water supply. Some of the most critical and destructive threats to forests and forest resources include the gypsy moth, emerald ash borer, and spotted lanternfly. The gypsy moth is the most destructive forest insect pest to infest New Jersey's forests. Repeated defoliation by the gypsy moth can severely weaken trees and shrubs, leaving them more susceptible to disease, and ultimately cause death to large sections of forests, orchards, and landscape plants. The NJDA Division of Plant Industry programs oversees programs to protect forests from infestations.[17]

The *Lymantria dispar dispar* (LDD- formerly knows as gypsy moth) is the most destructive forest pest to infest New Jersey's forest. Leaf feeding by the caterpillars of this pest causes severe defoliation of trees and causes a serious threat to the state's shade tree resoucres. Bergen Coutny has been affected by the LDD per the 2024 NJDA Division of Plant Industry Aerial Defoliation Survey.[18] The 2024 survey showed that Mahwah, Oakland and Ramsey saw the largest amount of defoliation in Bergen County (**Figure VII- 2**). The NJDA promotes an integrated pest management approach, however aerial spray treatments in residential and recreational areas using the selective, non-chemical insecticide, *Bacillus thuringiensis,* is recommended where natural controls are unable to keep the pest population in check.

The Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) was discovered in New Jersey in 2014 in Somerset County and has since killed tens of millions of ash trees throughout the US and Canada. As of 2022, the EAB had been found in all 21 counties in New Jersey. The destructive pest has been present in Bergen County since 2019 (**Figure VII- 3**). Tree mortality due to the EAB poses serious safety threats to farm and residential infrastructure including fencing, access roads, electrical utilities, farm buildings and farmhouses, hedgerows, and woodlot management units. Managing the standing timber to prevent damage from falling limbs and trees can be a dangerous and expensive task for farmers who may need to seek out logging or forester companies to remove affected trees. At this time, there are no conservation or stewardship funding programs that aid farmers in managing EAB impacts.

The Spotted Lanternfly (SLF) was first discovered in the United States in Berks County, Pennsylvania in 2014, and has

since spread to numerous neighboring states, including New Jersey. The insects in their various life stages feed on the sap of many different fruit, ornamental, and woody trees including grapevines, maples, black walnut, and other plants. Currently, there is no commercially available biological control option for SLF, but the NJDA is researching potential parasitoids or pathogens that can be released as a long-term control solution. Based on studies in 2018 and 2019, paraffinic and/or mineral oils such as JMS Stylet oil, Damoil, and Lesco Horticultural oil were the most effective products against insect egg masses, and research trials are still ongoing to evaluate the best application method and active ingredients for systemic insecticides.

Awareness of local pests, current research on management techniques, and appropriate timing for pest treatments can help farmers target the right pests efficiently. The Network for Environmental and Weather Applications (NEWA) is a web-based weather and pest reporting and forecasting system for insect and disease pests of fruits and vegetables. As part of a farm-integrated pest management (IPM) plan, NEWA can help save users money on spray costs and prevent crop losses by keeping farmers up to date on pest and weather conditions in their area and aid in decision-making to enhance pest control tactics with reduced costs and environmental burden. Pest forecasts include but are not limited to apple diseases and insects, apple leaf wetness events, grape diseases and downy mildew, potato blight, tomato blight, sweet corn Stewart's wilt, alfalfa weevil, and turfgrass diseases.

5. Agricultural Education and Promotion

To sustain a diverse and stable food and agricultural industry, education and progressive, ongoing training for farmers will promote a more efficient and productive business environment. This includes farmer risk management education, labor education including worker safety, agricultural leadership training, and secondary school, and college agricultural education. Programs include:

- Annie's Project is a farm risk management education program for women provided by Rutgers University, and Cornell Small Farms Project offering online courses for farmers. Rutgers University, NOFA-NJ, and NRCS provide twilight meetings, field days,

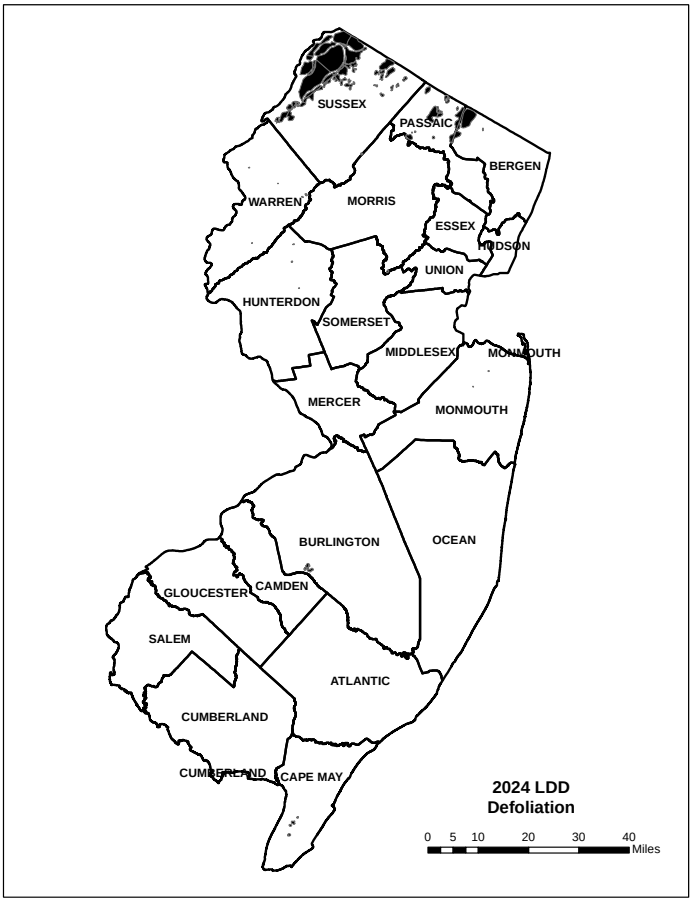


Figure VIII-2. Lymantria dispar dispar defoliation map

Source: NJDA Division of Plant Industry

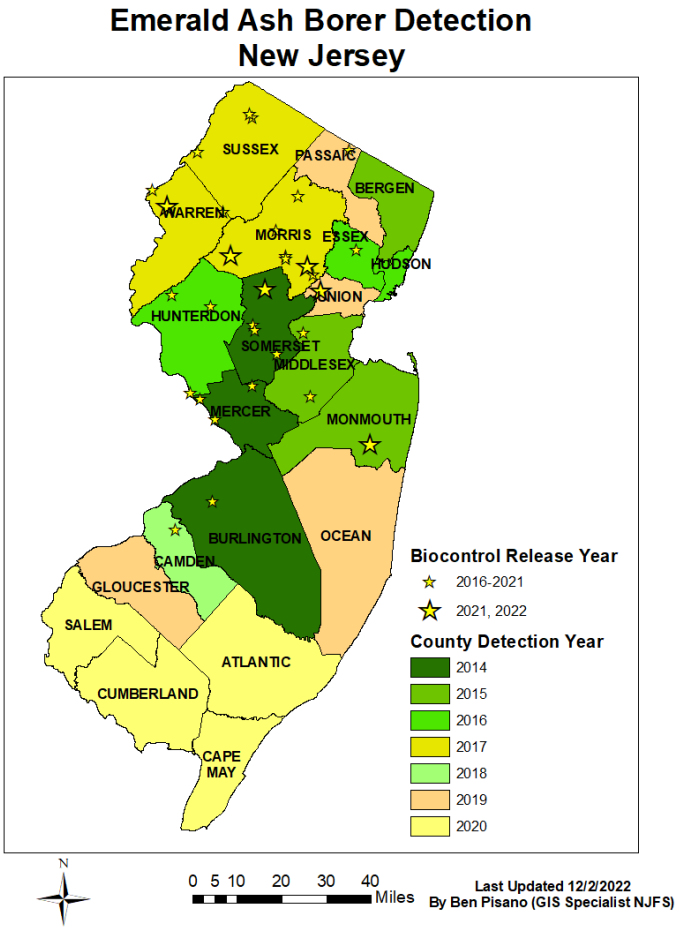


Figure VIII-3. EAB Detection NJ

farm-based education programs, and other training courses.

- NJDA lists programs, courses, and events that are useful for beginning farmers on its website.
- NOFA-NJ offers educational programs for farmers of all ages and skill sets, including a Beginning Farmer Program. Other educational programming includes organic gardening, permaculture design certification, business courses, technical assistance, and farm-to-table workshops.
- New Jersey Farm Bureau hosts educational meetings and provides educational information for farmers on its website about legislative issues, farmland preservation, and labor resources.[19]

Due to the aging farmer population in Bergen County (average of 52.5 years in 1992, as compared to 58.2 years in 2022), the next generation of the County's farmers needs to become interested in, and exposed to the business of agriculture, and be prepared to enter the industry. Educational programs in agriculture can assist those interested in pursuing such careers. Opportunities include:

- Rutgers University offers degree programs and courses in Agriculture and Food Systems, Animal Science, Plant Biology, Entomology, Agroecology, Horticulture, Sustainable Food Systems, and Public Garden Management. There is a Five-Year Teacher Education program for Agricultural Science Education Teachers (to teach grades K-12) and certificate programs in Horticultural Therapy, Medicinal and Economic Botany, Plant Biosecurity, and Turfgrass Science.[20]

A list of 4-year colleges located in the northeast that offer agricultural programs is found on the NJDA website.[21]

The Bergen County agricultural community can look to expand agriculture education to more schools, including elementary schools, which currently do not offer classes or programs within the County.[22]

- 4-H: The Bergen County NJAES-RCE helps promote the 4-H program. 4-H is an informal, practical educational program for youth that assists young people interested in farming and farm animals through different research projects, programs, field trips, and livestock projects.[23]
- NJ Agricultural Society's (NJAS) Agricultural Leadership Program is a two-year professional development

opportunity specifically designed for individuals interested in farming and agribusiness, hosted, and designed in collaboration with Rutgers University. The NJAS's Learning Through Gardening program promotes growing school gardens to increase understanding of agriculture, which can be implemented at preschools and elementary schools.[24]

Promoting Agriculture

Over the last 50 years, New Jersey has transformed from a largely rural and agricultural landscape to a more urban and suburban landscape. However, farming remains strong and viable in many portions of the state, including Bergen County. If the County's remaining agricultural areas are to survive and prosper, then the non-farming public needs to be aware of and financially supportive of the continuing economic, cultural, scenic, and agricultural contributions made by Bergen County's farming community. Public education and outreach can increase the recognition of the farm industry's importance to the non-farming residents.

Marketing, advertising, and agritourism initiatives by individual farmers all provide visibility for the agricultural community and are positive forms of public outreach. This outreach can be supported and built on by county, state, and municipal-level organizations that promote the farming community as a whole. Expansion of agriculture and agritourism-related signage at the municipal and county levels is one way to increase visibility. The Bergen County website contains a section on Agritourism, that shares information about activities and events happening at local farms.[25]

Another is to promote an agricultural presence at fairs, festivals, and other community events by having agricultural organizations set up informational tables or cooperative farmstands. These initiatives would complement and expand on what is already happening, such as the annual Bergen County 4-H Fair. This year the fair is ran September 26-28, and featured 4-H, Master Gardener displays and a variety of hands on activities for families.[26]

Local, county, and state governments can advertise the contributions of the farming community via public outreach at local schools as well. Some farms, such as Abma's Farm and Demarest Farms, in Bergen County, offer on-farm tours to school groups, bringing youth to the farms, but more farmers could be encouraged to do this, or a broader, organized program or schedule of school tours might be implemented.

Statewide programs, such as Jersey Fresh, act as an advertising, promotional, and quality grading resource.[27] The Jersey Fresh Program was initially launched in 1984 to help inform customers about the availability of fruits and vegetables grown in New Jersey. Now, the label is nationally known and produce under the label is recognized as meeting quality standards and grown locally here in New Jersey. The NJDA Division of Marketing and Development has expanded upon this successful brand by promoting other similar labeling including Jersey Grown for locally grown plants, trees, shrubs, and flowers, Jersey Raised for livestock, Jersey Seafood, and Jersey Equine.

In January 2022, Bill NJ S4128 was enacted to restrict the labeling of food products as "locally grown," "locally harvested," "locally sourced" to only those fruit and vegetable products that are grown and harvested within the State. This will ensure that only fruit and vegetable products grown and harvested in New Jersey will be advertised

as a "local" product and will reduce out-of-state competition to the sales of Jersey Fresh labeled products.[28]

The U.S. Taxpayer Relief Act of 1997, administered by the U.S. Department of Treasury's Internal Revenue Service, is meant to smooth out economic disparities that farmers experience from year to year due to the cyclical nature of agriculture. Known as Farm Income Averaging, qualified farmers can average all or part of their current year farm income over the previous three years. Substantial tax dollars can be saved by income averaging.[29]

The New Jersey Legislature has considered bills that would provide income averaging similar to the federal program. In the 2018-2019 Regular Session, Bill NJ A236 was introduced and has since been referred to the Assembly Agriculture and Natural Resource Committee.[30] The NJDA, SADC, Bergen County Commissioners, and Bergen CADB can work with, and encourage, the New Jersey Legislature to continue to introduce bills that would help Bergen County farmers remain economically viable.

The USDA FSA has both Direct and Guaranteed Farm Ownership loans available for farmers. Direct Farm Ownership Loans are available up to $600,000, and guaranteed loans can go up to $2,251,000. Down Payment loan funds may be used to partially finance the purchase of a family farm. Loan applicants must contribute a minimum down payment of 5% of the purchase price of the farm and the Agency will finance 45% to a maximum loan amount of $300,015.[31]

FSA loans can be used for most agriculture necessities such as purchasing land, livestock, equipment, feed, seed, and supplies, and for the construction of buildings, or to make farm improvements. All USDA FSA loans and information on those loans can be found here.[32]

The **Rutgers Cooperative Extension** may provide:

- Assistance with 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."[36]
- 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.
- Assisting new farmers with various regulatory requirements, and acquaintance with various farmer organizations.
- Holding Forestry Stewardship Programs.
- Development of specialized literature, such as a Peach Buyers Guide for buyers and distributors, a factsheet series and a Web page for agritourism.
- Providing outreach through the NJAES-RCE of Bergen County Website, and at the annual 4-H Fair.
- Providing agricultural fact sheets and bulletins and links to NJAES-RCE publications in other counties through the NJAES-RCE of Bergen County website.

Literature Cited

Chapter 8

1 New Jersey Department of Agriculture. SADC. *Right to Farm*, https://www.nj.gov/agriculture/sadc/rtfprogram/ Accessed July 2025.

2 New Jersey Department of Agriculture, SADC, *Local Right-to-Farm Ordinances*. https://www.nj.gov/agriculture/sadc/rtfprogram/resources/localordinances.html Accessed July 2025.

3 New Jersey Department of Agriculture, SADC, Right to Farm, *Agricultural Management Practices*. https://www.nj.gov/agriculture/sadc/rtfprogram/amps/ Accessed July 2025.

4 New Jersey Department of Agriculture, SADC, *Agricultural Mediation*, https://www.nj.gov/agriculture/sadc/agmediation/ Accessed July 2025.

5 New Jersey Department of Agriculture, SADC, Right to Farm. *Conflict Resolution*. https://www.nj.gov/agriculture/sadc/rtfprogram/conflictres/ Accessed July 2025.

6 New Jersey Department of Agriculture, SADC, Right to Farm, *Formal Conflict Resolution Process*. https://www.nj.gov/agriculture/sadc/rtfprogram/conflictres/formal/ Accessed July 2025.

7 New Jersey Department of Agriculture, *Agricultural Smart Growth Plan*. (2006) http://www.state.nj.us/agriculture/pdf/smartgrowthplan.pdf Accessed July 2025.

8 New Jersey Department of Agriculture, *Special Occasion Events on Preserved Farmland: Initial Report to the Governor and Legislature*. https://www.nj.gov/agriculture/sadc/documents/farmpreserve/postpres/SOEsOnPreservedFarmland_InitialReport_20240725.pdf Accessed July 2025

9 New Jersey Motor Vehicle Commission, *Slow Moving Vehicles*, (2017). https://www.nj.gov/mvc/vehicletopics/slowvehicles.htm Accessed July 2025.

10 New Jersey Department of Agriculture, *Motor Vehicle Laws and Regulations Impacting Farmers*, https://www.nj.gov/agriculture/divisions/md/prog/farmermotorvehicles.html Accessed July 2025.

11 United States Department of Agriculture, 1992, 1997, 2002, 2007, 2012, 2017, 2022 Ag Census. http://www.agcensus.usda.gov/Publications/ Accessed July 2025.

12 Official Site of the State of New Jersey, Department of Labor & Workforce Development. *New Jersey's Minimum Wage to Exceed Governor Murphy's $15/Hour Goal on January 1*. (2023) https://www.nj.gov/labor/lwdhome/press/2023/20231227_minimumwage.shtml Accessed July 2025.

13 NJDA, Agricultural and Natural Resources. https://www.nj.gov/agriculture/divisions/anr/ Accessed July 2025.

14 Official Site of the State of New Jersey, NJDOL, *Farm Workers*. https://www.nj.gov/labor/myworkrights/worker-protections/farm_workers/ Accessed July 2025.

15 United States DepEartment of Agriculture. 2022 Census of Agriculture. https://www.nass.usda.gov/Publications/AgCensus/2022/. Accessed July 2025.

16 Ibid

17 NJDA Division of Plant Industry: Contacts. Department of Agriculture. (n.d.). https://www.nj.gov/agriculture/divisions/pi/about/contacts.html Accessed July 2025.

18 NJDA Division of Plant Industry. (2024). *New Jersey LDD Aerial Defoliation Survey*. https://www.nj.gov/agriculture/divisions/pi/pdf/2024%20LDD%20Aerial%20Defoliation.pdf Accessed July 2025.

19 New Jersey Farm Bureau. http://njfb.org/ Accessed July 2025.

20 Rutgers, *Academics*, https://www.rutgers.edu/academics Accessed July 2025.

21 SADC FFA. (rep.). *4-Year Colleges in the Northeast Offering Agriculture-related studies*. https://www.nj.gov/agriculture/ag_ed/ffa/scholarships/4yrAgColleges.pdf. Accessed July 2025.

22 National Agriculture in the Classroom, https://agclassroom.org// Accessed July 2025.

23 Rutgers NJAES Cooperative Extension of Bergen County, *4-H Youth Development*. https://bergen.njaes.rutgers.edu/4h/ Accessed July 2025.

24 Rutgers New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station, *Learning Through the Garden*. https://njaes.rutgers.edu/fs1211/#:~:text=Studies%20show%20that%20the%20education%20acquired%20in%20the,flexibility%2C%20open-mindedness%2C%20informed%20skepticism%2C%20creativity%2C%20and%20critical%20thinking. Accessed July 2025.

25 Bergen County. Agritourism. https://bergencountynj.gov/tourism/outdoor-activities/agritourism/ Accessed July 2025

26 New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station Cooperative Extension of Bergen County, *Bergen County 4-H Fair*. https://bergen.njaes.rutgers.edu/4h/fair/ Accessed July 2025

27 NJDA, *Jersey Fresh*, https://www.nj.gov/agriculture/divisions/md/prog/jerseyfresh.html Accessed July 2025.

28 NJ-S4128, Bill Track 50 (2022). bill. https://www.billtrack50.com/billdetail/1397307. Accessed July 2025.

29 Lutz. Understanding Farm Income Averaging. https://www.lutz.us/blog/understanding-farm-income-averaging Accessed July 2025.

30 LegiScan. New Jersey Assembly Bill 236. (2018). https://legiscan.com/NJ/text/A236/id/1683841 Accessed July 2025.

31 USDA Farm Service Agency. *Farm Ownership Loans*. https://www.fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/farm-loan-programs/farm-ownership-loans/index Accessed July 2025.

32 USDA Farm Service Agency, *Farm Loan Programs*. https://www.fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/farm-loan-programs/index Accessed July 2025.

33 New Jersey Department of Agriculture, SADC. *Conflict Resolution Determination*. https://www.nj.gov/agriculture/sadc/rtfprogram/formdet/conflictres/index.html Accessed July 2025.

34 New Jersey Department of Agriculture, SADC, *Right to Farm Eligibility Criteria*. https://www.nj.gov/agriculture/sadc/rtfprogram/eligibility/ Accessed July 2025.

35 New Jersey Department of Agriculture, Farmland Assessment. *Farmland Assessment Overview*. July 2015. http://www.nj.gov/agriculture/divisions/anr/pdf/farmlandassessmentoverview.pdf Accessed July 2025.

36 NJDA, *Outstanding Young Farmer's Award, New Jersey's Annual Competition*. http://www.nj.gov/agriculture/about/sba/cover.html Accessed July 2025.

Appendix

A. Public Survey and Public Meeting Materials

Referenced in Executive Summary

B. Agricultural Soils in Bergen County

Referenced in Chapter I, Section B

C. SADC Minimum Eligibility Criteria

Referenced in Chapter V, Section B

D. Target Farms

Referenced in Chapter V, Section C

APPENDIX A
Public Outreach Materials

1. Public Survey: March-April 2025

Social Media Posts

2. Public Meeting #1: January 9, 2025 CADB

Meeting Announcement, Agenda, Presentation

Minutes *(to be included in final report)*

3. Public Meeting #2: CADB (to be announced)

Meeting Announcement, Agenda, Presentation, and Minutes

Resolution approving Plan Update

(*pending, will be included in final report*)

4. Planning Board (to be announced)

Meeting Announcement, Agenda, Presentation, and Minutes

Resolution adopting Plan Update

(*pending, will be included in final report*)

5. County Board of Commissioners (to be announced)

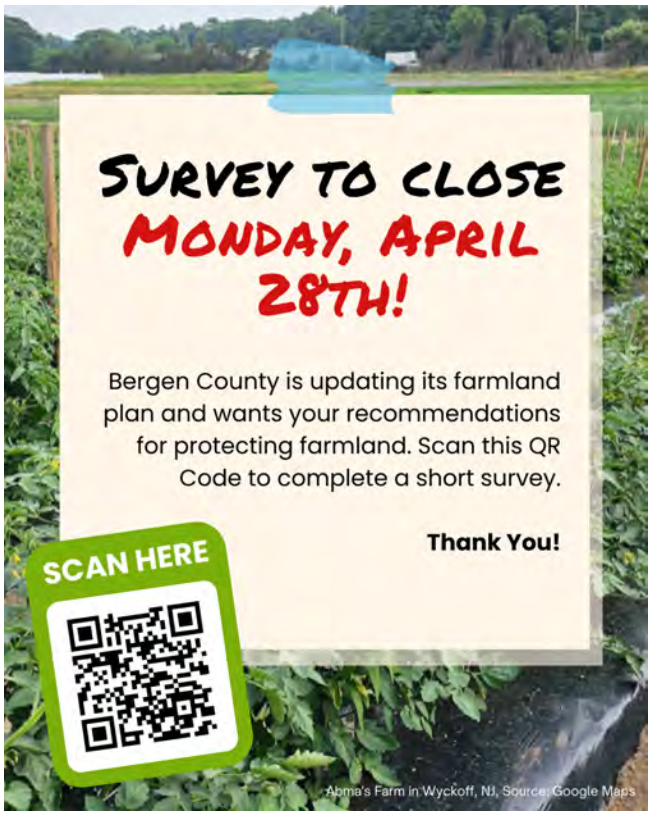
Meeting Announcement, Agenda, Presentation, and Minutes

Resolution accepting Plan Update

(*pending, will be included in final report*)

1. Public Survey: March-April 2025

Social Media Posts



2. Public Meeting #1: January 9, 2025 CADB

Meeting Announcement

BERGEN COUNTY
2025 FARMLAND PLAN UPDATE

PUBLIC MEETING
THURSDAY, JANUARY 9, 2025 - 5:30 PM

Bergen County Administration Building
One Bergen County Plaza • 4th Floor Learning Center • Hackensack

AGENDA

- Learn about Bergen County's farmland preservation program.
- Participate in a question-and-answer session.
- Provide your recommendations about the future of the program.

In Bergen County ...

- 7 farms (335 acres) are preserved.
- 42 farms remain unpreserved
- 67% of the county's farmland has been lost to development over the last 42 years
- 924 acres of farmland remain

Do you care about our county's farmland?

Please help us preserve what is left.

THE LAND CONSERVANCY OF NEW JERSEY

2. Public Meeting #1: January 9, 2025 CADB

Agenda

BERGEN COUNTY AGRICULTURE DEVELOPMENT BOARD

January 9th, 2025
5:30 PM

AGENDA

I. CALL TO ORDER/READING OF THE OPEN PUBLIC MEETINGS ACT

II. ROLL CALL

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- Regular meeting of January 26th, 2023
- Regular meeting of September 17th, 2024

IV. CORRESPONDENCE

V. CHAIR'S COMMENTS

VI. NEW BUSINESS

- Next Gen Farmer Program, *Brendon Pearsall, SADC*

VII. COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE FARMLAND PRESERVATION PLAN

- *Barbara Davis, The Land Conservancy of New Jersey*

VIII. REPORT OF BOARD COUNSEL

IX. OLD BUSINESS

- Various updates

X. DISCUSSION

XI. PUBLIC COMMENT

XII. TIME & DATE OF NEXT MEETING

2. Public Meeting #1: January 9, 2025 CADB

Presentation

Welcome and Introductions

Bergen County Agriculture Development Board

Evelyn Spath-Mercado, Chair
Shergoh Alkilani, Vice-Chair
Ken Aloisio, *CADB Administrator*
Joel S. Flagler, *Rutgers Cooperative Extension*

Farm Plan Update

Barbara Heskins Davis
The Land Conservancy of New Jersey

THE LAND CONSERVANCY OF NEW JERSEY

SADC Guidelines

For developing and updating County Comprehensive Farmland Preservation Plans

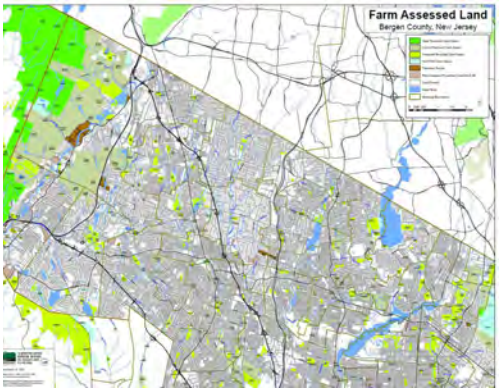
The SADC Rules for Farm Plans and the PIG program:

- ✓ **adopted May 24, 2007**
- ✓ **amended July 25, 2019**

Requires the latest data.

The Plan uses the most up-to-date data on agricultural statistics, economic development, land use, and resource conservation.

The SADC is providing a 50% grant to Bergen County to complete the Plan.



2024 Bergen County Farmland

240 square miles total (153,490 acres)

924 acres of assessed farmland

335 acres of preserved farmland

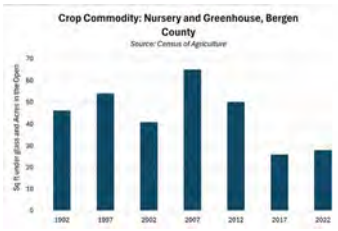
67% loss of farmland in 42 years

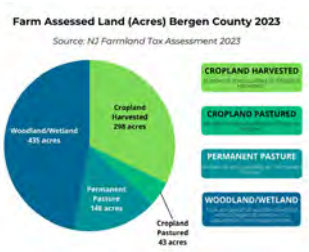
Plan Update: Overview

I. Agricultural Land Base
II. Agricultural Industry
III. Land Use Planning
IV. Farmland Preservation Program
V. Future Farmland Preservation Program
VI. Economic Development
VII. Natural Resource Conservation
VIII. Sustainability, Retention, and Promotion

2. Public Meeting #1: January 9, 2025 CADB

Presentation

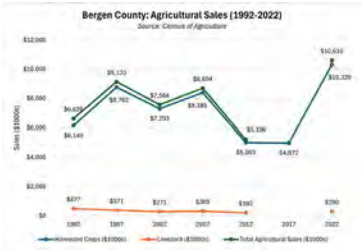




Bergen County
is ranked eighth out of all New Jersey Counties in average sales per farm for agricultural products.

AVG. SALES PER FARM BY COUNTY

#8	Cumberland	$565,867
	Atlantic	$310,268
	Gloucester	$250,153
	Camden	$229,410
	Monmouth	$215,609
	Salem	$177,253
	Burlington	$146,189
	Bergen	**$145,342**
	Warren	$138,959
	Ocean	$137,969



IV. Farmland Preservation Program

1. Farmland Preservation Program and Expenditures
2. County Agricultural Development Areas (ADA)
3. Planning Incentive Grant Project areas (PIGs)
4. Coordination with Open Space Preservation
5. Easement Monitoring and Enforcement

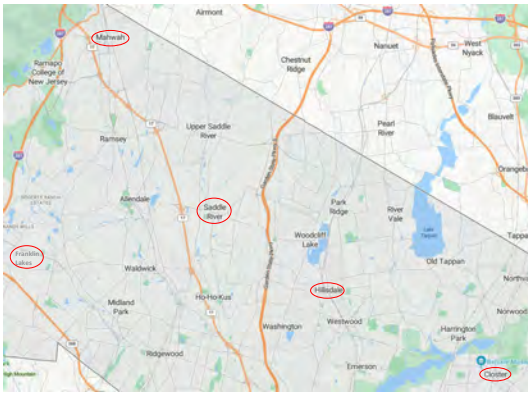
7 Preserved Farms in Bergen County:

Closter Borough:
10.7 acres, preserved 2004

Franklin Lakes Borough:
6.2 acres, preserved 2004

Hillsdale Borough:
10.1 acres, preserved 2004
and
Saddle River Borough:
17.4 acres, preserved 2015

Mahwah Township:
216 acres, preserved 2002
16.5 acres, preserved 2006
11 acres, preserved, 2006
47 acres, preserved 2007



V. Future Farmland Preservation Program

Goals for Farmland Preservation

- Minimum eligibility and ranking criteria to prioritize preservation.
- County policies and their impacts.
- Limiting factors and potential strategies: funding, costs, landowner interest.

2. Public Meeting #1: January 9, 2025 CADB

Presentation

Bergen County has preserved 7 farms, and 42 unpreserved farms remain. Traditionally, the County has preserved farms in partnership with the State of New Jersey, prioritizing land that meets the state's criteria for soils and tillable land. This has proved challenging for Bergen County, where the farms may not easily meet the state requirements.

As part of the Farm Plan Update, the CADB recognizes the agricultural value of those farms that may not meet the state criteria but contribute to the economy - both in terms of tourism and in products that residents value. There may be additional options not typically considered in a traditional farm preservation program, where the County can make a meaningful difference in the landscape. To address this, the CADB recommends diversifying its program to include the following ways to preserve both farmland and farming:

- **TIER I. THOSE FARMS THAT MEET THE STATE CRITERIA FOR PRESERVATION**
- **TIER II. PRODUCTIVE FARMS THAT DO NOT MEET THE STATE CRITERIA**
- **TIER III. LOCALLY IMPORTANT FARM OPERATIONS**
- **TIER IV. URBAN AGRICULTURE AND SUPPORTING NON-TRADITIONAL FARMS**
- **TIER V. TURNING BROWNFIELDS INTO COMMUNITY-SUPPORTED AGRICULTURE**

- **TIER I. FARMS THAT MEET STATE CRITERIA**
  - Agricultural soils and tillable land
  - 2 Farms (30 acres) in Bergen County
- **TIER II. PRODUCTIVE FARMS, BELOW STATE CRITERIA**
  - Lower percentage of agricultural soils / tillable land
  - 13 farms (161 acres) in Bergen County
- **TIER III. LOCALLY IMPORTANT FARMS**
  - Contribute to local economy; agritourism destinations
  - 27 farms (409 acres) in Bergen County
- **TIER IV. URBAN AGRICULTURE; NON-TRADITIONAL SITES**
  - Broadest category; opportunity to recast land as farms
  - Land includes agricultural soils, 12% of Bergen County
- **TIER V. FROM BROWNFIELD TO AGRICULTURAL FIELD**
  - Requires partnership and innovation
  - An investment in county's Overburdened Communities

We'd like to hear from you.

Your input is invaluable to creating a Plan that reflects Bergen County and the farmers who work and live here.

- Is there interest in preserving more farms in Bergen County?
- What are your future goals and targets for preservation?
- Do you have any comments on the suggested tier system of farms?
- Do you have any other suggestions or comments?

Metropolitan Farm, Closter NJ

Schedule and Deliverables

= We are here

KICKOFF MEETING
With the SADC, Bergen CADB, and TLCNJ

DRAFT PREPARATION
TLCNJ will prepare drafts for review

FINAL PLAN
TLCNJ will provide the final Plan Update

FIRST PUBLIC MEETING
Bergen CADB and TLCNJ host a public meeting to discuss the Farm Plan Update

SECOND PUBLIC MEETING
To review progress of the Plan Update

PLAN UPDATE ADOPTION
Sussex County will approve and adopt the Plan Update as an Element of the Master Plan

Thank You

Bergen County CADB
Ken Aloisio, kaloisio@bergencountynj.gov
(201) 336-6454

Barbara Heskins Davis, PP, AICP
The Land Conservancy of New Jersey
bhdavis@tlc-nj.org
(973) 541-1010, extension 33

2. Public Meeting #1: January 9, 2025 CADB

Minutes - *will be included in final report*

3. Public Meeting #2: CADB (to be announced)

Meeting Announcement, Agenda, Presentation, and Minutes

Resolution approving Plan Update

(*pending, will be included in final report*)

4. Planning Board (to be announced)

Meeting Announcement, Agenda, Presentation, and Minutes

Resolution adopting Plan Update

(*pending, will be included in final repor*t)

5. County Board of Commissioners (to be announced)

Meeting Announcement, Agenda, Presentation, and Minutes

Resolution accepting Plan Update

(*pending, will be included in final report*)

APPENDIX B

Agricultural Soils in Bergen County

Table 1. BERGEN COUNTY SOILS (NRCS SOIL CLASSIFICATIONS)		
Code	**Name**	**Acres**
BohB	Boonton moderately well drained gravelly loam, 3 to 8 percent slopes	898
DuoB	Dunellen loam, 3 to 8 percent slopes	1,080
HamB	Haledon gravelly loam, 3 to 8 percent slopes	494
PbuA	Pascack silt loam, 0 to 3 percent slopes	1,219
RkrA	Riverhead sandy loam, 0 to 3 percent slopes	288
RkrB	Riverhead sandy loam, 3 to 8 percent slopes	1,730
WemB	Wethersfield gravelly loam, 3 to 8 percent slopes	1,622
	Prime Farmland	**7,331**
BohC	Boonton moderately well drained gravelly loam, 8 to 15 percent slopes	1,357
DuoC	Dunellen loam, 8 to 15 percent slopes	1,441
RkrC	Riverhead sandy loam, 8 to 15 percent slopes	1,805
RofCb	Rockaway gravelly loam, 8 to 15 percent slopes, very stony	715
WemC	Wethersfield gravelly loam, 8 to 15 percent slopes	2,368
	Farmland of Statewide Importance	**7,687**
CarAt	Catden muck, 0 to 2 percent slopes, frequently flooded	267
AdrAt	Timakwa muck, 0 to 2 percent slopes, frequently flooded	667
TrkAv	Westbrook, Ipswich, and Sandyhook soils, 0 to 2 percent slopes, very frequently flooded	2,801
	Farmland of Unique Importance	**3,735**
BohBb	Boonton moderately well drained gravelly loam, 0 to 8 percent slopes, very stony	275
BohD	Boonton moderately well drained gravelly loam, 15 to 25 percent slopes	502
BohDb	Boonton moderately well drained gravelly loam, 15 to 25 percent slopes, very stony	319
BohE	Boonton moderately well drained gravelly loam, 25 to 45 percent slopes	497
BohCb	Boonton moderately well drained gravelly loam, 8 to 15 percent slopes, very stony	504
BorD	Boonton moderately well drained-Rock outcrop complex, 15 to 25 per-cent slopes	590

Table 1. BERGEN COUNTY SOILS (NRCS SOIL CLASSIFICATIONS)		
Code	**Name**	**Acres**
BorE	Boonton moderately well drained-Rock outcrop complex, 25 to 45 percent slopes	1,161
BorB	Boonton moderately well drained-Rock outcrop complex, 3 to 8 percent slopes	557
BorC	Boonton moderately well drained-Rock outcrop complex, 8 to 15 percent slopes	962
BouB	Boonton-Urban land complex, 0 to 8 percent slopes	4,649
BouD	Boonton-Urban land complex, 15 to 25 percent slopes	4,409
BouE	Boonton-Urban land complex, 25 to 45 percent slopes	579
BouC	Boonton-Urban land complex, 8 to 15 percent slopes	7,502
DuoO	Dunellen loam, 15 to 25 percent slopes	249
DuuA	Dunellen-Urban land complex, 0 to 3 percent slopes	4,233
DuuD	Dunellen-Urban land complex, 15 to 25 percent slopes	1,616
DuuB	Dunellen-Urban land complex, 3 to 8 percent slopes	15,137
DuuC	Dunellen-Urban land complex, 8 to 15 percent slopes	13,168
FmhAt	Fluvaquents, loamy, 0 to 3 percent slopes, frequently flooded	2,061
GtbA	Greenbelt loam, 0 to 3 percent slopes	0.09
HamBb	Haledon gravelly loam, 0 to 8 percent slopes, very stony	985
HasB	Haledon-Urban land complex, 3 to 8 percent slopes	2,057
HcsAb	Hasbrouck loam, 0 to 3 percent slopes, very stony	917
HhmBb	Hibernia loam, 0 to 8 percent slopes, very stony	558
OtsD	Otisville gravelly loamy sand, 15 to 25 percent slopes	361
OtsE	Otisville gravelly loamy sand, 25 to 35 percent slopes	344
PHG	Pits, sand and gravel	391
PrnAt	Preakness silt loam, 0 to 3 percent slopes, frequently flooded	1,670
RNHF	Rock outcrop-Holyoke complex, 45 to 60 percent slopes	0.3
RofDb	Rockaway gravelly loam, 15 to 25 percent slopes, very stony	398
RofEb	Rockaway gravelly loam, 25 to 35 percent slopes, very stony	672
RomD	Rockaway-Rock outcrop complex, 15 to 25 percent slopes	1,285
RomE	Rockaway-Rock outcrop complex, 25 to 45 percent slopes	3,124
RomC	Rockaway-Rock outcrop complex, 8 to 15 percent slopes	2,072
SecA	Secaucus artifactual fine sandy loam, 0 to 3 percent slopes	1.6
UdkttB	Udorthents, loamy, 0 to 8 percent slopes, frequently flooded	1,128
UdoB	Udorthents, organic substratum, 0 to 8 percent slopes	971

Table 1. BERGEN COUNTY SOILS (NRCS SOIL CLASSIFICATIONS)		
Code	**Name**	**Acres**
UdouB	Udorthents, organic substratum-Urban land complex, 0 to 8 percent slopes	645
UdrB	Udorthents, refuse substratum, 0 to 8 percent slopes	1,359
UdrD	Udorthents, refuse substratum, 15 to 25 percent slopes	7
UdwB	Udorthents, wet substratum, 0 to 8 percent slopes	4,142
UdwuB	Udorthents, wet substratum-Urban land complex	9,707
UdwuB	Udorthents, wet substratum-Urban land complex, 0 to 8 percent slopes	0.9
UR	Urban land	23,488
URBEDB	Urban land, bedrock substratum, 0 to 8 percent slopes	5
URBEDD	Urban land, bedrock substratum, 15 to 25 percent slopes	0.008
URBEDC	Urban land, bedrock substratum, 8 to 15 percent slopes	0.3
UREOLB	Urban land, eolian substratum, 0 to 8 percent slopes	0.8
URTILB	Urban land, till substratum, 0 to 8 percent slopes	6
URTILC	Urban land, till substratum, 8 to 15 percent slopes	0.2
URWETB	Urban land, wet substratum, 0 to 8 percent slopes	1
USBONB	Urban land-Boonton complex, 0 to 8 percent slopes	0.003
USRHVB	Urban land-Riverhead complex, 3 to 8 percent slopes	0.8
WATER	Water	4,908
WectA	Westbrook mucky peat, 0 to 2 percent slopes, very frequently flooded	0.5
WemD	Wethersfield gravelly loam, 15 to 25 percent slopes	905
WemDb	Wethersfield gravelly loam, 15 to 25 percent slopes, very stony	291
WemE	Wethersfield gravelly loam, 25 to 35 percent slopes	1,094
WerD	Wethersfield-Rock outcrop complex, 15 to 25 percent slopes	369
WerE	Wethersfield-Rock outcrop complex, 25 to 45 percent slopes	421
WerB	Wethersfield-Rock outcrop complex, 3 to 8 percent slopes	624
WerC	Wethersfield-Rock outcrop complex, 8 to 15 percent slopes	970
WeuD	Wethersfield-Urban land complex, 15 to 25 percent slopes	3,149
WeuB	Wethersfield-Urban land complex, 3 to 8 percent slopes	2,420
WeuC	Wethersfield-Urban land complex, 8 to 15 percent slopes	4,295
	Not Prime Farmland	**134,713**
	Total	**153,466**
Source: Natural Resources Conservation Service Soil Data (2023)		

APPENDIX C

SADC Minimum Eligibility Criteria

Minimum Eligibility Criteria are based upon the SADC's rules for farmland preservation and project eligibility.[1] In order to be eligible for preservation the site must be developable, have soils capable of supporting agricultural or horticultural production, and meet minimum tillable land standards. (N.J.A.C. 2:76-6.20)

In summary:

For all lands less than or equal to 10 acres:

- The land must produce at least $2,500 worth of agricultural or horticultural products annually; and
- At least 75% or a minimum of 5 acres of the land (whichever is less) must be tillable; and
- At least 75% or a minimum of 5 acres of the land (whichever is less) must be capable of supporting agriculture or horticulture; and
- The land in question must exhibit development potential as defined by the SADC (based upon zoning, ability to be subdivided, less than 80% wetlands, less than 80% slopes of 15% or more); or
- The land must meet the above criteria or be eligible for allocation of development credits pursuant to a Transfer of Development Credits (TDR) program.

For lands greater than 10 acres:

- At least 50% or a minimum of 25 acres of land (whichever is less) must be tillable;and
- At least 50% or a minimum of 25 acres of land (whichever is less) must have soils capable of supporting agriculture or horticulture; and
- The land in question must exhibit development potential as defined by the SADC; or
- The land must meet the above criteria or be eligible for allocation of development credits pursuant to a Transfer of Development Credits (TDR) program.

For a farm application to qualify for SADC cost share, the farm must have at least one parcel listed on the targeted farm list; comprise an assemblage of substandard parcels which together meet SADC minimum standards; or have sufficient justification by the Bergen CADB that the parcels were not identified as targeted due to a specific mapping issue or other error.

Within the identified project area, candidate farms are identified which meet the tillable land and soils minimum eligibility standards. To determine farms that are potentially eligible for preservation, a series of queries were made utilizing the ArcGIS digital mapping software for soils and tillable land. These are described in further detail below and shown on target farm map.

1 Adopted by the SADC May 21, 2007, and July 25, 2019.

Farmland that meets the SADC Criteria for Tillable Land: Tillable acreage was determined using the NJDEP 2020 Land Use/Land Cover mapping for agricultural lands. The land categories that are defined as the "tillable land" are as follows:

- Agricultural Wetlands (Modified)
- Confined Feeding Operations
- Cropland and Pastureland
- Former Agricultural Wetland
- Orchards/Vineyards/Nurseries/Horticultural Areas
- Other Agriculture

Farm parcels were sorted by size based upon the SADC Minimum Eligibility Criteria for tillable land:

Farm Size	Requirements
0-6.667 acres	75% tillable
6.667-10 acres	5 acres tillable
10-50 acres	50% tillable
50+ acres	25 tillable acres

Farmland that meets the SADC Criteria for Agricultural Soils: Agricultural soils as defined by the SADC are those soils capable of supporting agricultural or horticultural production. The use of the NRCS Soil Survey identifying prime, statewide, and unique agricultural soils is the first and best indication of the farmland soils.

Farm parcels are sorted by size based upon the SADC Minimum Eligibility Criteria for soils:

Farm Size	Requirements
0-6.667 acres	75% soils capable of supporting agricultural production
6.667-10 acres	5 ac of soils capable of supporting agricultural production
10-50 acres	50% soils capable of supporting agricultural production
50+ acres	25 ac of soils capable of supporting agricultural production

Farmland that meets SADC Criteria for both Tillable Land and Soils: Utilizing the tillable acreage determined from the NJDEP 2020 Land Use/Land Cover mapping for agricultural lands and soil acreage determined using the Soil Survey as prepared by the NRCS for prime farmland soils, soils of statewide importance and soils of unique importance, farm parcels were sorted by size based upon the SADC Minimum Eligibility Criteria for tillable land and soils.

Bergen County may proceed without state funding on projects that do not meet these Minimum Eligibility Standards, but typically, Bergen County will not cost share on applications that do not meet SADC minimum standards. In all cases, the CADB will review and process applications from landowners for farmland preservation and follow all state procedures to ensure consistency in application review and processing.

APPENDIX D

Target Farms

Block	Lot	Class	Municipality	Location	Zoning permits agriculture	Acres (GIS)	Tillable Percent	50% Tillable?	Agricultural Soil Percent
TIER I: FARMS WHICH MEET STATE CRITERIA FOR PRESERVATION									
202	1	3B	CLOSTER BORO	40 OLD HOOK ROAD	Y	14.03	91%	Y	96%
702	3	3B		DEWOLF ROAD					
701	11	3A	OLD TAPPAN BORO	23 DEWOLF ROAD	Y	16.03	71%	Y	73%
701	11.01	2		31 DEWOLF ROAD					
TIER 1: FARMS MEETING STATE CRITERIA FOR PRESERVATION					**Total:**	**30.06**	**2**	**Farms**	
TIER 2: ELIGIBLE, MEETS TILLABLE CRITERIA									
908	2	3A	WOODCLIFF LAKE BORO	88 OVERLOOK DRIVE	Y	4.80	100%	Y	3%
2005.01	13	3A	WOODCLIFF LAKE BORO	107 WOODCLIFF AVE	Y	6.20	62%	Y	91%
					Meets Tillable Criteria:	**11.01**	**2**	**Farms**	
TIER 2: ELIGIBLE, ZONING ISSUE									
4201	6	3A	RAMSEY BORO	425 ISLAND AVE	N	7.91	82%	Y	0%
81	3	3B	NORWOOD BORO	BLANCH AVE		18.57	0%	N	16%
1401	5	3A	CLOSTER BORO	75 BLANCH AVE	Y				
1201	1	3A	EMERSON BORO	650 OLD HOOK RD	N	6.71	79%	Y	58%
					Eligible, Zoning Issue:	**33.19**	**3**	**Farms**	
TIER 2: MAYBE ELIGIBLE (CLOSE TO MEETING TILLABLE CRITERIA)									
605	6	3A	WOODCLIFF LAKE BORO	285 GLEN ROAD	Y	5.97	47%	close	0%
605	16	3B		GLEN ROAD					
2401	51	3A	CLOSTER BORO	681 CLOSTER DOCK RD	Y	7.16	0%	N	2%
25	25	3A	MAHWAH TWP	1056 RAMAPO VALLEY ROAD	Y	7.86	23%	N	70%
					Close to Criteria:	**20.99**	**3**	**Farms**	
TIER 2: CLOSE TO OR BELOW STATE PRESERVATION CRITERIA					**Total:**	**65.19**	**8**	**Farms**	

Block	Lot	Class	Municipality	Location	Zoning permits agriculture	Acres (GIS)	Tillable Percent	50% Tillable?	Agricultural Soil Percent
TIER 3: NOT ELIGIBLE (NOT TILLABLE)									
3001	1	3B	OAKLAND BORO	136 LONG HILL RD	N	80.70	0%	N	16%
3001	4	3A		136 LONG HILL RD					
3001	15	3B		BACK-LONG HILL RD					
3001	18	3B		194 LONG HILL RD					
25	37	3A	MAHWAH TWP	1010 RAMAPO VALLEY ROAD	Y	10.81	34%	N	89%
7101	4.QQ	3B	PARAMUS BORO	ORADELL AVE.	N	5.91	61%	Y	14%
3102	1	3A	OAKLAND BORO	21A BREAKNECK RD	N	9.60	14%	N	87%
2002	7	3A	SADDLE RIVER BORO	29 E. SADDLE RIVER ROAD	Y	9.68	0%	N	0%
7002	1.QQ	3B	PARAMUS BORO	OFF RIDGEWOOD AVE.		2.24	0%	N	0%
139	25	3A	MAHWAH TWP	40 PETERSON PLACE	Y	6.28	0%	N	19%
25	20	3A	MAHWAH TWP	1100 RAMAPO VALLEY ROAD	Y	10.45	0%	N	0%
19	18	3A	MAHWAH TWP	888 RAMAPO VALLEY ROAD	Y	12.57	4%	N	49%
19	19		MAHWAH TWP						
909	7	3B	HILLSDALE BORO	REAR MORRIS DR	N	7.71	0%	N	0%
154	54	3B	MAHWAH TWP	VANDERBECK LANE		12.18	13%	N	0%
					Not Eligible:	**168.13**	**11**	**Farms**	

Block	Lot	Class	Municipality	Location	Zoning permits agriculture	Acres (GIS)	Tillable Percent	50% Tillable?	Agricultural Soil Percent
TIER 3: NOT ELIGIBLE (TILLABLE, BUT SOIL DISTURBANCE)									
202	2	3A	WYCKOFF TWP	710 LAWLINS RD					
202	4	3A	WYCKOFF TWP	700 LAWLINS RD	Y	29.59	60%	Y	0%
2513.01	5	3B	FRANKLIN LAKES BORO	OLD MILL ROAD					
18	22	3A	MAHWAH TWP	795 DARLINGTON AVENUE	Y	9.86	51%	Y	0%
1903	3	3A	MONTVALE BORO	53 CRAIG ROAD					
1903	4	3A	MONTVALE BORO	138 SUMMIT AVENUE	N	13.31	87%	Y	43%
1903	5	3A	MONTVALE BORO	SUMMIT AVENUE					
1510	7	3A	FRANKLIN LAKES BORO	370 PULIS AVENUE	Y				
1510	8	3B	FRANKLIN LAKES BORO	378 PULIS AVENUE	Y	7.51	0%	N	52%
1510	9	3B	FRANKLIN LAKES BORO	378 PULIS AVENUE	Y				
1515	1.04	3B	FRANKLIN LAKES BORO	705 ANNTARAMISS LANE	Y				
2004	20.02	3B	ALLENDALE BORO	16 ROZMUS COURT					
2004	20.10	3B	ALLENDALE BORO	13 ROZMUS COURT					
2004	20.11	3B	ALLENDALE BORO	3 ROZMUS COURT	Y				
2004	21	3A	ALLENDALE BORO	100 FRANKLIN TPKE					
2004	34	3B	ALLENDALE BORO	HOMEWOOD AVE		16.32	69%	Y	30%
1805	5	3B	SADDLE RIVER BORO	17 CAMERON ROAD					
1805	6	3B	SADDLE RIVER BORO	19 CAMERON ROAD					
1805	24	3B	SADDLE RIVER BORO	CAMERON RD - REAR					
1806	5.01	3B	SADDLE RIVER BORO	18 CAMERON RD					
120.01	1								
120.01	131	1	MAHWAH TWP	172 AIRMONT AVENUE	Y	24.56	40%	N	59%
120.01	132	2		168 AIRMONT AVENUE					
120.01	133	3A		85 AIRMONT AVENUE					
					Soil Disturbance:	**101.14**	**6**	**Farms**	
TIER III: LOCALLY IMPORTANT, DO NOT MEET STATE CRITERIA					**Total:**	**269.28**	**17**	Farms	
					TARGET FARMS, TIERS I, II, III:	**364.53**	**27**	**Farms**	

Block	Lot	Class	Municipality	Location	Zoning permits agriculture	Acres (GIS)	Tillable Percent	50% Tillable?	Agricultural Soil Percent
OTHER FARM ASSESSED LAND IN THE ADA (NOT TARGET FARMS)									
1801	21.01	3A	SADDLE RIVER BORO	9 LOWER CROSS ROAD	Y	6.89	93%	Y	0%
4004	4	3A	OAKLAND BORO	127 MCCOY RD	N	10.51	83%	Y	36%
4004	5	3B		125 MCCOY RD					
901	10	3B	OAKLAND BORO	35 GLEN GRAY RD	N	17.69	40%	N	42%
1801	1	1	SADDLE RIVER BORO	107 E. SADDLE RIVER ROAD	Y	39.54	40%	close	67%
1801	2	2		111 E. SADDLE RIVER ROAD					
1801	4.01	1		103 E. SADDLE RIVER ROAD					
1801	7.01	3B		12 RIVER FARM LANE					
1801	7.02	3A		12 RIVER FARM LANE					
1801	11.02	3A		5 WILLOW POND RD					
1607	19	3A	SADDLE RIVER BORO	137 E. SADDLE RIVER ROAD	Y	21.35	45%	close	32%
1607	20	3A		135 E. SADDLE RIVER ROAD					
1607	21.01	1		131 E. SADDLE RIVER ROAD					
1607	21.02	3B		135 E. SADDLE RIVER ROAD					
2102	6	3A	SADDLE RIVER BORO	16 TWIN BROOKS ROAD	Y	26.96	13%	N	28%
2102	21	3B		157 MILL ROAD					
2102	22	3B		157 MILL ROAD					
1	152.01	3A	MAHWAH TWP	31 MIDVALE MOUNTAIN ROAD	Y	8.52	0%	N	0%
2205	1	3A	FRANKLIN LAKES BORO	735 FRANKLIN LAKE ROAD	Y	11.15	0%	N	46%
12	24	3A	MAHWAH TWP	18 SPLIT ROCK ROAD	Y	5.90	19%	N	36%
1703	2.01	3A	CLOSTER BORO	639 PIERMONT RD	Y	9.46	0%	N	0%
24	1	3A	MAHWAH TWP	200 STABLED WAY	Y	38.88	17%	N	14%
24	1	3B		200 STABLED WAY					
2102	27	3A	SADDLE RIVER BORO	12 CHESTNUT RIDGE ROAD	Y	13.59	0%	N	33%
1	185	3A	MAHWAH TWP	11 FOX RIVER CROSSING	Y	6.91	0%	N	0%
4808	6.QQ	3B	PARAMUS BORO	578 PARAMUS ROAD	N	4.95	0%	N	0%
FARM ASSESSED LAND IN THE ADA (NOT TARGET FARMS)					**Total:**	**222.31**		**14 Farms**	
				Total, Farm Assessed Land in the ADA:		**586.83**		**41 Farms**	