

## **VII. NATURAL RESOURCE CONSERVATION**

### **A. Natural Resource Protection Coordination**

#### 1. Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)

The NRCS is a valuable resource to private landowners seeking to engage in conservation practices that will ensure the continued viability of their land's soil, water, and natural resources. The local NRCS office designated to serving Morris along with Sussex and Warren counties is located in Hackettstown and can be reached at (908) 852-2576.

A major service provided by the NRCS is the development of farm conservation plans. Conservation plans are designed to help a landowner determine and implement the best management practices for the natural resources on their farm. The benefits of a well designed conservation plan include the protection of the farm's soil and productivity, improvement of the farm's soil fertility and moisture management, and improvement of the local water quality. A conservation plan can also help a landowner comply with environmental regulations. Examples of resource concerns that are addressed by a conservation plan include soil erosion, pasture and woodland improvement, the management of animal waste, wildlife habitat improvement, irrigation water management, and stream bank protection. (NRCS Website)

The development of a conservation plan is a free service. Once the NRCS is contacted, a soil conservationist will proceed to assist the landowner inventory the existing resource conditions on the farm and determine the land's production capability. The landowner is involved throughout the process and works with the conservationist to decide what actions should be taken to protect and improve their land. The landowner makes the ultimate decisions as to what actions will be taken, as well as when and how they will be implemented. The NRCS can direct a landowner towards available state and federal funding sources suitable for the resource decisions they make. (NRCS Website)

The deed of easement for permanently preserved farms requires landowners to obtain a conservation plan for the farm within one year of executing the deed. Since conservation plans are confidential documents, copies are not automatically sent to the CADB. Staff sends reminders to all preserved farm owners with their annual monitoring reports when a plan is not on record. Beginning in 2008, staff will request that landowners sign a conservation plan release form upon execution of the deed of easement to ensure that a copy of their plan is made available to staff once it is developed. Stricter enforcement of this provision in the deed of easement is necessary to ensure that the resources on Morris County's farmland are best managed to provide for the future viability of agriculture in the years to come.

#### 2. Morris County Soil Conservation District (MCSCD)

The State Soil Conservation Committee (SSCC) was established by statute in 1937. The SSCC coordinates with federal and state agencies to provide natural resource conservation and management services through 15 local conservation districts, one of which is the MCSCD. The MCSCD, like all of New Jersey's soil conservation districts, works in two capacities; as a

provider of assistance and support to the agricultural community and as a regulatory agency charged with implementing the State's erosion control laws. (NJDA website)

The NJ Soil Erosion and Sediment Control Act (Chapter 251, P.L. 1975) regulates all activities resulting in land disturbances greater than 5,000 square feet but exempts land clearing for agricultural and horticultural purposes. To receive an exemption, a landowner must provide proof to the MCSCD that the land is permanently preserved, eligible for farmland assessment, qualifies for RTF protection or falls under a farm conservation or forest management plan.

However, intensive agricultural activities that result in the clearing of more than 5,000 square feet of land that is not the direct result of tilling and planting crops must comply with standard soil conservation practices. These activities include the clearing of land for the erection of barns, farm stands, greenhouses, and other related structures. A farmer has the option of voluntarily addressing such activities with a MCSCD approved conservation plan or of relying on the MCSCD regulatory activity through the NJ Soil Erosion and Sediment Control Act. If an activity is addressed in a farm conservation plan, the disturbance must conform to the USDA, June 1, 2005 Field Office Technical Guide (FOTG), available from the NRCS or at <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/efotg/>. If the activity is not addressed in a conservation plan, compliance with the NJ Soil Erosion and Sediment Control Act requires an Application for Soil Erosion and Sediment Control Plan Certification, payment of fees in accordance with the MCSCD's requirements, submission of design drawings as prepared by a NJ licensed professional, and certification of the plan by the MCSCD Board of Supervisors. (Joe Dunn, February 27, 2006 and December 28, 2006 Memorandums)

The MCSCD plays a vital role in the development of farm conservation plans. The MCSCD must approve requests for conservation plans prior to the implementation of its development with the NRCS. A landowner interested in obtaining a conservation plan should submit a Request for Assistance form to the MCSCD. The RFA form can be obtained by contacting the MCSCD's office at (973) 285-2953 or on their website: <http://www.mcscd.org/>.

## **B. Natural Resource Protection Programs**

### **1. SADC Soil and Water Conservation Grant Program**

Historically, landowners who permanently preserved their farms or enrolled in eight-year preservation programs have been eligible to apply for soil and water conservation cost share grants that help pay eligible project costs. Eligible projects include installation of increased efficiency irrigation systems, protection of soil from erosion, installation of needed animal waste facilities and other practices that help protect the environment and improve the economic viability of farming operations.

Funding for these grants has become unstable over the last several years and the reliability of funding is uncertain for the foreseeable future. In response to an increased demand for soil and water conservation grant monies and the limitations and uncertainties associated with a funding source for this program, the SADC adopted a policy in May 2006 placing a 50% cap on their

cost share and outlining prioritization criteria that will be used for incoming applications. First priority for cost share grants will be given to farms that are permanently preserved or in a TDR program. Farms enrolled in an eight year farmland preservation program will be given second priority. As eligibility for soil and water conservation grants is the prime incentive for enrollment in the eight-year program, it can be expected that there not be much interest for this program without a stable funding source in place for grant monies.

In order to apply for a soil and water conservation grant, eligible landowners must submit an application to the MCSCD. The MCSCD will assist the landowner with the development of a farm conservation plan and ensure that the proposed project is necessary and feasible. The MCSCD will then forward the application to the SSCC which is responsible for the final recommendation of projects to the SADC for the approval of funds. The SADC continuously accepts applications for soil and water conservation grants, but will not consider them for approval unless a funding source is in place to accommodate the request.

## 2. North Jersey Resource Conservation & Development Council

North Jersey Resource Conservation & Development (RC&D) Council is a regional non-profit that was initially established in 1972. The organization's mission is to facilitate the transition to sustainable use and protection of the region's human and natural resources through partnerships, education and innovation. This is accomplished by working with communities and regional partnerships to: address issues related to water quality and water resource protection, sustainable farming and farm communities, building local community capacity and resource management on public lands.

The Council serves and is sponsored by the Counties of Sussex, Warren, Morris, Hunterdon, Somerset and Union. The North Jersey RC&D Council is comprised of 11 Council members. The county Freeholders appoint one Council member (6 total) and the county soil conservation districts appoint one Council member (5 total, Somerset-Union SCD provides one Council member). These individuals initiate and direct the process of planning RC&D projects, develop and implement the area plans, and then act to maintain plans.

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service provides assistance to North Jersey RC&D in the form of a USDA RC&D Coordinator to the council. The Coordinator works closely with Council to develop and implement their area plans.

Examples of current projects and services provided by North Jersey RC&D Council include: coordination and implementation of riparian forest buffer programs, grant writing and review support, assistance to local communities with project start-up, coordination and training for regional initiatives, coordination of watershed management and stream restoration projects in the Musconetcong Watershed, Neshanic Watershed, and Upper Delaware Watershed, and the River-Friendly Farm Program. For more information about the North Jersey RC&D visit their website [www.northjerseyrcd.org](http://www.northjerseyrcd.org).

### *River-Friendly Farm Program*

The River-Friendly Farm Program was created to provide incentives through recognition for agricultural producers to voluntarily manage their land in a manner that protects and enhances the water resources of the Raritan River Watershed. Many of the streams within the watershed have been assessed as impaired for phosphorus. Through the program, agricultural best management practices are promoted that help improve water quality while maintaining and improving agricultural viability of New Jersey Farms. By publicly recognizing farmers' voluntary contributions to resource protection, the River-Friendly Farm Program seeks to increase public awareness and appreciation for the roll agriculture plays in the community.

Farms are eligible for participation if they are physically located within the Raritan River Watershed. The sub-watersheds of South Branch (portions of Mount Olive, Washington and Chester Townships in Morris County), Spruce Run, and Neshanic have been selected as critical target areas based on water quality test results. Active outreach is limited to the target areas, but program resources are available to farms in the entire Raritan Basin. A water body does not have to be located on the property in order to qualify for the program.

Land owners or operators can participate in the program by submitting an application to North Jersey RC&D. Once the application is received, a site visit is scheduled, at the applicant's convenience, with an RC&D conservation planner. During the site visit, the planner will tour the property and interview the applicant in order to evaluate the criteria established for becoming a River-Friendly Farm. Farm evaluations are based on key criteria for the management of soil loss, nutrients, pests, stream corridors, and irrigation water. If all criteria are not currently met, conservation planning assistance will be made available to the applicant to help them implement the best management practices needed for the farm to become certified as River-Friendly. Referral to other agencies such as NRCS and the appropriate Soil Conservation District may be encouraged for technical and/or financial assistance on specific practices.

Once all best management practices are implemented, the conservation planner will make a recommendation to the Raritan Watershed Agricultural Committee – River-Friendly Farm Subcommittee for certification. The Raritan Watershed Agricultural Committee is a group of proactive farmers and citizens from the Raritan River Basin who address issues arising from potential water quality impacts from agriculture. The subcommittee consists of members from the RWAC, NJ Water Supply Authority, USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service, NJ Department of Agriculture, NJ Farm Bureau, Rutgers Cooperative Extension, and Local Soil Conservation Districts. Certified River-Friendly Farms will receive a plaque, a sign for display at roadside, and recognition in newspapers, newsletters and at local Board of Ag or Soil Conservation District banquets. The certification is valid for four years, at which time the property will be reevaluated. The River-Friendly Certification is attached to the property being certified, not the person. If ownership changes or operation changes by 20% or more the operation needs to be reevaluated.

Six farms have been certified, three are in Morris County, and cover 235 acres.

This program was developed by the North Jersey Resource Conservation & Development Council in conjunction with the Raritan Watershed Agricultural Committee active participation of technical partners, including: New Jersey Department of Agriculture, USDA - Natural Resources Conservation Service, Rutgers Cooperative Research and Extension, New Jersey Farm Bureau, New Jersey Water Supply Authority, South Branch Watershed Association, and the Stony Brook-Millstone Watershed Association. The New Jersey Water Supply Authority provides financial support for the River-Friendly Farm certification program.

For more information about the River-Friendly Farm program, visit [www.njriverfriendlyfarm.org](http://www.njriverfriendlyfarm.org).

### 3. Federal Farm Conservation Programs

The Farm Security and Rural Investment Act (Farm Bill) provides for conservation funding through numerous programs enabling farmers to focus on environmental issues on their land. All of these programs are voluntary and many are administered through the NRCS.

#### *a. Conservation Security Program (CSP)*

The goal of the CSP is to promote the conservation and improvement of the resources on private working lands. This is accomplished by providing farmers of operations that are meeting high standards of conservation and environmental management with financial and technical assistance.

Specific watersheds are selected for the CSP each year. To be eligible, an applicant must be in compliance with highly erodible and wetland provisions of the Food Security Act of 1985, have control of the land for the duration of the contract term, and have the majority of their lands located within one of the selected watersheds. As a part of the application process, a self-assessment is completed that includes a description of all conservation activities the applicant is undertaking on their operation. The NRCS reviews each application, conducts an interview with the applicant, and makes a final determination as to eligibility and what level of enrollment the applicant can participate in. (NRCS website)

Examples of eligible conservation practices include soil quality practices such as crop rotations, tillage practices, and cover crops and water quality practices such as filter strips, terraces, grassed waterways, and nutrient and pesticide management. Payments are determined by the tier of participation, what conservation practices are completed and the acres of land that are enrolled. Landowners are eligible for enhancement payments if exceptional conservation effort is made or if practices increase resource benefits beyond a prescribed level. As much as \$45,000 can be paid to a producer annually under this program. (NRCS website)

In 2007, none of Morris County's watershed lands were eligible for assistance through this program but in 2006 the Raritan watershed was eligible. There are three farms totaling 550 acres in Morris County that are currently enrolled in the CSP (Janice Reid, Personal Communication).

*b. Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)*

The primary goal of the EQIP is to provide assistance to farmers facing threats to the natural resources on their land in ways that optimize benefits to the environment while promoting agricultural production and environmental quality as compatible objectives. This program began in 1997 and has since invested over one billion dollars to help producers practice good stewardship on over 51 million acres of working agricultural land. (NRCS website)

Interested landowners must fill out an application and, along with a NRCS specialist, develop a plan of operations that include the specific conservation objectives that are desired, the practices that will be implemented to obtain the stated objectives and an implementation schedule. The plan of operations forms the basis of the cost-share agreement between the landowner and the NRCS and landowners can receive up to 75 percent of the costs of certain conservation practices (90 percent for beginning farmers and limited resource producers) with a cap of \$450,000. EQIP agreements can last up to ten years. National environmental priorities are used to rank incoming applications and determine which producers will be selected for assistance. (NRCS Website)

The conservation practices eligible for payment assistance vary annually and must be included in an approved Conservation Plan for the farm. In 2007, eligible conservation practices included various cropland practices, irrigation systems, pasture or grazing land management, animal waste management and stormwater management practices. (NRCS Website) There are currently ten farms in Morris County totaling 643 acres enrolled in the EQIP (Janice Reid, Personal Communication).

*c. Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP)*

The WHIP strives to provide landowners with technical and financial assistance to develop high quality fish or wildlife habitat on their lands. Selected applicants work with the NRCS to develop a wildlife habitat development plan that outlines the landowner's habitat improvement goals and practices, and an implementation schedule. This plan is then ranked according to how well it meets national, state, and species specific goals and for cost efficiency. In New Jersey, specific goals include the creation, restoration, or management of the following types of habitats: early successional, wetlands, disturbance-dependent, and bog-turtle habitat. If the applicant is selected, the plan then forms the bases of the cost-share agreement. WHIP agreements typically last from five to ten years. There is no cap on the amount of funds that a WHIP participant can receive; however most contracts average around \$15,000. (NRCS Website)

In northern New Jersey, management practices that have been implemented under the WHIP include native grass restoration, early successional habitat management, brush management and prescribed burning. Species that have benefited from New Jersey WHIP projects include the grasshopper sparrow, bobolink, northern harrier, eastern wild turkey and ring-necked pheasant. (NRCS Website) There are nine farms totaling 176 acres in Morris County that are enrolled in the WHIP (Janice Reid, Personal Communication).

*d. Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP)*

The WRP provides eligible landowners with technical and financial assistance to restore, protect, and enhance wetlands in exchange for retiring marginal lands from agriculture. Under the WRP, landowners have an opportunity to increase flood water retention and ground water recharge, enhance and protect wildlife habitat, and improve local water quality. Landowners are eligible for reduced property tax rates on the acres enrolled in this program. (NRCS Website)

There are three types of enrollment options under the WRP. If a landowner places a permanent easement on their property, they are paid for the easement and the USDA pays up to 100 percent of the wetland restoration costs. If a landowner enters into a 30 year easement plan, (s)he can receive 75% of the cost of the permanent easement and the USDA pays up to 75% of the wetland restoration costs. There also exists the option to enroll in a restoration cost-share agreement where no easement is placed on the property, and the USDA pays up to 75% of the wetland restoration costs. This type of agreement typically lasts at least ten years. (NRCS Website)

To be eligible for the WRP, land must be restorable and suitable for wildlife benefits. Upon receipt of an application, the NRCS determines eligibility by conducting a site visit to collect ranking data and perform necessary assessments. Then a preliminary restoration plan is developed. Applications are ranked according to cost and ecological considerations. Once selected for the WRP, it is a collaborative effort between the landowner and the NRCS to complete the restoration activities. (NRCS Website)

*e. Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)*

The CRP is administered by the Farm Service Agency (FSA) with technical assistance from the NRCS, USDA Cooperative Services, State forestry agencies, local soil and water conservation districts, and the private sector. Under the CRP, landowners receive annual rental payments and cost-share assistance to establish long term, resource conserving vegetative covers on farmland. Such cover protects topsoil from erosion by reducing water runoff and sedimentation, resulting in increased protection of groundwater and the improvement of water quality in lakes and streams. In addition, this cover provides increased wildlife habitat for many different species. (FSA website)

Rental payments are based on the agricultural rental value of the land and landowners are eligible for up to 50 percent of the costs involved in establishing approved conservation practices. Applications are ranked according to the suitability of the land to address several Environmental Benefits Index (EBI) factors including wildlife habitat benefits from covers on contracted acreage; water quality benefits from reduced erosion, runoff, and leaching; on-farm benefits from reduced erosion, and cost. CRP contracts typically last between ten and 15 years. (FSA website)

More information about the CRP can be obtained by contacting the Hackettstown FSA office at 908-852-2576.

f. *NJDEP Landowner Incentive Program (LIP)*

In recognition of the fact that private lands support numerous rare species throughout the country, the United States Fish and Wildlife Service developed the LIP to provide private landowners with financial and technical assistance in the protection, enhancement, and restoration of critical habitat on their lands. In New Jersey, the LIP is administered through the NJDEP Division of Fish and Wildlife's Endangered and Nongame Species Program. Applications are accepted year-round and proposals must focus on the significant enhancement of the habitat of at least one rare animal or plant species. (NJDEP website)

Eligibility for the LIP depends on the land's potential for a targeted species. Successful applicants enter into a project agreement and management plan with the Division of Fish & Wildlife and are expected to provide at least 25 percent of the project's total cost. All projects must be maintained for a minimum of five years and have measurable results. (NJDEP website)

Examples of potential projects that could receive funding through the LIP include habitat improvement activities such as native vegetation restoration and vernal pool restoration; habitat management activities such as changing haying or grazing regimes and implementation of sustainable forestry practices; and habitat protection activities such as the construction of enclosure fences or the fencing off of streams. Funding priority is given to projects involving grassland within regional priority areas and projects adjacent to state Wildlife Management Areas and other permanently protected areas. Priority is also given to projects that benefit the bog turtle, Indiana bat, or bald eagle. (NJDEP website)

### **C. Water Resources**

Section E of Chapter III discusses Morris County's water supply characteristics. The Morris County Water Supply Element of the master plan was adopted in 1994 and addresses water distribution, water quality and the protection of water supplies. The Plan indicated that water supply would be sufficient to meet the needs of the anticipated population, which was projected as 446,000 persons by the year 2010. The Plan did not comment on the ability to meet demand post 2010.

In actuality, the population of Morris County reached 470,212 by the year 2000 and total water demand for 1999 was estimated at 60.9 MGD. The 2005 estimated population of Morris County is 481,130, an increase of 2.3%. Assuming a corresponding percent increase in water use, current demand is estimated at about 62.3 MGD, slightly exceeding the demand estimated for 2014.

Estimates of water demand are available from the NJDEP, Division of Water Supply, which is the state agency responsible for managing water in New Jersey. Most water purveyors must apply to NJDEP for consideration of water withdrawal permits. Data summarizing water withdrawals for Morris County as reported to NJDEP for the period (1990-1996) indicates annual average withdrawals of 42,027 Million Gallons per Year (MGY) in Morris County.<sup>1</sup> Of

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<sup>1</sup> [www.state.nj.us/dep/njgs/enviroed/infocirc/withdrawals.pdf](http://www.state.nj.us/dep/njgs/enviroed/infocirc/withdrawals.pdf)

this, about 53% is drawn from ground water sources and the remainder is from rivers and reservoirs. Of the total withdrawn, it is estimated that about 47% is exported, leaving approximately 22,294 MGY to serve residential and nonresidential activities within Morris County. Exported water is primarily from surface water sources.

Only a small portion of all agricultural lands in Morris County are irrigated. However, the largest commodity group, in terms of sales, is “nursery, greenhouse, floriculture and sod.” This segment, which represents 90% of farm sales in the county, relies most heavily on irrigation for its crops. Therefore, available water for irrigation is immensely important for the economic well-being of agriculture in Morris County. According to the 2002 Census of Agriculture, there are 78 farms irrigating 1,006 acres of land in Morris County.

The most recent well permit information readily available, according to Mr. Ferdows Ali with the NJ Department of Agriculture has 13 farms having well permits allowing for a monthly usage of 270 million gallons. (Ferdows Ali, Personal Communication). This information was collected from the NJDEP in the 1990’s and may not be reflective of the current water permits issued by the NJDEP.

On-site retention of stormwater as well as drip irrigation are two strategies that agricultural landowners can employ to conserve water resources. However, with only slightly more than 1,000 acres of agricultural lands being irrigated, drip irrigation would assist a small percentage (6%) of the total 17,233 acres of land in agricultural use. Many farmers have adopted the use of plastic mulch in order to conserve water.

The supply of groundwater is becoming limited in some areas of the county due to development. Surface water is available in some areas however it is unclear how new regulations being adopted by NJDEP will impact the use of that surface water.

#### **D. Waste Management Planning**

According to the Morris County MUA, the County’s long-term solid waste management outlook is very positive. The County has a NJDEP approved waste management plan that will provide for long-term, economic, and environmentally sound solid waste management solutions.

Morris County owns two transfer stations, one in Mount Olive Township, and one in Parsippany-Troy Hills. Each municipality is assigned to a transfer station as follows.

<b>Parsippany-Troy Hills Transfer Station</b>	<b>Mount Olive Transfer Station</b>
Boonton Town	Chester Borough
Boonton Township	Chester Township
Butler Borough	Dover Town
Chatham Borough	Jefferson Township
Chatham Township	Mendham Borough
Denville Township	Mendham Township

<b>Parsippany-Troy Hills Transfer Station</b>	<b>Mount Olive Transfer Station</b>
East Hanover Township	Mine Hill Township
Florham Park Borough	Mt. Arlington
Hanover Township	Mt. Olive Township
Harding Township	Netcong
Kinnelon Borough	Randolph Township
Lincoln Park Borough	Rockaway Borough
Long Hill Township	Rockaway Township
Madison	Roxbury Township
Montville Township	Victory Gardens
Morris Plains Borough	Washington Township
Morris Township	Wharton
Morristown	
Mountain Lakes	
Parsippany-Troy Hills Township	
Pequannock Township	
Riverdale Borough	

Source: [www.mcmua.com](http://www.mcmua.com)

Vehicles are allowed to drop off waste at the transfer stations and pay on a weight basis. Waste is weighed on the tipping floor before being loaded into transfer trailers for transport to the MCMUA's disposal locations in Eastern Pennsylvania. An individual that uses a transfer station more than three times per year is required to open an account with the MCMUA and maintain a required minimum balance. 2007 tipping fees per ton of waste are as follows:

<b>Waste Type</b>	<b>Tip Fee (per ton)</b>
Type 10 Municipal Solid Waste	\$83.90
Type 10C Non-Regulated Medical Waste	\$112.50
Type 13 Bulky Waste	\$83.90
Type 13C Construction and Demolition Waste	\$83.90
Type 23 Vegetative Waste	\$83.90
Type 25 Animal Processing Waste	\$83.90
Type 27 Non-Hazardous Dry Industrial Waste	\$112.50
Tires (Parsippany transfer station only)	\$200.00

Source: [www.mcmua.com](http://www.mcmua.com)

Ownership of these transfer stations provides for the infrastructure and flexibility to attempt innovative solutions to the County's solid waste needs. The Parsippany-Troy Hills transfer station accepts tires for recycling on Saturdays. No appointment is necessary when delivering 12 or less tires. It costs \$2.00 per tire to recycle car or small truck tires; larger truck tires are accepted for \$5.00 per tire.

Morris County has an excellent recycling system and has the third highest municipal recycling rate in the state. The County has set ambitious recycling goals of 50% of all municipal solid waste and 60% of total waste.

Vegetative waste composting services are provided through the Morris County Shade Tree Commission's two compost facilities, one in Parsippany and one in Mount Olive Township. The compost facilities provide for the management of leaves, grass, and brush. Both facilities are open to landscapers and to contracting municipalities, located both inside and outside of the County. End products include compost and mulch which are available for sale and delivery to interested residents, landscapers, commercial companies, and garden centers. Improvements to the composting facilities' processing equipment has resulted in a higher quality end product.

### *Agricultural Waste Management*

#### *Agricultural plastics:*

There are several large greenhouses in Morris County recycling the film they use to cover their greenhouses. For other small farms, the smaller quantities, storage, and transportation costs make recycling less practical. Currently, plastic mulches are not commonly recycled due to the soil and other debris that contaminates this material when collected. Some local growers are utilizing degradable mulches to avoid this disposal issue. The Cooperative Extension Office of Morris County is currently in discussions with the New Jersey Department of Agriculture and the MCMUA about developing a program to facilitate the recycling of nursery pots and containers. The MCMUA has had programs to recycle tires in the past; however, there is currently no funding in place for such a program.

#### *Animal waste:*

Some Morris County agricultural producers are handling animal waste on their farms by spreading the material on crop fields and pastures and/or by onsite composting. At least one producer is composting his animal waste, bagging it, and selling it to local gardeners and landscapers. Finally, some livestock and equine producers are taking advantage of AG Choice, LLC, a facility in Sussex, which accepts and composts animal waste.

#### *Recycling for agriculture:*

Recycling saves valuable landfill space, extends the life of existing landfills and contributes to the Garden State's goal of recycling 60 percent of its solid waste. Agriculturalists help with recycling efforts by using leaves and grass clippings to mulch farm fields, and applying non-hazardous, non-contaminated food-processing by-products to farmland. The New Jersey Department of Agriculture helps the state's food processing industry find markets for soon-to-expire and expired food products, provides information on greenhouse film recycling and works closely with other agencies in matters that require creative recycling solutions for non-traditional materials. For additional information, farmers may contact Ms. Karen Kritz at (609) 984-2506 or [Karen.Kritz@ag.state.nj.us](mailto:Karen.Kritz@ag.state.nj.us). (source: <http://www.state.nj.us/agriculture/divisions/md/prog/agriculturaleconomic.html#8>).

Extensive information about New Jersey agricultural recycling programs can be found on the New Jersey Department of Agriculture website at:

<http://www.state.nj.us/agriculture/divisions/md/prog/recycling.html>. The website provides information about the recycling of nursery and greenhouse film, pesticide containers, and agricultural plastics – drip irrigation tape.

## **E. Energy Conservation Planning**

A number of Morris County farmers have begun to take advantage of alternative and sustainable power for their homes and farming operations. The alternative sources of energy used are solar and wind. Eligible landowners may receive a rebate to install clean energy systems from the New Jersey Clean Energy Program (<http://www.njcleanenergy.com/>) administered by the New Jersey Board of Public Utilities. Sun Farm Network (<http://www.sunfarmnetwork.com>) worked with a farmer in Mendham Township to design and install a solar system on his farm. A farmer in Washington Township worked with Rutgers University to test the viability of a wind power generator on his farm.

The SADC permits the installation of renewable energy systems such as solar or wind on preserved farmland. However, the energy generated by the systems must be used by the agricultural operation. Generation of energy for sale would be considered a commercial non-agricultural use and would thus be prohibited by the Deed of Easement.

Extensive information about renewable energy and energy efficiency on farms can be found on the New Jersey Department of Agriculture website at:  
<http://www.state.nj.us/agriculture/divisions/md/news/renewenerg.html>.

## **F. Outreach and Incentives**

A number of conservation programs are funded by the 2002 Farm Bill. They include the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) and Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), the Conservation Innovation Grant Program (CIG), the Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP), the Farm and Ranch Protection Program (FRPP), the Grasslands Reserve Program (GRP), the Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP), the Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP), and NJDA Soil and Water Conservation Grants. It is imperative that farmers are informed about and take advantage of these conservation programs available to them.

CREP (<http://www.fsa.usda.gov/FSA/webapp?area=home&subject=copr&topic=cep>) is a voluntary land retirement program that helps agricultural producers protect environmentally sensitive land, decrease erosion, restore wildlife habitat, and safeguard ground and surface water.

CIG (<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/cig/>) is a voluntary program intended to stimulate the development and adoption of innovative conservation approaches and technologies while leveraging Federal investment in environmental enhancement and protection, in conjunction with agricultural production. CIG will benefit agricultural producers by providing more options for environmental enhancement and compliance with Federal, State, and local regulations.

EQIP (<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/PROGRAMS/EQIP/>) is a voluntary conservation program for farmers and ranchers that promotes agricultural production and environmental quality as compatible national goals. EQIP offers financial and technical help to assist eligible participants install or implement structural and management practices on eligible agricultural land.

FRPP (<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/frpp/>) provides matching funds to help purchase development rights to keep productive farm and ranchland in agricultural uses. Working through existing programs, USDA partners with State, tribal, or local governments and non-governmental organizations to acquire conservation easements or other interests in land from landowners.

GRP (<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/GRP/>) is a voluntary program offering landowners the opportunity to protect, restore, and enhance grasslands on their property.

WRP (<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/wrp/>) is a voluntary program offering landowners the opportunity to protect, restore, and enhance wetlands on their property. This program offers landowners an opportunity to establish long-term conservation and wildlife practices and protection.

WHIP (<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/whip/>) is a voluntary program for people who want to develop and improve wildlife habitat primarily on private land. Through WHIP USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service provides both technical assistance and up to 75 percent cost-share assistance to establish and improve fish and wildlife habitat. WHIP agreements between NRCS and the participant generally last from 5 to 10 years from the date the agreement is signed.

#### NJDA Soil and Water Conservation Grants

(<http://www.state.nj.us/agriculture/financialassistance.htm#soil>) - the State Agriculture Development Committee (SADC) provides cost-sharing grants to landowners in the permanent or eight-year preservation programs to fund approved soil and water conservation projects. These projects not only protect soil and water resources, but increase productivity and profitability for the farmer. Projects include terrace systems; diversions; water impoundment reservoirs; irrigation systems; sediment retention, erosion or water control systems; drainage systems; animal waste control facilities; and land shaping and grading.