



Press Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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‘Rising Sun’ Farm in Millstone is preserved 28-acre tract is located next to Assunpink Wildlife Refuge

MILLSTONE – The Monmouth County Board of Chosen Freeholders is pleased to announce that a strategically located farm on Rising Sun Tavern Road has been preserved.

This field crop and sheep farm, familiar to many western Monmouth County residents for its distinctive red barn painted with a rising sun, secures 28 acres of high-quality farmland next to the Assunpink Wildlife Refuge. The landowner, Betty Sinha, noted how it was particularly poignant for her to see the property preserved for future generations, as her late husband had always expressed a strong interest in seeing the property remain “forever farmland.”

“Monmouth County is pleased to join with Millstone in announcing the preservation of this local landmark,” Freeholder Lillian G. Burry said. “The county’s preservation partnership with Millstone has resulted in the preservation of hundreds of acres of farmland to date, with 12 more farms currently in various stages of the preservation process.”

Freeholder Burry also thanked those involved in the transaction for their team effort. “From outreach by tireless and dedicated volunteers at the local level to acquisition services from D&R Greenway Land Trust, professional services support by county staff and significant financial support from the state, this shows how working together toward a common objective yields results.”

The county’s Farmland Preservation Program is overseen by the Monmouth County Agriculture Development Board (MCADB) and administered by staff of the Monmouth County Planning Board. Landowners who participate in the program sell the development rights of their properties for a value based on the findings of two independent appraisers. The properties remain in private ownership on the tax rolls, and can be used for any agricultural purpose.

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The Sinha Farm was preserved through the Planning Incentive Grant farmland preservation program (P.I.G. Program). The P.I.G. Program provides state grants to eligible counties and municipalities to purchase agricultural easements on farms in designated project areas. This arrangement empowers municipalities to take the lead in safeguarding their farmland resources. The recent acquisition was a cooperative effort on the part of the Monmouth County Board of Chosen Freeholders, the Monmouth County Planning Board, the State Agriculture Development Committee, the Township of Millstone, and the D&R Greenway Land Trust.

MCADB Chairman Joseph McCarthy remarked on the strategic nature of this acquisition, observing that, “Besides the property being directly contiguous with the several-thousand-acre Assunpink Wildlife Refuge, this farm is located within a two-mile radius of six other preserved farms. Thanks to the continued financial support of the Monmouth County Board of Chosen Freeholders, an additional five farms are being pursued for preservation within that same two-mile radius.”

At the local level, Millstone Township has demonstrated a strong commitment to farmland preservation efforts over the years. The Millstone Township Open Space and Farmland Preservation Council, led by Chairwoman Pat Butch, has dramatically ramped up its outreach and preservation efforts, evidenced by the fact that more than 600 acres of farmland are currently proceeding toward preservation.

Millstone Township Mayor Nancy Grbelja, elated at the preservation of this parcel, said, “Permanent preservation projects such as these are only possible with financial contributions from open space/farmland preservation funds at the municipal, county and state levels. To better compete for the extraordinary 84 percent cost-share grants we qualify for on projects such as these, we will be asking our residents whether they support increasing the local open space levy this November.

“The next few years represent our last opportunity to preserve the character of Millstone Township that our residents cherish,” Mayor Grbelja continued. “Preservation monies are not only a much better investment for the environmental future of our town, but also for its financial future. A one-time preservation payment costs far less than the perpetual infrastructure and schooling obligations of additional residential development.”

The Monmouth County Board of Chosen Freeholders currently provides financial resources in support of farmland preservation efforts to 10 municipalities. Those municipalities comprise most of the county’s remaining farmland and its overall land base. The county is committed to continuing this partnership, recognizing that time is of the essence in protecting this rapidly disappearing resource.

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