

Warren County Preserves 10,000th Acre Of Farmland

FRELINGHUYSEN TOWNSHIP, N.J. — Warren County reached a milestone this month with the preservation of its 10,000th acre of farmland, an achievement that was celebrated by county and state officials at the Frelinghuysen Township farm responsible for surpassing that record.

Gathering at the farm of Michael Staufenger, officials noted the success of Warren County's farmland preservation program and pledged to keep up their efforts.

"The preservation of 10,000 acres is an important milestone for the citizens of Warren County and for our agricultural industry," said state Agriculture Secretary Charles M. Kuperus, who joined in the outdoor celebration overlooking Staufenger's farm on a chilly December morning.

"When we preserve farmland, we help promote smart growth, protect the quality of life in our communities and strengthen our agricultural industry," Kuperus said. "We're proud to have played a partnership role in Warren County's success to date, and look forward to continuing to work together to preserve many more farms."

Warren County recently finalized the purchase of development rights on 125 acres of Staufenger's 134-acre farm. The preservation program only includes agricultural land, and not homes or other buildings on the property. Farmers are paid to permanently surrender their right to develop the land, keeping it green and available to be farmed forever.

Warren County made its first farmland preservation acquisition in August 1989, preserving about 600 acres in Allamuchy. Since then, the County Agriculture Development Board (CADB) has steered preservation acquisitions protecting farms throughout Warren.

With the Staufenger project, Warren County has 10,082 acres of permanently protected farmland, and ranks fifth in the amount of acreage preserved of the 18 counties in New Jersey with farmland preservation programs.

About 10 percent of New Jersey's total preserved farmland is located in Warren County.

Staufenger, a Frelinghuysen resident for the past 13 years, said the farmland preservation program has helped him to achieve his dream. A financial adviser who grew up in Colonia, Staufenger said he remembers going fishing when he was six years old on the Musconetcong River in Warren County and falling in love with the rural area. "I always said, this is where I'm going to live."

Staufenger has been restoring the farmhouse, parts of which date back 200 years, and said he is looking into agricultural areas to expand beyond hay production at the farm.

"My intention is to bring the farm back to life," he said.

The farm had been looked at for housing developments, a golf course, and other development plans, which would have dramatically changed rural Frelinghuysen.

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New Jersey Agriculture Secretary Charles M. Kuperus addresses Warren County officials and others as the county celebrated the 10,000th acre of farmland preserved in Warren County.

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