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**NEW JERSEY FARM BUREAU URGES DEDICATED FUNDING SOURCE
AS INTEGRAL PART OF HIGHLANDS PROGRAM**

Trenton, NJ (August 10, 2004) -- The New Jersey Farm Bureau, the state's largest organization of farmers, has issued a reminder that any program developed from the Highlands Water Protection and Planning Act, signed today by Governor McGreevey, must include a dedicated funding plan for farm and open space land acquisition.

"Our members cannot support this program unless and until they are assured that a funding source is in place," says Richard Nieuwenhuis. "The Highlands Act as signed does not guarantee compensation for state purchase of land or development easements or transfer of development rights. While it may strive to preserve major water supplies and stop the spread of sprawl, it also threatens farmers with the inability to sell their land into preservation programs at market value without the funding source. The farmers are potentially singled out from others not encumbered by the preservation legislation."

The Farm Bureau suggests that a means for such a funding source could be a dedicated tax for users of the same water supplies that the Highlands Act is designed to protect. It would become a permanent source of farm and Green Acres buy-out funding and a portion could actually go back into maintaining and upgrading the water-source infrastructure. "This seems eminently fair -- the ultimate 'pay-as-you-go' funding vehicle," says Nieuwenhuis. "Such a water tax would apply to only those people in the areas of water use and thus would not burden other areas of the state that are not users." The Farm Bureau intends to pursue this or some other funding initiatives with the legislature as the program moves forward to develop a regional master plan and implement the act.

The New Jersey Farm Bureau is a member organization of more than 19,000 farmers and farm-related entities within the Garden State. It is the only organization solely dedicated to representing the grass-roots interests and directives of its members in educating all levels of government and the public on the farm community's policies and positions. The Farm Bureau also takes a lead in seeking out initiatives, activities and ventures to enhance the profitability of producer members and the ensure the viability of agriculture in New Jersey -- *the Garden State for Good Reason.*

For further information, contact the New Jersey Farm Bureau, at The Farmhouse, 168 West State Street, Trenton, NJ 08608. Phone 609-393-7163; fax 609-393-7072; email mail@njfb.org; website www.njfb.org
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