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**‘PASSING HIGHLANDS REGIONAL MASTER PLAN LEAVES FARMERS
HANGING’**

Says New Jersey Farm Bureau

TRENTON, NJ (July 18, 2008) -- Farmers are wholly unsatisfied with the terms of the newly passed Highlands Regional Master Plan (RMP), but are determined to continue their efforts to have the RMP support farming and seek landowner compensation for the heavy regulation of their property, according to Richard Nieuwenhuis, president of the Farm Bureau

“The overriding regulation of a viable farming community in the Preservation Area (the most restricted acreage) is very discouraging to the farming community,” says Nieuwenhuis. “Farmers have been good land stewards, preserving nearly 23,000 acres throughout the Highlands region to remain in agriculture. Farmers now feel the governor and legislature have forsaken them, first by not mandating a funding source and now, by piling on new regulations. We continue to maintain that the nearly 400,000 acres of Highlands Preservation Area are not a wilderness preserve, but a working region of 118,000 acres of farmland, 88 municipalities and various industries, with heavily traveled highways throughout.”

Farm Bureau is further concerned that water allocation and other environmental restrictions of the RMP are far too open-ended and may undermine farmers’ freedom to farm. Kurt Alstede, a farmer member of the Highlands Council who voted against the RMP stated during the final vote, “In essence, the Highlands Region and those residing in

it are forced to become nothing more than a colony to the greater political powers of northeastern New Jersey.” He pointed out that on top of all the other inequities for the farming community, farmers and all the residents of the Highlands area are being forced to restrict and regulate their own water in order to provide water to the other 4.5 million people in such towns as Jersey City, Hoboken, Newark and other densely populated areas, who have no restrictions or regulations on how much water they can draw.

Nieuwenhuis concludes: “It now is up to the governor and the legislature to find and dedicate the money needed to purchase and compensate landowners. Until that is accomplished, the plan will never work..”

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

The New Jersey Farm Bureau is a non-profit member organization of 14,000+ farmers and farm-related individuals 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 ensure the viability of agriculture in New Jersey -- *the Garden State for Good Reason -- our farms.*

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