

Burlington County looks to preserve 350 acres of farmland

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George Woolston | Burlington County Times

MOUNT HOLLY — Nearly 350 acres of Burlington County farmland is on its way to staying farmland in perpetuity.

Burlington County officials recently awarded six farms preliminary approval to enter into its Farmland Preservation Program, including four located in the land buffer around Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst.

The preservation program allows the county to purchase the development rights of the farms and place deed restrictions on the properties, ensuring they remain in agriculture.

The farmers retain ownership of the land.

The six properties total 346 acres and are expected to boost the total acreage of preserved farmland in the county to 63,064 acres.

They are:

- The Roohr Farm in Southampton, a 58-acre grain and hay farm off Birmingham Road;
- The Columbus Farmers Market LLC in Springfield, a 28-acre grain farm off Route 206 adjacent to the iconic farmers market and shopping mall;
- The Whalen-Robinson Farm in Shamong, a 16-acre cranberry farm off East Stokes Road;
- The Emmons Home Farm in Pemberton, a 90-acre grain and hay farm off Pointville and Catesville Road;
- The Emmons West Farm in Pemberton, an 80-acre sod, grain and hay farm off Pointville and Catesville Road;
- The Stevens Farm in Tabernacle, a 74-acre vegetable farm off Medford Lakes Road.

The Roohr, Emmons Home, Emmons West and Columbus Farmers Market farms are located within the 5-mile military buffer zone around Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst.

The buffer helps minimize security issues and reduce land-use conflicts. The county has preserved 32 farms totaling 2,229 acres in the buffer zone since 2008.

“By partnering with the military to preserve these farms, we’re able to help the base and our farming communities,” Freeholder Linda Hynes, the board’s liaison to the Department of Resource Conservation, said in a statement.

The farms in the buffer are eligible for military funding to cover up to 50% of the preservation costs. All six farms ranked high enough to qualify for the state to cover 60% of the costs for acquiring the lands’ development rights.

The funding for the remaining preservation expenses is drawn from the county's open space, farmland and historic preservation tax, which was reduced from 3 cents per \$100 of assessed property value to 2 cents per \$100 earlier this year.

“Preserving farmland and open space is a win-win for everyone. Not only does it keep agriculture viable in our state and maintain our county’s scenic landscapes, but it can also help protect the mission of Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst,” Hynes said.

Burlington County is ranked first in New Jersey for acres of farmland preserved and seventh in the nation.

George Woolston is a South Jersey native who covers several topics for the Burlington County Times. He joined the staff in 2019. Contact him at gwoolston@thebct.com and follow on Twitter [@gcwoolston](https://twitter.com/gcwoolston). Help support local journalism with a subscription to the Burlington County Times.