

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**STATE OF NEW JERSEY AND LEBANON TOWNSHIP PRESERVE  
HIGHLANDS PROPERTY**

(06/36) TRENTON — Department of Environmental Protection Commissioner Lisa P. Jackson and Agriculture Secretary Charles M. Kuperus today announced the preservation of a 163-acre property in the Spruce Run Reservoir watershed in Lebanon Township, Hunterdon County. The New Jersey Water Supply Authority purchased the property in partnership with the DEP's Green Acres Program, the State Agriculture Development Committee (SADC) and the Township of Lebanon.

“Preservation of this farmland advances our commitment to protecting open space and precious water resources in the Highlands region,” Commissioner Jackson said. “Future generations of New Jerseyans will reap the benefits of this productive partnership.”

The property, known as Special Farms, is located near Anthony Road in Lebanon Township. The New Jersey Water Supply Authority purchased Special Farms from the Riback family and immediately conveyed 94 acres to SADC and the remaining 69 acres to Green Acres. The SADC portion of the property was farmed for field crops and includes a farmhouse and some outbuildings. The SADC plans to return the land to private ownership by selling it as a permanently preserved farm at a private auction at a later date. The DEP's Division of Fish and Wildlife will manage the Green Acres portion for passive recreation.

“Funding partnerships such as the one to preserve Special Farms are critical in helping to permanently protect our farmland and all the important resources of the Highlands,” Secretary Kuperus said. “I commend the New Jersey Water Supply Authority for taking the lead in the preservation of this property and look forward to many more successful cooperative efforts to protect our farms, our water quality and all the valuable resources of this region.”

This property expands the existing Highlands greenway. Special Farms is contiguous to September Farms, which Green Acres and the New Jersey Water Supply Authority preserved in 2004, and Hunterdon County's recently acquired Wattles farm on Point Mountain Park.

Special Farms was purchased for \$1,953,208. The New Jersey Water Supply Authority contributed \$49,500 from its Source Water Protection Fund, the DEP Green Acres

Program contributed \$808,183 in state acquisition funds, the SADC contributed \$1,021,068 and Lebanon Township contributed \$74,457.

“This action results from the coordinated efforts of the State and Lebanon Township,” said Senator Leonard Lance. “All of those who have been involved should be congratulated.”

“Lebanon Township was delighted to assist in this very important Highlands preservation project,” Lebanon Township Mayor Patricia Schriver said. “In keeping with our township planning goals, and the mission of Green Acres, we continue to connect our preserved lands. We commend NJWSA, SADC and Green Acres for their collaborative efforts which have led to the best of preservation: water protection for the good of the state; land for the public to enjoy; and maintaining the working landscape for continued farming.”

Spruce Run Reservoir, which is designated a Category One waterbody, augments the resources of the Raritan River. The Raritan River provides drinking water to residents of 48 municipalities in Hunterdon, Mercer, Middlesex, Morris, Somerset and Union counties. Fifty-five percent of the Raritan River’s source water area is located in the Highlands region.

The purchase of this property is part of New Jersey Water Supply Authority’s Spruce Run Initiative, which dedicates a portion of its Raritan Basin System ratepayer funds to assisting local, county and state governments in the preservation of critical watershed properties in the Spruce Run Reservoir watershed. The initiative’s objective is to maximize the efficiency of existing watershed preservation programs through a coordinated effort of government, non-profit and private resources.

The DEP’s Green Acres Program purchases land to protect environmentally sensitive open space, water resources and other significant natural and historical open space. Land acquired becomes part of the statewide system of parks and forest, wildlife management areas and natural areas.

To date, Green Acres has protected more than 595,000 acres of open space and provided funding to develop hundreds of public parks, bringing the statewide system of preserved open space and farmland to more than 1.3 million acres.

The SADC administers the state Farmland Preservation Program. To date, more than 1,300 farms covering approximately 145,000 acres have been permanently preserved.

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