

Concerning Open Space in Highlands

Erica Van Auken

Wednesday, June 25, 2014 • 4:12pm

Before recessing for the summer, the New Jersey Senate and Assembly should pass legislation giving voters the opportunity to decide in November whether to dedicate existing corporate business tax revenues to continue land and water preservation efforts through the Green Acres and farmland preservation programs. Continued funding is essential to protecting sources of clean drinking water in the Highlands, as well as to preserve working farmland that supplies fresh, local produce for our families.

There are landowner equity provisions in place in the Highlands, which include a dual appraisal process (reflecting pre- and post-Act regulations), and if the legislature fails to provide continued preservation funding, then landowners will not be able to utilize the equity provisions for the first time since the Act's passage. The state is completely out of funds to support farmland preservation efforts.

The Legislature must act before recessing for the summer and let the voters decide at the ballot on continuing these vital efforts to protect our water supply and give landowners an equitable opportunity to preserve their farms.

Sincerely,

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