

Thirteen farms added to preservation program

Media: A list of the latest selections is online at <http://de.gov/aglands2014>.

DOVER – Thirteen farms totaling more than 1,060 acres have been selected for permanent easements to add to the Delaware Farmland Preservation Program, the Delaware Agricultural Lands Preservation Foundation has announced.

The Foundation's Board of Trustees recently voted to permanently preserve the properties in Round 19 of the program, which began in 1991, for an investment of \$1.43 million. The purchase of those easements means that more than 116,000 acres of farmland are permanently protected in Delaware. Under the Markell administration, 304 farms totaling 27,700 acres have been preserved.

“Our farmers remain national leaders in keeping agriculture thriving and profitable, and this program helps them do that while protecting open space and preserving farmland,” said Delaware Secretary of Agriculture Ed Kee. “Over the last 20 years, these investments have reaped economic, natural and cultural dividends for our children and grandchildren, and will continue to do so for generations to come.”

The voluntary preservation program leverages state, local and federal contributions. The Foundation does not own the land, but rather purchases landowners' development rights and has a permanent agricultural conservation easement placed on the property. All purchases by the Foundation are done at discount, at 56 percent of the appraised value on average over the life of the program; the average discount for Round 19 was 71 percent. The average farm size in the latest round was 82 acres, at an average cost of \$1,345 per acre. The average farm

size in the program overall is 144 acres, at an average cost of \$1,793 per acre.

The properties in the latest round include five in Sussex County, six in Kent County and two in New Castle County. Kent County Levy Court contributed \$146,432, allocated to six properties.

There are also more than 51,000 acres of farmland in preservation districts, voluntary agreements in which landowners agree to only use their land for agriculture for 10 years. Farmers must enroll in a preservation district before they can sell an easement.

The Foundation's Board of Trustees includes representatives from agriculture and state agencies. Trustees in addition to Kee are Bob Garey, chairman; Bill Vanderwende, vice-chairman; L. Allen Messick Jr., treasurer; William H. "Chip" Narvel Jr., secretary; State Treasurer Chip Flowers; Secretary of Natural Resources and Environmental Control David Small; Peter Martin; Theodore P. Bobola Jr.; and Robert Emerson.

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