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Submittal
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FRPP - IFR - CANRIGHT

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September 25, 2006

Easement Program Division, NRCS
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Room 6819-S
Washington, DC 20250-1400

Re: Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program, Interim Final Rule

To Whom It May Concern:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the proposed amendments to the Interim Final Rule implementing the Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRPP).

I farm 38 acres organically in the Musconetcong River Valley in Hunterdon County, New Jersey. My family has preserved our farm through the State Farmland Preservation Program, and we were fortunate enough to be able to use FRPP funds, in addition to State, County and Township monies for preservation. We fully support FRPP as one of the Farm Bill programs, and believe that it is an important program for landowners who seek to place conservation easements on their land to preserve these lands for future generations. The preservation of our farmland and open spaces is beneficial to our farm economy, our food security, our rural landscapes and our way of life.

The Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program is very important to the State of New Jersey. New Jersey has permanently preserved 11,606 acres of farmland using FRPP funds and continues to preserve even more land with this program.

I fully support FRPP as an agricultural soils protection program and I strongly support the federal government in ensuring that the public receives a real benefit when it uses public dollars to protect farm and ranch lands. The impervious cover limit of 2-6% required by FRPP, which we accepted when we preserved our farm, is completely appropriate; it provides sufficient flexibility for infrastructure while still protecting agricultural soils.

The issue of impervious surface limitations is a critical one, not only to agriculture within our state, but also to our water supply in New Jersey and all across the nation. Without the impervious cover limit, there is no way to protect the future viability of agricultural lands for food crops, ensure public support for the Program and secure adequate protection of soil and water resources. The Farm and Ranch Land Protection Program should help us continue to protect agricultural viability by protecting our soils.

Thank you for your consideration of my comments.

Sincerely,

Mark Canright
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