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Amherst

Town of Amherst Planning Department *Erie County, New York*

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September 19, 2006

Commissioner Patrick Brennan
New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets
10B Airline Drive
Albany, NY 12235

State Conservationist Ron Alvarado
USDA NRCS
The Galleries of Syracuse
441 South Salina Street, Suite 354
Syracuse, NY 13202-2450

Dear Commissioner Brennan and State Conservationist Alvarado,

As Planning Director for the Town of Amherst, I am writing to stress the importance of permanent farmland protection dollars throughout the State of New York. Since 1997, and as a past recipient of $2,428,844 of State Farmland Protection Implementation Grants and $334,844 of Federal Farm and Ranchlands Protection Program Grants, Amherst has participated in the preservation of agricultural lands, we have observed increased support from agricultural and nonagricultural landowners, and we have been witness to the overall evolution of this program in New York State.

It is my experience that the complimentary nature of the NYSDAM and NRCS relationship for funding farmland protection is greatly compromised by conflicts in terminology and allowances for impervious surfaces in Grant applications.

I echo the concerns and principles of the American Farmland Trust and other farmland protection programs that, "in order to maximize the effectiveness of limited funding, State and Federal funds must be able to be used together on farmland protection projects in New York. The inability to match State and Federal funds will result in fewer farms being protected and diminish the effectiveness of both programs."

I urge you to find a common ground on these issues by working together and developing a standard or principle upon which these two programs may co-exist and continue to thrive and grow agriculture in New York State.

Sincerely,

Eric W. Gillert, AICP
Planning Director