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Pinelands easements total nearly 4,000 acres

Burlington County Freeholders have agreed to appraise nine Pineland farms for easements to preserve nearly 4,000 acres in Medford, Pemberton, Tabernacle, Washington and Woodland townships.

The county applied to the State Agricultural Development Committee for funding for the Pinelands farm easements and authorized two appraisals to be conducted for each farm.

"Our Pinelands farm program is still in its infancy, but we are extremely encouraged by the response we have received thus far from area farmers, as well as the support from local officials," said Freeholder William S. Haines Jr.

"The easements that the county hopes to acquire through this Pine-

lands initiative will ensure permanent protection of these farms from unwanted development, regardless of any changes in zoning that could occur in the years to come," Haines added.

Municipalities are not required to provide a cost share to preserve Pinelands farms. The state will

provide a cost share of 70 to 75 percent, with the county providing the balance

The largest tract, a cranberry farm owned by Lee Brothers Inc., next to Wharton State Forest in Woodland, Washington and Tabernacle, totals 1,760 acres. It would

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be the largest preserved farm in the state.

In December, the Freeholders approved preservation of the 30-acre Kumpel farm in Southampton Township, making it the first farmland easement that the county will purchase in the Pinelands.

In addition, the county is waiting for the state committee to certify appraisal values on six other Pineland farm easements totaling 790 acres that received preliminary funding

approval last year. Two of the farms are in Shamong: Abrams on Indian Mills Road., 115 acres, and DiMeo on Route 206 and Stokes Road., 52 acres.

The other four farms are: Albert Puleo on Issac Budd Road in Southampton, 158 acres; Thompson (Fenwick Manor) on Route 530 in Pemberton, 114 acres; Eckert on Carranza Road in Tabernacle, 63 acres, and Wading River Cranberries (Cutts) on Ridge Road in Washington Township, 288 acres.