



Working Lands Alliance

A Project of American Farmland Trust

End of Session Report: Impacts on Farmland Preservation

SB 891: Expands Community Investment Act to Include Dairy Safety Net

Governor M. Jodi Rell, Senate President Pro Tempore Don Williams, House Speaker Chris Donovan and House Majority Leader Denise Merrill worked together in the final days of session to enact legislation to ensure the continued viability of Connecticut's dairy farmers. The Governor has announced she will sign the bill. The nationally recognized Community Investment Act (CIA) was modified by SB 891 to increase the land record filing fee from \$30 to \$40 and to create a new distribution formula for the revenue. The expanded CIA provisions will expire in two years. The new formula maintains funding for open space preservation, historic preservation and affordable housing. Within the Department of Agriculture, the CIA will continue to fund several programs, including Agriculture Viability grants (\$1,000,000), the CT Grown program (\$100,000), and the CT-Farm Link program (\$75,000). The balance of the CIA revenue will be used to provide support to dairy farmers during periods of low milk prices. As a result of SB 891, the state Farmland Preservation Program will not receive funding through the CIA for the next two years, except to cover the cost of administering the program (which currently includes 3 full-time staff, support staff from the Attorney General's office, and the cost of real estate appraisals and boundary surveys).

Bonding \$\$ for Farmland Preservation

Over the next two years, the purchase of development rights on farms will depend solely on state bonding for funding. In 2007, CT leaders passed legislation that ensured the Farmland Preservation Program would receive \$5 million every six months. BUT, there is a \$12.5 million shortfall of bonding for FY10 and FY11! State leaders have NOT agreed on a capital bonding package yet for FY10 and FY11. Governor Rell has proposed \$5 million in bond authority for farmland protection; the Legislature has proposed \$0. **URGE YOUR LEGISLATORS TO CONTACT REP. LEONE AND SEN. DeFRONZO (co-chairs of the Bonding Subcommittee). Ask them to include \$12.5 million in the Bond Package (\$2.5m for FY10; \$10m for FY11) to maintain the current commitment to the CT Farmland Preservation Program, and ensure availability of funds to leverage federal Farmland Protection Program dollars.**

Bill1082: State-Held Agricultural Land

This bill passed the Senate and House and awaits the Governor's signature. The bill requires the state Farmland Preservation Advisory Board to review all state-held farm parcels (about 1300 acres total) and make recommendations, if appropriate, on how to permanently conserve each for agricultural use.

HB 6467: Smart Growth and Plans of Conservation and Development.

This bill, which also passed the Senate and House and awaits the Governor's signature, requires the next state Plan of Conservation and Development (due in March 2011) to incorporate "smart growth" principles into the plan. Smart growth principles include: "(G) preserving open space, water resources, farmland, environmentally sensitive areas and historic properties.

HB 5267: Prohibiting Use of Small Town Economic Assistance Program (STEAP) Funds to Convert Prime Farmland to Non-Agricultural Use

This bill made it to the House calendar, but was not acted on by either the House or Senate. The bill would have prohibited the use of STEAP funding for projects that convert prime farmland unless a town mitigates the loss of that farmland or can demonstrate a commitment to farmland preservation through other town actions.