

Planning for Agriculture: Putting All the Pieces Together

One County's Story: Burlington County New Jersey



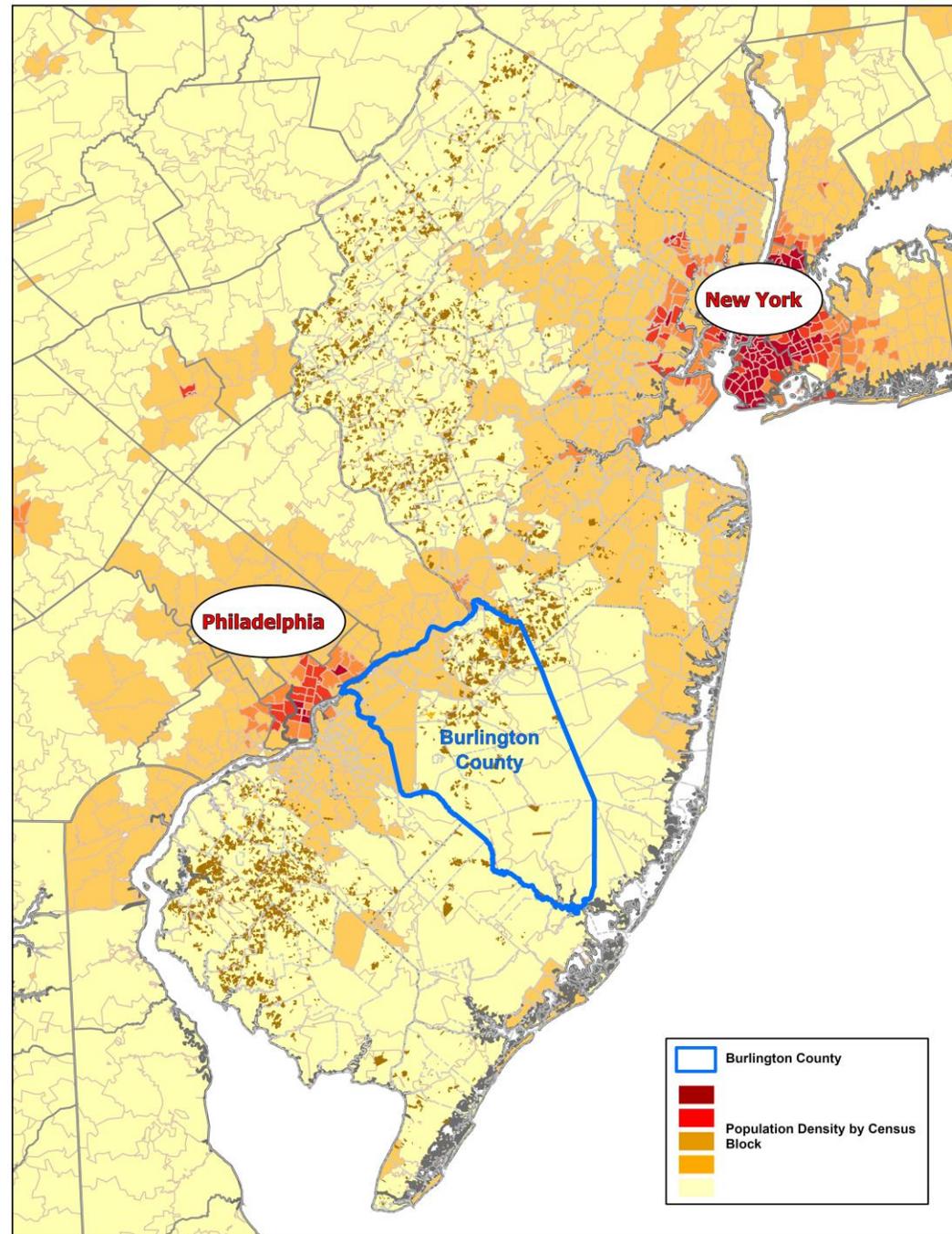
FAIRMONT-DALLAS HOTEL, DALLAS, TEXAS | APRIL 23-25, 2025

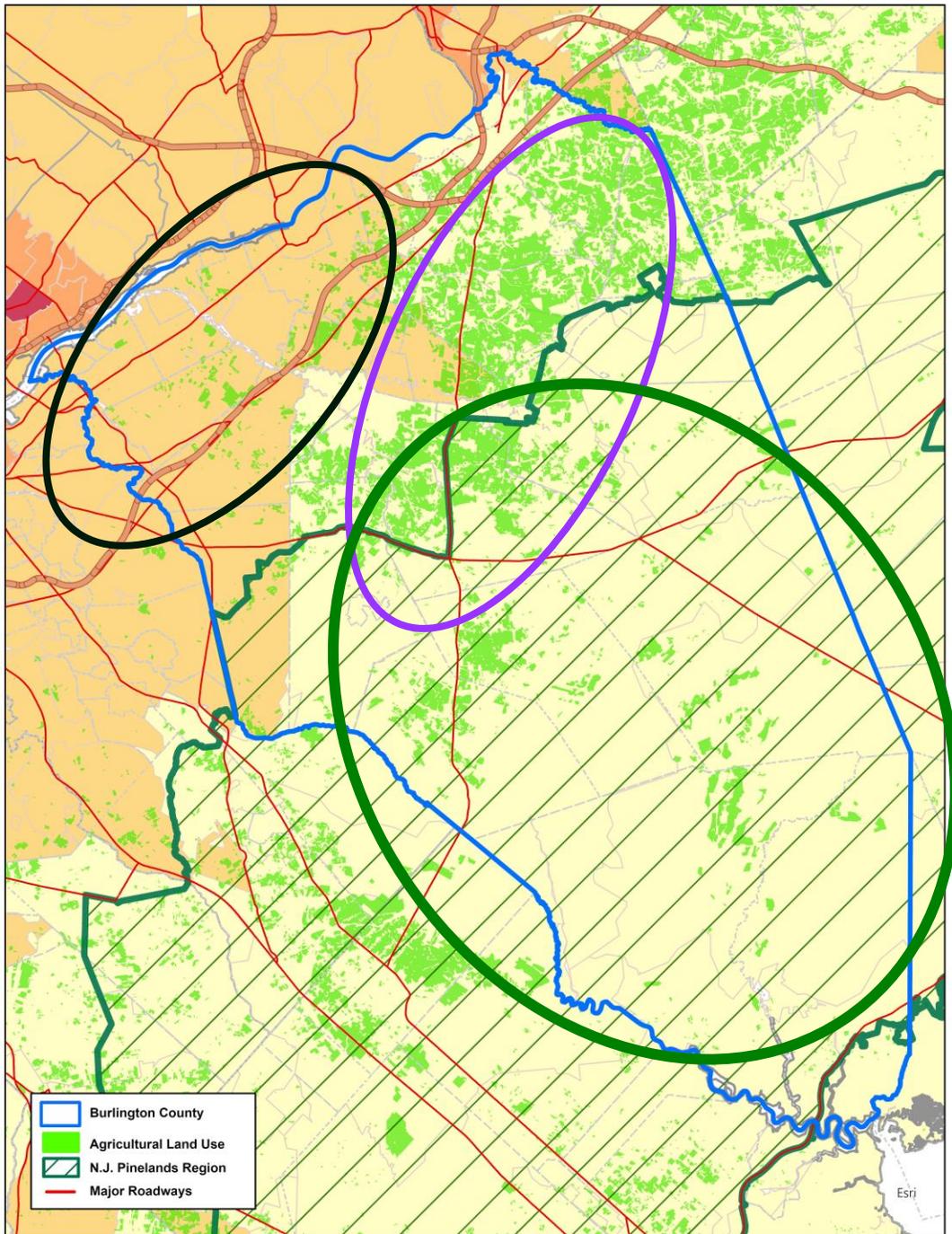
Largest county in NJ (800 sq. mi.)

475,000 population

Within the northeast megalopolis

Home Rule State – municipal
planning and zoning power





Explosive post WWII growth (1940-70)

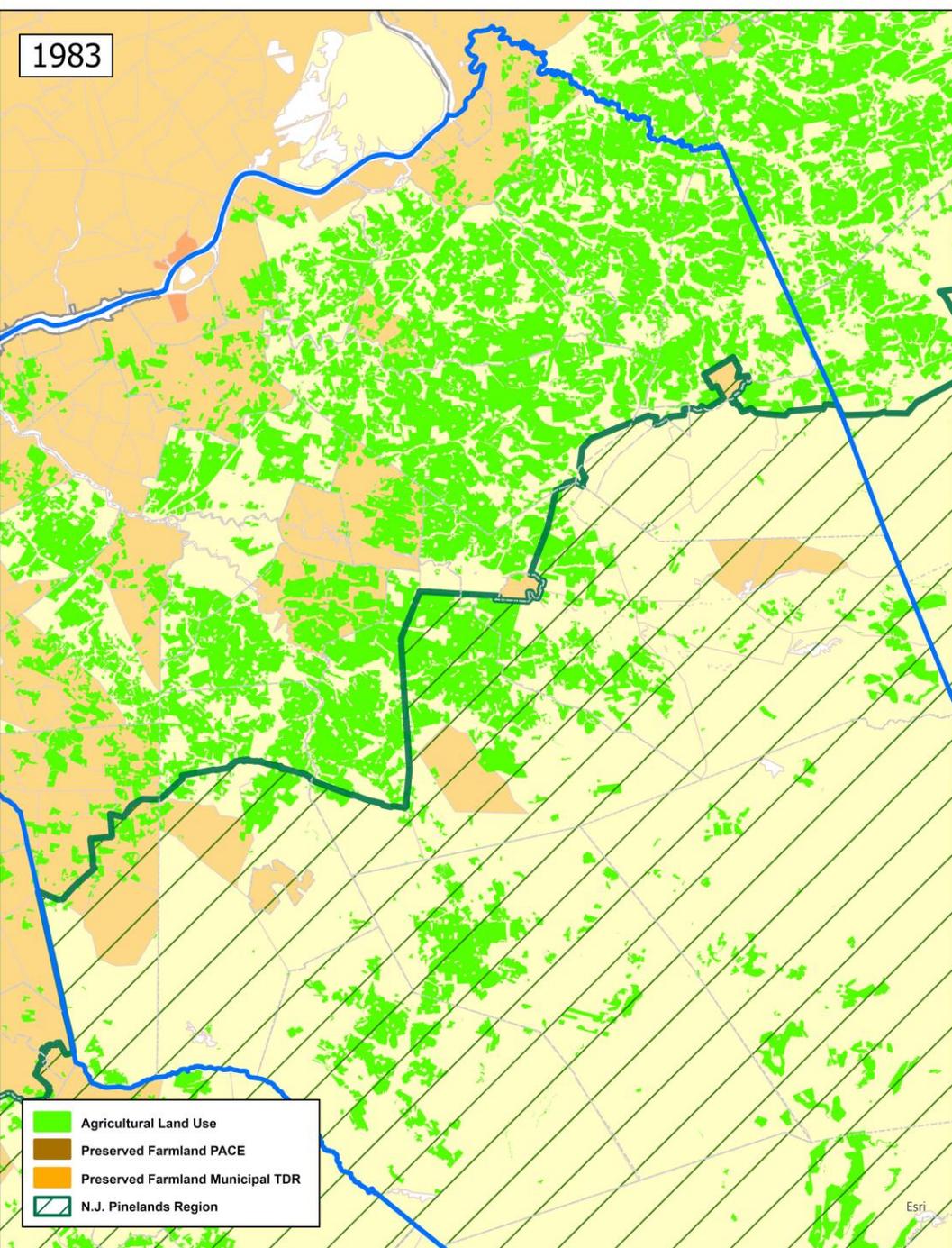
Population increase almost 2.5X
(from <100K to 323K)

Large agricultural 'farmbelt'

1979 NJ Pinelands designation
- downzoning
- landowner impacts

1978 BurlCo bond ordinance (Pine's)

1981 BurlCo establishes Farmland
Preservation Advisory Committee



1983

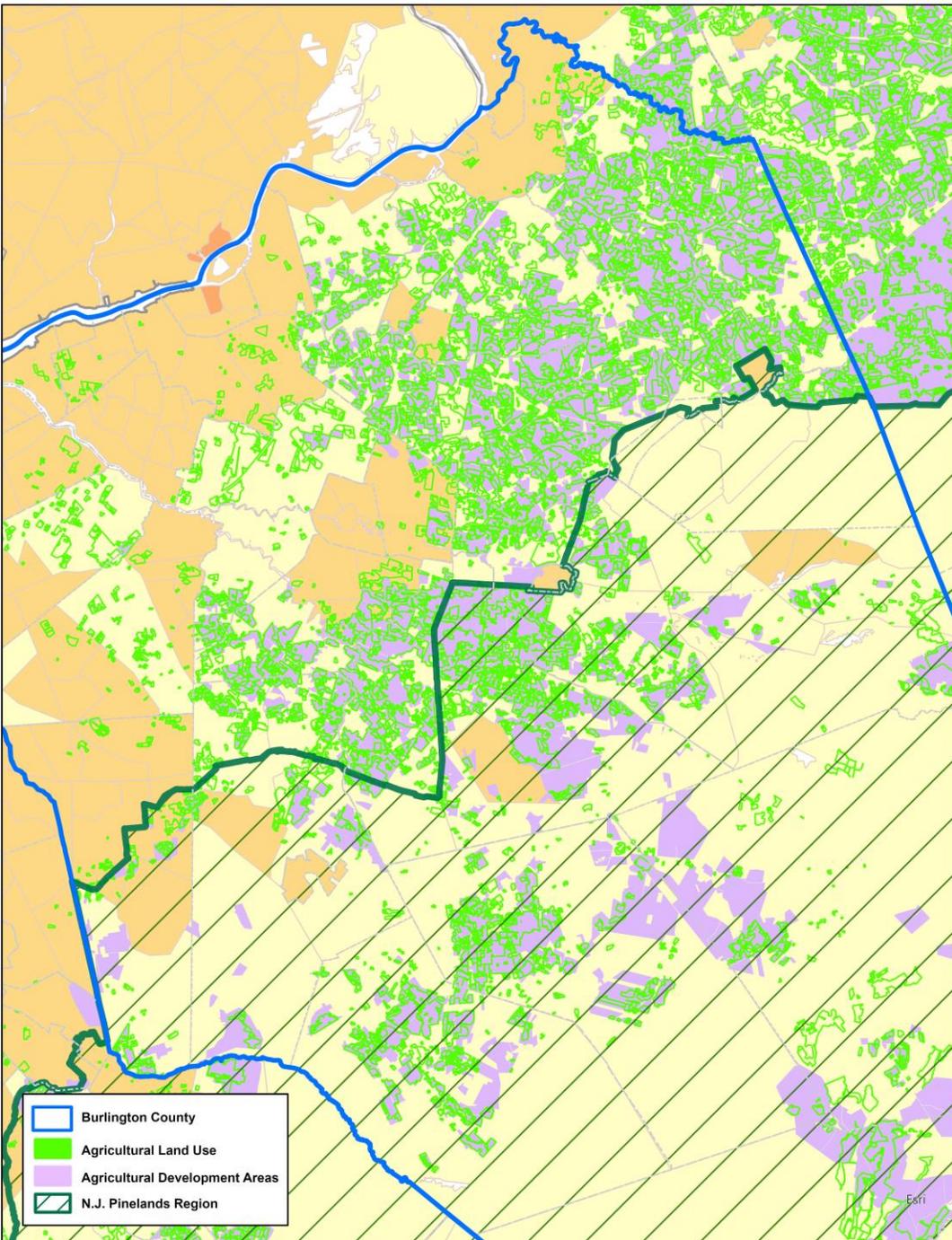
1983 NJ's PACE program established (ARDA)

County centered – CADBs set up

State & local cost share match

- 60/40
 - County 20%
 - Municipality 20%

Permanent easement



Agricultural Development Area (ADA)

Ag is 'preferred' land use

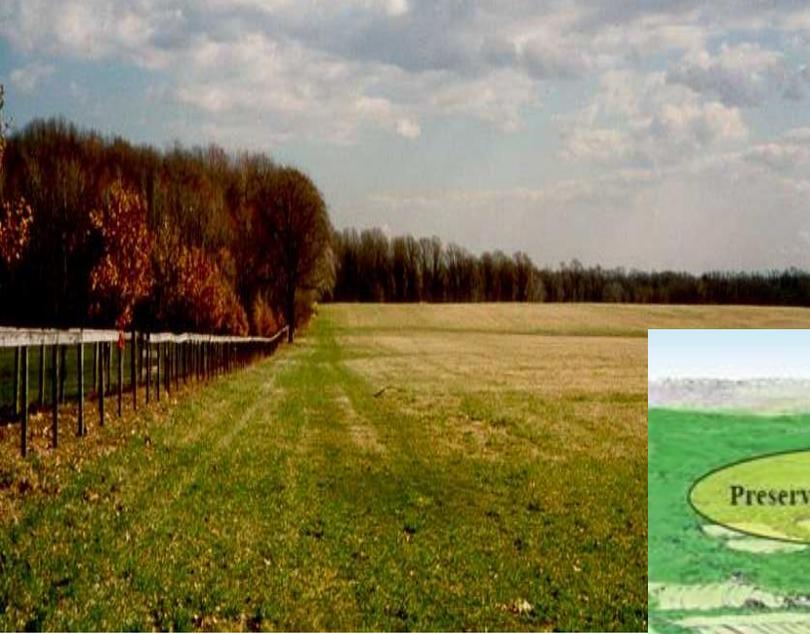
PACE program eligibility

Sewer/water infrastructure

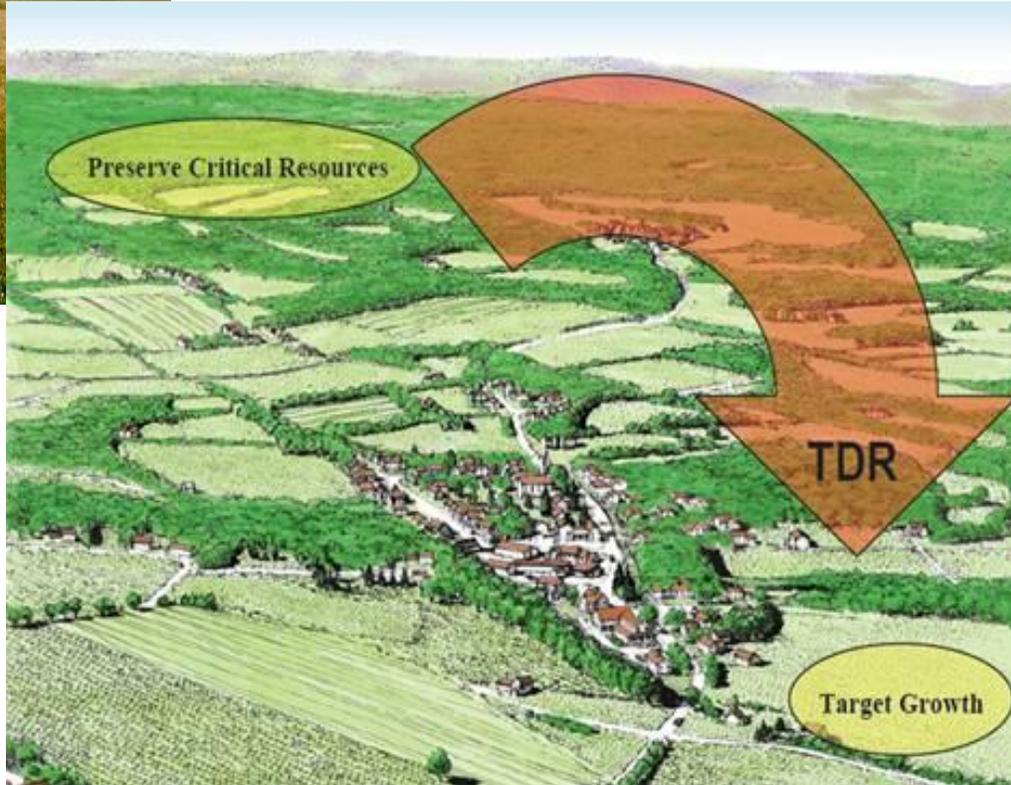
Not all farmland in the ADA – strategic!

- 72,000 ac. Farmland
- 52,000 ac. in ADA

Transfer of Development Rights (TDR)



Identify resources to be protected – the sending area (SA)



Identify appropriate areas for additional growth – the receiving area (RA)

Enable transfer of development potential from SA to RA



TDR Outcomes

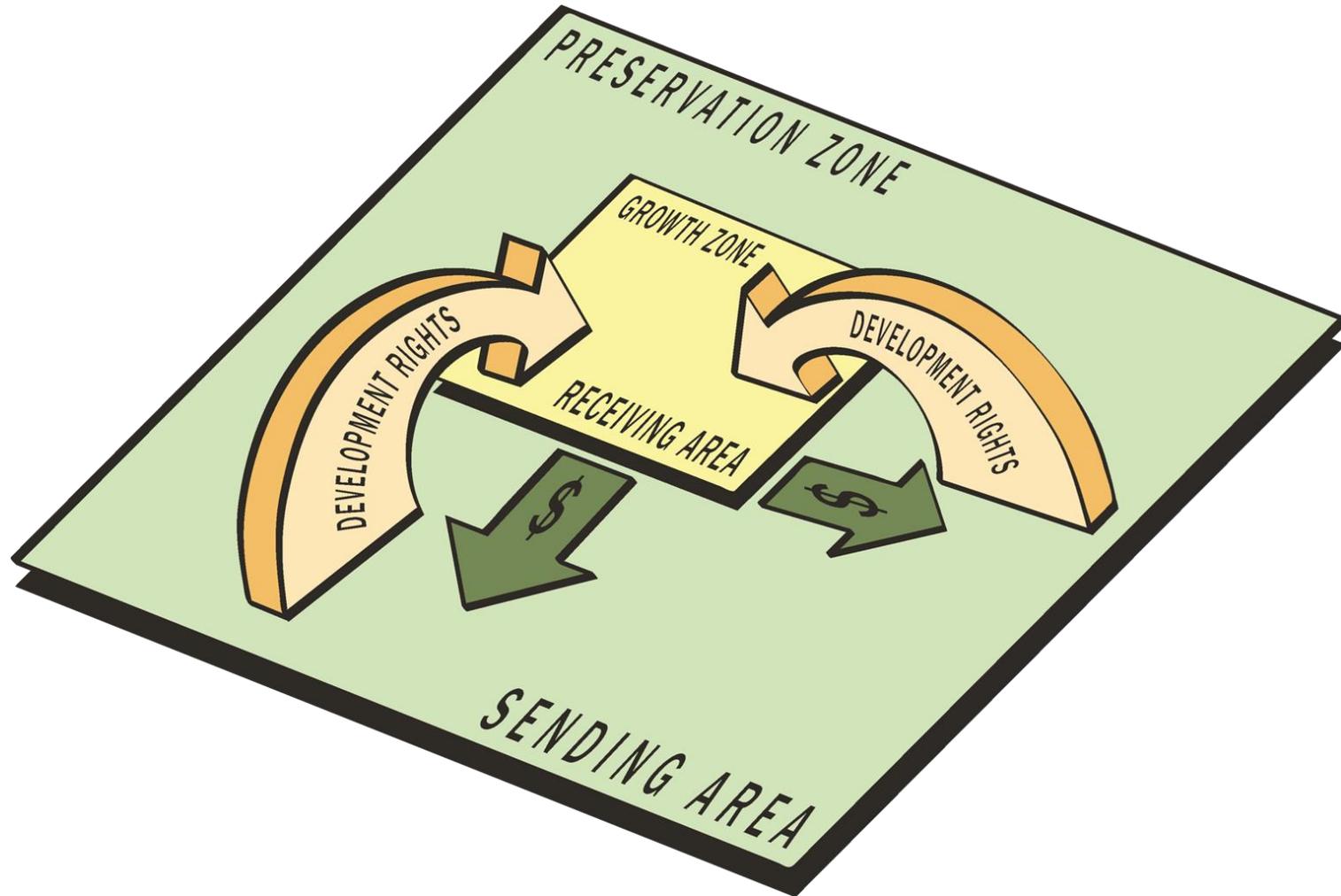
Development potential transferred from SA to RA

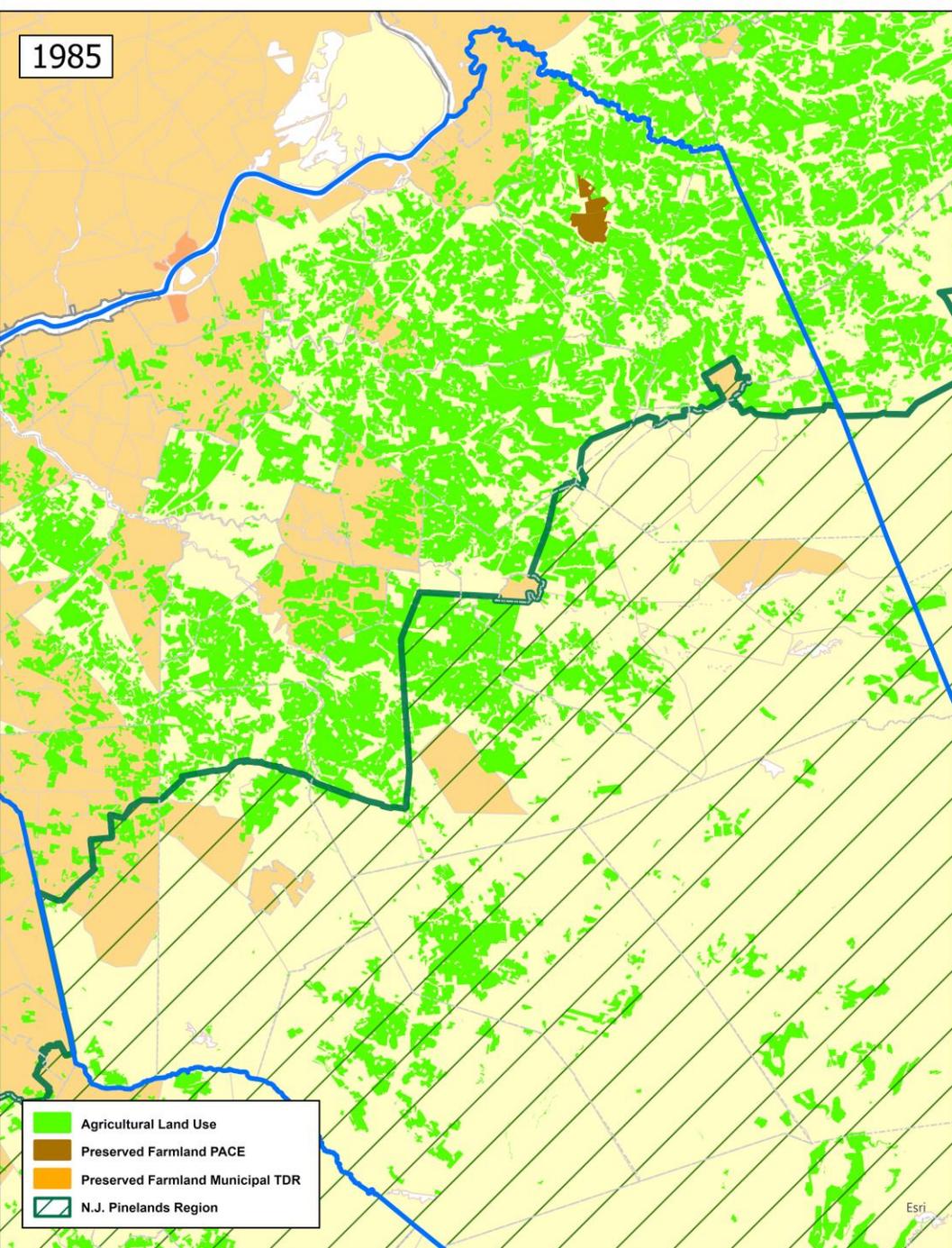
SA landowners compensated for selling development rights

Developers achieve higher density development in RA

SA lands permanently protected (eased)

Land protection using private, not public, dollars



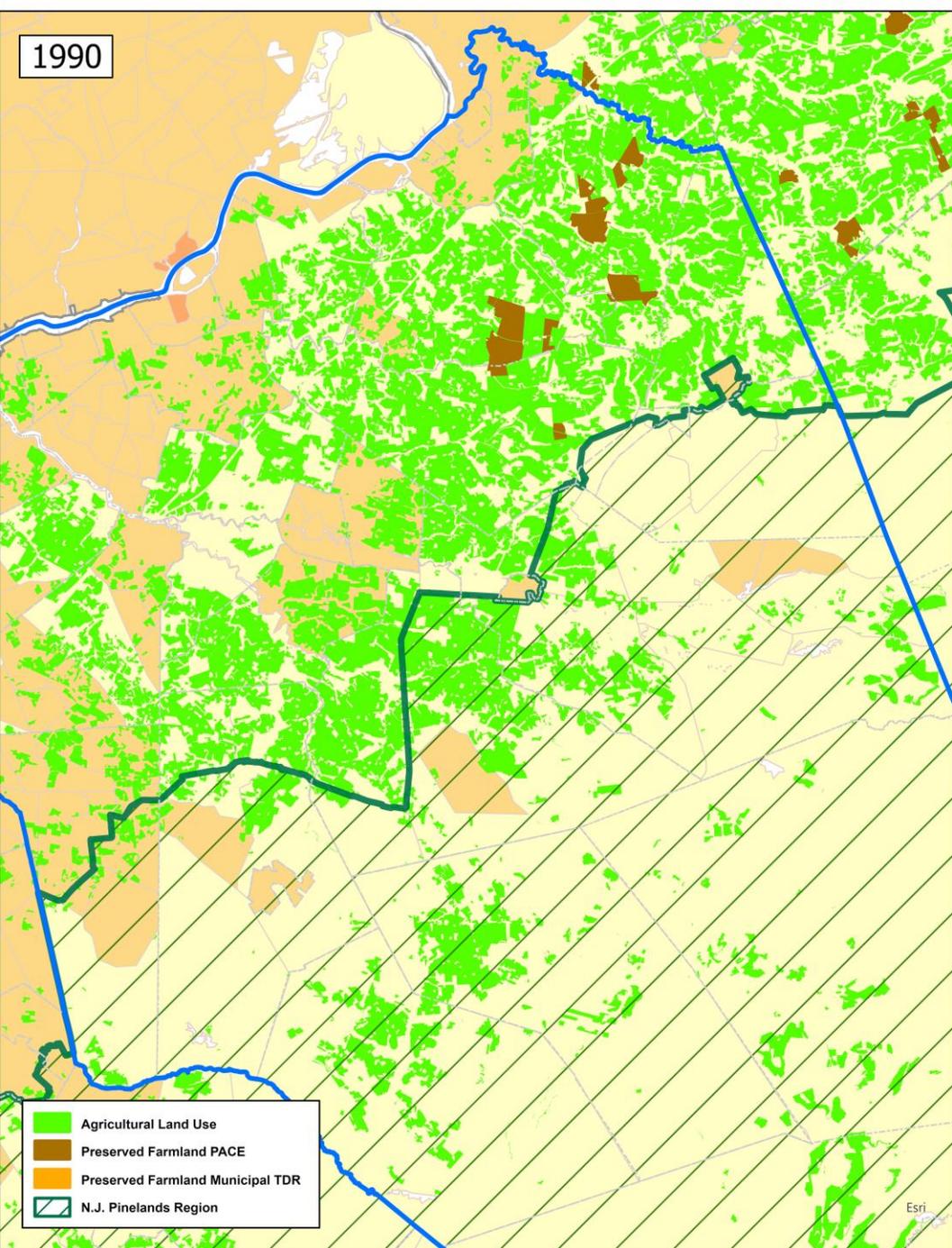


1985

1985 1st protected farm in NJ!

Buy-protect-sell (BPS) transaction!

- 608 acres
- Owned by a developer
- Preserved, divided into 4 farms
- Auctioned off to the ag community

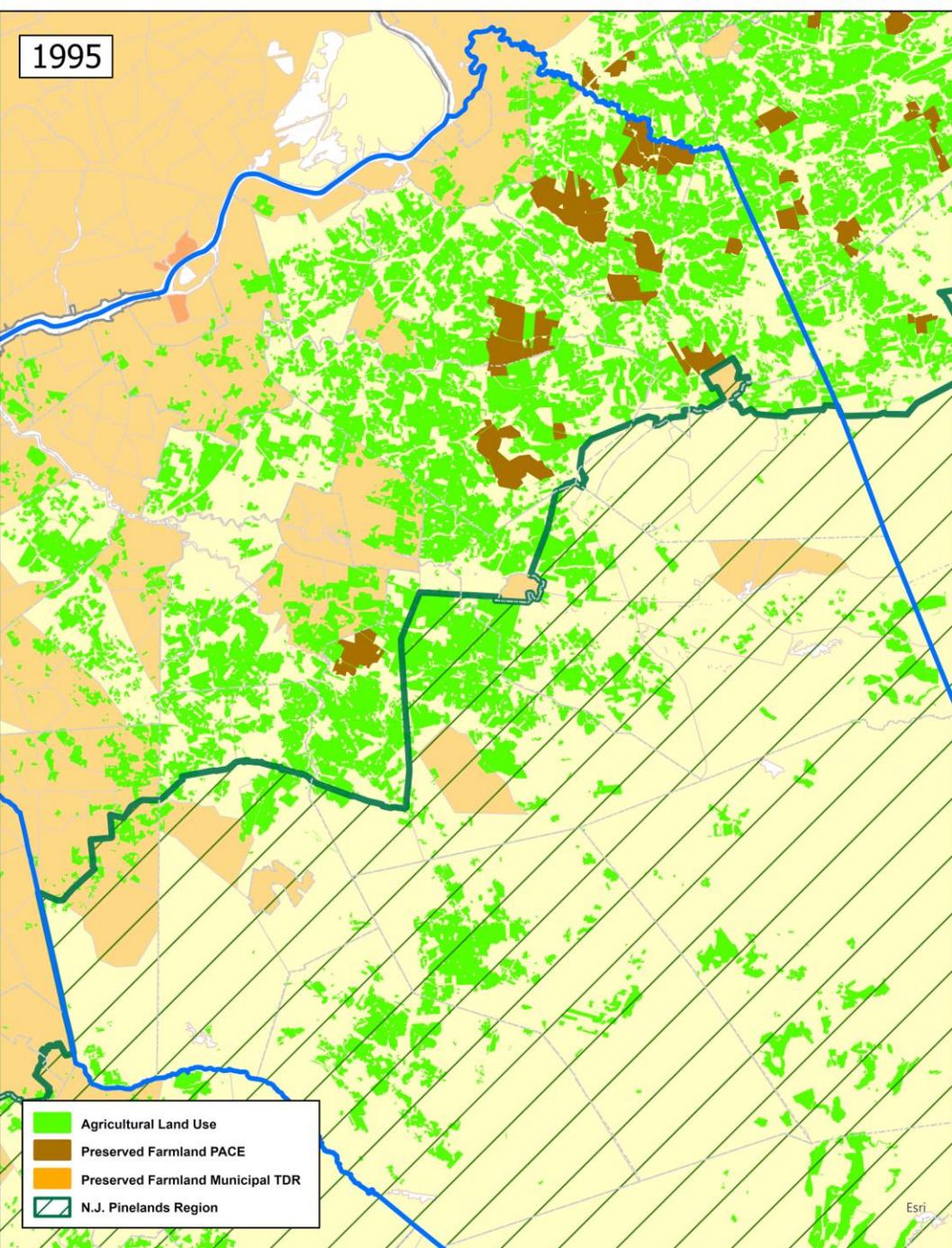


1985-1990

Recognition that PACE program, alone, can't protect the farmbelt

1989 Burlington County TDR Demonstration Act
 'Pilot program' for BurlCo municipalities only

1990 BurlCo starts to pre-acquire PACE program easements due to state funding limitations & process



1990-1995

1990's County provides significant TDR related land use planning support to rural communities

1996 County Farmland & Open Space Preservation Tax Referendum (\$0.02 assessment for 15 years)

Insufficient state funding to keep pace with demand

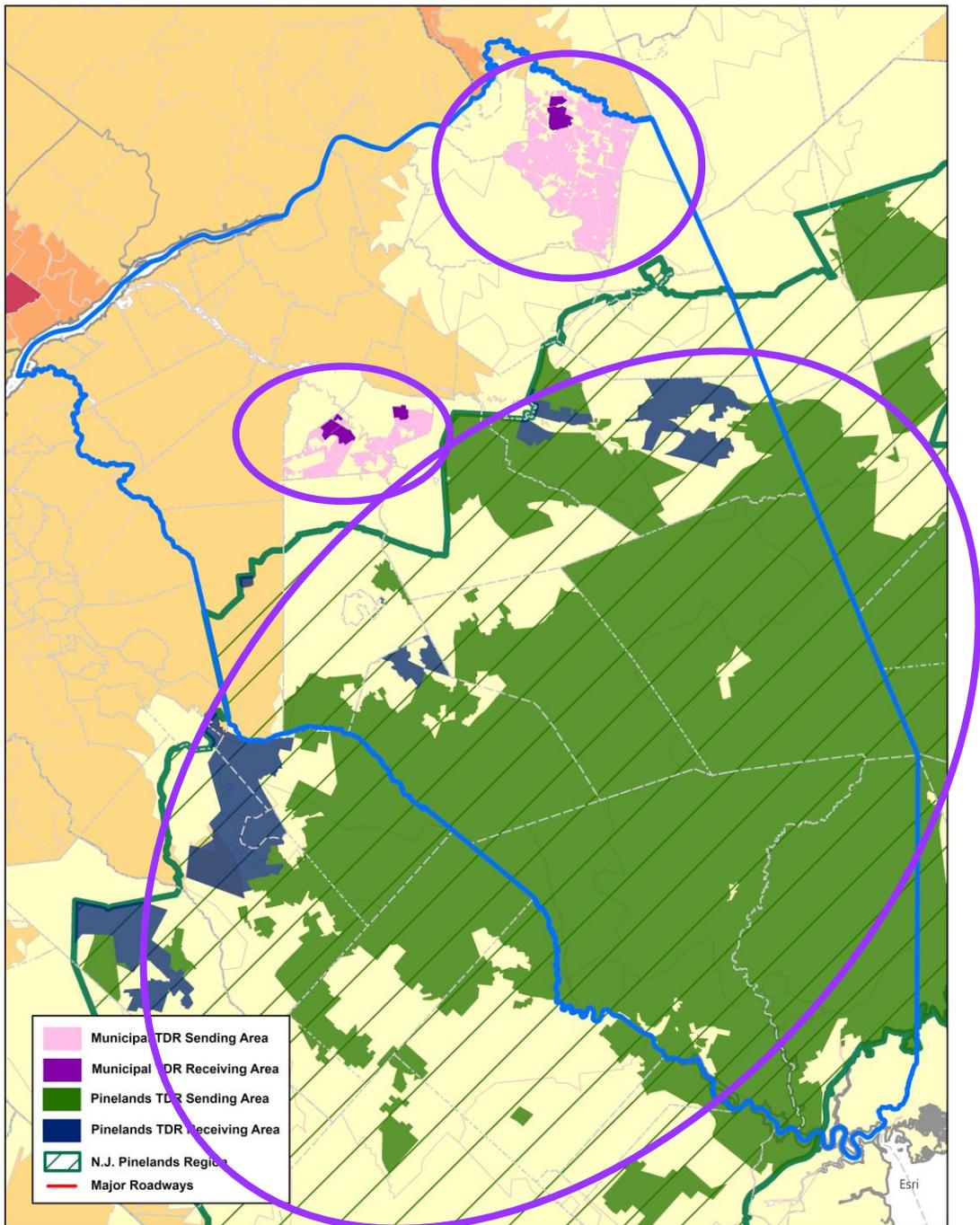
1997 County starts Installment Purchase Agreement (IPA) model for land protection financing to accelerate pace of preservation

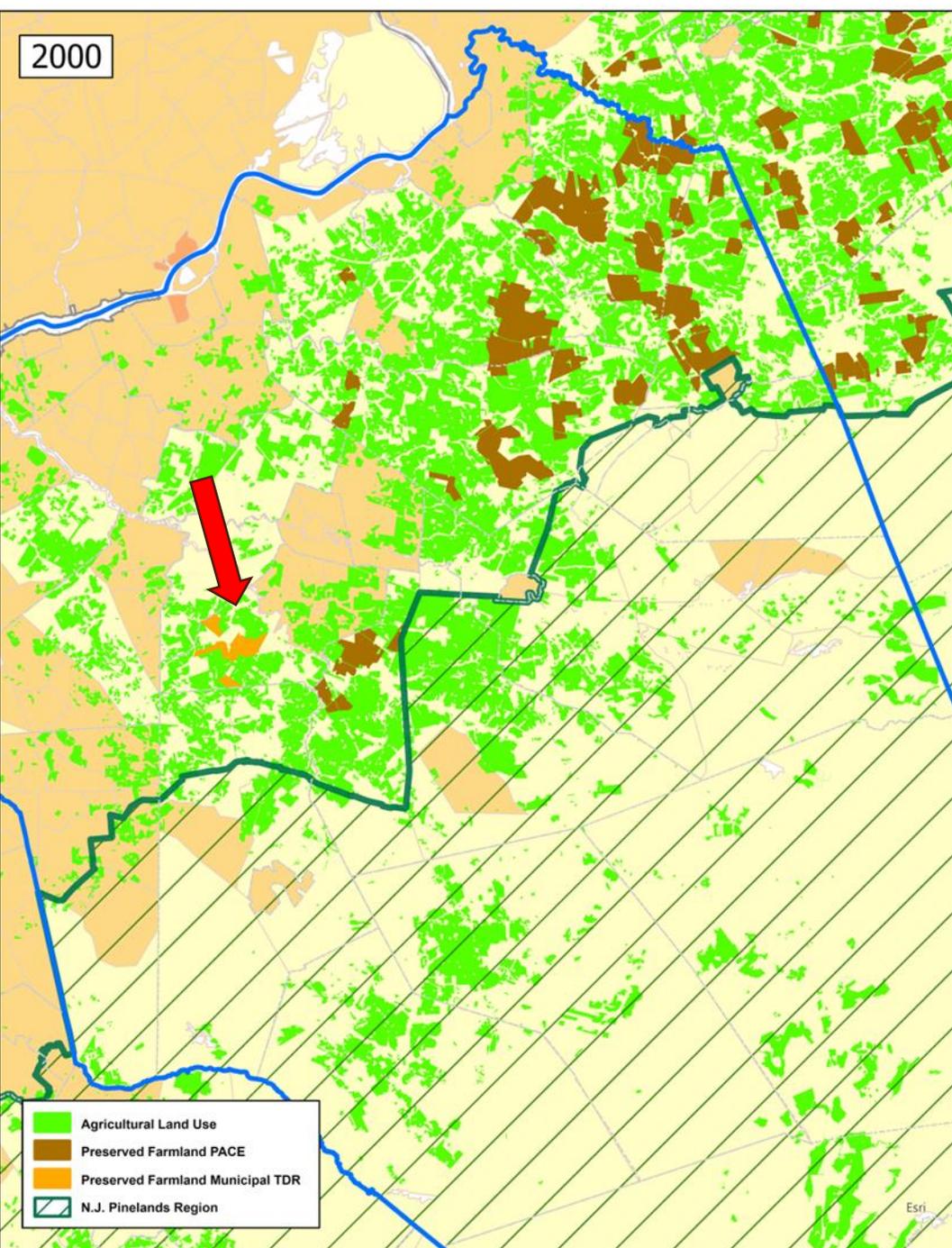
TDR

- 1996 Lumberton Twp. TDR program adopted
- 1,750 acre sending area
 - 508 acre receiving area
 - RA fully builds out
 - 840 acres of farmland preserved

- 1997 Chesterfield Twp. TDR program adopted
- 10,000 acre sending area
 - 560 acre receiving area
 - RA almost fully built out
 - 2,895 acres preserved

NJ Pinelands TDR Program





1995-2000

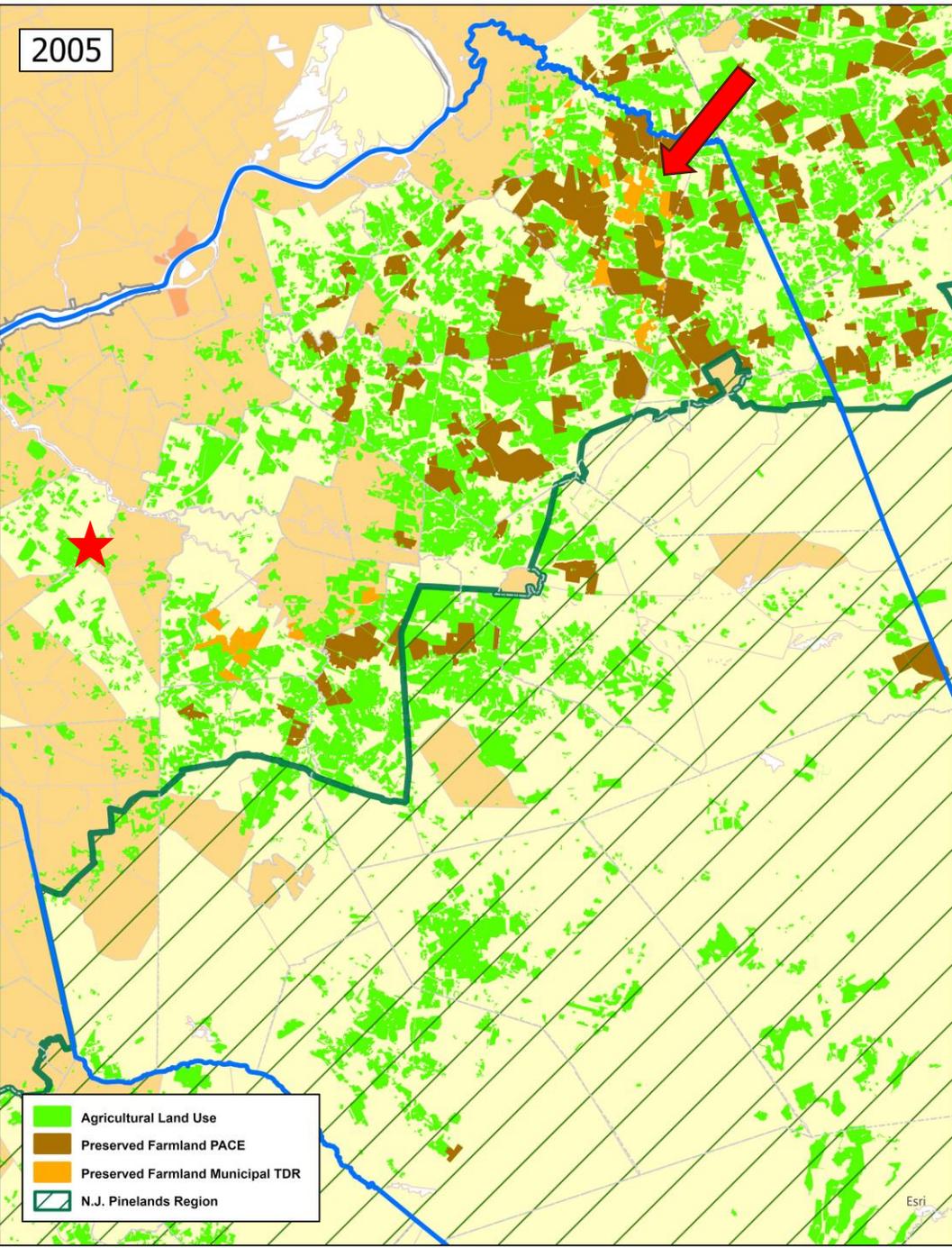
Lumberton TDR program starts preserving farmland

1998 County proposes creation of a county parks/open space program

1998 County voters approve doubling \$0.02 tax assessment (total \$0.04), extend to 2018

1998 Garden State Preservation Trust Act (\$200M/year)

2005



2000-2005

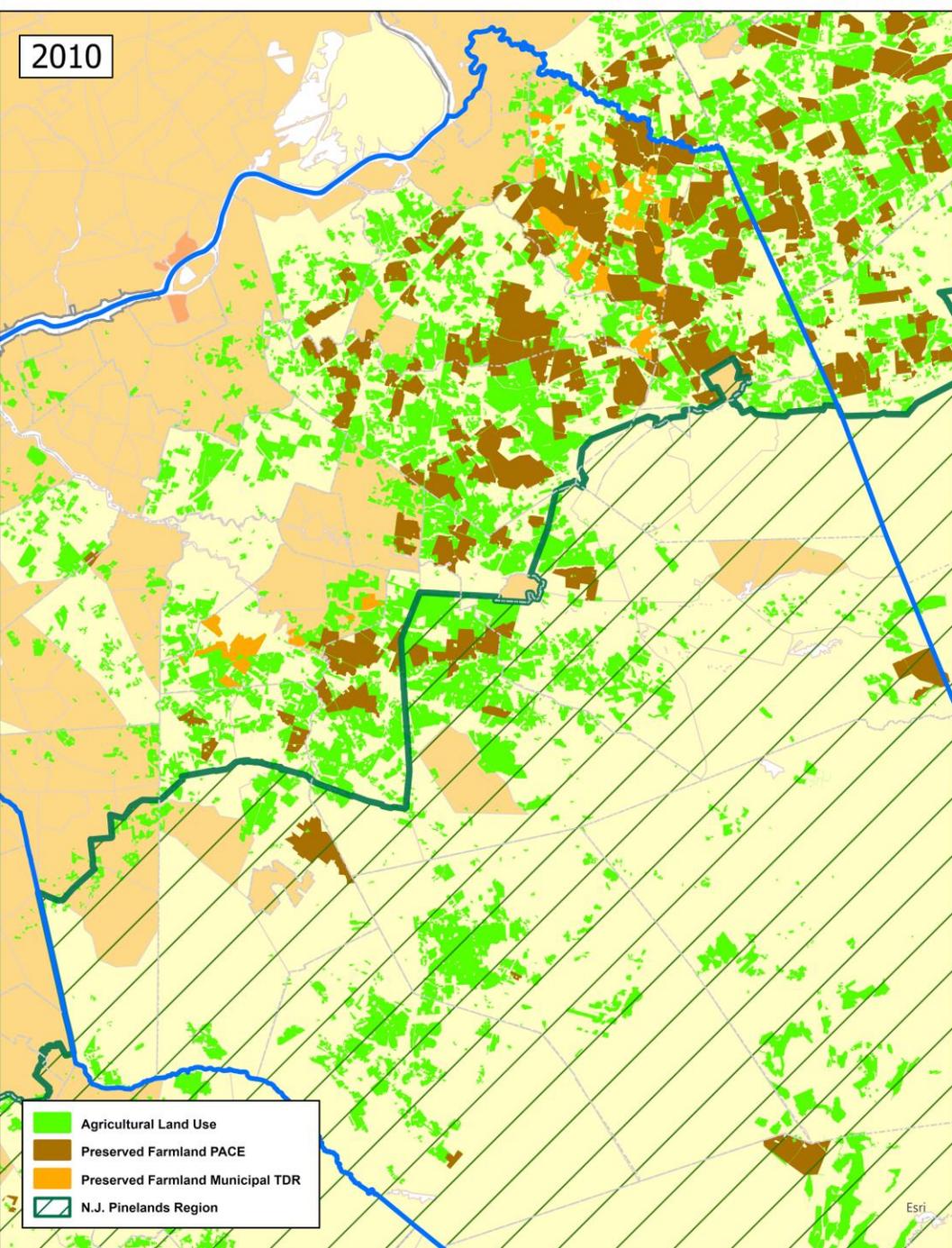
Chesterfield TDR program starts preserving farmland

2003 BurlCo sets up county TDR Bank to support Chesterfield TDR program

2004 1st TDR Bank auction held

2004 County buys a strategic farm to establish a County Farmers Market to support ag. viability

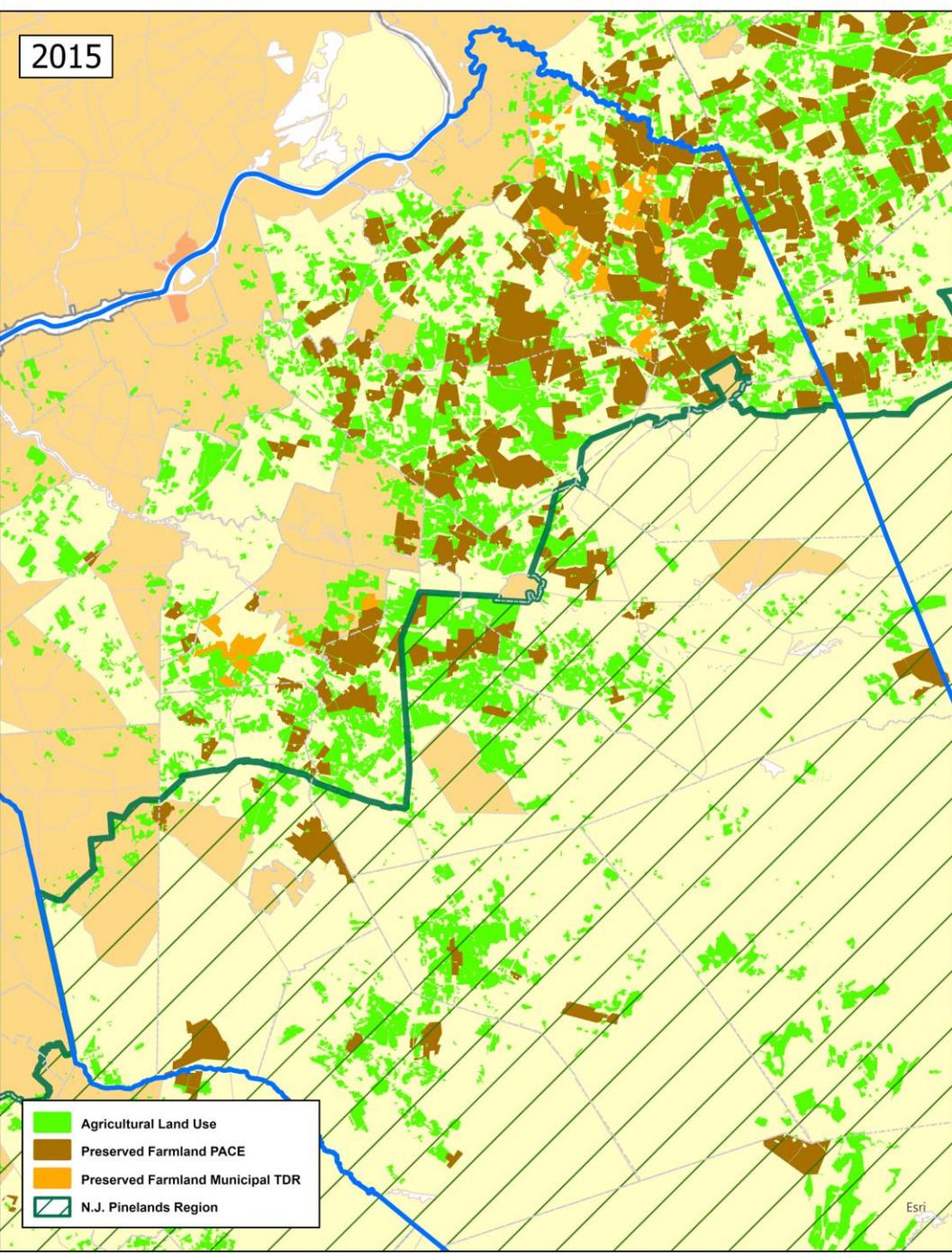
2004 Statewide TDR Enabling Legislation passed



2005-2010

2006 BurlCo voters approve extending sunset of county open space tax from 2018 to 2036

2007 2nd TDR Bank auction held for Chesterfield



2010-2015

2014 State referendum approved – ***permanent*** funding source for farmland and open space preservation (~\$250M/yr)

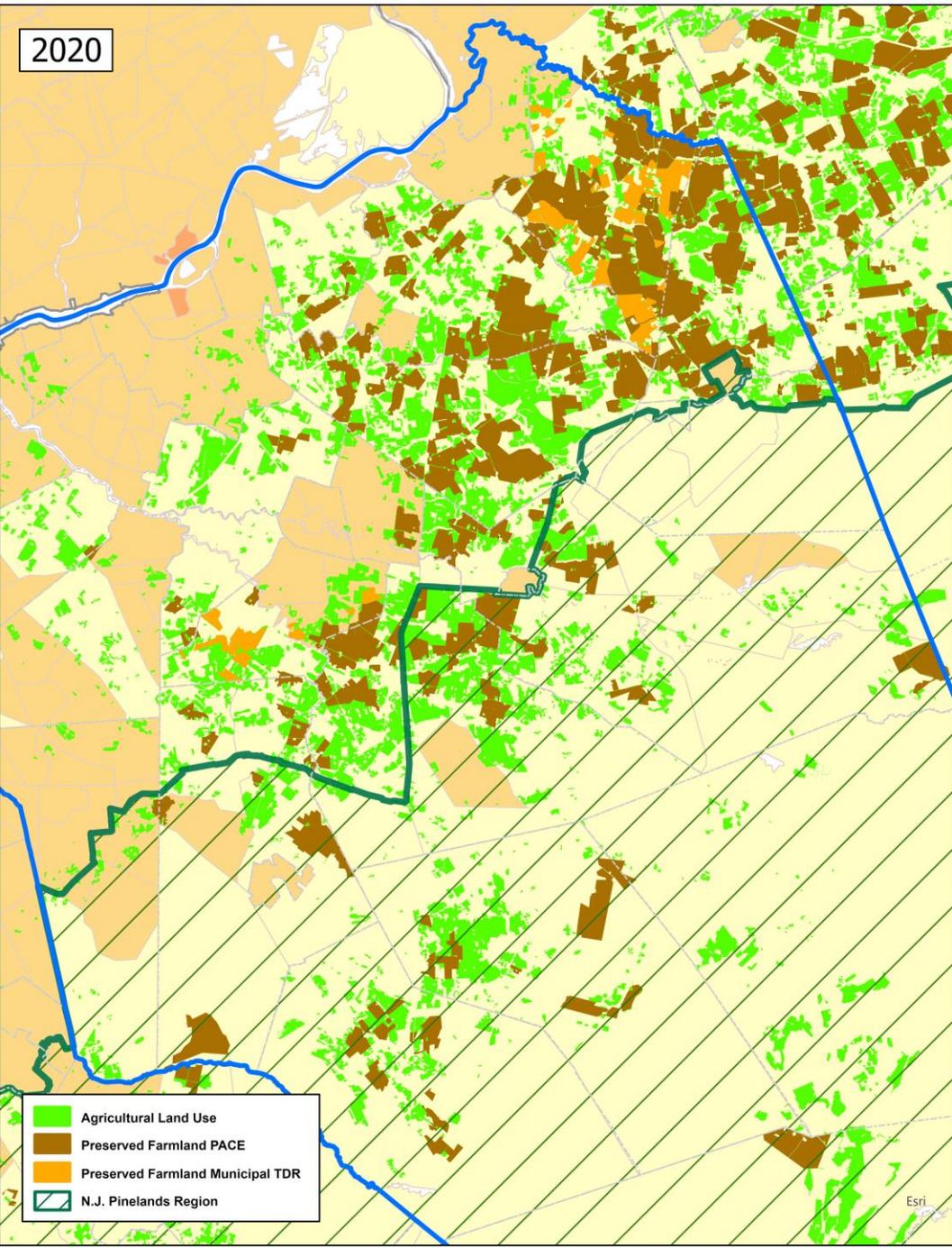
2020

2015-2020

Chesterfield TDR - preservation of sending area and buildout of receiving area

TDR and PACE programs both functioning in Chesterfield

Burlco accelerates PACE for Pinelands Region farms



2025

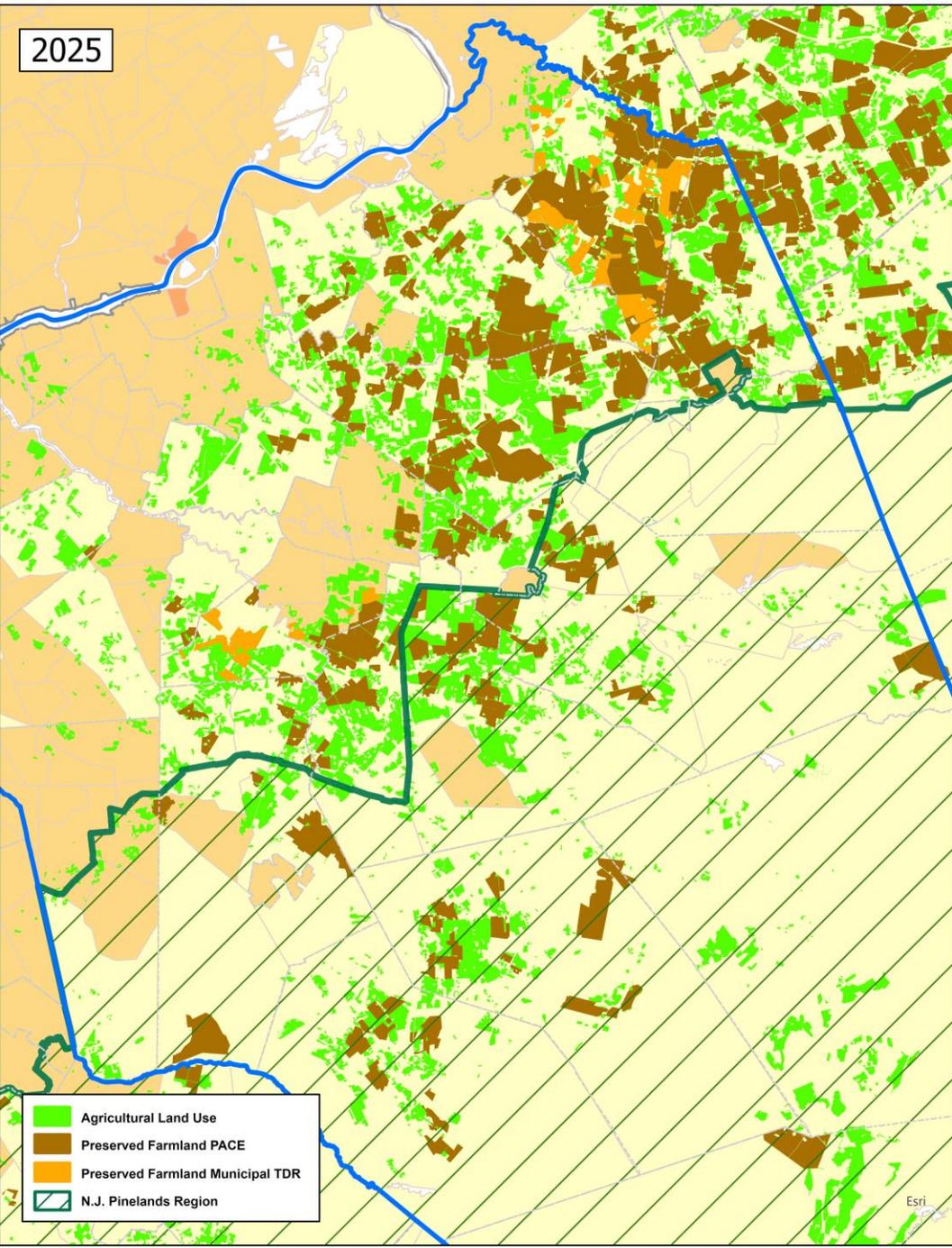
2020-2025

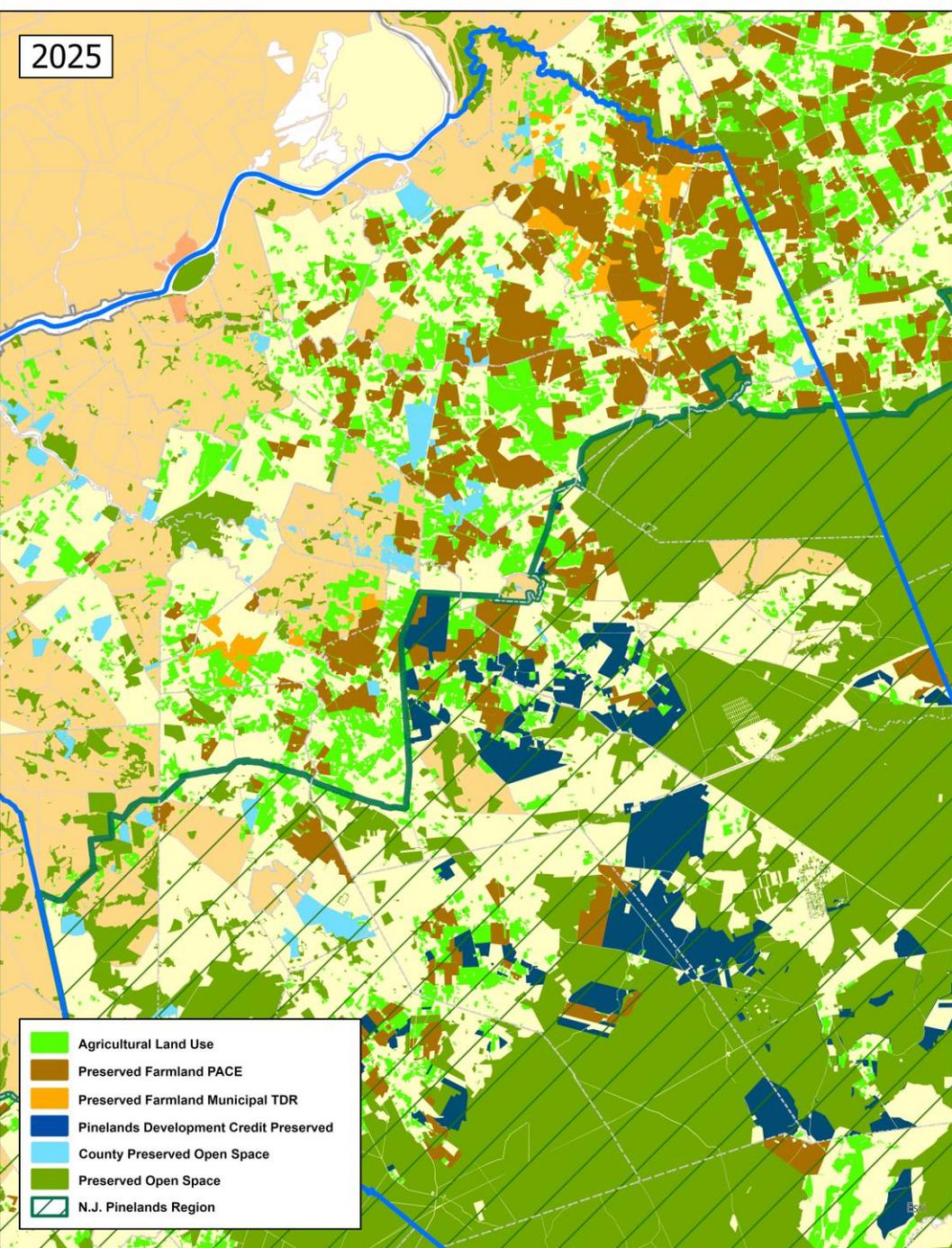
Farmland protection achievement:

52,000 acres of farmland in the ADA

30,500 acres via PACE program
+ 3,735 acres via TDR program
= 34,235 acres permanently preserved!

65% of the ADA





The Full Picture

Farmland Protection thru PACE

Municipal TDR programs

Pinelands TDR program

County parks and open space

State and local parks & open space

Achieving Farmland Protection at Scale

Lessons Learned

- Obstacles? Innovate, innovate, and then innovate some more
- Power of the pilot project
- Foundation of land protection is public support – both programmatically and financially

“Conservation without money is just conversation”

- But, leaders must lead!
- Foundation of farmland protection is farmer support – need local agricultural leaders to be all-in





American Farmland Trust
SAVING THE LAND THAT SUSTAINS US



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