

**WAYNE COUNTY
AGRICULTURAL AND FARMLAND PROTECTION PLAN**

**2009 Draft prepared by:
Wayne County Agricultural Development Board**

Public Hearing January 12, 2010 1:15 PM Cornell Cooperative Extension

**Original Plan developed by: NUTTER Associates
With Trowbridge & Wolf; Dehm Associates; Jay Kerig**

WAYNE COUNTY AGRICULTURAL AND FARMLAND PROTECTION PLAN

DRAFT

I. BACKGROUND

The Wayne County Board of Supervisors adopted the original Agricultural and Farmland Plan in 1997 and authorized its update in 2008. The Wayne County Agricultural Development Board prepared this updated Plan to document the status of agriculture and farmland in Wayne County and to provide recommendations for the preservation of both farming and farmland in the county.

Wayne County has a long history of successful agriculture and almost all land in the county is classified as prime and/or unique farmland. Especially important are the unique fruit-growing conditions along Lake Ontario which have made Wayne County first in New York for apples, with fully one-third of the state's total apple production and acreage. Other important products include cherries and other tree fruit, onions and potatoes produced on the county's highly productive mucklands, dairy products, grain and vegetables. The county's rich agricultural production has brought many food processors and wholesalers to Wayne County. Employment in these facilities has seen a modest decline over time. The WCIDA records indicate there were approximately 967 food manufacturing employees in 1995. According to the Census Bureau there were approximately 955 food manufacturing jobs (NAISC 311) in 2007. While some processors have closed processing facilities, others have expanded over this time period. The number of farms in New York State as a whole has continued to decline, during the recent decade, however Wayne County farm numbers have held steady and even increased slightly. In 1992, Wayne County had 919 farms on 174,000 acres. According to the 2007 Census of Agriculture, Wayne County had 938 farms on 168,000 acres, or 45 percent of the county's land area. Reflecting trends all over the US, the farms "in the middle" are either getting bigger or going out of business. Family-scale farms that support a single family are under increasing stress for two reasons: today's economic conditions favor larger more specialized farms, and the county has become increasingly popular as a residential suburb for metropolitan Rochester. The increase in farm numbers is largely due to small farms. These often part-time operations have been responding to the recent enthusiasm for buying locally grown farm products directly from the producer.

Agricultural specialization is a global phenomenon which is putting the small family farm under increasing economic pressure. Between 1982 and 1992, the County lost twenty-five percent of its farms and 10 percent of its farmland (17,500 acres) between 1987 and 1992. More recently, in the years 2002 to 2007 Wayne County lost 3 percent of its farmland (6,000 acres) as the number of farms in the County grew by about 3 percent. While there have been a number of consolidations, Wayne County farms are still relatively small, averaging 180 acres in 2007, a decrease of about 3-acres per farm from 2002. Larger farms are relatively difficult to create in the County due to high land prices, existing development patterns, and numerous drumlins, which make large tillable parcels difficult to assemble.

Farms in Wayne County are still primarily family owned (87 percent in 2007). According to a 1994 WCAFPB survey, a majority of farmers indicated that the next generation of their family will probably not be farming (62 percent,) and drew the conclusion that "If these intentions hold, in 20 years or less the County will have fewer than 400 farms and an estimated 100,000 acres of farmland, a loss of almost half the acreage and more than half the farms now in production." Happily, this prediction turned out to be excessively pessimistic. Clearly the relatively moderate level of development pressure, the ability to encourage another generation of farmers as well as the agricultural economic development programs and municipal planning documents have helped to stem the tide for now.

At the same time as farms are going out of business, there is increasing pressure for suburbanization in Wayne County, especially in the western towns closest to Monroe County. There are a few relatively large subdivisions under development in the County, but the

WAYNE COUNTY AGRICULTURAL AND FARMLAND PROTECTION PLAN

DRAFT

predominant style of residential development in Wayne County is linear, consisting of half to two-acre lots fronting on established roadways. The county's road network forms a grid of large blocks, one to four miles square. In the western parts of the county where water lines are in place, these roads are typically lined with residential development. The interior of the blocks remain in active farmland, but the close juxtaposition of farms and suburban houses causes lifestyle conflicts and constricts the contiguous land available for agriculture. It is also an inefficient use of infrastructure, since creation of new land for development requires waterline extension along yet another roadway.

Availability of water (and sewer) infrastructure creates a market for residential development and raises land values. In those areas of eastern Wayne County without municipal piped water supply, land sold for \$4,000 - \$7,000 per acre in 2008. In the western parts of the county, where municipal water is generally available, land was selling for four times that, or \$15,000 - \$25,000 per acre. High land values are an advantage for those farmers who wish to sell their land, but make it difficult to effectively preserve agriculture in the area.

While the problems of agriculture and farmland protection do not lend themselves to simple solutions, there are many courses of action which can help farmers to stay in business and to preserve land for agricultural use. In developing the original version of this plan, over 50 projects were investigated for possible implementation in Wayne County, including both projects to advance agricultural economics and projects to protect farmland. Agricultural economic projects in the 1996 Plan included marketing, farm labor issues, farm finance, promoting new and expanded agricultural businesses, agritourism and agricultural education, new farmer support, land use regulation and purchasing easements. In revising the plan, the Agricultural Development Board is considering many new ideas and is seeking input at a public hearing on January 12, 2010.

While it would be an exaggeration to claim that the 1996 Wayne County Plan is solely responsible for arresting the decline in farm numbers, the planning process resulted in improvement in coordination among county agencies like the Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD), Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE), Wayne Economic Development Corp. (WEDC), Tourism and Planning (WCPlan). This contributed to improving the overall climate for farming in the County which resulted in significant progress with several of the top priority projects in the plan:

1. The county hired a full-time agricultural development specialist .
2. Purchase of Development Rights easements have preserved 3,400 acres utilizing State and Federal grants totaling \$6,606,000. Towns were awarded approximately \$1, 800,000 in State farmland protection awards in 2009 for 765 acres.
3. A video on farming in Wayne County was produced
4. Almost universally, as local Comprehensive plans are updated, the Towns identify agriculture and farming as being an important sector. The comprehensive plans are the basis for any changes in town zoning ordinances.
5. Training and support for town planning and zoning boards with emphasis on planning for agriculture
6. Coordination of agri-tourism among farms and with the County Tourism has increased
7. cooperation among farm markets has helped the markets reach out to a broader constituency
8. Work with NY FarmNet and NY FarmLink programs to assist local farms
9. new farmer program – Exploring the Small Farm Dream; advanced business plan courses
10. The Cornell Cooperative Extension created Spanish language resources available to farmers and farm workers and offers Spanish language training

11. Micro-loan program for county farm businesses – has made loans and provided technical training to farmers to enable them to manage their businesses more effectively.
12. The Ag Development Board, Cooperative Extension and Farm Bureau have hosted annual Farm tours for policy makers

II. VISION AND GOALS

The vision and goals of the Wayne County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan have provided a strong framework for the implementation of this plan. The Ag Development Board's vision is:

To promote a strong, economically viable and environmentally sound agriculture in Wayne County and preserve it for future generations.

The vision is further defined through a series of goals. Goals for the Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan are:

1. The preservation of farms and farmland in Wayne County.
2. An increase in the support for agriculture and the understanding of the needs and realities of farming among the people of the county.
3. An increase in Wayne County farm produce consumed in the upstate region of New York and in the northeast as a whole, through the purchase of Wayne County produce by local stores and institutions, and more value-added processing and other enterprises based on county agriculture.
4. The establishment of a new system of local taxation which encourages agriculture.

WAYNE COUNTY AGRICULTURAL AND FARMLAND PROTECTION PLAN
DRAFT

III. OPPORTUNITIES AND CONSTRAINTS

The following updated table of opportunities and constraints of agricultural and farmland protection originated in the 1996 Plan and highlights those issues which either encourage or detract from the county's ability to fully protect and preserve its agriculture and farmland.

ISSUE AREA	OPPORTUNITIES	CONSTRAINTS
Metropolitan Location	Significant metropolitan market opportunities for agricultural products.	Pressures for suburban development of agricultural land
Agricultural History	Long county tradition of successful agriculture, including production, processing, and marketing.	---
Quality of Farmland and Soils	County farmland is of exceptional quality, including extensive areas of unique farmland along Lake Ontario suited to fruit orchard production; significant acreage of valuable mucklands used for potatoes and onions; very high percentage of prime farmland, used primarily for field crops.	The western towns, location of the highest concentration of prime farmlands, are under significant suburban development pressure. Unique orchard land along Lake under rapidly growing pressure for residential development. Mucklands in southeast under pressure for conversion to wildlife refuge expansion and/or hunting preserve.
Specialization Trends in Agriculture	Finding marketing niches and getting closer to the consumer.	Economic pressure caused by increasing cost of expenses and fluctuating product prices for income
Agricultural Commodities	Apple production (largest county crop) increasing with particular opportunities in fresh market varieties; fresh vegetable, nursery and greenhouse, organic and specialty produce markets increasing. New computer and biotechnology available to decrease costs, increase yields and conserve resources.	Decreasing production in cherries, pears, prune/plums; declining profits for smaller dairy herds; increasing competition from large mid-west growers, particularly for field crops; vegetable production generally decreasing; new technologies often too expensive for small growers.
Processing	Significant presence in county provides local market for county produce. Potential for additional producer cooperatives can increase farmer profitability.	Decreasing prices paid by processors for agricultural products. Local processing industry in general losing market share and experiencing increasing competition.

WAYNE COUNTY AGRICULTURAL AND FARMLAND PROTECTION PLAN
DRAFT

ISSUE AREA	OPPORTUNITIES	CONSTRAINTS
Marketing	Processors continue to require large volumes of fruit and vegetables; major local supermarket chains are increasing demand for local produce; county farmers are increasing participation in local and regional public markets; farmstands and farmers markets enjoy wide community support.	Prices set by processors are half of fresh market prices; high volume terminal markets are a considerable distance from the county; supermarket selling logistics are problematic, including direct delivery, pricing and liability.
Land Values	Rising land values in suburbanizing western areas of the county and along the lakefront increase personal net worth of farmer landowners.	Increasing land prices in suburban and lake front areas tend to put land out of agricultural production. Loss of unique fruit-growing and other prime agricultural land is particularly serious.
Land Use Planning and Zoning	All 15 towns and 9 villages have a written comprehensive plan (need to check); 14 towns and all villages have zoning or land use law in place. Cluster or planned unit development provisions, which can help to protect farmland by creating larger contiguous open space, in place in 6 towns.	The County Comprehensive Plan and many municipal plans and zoning ordinances are over 20 years old and outdated; Current zoning ordinances discourage compatible economic uses on farms; ordinances typically permit single family lots in all agricultural districts and thus offer little protection for farmland. Nine towns (need to check) have no cluster or PUD provisions.
Agricultural Districts	Almost all county farmland is in Ag Districts, thus enjoying some protections and water/sewer tax benefits. In 2008 the County consolidated all nine Ag Districts into one District, the next review will be in 2016.	Ag District controls/benefits not sufficient to prevent substantial conversion of farmland to suburban use.

WAYNE COUNTY AGRICULTURAL AND FARMLAND PROTECTION PLAN
DRAFT

ISSUE AREA	OPPORTUNITIES	CONSTRAINTS
Water & Sewer Service	Water service provided in 75-100% land in western towns of Ontario, Walworth, Macedon, and Williamson; 25-35% (need to check) land in mid-county towns of Marion, Palmyra and Sodus. Sewer service typically provided in or close to villages.	Availability of water and sewer raises the value of land for suburban use. No overall county plan exists to determine extent of future water or sewer service.
Development Pattern: Active Farmland vs. Residential Use	Much of the county's unique and prime farmland is actively farmed. Very little development pressure in central or eastern towns (except in lakefront areas).	In the three westernmost towns, most established roads (1-4 mi. grid) lined with residential lots, altering the rural character of the landscape and creating conflicts with farm use. Lakefront orchard land under pressure for residential conversion. Farmland in the southeast being taken out of production for private hunting grounds or off the tax rolls for inclusion in wildlife refuge.
Food Pantries/Institutions	FoodLink in Rochester attracts significant donations and coordinates delivery.	Many food pantries have limited ability to store or stabilize produce. Institutions deal primarily with large suppliers.
Educational Programs	Ag in the Classroom program for grades 1-6, coordinated by Cornell University, used by 5 (need to check) of the 11 local school districts .	Ag in the Classroom program not part of mandated NYS curriculum; 6 districts do not participate. Only 3 districts have agricultural programs at high school level.
Agritourism	Extraordinary beauty of local rural scenery. Many small local farm markets, u-pick operations, organic farms, festivals, farm tours, B&B's, etc.	Little coordination or common marketing among county agritourism attractions.

IV. IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

The vision and goals of the plan are wide ranging and it is recognized that realizing them will require myriad actions on the part of many people and groups. The strategy of this plan will be to implement a number of projects, both large and small, which can continue to improve the economic life of farmers and preserve farmland in the county.

From the grower survey, Agricultural Development Board developed a list for review and comment at the Public Hearing. Following the public hearing, the Board will collect and tabulate the input and develop a list of priorities for implementation under the updated plan.

Main concerns expressed by farmers in 2009 AG AND FARMLAND PROTECTION SURVEY:

- Profitability – pricing, taxes
- Farmer health and farm succession
- Land Protection
- Relations with neighbors – pesticides, manure smells, trespassing damage
- Labor supply
- Regulations
- Chemicals- drift, regulations
- Farm vehicles and road safety

The Ag Development Board is asking participants to rate the following concepts from 1 to 3 as follows:

- 1) TOP PRIORITIES
- 2) SECONDARY LONG TERM
- 3) NOT AT THIS TIME

If you are unable to attend the public hearing, please consider emailing (orothfuss@co.wayne.ny.us) or faxing (315-946-7657) the table below with your responses.

Please mark Column A for each item- (1) top priority; (2) secondary or long term goal; (3) not at this time	
Column A	Column B
Education and Outreach	
	Provide timely information about program opportunities and deadlines
	Support and encourage farmers to be involved in local government and community organizations.
	Work with towns to ensure that fees and local laws are reasonable for farm businesses.
	Support for the Amish communities
	Produce a series of articles, TV and radio interviews, talks for county organizations such as church groups, Rotary, Lyons, etc. on Farmer-neighbor relations.
	Resource Booklet-Sponsor the preparation of a booklet of information on resources available to Wayne County farmers.
	Handout for Realtors on farmer-neighbor relations
Financial Assistance	
	Grant programs to assist new ventures.
	Improve Drainage infrastructure- cost share of drainage tile and programs to ensure an adequate level of drainage ditch maintenance.
	Program to assist with removal of trees from abandoned orchards and to assist in tree replacement in underperforming orchards
	Support for Agritourism ventures through programming, loans and grants
	Support for alternative energy projects- technical assistance, loans, grants
	Support for below-market rate loan program by Industrial Development Agency, including applying for more money as needed.
Policy	
	Continue strong support for Ag Districts.
	Increase the amount of local farm products consumed within the county
	Support for lowering governmental regulations.
	Support for lowering real property tax burden
	Support State and Federal legislative initiatives to ensure an adequate labor supply for farm businesses.
	Support initiatives to stabilize and improve the farm infrastructure
	Support for County and Town right to farm laws and local ag and farmland protection plans as well as including agriculture in county and local planning documents. Identify the best land to protect in any farmland protection project.
	Support projects that will improve water quality for bodies of water located in the region.
	Support efforts to increase diversity of job types so that harvest laborers can find year round employment
Technical Assistance	
	Assist in development and implementation of nutrient management plans
	Support a Beginning farmer initiative and offer technical assistance and financial support
	Support initiatives to improve Landowner relations through information and programming
	Continue offering Pest management training and certification programs including pesticide training.

WAYNE COUNTY AGRICULTURAL AND FARMLAND PROTECTION PLAN

	Support for cooperative ventures
	Support business plan development and implementation for agritourism
	Support initiatives to increase the availability and capacity of alternative energy facilities in the County
	Support initiatives that will help farm business owners control or reduce operating expenses or increase profit margins.
	Woodlot management programs
	Support environmentally sound projects like nutrient planning, composting, manure storage, minimum tillage, methane digesters or other technology
	Use of retired experts and volunteers
	Work with the local SCORE office to support Wayne County farms
	Support for Nutrient management planning and implementation
	Continue CCE production education and outreach
	SWCD drainage programs
	Support efforts to increase congressional support for USDA NRCS/FSA
Marketing	
	Buy Fresh/Buy Local – increased campaign
	Support for development of an agritourism organization.
	Support efforts to develop an Agricultural museum
	Technical assistance, loans and grants for increasing marketing opportunities and abilities of farmers.
	Support for value-added enterprises including farmers markets and produce auction
Increase availability of ag-support businesses	
	Support initiatives to increase the availability and capacity of food processing plants in the County
	fertilizer and spray services
	supply of farm labor housing
	supply of tire dealers and crop consultants
	veterinarian services
	Value-added enterprises for meat- slaughterhouse
Support land use planning that is beneficial to farm business	
	Support the use of Purchase of Development Rights as a business planning and municipal planning tool.
	Support town efforts to develop a TDR program which would allow for preservation of viable farmland by sending (sending district) the development rights of the designated farmland to another area. The area receiving (receiving district) the development rights may then be permitted to utilize increased building densities.
	Support town efforts to develop Incentive Zoning, which allows for adjustments to the permissible population density, area, height, open space, use, or other provisions of a zoning ordinance or local law for a specific purpose authorized by the town board.
	Assist town efforts to adopt and implement proposed model zoning provisions which permit farmers to have secondary businesses on farms and provide regulation for agricultural support businesses

Ora Rothfuss III, Ag Development Specialist
Wayne County Planning
9 Pearl Street, Lyons, NY 14489
(315) 946-5919 phone (315) 946-7657 fax
orothfuss@co.wayne.ny.us