

BRINGING LAND INTO PRODUCTION

Farmland, Food & Livable Communities Conference



Kip Kolesinskas, AFT

Ben Leffew, Shaker Village of Pleasant Hill, KY

Wayne Woodard, Sunny Valley Preserve, TNC-CT

October 20, 2014

What are the issues and opportunities ?

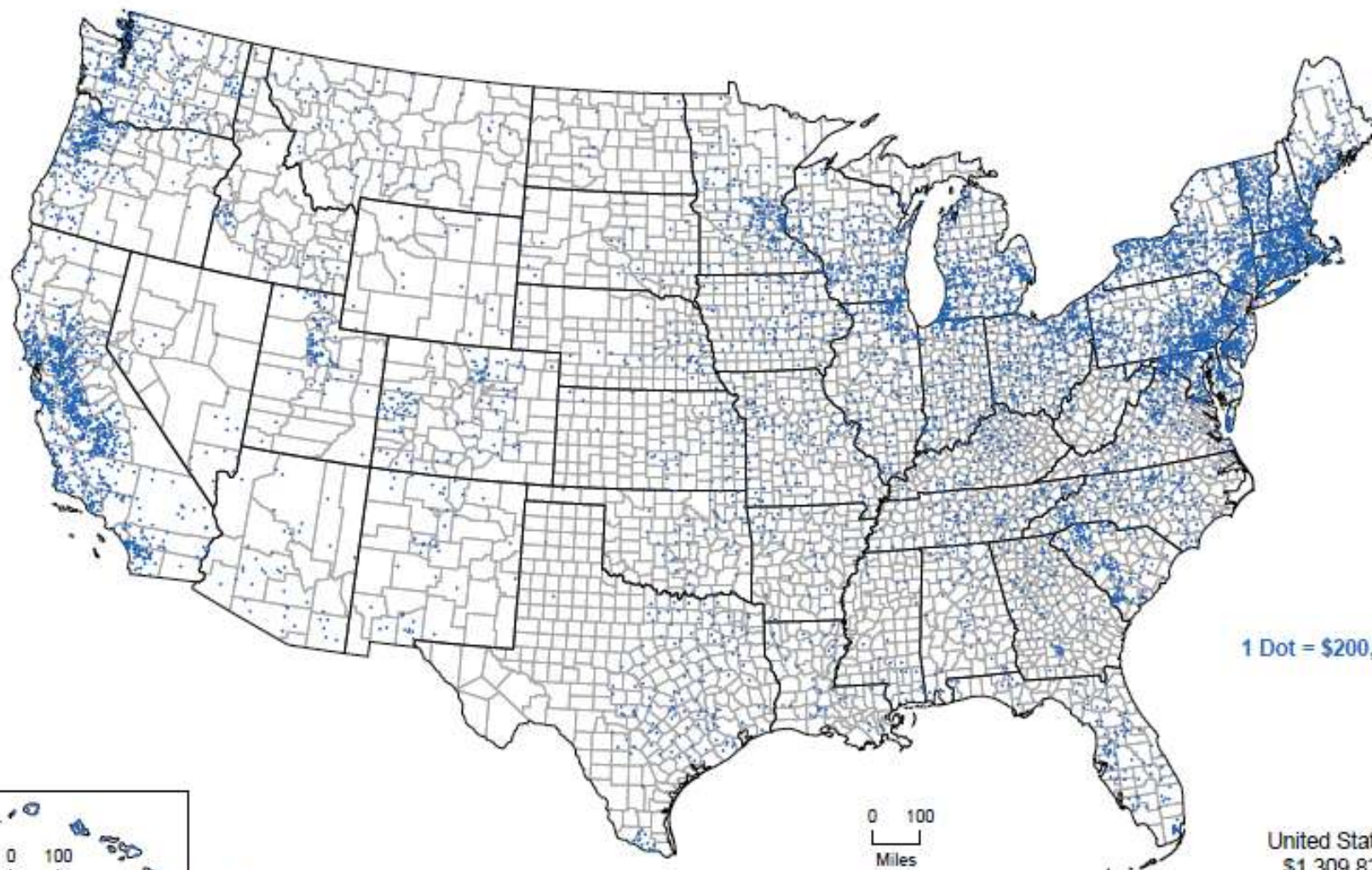
- Suitability of land and infrastructure
- Costs of bringing into production
- Compatibility with surrounding land uses
- Farm friendliness of community, local laws and regs
- Desires and motivation of landowner
- Restrictions of deed, laws and regs
- Compliance with Farm Bill provisions
- Opportunity for farmer to assist with stewardship
- Opportunity to expand and/or diversify
- Opportunity to be closer to the market
- Increased access to less costly land to lease or own
- Opportunity to manage land for multiple objectives

Where are there lands to bring into production?

- Non farming private landowner lands
- Federal, State, Municipal lands
- Land trusts, schools, churches, and other non-profits lands
- Utility owned lands
- Large lot residential
- Vacant urban lands
- Mined and brownfields lands
- Forested, shrub lands, grasslands, abandoned ag lands



Value of Agricultural Products Sold Directly to Individuals for Human Consumption: 2012



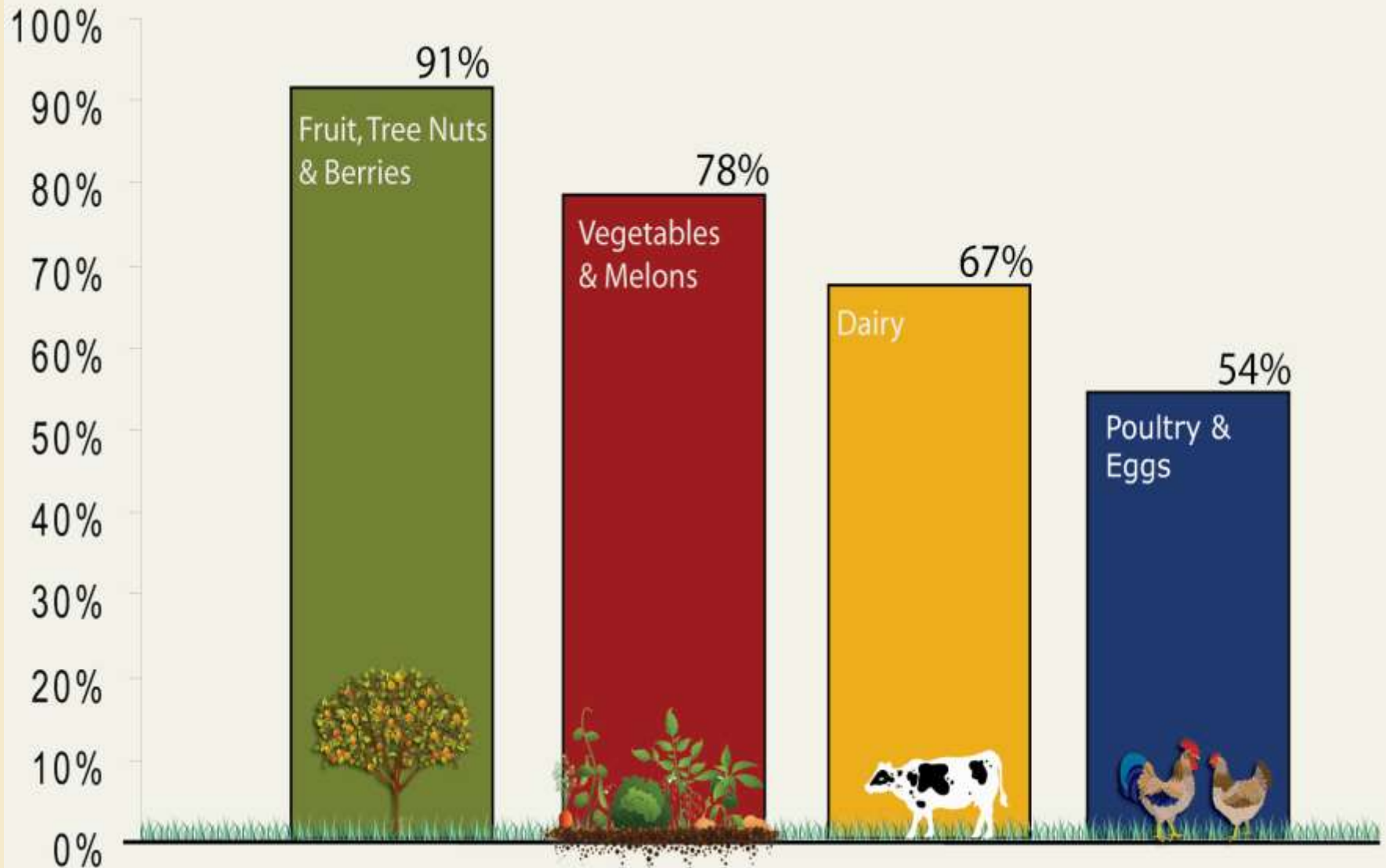
1 Dot = \$200,000

United States Total
\$1,309,827,000



12-M037
U.S. Department of Agriculture, National Agricultural Statistics Service

Our Food Is in the Path of Development



Sauvie Island Organics, Portland, Oregon



- 15 miles from Portland
- 21 yrs of Organic fruit and vegetable production
- Rent 13 acres from Portland Metro Council, 18 acres total
- Produce 400 CSA shares, sell to 25 restaurants
- www.sauviesislandorganics.com

Southbury Training School Agricultural Reserve Project, CT

Southbury Training School Southbury & Roxbury, Connecticut 921 +/- Acres



Legend

- Southbury/Roxbury Town Line
- Southbury/Roxbury Parcels
- 10' Contours
- Southbury Training School Property

Farmland Soils

- Prime Farmland Soils
- Statewide Important Farmland Soils
- Locally Important
- Not Prime

1 inch = 500 feet

- Excluded Farmstead Area #3 - 1.57 acres
- Excluded Farmstead Area #2 - 20.02 acres
- Excluded Farmstead Area #1 - 2.49 acres

New Entry Sustainable Farming Project



The Environment

- High development pressure in Eastern Massachusetts.
- MA has lost over 100,000 acres of farmland since 1982.
- MA farmland is among the most expensive in the nation, with prices upward of \$12,000 per acre.

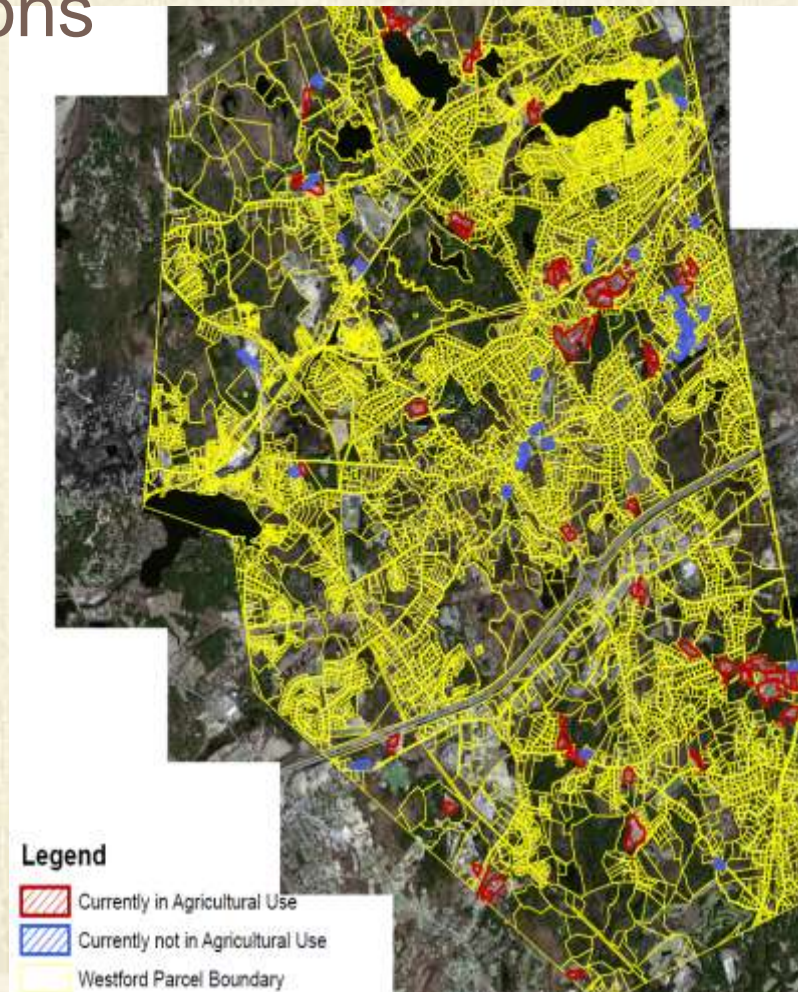
Accessible
farmland remains
a formidable
barrier to young
and beginning
farmers in the
region.

New Entry Sustainable Farming Project



Community Farmland Connections (GIS Mapping Projects)

- Uses spatial analysis to identify unused viable farmland and encourage landowners to lease their land to a farmer.
- Combines soil data, land use cover, local assessor's data, and wetlands boundaries, parcels are identified that would be best suited for agricultural use.

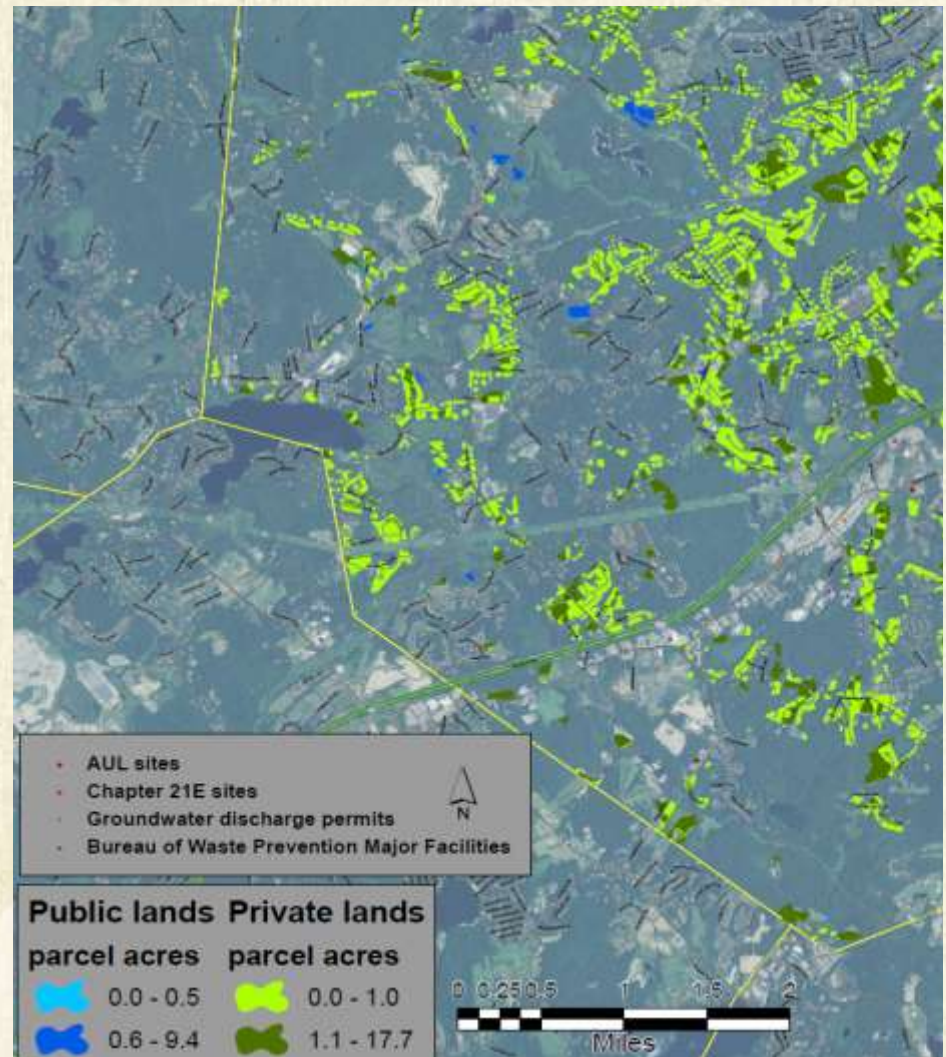


New Entry Sustainable Farming Project



Process

- 1) Present the project at an agricultural commission meeting.
- 2) Identify properties in town with prime soils of 2 acres or more that are not currently used for agriculture.
- 3) The ag commission reviews the map and accompanying data.
- 4) The agricultural commission strategizes about outreach.
- 5) Prepare outreach materials and organize a landowner forum.



New Entry Sustainable Farming Project



Lessons Learned

- 1) **Let the process be community lead.** Communities themselves often have the best ideas to offer that will make a process like this successful for their area.
- 2) **Some communities can be insular.** Some take offense to outside groups getting involved in issues they see as town-specific. Don't push your involvement with these communities. It's their choice.
- 3) **Communicate about publicly available data.** Sometimes landowners are taken aback by the amount of data that is available to the public about their land resources. Make sure to let people know early on that all of this information is public and can be accessed easily through state and federal websites.

New Entry Sustainable Farming Project



Contact Info

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For a free digital copy of New Entry's Guide to GIS Mapping Projects:





<https://nesfp.org/resources/GIS-mapping-guide>

Farmland Restoration

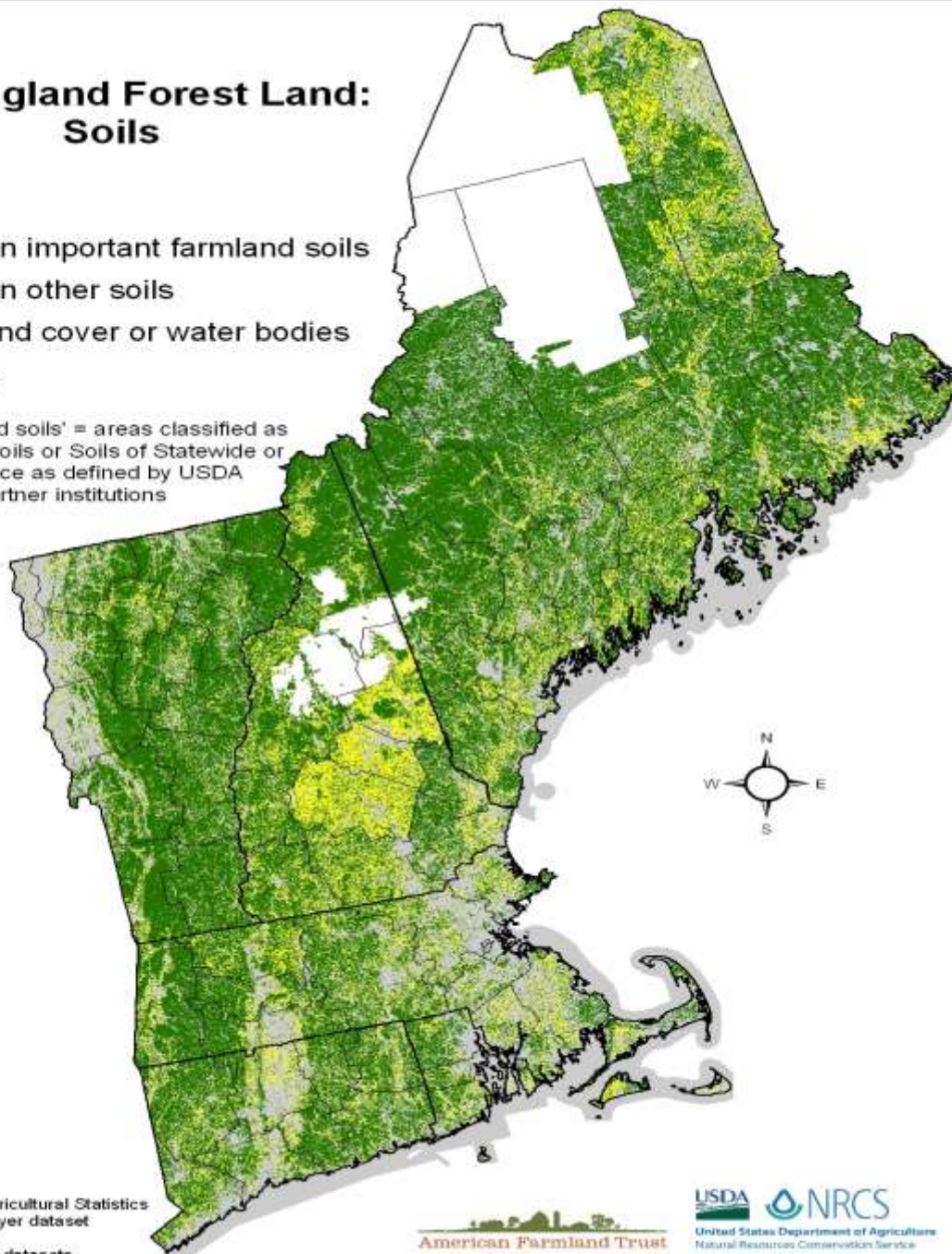
- **What are the driving forces for restoration?**
 - Competition for farmland
 - New and beginning farmers
 - Diversification of agriculture
- **What are the potential consequences?**
 - Fragmentation and loss of habitat
 - Impacts to soil and water resources
 - Increase in available land base for farming
 - Increases in habitat and habitat management
- **What and where are the opportunities?**
 - Non cropland land cover
 - Enhancements to existing fields
 - Improvements that increase productivity and viability



New England Forest Land: Soils

-  Forest on important farmland soils
-  Forest on other soils
-  Other land cover or water bodies
-  No Data

'Important farmland soils' = areas classified as Prime Farmland Soils or Soils of Statewide or Local Importance as defined by USDA and partner institutions



Sources:
-2012 USDA National Agricultural Statistics
Service Cropland Data Layer dataset
(NASS-CDL)
-USDA-NRCS SSURGO datasets

Where are soils suitable for restoration?

New England has 2.13 million acres of “prime farmland”

- 1.30 million (61%) is under forest
- .73 million (34%) is in cropland or pasture

Prime farmland, by state:

- CT: 284,100 acres (44% in cropland/pasture)
- MA: 259,000 acres (50%)
- ME: 1,083,300 acres (20%)
- NH: 137,200 acres (32%)
- RI: 54,100 acres (48%)
- VT: 317,200 acres (59%)

Source: USDA NRI 2007, Table 10

Connecticut Farmland Restoration Program

Public Act 11-1

- **Priority of applications for human food production**
- **Up to \$20,000 match per farm**
- **Allocated \$5 million in Bond funds**
- **Requires a Farmland Restoration Plan**
- **One year to complete practices**

TYPES OF RESTORATION ACTIVITIES FUNDED:

- **Removal of invasive species to restore fields**
- **Clearing and removal of trees, stumps, stones**
- **Fencing systems in restored areas for pasture management**
- **Wildlife management fencing to protect crop land**
- **Restore water runoff and drainage patterns**
- **Renovate irrigation ponds, install irrigation wells for restored areas**
- **Replant vegetation on erosion prone areas and riparian areas**
- **Restore shellfish beds or aquaculture ponds**
- **Enhance farm roads which service restoration areas**


Connecticut Farmland Restoration Program

Public Act 11-1

BENEFITS:

- Reestablishes use of prime and important soils for ag
- Increases farmland base
- Enhances lands that are underutilized
- Grows farm businesses through increased production
- Builds land base for new and beginning farmers
- Helps with adaptation to climate change
- Increased development and use of conservation plans

Restoration



112 applications
average grant: 12.5 acres/project
\$2,500/acre grant average
1,200 acres restored to date

\$1.5 million allocated to specific projects,
includes farmland on State, Municipal, and
land trust lands.

www.ct.gov.doag for more information

With restoration we don't want this again!

Hugh H. Bennett, Chief, Soil Conservation Service and
Dr. Jones observing severe sheet erosion in Connecticut.
1938



Restoration



But we do want this.... Invasives cleared, stones removed, organic matter building sudan grass planted prior to planting perennial grasses and fruit crops.



Saving the Land that Sustains Us



American Farmland Trust

www.farmland.org