

VOTERS INVEST IN ALTERNATIVES TO SPRAWL

In November's elections, voters approved ballot measures funding \$746 million worth of state and local measures that include farm and ranch land protection. American Farmland Trust (AFT) tracked 60 measures—seven at the state and 53 at the local level. Of 47 incentive-based initiatives, 42—or 89 percent—passed. But organized opposition is growing, defeating high profile smart growth measures in Arizona and Colorado and weakening Oregon's powerful land use authority. Commenting on a study she is conducting for the Brookings Institution Center on Urban and Metropolitan Policy, Phyllis Myers concludes, "Open space measures remain popular but regulatory restrictions were controversial and contentious."

Voters rejected two statewide resource management amendments. Arizona's Proposition 100 would have designated 70,000 acres of state trust land for permanent conservation and extended agricultural and grazing leases. Maine's Forest Protection Act would have required landowners to obtain a permit to clear-cut forest land based on an ecological impact analysis and set strict cutting levels for lands subject to the state's Tree Growth Tax law. Where the Arizona vote was close, Maine's Question 2 was trounced for the third time in four years. According to Myers, founder of State Resource Strategies, neither measure was supported by much of the environmental community.

States favor incentives

Rhode Island voters approved a \$34 million bond to acquire open space, groundwater protection and public recreational facilities. The \$5 million specifically earmarked for purchasing development rights on farmland adds to the \$15 million the state has spent since 1981. Ohio voters approved State Issue 1, amending the state constitution to authorize a \$400 million bond—\$200 million for farmland and greenspace and the rest for brownfield redevelopment. *continued on page 6*

INNOVATIONS

FOSTERING NEW FARMERS

Some say there are two ways to get a farm: the altar or the grave. Farm link programs provide another route. Farm advocates from at least 18 states have developed linking programs to connect retiring farmers and other landowners with farmers hoping to work into farm ownership. According to John Baker, administrator of Iowa State University Extension's Beginning Farmer Center, "Farm link programs re-create a career ladder that used to exist in agriculture."

A century ago, about one in fifteen people were identified as farmers, so most people had a direct farm connection. But as the number of farms continues to shrink there are fewer opportunities for young people to enter the business. *continued on page 2*

LANDWORKS

Volume III, Issue 4
November, 2000

In This Issue:

1 VOTERS INVEST IN ALTERNATIVES TO SPRAWL

1 INNOVATIONS:
Fostering New Farmers

3 USING RESOURCES WISELY:
Forestry on the edge: Conserving
Forestland in the South

5 POLICY REPORT:
USDA Looking at Urban-Influenced
Agriculture

Connection

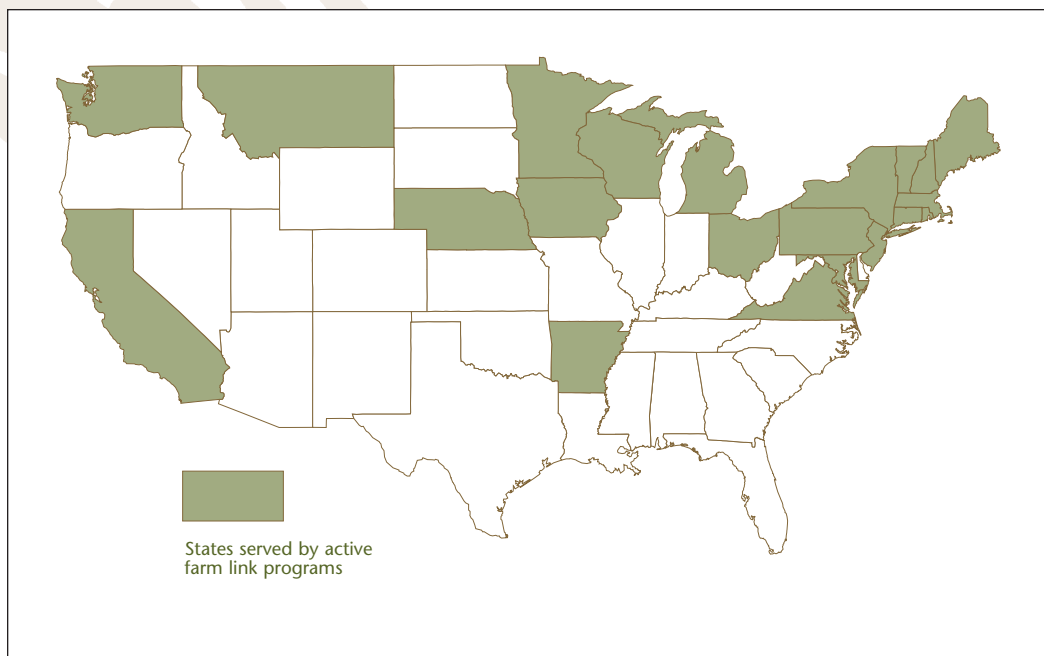
LANDWORKS

Serving the people
who conserve
the land

Innovations *continued from page 1*

Access to affordable farmland is a chief obstacle. Tenure options like renting, leasing and “work-ins” often are not available. Entering farmers must raise capital up front to cover operating costs and young farmers don’t have professional networks to support their career.

Farm link programs help overcome these obstacles. Today, at least 18 programs serve 21 states. They are organized loosely as part of the National Farm Transition Network. The network was formed “to support programs that foster the next generation of farmers and ranchers.” Program managers meet annually. A recent focus has been the development of a strategy for drawing national attention to their issues. They have met with officials from the United States Department of Agriculture and the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture. John Baker serves as the coordinator and the Beginning Farmer Center maintains the network’s Web page.



The first farm link program was pioneered in 1991 by the Center for Rural Affairs in Nebraska. By 1994, programs were in place in Iowa, New England and Pennsylvania. More recently, programs have been launched in Vermont (1998), Virginia (2000) and New Hampshire (2000). Both New Jersey and Virginia’s programs are tied directly to efforts to permanently protect farmland. As Bill Dickinson, Virginia’s assistant commissioner of agriculture remarks, “We know that the preservation of farmland and the preservation of farmers is tied together.”

Services offered by linking programs vary from state to state. At a minimum, programs provide a searchable database that matches retiring farmers with other interested landowners and beginning farmers. Program staff enter applicants’ information in the database and then conduct a search to identify potential matches. Matches can be based on location, size, type of farm operation and business goals. Most programs then send profiles of prospective matches to both entering and exiting farmers. Once the profiles are distributed, it is generally the participants’ responsibility to initiate contact.

But, as Joy Johnson, manager of Nebraska’s Land Link program remarks, “When you just provide a list, participation is very low. The more you interact with the people

LandWorks is a service of American Farmland Trust. Subscriptions are \$125 per year and include quarterly issues of *LANDWORKS Connection*, access to an exclusive Web site, free research assistance, reports and discounts on AFT publications and conferences.

Julia Freedgood
Managing Editor

Jennifer Dempsey
Susanne Fleek
Julia Freedgood
Jill Schwartz
Contributing Writers

Jesse Robertson-Dubois
Joan Deely
Researchers

Eileen West
Program Coordinator

For subscription information and publication orders contact:

LandWorks
American Farmland Trust
One Short Street, Suite 2
Northampton, MA 01060
(800) 370-4879
LandWorks@farmland.org

American Farmland Trust is the only private, nonprofit conservation organization dedicated to protecting the nation’s strategic agricultural resources. Founded in 1980, AFT works to stop the loss of productive farmland and to promote farming practices that lead to a healthy environment.

Basic membership is \$20 per year. For membership or general information about AFT, contact the National Office at 1200 18th Street, N.W., Suite 800, Washington, DC 20036 (202) 331-7300, or connect to our Web page at <http://www.farmland.org>

 Printed on recycled paper

the more successful you are.” To this end, Nebraska Land Link offers one-on-one consultations. According to Johnson, much of what they do is provide information about financing available to beginning farmers. Pennsylvania Farm Link offers workshops on farm succession and transfer planning, shorter sessions on marketing and entrepreneurial skills development and a state-certified apprenticeship program, all in addition to a database. Iowa’s Farm On and Wisconsin’s Farm Link programs have developed succession planning publications, including Farm Savvy and Farm Transfers in Wisconsin: A Guide for Farmers. Staff, with back-up from dozens of “advisors”—including extension agents and technical college instructors, financial planners and attorneys—also provide financial analyses, legal assistance, employment counseling and mediation services. These programs aim to encourage and support the next generation of farmers and to educate landowners so that they can assemble the right team of advisors and ask the right questions as they prepare to pass on their assets and expertise.

Funding is another important factor. The network hopes to increase the effectiveness of linking programs by securing federal and state support. Wisconsin’s program is mandated by state law, administered by the state department of agriculture, and receives \$50,000 each year from the state legislature. The funds support a full-time staff person. Similarly, the Iowa Legislature created the Beginning Farmer Center in 1994, which houses Iowa’s farm link program. The law, set out in Chapter 266 of the Code of Iowa, provides that the center “shall... assist in facilitating the transition of farming operations from established farmers to beginning farmers.” Consistent state support has allowed the program to provide more individualized technical assistance, develop educational materials, and provide course offerings.

However, a state tie does not assure success. Programs in North and South Dakota initiated by their state departments of agriculture are now defunct. On the other hand, Nebraska’s program is administered by a nonprofit organization and primarily funded with foundation grants. Because it is private, staff may work on related policy issues. Most recently, they were involved in the passage of the state’s Beginning Farmer Tax Credit that provides a state income tax credit to eligible “owners of agricultural assets” who enter into three-year share rental agreements with beginning farmers or ranchers (for more details see Connection Vol. II, Issue 4). The downside is their funding is less stable.

Program managers often avoid providing statistics, but numbers reported by a few established programs suggest that linking can work. Nebraska Land Link has made more than 125 matches—nearly 100,000 acres. Iowa’s Farm On program has facilitated about 90 links. Given that 463 million acres of agricultural land is expected to change hands in the next 15 years, farm link programs may prove to be an important strategy to foster new farmers and keep land in agriculture. 🚜

USING RESOURCES WISELY

FORESTRY ON THE EDGE: CONSERVING FORESTLAND IN THE SOUTH

Land use planners are creating colorful maps to illustrate urban-edge forestland. People are organizing conferences to figure out how to stop the fragmentation and loss of threatened forestland. Foresters are making presentations at local planning meetings about the numerous benefits of urban-edge forestland to inspire communities to protect it.

Sound familiar?

This is the same road conservationists began heading down 20 years ago—only their focus usually was contained to farmland on the urban edge. *continued on page 4*

“Farm link programs re-create a career that used to exist in agriculture”

—John Baker, administrator of Iowa State University Extension’s Beginning Farmer Center

FOSTERING NEW FARMERS

Contact:

**John Baker
515-331-8900**

**Joy Johnson
402-846-5428**



Ray Durham of the Florida Division of Forestry reviews a map of a subdivision in Florida.

Today, the urban-edge forestland conservation movement is building momentum in the South. Often referred to as the “wildland-urban interface,” this land is defined as the area where forest and urban land occur side by side or intermix. The movement was jump-started by catastrophic fires in the region and frustrations with fire management on the urban-edge. Most notably, the Florida wildfires in 1998 captured the public’s attention.

Fires keep ecosystems healthy. But when they happen near urban areas, the health and safety of humans, not ecosystems, takes precedence. That is now happening in the 13 states between Virginia, Florida and Texas where sprawling development is having a significant impact on the landscape. Estimates are that the South is losing 1,500 acres of private, non-industrial forestland per day, according to Ed Macie, a regional urban forester for the United States Department of Agriculture Forest Service. Macie has been working on urban-edge forestry issues in the South for 17 years.

Although health and safety issues related to fires kicked off the movement in the South, other reasons for conserving forestland are emerging. Protecting species habitat, improving water and air quality, and preserving the rural character of communities top the list. “This has been a real turning point for us,” said Bettina Ring, deputy forester for the Virginia Department of Forestry and one of the first southeastern foresters to try to draw attention to wildland-urban interface issues. “We were too limited when we just looked at this as a fire issue.” Her agency lists forestland conservation as its second most important goal. Conserving this land and managing it differently are ways to reduce severe fires.

This is similar to the farmland conservation movement, which began because of concerns about a dwindling supply of local food but has evolved into a movement that attracts a diverse mix of interest groups. And as with farmland conservation, the challenges facing forestland owners are similar, such as complaints from urban neighbors about the odors and noises, pressure to sell forestland to pay inheritance taxes and pressure to subdivide the land.

Southerners are taking steps to protect the remaining forestland. Most activity is geared toward equipping foresters with the skills and information they need to meet the new challenges that come with working in urban-edge areas. As Ring said, “Foresters like to play in the woods, not go to public meetings.” According to Ring, “This is a little bit out of their comfort range. They need a new set of skills now that urban communities are coming right up against forests.” About half of the southern state forestry agencies employ foresters who work on wildland-urban interface issues.

Activities in the Southeast

Southern Wildland-Urban Interface Assessment: To set the framework for discussing urban-edge forestry in the South, the Southern Group of State Foresters, Southern Research Station and the Southern Region of the United States Department of Agriculture Forest Service are conducting an assessment of the economic, environmental and social conditions and dynamics of the southern wildland-urban interface. They are also focusing on identifying new tools, knowledge and skills needed by natural resource managers as forests become more urbanized. They conducted 12 focus groups in six southern states and are collecting data, creating maps and illustrations, and synthesizing the assessment findings into a publication. Targeted for release at a conference November 5-8, 2001, the assessment could have the same type of impact on a regional scale that the National Agricultural Lands Study (NALS) had on farmland conservation when it was released in 1980. NALS was the first study to evaluate farmland loss, and to suggest why and how it should be conserved.

FORESTRY ON THE EDGE: Conserving Forestland in the South

Contact:

**Annie Hermansen
706-559-4305**

**Dr. Mary Duryea
352-846-0896**

Southern Wildland-Urban Interface Council: What originally began in 1992 as a council of state foresters who focused primarily on fire issues on the urban-edge recently expanded to include a coalition of state and federal forest agency representatives, university faculty, researchers, resource managers and conservationists focusing on a wide range of interface issues. After this reorganization, the council began to meet regularly last year. Projects include providing input on the format and content of the wildland-urban interface assessment and developing a methodology for determining the loss risk of critical forestland in exurban areas.

Research and Technology Transfer Center: A proposal to create a center where research and technology development issues pertaining to the southern wildland-urban interface can be addressed is being written by the USDA Forest Service Southern Research Station and University of Florida. The need for the center was raised in focus group sessions held over the summer. 🚗

POLICY REPORT

USDA LOOKING AT URBAN-INFLUENCED AGRICULTURE

According to USDA Undersecretary Jim Lyons, “building a connection to conservation and natural resources for urban residents is essential.” Recently testifying before Congress, Lyons said, “The views and opinions of urban residents and their representatives have a strong influence on national priorities. Without this connection, future support for agriculture, forestry and conservation may be at risk.”

USDA is turning theory into practice by increasing their attention to the challenges facing agriculture on the urban edge. Over the summer, USDA hosted five “listening forums” around the country to hear directly from producers, community members and public officials on how rapid growth in traditionally rural areas is affecting agriculture, and how USDA can address the urbanization problems facing producers all across the country.

Many of the participants shared the view of Donna Gorski from DeKalb County in Illinois. “Most people in DeKalb do not want to become the next suburb,” Gorski testified, “they cherish the slower pace, beauty of open lands and the economy that comes from agriculture, but are not quite sure what they can do to protect it.”

At every forum, USDA also heard that agriculture can survive—and even thrive—in the face of urban growth with the proper tools. Bob Tidball, owner of a raspberry and strawberry farm near Seattle, has enrolled his farm in the King County Farmland Preservation Program. His farm has capitalized on the nearby urban market and he believes that “with farmers’ markets cropping up in many communities, increasing popularity of subscription markets and increasing demand for locally grown produce...there is plenty of room for more young farmers to enter the business.”

However, participants agreed that USDA needs to do more to help urban-influenced farmers raise public awareness of the benefits of American agriculture. Albert Medvitz, a California sheep rancher, urged USDA to take the lead in studying the full range of options to keep farmland productive. “We need a recurring, long-term payment model to reimburse us for the environmental benefits we produce. We have to reframe the notion of what farmers do...we’re environmental managers, producing goods for the tangible market, as well as such ‘intangible goods’ as landscape views and wildlife habitat. If we can assign value to these intangible goods and figure out a way to make transaction payments, we can begin to stabilize the farming economy.”

continued on page 8

FACT: 80 percent of all Americans, more than 190 million people, live in urban areas, yet less than one-tenth of one percent of the budget for forestry and conservation programs serves urban areas.

—Congressional testimony of USDA Undersecretary for Natural Resources and the Environment, James Lyons

**INCENTIVE-BASED
FARMLAND-FRIENDLY MEASURES**

MEASURES PASSED

Jurisdiction	Funding
CA - City of Davis	\$17,500,000
CA - Placer County	—
CO - Boulder County	\$119,200,000
ME - Scarborough	\$1,500,000
MT - Gallatin County	\$10,000,000
NJ - 27 jurisdictions**	\$76,000,000
NM - Bernalillo County	\$1,500,000
NM - Santa Fe County	\$8,000,000
NY - North Salem	\$2,000,000
NY - Warwick	\$9,000,000
OH - STATE	\$400,000,000
PA - Hilltown Twp	\$12,000,000
PA - Upper Makefield Twp	\$15,000,000
RI - STATE	\$34,000,000
SC - Beaufort County	\$40,000,000
WI - Sheboygan County	—

Total Funding Approved \$745,700,000

** NJ funding includes some estimates.

MEASURES NOT PASSED

Jurisdiction	Funding
CO - Teller County	N/A
CO - Weld County	N/A
MN - Washington County	13,000,000
NV - Douglas County	N/A
SC - Charleston County	1,200,000,000

“The amount of new funding is terrific! But since farmland is so commingled with other open space objectives, it remains to be seen how much funding actually will be used to protect farmland for farming.”

**—Bob Wagner,
AFT assistant vice president
for field programs**

According to Ohio Governor Bob Taft, “It was a confusing, complicated ballot issue. We had to prevail against that tide.” Some legislators wanted the farmland component removed from the measure. Backed by the Ohio Home Builders Association, they argued that government planners would replace individuals and market forces in deciding how land is used. Legislators who defended farmland countered that spending some of the bond on agriculture was no different from the millions the state spends on economic development for other industries. Ohio’s three major farm groups, sportsmen and environmentalists helped pass the bill.

Where Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) initiatives were popular with voters, state-level smart growth measures were not. Voters soundly rejected Arizona’s Citizen’s Growth Management Initiative and Colorado’s Responsible Growth Initiative. Modeled on Portland, Oregon’s urban growth boundary (UGB) law, these proposals drew early support but were defeated by well-financed real estate interests and affordable housing advocates who argued that the regulations would drive up housing prices. They pointed to rising costs in Portland and Boulder, Col., which both have UGBs. Smart growth advocates responded by saying that housing costs in Denver have risen faster than those in Portland, even with no restrictions in place. A similar coalition came together to pass Oregon’s Measure 7, which requires reimbursing landowners for lost property value in UGBs.

Californians beat sprawl in local elections

California voters approved five local smart growth measures that protect agriculture and open space. In Alameda County, choosing between two UGB initiatives, they favored the stronger Measure D over Measure C. Measures intended to strengthen UGBs failed in Sonoma and San Luis Obispo counties. These would have given voters power to reject zoning changes in agricultural and open space districts. According to AFT President Ralph Grossi, “Some of the rejection was a result of over reaching agendas. Sonoma’s Rural Heritage Initiative may actually have been a strong showing of support for agriculture because the opponents did a very good job of positioning it as a threat and a hardship for family farmers—likely to imperil the very landscape the proponents sought to protect.” Since November’s approval of a UGB in the city of Sonoma, now all but one city in that county has a smart growth provision.

Oregon faces legal challenges

The jury is out on the implications of the Oregon vote but the first claim was filed on November 17. The Jackson Sand Creek Company filed a \$50 million claim against the City of Jacksonville and Jackson County in U.S. District Federal Court. The company wants to mine 18 million tons of gravel aggregate but was prevented from doing so by local land use laws. Measure 7 requires compensation to any landowner who can show their property values were reduced because of land use restrictions or regulations, including agricultural zoning. The cost of compensating landowners to enforce state and local regulations has been estimated at as much as \$5.4 billion annually.

According to Corvallis Mayor Helen Berg, Oregon cities are working on a protocol for handling claims. Implementation legislation is necessary and may provide an avenue of mitigation, as Measure 7 does not spell out a process. Berg says she expects cities to hold public hearings on whether or not to enforce regulations and pay claims. Opponents of Measure 7 already have filed suit challenging the validity of the measure and have announced their intention to mount a campaign to reverse the measure in the next election if their legal challenges are unsuccessful.

Growth is a major citizen concern

From communities on both coasts where farmland protection has a 20-year track record, to the Rocky Mountains and other regions where the issue is emerging, voters approved 42 local incentive-based measures that include the protection of agricultural land. Tracking all open space ballot initiatives—including large capital investments in parks, recreation and trails—the Land Trust Alliance and Trust for Public Land found 168 of 205 measures passed. According to Russ Shay, LTA public policy director, “People are tremendously concerned about what their communities will look like in the future, and very willing to invest their tax money to protect parks, farms, forests and fields.” Phyllis Myers agrees, “Although growth has not been a significant issue in the national campaign, these measures show it is a major citizen concern.” A recent survey by Smart Growth America found that more than three-quarters of Americans say they want government to use tax dollars to preserve open space. Previous polls show sprawl is a growing concern among voters who are tired of traffic congestion and of endless developments taking over the rural landscape.

LAY OF THE LAND

Total dollars voters committed that could be used to protect agricultural land	\$746 million
Estimated annual cost to enforce state and local regulations in the wake of Oregon’s measure 7	\$5.4 billion
Number of Farmland-Friendly Incentive-Based Measures that passed	42
Number of Farmland-Friendly Incentive-Based Measures that DID NOT pass.....	5
Percentage of Farmland-Friendly Incentive-Based Measures that passed	89%

However, where once such initiatives were targeted specifically to farmland, this round of measures was less focused. According to Bob Wagner, AFT assistant vice president of field programs, “The amount of new funding is terrific! But since farmland is so commingled with other open space objectives, it remains to be seen how much funding actually will be used to protect farmland for farming.” Still, local gains were impressive—more than \$300 million of new funding was brought to the table—matching the \$308 million that municipalities have spent to date. Total funds spent on PDR nationally exceed \$1.2 billion.

- Boulder County, Colorado: \$119.2 million to extend the use of the current sales and use tax and to redirect the revenue to protect agricultural land and open space.
- Beaufort County, South Carolina: \$40 million to purchase land and development rights on farmland and open space.
- City of Davis, California: \$17.5 million to buy conservation easements and fee interests on agricultural and other lands in a 102,000-acre planning area.
- In the Northeast: Upper Makefield, Pennsylvania: \$15 million to purchase development rights to farmland and open space; Sussex County, New Jersey property tax increase expected to generate \$16 million, 90 percent for farmland; and Warwick, New York: \$9 million for open space and farmland protection.
- Gallatin County, Montana: \$10 million to buy farm and ranch land and agricultural conservation easements.

Five local funding initiatives failed: two in Colorado, and the others in Nevada, Minnesota and South Carolina. Weld County, Colorado was the only community with significant agricultural resources, and it is not clear why it was rejected. And while little commercial agriculture is left in Washington County, Minn., the defeat of the PDR measure there may dampen neighboring farmland protection efforts as other Twin City municipalities watched this race closely.

Some of the most impressive local gains include:

In addition, 200,000 New Jersey voters approved measures to increase their property taxes to match state funds for farmland and open space protection, predicted to generate more than \$76 million of additional funds. Citizens in Scarborough Maine approved \$1.5 million for PDR in their town. Voters in Sheboygan, Wisconsin, approved a measure to encourage the county board to create a stewardship fund for PDR on farmland, to conserve natural lands and develop recreational lands. And although Placer County, California voters rejected Measure W, a .25 percent sales tax increase for “general county purposes,” they approved Measure V to earmark any extra revenue that would have been generated by the tax for farmland, open space and water quality.

Commenting on the overall outcome of the ballot initiatives, AFT’s President Grossi said, “One of the lessons learned is that we cannot assume that we have the high road all to ourselves. There are other competing interests with every bit as compelling a case for action—and we cannot succeed without educating them and learning about their concerns.” 🚗

**For more information
on open space ballots
visit these Web sites:**

**www.brookings.edu
www.lta.org
www.tpl.org**


POLICY REPORT *continued from page 5*

**POLICY REPORT
USDA Looking at
Urban-Influenced
Agriculture**

Contact:

**Susanne Fleek
202-331-7300**

In "Maintaining Farm and Forest Lands in Rapidly Growing Areas," a report released in November to the White House, the USDA recommended several changes to existing programs and development of new initiatives to help farmers deal with land fragmentation, high real estate values and environmental concerns. The report also looks at the extent to which actions by federal agencies, such as construction, development grants and loans, and federal land management decisions contribute to the loss of farmland.

USDA's increasing interest in urban-influenced agriculture comes at a time when community leaders, national conservation organizations and policymakers are expressing concern over the impacts of sprawl. Population growth on the edge of metro areas increased from 7.1 percent during 1987-1992 to over 10 percent during 1992-1997. Growth rates in rural areas also increased but dropped in core metro areas (Source: U.S. Census 1990). In AFT's 1997 *Farming on the Edge* study, we learned that these areas contain some of our most productive farmland, generating 79 percent of our nation's fruit, 68 percent of our vegetables and 52 percent of our dairy. Participants expressed hope that these listening sessions will inspire USDA to act quickly on their recommendations and launch a new approach to urban agriculture that integrates the programs and expertise of the entire agency. This would include Rural Development, Farm Services Agency, Agriculture Marketing Service and others. Only through this level of coordination can USDA help farmers who farm in the shadow of cities. 

American Farmland Trust

American Farmland Trust
One Short Street
Northampton, MA 01060

LANDWORKS

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Custom Mail