



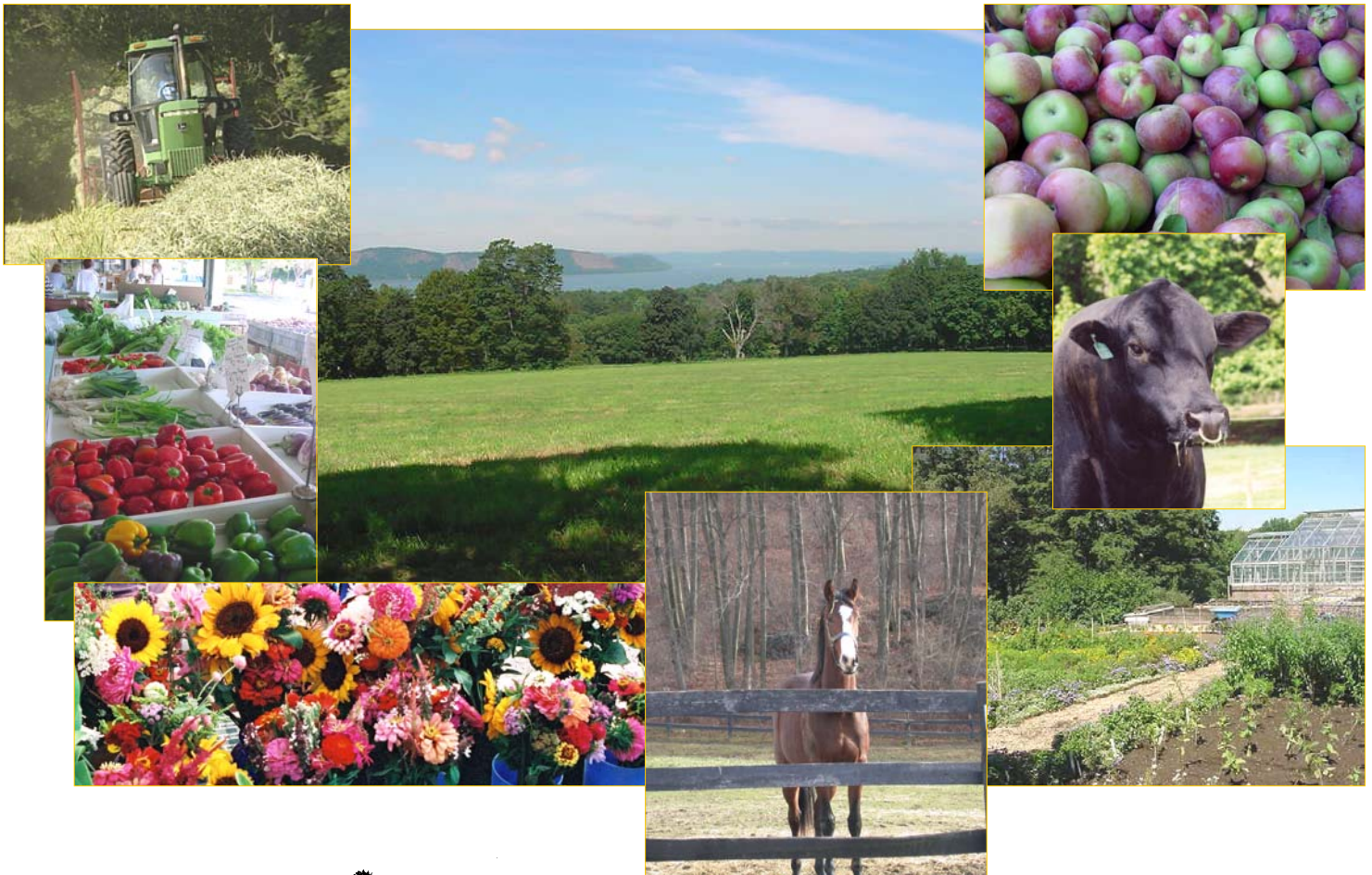
Andrew J. Spano, Westchester County Executive

County Board of Legislators

Note: This is a condensed version of the Plan. For the full version, contact the Westchester County Department of Planning.

Westchester County Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan

April 2004



Agriculture & Farmland
Protection Board
of Westchester County

Westchester County Department of Planning
Gerard E. Mulligan, AICP, Commissioner

Westchester County Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan



Andrew J. Spano, Westchester County Executive

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Cover photo credit: Michael Saviola

FOREWORD

We, the members of the Agriculture and Farmland Protection Board, share something very personal with you: our dreams, aspirations, longings, and understanding of a grand and meaningful life. We choose to serve as volunteers on the Board to preserve something we consider of great value to the community. We think you should know something of how we feel about where we are, our hopes and desires for our towns and neighbors, our visitors, and especially our children.



Why do we believe that farming and the farm way of life is so vitally important in today's world? We are mindful of the concepts of legacy, dignity, worthwhile living, teaching responsibility to our children, and of giving back to our communities. We are passionate about maintaining our open space working landscapes, habitats for birds, wildlife and fish, our exceptional water quality and our part in fostering watershed buffers, as well as our closeness to nature and the land.



We are concerned that the tremendous development pressure will erode the very landscape that we recognize as such an important asset to the residents of Westchester County. Westchester's children are invited and come to the farms to learn in ways that are not possible in the classroom. Westchester's neighbors come to the farms for family outings, recreational opportunities, to relieve stress with fresh air, and for the obvious benefits of the availability of farm fresh foods and exposure to the care of animals.

We want to educate people about agriculture and have them recognize the substantial amount of agriculture in Westchester. The economic benefits to the towns and the county are many. For example, it is the most economical way to maintain open space while keeping the properties on the tax rolls. Farms have value as farms, requiring far less in service dollars than residential developments.

Individually, we all have stories of the importance of farm living to everyone. Foremost are the teaching opportunities and the fostering of a sense of responsibility in our children. We are constantly amazed at Westchester children's lack of exposure to farms even though some of our horse farms run summer camps to bridge that gap. Many thousands of families come to pick apples on the same Westchester farm where our Governor had his first job picking apples. They can't get enough of the experience. 4H clubs abound on farms large and



small, teaching our young people care and reliability in the raising of animals. Elementary school teachers from all over the county plead for the farmer's time on class trips to farms to contribute to the children's hands-on experience of this vital heritage.

Our high school students often have their first jobs on local farms, which in addition to aiding the local economy, provides the students a strong work ethic and an understanding of the origin and culture of food and animals outside of the local supermarket. They have learned that Westchester farmers not only sell all over this country but also internationally and that small farms are even being started today to fill the local market needs.



Others of our farmers grow beef cattle or raise landscape plants or organic vegetables or corn or Christmas trees. We all take seriously our self imposed obligation to share our land, our experiences, our education and our heritage with our more urban neighbors who otherwise would have lost that part of their legacy to understand some of the factors which made our country great.

There is a sense of urgency in protecting farmland today. We know what we don't want to happen: urban sprawl, traffic gridlocks, lost opportunities for our children to experience the sense of accomplishments of farm living, decrease in Westchester's rural landscapes and forests, and the inability to contribute to the metropolitan food chain and landscape markets.



To keep farming in Westchester, farmers need to be allowed to farm in a responsible manner; many need technical information on merchandizing; and all farmers need meaningful support from the County and Town governments to continue their operations. This document should help you gain a better understanding of farming in Westchester County and we hope you will join us in implementing its recommendation to protect and preserve farming in the County. Our rural landscape must not be taken for granted. We all must be proactive in its protection.

Westchester County Agriculture and Farmland Protection Board, May 2004

Barbara J. Wilkens, Chair
Thomas J. Cogger, Vice Chair
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Agriculture & Farmland
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Westchester County Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan

Westchester County Department of Planning

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Photo: Mike Saviola

Westchester County, New York is located directly north of New York City and is bordered on the west by the Hudson River, on the north by Putnam County, on the east by Connecticut and Long Island Sound. The County contains 45 cities, villages, and towns and is home to almost a million people and over 400,000 jobs (2000). Population density varies widely across the County with a density of 15,262 people per square mile in the southern, more urbanized portion to 243 people per square mile the northern towns. Of the County's total of 288,200 acres, 52,120 acres (18%) are undeveloped land. Of this, 7,528 acres (3%) were identified as land in farms by the 1997 U.S. Census of Agriculture. The northern portion of the County also contains the Croton Reservoir, a key component of the drinking water supply for the City of New York and Westchester County.

Historically, the location of the County in the lower Hudson Valley made it one of the first areas to supply fresh dairy products, meats, and vegetables to the metropolitan New York area. Today, agriculture in Westchester County, while not a predominant land use, plays an important role in establishing the rural character of large portions of the County. These rural areas offer residents a diversity of landscapes, including visual relief from intensely urban settings in the southern part of the County. Agriculture contributes to the attractiveness of many of the towns and provides agricultural activities and products to citizens and school groups for whom farming is not part of their everyday experience. Equally as important is the role of agricultural lands in the protection of the drinking water supply for New York City and Westchester County residents. As noted further in this summary, the majority of agricultural lands are located in Northern Westchester. This land area also contributes to New York City's drinking water supply system. In contrast to residentially or commercially developed land, well managed farmland provides permeable surfaces for rainwater to move through and be filtered on its way to reservoir systems and to groundwater supplies.

The agricultural industry in Westchester County possesses many characteristics of a farm economy in an urbanized area, where high land costs prevent the growth of low-value, traditional grain and livestock products. Not surprisingly, greenhouse and nursery products dominate the County's agricultural economics. These crops have a high value to suburban consumers, but are

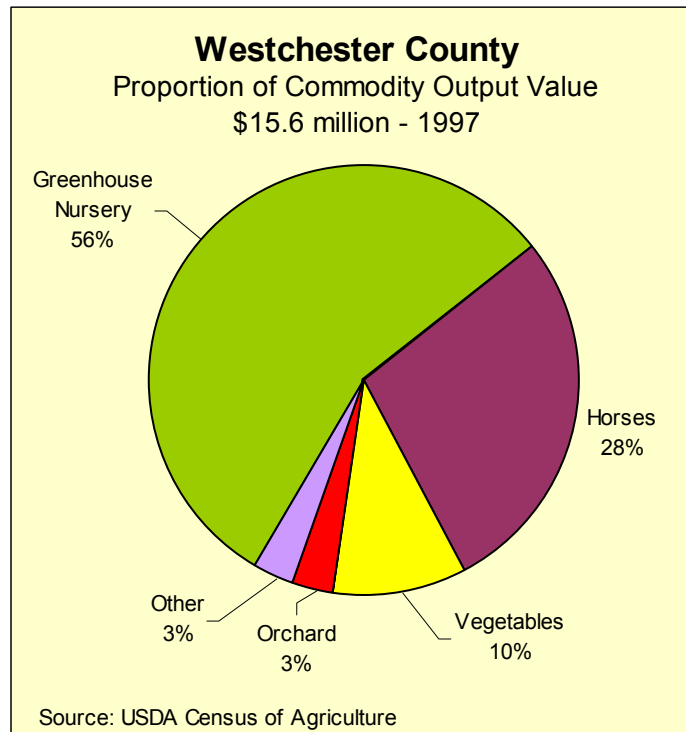
costly to transport. As a result, local greenhouse and nursery producers in large population areas typically find they have a ready market for their products. This has been true in Westchester County. For similar reasons, the vegetable sector of the County's farm economy has also thrived in recent years, although it remains significantly smaller than the greenhouse and nursery sector. The horse industry, while ranking second in sales activity, represents an enormous investment in livestock inventory and equine infrastructure, as well as occupying a major portion of the acreage in agricultural use in the County.

When the Agricultural District was created in 2001, the Agriculture and Farmland Protection Board identified 11,856 acres that met the criteria of land that is farmed *or capable of being farmed*. This represents 5% of the total County acreage and 10% of the Croton watershed land area. Together, the municipalities of North Salem and Somers contain 50% of this land, while Bedford contains 18%.

WHY AN AGRICULTURE AND FARMLAND PROTECTION PLAN?

The purpose of this Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan is to provide Westchester County with a blueprint for action to protect the remaining agricultural lands in the County. This includes improving awareness of the needs of agriculture as an industry and of farmland itself as valuable component of the County's quality of life. It follows the establishment by the County and approval by the State of an Agricultural District in 2001. Westchester County's District properties comprise 11,856 acres in 19 municipalities. The District establishment is the result of efforts by the Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board (AFPB), whose sole purpose is to focus attention on the role of agriculture in Westchester County.

The State of New York operates the Agriculture and Farmland Protection Program authorized by Article 25-AAA. This program provides counties with grants for planning assistance for coordinated local and state initiatives to protect agriculture and farmland. These plans are intended to identify lands proposed to be protected, to analyze them in terms of their value to the agricultural economy, their open space value and their level of conversion pressure. Typically, the plans then describe the activities, programs and strategies that municipalities can use to promote continued agricultural use. This formalized strategy is a prerequisite for eligibility to apply to the NYS Agriculture and Farmland Protection Program for funds for permanent protection of land with purchase of development rights (PDR), also known as conservation easements.



This Plan examines both the land use policies associated with agriculture in Westchester County as well as the state of the industry. It analyses the appropriateness of existing tools to protect land and to support the agricultural enterprises as positive economic contributors to the local economy. Background information was assembled from published sources and from data collected from farm landowners during the creation of the Agricultural District. Information that served as the basis for analysis regarding applicability of farmland protection tools to Westchester County was garnered from both existing maps and documents, as well as from interviews with local and county officials. Economic conditions were gleaned from public data sources and corroborated and expanded upon by the advice and experience of individuals familiar with local dynamics. Since most of the farmland in the County is in the northern towns, much of the land use research for this Plan focused on that area.

BACKGROUND

Loss of farmland and its associated benefits of food production, stabilization of local economies, protection of the environment, and enhancement of the quality of life are being felt to varying degrees throughout the country. Common to most situations is the threat to the land base from sprawling suburban development and the vulnerability of a challenged industry.

Given the diversity of types of agriculture and the various governmental structures, protection of agriculture and farmland takes many forms. Protection tools are often in the form of land use regulation, agriculture economic development initiatives, and purchase of development rights to permanently secure a land base for agriculture. The communities around the nation making the greatest strides are those employing some combination of these tools as well as a robust economic development strategy – all customized to their respective circumstances.



Photo: Diane Miller

Soil and water are the essential resources of agriculture. In Westchester County, both soil quality and accessibility present a significant challenge. Only 17% of the County's acreage is deemed to be of prime soil condition. These are scattered throughout the northern towns, however, much of this land has been permanently altered by the development of the New York City reservoir system and by residential development.

Since the vast majority of the prime soils, farmland and agricultural district properties are located in the northern portion of the County, this study focused on ten towns: Cortlandt, Yorktown, Somers, North Salem, Lewisboro, Bedford, New Castle, Pound Ridge, North Castle, and Mt. Pleasant. These ten municipalities are also involved in the development of the Comprehensive

Croton Watershed Water Quality Protection Plan. This planning process is intended to identify water quality problems in the Croton Watershed, make recommendation on how to improve those problems, and protect the character of the ten municipalities with land area in the Croton Watershed. The Croton Planning process has examined the impact of development on water quality and has also identified agricultural uses, particularly crop agriculture, as one of the most likely land uses to undergo conversion to a more intense land use (such as commercial or residential) in the future. A look at the tax parcel line maps for each of these towns conveys enormous information about land ownership patterns. With the exception of North Salem, they evidence a highly fragmented land base. This means that most of the land surrounding the existing farms has already been subdivided into parcels intended for residential use rather than for economically viable farm uses. The multitude of owners and uses has enormous implications for expansion or intensification of an existing operation. The lack of a contiguous, *critical* mass of farmland presents a challenge to agricultural operators and complicates the job of local officials dealing with conflicting land uses.



Photo: Diane Miller

In comparison to the New York metropolitan region, Westchester County's population growth over the decade from 1990 to 2000 was relatively low with a ten-year increase of 5.6%. This mirrors the statewide growth rate. It is half the rate of Orange County (11%) across the Hudson and a little more than a third of Putnam County's growth rate (14.1%) directly to the north of Westchester.

The ten northern towns all have comprehensive plans, many of which are currently undergoing updates. Agriculture is not discussed as a discreet element of any

of the plans, but simply as a component of the open space that characterizes some of the towns.

Zoning, which follows the adoption of comprehensive plans, is one of the most critical types of land use regulation to negatively affect farming. With regulation of minimum residential lot size, zoning can set up housing densities that compromise the land base or, if properly timed, it can keep residential development sufficiently low to allow agriculture to continue. The choices made in zoning can drive up land values making farm expansion impossible and selling the land for development difficult to resist. The lowest density zones in the ten northern towns range from one dwelling per one acre (1:1) to one per four acres (1:4).

Beyond residential density, zoning regulations affect agriculture in other ways as well. Each town's regulations vary in their specifics but are similar in their general content. Agriculture is usually very narrowly defined and in almost all the towns is allowed by special permit or conditional use only. Livestock is extremely restricted in virtually all towns, either absolutely or by the need to obtain special permits for anything beyond a minimal number. The requirements to buffer farm operations from property lines range from 50 feet to 250 feet. Often agricultural

buildings fall under the town's requirements for full site development plans to be submitted and reviewed. These are long-standing regulations whose adoption, no doubt, paralleled the suburbanization of these formerly rural towns. They serve the purpose of protecting the dominant residential land use. They have also probably had the affect, perhaps inadvertently, of accelerating the decline of agriculture in the County.

Even given Westchester's unique situation, there are actions that can be taken to protect the land base for agriculture. There is work to be done with public outreach to educate citizens and public officials about the effect of their choices and decisions on agriculture. The recently established Agricultural District is an ideal platform on which to build partnerships between the County and municipalities, and between municipalities and the agricultural operators themselves. Striving toward best management practices for soil conservation and water quality protection continues to be critical to broaden the constituency that supports Westchester's farms. Last, but not least, participation in an existing purchase of development program seems within reach.

The farm enterprises that remain in Westchester County tend to be operations that serve suburban agricultural needs such as landscaping materials, fresh food, entertainment, and lifestyle preferences. The adjacent metropolitan New York City market shows no signs of needing less of these types of operations in the foreseeable future. As such, agriculture offers a solid business opportunity for local agricultural entrepreneurs. These opportunities are driven by the region's large consumer market as well as niche markets created by its rich ethnic and socio-economic diversity. Westchester, given its unique demographics and geography, is not only home to a large portion of this market, but serves as an access point for products moving into the region. Westchester County also benefits due to its central location by its accessibility to the agricultural infrastructure of nearby communities in New York, Pennsylvania, Connecticut, and New Jersey. Since Westchester agriculture has prospered because of the unique characteristics of its agricultural entrepreneurs, the central role of any economic development strategy should focus on supporting individual businesses.



Photo: Mike Saviola

RECOMMENDATIONS

Westchester County presents an interesting but challenging situation in which to plan for agriculture and farmland protection. On the one hand, the size of the industry in acres is small and, in many cases, is an avocational activity. On the other hand, the land is decades past the surging growth being experienced by many other jurisdictions. This, with other factors, has created a certain ‘stasis’ in the land base that tends to diffuse development pressures. The farms that remain have ‘evolved’ to thrive within the dominant non-agricultural land uses and the regulatory climate. They tend to be operations that serve the suburban agricultural needs (e.g. nursery/greenhouse, turf), the fresh food and entertainment needs of the same population, or the lifestyle preferences of those who can afford them (e.g. horses). And the huge adjacent market of metropolitan New York City shows no signs of needing less of all three types of operations in the foreseeable future.

In addition, the potential environmental benefits in terms of water quality protection (far less impervious surface than developed land) in a key drinking water supply watershed highlights the multiple public benefits of Westchester County agriculture. Almost as compelling a reason to protect the land base for the industry is its contribution to the rural character that defines many of the northern towns.

The Westchester County Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan recommends eight broad tasks to protect the remaining farmland in the County and to enhance the business of agriculture. In the Plan each recommendation is followed by a list of action items along with designation of implementation responsibility. Included as well is a work plan matrix that summarizes the implementation components of each recommendation of the Plan.

1. **Develop a public outreach program.**

Westchester County’s non-farm public can significantly impact the long-term success of local agriculture. Taxation, promulgation of land use regulations, allocation of public resources and patronizing local agricultural businesses rest largely with this broader community. Given this potential, it is important that the public know about the environmental, economic, and quality of life benefits of agriculture. Action items include development of program components such as a speakers’ bureau, school programs, farm tours, marketing material and a website.



Photo: Diane Miller

2. Strengthen the Westchester County Agricultural District.

The Westchester County Agricultural District has the ability to protect farm operations in a highly regulated climate. The goal of strengthening the District is to add credibility to its purpose in the Westchester suburban setting and to use it to focus energies for maximum effectiveness. The most efficient way to use limited resources will involve concentrating on the core operations of the industry as well as garnering the cooperation and support of the local jurisdictions. If strengthened, the District has the potential to be a powerful focus of education of both the general public and local elected officials regarding the benefits and needs of agriculture in their communities. It can become a core of operators learning to view the needs of the agricultural community as a whole, beyond their individual business needs. The long-term survival of the District may hinge on its ability to function on a public relations level as well as a regulatory one. Action items include development of District criteria customized to Westchester, a process for new property applications, and outreach to town officials and landowners.

3. Plan for agriculture at the local level.

Planning for agriculture in the northern towns which contain most of the farmland will not necessarily mean significant changes to zoning densities or allowed uses. By adopting regulations over many years to avoid some of the less pleasant side effects of farming, towns have essentially zoned traditional agriculture out of their communities. Now that even more suburban development surrounds farms, the need to control the unpleasant side-effects for the majority of their citizens has increased. The farms that remain, however, have largely managed to work within these limitations. These farms may need some regulatory flexibility to



Photo: Mike Saviola

be innovative and to adjust to changing market conditions in order to stay in the County. Maintaining productive farms, as an alternative to more housing, may dovetail with the growth management desires of many of the towns. Action items call for the towns to analyze and *plan for* agriculture as an economic use and as a *special* component of their community's open space.

4. Continue to expand the use of best management practices (BMPs) on farmland throughout the County.

In order to gain and keep a broad base of support among a very environmentally concerned public, Westchester farms will need to be showcases of best management practices for soil conservation and water quality protection. The technical help to accomplish this is available to all farmers in the County and outreach should be encouraged and supported by government entities. Action items call for integration of BMP education into Agricultural District activities and the *Comprehensive Croton Watershed Water Quality Protection Plan For Westchester County*.

5. Explore participation in a purchase of development rights (PDR) program.

The ability of Westchester to compete for funds from the New York Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) Grants Program may be stymied both by the limited funding of the program statewide as well as the criteria by which priority is given to funding individual easement projects. In recent years, the State Grants Program has been able to fund 20% or less of the amount requested for PDR projects throughout the state. While the criteria for project funding is very broad (agricultural viability, development pressure, and natural resource protection), Westchester County may face significant challenges in the first two categories when compared to many other areas of the state. The strongest case under all three criteria may be in the Town of North Salem.



Photo: Diane Miller

The fact that most of the County's farmland is also within the Croton watershed, part of the New York City water supply system, may mean that there is potential for purchase of agricultural easements throughout farms in the watershed, specifically for water quality protection purposes. This means that one of Westchester County's best opportunities for PDR funding may be the continued movement of NYCDEP's and the Watershed Agricultural Council's (WAC) programs east of the Hudson River to support purchase of agricultural easements.

Beyond funding, there are substantial administrative efficiencies to be gained by participating in an existing PDR program if it matches the County's goals for farmland protection. Action items outline steps that should be taken to move toward PDRs including soliciting landowner interest, conducting test appraisals, and initiating discussions with funding sources.

6. Use the strategic farmland map as a link to the Croton Watershed planning efforts.

The Westchester County Strategic Farmland Map serves various purposes. It is focused on the Croton Watershed because that's where the greatest convergence of multiple public benefits exists: scenic character, blocks of the farmed land, and drinking water quality protection. There are relatively few parcels left in agriculture in the County and most are in the Croton watershed. They are all shown on the map because, with so little left, they are virtually all strategic. Therefore, the map 1) narrows the land to be solicited first for permanent protection to the Croton watershed, 2) it identifies some of the disconnect between the Agricultural District designation and the parcels classified by local land use records as being in agricultural use, and 3) it identifies the agricultural parcels that may need special consideration in the *Comprehensive Croton Watershed Water Quality Protection Plan For Westchester County (the Croton Plan)*. If the map is integrated into the Croton Plan's outreach process, it presents an opportunity for building alliances among the environmental interests in the County. Action items involve documenting and highlighting the environmental contributions of farmland to educate the public and to broaden support for agriculture.

7. Support Westchester County's current and future agricultural entrepreneurs.

One of the most important findings of this study has been the role of individual entrepreneurs in supporting growth and development of agriculture in Westchester County. One can look at any sector of commercial agriculture and find that today's operations are successful not because of the inertia of the industry, but because of the business and market savvy of the local agricultural entrepreneur. The entrepreneur will continue to drive development of agriculture in the future and those individuals will need the best technical assistance available. Action items contain ideas for county economic development programs that focus on entrepreneurs rather than industry sectors.

8. Integrate agriculture with local and regional economic and business development programs.

Westchester County and, indeed, the entire State and region offer a wide-range of economic and business development programs from which local farms may benefit. However, few farmers are aware of their existence and few of these programs are marketed to the agricultural industry. Improving this integration will provide a low cost means of improving local and regional agricultural economic conditions. Action items include building networks, participating in regional efforts, creating an ombudsman function, and encouraging farmers to participate in local government.

CONCLUSION

Advice, energy and cooperation from a number of agencies, organizations, and governments will be needed to implement these recommendations. The Agriculture and Farmland Protection Board (AFPB) is the hub of the wheel directing the effort. As a volunteer board, it will need dedicated staff support either through an employee of its own or through a shared position with a partner agency such as the Planning Department, the Office of Economic Development, Cornell Cooperative Extension, or the Watershed Agricultural Council. The annual work plan for this part-time employee should be developed by the AFPB based on the work plan matrix which follows. As all agencies and governments have limited resources, grant support and other funding sources would be sought for additional program needs.

Putting an Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan into action is not unlike launching a business or program. The process will take time and resources and outcomes will not be immediate. Early and sustained commitment from members of the AFPB is a minimum requirement for successful implementation. Keeping stakeholders engaged in the process during this period will be one of the greatest challenges facing the AFPB and any staff it may engage.



Photo: Mike Saviola

During the process of researching and developing this Plan, Westchester County purchased Hilltop Hanover Farm in Yorktown. This working farm is 182 acres, of which 45 acres are farmed. This former dairy farm, now growing vegetables, contains extensive agricultural infrastructure. The County plans to incorporate a number of the Plan's recommendations into the programming for the use of this asset, particularly for the demonstration of sustainable agriculture in a sensitive watershed.

Westchester County and its municipalities will benefit from the protection of the remaining farms by preserving valuable cultural and historic activities, scenic vistas, rural character as well as maintaining viable economic enterprises. In addition, the County's farmland provides water quality protection (far less impervious surface than developed land) in the Croton watershed, a key drinking water supply for New York City and Westchester County. Therefore, protection of agricultural land supports many of the water quality goals outlined in the Croton Plan. Finally, planning for agriculture will complement growth management goals of municipalities and supports the County's long-range land use policy plan known as *Patterns*.

Figure 6-1. WORK PLAN MATRIX
Recommendation 1: Develop a Public Outreach Program

Action Item	Purpose	Responsible Entity	Potential Partners & Funding Sources	Budget Considerations	Implementation Timeline - Years		
					1-2	3-5	6-8
I. Develop a cohesive public message.	Gain local support for agricultural programming including purchase of development rights by bringing agriculture closer to the daily lives of Westchester citizens.	AFPB	County Legislature, New York City Department of Environmental Protection, Office of Tourism, Office of Economic Development, Cornell Cooperative Extension, WAC, Planning Department, land trusts, environmental groups, Farm Bureau, Industry Associations	Allocation of staff and board time			
II. Create an agricultural speakers' bureau.	Provides a method for AFPB to deliver above message to community, school, and business groups in support of PDR, Ag District renewal, and program support.	AFPB	County legislature, industry associations, citizen leagues, school districts, chambers of commerce, etc.	Allocation of staff and board time			
III. Integrate above message with youth programming such as schools and equine programs.	Introduces youth to the importance of agriculture in the County and integrates equine programs into the agricultural community.	AFPB in cooperation with Cornell Cooperative Extension and/or East of Hudson WAC	County legislature, New York City Department of Environmental Protection, Office of Tourism, Office of Economic Development, Cornell Cooperative Extension, WAC, Planning Department, land trusts, environmental groups, Farm Bureau, Industry Associations	Allocation of staff and board time			
IV. Produce periodic editorial for local print media.	Disseminates above message to broad population base.	AFPB	County legislature, Cornell Cooperative Extension, East of Hudson WAC, Farm Bureau	Allocation of staff and board time			
V. Develop a local farm tour program.	Allows general citizens and policy makers first hand experience of farm issues.	AFPB	County legislature, Cornell Cooperative Extension, East of Hudson WAC, Farm Bureau	Allocation of staff time and approximately \$5,000 for advertising and marketing collateral.			

Action Item	Purpose	Responsible Entity	Potential Partners & Funding Sources	Budget Considerations	Implementation Timeline - Years		
					1-2	3-5	6-8
VI. Develop a marketing brochure.	Gives the AFPB “leave behind” collateral to distribute throughout the County.	AFPB	County legislature, New York City Department of Environmental Protection, Office of Tourism, Office of Economic Development, Cornell Cooperative Extension, WAC, Planning Department, land trusts, environmental groups, Farm Bureau, Industry Associations	Allocate \$8,000 for graphic art and production costs. Allocation of staff time			
VII. Develop an AFPB Web Site.	Expands information offerings, provides consumer content, and links to related web sites.	AFPB with cooperation from Planning Department	County legislature, New York City Department of Environmental Protection, Office of Tourism, Office of Economic Development, Cornell Cooperative Extension, WAC, Planning Department, land trusts, environmental groups, Farm Bureau, Industry Associations	Allocate \$2,500 for web design and \$800 annually for maintenance.			

Recommendation 2: Strengthen the Westchester County Agricultural District

Action Item	Purpose	Responsible Entity	Potential Partners & Funding Partners	Budget Considerations	Implementation Timeline - Years		
					1-2	3-5	6-8
I. Develop criteria for inclusion in ag district.	To create a practical definition of district-appropriate properties to reflect Westchester’s unique situation.	AFPB in cooperation with Westchester County Planning Staff	County legislature	Allocation of staff time			
II. Develop a process to coordinate inter-review year applicants to district.	To make the addition of properties to the district before the 2009 review as smooth as possible.	AFPB in cooperation with Westchester County Planning Staff	County legislature	Allocation of staff time			
III. Reach out to towns about Plan and ag district.	To use the district as a vehicle for public relations and education and to strengthen it with input from Towns.	AFPB in cooperation with Westchester County Planning Staff	County legislature, Westchester County Municipal Association	Allocation of staff time			

Action Item	Purpose	Responsible Entity	Potential Partners & Funding Partners	Budget Considerations	Implementation Timeline - Years		
					1-2	3-5	6-8
IV. Communicate with district property owners.	To educate landowners about the benefits and responsibilities of district inclusion.	AFPB in cooperation with Westchester County Planning Staff	County legislature	Allocation of staff time			
V. Prepare for modifications to district in 2008.	To have the most credible and defensible district configuration when it is reviewed as a whole.	AFPB in cooperation with Westchester County Planning Staff	County legislature	Allocation of staff time			

Recommendation 3: Plan for Agriculture at the Local Level

Action Item	Purpose	Responsible Entity	Potential Partners & Funding Sources	Budget Considerations	Implementation Timeline - Years		
					1-2	3-5	6-8
I. To analyze farmland as an economic use of land when master planning.	To draw attention to the special needs of farmland if protection is contemplated.	Westchester County municipalities, AFPB and Westchester County Planning Staff.	AFPB in cooperation with Westchester County Planning Staff				
II. Consider easements as well as fee simple purchase of land when planning for open space protection.	Think of open space in a broader way as both public and privately owned land – some passive, some working.	Westchester County municipalities, AFPB and Westchester County Planning Staff.	AFPB in cooperation with Westchester County Planning Staff, land trusts, WAC.				
III. Design easements so that farming can continue.	Not all conservation easements leave the possibility of farming on a property.	Westchester County municipalities, AFPB and Westchester County Planning Staff.	WAC, land trusts				
IV. Use Ag District for dialogue with County and landowners.	The District gives focus to the tangible land use issues that are important both to the individual farm operator and town officials.	Westchester County municipalities, AFPB and Westchester County Planning Staff.	AFPB in cooperation with Westchester County Planning Staff, County legislature	Allocation of staff time			
V. Incorporate refinements into town zoning regulations.	Ensure maximum flexibility for farmland owners to expand or partially develop property.	Westchester County municipalities, AFPB and Westchester County Planning Staff.	AFPB in cooperation with Westchester County Planning Staff, NY State Ag & Markets, County legislature	Allocation of staff time			

Action Item	Purpose	Responsible Entity	Potential Partners & Funding Sources	Budget Considerations	Implementation Timeline - Years		
					1-2	3-5	6-8
VI. Assist County in communicating with farmland owners.	Ensures a well informed farm community about programs available to help them thrive in an environmentally sound way.	Westchester County municipalities, AFPB and Westchester County Planning Staff.	AFBP with County Dept. of Planning				
VII. Coordinate with County tourism	Leverage town efforts to promote the attractiveness of their communities and the agri-tourism destinations they may contain.	Westchester County municipalities, AFPB and Westchester County Planning Staff.	County Office of Tourism, AFPB, County legislature	Allocation of staff			

Recommendation 4: Continue to Expand the Use of Best Management Practices on Farmland

Action Item	Purpose	Responsible Entity	Potential Partners & Funding Sources	Budget Considerations	Implementation Timeline - Years		
					1-2	3-5	6-8
I. Support the work of the WAC for Whole Farm Plans	Key to making farms the most environmentally benign they can be.	AFPB in cooperation with Westchester County Planning Staff	County legislature, WAC, NRCS, SWCD	Allocation of staff time			
II. Urge greater involvement in NRCS cost-share program.	Increase the use of cost-share for BMPs and other environmental programs on all county farms.	AFPB in cooperation with Westchester County Planning Staff	County legislature, NRCS, SWCD	Allocation of staff time			
III. Incorporate BMP info in outreach material to landowners.	Dovetail resource management information into the complete message about agriculture to farmland owners.	AFPB in cooperation with Westchester County Planning Staff	County legislature WAC, NRCS	Allocation of staff time			
IV. Use examples of BMPs in Croton Watershed presentations.	Take opportunity to educate the non-agriculture community about environmental stewardship on farms.	AFPB in cooperation with Westchester County Planning Staff	WAC, NRCS	Allocation of staff time			

Recommendation 5: Explore Participation in Purchase of Development Rights Program

Action Item	Purpose	Responsible Entity	Potential Partners & Funding Sources	Budget Considerations	Implementation Timeline - Years		
					1-2	3-5	6-8
I. Prepare landowner educational materials about PDR.	Key to soliciting interest in PDR sale. Explains conservation easements and general program elements.	Westchester County Planning Staff	County legislature	Allocation of staff time			
II. Solicit interest from landowners.	Sale of development rights is voluntary. Landowner willingness to sell needs to be determined before further program planning.	AFPB in cooperation with Westchester County Planning Staff	County legislature	Allocation of staff time			
III. Conduct sample appraisals of farmed properties to determine before and after values.	To estimate the approximate per acre costs of conservation easements (PDR) in Westchester.	Westchester County Planning Staff	County legislature	Allocation of staff time			
IV. Develop funding partnerships.	Brings together landowner interest, easement costs, and impact analysis from strategic map to gain support for permanent protection of land.	Westchester County Planning Staff	New York City Dept. Of Environmental Protection; East-of-Hudson Watershed Ag Council., County legislature	Allocation of staff time			
V. Design a local process for participation in existing PDR program.	If all of the above four actions produce positive results, then a program can be designed with substantial savings by using existing WAC elements (i.e., standard easement and ranking criteria)	AFPB in cooperation with Westchester County Planning Staff	Watershed Agricultural Council	Allocation of staff time			
VI. Consider submission of projects to State PDR program from North Salem.	Area most likely to meet the State Program criteria. If successful, would bring additional PDR dollars to the County for permanent protection.	AFPB in cooperation with Westchester County Planning Staff	NY State Department of Agriculture and Markets	Allocation of staff time			

Recommendation 6: Use the Strategic Farmland Map as Link to Croton Watershed Planning

Action Item	Purpose	Responsible Entity	Potential Partners & Funding Sources	Budget Considerations	Implementation Timeline - Years		
					1-2	3-5	6-8
I. Highlight value of farmland to Croton Watershed.	Help towns understand farmland as a working landscape rather than passive open space.	Westchester County Planning Staff	County legislature	Allocation of staff time			
II. Incorporate map and recommendations of this Plan into Croton process.	To demonstrate how the plans complement and strengthen each other	Westchester County Planning Staff	County legislature	Allocation of staff time			
III. Seek out dialogue and alliances with community groups.	To broaden the base of support for agriculture as a preferred land use in the Croton Watershed.	AFPB in cooperation with Westchester County Planning Staff	County legislature, land trusts, community environmental councils, other environmental groups	Allocation of board and staff time			

Recommendation 7: Support Westchester County's Current and Future Agricultural Entrepreneurs

Action Item	Purpose	Responsible Entity	Potential Partners & Funding Sources	Budget Considerations	Implementation Timeline – Years		
					1-2	3-5	6-8
I. Implement ag entrepreneurship training.	Enhances business and management skills of agricultural entrepreneurs throughout the region.	AFPB in cooperation with Cornell Cooperative Extension and/or East of Hudson WAC	Empire State Development, Cornell University, industry associations, regional agricultural development programs, community college, Kaufman Foundation, North Ease SARE, County Legislature.	Course should be conducted on a cost recovery basis. Allow \$1,800 to underwrite the first course.			
II. Develop a service corps of ag mentors and counselors.	Links experienced business people within the community to agricultural producers through a formal, quality-controlled network	AFPB in cooperation with Cornell Cooperative Extension and/or East of Hudson WAC	Industry associations, regional Cornell Cooperative Extension Offices, Office of Economic Development, Community College, SCORE, WAC, County legislature, SARE Professional Development Grant.	Allocate approximately \$2,000 for pilot program related costs in identifying and training counselors, and assessing effectiveness of network.			

Action Item	Purpose	Responsible Entity	Potential Partners & Funding Sources	Budget Considerations	Implementation Timeline - Years		
					1-2	3-5	6-8
III. Maintain and expand the ability of Cornell Cooperative Extension Service to provide production expertise.	CCE is the best equipped agency in the County to provide technical support on production issues.	Cornell Cooperative Extension	County legislature, AFPB	Allocation of staff time			
IV. Develop formal “masterminding” roundtables by ag sector.	Networks agricultural producers within and across agricultural sectors (addresses issues of dis-aggregation) while providing useful, topical information.	AFPB in cooperation with Cornell Cooperative Extension and/or East of Hudson WAC	Industry associations, Cornell University, Department of Agriculture and Markets, County legislature.	Allocate \$250 annually to provide beverages/snacks. Provide staff support to organize and facilitate initial masterminding sessions.			
V. Conduct quarterly brown bag lunches to address current management, operational, regulatory, and other issues.	Provides an educational and training forum for agricultural operations that addresses current issues such as labor recruitment.	AFPB in cooperation with Cornell Cooperative Extension and/or East of Hudson WAC	Industry associations, Cornell University, Department of Agriculture and Markets, County legislature.	Allocate \$400 annually to provide beverages/snacks.			
VI. Encourage and support an ag related “Angel Capital” network	Focuses on the regional and local need for seed and a patient capital in support of agricultural innovation and value-added production.	AFPB in cooperation with Cornell Cooperative Extension and/or East of Hudson WAC	Office of Economic Development, Westchester IDA, Empire State Development, regional Community Development Councils, industry associations, County legislature, Kellogg Foundation	Initially host a roundtable to introduce the idea of a regional ag investors network. Allocate \$2,500 - \$3,000 for expenses, speakers, and facilitator.			

Recommendation 8: Integrate Agriculture with Local and Regional Economic and Business Development Programs

Action Item	Purpose	Responsible Entity	Potential Partners & Funding Partners	Budget Considerations	Implementation Timeline - Years		
					1 - 2	3-5	6-8
I. Meet with representatives from local and regional economic, tourism, and industrial development organizations.	Integrates agribusiness within broader development community.	AFPB	Industry associations, Cornell Cooperative Extension, East of Hudson WAC, Farm Bureau	Allocation of staff and board time			
II. Encourage involvement of local farmers and agribusiness in local and regional development efforts.	Keeps interests of local farmers at the forefront of regional economic and market development initiatives.	AFPB	Department of Agriculture and Markets, Empire State Development, USDA Offices, Cornell University, Glynwood Center, WAC, others counties, etc. County legislature. Other source may be available depending on the project.	Allocation of staff time. AFPB may allocate up to \$10,000 bi-annually to support grant match for regional development projects.			
III. Seek to have additional WAC economic and business development programs extended to East of Hudson Office.	Gives local farmers greater access to enhanced economic and business development services.	AFPB	WAC, County legislature	Allocation of staff and budget support.			
IV. Develop on-going ombudsman function.	Creates a formal program to assist agribusinesses with local, county and state regulatory issues.	AFPB in cooperation with Cornell Cooperative Extension and Office of Economic Development	Empire State Development, Department of Agriculture and Markets, Cornell University, County legislature	Allocation of staff time			
V. Encourage farmer participation on boards and committee.	Integrates farmers with broader business community to broaden base of support.	AFPB	Chambers of Commerce, Office of Economic Development, IDA, others as appropriate, County legislature	Allocation of staff time			
VI. Encourage farmer and agribusiness participation in formal leadership training.	Integrates farmers with broader business community to broaden base of support and improve industry leadership skills.	AFPB in cooperation with Cornell Cooperative Extension and/or East of Hudson WAC	County legislature, Cary Charitable Trust, other local foundations	Allocation of \$2,000 to support pilot scholarship program.			