



Agricultural Stewardship Association

December 29, 2015

Re: Updating the Washington County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan

Dear Agricultural Producer:

We want YOU! To be heard, that is. Washington County is in the process of updating its Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan. The Plan was originally adopted in 1996 to identify strategies to promote agricultural viability and protect farmland. Many of the goals of the original plan were met, but the plan has become outdated. In February 2015, the county received a grant from the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets to update the Plan to better serve the agricultural industry in Washington County. The goal of the update is to generate a new list of goals and strategies to strengthen and support the local ag sector. We hope a few great ideas will rise to the top and we can pursue state funding to implement them.

With limited staff capacity, the County decided to partner with the Agricultural Stewardship Association (ASA), a nonprofit land trust that assists farm families in conserving their working farms and forestlands, to help implement the grant and facilitate the process. A Steering Committee of farmers and ag-related businesses and organizations was formed to provide input throughout the process.

During this past spring and summer, the Steering Committee began discussions and planning for this 18-24 month process. Knowing that summers are very busy for farmers, the Committee first reached out to Washington County residents who are non-farmers and asked them to complete a brief survey about their involvement, knowledge and support of local agriculture. We received more than 400 responses, which will be shared as part of the planning process.

Now, with the commencement of winter, we turn our attention to learning what the farm community has to say. We hope you will take some time to provide us with feedback. The Plan is only as good as the input we receive, so we truly need your ideas, challenges and possible solutions.

We will be reaching out to farmers through farmer workshops and interviews. Although it isn't feasible to individually reach every farmer for an interview or participate in a workshop, we want to make sure that you know this update is occurring and invite you to participate in whatever capacity you can.

The two farmer workshops will be identical in content so please only attend one, if you wish to participate. *If you are not an agricultural producer, please pass this information on to the farmer that uses your land.* The workshops are being held on:

**Tuesday, February 2<sup>nd</sup> at Burton Hall in Easton from noon until 2pm. A complimentary light lunch will be provided. 1071 State Route 40, Greenwich**

**Monday, February 8<sup>th</sup> at Hartford Town Hall from noon until 2pm. A complimentary light lunch will be provided. 165 Hartford Main Street, Hartford**

Information on each one will also be posted on the county and ASA websites and in local papers. We hope you will consider participating in an interview or workshop to identify issues and possible strategies for addressing those issues.

**If you would like to be contacted for a personal interview or be a participant in a farmer workshop, please contact Renee Bouplon with ASA at 692-7285 or [renee@agstewardship.org](mailto:renee@agstewardship.org).**

Once the interviews and workshops are concluded, we intend to ask all county farmers to participate in a brief survey asking for help to prioritize the identified goals and strategies that came out of those prior discussions. Everyone, including the general public, will have an opportunity to comment on the draft plan which is expected to be available later in 2016.

To help get us started understanding your concerns and ideas, we have also enclosed a brief questionnaire with this letter. We would be greatly appreciative if you could complete it. You can either mail or drop it off at ASA, 2531 State Route 40, Greenwich, NY 12834, or scan it and send it to Renee's email.

We thank you for your time and hope that you can be a part of this worthwhile endeavor to continue to grow and support the local agricultural industry and protect the land base that supports it.

With appreciation,

Washington County Agricultural and Farmland  
Protection Plan Steering Committee

Steering Committee

Corrina Aldrich, Wash . Co. SWCD  
Ted Blomgren, Windflower Farm  
Renee Bouplon, ASA  
Dave Campbell, Mapleland Farms  
Brian Gilchrist, CCE  
Laura Oswald, Wash. Co. Econ. Dev.  
Lisa Randles, White Clover Farm

Teri Ptacek, ASA  
Jay Skellie, Hi-Brow Farm  
Nan Stolzenburg, consultant  
Bob Weiderhold, Farm Credit East  
Karen Weinberg, 3-Corner Field Farm  
Dan Wilson, Hicks Orchard