

Cayuga County Farmland Protection Program



**TRISH OTTLEY RITER, COMMUNITY
PLANNER**

**CAYUGA COUNTY DEPT. OF
PLANNING & ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT**

315-253-1276

riter@cayugacounty.us



Cayuga County Statistics

2002 USDA Ag Census; 2000 US Census



OUR AG INDUSTRY IS STRONG!!!

- ❖ Agriculture is our #1 industry
 - \$128 Million in ag product sales
 - \$100 Million additional sales for ag industry support businesses (suppliers, distributors, etc)
 - 2nd in NY for field crop Sales
 - 3rd in NY for total dairy product Sales, top 2% nationally
- ❖ Agriculture dominates the landscape
- ❖ We have GREAT soils!

OUR AG INDUSTRY IS VULNERABLE!!!

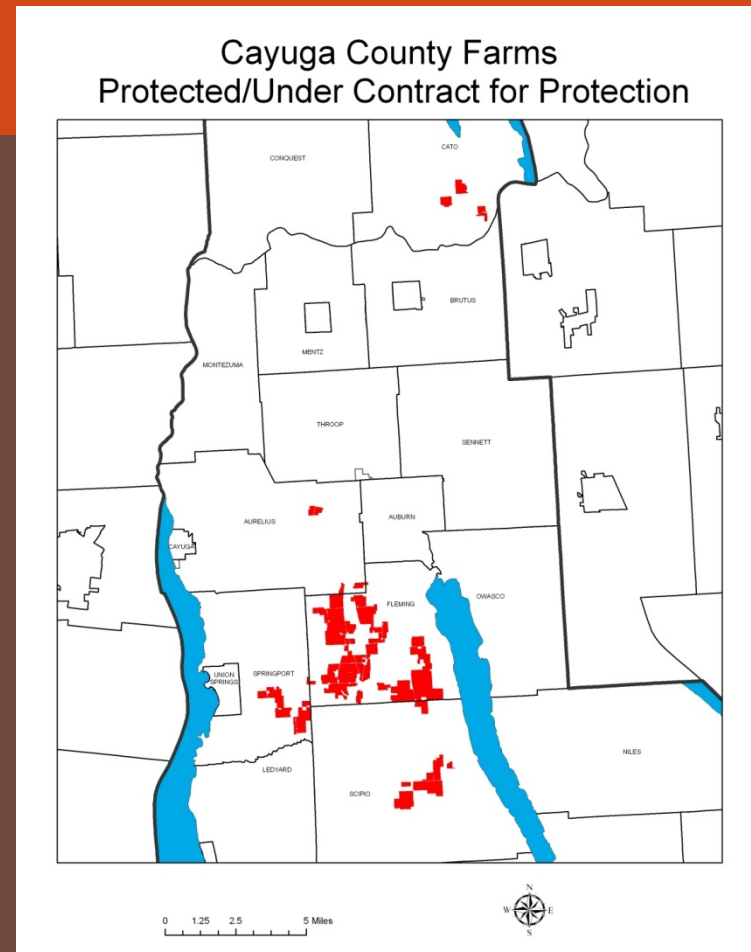
- ❖ 1990-2000: 2200 new housing units, 96% in towns; population loss in virtually every urban area, gain in many rural towns
- ❖ 1992-2002: Cayuga County lost 155 farms; 15% of Cayuga County's farmland, or 41,500 acres, went out of production



Cayuga County Farmland Protection Program

Program History

- ❖ Program began in 2001 with funding to protect 680 acres in Town of Fleming, southwest of City of Auburn
- ❖ 2000 acres now protected (3 farms)
- ❖ 4000 acres under contract (8 farms)
- ❖ Landowner interest has increased substantially since program inception (27 applicants last yr)
- ❖ **WE STARTED WITH ONE PDR PROJECT; NOW WE'RE BUILDING A PROGRAM!**



Having an adopted, approved plan that demonstrates support for agriculture is a requirement of the FPIG program.



LOCAL PLANNING

- County is working with Towns to develop PDR programs that are supported by local comprehensive plans
- County assists Towns in pursuing eligibility determinations from NYSDAM for FPIG funding; some towns qualify for FPIG, others don't
- Desire to pursue PDR funds is stimulating interest in planning in some communities!
- County working with Towns to pursue NYSDAM municipal ag planning grants

COUNTY PLANNING

- County Ag & Farmland Protection Plan enables us to apply for FPIG funds
- Plan outdated - mention of PDR!
- Identifies important agricultural areas, overlooks others
- In the end, County must respect local land use decision-making authority – farm selection contingent upon municipal board support

Generally, there is tremendous support for PDR at the County, local, and individual level!



- ❖ **Municipal outreach (presentations, education) to:**
 - ❖ Town Boards, Planning Boards, Association of Town Supervisors
 - ❖ Comp plan steering committees
 - ❖ County Legislative Committees
- ❖ **County is working with Towns that don't support farmland protection**
 - ❖ Maintain positive relationship, educate, listen, respect local authority
 - ❖ Sparking grassroots effort by farmers to engage local decision-makers
- ❖ Cooperating organizations: most represented on County AFPB, have oversight of program and process – all changes to the program approved by Board
- ❖ **Landowner outreach includes:**
 - ❖ Annual informational workshop;
 - ❖ Website;
 - ❖ Individual Q&A



Strong partnerships are critical to a successful program.



- ❖ LANDOWNERS - Without landowner commitment, we wouldn't have a program. Disclose pros and cons, program requirements up front (no surprises).
- ❖ LAND TRUSTS – These relationships are critical to our program; we wouldn't have a program w/o them. AFT and NYALT have been instrumental (project management, sole party to easement)
- ❖ MUNICIPALITIES – Trying to empower local towns to apply for PDR; County “seeding” farmland protection areas, building local comfort level for local sponsorship, and moving to new areas
- ❖ NEIGHBORING COUNTIES: Look for opportunities to partner on PDR projects
- ❖ NYSDAM & NRCS – Critical funding and technical resources!
- ❖ SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT: Oversee AEM requirements for PDR
- ❖ CCE – Education and Outreach

Our PDR farm selection process is reviewed annually and revised as needed; our process is transparent and objective.



- ❖ Pre-applications reviewed, scored, ranked by County Planning, presented to AFPB for farm selection; typically select highest ranking farms
- ❖ Look for opportunities to maximize submittals to State, through local sponsorship (Towns relying on County rankings); partnerships with neighboring counties; and industry-based proposals (dairy application submitted last year)
- ❖ Focus on environmental quality: now require Tier 1 and 2 of AEM to apply to program, Tier 3 if selected; also this year revised scoring to award points for demonstrated buffering of important natural resources (maintenance of riparian buffers, stream setbacks, etc)
- ❖ Selected landowners write their own proposals (to date all have contracted with consultants; County Planning provides GIS data and mapping, narrative)
- ❖ **OUR SELECTION CRITERIA ARE MODELED AFTER NYSDAM's**

SHOW ME THE MONEY!!!!



The only source of funding for Cayuga County's Farmland Protection Program is FPIG in conjunction with bargain sale.

When NRCS FRPP funds were allowed as eligible match, we were awarded funds for every application submitted.

Resolution of conflicts between FPIG and FRPP programs is critical; property owners should be compensated fairly and equitably for their commitment to farmland protection. County AFPB consistently demonstrates support for AFT's policy initiatives to remedy programmatic issues.

TIMELY PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION



We rely on the land trust to implement projects, but remain primary point of contact with NSYDAM.

Our first project took 4+ years to complete. Now we're down to 2½, but every project is different and has its own idiosyncrasies.

Periodic conference calls and meetings help keep projects on track.

Oil and gas leases take a while to resolve – start on these early.

Make sure the project manager is reviewing documents for consistency BEFORE sending packages to NYSDAM.

Give yourself enough time to have NYSDAM (and NRCS if applicable) review and comment on the project file, for you to address concerns, and for you to get an approval to draw down funds in time for closing before the contract deadline!!!!

Celebrations are more than just a pat on the back!!!



Recognize the commitment of landowners.

Give elected officials an opportunity to showcase their community and promote their farmland protection efforts.

Give the press an opportunity to reiterate the benefits of farmland protection.

AFT has done a great job organizing celebrations for PDR closings here in Cayuga County.

STEWARDSHIP



Cayuga County leaves stewardship responsibilities to the experts – our partnering land trusts.

Without our partnering land trusts, we wouldn't have a program because the County does not want to be in the position to hold, monitor and enforce these easements.

Visit us online!

- Ranking Criteria
- Pre-application
- Links
- Map of Protected Farms
- Powerpoint Presentation

Trish Ottley Riter
Community Planner
Cayuga County Dept. of
Planning &
Economic
Development

315-253-1276

ritter@cayugacounty.us



SAVE THE DATE!!

**Cayuga County Farmland Protection Program 2008 Workshop
Tuesday, February 5th 2008, 1-3 pm
Cornell Cooperative Extension of Cayuga County
Pre-applications due Monday March 3rd 2008**

Cayuga County's Farmland Protection Program launched in 2001 with the award of over \$1,000,000 dollars from New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets (NYSDAM) for protection of 680 acres on the DeGroff Farm in the Town of Fleming, through purchase of development rights on that farm. Since then, Cayuga County has secured funds to protect another 5300 acres - a significant block of highly productive farmland nestled between Cayuga and Owasco Lakes in the Towns of Fleming, Scipio, Springport and Aurelius! Three farms are protected by permanent conservation easements that are currently held, monitored and enforced by American Farmland Trust. Eight other farms are under contract for protection and are expected to close in the near future.

Cayuga County's success has been made possible by developing strong partnerships with our farming community, land trusts including American Farmland Trust and the New York Agricultural Land Trust, and our funding partners - NYSDAM and the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS). NYSDAM offers up to 75% in State funding for purchase of development rights on viable farmland through a competitive grant program entitled the Farmland Protection

IMPORTANT LINKS

[Download our Farmland Protection Program Powerpoint Presentation \(2 MB\)](#)

[Cayuga County Farmland Protection Review Criteria](#)

[Map of Cayuga County Protected Farms](#)

[Map of Cayuga County 2007 Farm Applications](#)

[2007 Farmland Protection Pre-application \(for first-time applicants\)](#)

[2007 Farmland Protection Pre-application Supplemental \(for past applicants\)](#)

[American Farmland Trust](#)