



Town of Halcott

Agricultural Enhancement and Farmland Protection Plan

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Town of Halcott Agricultural Enhancement and Farmland Protection Plan

Acknowledgements

Town Board

Innes Kasanof, Supervisor
Alan Reynolds
Chris DiBenedetto
Tim Johnson
Walter Miller

Consultants

Community Planning & Environmental Associates, Berne, NY
Nan Stolzenburg, AICP
Don Meltz

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Photographs

Nan Stolzenburg



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Executive Summary

What is the Plan?

In 2003, the Town of Halcott completed work and adopted a town-wide Comprehensive Plan that outlines the long-term direction and actions Halcott can take to address community goals. Agriculture was a significant part of the Comprehensive Plan and was recognized as critical to maintaining community character. Farming was recognized by the community as having a vital role in the Town's landscape and culture.

In 2007, the Town started implementing the Comprehensive Plan. This work included development of a zoning ordinance referred to as a land use code and updating site plan review and subdivision regulations. To aid in these efforts, the Town of Halcott sought and received a grant from the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets and an additional grant from the Catskill Watershed Corporation. . In accepting the New York State funding, the Town agreed to follow Agriculture and Markets Circular 1500, Article 25-AAA, Section 324-a, which asks the town to include the following (but is not limited to):

- a) the location of any land or areas proposed to be protected;
- b) an analysis of the following factors concerning any areas and lands proposed to be protected;
 - i) value to the agricultural economy of the municipality;
 - ii) open space value;
 - iii) consequences of possible conversion; and
 - iv) level of conversion pressure on the lands or areas proposed to be protected; and
- c) a description of activities, programs and strategies intended to be used by the municipality to promote continued agricultural use, which may include but not be limited to revisions to the municipality's comprehensive plan pursuant to paragraph (a) of subdivision two of section two hundred seventy-two-a of the town law and land use regulations as defined in paragraph (b) of subdivision two of section two hundred seventy-two-a of the town law as appropriate.

The Town retained a planning consultant to help with development of the plan and enlisted project help from the Catskill Center, Greene County Soil

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and Water Conservation District, and the Greene County Department of Planning and Economic Development. The planning process included:

- Two farm focus group meetings to discuss agriculture with farmers and farmland owners in Town,
- Development of maps and information that helps us understand agricultural resources in Town,
- Formation of a zoning commission to draft zoning consistent with the Town Comprehensive Plan and that is supportive of agriculture,
- Public education and information sessions on land use options,
- Adoption of zoning as recommended from this planning process, and
- Drafting of recommended strategies that can be put to work to enhance agriculture in Halcott.

The results of all these efforts are collected together and organized to form this strategic plan.

Why have this Plan?

The Town of Halcott Comprehensive Plan establishes agriculture as a very important land use in town. Farms are struggling from an economic perspective and there is more and more competition now for use of farmlands for non-farm purposes. The Town has limited, but viable agricultural resources (farmland soils, forests, and open lands) that are critical to maintaining the rural character of Halcott sought by residents.

The plan is designed to offer the Town a toolbox of ideas and actions that can be implemented over time to improve agricultural opportunities in Halcott, preserve important farmlands, and maintain open lands as part of the landscape. This ag plan builds on and is more specific than the Comprehensive Plan.

What will the Plan do for Halcott?

It gives residents and local officials a document that offers information and ideas to promote farming. The document includes data that characterizes farming and farmlands in town; maps and analyses to show strengths, weaknesses and opportunities for agriculture; and suggests tools that the town, its residents, and farmers could implement.

The Town Board has already provided leadership to plan for its own future (development of the comprehensive plan, updating of land use regulations, and passing a first zoning law). This ag plan is another tool that offers information, ideas, and direction to help the Town meet its community goals.

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Overall, the Ag Plan will give the Town:

- o Additional leverage and success in receiving future State aid;
- o Assist local landowners who wish to participate in State or Federal purchase of development rights programs;
- o Give a framework for the Town and interested landowners to promote farming and agri-tourism in town;
- o Give the Town and Planning Board guidelines they can use during project review to protect farms to the maximum extent practical;
- o Provide a timetable for the Town to implement recommendations;
- o Establish agriculture as a critical land use in Town;
- o Identify opportunities for new farm operations such as grass-fed, niche farming, timber, agri-tourism, and food for local residents;
- o Help the Town maintain agriculture to promote healthy and local food.

How will the Town use the Plan?

The Town Board will first have to approve the plan. After approval, the Town Board will provide the leadership to follow the checklist of actions and implement the plan over the next few years. The Plan outlines who can assist the Town Board to take those steps.

Long-term, the Town Board should evaluate all actions it may take in context of the Comprehensive Plan, and this Plan to answer: “will this action or decision we are about to take bring Halcott closer to meeting our established vision?” The Town Planning Board now has maps and other information that they should use during any review of special use permits, site plan approvals, or subdivision developments.

What steps does the Town have to take to approve the Plan?

It is recommended that the Town approve this plan as a formal addendum to the Comprehensive Plan. That approval process requires a public hearing, County Planning Board review, an environmental review (SEQRA) and adoption as a resolution of the Board. New York State Agriculture and Markets (as funder) further requires that the County Agriculture and Farmland Protection Board also approve the plan prior to it being submitted to the Commissioner.

What is included in the Plan?

The plan discusses the role of Agriculture in Halcott and documents the importance of farming to residents of the Town. It also offers details on the status of farms and farming in Halcott. New maps show where farms are, what kind of farms they are, farmland soils, how these farmlands relate to

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other environmental features such as slopes and wetlands, and where the NYS Ag District boundary is. Statistics on farmland acreage are also given. Based on input received from farmers and farmland owners in Halcott, the plan also presents a prioritization of farmlands so that the Town can target farmland promotion and protection efforts to critical areas in the future.

The plan offers additional information that details trends and pressures facing farming in Halcott. Like the Comprehensive Plan, the Ag Plan establishes a clear vision and a set of goals for the future of agriculture in Halcott. At the heart of the Plan is a set of recommended actions and strategies.

The plan offers the Town Board a variety of ideas and programs it could implement to help promote farming. **As the Zoning Commission and adoption of zoning were part of this planning process, agricultural needs have already been largely incorporated into the new Halcott regulations.** Most of the other recommended actions in this ag plan revolve around ag economic development, funding opportunities, and actions the State and County could take to better support agriculture in Town.



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Introduction

To the people who live and visit here, the Town of Halcott, Greene County, is a very special place. Halcott is a small community of 193 people. The town is 22.68 square miles and is accessed primarily by one main road, 5.3 miles long, which runs like the trunk of a tree up the Vly Creek stream valley. Open pastures and hay lands are common along Halcott's roads, while steep hills and ridges rise up from that on both sides. Side roads extending off the main road, eventually end at the foot of a bowl-shaped mountain range. This range includes some of the Catskills' highest peaks: Bearpen, Halcott and Vly Mountains. The Halcott Mountain Wild Forest is located along the eastern boundary of the town.

Like many surrounding Catskill towns, Halcott's history combines influences of agriculture and tourism. At the peak of the farming era, there were many dairy operations, as well as sheep, chickens, cauliflower and potato farms. Maple syrup production was also an important part of the farmers' livelihood. Summer hotels and boarding houses gained popularity during the golden age of railroad travel, which provided a colorful seasonal tourist trade for natives and visitors.

Today Halcott offers one of the purest experiences of natural beauty in the region. This natural beauty, highly valued by Halcott's residents and landowners, includes mountain and meadow views, clean water and air, an undisturbed night sky, natural habitats and abundant wildlife. People value the area's peace and tranquility. These qualities draw and keep people here.

¹

The Planning Process

In 2003, the Town of Halcott completed work and adopted a town-wide Comprehensive Plan. This plan outlines the long-term direction and actions Halcott can take to address community goals. Agriculture was a significant part of this plan (see below) and was recognized by the community as having a vital role in the Town's landscape and culture. In 2007, as part of their ongoing Comprehensive Plan implementation work, the Town of Halcott sought and received a grant from the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets and an additional grant from the Catskill Watershed

¹ Paragraphs adapted from the 2003 Town of Halcott Comprehensive Plan.

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Corporation to develop an agriculturally oriented plan and recommendations to improve land use regulations.

The Town retained a planning consultant and enlisted project help from the Catskill Center, Greene County Soil and Water Conservation District, and the Greene County Department of Planning and Economic Development. The Town Board, together with an appointed Zoning Commission developed and reviewed this Plan.

This planning process included the following major steps:

- Farm Focus Group formed.
- Farm Focus Group met to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and vision related to farming in Halcott.
- Farm Focus Group met to identify and prioritize farmland.
- Maps were developed depicting agriculture and farmland in Halcott as well as the prioritization of farmland for future programs.
- Met with Cornell Cooperative Extension to discuss opportunities presented to Halcott farmers through their programs.
- Held discussions on programs and opportunities with Soil and Water Conservation District, County Planning, and The Catskill Center.
- Zoning Commission was formed to develop draft zoning that addressed both comprehensive plan and agriculture needs.
- Catskill Center held a well-attended Saturday session to discuss zoning and the role land use regulations can play in meeting the goals of the Comprehensive Plan and this agricultural plan.
- Numerous public meetings were held related to land use in Halcott and the development of the zoning law.
- Drafts of vision, goals and recommended actions were drawn up.
- Draft Plan reviewed by Town Board and Public (November 2009).
- Public Hearing held on Plan (TBA)

Agriculture and the Town of Halcott Comprehensive Plan

The Comprehensive Plan is a written document that identifies the goals, objectives, principles, guidelines, policies, standards, and strategies for the growth and development in the Town of Halcott. The Plan background information describes the current status, conditions and trends in Halcott and answers the questions “where are we now”, and “where are we going” questions. The vision statement sets the tone and overall direction the Town should take in the future and together with the goals, answers the “where do

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we want to be” question. The vision depicts in words and images what Halcott is striving to become. The goals included in this plan are broad statements that reflect “ideal” future conditions desired by the residents of Halcott. Finally, the recommended strategies are a series of actions that the Town can take to accomplish each goal. The strategies address the “how can we get there” question.

Public participation was an important part of the planning process. This included two surveys, two planning workshops, public presentations, and hearings. A high level of public participation occurred. There was a 46.5% return on the community survey and 100 (out of a total population of 193) people participated in the first planning workshop.



Agriculture is included in the Comprehensive Plan and recognized as an important part of the Town. Rural character, quality of the environment, open spaces, low taxes, and road conditions were the most important issues to participants. The town’s small farms were among the highest rated features of the town.

People highly value the small family farms and working landscapes remaining in Halcott. Although physical conditions and soil characteristics limit areas that are suitable for crops or more intensive agriculture, the plan details how open lands are an important part of the landscape not only because of agriculture, but because they contribute to the town's rural character and break up an environment dominated by woodlands. There is a desire among residents to encourage small, sustainable agricultural operations.

Definition of Agriculture in Halcott

Agriculture in Halcott is any active use for livestock or crops² on seven or more acres of land.

² Crops as defined by New York State as: field crops, including corn, wheat, oats, rye, barley, hay, potatoes and dry beans; fruits, including apples, peaches, grapes, cherries and berries; vegetables including tomatoes, snap beans, cabbage, carrots, beets and onions; horticultural specialties, including nursery stock, ornamental shrubs and trees,

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Role of Agriculture in Halcott

Agriculture has been part of the landscape in Halcott from its beginning. Dairy farming was a way of life in the valley. Census figures in 1875 show 78 dwellings in Halcott with 146 horses, 1,465 head of cattle, and 7,138 apple trees. The first creamery in Town was the Kingston Dairy and Ice Cream Company built about 1889 on the Crosby land. The Co-op Creamery was built and traded places with the Grange and after 1910, the creamery was operated by different dairies. By mid-century, the local creamery had moved out of Halcott and there were 35 operating farms in Halcott. By 1951, that number was down to 27. The 1976 town history (*Halcott Valley 1851-1976*) listed 4 dairy farms with 137 cows. Other farming operations have always been a part of Halcott as well including maple syrup, timber, other livestock, orchards, and horses.



Due to mountainous conditions, soil limitations, and weather constraints, Halcott is not suited to large scale crop farming. However, because the Town is primarily forested, agriculture and especially open hay fields and pastures are vital to the character and culture of Halcott. People in Town highly value the small family farms and working landscapes remaining in Halcott. Physical conditions and soil characteristics limit areas that

are suitable for crops or more intensive agriculture. Only a few commercial dairy farms remain in operation. Open lands are an important part of the landscape not only because of agriculture, but because they contribute to the town's rural character and break up an environment dominated by woodlands. There is a desire among residents to encourage small, sustainable agricultural operations. The farmland base in Halcott is modest but critical to the town. Farms in Halcott play an important role in the following:

and flowers; livestock and livestock products, including cattle, sheep, hogs, goats, horses, poultry, ratites, such as ostriches, emus, rheas and kiwis, farmed deer, farmed buffalo, fur bearing animals, wool bearing animals such as alpacas and llamas, milk, eggs and fur; maple sap; Christmas trees; aquaculture products including fish, fish products, water plants and shellfish; woody biomass; apiary products; and farm woodland.

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Rural Character: Halcott's farms play a critical role in the town's character, especially the open fields and pastures. At one time, more of the town was open and farmed. As farm operations have declined and open fields abandoned, a majority of the land is now forested. The remaining farmlands create landscape diversity and open fields used for farming provide scenic views of the mountains and contribute to the rural atmosphere highly desired by Halcott's citizens. Without farmlands, there would be little diversity and the landscape would be dominated by forestland interspersed with residential properties.

Water Quality and Environmental Protection: Halcott's mostly small, local, farms are run by farmers who live on their land and work hard to preserve it. They protect open spaces by keeping land in agricultural use and preserve natural habitats by maintaining fields, woodlots and wetlands. The edge between a forested area and fields and pastures often has the richest diversity of plant and animal life. Woodlands that are well-managed and harvested for timber also support a diversity of forest wildlife.

Open lands add to the biodiversity of the area and provides habitats for deer, turkey, grassland birds, and other species that rely on non-forested areas. The active farms are located along the town's limited road network and this plays a crucial role in creating the distinctive character of Halcott.

Source of Local Food: Selling and buying food locally is good for consumers and farmers. There is a growing awareness among consumers of the desire and need for local foods. Numerous movements and efforts such as the "locavores" and the "100-mile diet" have developed throughout the United States to promote local food. Local food is desired as a fresher, safer, and more nutritious alternative to foods imported from far away.

Selling foods locally can be good for farmers too. There are significant difficulties of earning a living wage as a farmer. Farmers are earning less producing crops these days than they did in 1969, despite the fact that American farmers have almost doubled productivity over the past four decades. Farmers aren't just earning less; current prices do not even cover the cost of production. Until just recently the difference between farm income nationwide and what it cost to grow and raise American crops could be counted in the billions. Buying locally or directly from farmers can dramatically increase a farmer's income.

The Maine Organic Farmers and Gardener's Association published a study that demonstrates what would happen if consumers shifted 1% of their

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purchasing power to buy locally grown products: farmers would see a gain of 5% in their income. Buying direct from a farmer sends 90% of those food dollars back to the farm. Increasing farm income means more money can be spent locally by the farmer to run their business and home, helping keep the local economy alive.

The Greene County Comprehensive Economic Development Plan also recognizes the importance of local foods. This plan establishes a policy and set of strategies for the County to undertake to develop a “Buy-Local” initiative to support county farms.

Recreation: Recreational opportunities on farmland including open fields and forested areas in Halcott range from hunting, bird watching, to hiking. Others use the open lands for snowmobiles and other recreation vehicles. The County economic development plan establishes an action to enhance the visibility of and access to natural resources for outdoor recreation, including walking, birding, fishing, and other activities, particularly outside the Catskill Forest Preserve. Halcott’s farms can play a role in implementing this action.



Economy and Taxes:

Farmlands contribute to the town’s fiscal health by providing property. Farmlands have an average assessed land value in the Town of \$91,479 and a total assessed land value of \$4,391,000. Of this total, the land is assessed at about \$2,300,000. These farms support regional businesses primarily in Delaware County³ and include equipment dealers and repairers, feed, petroleum,

and other products and services. Agriculture has a high economic multiplier that also influences the regional economy. Dairy production, for example, has a 2.26 income multiplier and horse breeding and boarding has a 2.82 multiplier compared to 1.66 for construction, and 1.4 for retail and wholesale trade.⁴ Agricultural uses do not require a large amount of public services

³ Farms in Halcott purchase more goods and services from other counties such as Delaware or Otsego Counties because these locations are easier to get to compared to Cairo or Catskill.

⁴ From the 2002 Greene County Agricultural Development and Farmland Protection Plan.

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and thus farms produce more in tax revenue than expenditures.⁵

Tourists seek picturesque, distinctive, and safe areas to visit – all significant features in Halcott. Farms and farmland are increasingly important in local tourism development. The County economic development plan seeks to promote and enhance opportunities for agri-tourism and opportunities exist in Halcott to further develop small-scale recreational opportunities and additional tourism-related businesses that are consistent with the Town's comprehensive plan.

Strengths, Weaknesses, and Opportunities for Agriculture in Halcott

Based on the input received from the farm focus meetings and the general public, the following strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities for agriculture were identified:

Strengths

- Farmers and farmland owners have a deep love of their land and their farms.
- Town is quiet and isolated.
- There are a lot of family ties and farm history here.
- The overall quality of life in Town is excellent.
- Visitors come to Halcott to see farm operations.
- Community supports farming and has a desire to maintain farms and farmland.
- Farmland owners are committed to their land and are not, at this point in time, interested in selling land.
- Greene County has an agricultural and farmland protection plan in place.
- Greene County has an economic development plan that recognizes the role agriculture plays in the area's economy.
- Watershed Agricultural Council programs exist, and support and enhance farms.
- Grass-roots level support in County and region exists including County-based services such as the Soil and Water Conservation District, Cornell Cooperative Extension, and NRCS, as well as other organizations supporting or promoting small farms.

⁵ From research by the American Farmland Trust, Cornell Cooperative Extension, and Cost of Community Service Studies throughout the Hudson Valley.

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- The Agroforestry Center in Cairo offers support for woodland and timber activities.
- The Catskill Center is nearby and active in promoting agriculture and farmland protection.
- There is a growing awareness in the Hudson Valley and Catskills of the importance of local foods.
- Catskill branding for agricultural products exist (Pure Catskills).
- Small farms are increasing in the County and there are more small operations in Halcott that keep land open and support the farm economy.

Weaknesses

- Low milk prices for dairy products
- Production and operation costs including energy, taxes, fuel.
- Nuisance complaints from neighbors related to smell, noise, spraying, or other ag practices.
- Lack of public understanding and education on such practices as clearcutting versus harvests and forest management. Public misunderstands forest operations and thinks the forests are being destroyed.
- Agri-services are too far away. It is difficult to get a veterinarian to come out anymore.
- Lack of services for breeding dairy cows.
- Lack of nearby machinery repair/parts dealers.
- Limited County services. Farm Focus Group participants mentioned that services provided by Cornell Cooperative Extension and other similar agencies don't help much. Instead, they felt that they get more from the Watershed Agricultural Council (WAC) in terms of soil samples, nutrient management, and farm planning. A few farms have farm plans, manure management and barn yard plans through WAC.
- Soils are limited for farming.
- Lack of awareness of the NYS Ag District. Farm Focus Group participants indicated that some did not know if they were in the ag district or not. Others were not familiar with the ag assessment program or how to take advantage of that program.
- Concern that future land use regulations would curtail farmers' ability to run their agricultural operations or expand their use of land.
- Development pressures, especially for second homes.
- High expenses in starting a new farm.
- Low milk prices for dairy.
- Lack of education and understanding about farming on the part of non-

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farmers.

- Low farm profitability.
- Rising land values and corresponding taxes.
- Limited infrastructure in the Greene/Delaware area to support. (Slaughterhouse, processing, storage, and distribution systems are scarce and located far away, thus limiting livestock production)
- Challenges to start-up farms include access to land, credit, and farm business management training
- Lack of next generation of farmers.

Opportunities

- Value-added, grass-fed, and farm-stay programs or other agri-tourism businesses.
- Halcott still an element of tourism here. Recreation is still an important part of the community and farming could take advantage of that. There are opportunities for:
 - Stocking pond with trout for more recreation
 - Hunters leasing hunting rights.
 - Maple syrup and tourism related to that operation.
 - Farm-based tourism. For example, Hasidic Jews summering nearby come to see farms. Lots of people stop by just to see the farming operation and animals.
- There is interest in value added operations, but farmers are concerned about how to find the time to figure out how to do it or start it up.
- Greater demand for and awareness of the importance of local farms and local agricultural products.
- Opportunities exist for niche, grass-fed livestock, and smaller-scale value-added agricultural operations.
- Forests are underutilized for agro-forestry operations and could become more a part of the agricultural economy in town.

Vision and Goals for the Future

Town Vision⁶:

The Town Comprehensive Plan establishes a long-term vision for the town and in particular, addresses agriculture. The vision statement is:

⁶ From the Town of Halcott Comprehensive Plan, adopted December 2003

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"In the future, our natural beauty and secluded, rural character remain the most prominent features of Halcott. The landscape is a mix of undeveloped open and forested land, thriving farms, and low-density rural residences that are consistent with Halcott's traditional character. Clean air and water, unobstructed views of the mountains, and an abundant wildlife community exist throughout the town. Agriculture is actively encouraged and sustained locally in a non-polluting manner. Sensible land use regulations control new uses and encourage low impact development that meet the needs of the community, enhances quality of life, and preserves the character and environment of our town. Halcott has a strong sense of community where people are friendly, tolerant, considerate, and welcoming, and where there is a high degree of cooperation and communication between citizens and the local government. Quality public services will include road maintenance, emergency services, recreational and cultural activities, solid waste management, and schools. The Grange Hall remains the central focus for activities in town."

Building on the Comprehensive Plan vision and information collected as part of this Ag Plan, the Town of Halcott establishes the following agricultural vision:

Farms are an important part of Halcott's rural landscape, economy, and culture. Halcott is a farm-friendly community that supports and sustains its farms and farmers. Our farms provide residents and visitors with locally grown food and farm-experiences. Halcott has a diversity of farm operations that successfully supports our farm families.

In order to attain this vision, this strategic plan promotes four principles that the Town can advocate locally, regionally, and statewide:

1. Marketing Promotion
2. Sustainable Production
3. Farmland Protection
4. Policy Development

The following goals are established to promote the agricultural vision and these principles:

Goal 1. Halcott is a "farm friendly" town and has policies supportive of profitable farming, agri-tourism, and farmland protection initiatives.

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- Goal 2. Halcott increases community awareness about the importance of agriculture in Halcott and about farming practices to minimize nuisance complaints, encourage communication between farmers and non-farmers, and promote new agricultural operations.
- Goal 3. Halcott preserves its agricultural lands, especially open fields and pastures on prime farmlands and farmland of statewide importance.
- Goal 4. Halcott promotes and encourages new sustainable production, grass-fed, value-added, and niche farms, as well as sustainable timber operations. More farms offer locally grown foods to residents.
- Goal 5. Halcott promotes existing farms and aids in the establishment of new operations.

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Recommended Actions

This section details a variety of actions that could be taken to implement this Plan. These strategies should be considered a “tool box” of actions and ideas that could be put to work to promote farming activities in Halcott.



Because success will come from strong regional efforts, this toolbox stresses cooperation between the Town, County and State. Success at agricultural promotion and protection programs needs involvement at all levels of government.

Town-Level Actions

Goal 1. Halcott is a “farm friendly” town and has policies and programs supportive of profitable farming, agri-tourism, and farmland protection initiatives.

- A. Formally adopt this Plan as a part of the Town Comprehensive Plan using adoption procedures of NY Town Law 272-a. This could be as an appendix or addenda to the existing plan. Keep both the Town Comprehensive Plan and this Agricultural Plan updated by reviewing and updating as needed every five years.
- B. Develop inter-municipal connections between Halcott, adjacent towns as well as Greene and Delaware County. A regional approach to enhancing agriculture is vital. Provide leadership to create an inter-municipal agreement between these municipalities.
- C. Establish an advisory agricultural implementation committee and appoint members to represent farmer and local government interests. This advisory committee should be an appointed, standing committee of the Town that is responsible for representing the farm community, encouraging and promoting agricultural-based economic opportunities, and preserving, revitalizing, and sustaining the Town’s agricultural businesses and land. The Town Board should assign terms of service, establish a time table and benchmarks for different actions as per this plan, establish a mission statement for the committee, and outline expectations for communicating with each other. This committee should be this Plan’s implementing body, and should report regularly

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to the Town Board. Ideally, this committee would be part of a larger committee that represents a variety of municipalities (see above). A multi-town committee could have sub-committees oriented to specific actions that may be needed for each town. This Committee should coordinate and work closely with the Greene and Delaware County agricultural economic development staff as well as with the Watershed Agricultural Council, Cooperative Extension, and other organizations that promote agriculture. Of prime importance should be to promote new small farms and maintenance of Halcott's remaining dairy farms.

- D. Aggressively advocate to Greene County (including the Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board) the critical need to fully implement the County Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan and the County economic development plan.
- E. Aggressively advocate to New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets, legislators, and the Governor the critical need to implement the state-level actions identified in this Plan.
- F. Seek funding for implementing strategies suggested within this Plan. Funding sources, especially public-private opportunities to be explored include, but are not limited to:

USDA: Has a variety of loans and grant programs including the Value-Added Producer Grant and the Rural Business Enterprise and Rural Business Opportunity programs.

NYS DAM: Has a variety of loans and grant programs including the Agr-Tourism Project, Specialty Crop Block Grant, Farmers Market Grants, SARE Farmers/Grower Grant Program, Grow NY including Ag Research and Development Grants, Farmland Viability Grants, Enterprise Program, and Non-point Source Abatement and Control Grants

NYS DEC: Offers the Environmental Farm Assistance and Resource Management Program

NYS Office of Small Cities: Offers Community Development Block Grants

NYSERDA: Offers Innovation in Ag Grants

Watershed Agricultural Council: Offers a variety of on-farm and ag economic development programs.

- G. Incorporate promotion of agriculture in all town functions. Use every opportunity to convey the importance of agriculture to the town

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including implementing this plan and using town websites, newsletters, offices, press releases, etc.

- H. Educate farmers and farmland owners about tax relief programs that are available. Maintain copies of brochures and other information in Town Hall on these programs as well as land trusts, new farm marketing and start-up information, etc. Ensure that the Town Assessor, farmers and farmland owners have up-to-date information on the tax relief programs and make this available to farmers.
- I. Work with the Greene County Industrial Development Authority (IDA) to enhance funding opportunities in the forms of loans, grants, and tax incentives directly for new farm, farm expansion, and ag-business development. Some initiatives that should be promoted include:
 - a. Develop an Ag Local Development Corporation to provide incentives and tax benefits for new and expanding agricultural businesses. Promote agricultural business development through the County IDA so that the same incentives are given to farms and ag businesses as other businesses.
 - b. Work with Greene County to establish a Greene County Agri-Business Revolving Loan Fund to target entrepreneurial, emerging and expanding agri-businesses. This program should assist in helping farmers with inventory, machinery and equipment, signage, and other direct improvements to expand or initiate a new agricultural business.
- J. Use NYS Town Law 271.11 and appoint a farmer to serve as a member of the Planning Board to ensure that the agricultural perspective is included in the planning process.
- K. Approach farmers not currently in the agricultural district about becoming part of agricultural district. Educate them about the benefits of and requirements for becoming part of the district.
- L. Utilize the Agricultural District Law to Protect Farms: Ensure that all of the provisions of the state's agricultural district law are being adhered to within the town.
- M. Designate farmlands in Halcott as a Critical Environmental Area under the State environmental quality review law (SEQRA). Designating

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farmland as a critical environmental resource that requires development projects within that area to use the Full Environmental Assessment Form when the State Environmental Quality Review process is undertaken. This process heightens the review of a project's impact on critical farmlands in Halcott.

- N. Amend the Subdivision Regulations to ensure that future subdivision activity minimizes negative impacts on farms in Halcott. In order to make the subdivision law more "farm friendly" adopt amendments so agriculture plays a more prominent role in the law and to:
- a. Emphasize protection of agriculture as an important policy and purpose of the subdivision regulations.
 - b. Add definitions of critical agricultural terms.
 - c. Create a mandatory sketch plan requirement.
 - d. Add general standards to minimize adverse impacts of subdivision.
 - e. Add cluster and conservation subdivision requirements and procedures and identify agricultural lands as critical to be preserved during this process.
- (These suggested changes have been incorporated into a proposed amended subdivision law and have been submitted to the Town Board for their consideration. Copies of the proposed subdivision law can be obtained from the Town.)
- O. Maintain agriculture as a permitted use as included in the recently adopted land use regulations.

Goal 2. Halcott increases community awareness about the importance of agriculture in Halcott and about farming practices to minimize nuisance complaints, encourage communication between farmers and non-farmers, and promote new agricultural operations.

- A. Use the Town Website as marketing for area farms by adding text and pictures that captures the agricultural character of Halcott.
- B. Organize farm tours, especially for local and county elected officials.
- C. Educate local realtors about the ag disclosure notice and the critical role they play in informing new land buyers about agricultural practices. (See Appendix D)

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- D. Develop a welcome packet for new residents that include information about farm practices, the agricultural district, the ag disclosure statement, local regulations and plans, and the right to farm law.
- E. Expand Halcott Day to showcase town farms. There could be a farmers market with local products, a petting zoo with local animals, or displays.
- F. Provide for training of the Planning Board in agricultural topics. This should count towards their required four hours of training.
- G. Educate Buyers and Sellers of Property on How to Minimize Loss of Farmland: Collaborate with Cornell Cooperative Extension and the Watershed Agricultural Council to create an educational brochure for those who want to subdivide and develop property, offering guidelines of how to do it with the least negative impact on agriculture.

Goal 3. Halcott preserves its agricultural lands, especially open fields and pastures on prime farmlands and farmland of statewide importance.

- A. Consider the feasibility of using a town-sponsored Lease of Development Rights program (LDR) to promote preservation of farmlands. An LDR could provide tax incentives for 10 years if farmers voluntarily agree to a term conservation easement and active farm operations for that time period. Use the Priority Farmland Map to assist in determining critical locations to direct this program towards.
- B. Support landowners who desire to use conservation easements to protect their farmland properties.
- C. Establish a local Purchase of Development Rights program (PDR). Use the prioritization criteria established in this plan to direct funds to the critical farmlands first. Lands should be preserved with conservation easements.
- D. Connect land sellers and buyers to promote available farmlands for sale or rent to other farmers. Develop a program modeled on the Jefferson County "Come Farm with Us" program (www.comefarmwithus.com). Promote farmlands as potential niche

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farms to urban residents seeking a rural business opportunity.

Goal 4. Halcott promotes and encourages new sustainable production, grass-fed, value-added, and niche farms, as well as sustainable timber operations. More farms offer locally grown foods to residents. Halcott promotes existing farms and aids in the establishment of new operations.

- A. Promote local branding as well as the “Pure Catskills” brand. The “Pure Catskills: Buy Fresh, Buy Local” is an existing brand that could be promoted and more effectively utilized. Encourage farmers to become members of Pure Catskills and increase the number of farms in town that are listed in the Pure Catskills brochures.
- B. Together with both Greene and Delaware counties, create a local regional farm inventory website that includes location, products, availability, prices, etc. Work with Pure Catskills to enhance their geographic search options.
- C. Work with local farms and encourage them to be listed in the New York MarketMaker website. This is an interactive mapping system that locates businesses and markets of agricultural products in New York, and provides a link between producers and consumers: (<http://ny.marketmaker.uiuc.edu>)
- D. Use the Grow NY and Pride of NY materials to promote fresh foods and agriculture. (See NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets website).
- E. Promote value-added farming, Community Supported Agriculture (CSA), niche farming, and agri-tourism opportunities with landowners and farmers. Use existing resources such as the Agricultural Marketing Resource Center (www.agmrc.org) and the Small Scale Food Entrepreneurship program (www.nysaes.cornell.edu) to help.
- F. Work to enable provision of cable and high-speed internet access to all locations in the Town.
- H. Organize farmers in Halcott to form a cooperative that would enable them to make purchases as a group, ensuring lower prices on goods as well as services including insurance.



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County Initiatives Needed to Support Town Goals

- A. Promote and expand the County IDA's program to retain existing farms and expand new farming and agri-business opportunities.
- B. Keep the County Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan updated and commit to full implementation of it. Add more detail, time frames, and to-do-checklists to aid in implementation.
- C. Facilitate more interaction between County officials and the farming community in Halcott.
- D. Fund County agricultural economic development efforts.
- E. Support the various initiatives outlined in this Plan with staff, funding, and leadership.
- F. Direct IDA policies to target farm retention and expansion programs.
- G. Provide additional information and training of local officials about the Ag District Program, its purposes, and its requirements.
- H. Enhance agriculture and locally grown products on the Greene County Visitors Association website. Agriculture and agri-tourism should have a more prominent role in county-wide tourism marketing.
- I. Promote agricultural education at local schools and in the community colleges, and through youth programs such as 4-H.
- J. Develop and maintain an up-to-date list of all farms in Greene County.

State Initiatives Needed to Support Town Goals

- A. Provide additional incentives to landowners who rent their land for farmland to maintain the rented land farm base.
- B. Create additional funding streams to assist towns and counties to implement the ag and farmland protection plans the State has already sponsored.
- C. Lower the gross sales limits a farmer needs in order to be eligible to

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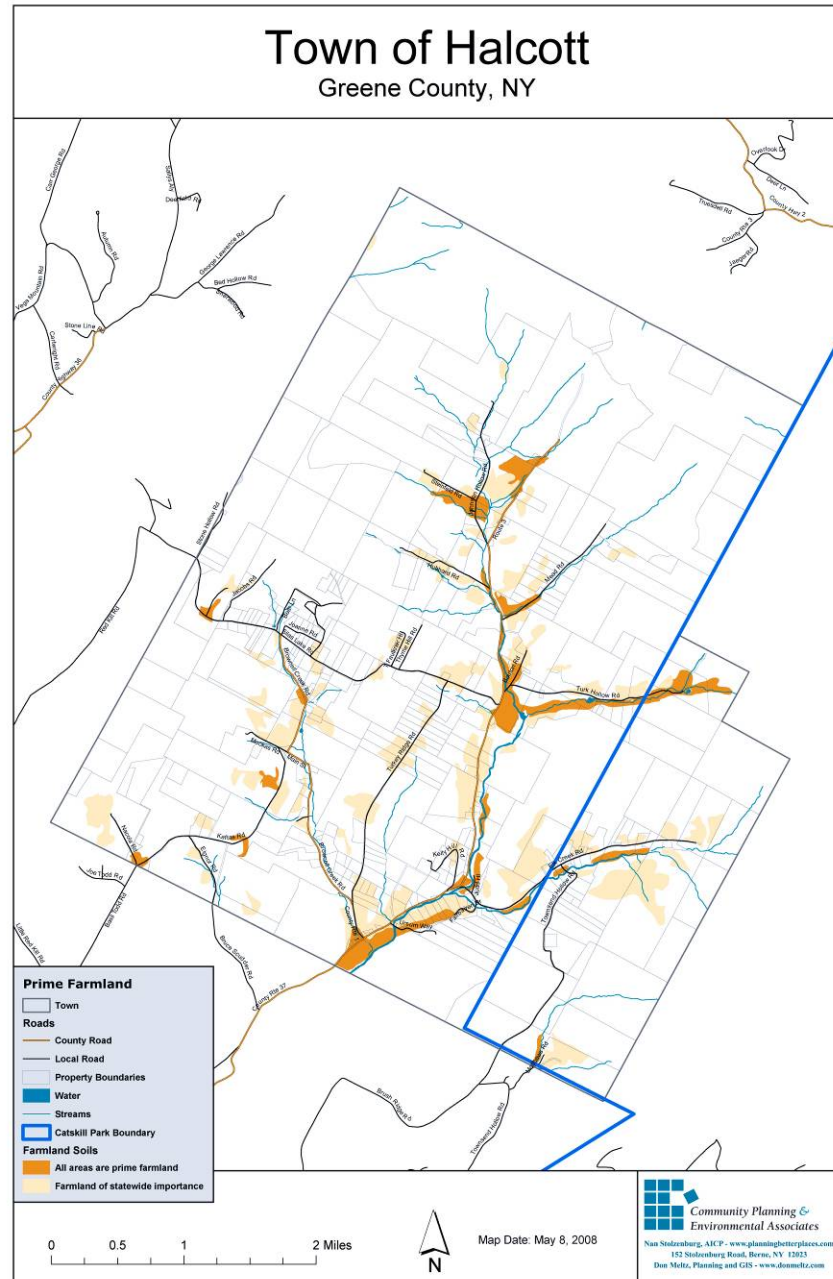
receive ag assessments (currently is \$10,000 or more if 7 acres are farmed or \$50,000 if less than 7 acres are farmed).

- D. Increase the Farm to School initiatives.
- E. Expand local options for raising funds for PDR and LDR programs including allowing for use of real estate transfer taxes.
- F. Provide funding to reduce farm production costs such as on-farm methane digesters and use of solar or small wind facilities to reduce energy costs for farms.
- G. Allow local governments to use the penalties that are collected when land that has received ag assessments is taken out of production to be used for local PDR funding and other new farm incentives.
- H. Create county by county information on cost of services, cost/benefit analyses, economic multipliers, and fiscal impacts of land conversion. This information is important to help local governments understand the implications of farms and farmland loss to their communities.
- I. Develop mechanisms to help local communities bring their local planning to be more consistent with the Ag Districts program.
- J. Provide additional information and training of local officials about the Ag District Program, its purposes, and its requirements.
- K. Provide a mechanism, possibly through Cornell Cooperative Extension, to provide specific business plan development and marketing support for direct sale, niche farming, and value added operations.
- L. Change state level policies that require creation of new jobs as part of the ranking criteria for economic development project proposals.
- M. Provide more training for local officials using up-to-date technology such as webinars on a variety of topics such as:
 - a. Valuation of farm properties (assessors)
 - b. Provisions of Ag District Law
 - c. Operational details of farmland protection
 - d. Farmland protection techniques for towns and their attorneys.
 - e. More tools and models for local leaders to help them effectively

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incorporate agriculture into their plans, codes and ordinances. Needs a real toolbox that the average volunteer local official can easily and readily adapt to their situation.

- N. Initiate state level programs to plan for local “foodsheds” to ensure that New York can “feed itself” in the future.



Town of Halcott Agricultural Enhancement and Farmland Protection Plan

Action Steps and Implementation Plan

Several actions should be taken to implement this plan. Some actions are needed to facilitate or enable other actions while some will require long-term commitment and planning. The recommended strategies are split into enabling, short-term, long-term, and ongoing actions. All the enabling strategies should be considered high priority for implementation by the Town in the first year after adoption of the plan.

Key to Priorities

This plan calls for a variety of policy decisions, program initiation, regulatory changes, coordination with regional organizations and agencies, and securing funding. The following schedule is a compilation of all the actions identified in this Plan. The action table does not detail each and every strategy contained in the Plan. Instead, it is a compilation of the major actions suggested and presents a prioritization of major categories of work to be accomplished in Halcott. This Action Plan should not be a substitute for the details contained in the rest of the Plan.

The priorities listed in the table below are based on the following scale:

Short-term	Medium-Term	Long-Term	Ongoing
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Where

Short = Enabling and implemented immediately following plan adoption (First Year)

Medium-term = implemented within 2 years following plan adoption

Long-term = implemented within 4 years following plan adoption

Ongoing = action item that needs ongoing attention over time

Check Off When Done	Action Item	Time Frame	Town Funding Needed to Implement?		
Goal 1. Halcott is a “farm friendly” town and has policies and programs supportive of profitable farming, agri-tourism, and farmland protection initiatives.					
	A. Formally adopt this Plan as a part of the Town Comprehensive Plan.	Short	No		
	B. Develop inter-municipal connections between Halcott, adjacent towns as well as Greene and Delaware County.	Short	No		
	C. Establish an advisory agricultural implementation committee and appoint members.	Short	No		
	D. Aggressively advocate to Greene County the critical need to fully implement the County Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan and the County economic development plan.	Ongoing	No		
	E. Aggressively advocate to New York State the critical need to implement the state-level actions identified in this Plan.	Ongoing	No		
	F. Seek funding.	Ongoing	Possibly: For grant writer		
	G. Incorporate promotion of agriculture in all town functions.	Ongoing	Possibly: for printing or website		
	H. Educate farmers and farmland owners about tax relief programs that are available.	Ongoing	No		
	I. Work with the Greene County IDA to enhance funding opportunities.	Medium	No		
	J. Use NYS Town Law 271.11 and appoint a farmer to serve as a member of the Planning Board.	Ongoing	No		
	K. Encourage all those eligible to be added to the NYS agricultural district.	Short	No		
	L. Utilize the Agricultural District Law to Protect Farms.	Ongoing	No		
	M. Designate farmlands in Halcott as a Critical Environmental Area under SEQRA.	Long	Possibly: To develop map to be filed		
	N. Amend the Subdivision Regulations as drafted.	Short	No		
	O. Maintain agriculture as a permitted use as included in the recently	Ongoing	No		

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Check Off When Done	Action Item	Time Frame	Town Funding Needed to Implement?		
	adopted land use regulations.				
Goal 2. Halcott increases community awareness about the importance of agriculture in Halcott and about farming practices to minimize nuisance complaints, encourage communication between farmers and non-farmers, and promote new agricultural operations.					
	A. Use the Town Website as marketing for area farms.	Medium	Yes: For website		
	B. Organize farm tours, especially for local and county elected officials.	Medium	No		
	C. Educate local realtors about the ag disclosure notice.	Ongoing	No		
	D. Develop a welcome packet for new residents.	Long	Yes: For website and printing		
	E. Expand Halcott Day to showcase town farms.	Medium	No		
	F. Provide for training of the Planning Board in agricultural topics.	Ongoing	No		
	G. Educate Buyers and Sellers of Property on How to Minimize Loss of Farmland.	Ongoing	No		
Goal 3. Halcott preserves its agricultural lands, especially open fields and pastures on prime farmlands and farmland of statewide importance.					
	A. Consider the feasibility of using a town-sponsored Lease of Development Rights program.	Medium	Yes: to initiate the program and then taxes would be reduced on these properties		
	B. Support landowners who desire to use conservation easements to protect their farmland properties.	Ongoing	No		
	C. Establish a local Purchase of Development Rights program (PDR).	Medium	Yes: to initiate the program and then taxes		

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Check Off When Done	Action Item	Time Frame	Town Funding Needed to Implement?		
			would be reduced on these properties		
	D. Connect land sellers and buyers to promote available farmlands for sale or rent to other farmers.	Long	Possibly		
Goal 4. Halcott promotes and encourages new sustainable production, grass-fed, value-added, and niche farms, as well as sustainable timber operations. More farms offer locally grown foods to residents. Halcott promotes existing farms and aids in the establishment of new operations.					
	A. Promote local branding as well as the “Pure Catskills” brand.	Ongoing	No		
	B. Encourage farmers to become members of Pure Catskills.	Ongoing	No		
	C. Create a local regional farm inventory website.	Long	Yes		
	D. Work with local farms and encourage them to be listed in the New York MarketMaker website.	Medium	No		
	E. Use the Grow NY and Pride of NY materials to promote fresh foods and agriculture.	Medium	No		
	F. Promote value-added farming, CSA’s, niche farming, and agri-tourism opportunities with landowners and farmers.	Ongoing	Possibly		
	G. Work to enable provision of cable and high-speed internet access to all locations in the Town.	Ongoing	No		
	H. Organize farmers in Halcott to form a buying cooperative to reduce costs.	Long	Possible: There may be legal costs associated with this		
County Initiatives Needed to Support Town Goals					
	A. Promote and expand the County IDA’s program to retain existing farms and expand new farming and agri-business opportunities.	Medium			
	B. Keep the County Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan updated and	Ongoing			

Town of Halcott Agricultural Enhancement and Farmland Protection Plan

Check Off When Done	Action Item	Time Frame	Town Funding Needed to Implement?		
	commit to full implementation of it.				
	C. Facilitate more interaction between County officials and the farming community in Halcott.	Ongoing			
	D. Fund County agricultural economic development efforts.	Short			
	E. Support the various initiatives outlined in this Plan with staff, funding, and leadership.	Short			
	F. Direct IDA policies to target farm retention and expansion programs.	Short			
	G. Provide additional information and training of local officials about the Ag District Program, its purposes, and its requirements.	Ongoing			
	H. Enhance agriculture and locally grown products on the Greene County Visitors Association website.	Medium			
	I. Promote agricultural education at local schools and in the community colleges, and through youth programs such as 4-H.	Ongoing			
	J. Develop and maintain an up-to-date list of all farms in Greene County.	Medium			
State Initiatives Needed to Support Town Goals					
	A. Provide additional incentives to landowners who rent their land for farmland to maintain the rented land farm base.	Medium			
	B. Create additional funding streams to assist towns and counties to implement the ag and farmland protection plans the State has already sponsored.	Short			
	C. Lower the gross sales limits a farmer needs in order to be eligible to receive ag assessments (currently is \$10,000 or more if 7 acres are farmed or \$50,000 if less than 7 acres are farmed).	Medium			
	D. Increase the Farm to School initiatives.	Medium			
	E. Expand local options for raising funds for PDR and LDR programs including allowing for use of real estate transfer taxes.	Medium			
	F. Provide funding to reduce farm production costs such as on-farm methane digesters and use of solar or small wind facilities to reduce energy costs for farms.	Long			

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Check Off When Done	Action Item	Time Frame	Town Funding Needed to Implement?		
	G. Allow local governments to use the penalties that are collected when land that has received ag assessments is taken out of production to be used for local PDR funding and other new farm incentives.	Short			
	H. Create county by county information on cost of services, cost/benefit analyses, economic multipliers, and fiscal impacts of land conversion.	Long			
	I. Develop mechanisms to help local communities bring their local planning to be more consistent with the Ag Districts program.	Medium			
	J. Provide additional information and training of local officials about the Ag District Program, its purposes, and its requirements.	Ongoing			
	K. Provide a mechanism, possibly through Cornell Cooperative Extension, to provide specific business plan development and marketing support for direct sale, niche farming, and value added operations.	Long			
	L. Change state level policies that require creation of new jobs as part of the ranking criteria for economic development project proposals.	Short			
	M. Provide more training for local officials using up-to-date technology such as webinars on a variety of topics such as:	Ongoing			
	N. Initiate state level programs to plan for local "foodsheds" to ensure that New York can "feed itself" in the future.	Ongoing			

Appendix A: Status of Farms and Farmland in Halcott

Location of Farms



Figure 1: The forest and farm landscape of Halcott. This illustrates the location of open farmlands in the valley areas.

Halcott is in the Catskill Mountains. The mountainous terrain limits the availability of farmland mostly to valley areas. The Farmed Parcel map shows the locations of farm operations in Halcott. 50 parcels covering 2,799 acres of land (19.3% of the Town) are in agriculture. Of that, 671 acres are in field, pasture, or other cultivation. Farming activities follow closely where the best soils in town are in the Elk, West, and Vly Creek valleys.

Types of Farms

There are two full-time dairy farmers in Halcott and a diversity of other types of agricultural activities. A variety of agricultural activities still take place in Halcott and there are opportunities for more niche, alternative, and agri-tourism agriculture operations. A survey of all farmland owners in town resulted in a farm inventory (from 40% return) of the following ag operations:

Beef 2 farms	Christmas Trees 1 farm
Dairy 1 farm	Forestry 3 farms
Goats 2 farms	Hay 7 farms
Horses 2 farms	Maple Syrup 1 farm
Replacement Dairy 1 farm	Sheep 2 farms
Poultry and Poultry Products 1 farm	Vegetables 2 farms (small)
Fruit 1 (small)	

There are 50 parcels of land owned by 30 different families currently farmed in Halcott. This encompasses 2,799 acres of land (19.3% of total land base in Halcott). The average size of the parcel is 58 acres and the median size is

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19 acres. Farmed parcels range in size from 1.8 acres to 467 acres. Seventeen parcels receive agricultural assessments. The total market value of these farms is \$4,753,000 (average assessed value is \$95,060).

Some of the farmland is wholly cropland, others have farm structures, and one is considered a private forest operation. The others are parcels that have residential structures on them with the remainder of the land used for agriculture. There are 21 rural vacant parcels over 10 acres in size, and 25 residential parcels with farm acreage. Of the 50 parcels, 17 receive agricultural exemptions.

Table 2 illustrates a variety of other features about agriculture in Halcott. Of note is of the 50 total parcels, only 18 that are farmed are actually within the NYS Certified Agriculture District. Of the 1,700 acres of land within the NYS Certified Agriculture District, 1,253 are farmed. There are 349 acres of prime farmland in Town and 1,040 acres of soils of statewide importance.

Table 1: Assessment Rolls for Halcott

<u>Property Use Code</u>	<u>Category</u>	<u>Number of Parcels</u>	<u>Number of Parcels With Ag. Exemption</u>	<u>Average Value (\$)</u>	<u>Total Market Value (\$)</u>
Agriculture					
105	Productive Vacant Land	1		45,000	45,000
112	Dairy	2	1	268,450	536,900
120	Field Crops	1	1	150,800	150,800
210, 240, 270, 280	Residential	25	2	133,076	3,326,900
312, 314, 322	Vacant Land	21	13	33,019	693,400
Subtotal		50	17	95,060	4,753,000

Table 2: Farmland Inventory Information

Feature	Total Acres
105 Productive Vacant Land	28.6
112 Dairy	257
120 Field Crops	17.7
210, 240, 270, 280 - Residential	1,802

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Feature	Total Acres
312, 314, 322 – Vacant Land	694
Prime Farmland in the Town	349
Soils of Statewide Importance in the Town	1,040
Prime Farmland Soils on farms	164
Soils of statewide importance on farms	441
Land in a NY Certified Ag District	1,700
Farmland in a NY Certified Ag District	1,253
Number of farmland parcels in a NY Certified Ag District	18

Local Agricultural Census Data



Table 4 details data from the US Agricultural Census for all farms within the 12430 zip code⁷. The farming base in Halcott is very moderate and the census recorded 16 farms in 2007.

Between 1997 and 2007, the number of farms in the Halcott area decreased slightly (a loss of two farms) from 18 to 16. The number of small acreage farms (<50acres) decreased from eight to one farm. The number of large farms rose from 10 to 15 farms. It is possible that several farms went out of business, and remaining farms incorporated the land into their operations.

From an economic perspective, there was a decrease in the value of sales for most farms. The 2008-2009 economic recession together with the dairy crisis and poor growing conditions is likely to further compromise market gains.

There were about 50% fewer farms having livestock and dairy animals and more with hogs, chickens and horses, maple syrup taps, and vegetables. The number of farms having field crops decreased from 14 to 11 between 1997 and 2007.

⁷ The 12430 zip code includes areas slightly beyond the Town of Halcott (Fleischmanns) but includes all of the Town of Halcott.

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Table 4. Agricultural Statistics for Halcott in Zip Code 12430

Zip Code 12430	1997	2007	% Change
Farms (number)	18	16	-11.1
Farms with ag land harvested <49 acres	8	5	-37.5
Farms with ag land harvested >50 acres	6	7	16.7
Farms with pasture	9	4	-55.6
Farms by size - 1 to 49 acres	8	1	-87.5
Farms by size - 50 to 999 acres	10	15	50.0
Farms by value of sales - \$25,000 to \$49,999	12	8	-33.3
Farms by value of sales - \$50,000 to \$99,999	6	1	-83.3
Principal operator by primary occupation – Farming (number)	17	16	-5.9
Principal operator by primary occupation - Other (number)	5	7	40.0
Farms with Beef Cows	6	3	-50.0
Farms with Milk Cows	6	3	-50.0
Farms with Cattle and Calves Sold	6	4	-33.3
Farms with Hogs and Pigs	2	4	100.0
Farms with Sheep and Lambs	1	0	-100.0
Farms with Hens and Pullets	3	6	100.0
Farms with Horses and Ponies	6	8	33.3
Farms with crops for sale (all < \$50,000)	18	13	-27.8
Farms with Christmas Trees	2	2	0.0
Farms with field crops	14	11	-21.4
Maple syrup with taps	1	4	300.0
Orchards	1	1	0.0
Vegetable operations	1	3	200.0
Milk products with sales	4	3	-25.0

County Agricultural Census Data

Like many areas in New York State, Greene County has seen an increase in the number of farms between 1997 and 2007, but a decrease in the amount of land farmed as shown in Table 3. In 2007, there were 286 farms included in the US Agricultural Survey – a 17.2% increase over 1997 levels. However, almost 5,000 acres of farmland were lost during that same time period. Farms are getting smaller. Throughout the County, market value of farmland, machinery, and farm products sold increased. The average per

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farm market value of products sold rose 59% between 1997 and 2007. However, the number of farms earning small returns (less than \$2500) rose by 39% while farms earning larger returns (between \$50,000 and \$100,000) fell. There were three additional farms earning over \$100,000 during this time period. Taken together, the net return for all farms increased greatly between 1997 and 2007. Farm production expenses rose about 46%. Livestock and dairy farms decreased while those with other animals such as hogs, sheep, and chickens increased in numbers.

Table 3: Statistics on Agriculture in Greene County, 1992 - 2007

Greene County	1997	2007	% Change
Farms (number)	244	286	17.2
Land in farms (acres)	48,770	44,328	-9.1
Land in farms - Average size of farm (acres)	200	155	-22.5
Estimated market value of land and buildings 1/ - Average per farm (dollars)	281,800	452,548	60.6
Estimated market value of land and buildings 1/ - Average per acre (dollars)	1,352	2,920	116.0
Estimated market value of all machinery and equipment 1/ - Average per farm (dollars)	45,514	77,318	69.9
Farms by size - 1 to 9 acres	21	32	52.4
Farms by size - 10 to 49 acres	38	70	84.2
Farms by size - 50 to 179 acres	95	113	18.9
Farms by size - 180 to 499 acres	64	53	-17.2
Farms by size - 500 to 999 acres	23	13	-43.5
Farms by size - 1,000 acres or more	3	5	66.7
Total cropland (acres)	25,315	22,234	-12.2
Market value of agricultural products sold (see text) (\$1,000)	8,781	16,373	86.5
Market value of agricultural products sold (see text) - Average per farm (dollars)	35,988	57,249	59.1
Farms by value of sales - Less than \$2,500	75	104	38.7
Farms by value of sales - \$2,500 to \$4,999	27	35	29.6

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Greene County	1997	2007	% Change
Farms by value of sales - \$5,000 to \$9,999	43	44	2.3
Farms by value of sales - \$10,000 to \$24,999	46	45	-2.2
Farms by value of sales - \$25,000 to \$49,999	13	18	38.5
Farms by value of sales - \$50,000 to \$99,999	16	13	-18.8
Farms by value of sales - \$100,000 or more	24	27	12.5
Principal operator by primary occupation - Farming (number)	114	145	27.2
Principal operator by primary occupation - Other (number)	130	141	8.5
Net cash return from agricultural sales (\$1,000)	-203	2,620	1390.6
Total farm production expenses, average per farm	35,390	51,681	46.0
Farms with and number of animals cattle, calves including beef and milk cows	117/5,145	95/2,996	-18.8/-41.8
Farms with and number of animals hogs and pigs	13/111	16/328	23.1/195.5
Farms with and number of animals sheep and lambs	20/546	23/479	15.0/-12.3
Farms with and number of animals layers, chickens	27 farms	68 farms	151.9

Source: 1992 and 2007 Agricultural Census

Environmental Conditions

Topography, floodplain/creeks, wetlands, and soils influence agricultural activities in Halcott. The following section describes these physical features in relation to agricultural lands.

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Soil Conditions

Prime farmland soils and farmland of statewide importance are located primarily in narrow corridors along the Elk and Vly Creeks (See Farmland Soils Map). Prime farmland soils in Greene County makes up about 6 percent of the total acreage. Of that, about 35% is woodland.



There are 349 acres of prime soils and 1,040 acres of soils of statewide importance. There is good correlation between where farms are located and these

soils. This is due to the mountainous terrain: good soils and remaining farmlands are located in the flatter and valley areas.

Prime farmland is the land that is best suited to food, feed, forage, fiber and oilseed crops. The soil qualities, growing season, and moisture supply are those needed for a well managed soil to produce a sustained high yield of crops in an economic manner. Prime farmland produces the highest yields with minimal expenditure of energy and economic resources, and farming it results in the least damage to the environment.

A majority of the Town's soils are classified in Soil Capability Class 4, 6 and 7 as these areas correspond to the steeper mountain areas. The soil capability classification used by the County groups soils according to their limitations for field crops, the risk of damage if they are used for crops, and the way they respond to management. The higher the classification, the narrower choices are for practical use. Halcott has soils mainly in Soil Capability Class 4, 6, 7 with some areas in 2 and 3 (see Soil Capability Class Map). Like the prime soils, the best soil classes are located in the valley areas of Town.

Table 5. Description of Soil Capability Classes

Class	Description
Class I	Soils have slight limitations that restrict their use
Class II	Soils have moderated limitations that reduce the choice of plants or that require moderate conservation practices

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Class	Description
Class III	Soils have severe limitations that reduce the choice of plants or that require special conservation practices, or both
Class IV	Soils have very severe limitations that reduce the choice of plants or that require very careful management or both
Class V	Soils are not likely to erode but have other limitations, impractical to remove, that limit their use
Class VI	Soils have severe limitations that make them generally unsuitable for cultivation
Class VII	Soils have very severe limitations that make them unsuitable for cultivation
Class VIII	Soils and miscellaneous areas have limitations that nearly preclude their use for commercial crop production

Slope

The flattest areas in Halcott are locations where most of the active farmland is located and are those areas found along the alluvial plain formed by Vly Creek, north of Halcott Center and at the junction of Vly Creek and Turk Hollow Creek (See Environmental Constraints Map). These lands are also those least constrained for development and served by the existing road system.

Lands with slope in excess of 35% are largely unsuitable for development and farming (except for timber products). In Halcott, these areas are in the upper elevations of Town on the Vly and Bearpen mountains.

Flood Plains

The Flood Insurance Rate Map for the Town of Halcott became effective in 1983. Designated floodplains exist in a fairly narrow corridor along the Vly, Elk, Turk Hollow, and West Settlement creeks. Given the mountainous terrain, wide floodplains are not present in Halcott. Given the narrow nature of the floodplain areas, they are not likely to impose limitations for agriculture in those areas (See Environmental Constraints Map).

Streams and Wetlands

Vly Creek and its tributaries, Turk Hollow Creek, Elk Creek, and Brownell Creek are the major streams in the Town (See Environmental Constraints Map). These streams are primarily classified by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation as either B (t) or B (ts). A few

Town of Halcott Agricultural Enhancement and Farmland Protection Plan

sections of the upper reaches of Elk Creek are classified as "A" streams. This classification system is established under NYCRR Title 6, Chapter X, Parts 700-705. NYS DEC has determined that the best usages of Class B waters are recreation (swimming, boating and fishing.) These waters shall be maintained and suitable for fish propagation and survival. Designation of a stream as (t) or (ts) indicates it shall be suitable for trout survival or trout propagation. The best usages of Class A waters are as a source of water supply for drinking, culinary or food processing purposes, recreation, and fishing. These waters shall also be suitable for fish propagation and survival.

Wetlands in the Town have been designated as either a NYS DEC regulated Wetland (those 12.4 acres or larger and governed by the New York State Freshwater Wetlands Act), or classified as a wetland by the United States Army Corps of Engineers through the National Wetlands Inventory (NWI) (See Environmental Constraints Map). All wetlands are regulated through the Federal Clean Water Act, although NYS DEC and the Army Corps of Engineers have joint review for wetlands over 12.4 acres. All development affecting wetlands is thus regulated either by the State or the Federal government although some activities may be exempted or included in a nationwide permit.

In Halcott, the most wetlands are located along the Vly Creek where Turk Hollow Creek joins it. Approximately 30 smaller NWI wetlands are found along other streams and tributaries in town.

One aquifer has been identified in Halcott. This is located along the Vly Creek from the southern boundary of the town and extends north along the creek to the intersection of Turk Hollow Road and County Route 3 near the cemetery. It overlaps some of the prime agricultural fields in Halcott.

Agricultural District 124 and Agricultural Assessments

Greene County has one agricultural district identified as #124 found throughout the County. The New York State Agricultural District Law recognizes that agricultural lands are an important and irreplaceable resource, that they are being lost due to development, high costs of doing business and regulatory restraints, and that certain actions can be taken to retain lands in agriculture. Rather than seeking to "preserve" agricultural lands, the Agricultural Districts Law seeks to create an economic and regulatory climate which will encourage farmers to continue farming. Relying primarily on the initiative of landowners and local governments with state

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oversight, the law provides agricultural landowners with a number of benefits and protections. These include agricultural assessments, limitations on local regulations, notice requirements on public actions, limitations on local benefit assessments (a limitation on levies for public improvements based on value, acreage or road frontage), and policy direction for state actions.

In Halcott, the District is concentrated on larger parcels of land near the Vly Creek (see Ag District Map). The following table details other information about the New York State Agricultural District #124 and ag assessments in Halcott.

Table 6: Characteristics of Ag District #124 in Halcott.

Characteristic	Acres Number	or Percent of Total Town, where applicable	Acres of land in District owned or under easement with DEP or WAC
Acres in District	1,700	11.7%	867
Number of Parcels in District	26	5.4%	5
Farmed Parcels Not in District	32	6.6%	
Parcels Receiving Agricultural Assessments	16	3.3%	3
Percent of District having Prime Farmland Soils or Soils of Statewide Importance	13%	9.6%	
Parcels Outside of District Receiving Agricultural Assessments	1		

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Other Land Uses and Trends in Halcott

In addition to the agricultural land uses described above, Table 7 illustrates the other land uses in Halcott. Residential land uses take place on 266 parcels (6,018 acres) or about 42% of the land base in Town. This figure is somewhat misleading since most of that acreage is not developed but is mostly field or forestland. Forestlands and conservation land uses are on a very few number of parcels (42) but encompass about 40% of the total land in Halcott. Vacant land is found on about 146 parcels or 2,084 acres (15% of the land base).

Table 7: Non-Agricultural Land Uses in Halcott

Land Classification	Number of Parcels	Number of Acres	Percent of Total Land Base
Agriculture (property class 100)	4	303	2%
Residential (year-round) (property class 200)	283	6,329	43.6%
Vacant Land (property class 300)	153	2,587	17.8%
Highway Garage, Grange, Religious Uses and Cemeteries (property class 600)	5	5.6	.04%
Forest, Conservation and Park Lands (property class 900)	38	5,114	35.2%

Conversion pressures and Trends in Non-farm Development

Since 1995, Halcott has issued approximately 40 building permits for new homes. The most active years for new permits was 1997, 2001, and 2004 with 6, 6, and 5 permits issued for new homes during each of those years, respectively.

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Table 8: Building Permits Issued in Halcott

Year	New Homes
1995	1
1996	1
1997	6
1998	1
1999	1
2000	2
2001	6
2002	3
2003	4
2004	5
2005	3
2006 (one permit was issued for a commercial structure)	1
2007	2
2008	3
2009	1
Totals	40

Since 1987, there have been 17 minor subdivisions and 4 major subdivisions approved by the Planning Board. Some of these were not completed however, due to discontinuation of the project by the landowner or developer. 2000 and 2001 had a higher level of subdivision activity than in the years since 1996.

Table 9: Subdivision Approvals

Year	Subdivision
1987	4 major / 6 minor
1989	
1992	3 minor
1996	1 minor
1997	1 minor
1998	1 minor
1999	
2000	3 minor
2001	5 minor
2002	
2003	5 minor

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Year	Subdivision
2004	
2005	2 minor
2006	1 minor
2007	
2008	6 minor
2009	
Totals	38 Total

Development pressures include ongoing residential development for mostly single-family, second-home dwellings. Nearby Belleayre Ski Center has increased development pressure in Halcott recently. Expansion of this recreational area is likely to make the Halcott area more attractive to additional-second home buyers. The Crosby flats which is an important open space and agricultural location in Town was considered for development but is now under contract for a conservation easement with NYS DEP.

Table 10: Population Trends, 1990-2007

Demographic	1990	2000	2009	2014
Total Permanent Population*	193	193	174	167
Total Households	77	84	77	74
Total Housing Units	265	288	309	320
Median Household Income	\$22,500	\$31,534	\$36,140	\$39,307
Occupied Housing Units (owner and renter)	77	84	77	74
Vacant Housing Units (Seasonal)	143 (54%)	192 (67%)	207	214
Enrolled in School (private and public)	33	41	NA	NA
Number of people aged 16+ employed in Agricultural, mining, forestry, fishing industries	6 (4 listed as farming income)	12	NA	NA
Number of households that moved into home 1990 to 2000	37	20	NA	NA

Forecasts based on ESRI Business Analysis of U.S. Bureau of Census, 2000 Census of Population and Housing

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Plans, Regulations and Agriculture Programs to Support Agriculture in Halcott

Comprehensive Plan: Halcott adopted its first comprehensive plan in 2003. This plan establishes agricultural as an important part of the history and character of Halcott and a highly valued land use. Public input gained during the comprehensive plan's development identified maintenance and promotion of farming in Town as a priority. The vision statement includes agriculture as desirable long-term. The Plan offers numerous strategies are offered to promote and encourage farming.

Local Regulations: In June 2009, the Town of Halcott passed its first zoning law (titled "Land Use Code" as part of its efforts to implement its 2003 Comprehensive Plan. This land use law incorporates and updates the Town's site plan review procedures and requirements. As part of their ongoing planning efforts, the Town has developed updated language for their subdivision law, but has not formally adopted these changes yet.

In the spring of 2008 as part of the ongoing implementation and this agricultural planning effort, a Zoning Commission was formed to draft the regulations. Because of new development pressures in Halcott, the Town decided to move forward with the adoption of the zoning even though this agricultural plan was not complete. An important goal of the Zoning Commission and community was to develop local land use regulations uniquely suited to Halcott and that are reasonable, not over-bearing, and that fairly balance public and private needs.

The Land Use Code attempts to meet the goals of this plan (to encourage and allow for agriculture as an important part of the Town) and the Comprehensive Plan by establishing a very agriculturally-oriented regulatory purpose as follows:

"In addition to the general purpose of promoting the health, safety and general welfare of the residents of the Town, the purpose of this district is to protect and maintain its rural character, including the agriculture, open space and scenic resources of Halcott. Further purposes of this district are to maintain existing low density residential development patterns, to provide for the protection of the Town's natural resources, to encourage the maintenance of native vegetation, to foster safe traffic circulation consistent with the rural character, and to encourage land uses that are compatible with agricultural uses, to promote active agricultural land uses, to maintain the Town's farmland, to promote agriculture as a component

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of the local economy, and to maintain a critical mass of farmland so as to prevent further fragmentation of the Town's existing farm resources." (Section 1.3)

As a result of these efforts, the Land Use Code incorporates the following "farm-friendly" policies:

- Most agricultural land uses are permitted as-of-right including farm stands, nurseries, agriculture, aquaculture, vet and animal services, forestry, logging, and horse stables. Sawmills, mining, riding academy and animal processing facilities are permitted via the special use procedures. Other land uses that are needed to support farms such as machinery repair, and agri-tourism oriented land uses are also allowed with special permits.
- The zoning establishes a minimum lot size of 5 acres.
- Clarifies that nothing in the law prevents keeping of domestic or farm animals by a resident, or for commercially for profit.
- Permits clustering and use of conservation subdivisions to preserve open space. The law authorizes the Planning Board to require use of these siting procedures when active agriculture is taking place on the parcel to be subdivided.
- Offers a density bonus to land developers who preserve 50% or more of the parcel for open space and agriculture.
- Exempts new agricultural structures from needing site plan approval.
- Establishes agriculture as an important consideration during site plan reviews.
- Requires that new residential uses proposed adjacent to existing agricultural uses shall provide buffering between the residential structure and the farm use.
- Requires that new structures requiring site plan approval be placed in a manner which optimizes preservation of open space and use of agricultural fields for farming.
- Broadly defines agriculture and agricultural uses in a manner which will allow a wide variety of farming activities.

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- Incorporates use of the Ag Data Statement.

County Agricultural Development and Farmland Protection Plan: Greene County adopted a county-wide agricultural development and farmland protection plan in 2002. It includes an inventory of farming in the County, discusses changes and trends facing agriculture (for example, poultry and other livestock farms and nursery/greenhouse operations are increasing while dairy and cattle/calve operations are decreasing), and presents weaknesses, strengths, and opportunities for agriculture in the County. Similar to information gained from Halcott farmers, the County identified farm tax burden, low commodity pricing, nutrient management, lack of young farmers, land development pressures, labor issues, and a fragmented farm community as major challenges. The plan stresses tax reduction, increasing farm profitability, right to farm laws, marketing of specialty enterprises and other ag economic development initiatives as major strategies to meet the goals of this plan.

County Economic Development Plan: Greene County has developed a comprehensive county-wide economic development plan. The Plan addresses seven major topics: business development and target industry attraction; tourism; land use and regional planning; workforce development; quality of life; infrastructure and public facilities; and telecommunication. It addresses agriculture in a variety of ways and recognizes the potential for additional agri-business development. County-wide, specialty cheese or other dairy products, ethnic baked goods, and specialty confections were identified as having particular potential for small business development. Recommended actions for the County to implement include working with the Hudson Valley Agri-Business Development Corporation, exploring creation of a food processing incubator/shared kitchen facility, enhancing opportunities for agri-tourism, eco-tourism and nature-based tourism, developing a buy local initiative to enhance support for Greene County farms and other locally-owned businesses, and increasing awareness of the benefits of purchasing local products. The Plan also recommends that the County undertake a countywide cost of community service study to frame local zoning and planning issues and education municipalities about the comparative fiscal implications of residential, commercial, and agricultural development.

New York City Watershed Regulations and Agricultural Programs. The Watershed Agricultural Council (WAC) is a nonprofit organization with the mission to support the economic viability of agriculture and forestry through the protection of water quality and the promotion of land conservation in the

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New York City watershed region. WAC is funded by New York City Department of Environmental Protection, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the U.S. Forest Service and other federal and foundation sources. WAC provides critical funding resources that support ag economic development, conservation and use of best management practices.

WAC offers a diversity of programs ranging from education to economic development and many Halcott farms take advantage of them. Economic initiatives relevant to Halcott include the Forestry Market Development Grant Program, Farm to Market projects, and the Buy Pure Catskill branding campaign. Water quality oriented programs include funding and education related to best management practices, logger training, as well as the Whole Farm Planning, Small Farms Program, and Land Stewardship.

Whole Farm Planning is a holistic approach to identifying and prioritizing environmental issues related to the farm and use of best management practices to mitigate environmental impacts and improve a farms economic outlook. Small Farms projects assist a wide variety of small farms with funding and support. The Land Stewardship program includes forest management planning and the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP). CREP is a voluntary streamside protection program where landowners place stream side vegetative buffers for 10 to 15 years and in return, farmers get annual rental payments and reimbursement for establishing good conservation practices along the streams. One farm in Halcott participates in this program.

WAC also works with landowners to establish conservation easements. This offers landowners an option to permanently conserve land and at the same time allow continued management of ag and forestry lands (when they are done in accordance with a WAC Whole Farm Plan). Several properties in Halcott have WAC Conservation Easements on them.

Cornell Cooperative Extension (Delaware County and Greene County)⁸:

The Agroforestry Resource Center located on Route 23 in Acra offers programs related to agricultural production, processing and markets, consumer and household food production, nutrition and health, and youth development. Examples of current program efforts that could benefit Halcott farms include classes for new farmers, support to Ag and Farmland Protection efforts, support to the County's vegetable and fruit farmers

⁸ Cornell Cooperative Extension is a community-based educational organization that reaches people of all ages with programs that can be connected to research and science based information from Cornell University and other institutions. Each county has an office.

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through a team of regional vegetable and small fruit experts, and support to County Farmers Markets. For Halcott, the Agroforestry program through CCE in Greene County offers many educational support programs important to promote forest land uses in town. These programs promote sustainable forest stewardship and protection of water quality through certified logger training, forest landowner education programs, woods walks, agroforestry demonstrations and guided nature exploration programs.

Delaware County offers other programs that benefit Halcott farmers. Business profitability, alternative agriculture and natural resources, field crop management and dairy and livestock production are topics supported by Extension educational programs. Of special interest are the alternative ag programs which assist people in diversification, ag micro-enterprise development, workforce training, and agri-tourism for forest products, maple production, part-time farming, aquaculture, greenhouse/landscape operations, vegetable, livestock, poultry, equine, field cash crops, and fruits.

Soil and Water Conservation District: The Soil and Water Conservation District (in both Greene County and Delaware County) administers a variety of State and Federal programs that provide funding for farm and farmland improvements. Soil and Water Conservation District, WAC, NRCS and to a certain extent, Cornell Cooperative Extension overlap and/or cooperate with implementation and administration of these programs. WAC is an important additional funding source for farms in Halcott. See Appendix G for a list of conservation-related programs and funding opportunities that could benefit Halcott farmers. Currently, most participating farmers work with WAC and the Delaware County SWCD.

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Appendix B: New York State Agricultural District and Assessment Programs

New York's Agricultural Districts Law, Article 25-AA, was enacted in 1971 to protect farmland in New York. The law's purpose is to provide local methods for keeping land in agricultural use and sets forth the concept of "agricultural districts" as a viable way to protect farmland. State agricultural districts are not the same as a locally established agricultural zoning district. The following are the major components established under the Agricultural Districts Law:

- Creation and review of agricultural districts
- County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Boards (for advising and reviewing on agricultural districts, proposed government actions, preparation of county ag plans, etc.)
- Agricultural Assessment (for property tax relief)
- Ad Valorem Limitations (limits the taxation of farmland for improvements such as municipal water, sewer, lighting, non-farm drainage, solid waste disposal, or other landfill operations)
- Right to Farm (nuisance protection and shielding farmers from excessively restrictive local laws, or to ward off unwanted or intrusive public infrastructure). This includes definition of agriculture, local ordinance protections, notice of intent, sound agricultural practice determinations, and disclosure notices.

The Town of Halcott has land included in the NYS certified Agriculture District #124, which covers 1,700 acres of the town. Within this district, there are about 1,200 acres being farmed (Table 2).

New York State Agricultural Assessments Program⁹

Agricultural assessment was established under the New York State Agricultural Districts Law to provide property tax relief for farmers. Any owner of land used for agricultural production may qualify if the land meets the requirements or is rented to an eligible farm operation. Land does not

⁹ Adapted from: Action Guide: Agricultural and Farmland Protection for New York. 1999. American Farmland Trust

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have to lie within an agricultural district to receive the assessment. Agricultural assessments provide “use value” assessment for eligible land. This allows farmland to be taxed for its agricultural value, not for its market (non-farm) value. To qualify, land must be greater than 7 acres and gross an average of \$10,000 or more in sales, or land less than 7 acres with average gross sales value of \$50,000 or more, and be used for the preceding two years in agriculture.

Rented land may qualify, as may support land, farm woodland, and land set aside in federal conservation programs. Land used for processing or retail operations does not qualify.

In determining agricultural assessment, the local assessor uses state certified assessment values established on an annual basis for specific soil types. Each soil group gets a different assessment value. A parcels agricultural value is determined by totaling all soil group values by acre on the parcel together.

Land placed under agricultural assessment and then converted to non-farm use is subject to conversion fees. These payments equal five times the taxes saved in the last year during which the land received an agricultural assessment, plus 6% interest compounded annually for each year that the assessment was granted (up to 5 years). If only a part of the parcel is converted, then payment is based on the converted portion that had received agricultural assessment. Landowners have up to 6 months to notify the assessor whenever a conversion occurs. Failure to do so can result in penalties.

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Appendix C: Prioritizing Farmland for the Future

Identification of Important Farmlands in Halcott

During the Farm Focus Group Meetings, participants worked to identify all farmed parcels and types of operations in Halcott (See Farmed Parcel Map). This inventory was necessary in order to prioritize farmlands for state and/or local farmland protection programs. Knowing that funds and human resources are limited, some kind of ranking system was felt to be important to ensure that those farms that are protected or preserved have the most positive impact in advancing the goals outlined in Halcott's comprehensive plan. In general however, the focus group participants felt that all farmland in Halcott is equally important and all are critical and limited resources in Halcott. This section of the Plan recognizes the special criteria felt to be important to distinguish between different agricultural lands in Halcott.

Farmland Prioritization – Local Criteria

The Farm Focus Group discussed priority farmlands in Halcott and suggested, in general that three main factors, in order of importance, be used to prioritize farmland in Halcott. These would be 1) whether someone derives their primary income from the farm (ie they are eligible for the ag tax exemption), 2) whether there is a chance the farm could be taken up by a next generation or a good chance it could remain a farm to be farmed by someone else, and 3) whether the farmer has farm business plans, farm management plans, or participates in conservation or farm programs. They also felt that farmland soils were important, but given the soil conditions in Halcott, not more important than the other factors. They wanted all farms to be important but felt that these factors would have the most bearing on the long range future of the farm.

Farmland Prioritization – State Criteria

Funding Criteria

Most of the funding that is available for implementing PDR and other farmland protection programs comes from State and Federal programs. Both the State and Federal programs have established specific criteria for funding eligibility. These criteria have been identified and mapped as part of this Plan (see Maps where each criteria is shown with farmed parcels identified).

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State Funding Criteria

Priority is given for funding under the State program when:

- A) Viable agricultural land is preserved (viable is defined as “land highly suitable for agricultural production and which will continue to be economically feasible for such use if real property taxes, farm use restrictions, and speculative activities are limited to levels approximating those in commercial agricultural areas not influenced by the proximity of non-agricultural development”. Viability also addresses other factors principally about the property such as quality of soil resources, percent of total farm available for agricultural production, number of acres to be protected, level of demonstrated farm management, etc.)
- B) Locations that are facing significant development pressure; and
- C) Locations that serve as a buffer for a significant natural public resource containing important ecosystem or habitat characteristics.
- D) Consideration is also given to:
 - 1) The number of acres that will be protected;
 - 2) The quality of the soil resources involved;
 - 3) The percentage of the total farm acreage available for agricultural production;
 - 4) The extent to which the property is bordered by or proximity to other farms which are already protected by a conservation easement or which might reasonably be expected to enter into a farmland preservation agreement in the future;
 - 5) The level of farm management that is demonstrated by the current landowner;
 - 6) The likelihood of the property's succession as a farm if the present ownership changes.
 - 7) Proximity to markets and processors.
 - 8) Proximity to vendors providing supplies and services available.
 - 9) The level of local partners' (both public and private) commitment to farmland protection (*e.g.*, these and other activities would be relevant: implementation of actions contained in local farmland protection plans; total local public and private expenditures on Purchase of Development Rights projects; number and acreage of permanent conservation

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easements on local viable agricultural land; all agricultural districts have been reviewed on or before their respective anniversary date, etc.).

Federal Program Eligibility

In order to be eligible for federal funding for conservation easements, the property must have:

- A) Prime, unique, statewide, or locally important soil or contain historical or archaeological resources. Farms must contain at least 50% of prime, unique, statewide, or locally important soils. Eligible historical or archaeological parcels must be on a farm listed on the National Register of Historic Places, or formally determined eligible for listing by the State Historic Preservation Officer, or formally designated by the State or Tribal Historic Preservation Officer.
- B) Cropland, grassland, pasture land, and incidental forestland and wetlands that are part of an agricultural operation. Farms must be in compliance with federal wetland conservation and highly erodible land provisions.

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Appendix D. Model Agricultural Data Statement and Disclosure Notice

Agricultural Data Statement

Halcott's Land Use Code defines and establishes use of an Agricultural Data Statement. This is consistent with requirements of the New York State Agricultural Districts Law (Article 25-aa, Section 305-a. As per Section 305-a and NYS Town Law 283-a, any application for a special use permit, site plan approval, use variance, or subdivision approval requiring municipal review and approval by a planning board, zoning board of appeals, or town board that would occur on property within an agricultural district containing a farm operation or on property with boundaries within five hundred feet of a farm operation located in an agricultural district, shall include an agricultural data statement.

The planning board, zoning board of appeals, or town board shall evaluate and consider the agricultural data statement in its review of the possible impacts of the proposed project upon the functioning of farm operations within such agricultural district. When the planning board, zoning board of appeals, or town board receives an application with an agricultural data statement, they must mail a written notice of such application to the owners of land as identified by the applicant in the agricultural data statement. The board reviewing the request must mail a description of the proposed project and its location to all owners of land as identified in the Agricultural Data Statement. The cost of that mailing can be borne by the applicant. Further, the Town must refer all applications that require an agricultural data statement to the County Planning Board as required by Sections 239-m and 239-n of the NYS General Municipal Law.

To facilitate use of the Ag Data Statement, the following is offered for use when required:

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Agricultural Data Statement

Instructions: This form must be completed for any application for a special use permit, site plan approval, use variance or a subdivision approval requiring municipal review that would occur on property within 500 feet of a farm operation located in NYS Ag and Markets certified Agricultural District #124. County Planning Board review is also required. A copy of this Agricultural Data Statement must be submitted along with the referral to the Greene County Planning Department.

1. Name and Address of Applicant: _____

2. Type of application (Check one or more):

☐Special Use Permit ☐Site Plan Approval ☐Subdivision approval

3. Description of proposed project to include (1) size of parcel or acreage to be acquired and tax map identification number of tax parcel(s) involved; (2) the type of action (single-family dwelling or subdivision, multi-family development, commercial or other non-residential use, etc., and (3) project density (Please provide this information on the reverse side of this application and attach additional description as necessary).

4. Is this parcel within an Agricultural District? ☐Yes ☐No

5. Is this parcel actively farmed? ☐Yes ☐No

6. List all farm operations within 500 feet of your parcel. Attach additional sheets if necessary.

A. Name: _____

Address and Telephone #: _____

Type of Farm: _____

Is this parcel actively farmed? ☐Yes ☐No

B. Name: _____

Address and Telephone #: _____

Type of Farm: _____

Is this parcel actively farmed? ☐Yes ☐No

C. Name: _____

Address and Telephone #: _____

Type of Farm: _____

Is this parcel actively farmed? ☐Yes ☐No

D. Name: _____

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Address and Telephone #: _____

Type of Farm: _____

Is this parcel actively farmed? ☐ Yes ☐ No

8. Signature of Applicant: _____

9. Reviewed by: _____

Date: _____

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Agricultural Disclosure Notice

This is a requirement of the Agriculture and Markets Law 25-aa (§ 310) to inform property owners about farming practices before they purchase property in an agricultural district. The requirements are:

1. When any purchase and sale contract is presented for the sale, purchase, or exchange of real property located partially or wholly within an agricultural district established pursuant to Article 25-aa, the prospective grantor shall present to the prospective grantee a disclosure notice which states the following:

"It is the policy of this state and the Town of Halcott to conserve, protect and encourage the development and improvement of agricultural land for the production of food, and other products, and also for its natural and ecological value. This disclosure notice is to inform prospective residents that the property they are about to acquire lies partially or wholly within an agricultural district and that farming activities occur within the district. Such farming activities may include, but not be limited to, activities that cause noise, dust and odors. Prospective residents are also informed that the location of property within an agricultural district may impact the ability to access water and/or sewer services for such property under certain circumstances. Prospective purchasers are urged to contact the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets to obtain additional information or clarification regarding their rights and obligations under article 25-AA of the Agriculture and Markets Law."

2. The disclosure notice shall be signed by both the prospective grantor and grantee prior to the sale, purchase or exchange of such real property. And the receipt of such disclosure notice shall be recorded on a property transfer report form prescribed by the state board of real property services as provided for in section three hundred thirty-three of the real property law.

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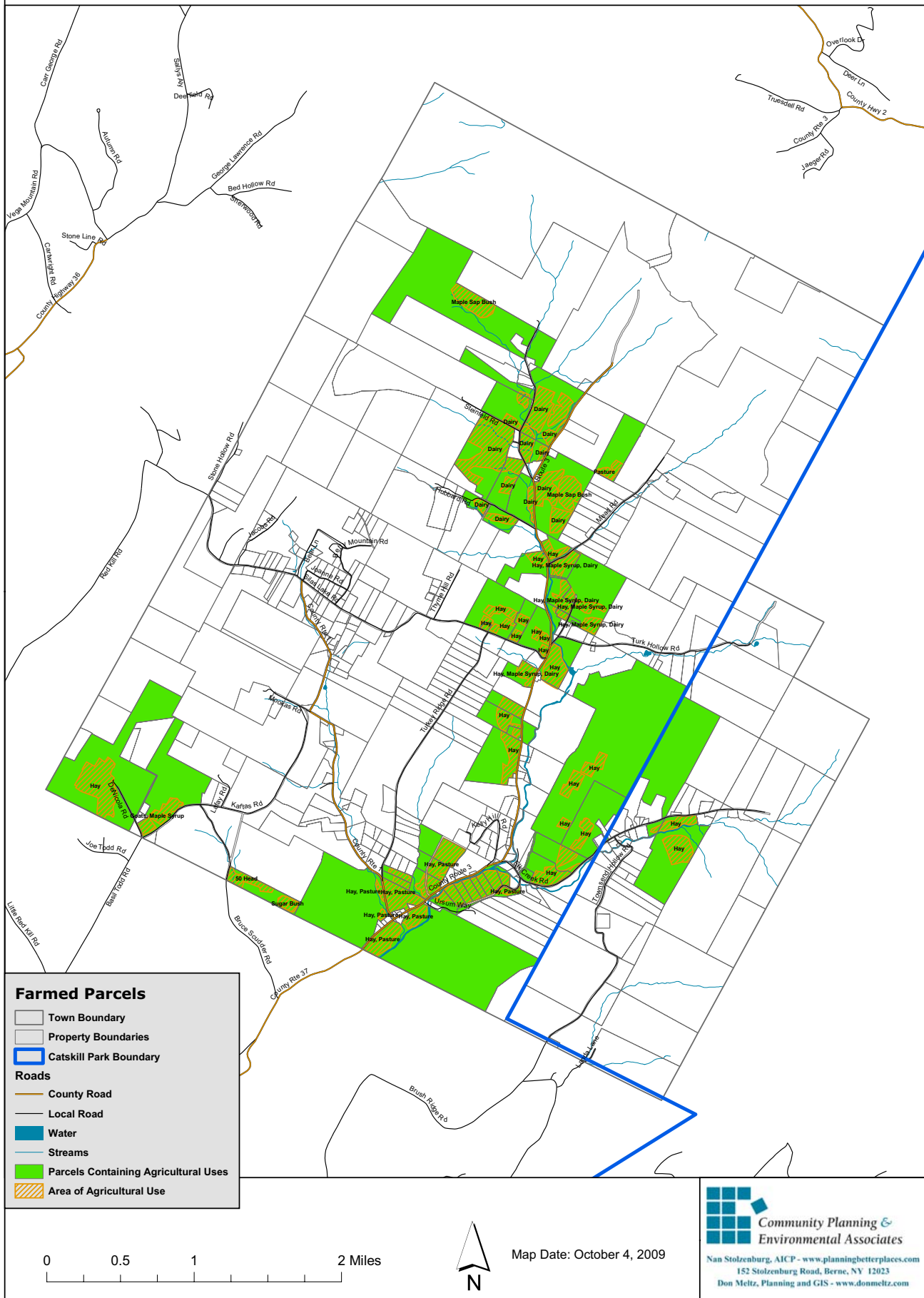
Appendix E: Maps

The following maps are referenced as part of this plan:

1. Farmed Parcels
2. County Ag District #124
3. Farmland Soils
4. Soil Capability Class
5. Property Class
6. New York State, New York City Properties, and Other Conserved Properties
7. Environmental Constraints
8. Zoning Map
9. Aerial Photograph

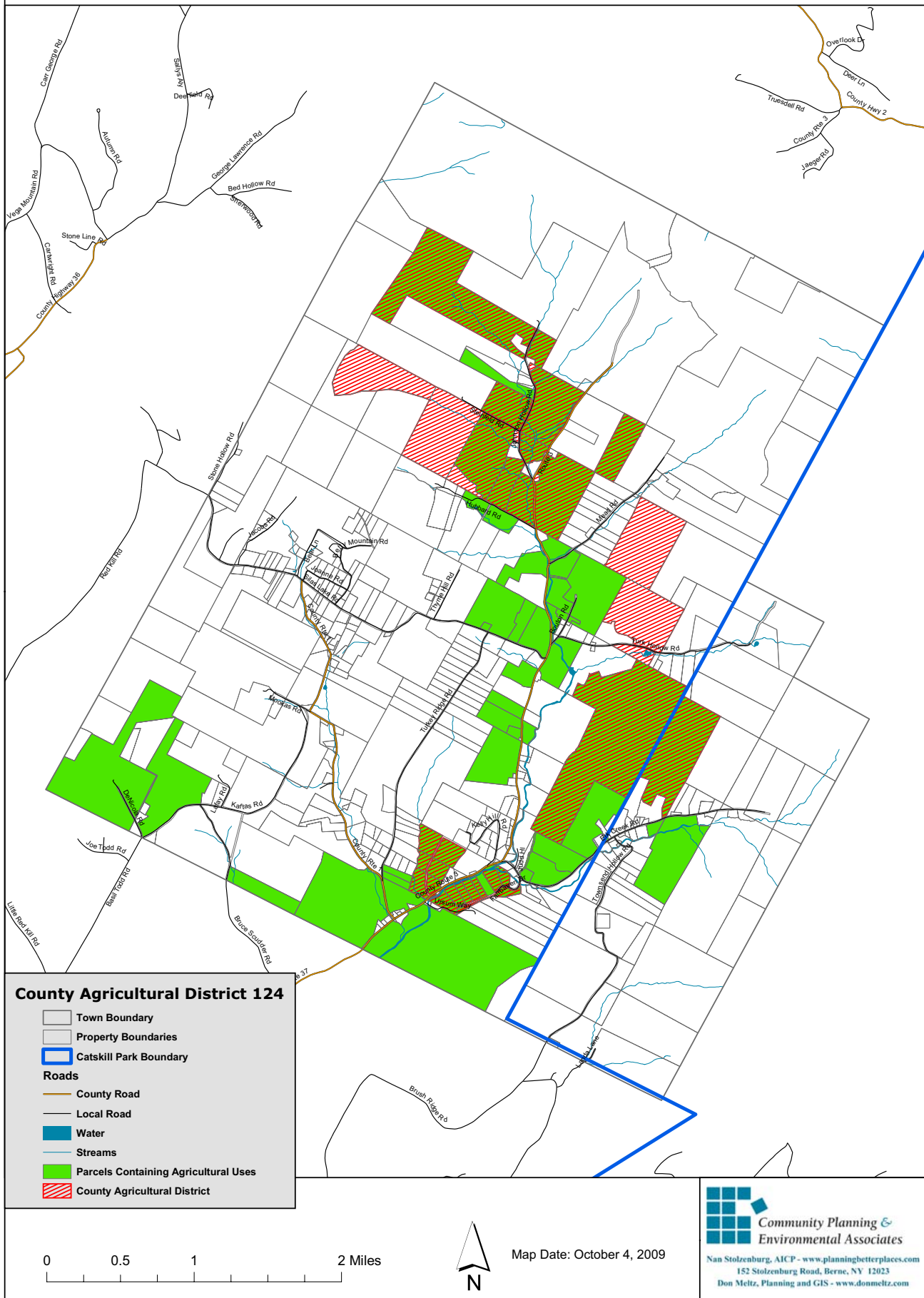
Town of Halcott

Greene County, NY



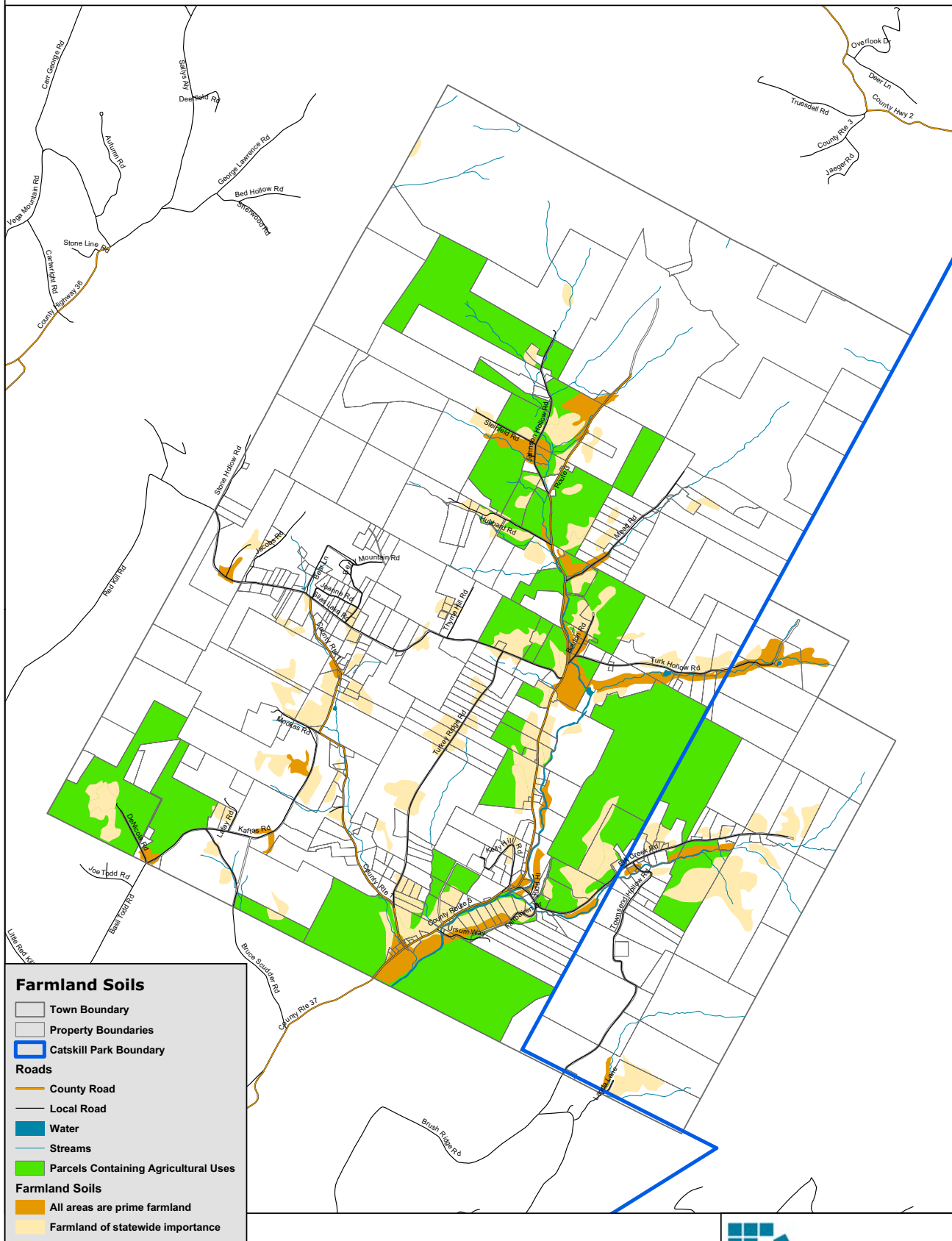
Town of Halcott

Greene County, NY



Town of Halcott

Greene County, NY



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Map Date: October 4, 2009

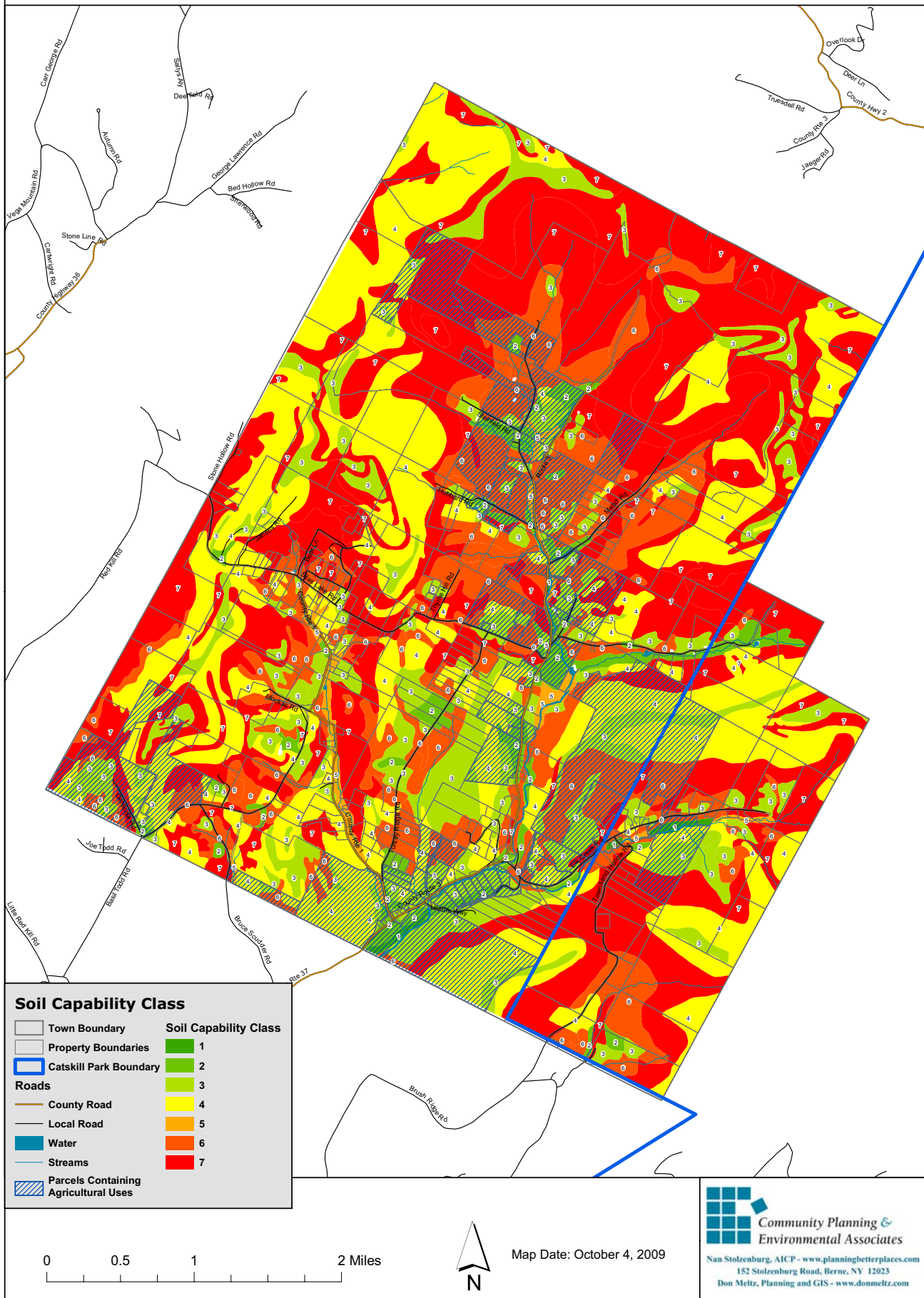


Community Planning &
Environmental Associates

Nan Stolzenburg, AICP - www.planningbetterplaces.com
152 Stolzenburg Road, Berne, NY 12023
Don Meltz, Planning and GIS - www.donmeltz.com

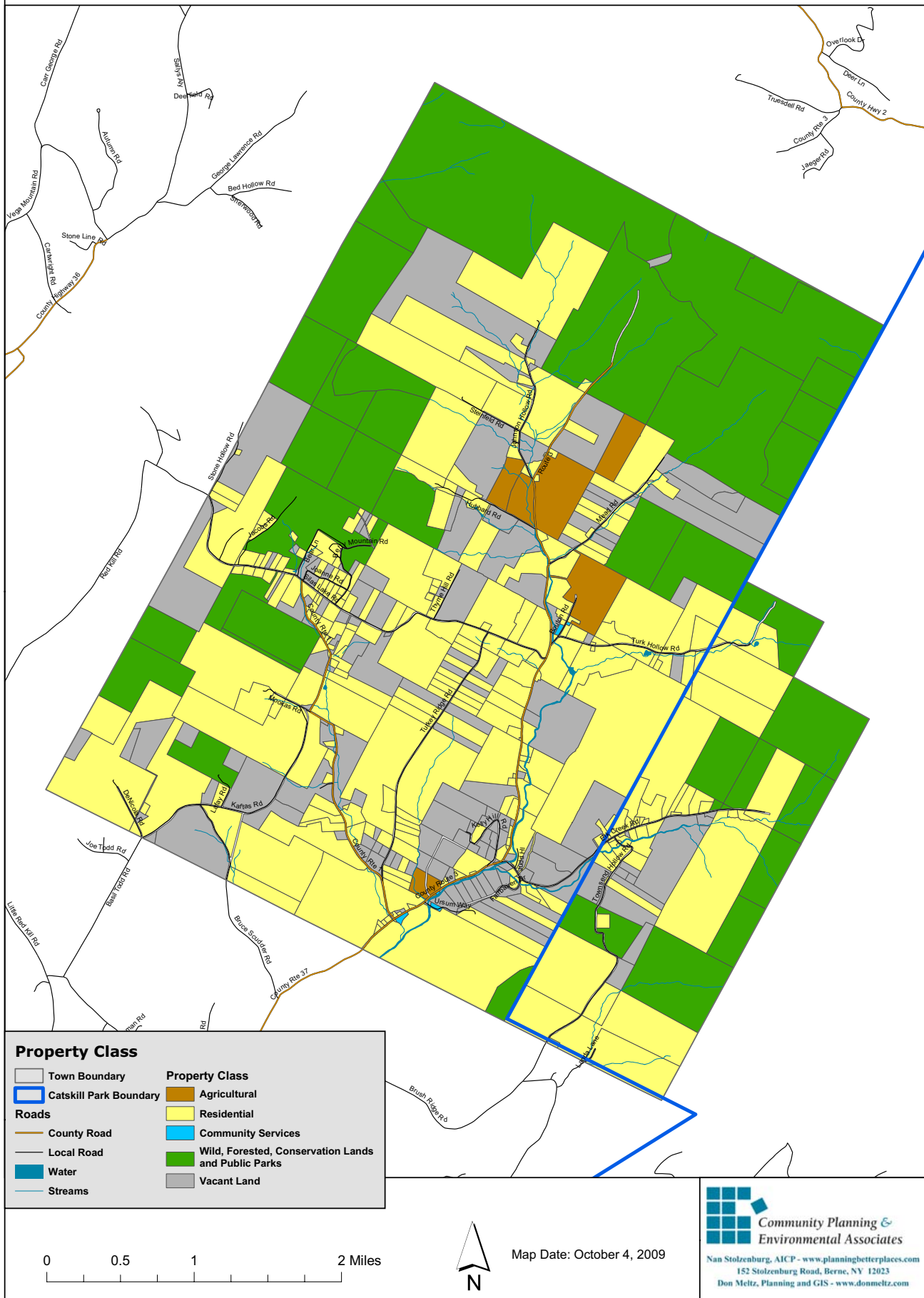
Town of Halcott

Greene County, NY



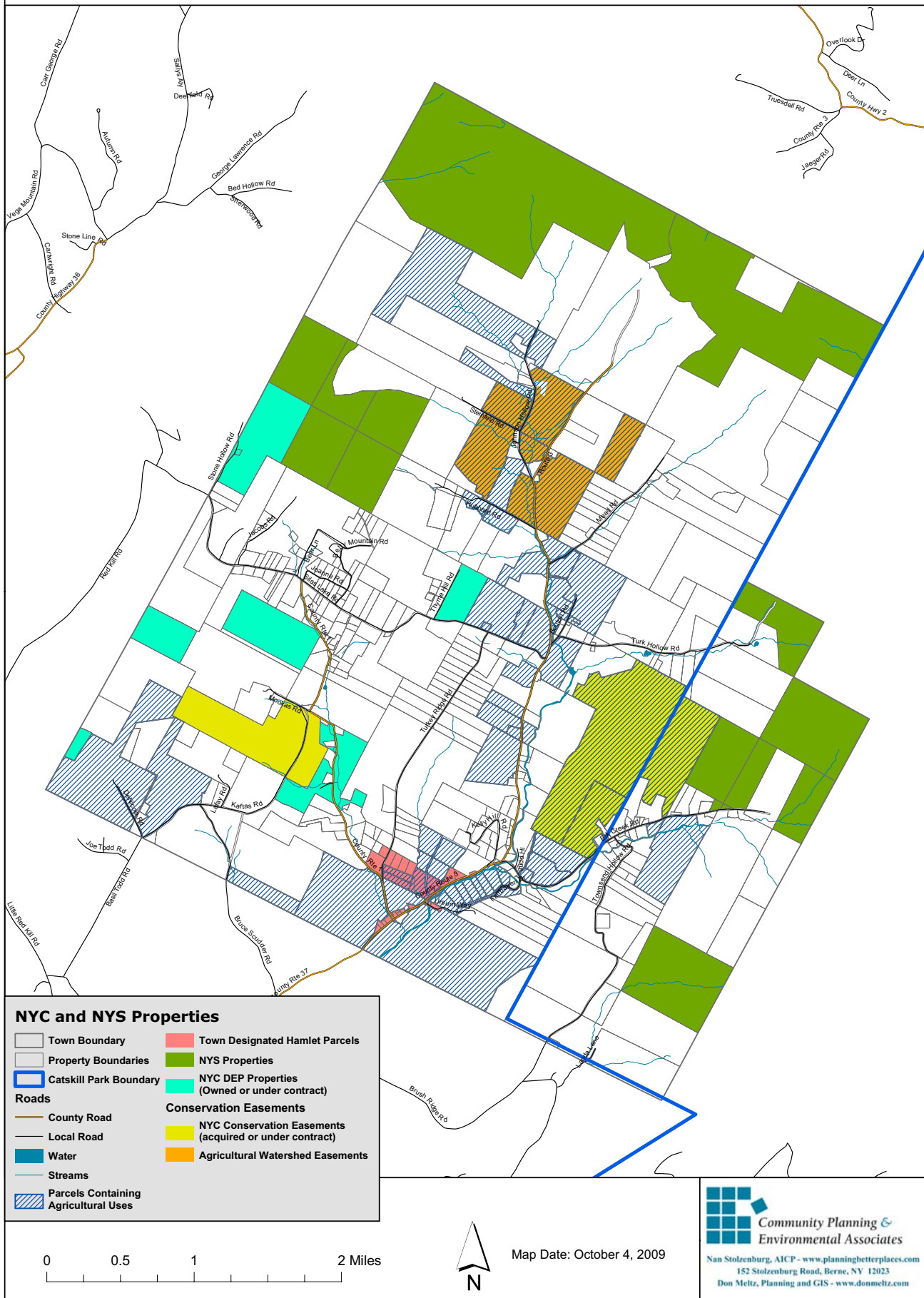
Town of Halcott

Greene County, NY



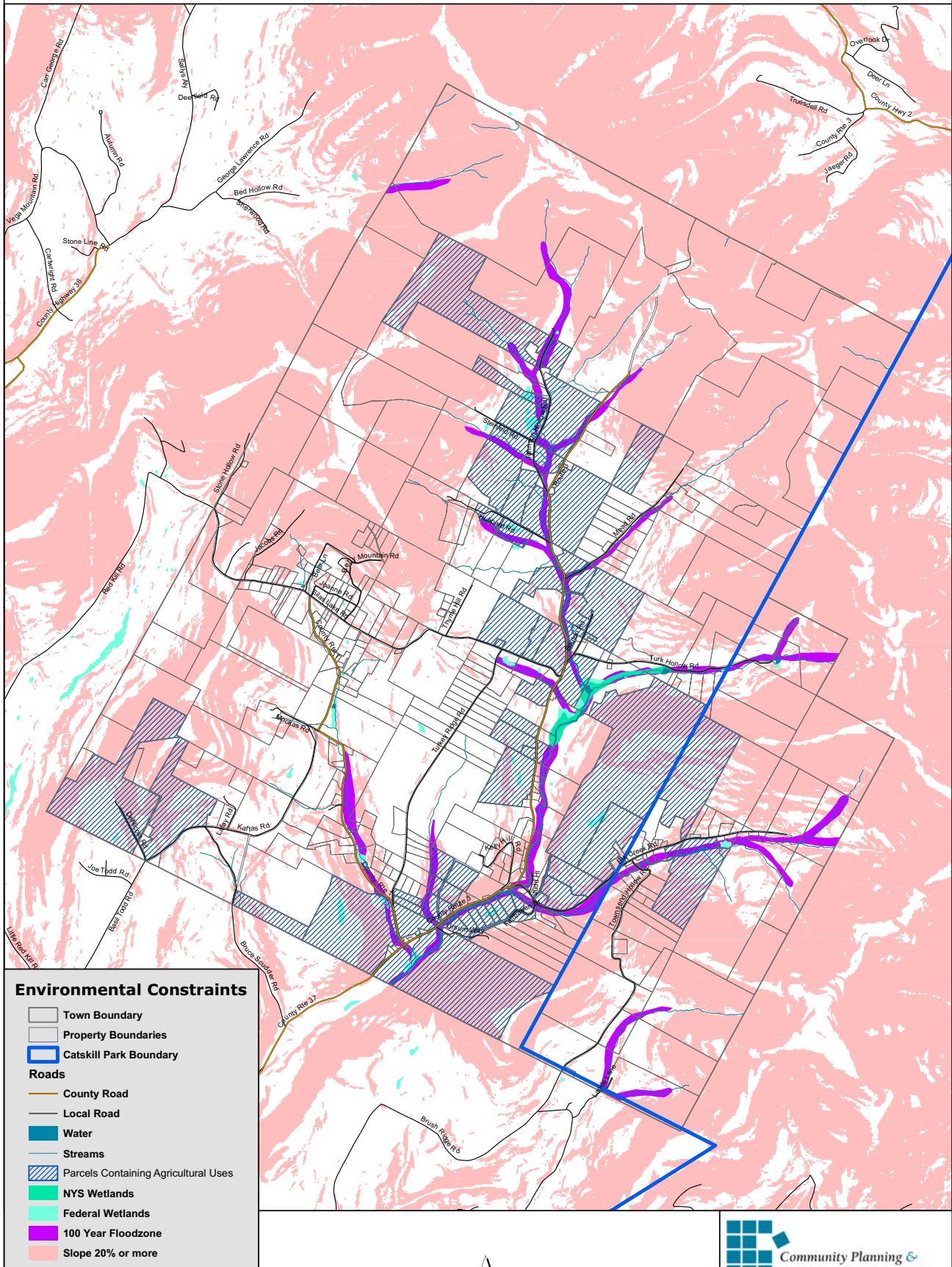
Town of Halcott

Greene County, NY



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Map Date: October 4, 2009

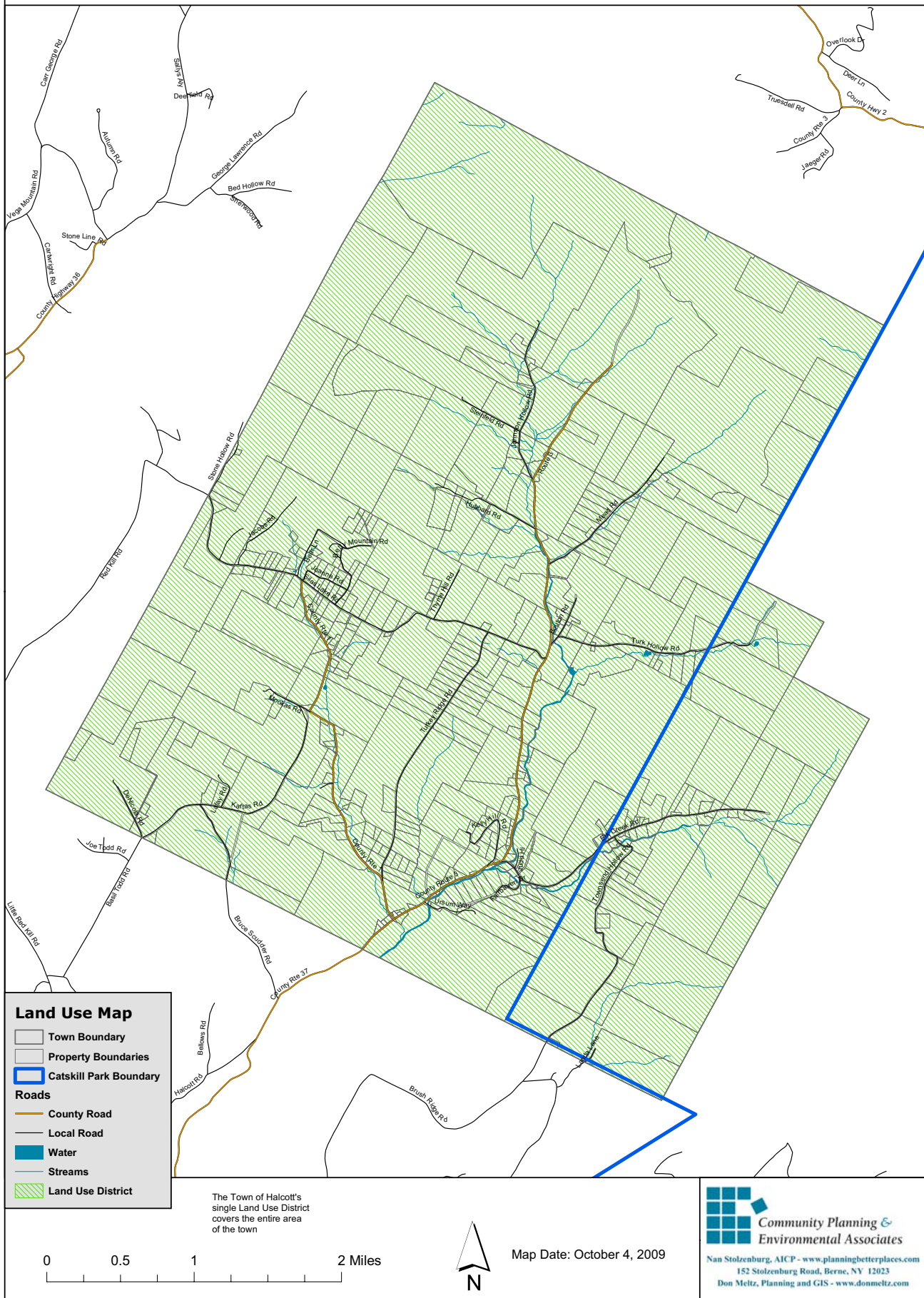


**Community Planning &
Environmental Associates**

Nan Stolzenburg, AICP - www.planningbetterplaces.com
152 Stolzenburg Road, Berne, NY 12023
Don Meltz, Planning and GIS - www.donmeltz.com

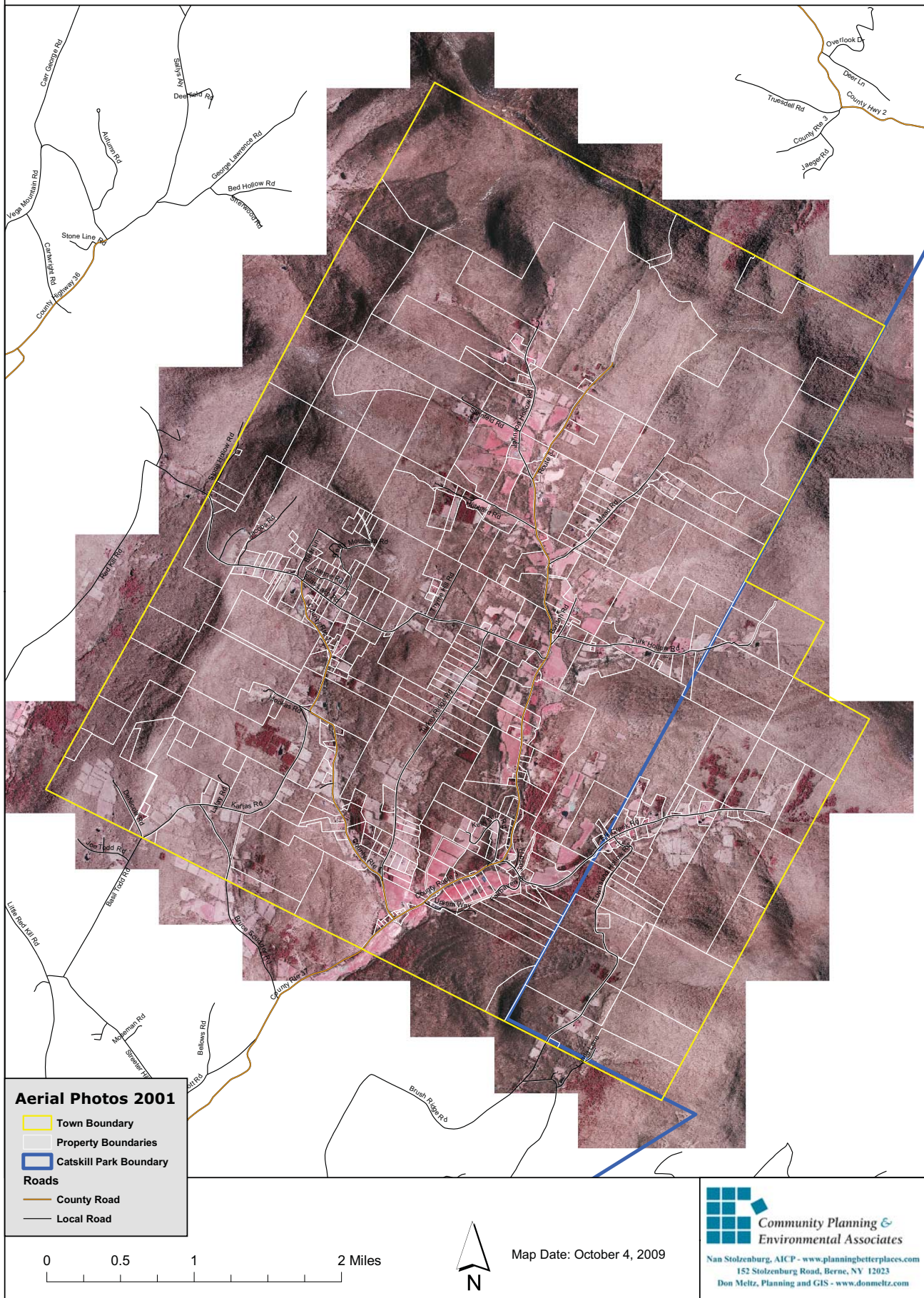
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Town of Halcott Agricultural Enhancement and Farmland Protection Plan

Appendix F: Guide to Conservation Funding

See attached brochure from the New York State Soil and Water Conservation Committee that lists all state and federal funds available for conservation planning on farms.

Conservation Funding Programs

  	<p>Agricultural Management Assistance (AMA) provides cost-share assistance to agricultural producers to voluntarily address issues such as water management, water quality, and erosion control by incorporating conservation into their farming operations. There is a 5 to 10 year contract period. For more information contact your county's USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) or Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD) or find sign-up information online at: www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/ama/</p> <p>Agricultural Nonpoint Source Abatement and Control Grant Program (Ag NPS) assists farmers in preventing water pollution from agricultural activities by providing technical and cost-share assistance. The grant program is coordinated at the local level by the SWCD, which identifies priority needs within the county and works with farm operators to prepare grant proposals. Planning grants are used for farm specific environmental planning that also serves as the groundwork for implementation grants that construct or apply best management practices (BMPs) to the farm operation. For more information contact your local SWCD or visit: www.nys-sollandwater.org</p> <p>Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) is a voluntary program for agricultural landowners, which provides annual rental payments and cost-share assistance to establish long-term, resource conserving covers on eligible farmland. Annual rental payments are made based on the agriculture rental value of the land, and provide cost-share assistance for up to 50% of the participant's costs in establishing approved conservation practices. Participants enroll in CRP contracts for 10 to 15 years. For more information contact your local USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) or visit: www.fsa.usda.gov/dslp/crp/crp.htm</p> <p>Continuous Enrollment Conservation Reserve Program (CCRP) is similar to CRP except that it focuses on smaller parcels of land that provide especially high environmental benefits, and allows enrollment in 10 to 15 year contracts at any time, without a competitive bidding process. To offer land for continuous sign-up, producers should contact their local FSA or visit: www.fsa.usda.gov/pas/publications/facts/html/crcpcont03.htm</p> <p>Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) places environmentally sensitive land that is located near streams, lakes, water bodies, and public wellhead areas into an approved vegetative cover for a period of 10 to 15 years. In return, farmers are paid annual rental payments and reimbursed for establishing recognized conservation practices. For more information contact your county's FSA, NRCS, SWCD or visit: www.fsa.usda.gov/pas/publications/facts/html/crepn03.htm</p> <p>Conservation Security Program (CSP) supports ongoing stewardship of private agricultural lands by providing payments for maintaining and enhancing natural resources. CSP identifies and rewards those farmers who are meeting the highest standards of conservation and environmental management on their operations, and provides incentives for other producers to meet those same standards of conservation performance. A staged, watershed-based implementation will be used until landowners in every watershed have had a chance to participate. CSP contracts last a minimum of 5 years. For more information contact your local NRCS or visit: www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/csp/cspinfo.html</p> <p>Debt for Nature Program, also known as the Debt Cancellation Conservation Contract Program, is available to persons with FSA loans secured by real estate. Under this program, a borrower can apply to enter into a conservation contract for 10, 30 or 50 years and have some portion of their debt cancelled. Borrowers can conserve wildlife habitat and improve the environmental and scenic value of their farms by establishing contracts on marginal cropland and other environmentally sensitive lands for conservation, recreation, and wildlife purposes. For more information contact your local FSA or visit: www.fsa.usda.gov/pas/publications/facts/html/dfn01.htm</p> <p>Emergency Conservation Program (ECP) provides funding for farmers to rehabilitate farmland damaged by wind erosion, drought, floods, hurricanes, or other natural disasters, and for carrying out water conservation measures during periods of severe drought. Emergency practices to rehabilitate farmland damaged by wind erosion and other disasters, including drought, may include debris removal, providing water for livestock, fence restoration, grading and shaping of farmland, restoring conservation structures, and water conservation measures. County FSA committees set eligibility for ECP assistance and cost-share levels. For more information contact your local FSA or visit: www.fsa.usda.gov/pas/publications/facts/html/ecp00.htm</p> <p>Environmental Farm Assistance and Resource Management Program (EFARM) provides reimbursement grants to permitted NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations to help pay for the costs of preparing and updating a Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plan (CNMP). For more information contact your CNMP Planner or visit the New York State Environmental Facilities Corporation website, www.nysedcf.org and click on "Programs" and then "EFARM".</p> <p>Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) is a voluntary conservation program for farmers that promotes agricultural production and environmental quality. EQIP offers financial and technical assistance to eligible participants for the installation or implementation of structural and management practices on eligible agricultural land. The maximum cost-share rate is 75%, except in the case of beginning farmers or other limited resource farmers, for whom the rate is 90%. Contact your county's NRCS or find sign-up information online at: www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/eqip/</p> <p>Farmland Protection Program (FPP) provides state assistance payments to eligible counties and towns to cover up to 50% of the costs to develop agricultural and farmland protection plans. Payments are also available to municipalities to cover up to 75% of the total costs for the purchase of development rights on viable farmland. Several grants of up to \$50,000 each are awarded on a rolling basis each year to counties that apply. For more information contact the NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets or visit: www.agmkt.state.ny.us/AP/agsservices/farmprotect.html</p> <p>Farmland Viability provides financial assistance in the form of matching grants to applicants for projects which contribute to overall farm profitability and sound environmental management. Grant funds may be used by a county to implement a portion of its agricultural and farmland protection plan or may be used by an individual farm to develop or implement a business management plan. For this program, a CNMP, which meets the requirements of the NRCS Standard NY-312, will be considered a component of a Farmland Viability Plan. All CNMPs must be developed by a certified or conditionally certified AEM planner. For more information contact the NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets or visit: www.agmkt.state.ny.us</p> <p>Forest Land Enhancement Program (FLEP) promotes sound stewardship of non-industrial, privately-owned forest land by offering owners technical assistance, educational programs and cost-sharing grants for issues relating to forest and wildlife management. DEC foresters should be contacted before a landowner initiates any projects with hopes of receiving cost-share payments. The program will support riparian forest buffers, forest regeneration, invasive plant control and other forestry projects. For more information contact your local SWCD or visit the DEC Division of Lands and Forest website at: www.dec.state.ny.us/website/dlfr/pvlindex.html</p> <p>Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRLPP) provides financial assistance to municipalities and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) for the purchase of development rights on eligible prime farmland. Eligible entities apply on behalf of landowners that are currently enrolled in a local farmland protection program. Entities who apply to the FRLPP for matching funds to purchase conservation easements must provide a minimum of 25% of the appraised fair market value in cash, or 50% of the purchase price of the conservation easement. For more information, contact your local NRCS office, or visit: www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/frpp/</p> <p>Grassland Reserve Program (GRP) funds restoration and preservation of pasture and grassland with easements, rental agreements, and cost-share payments. Eligible GRP land includes private grassland, shrubland, and containing forbs, or land located in an area historically dominated by grassland, shrubland, or forbs with the potential to serve as animal or plant habitat. The program offers several enrollment options. For more information contact your local NRCS, FSA, SWCD or find sign-up information online at: www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/GRP/</p> <p>New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA) offers cost-sharing and low-interest financing through its agricultural programs to help farms throughout the State save energy, develop new products, and increase profits. NYSERDA has provided funding to help farmers lower on-farm energy costs, use more environmentally friendly manure-management methods, improve profitability through value-added products, and generate their own electricity. For more information call 1-866-NYSERDA or visit: www.nyserda.org/incentives.asp</p> <p>New York State Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative (NYSGLCI) is a voluntary and cooperative effort led by a coalition representing several producer, conservation, scientific, and environmental organizations. The collaborative process provides technical assistance from NRCS to owners and managers of private grazing land to voluntarily conserve or enhance their resources to meet ecological, economic, and social demands. Consultants are available to assist with species selection, the planning and design of grazing systems, and assistance with ration balancing with managed intensive grazing. For more information contact your local SWCD or call NYSGLCI at 607-753-0854 ext. 117.</p> <p>Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) provides technical and financial support to help landowners with their wetland restoration efforts, and offers landowners an opportunity to establish long-term conservation and wildlife practices and protection by retiring marginal land from agriculture. Landowners may file an application for a conservation easement or a cost-share restoration agreement to restore and protect wetlands at any time. For more information contact your local NRCS, SWCD or find sign-up information online at: www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/wrp/</p> <p>Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP) provides technical and financial assistance to landowners to develop upland, wetland, riparian, and aquatic habitat areas on their property. NRCS works with the landowner to develop a wildlife habitat development plan, and provides cost-share payments to landowners under agreements that are usually 5 to 10 years in duration, depending upon the types of practices to be installed. Interested landowners may enter into cost-share agreements at any time. For more information contact your local NRCS, SWCD or find sign-up information online at: www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/whip/</p>	% Cost Supported	Annual Payment	Paid Easement	Conservation Planning	Nutrient Management	Manure Storage & Treatment	Soil Management & Erosion Control	Barnyard Runoff Management	Silage Leachate Control	Process Waste Water Management	Pest & Pesticide Management	Pasture Management	Stream Corridor/Floodplain Mgmt.	Feed Management	Livestock Odor Mgmt./Air Quality	Pathogen Management	Water Management & Irrigation	Forest Management & Tree Planting	Wildlife Habitat Management	Wetland Creation & Protection	Wellhead Protection	Farmland Protection	Energy Creation & Conservation	Transition to Organic Farming
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