Farm to Market: Cultivating a Conservation Ethic for Agricultural Landscapes

Abstract
Working agricultural landscapes are complex, difficult resources to preserve. This thesis examines and critiques traditional approaches to land conservation and presents an alternative model for their preservation. Traditional land conservation approaches – such as agricultural zoning and conservation easements – are necessary for success, but are not sufficient because they largely fail to capture and preserve culture. Successful working landscape preservation will capture the economic, natural, cultural, historic and scenic values of these places, rather than traditional modes of preservation which simply seek to prevent change. Integrated preservation models will embrace multiple values, enlist more stakeholders in the process, and contribute to broader goals of sustainability.

While land conservation and historic preservation may share the subject of working landscapes, they come to define "preservation" in somewhat telling, different ways. Land conservation's shortcoming is its narrow definition of preservation and its focus on technical solutions. Strict land conservation defines preservation success as preventing development or managing growth, and is often driven by concerns about ecological or economic sustainability, but not social sustainability. In contrast, cultural landscape preservation defines success in broader terms that explicitly seek to capture more layers of meaning, cultural values, and the physical imprint of human history on the land. These aspects of working landscapes are typically neglected by stricter, traditional definitions of preservation success. The conservation of working landscapes does not, however, have to be an either/or. Instead land conservation tools can be implemented in combination with cultural landscape management to yield a more comprehensive and potentially lasting approach to the preservation of working agricultural landscapes. This thesis investigates how traditional approaches to agricultural land preservation can expand their narrow focus to include broader preservation principles related to culture.

Comments
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FARM TO MARKET: CULTIVATING A CONSERVATION ETHIC FOR AGRICULTURAL LANDSCAPES

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A THESIS

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To my Hudson Valley ancestors:
The Downings of Saratoga County;
The Tompkins of Westchester County;
The Fowlers of Westchester County;
& The Lovatts of Rockland County.
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OVERVIEW

Working agricultural landscapes are complex, difficult resources to preserve. This thesis examines and critiques traditional approaches to land conservation and presents an alternative model for their preservation. Traditional land conservation approaches – such as agricultural zoning and conservation easements – are necessary for success, but are not sufficient because they largely fail to capture and preserve culture. Successful working landscape preservation will capture the economic, natural, cultural, historic and scenic values of these places, rather than traditional modes of preservation which simply seek to prevent change. Integrated preservation models will embrace multiple values, enlist more stakeholders in the process, and contribute to broader goals of sustainability.

While land conservation and historic preservation may share the subject of working landscapes, they come to define “preservation” in somewhat telling, different ways. Land conservation’s shortcoming is its narrow definition of preservation and its focus on technical solutions. Strict land conservation defines preservation success as preventing development or managing growth, and is often driven by concerns about ecological or economic sustainability, but not social sustainability. In contrast, cultural landscape preservation defines success in broader terms that explicitly seek to capture more layers of meaning, cultural values, and the physical imprint of human history on the land. These aspects of working landscapes are typically neglected by stricter, traditional definitions of preservation success. The conservation of working landscapes does not, however, have to be an either/or. Instead land conservation tools can be implemented in combination with cultural landscape management to yield a more comprehensive and potentially lasting approach to the preservation of working agricultural landscapes. This thesis investigates how traditional
approaches to agricultural land preservation can expand their narrow focus to include
broader preservation principles related to culture.

“Preservation,” as it is employed in this thesis, is an ideal condition. 1 It entails the
holistic conservation and management of working landscapes by acknowledging diverse
contemporary and historic values, and protecting and enhancing their core characteristics.
Working landscape preservation is concerned with environmental, economic and social
sustainability, making singular conceptions focusing on historic or ecological value
inadequate.

Working landscapes are best preserved through continued use, but there are many
challenges facing their sustainability. Successful preservation responses should operate on
multiple scales in order to adequately address the spectrum of issues necessary for full
preservation. Traditional land conservation protections lay an appropriate foundation upon
which preservation can be built, but can only provide the potential for agricultural use, and
in no way guarantees continuity of use or cultural meaning. Ideally, working landscape
preservation should allow places to evolve, acknowledging continual processes of change
and use reflecting human relationships to land and to history. These are questions of
management and policy, but also of principle. The success of ideal agricultural landscape
preservation will also depend on a stewardship ethic toward natural and cultural resources,
favorable political structures, regional coordination and strategy, creative partnerships and
entrepreneurial efforts that link producers and consumers, and opportunities for public
engagement.

1 I will often use “protection” to describe the outcome of partial approaches to preservation.
“Conservation” is often used to describe an ethic, perspective, or a particular intervention. Both are
necessary for preservation.
This thesis begins, in Chapter 1, by contextualizing different approaches to protecting landscapes taken since the 1960s and the emergence of more holistic preservation endeavors. Chapter 2 presents the case for hybrid approaches to working landscapes, and articulates five components of an ideal model for the preservation of working landscapes, each with illustrative examples. Chapter 3 uses the Hudson River Valley to test the ideas advanced in the model in a typical, real-world setting. Chapter 4 concludes the thesis by connecting agricultural landscape preservation to broader contemporary issues, such as sustainability and climate change, and considers how farmland preservation enhances the resilience of local food systems and cultural fabric, which can enrich public understanding of a place.
CHAPTER 1: CONTEXT AND REVIEW OF SELECTED LITERATURE

This literature review explains the context in which agricultural landscapes are preserved today by considering conservation approaches taken to these landscapes from the 1960s to the present. After a brief historical background, Part 1 discusses land conservation, including open space and working landscapes and how these approaches differ. Part 2 provides an overview of landscape preservation – particularly the emergence of cultural landscape perspectives. Finally, Part 3 surveys approaches that combine land conservation and historic preservation.

20th Century Context

By the 1960s planners, politicians, preservationists and the public began to recognize that the explosive suburbanization that defined post-war growth was exacting a price being paid by natural and historic resources of every stripe. (Whyte 1968) (Daniels 1999) (Stipe 2003) The reality of loss had become apparent in many communities. In rural places, particularly those adjacent to metropolitan areas, the rural landscape underwent rapid change. (Daniels and Bowers 1997) During the 1960s and 1970s, however, public interest in outdoor recreation, concerns about environmental quality, and broadening definitions of historic significance grew. (Stokes and Watson 1989) The emergence of the modern environmental movement as well as a variety of social justice movements also helped raise awareness about conservation issues. Planners and preservationists developed new tools and programs to protect historic and natural resources during this era, and the federal government enacted new protections including the National Environmental Protection Act and the National Historic Preservation Act. Despite common threads through the course of
contemporary preservation movements, land conservation and landscape preservation took somewhat different approaches to the same resources.

**Land Conservation**

Since the 1970s there has been an influential movement afoot in the United States to protect open space, including traditional working landscapes, such as farmland, rangeland and forests. The reasons for protecting open space and working landscapes vary as do the strategies employed. Land is often conserved as open space because of its particular ecology, scenic beauty, or recreational appeal. Working landscapes are places of production, so in addition to the desire to protect their ecology and scenery, they are often preserved for economic reasons. (Daniels and Bowers 1997) While the subject of this thesis is the conservation of working agricultural landscapes, understanding early work focused on open space is useful to understand as anticipating the protections developed for working landscapes.

**OPEN SPACE PROTECTION**

During the late 1950s and 1960s, conservationists saw open space protection as one of the defining environmental issues of the day, and it captured the attention of people from President Lyndon Johnson to radical environmentalist Edward Abbey. At the time author and ersatz sociologist William H. Whyte’s work popularized the use of conservation easements\(^2\) to protect open space. He created model statewide land protection programs, and coined the term “urban sprawl” to describe the phenomena of suburbanization on the rural fringe. Whyte’s landmark book, *The Last Landscape*, provided a vision of open space.

\(^2\) Conservation easement is used interchangeably in this thesis with purchase or donation of development rights.
protection in metropolitan regions. Whyte connected the wellbeing of cities and suburbs with the protection of open space, and he takes seriously Ian McHarg’s charge that nature should be the foundational unit of planning. Whyte argues that sprawl dramatically and often irreparably fouls the landscape of metropolitan regions and does nothing to solve the problems that people see in urban areas which cause urban flight in the first place. The quality of life inside cities and suburbs must improve and legal tools must be employed to preserve open space in a metropolitan region. While Whyte implicitly recognizes agriculture’s past in the Brandywine Valley, he does not address the historic value or economic viability of farming. The Last Landscape instead focuses on regional solutions to sprawl, such as design, networks of open space through cities and suburbs, and regional land protection.

Consider Whyte’s description of how sprawl affected his native Chester County, Pennsylvania. Similar to other counties in northeastern metropolitan areas, Chester County was still largely rural in the 1950s despite its proximity to Philadelphia. Farmers were productive and were improving the quality of the land and water with the help of the Brandywine Valley Association. “Private conscience, rather than public action, was expected to save the land. One would be told, as in many similar areas, that the landowners simply were not the kind who would sell out. They cared much too deeply about the land.” (Whyte 1968, 16) (Whyte 1968) But locals opened the door to the ensuing sprawl; a roadside stand here, ranch houses on a former farm there and the damage was done. Scattered development consumed prime farmland, taxes went up to cover the high costs of extending municipal services, in turn more lots sold. Developers stockpiled open space. Whyte puts it bluntly: “The fifties had been a time of ruination, but by the mid-sixties a countermovement had set
in,” as county planning and land conservation efforts grew stronger in the Brandywine Valley. (Whyte 1968, 16)

This is a familiar American story, as are some of the solutions Whyte advances. He calls for a stronger governmental role in saving open space, mostly through conservation easements, tax abatements, special zoning and districts. Whyte was, however, writing at a time when governmental solutions were still experimental and funding was rare. Today these measures are common techniques used to preserve open space, working landscapes and historic buildings. While Whyte expresses his fair share of doubt, he posits, “The less of our landscape there is to save…the better our chance of saving it.” (Whyte 1968, 15)

**FARMLAND PROTECTION**

Preservationists honed in on farmlands during the 1970s and 1980s, after early victories in open-space preservation amid increasing concerns about working landscapes protection. As earlier efforts to protect open space sought to stay development, the urgency to protect farmland is driven by the pressure of sprawl. The rural-urban fringe is the front line of this conflict. Most of America’s private land is owned or rented by farmers, so the impact of farmland protection has the potential to be significant. (Daniels and Bowers 1997)

Farms are productive landscapes, so their long-term survival is contingent on the ability of farmers earn a profit. Economic viability, therefore, became an important element of farmland protection along with ecology and scenery.

During the 1980s approaches to farmland protection came from many angles and at a variety of scales. The 1984 collection *Protecting Farmlands* illustrates just how fragmented these early efforts to were. Then-Congressman Jim Jeffords of Vermont describes these efforts as “pieces of a puzzle,” only beginning to come together. (Steiner and Theilacker
Culled from two conference proceedings, *Protecting Farmlands* presents an overview of tools for preserving farmland at the federal, state, county, and local levels, and offers case studies for illustrative domestic and international programs. The tools described are the same techniques used for open space preservation. The collection focuses on how to retain agricultural lands as economically viable, as opposed to simply protecting them from development. The difference may sound slight, but in this nuance is how farms are sustained. Profitability allows for continued use, and also helps to support the retention of a critical mass of farmland in the region and keeps farm-support businesses open.

*Protecting Farmlands* also considers the need to instill a conservation ethic among the public for agriculture. Small farms should be valued locally for the food they provide to urban consumers. The latter point comes from a chapter by Roger J. Blobaum, a sustainable agriculture consultant, who articulates an essential difficulty facing urban-fringe farmland preservation – urban residents having a stake in rural affairs. He notes that in Northeastern communities, where much fringe farmland has been developed, there is high public interest in local food but “the connection among consumer interest in locally produced food, the economic viability of farmers on the urban fringe, and farmland preservation is not well established.” (Blobaum 1984, 55) To help combat this disconnect, Blobaum suggests that metropolitan areas should develop regional food plans as a matter of public policy to make important rural-urban connections. Few places, such as Toronto, have created regional food plans. (Wekerle 2004, 378-86)

Often farmland protection efforts seek open-space preservation, rather than seeking to preserve them as productive, viable landscapes. (Daniels 1999) Many who have written on the subject of farmland protection offer these justifications: environmental quality, lower
cost of municipal services, and growth management. Of particular note are works on farmland preservation that concentrate on economic viability and legal and political tools that help offset the cost of doing business. As Tom Daniels and Deborah Bowers explain in their book, *Holding Our Ground: Protecting America’s Farms and Farmland*, farmland is an economic asset best retained by ensuring that farming in a region remains economically viable. (Daniels and Bowers 1997) Daniels and Bowers also place farmland protection in the context of sprawl: As development continues into the fringe, farms face rising operating costs, increasing taxes and find conflict with non-farm neighbors. (Daniels and Bowers 1997) They note that with the loss of farmland, “American communities are losing a vital resource while historic landscapes, traditional communities, and local economies are dramatically changed. Unless farmland protection is taken seriously, the population growth and development pose true threats to some of the nation’s most valuable farmland.” (Daniels and Bowers 1997, 259) Daniels and Bowers view farmland protection as a good rural economic development policy that bolsters a local economy, ranging from feed and seed companies to tourism. This understanding places the cause for farmland protection squarely in the context of rural economics.

By the 1990s some form of farmland preservation existed in every state. Daniels and Bowers devote several chapters to the tools that can be employed to protect farmland, including preferential tax treatment, the purchase of development rights (PDR), transfer of development rights (TDR), agricultural zoning, agricultural districts, and land-use planning
that favors compact growth. They suggest these techniques work best in combination, tailored to a community’s particular needs, employed by government, non-profit groups and the public.

Where strict, traditional land conservation approaches succeed is in developing useful legal tools to protect land from development. But technical solutions do not always produce desired preservation outcomes. It remains difficult, for example, for many farming communities to find common ground about how to accommodate growth and how working landscapes contribute to “community character.” But these decisions are necessary in order for a community to articulate its vision for the future and how local agriculture fits into that vision. Daniels and Bowers acknowledge that farms offer a cultural tie to the past, but do not address how that might factor into the difficult decisions made by communities about farmland protections. “We do not advocate protecting farms and farmland primarily for historic or cultural reasons. A farm must be able to pay its way as a business.” (Daniels and Bowers 1997, 73) This typifies the authors’ utilitarian approach to farmland protection. They contend that highest quality farmland with the greatest chance of staying in farm use should be prioritized. (Daniels and Bowers 1997) Despite the importance of economic viability, economics is not the only metric by which to measure the value of farmland preservation.

In his 1999 Book, *When City and Country Collide: Managing Growth in the Metropolitan Fringe*, Tom Daniels discusses farmland preservation as a growth management tool. He expands the role that historic considerations can play in farmland preservation. As one of

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the five objectives Daniels offers for design considerations in the fringe countryside is the protection of historic landscapes.

Historic landscapes help make a community or region identifiable and distinct. Historic sites are worthy of preserving, but not all of a historic landscape needs to be maintained in ‘museum condition.’ Still, what development is permitted should be designed and located in ways that do not detract from the historic landscape. These landscapes have economic as well as historic and aesthetic value. They are often important tourist attractions and may be actively farmed or logged. (Daniels 1999) This consideration is still couched in an economic framework, but Daniels does give credence to the role that historic landscapes can play in engendering a “sense of place” and a rooted local identity.

**Landscape Preservation**

The preservation of historic landscapes is a relatively new area of historic preservation concern which has developed since the 1970s. Early landscape preservation focused on designed landscapes to offer contextual setting to historic buildings. These preservation interventions were often reconstructions pinned to a particular period of significance. (Keller and Keller 2003) But cultural landscape theorists like J.B. Jackson recognized the worth of vernacular landscapes in ways that implied a different preservation perspective that deemphasized the traditional primacy of form and style. So-called rural “vernacular” and “traditional” landscapes became areas of historic preservation concern during the 1980s. (Keller and Keller 2003, ; Stipe 2003) As the definition of historic landscapes expanded, preservationists needed “landscape conservation guidelines and classifications based on natural systems and processes in addition to cultural values.” (Keller and Keller 2003) By the 1990s, federal historic preservation programs included rural historic landscapes with the publication of *National Register Bulletin 30: Guidelines for Evaluating and*
Documenting Rural Historic Landscapes. At the beginning of the 21st century preservationists are advancing more holistic approaches to working landscapes, inclusive of natural systems, cultural heritage, and economic considerations.

By the end of the 1980s there were examples of rural places being protected by linking landscape preservation and land conservation. Some are documented as case studies in the 1989 book *Saving America’s Countryside: A Guide to Rural Conservation*, including some demonstration projects of the Rural Project of the National Trust for Historic Preservation (NTHP). This book, similar to those written about land conservation, is in many ways a manual describing tools communities can use protect their cultural and natural heritage using a variety of tools. The authors, Samuel Stokes and A. Elizabeth Watson, define the goal of rural conservation as one that integrates “natural resource conservation, farmland retention, historic preservation, and scenic protection” and is linked to the social and economic needs of a community. (Stokes and Watson 1989, 3-4) Rural landscapes bear the marks of human interaction with land in ways that are important to consider when evaluating their preservation. From this perspective, issues of local identity and traditional land use patterns which link places to the past can be considered in ways which precluded by typical land conservation efforts.

The two NTHP Rural Project demonstrations profiled in *Saving America’s Countryside*, Oley, PA and Cazenovia, NY, offer interesting examples of how natural and cultural resources can be preserved simultaneously. These rural communities were able to take inclusive approaches to landscape surveys, express the values that they most wished to preserve, recognize connections between natural and cultural resources, and protect their landscapes through common plans and legal tools.
Due to the influence of cultural landscape theory, preservation increasingly came to consider of how natural and man-made forces continually combine, creating everyday landscapes over time. As Timothy and Genevieve Keller explain, “All of America’s landscapes hold the imprints of human occupation…. Consequently, all efforts to protect land areas, even when motivated by objectives to preserve pieces of the natural landscape and ecological resources, also serve to protect parts of our cultural heritage.” (Keller and Keller 2003, 235) All landscapes possess some imprint from human presence. (Lewis 1979) These perspectives owe much to the advent of cultural landscape theory which emerged in the historic preservation field during the 1990s. Cultural landscape theory was developed by cultural geographers and is useful in understanding the layers of time and human influence embedded in landscapes of every sort. (Meinig 1979) (Groth and Bressi 1997) Cultural landscape approaches include ecological values, history, and traditional use. (Mitchell and Buggey 2000) This perspective asks preservationists to permit and manage change, rather than more traditional approaches which seek to arrest or reverse change.

Cultural landscape preservation employs a process-based understanding and acceptance of change. In their book about regional vernacular architecture and landscapes, Gabrielle Lanier and Bernard Herman write, “Whether the reasons for shaping the land are economic, social, or aesthetic, each change creates a powerful statement of prevailing, often conflicted, cultural ideals. Landscape, then, is the largest but perhaps the most frequently overlooked cultural artifact.” (Lanier and Herman 1997, 279) Critically useful aspects of a cultural landscape perspective are a broad and inclusive definition of value and meaning that account for the past, appreciate the present and make room for change in the future. As Pierce Lewis writes, “Our human landscape is our unwitting autobiography, reflecting our
tastes, our values, our aspirations, and even our fears, in tangible, visible form.” (Meinig 1979, 12) This brings an understanding of working landscapes that includes an appreciation that change is an essential quality of any landscape.

To some, change is so essential a quality that preservation itself becomes problematic. Robert Cook suggests that because landscapes are such dynamic resources, landscape preservation itself may be a contradiction in terms. (Cook 1996, 42-53) Cook says preservationists should evaluate “cultural landscapes as systems more than artifactual properties,” to escape the preoccupation with restoration to particular periods of significance or design intent. (Cook 1996, 51) Preservation becomes acts of interpretation which are expressions of contemporary values. In this view, a multiplicity of interpretations will “permit an understanding of how the landscape’s functional organic nature served a cultural purpose or was transformed through human interaction. In this way a living landscape may both embrace and survive preservation.” (Cook 1996, 52)

**Integrated Approaches to Landscape Preservation**

Farmland preservation is rooted in the tools developed as a response to sprawl by land conservationists and the approaches historic preservationists have adopted to address landscapes with multiple layers of value and meaning. While historic preservationists and planners share legal tools to protect historic rural landscapes, there are relatively few conservation structures which explicitly pursue both land conservation and cultural landscape preservation. Explicitly integrated approaches are recent phenomenon and have been the subject of some study, notably by the Conservation Study Institute (CSI) of the National Park Service (NPS) as well as the UNESCO World Heritage Centre.
The split between natural and cultural resource protection stems from deep traditions within each movement. While naturalists have focused on the need to preserve “undisturbed” and pristine landscapes, and conservationists advocated for the “wise use” of natural resources, historians have focused on great works of civilization. But when it comes to many landscapes purely “biocentric” or “anthropocentric” approaches miss meaningful interactions between humans and the land. (Mitchell and Buggey 2000) As Nora Mitchell, Director of the CSI, and Susan Buggey former Director of Historical Services for Parks Canada, note in an article from 2000, “in spite of the strong dichotomous tradition, recent experience has demonstrated that in many landscapes the natural and cultural heritage are inextricably bound together and that the conservation approach could benefit from more integration.” (Mitchell and Buggey 2000) Still, they note that people working to protect natural and historic landscapes are incorporating each other’s values into their work. Through integrated approaches a multiplicity of values, including those of traditional communities who live and work on the land, will yield more sustainable resource management. This holistic approach has yielded, they contend, “a gradual, but fundamental change in the way we look at the world and at the very purpose of conservation.” (Mitchell and Buggey 2000, 45)

As cultural landscape theory has been incorporated into heritage conservation, important international conventions have validated this progression. In 1992, UNESCO’s World Heritage Committee agreed that cultural landscapes can be included as places of outstanding universal value under the World Heritage Convention adopted in 1972, marking the first international protection for cultural landscapes. In 1994, the World Heritage Committee developed its Global Strategy, which integrates the protection of natural and
cultural resources. (Mitchell and Buggey 2000) (World Heritage 2003) Beyond legitimizing the pursuit of resource conservation from a cultural landscape perspective, the inclusion of cultural landscapes as part of the World Heritage list has led to the inscription of sites that beautifully illustrate the mutual influence of man-made and natural forces embedded in the landscape, including traditional working landscapes.
CHAPTER 2: INTEGRATED CONSERVATION - A PREFERRED MODEL FOR WORKING LANDSCAPES

The preservation of working landscapes necessitates holistic and integrated conservation responses. As demonstrated in Chapter 1, traditional land conservation measures and historic preservation interventions often result in fragmented and more singularly-focused protections that do not account for the breadth of values embedded in working landscapes. Instead, an ideal model for working landscape preservation will integrate the protection of natural, cultural and economic resources. In this model, conservation responses will operate at a variety of scales to create layered protections, broad support, favorable political structures, and strong partnerships to sustain working landscapes.

An ideal integrated conservation model should have these five elements:

- **A regional management structure, vision and partnerships.** Regional structures will provide a platform for communication and coordination among fragmented conservation partners, and will develop a regional vision for preservation.

- **Strategic, funded and long-term landscape conservation tools.** Traditional conservation tools used at the local level, tailored to local conditions, will help realize pieces of the regional vision over time. Dedicated funding and clear strategies will help ensure the success of local actions by land trusts or government.

- **Traditional working landscape that thrive.** The economic viability of traditional landscapes will preserve these places through continued use. This
will also help preserve the lifestyles and heritage of the communities who work the land. New entrepreneurship opportunities will allow producers to profit from traditional operations, otherwise outpaced by globalized market pressure.

- **Valued and enhanced historic integrity and ecological health.** Productivity and conservation are not mutually exclusive. Sustainable practices will protect the environmental quality and cultural heritage of working landscapes over the long term.

- **Opportunities for the public to experience and learn through the landscape.** Tourism, education, outreach, and authentic experiences will help build public support for working landscapes, and connect urban and rural areas.

**A Preferred Model for Working Landscape Preservation**

**SUSTAINED REGIONAL VISION, MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE, PARTNERSHIPS**

Regional resource management structures will help develop common responses to preserve working landscapes across a region. Regional planning is rare in America. But a regional perspective helps to contextualize working landscapes as part of larger natural, cultural, and economic systems, seeing past fragmented land use created by ownership and political jurisdictions. A regional management structure or coalition will survey and inventory natural and cultural resources to build an understanding of the landscape at large. This understanding will be the foundation for a regional vision for working landscape preservation. Regional structures will coordinate partnerships between conservation organizations, local governments and the public to help realize the regional vision over time.
One solution to regional resource management that has grown in popularity since the 1980s is the National Heritage Area model. National Heritage Areas (NHAs) are congressionally designated places that are regional in scale and focus, that seek to manage natural and cultural resources in partnership with local communities. Heritage Areas are organized around particular themes that serve to unify the resources within and distinguish the landscape as a whole. They explicitly connect natural and cultural resource protections with economic and community development.

NHAs demonstrate how layered management can work at a variety of scales. The National Park Service coordinates with and assists the Heritage Areas without owning or managing them directly; Heritage Areas are managed locally and are usually supported by a non-profit corporation; NHAs work with municipalities to plan projects, interpret resources, market the region, and help guide decision-making. Because NHAs are congressionally funded they can have significant financial resources at their disposal and have the benefit of technical guidance of the National Park Service for particular projects.

NHAs are typically authorized for 20 years, which offers a rare opportunity to develop, implement, and monitor a regional management strategy. Local residents help establish the goals and strategies for the region, and non-profit, public and private partnerships are critical to the realization of a Heritage Area. Management entities for NHAs develop management plans that set long-range goals and strategies for achieving them. Typical NHA projects include physical linkages, such as trails, and unified interpretation, marketing, and branding of the NHA and its unique resources. NHAs also help to facilitate collaboration among municipalities and groups. In the case of working landscapes they help
market traditional products and tourism opportunities that help keep working landscapes viable.

Heritage Areas provide a platform for regional coordination that is otherwise missing in American preservation planning. They are particularly useful in leading inventories which help identify an area’s important resources. For example, in 2004 Essex National Heritage Area\(^4\) launched a major Heritage Landscape initiative, in partnership with the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation, to better understand and preserve the area’s landscape resources. For 18 months partners inventoried “places of the heart”\(^5\) (their term for cultural landscapes) in two-thirds of Essex NHA’s communities, including many historic working farmsteads. [Figure 2.1] The Heritage Landscape Inventory integrated land conservation and historic preservation priorities, and engaged residents in a participatory process for identifying the landscapes and for the preservation of “community character.” Communities participated in reconnaissance inventories; hundreds of people attended meetings, and identified a total of 1,300 “heritage landscapes.”\(^6\) The inventory process finished with a symposium during which participants developed action agendas for six different landscape typologies.\(^7\) The results have become a new basis for dialogue among advocates and power brokers about how to preserve these resources. Community planning reports synthesized initiative’s results and made policy and planning recommendations. Through this process Essex NHA inventoried its cultural landscapes, built a broad base of

\(^4\) Essex National Heritage Area encompasses a 550-square mile Northeastern corner of Massachusetts, beginning 10 miles north of Boston, extending north to the New Hampshire border, west to the Merrimack River and east to the Atlantic Coast of Cape Ann.


\(^6\) Ibid.

\(^7\) Types included: city and town centers, estates and institutional campuses, coastal resources, working farms, transportation routes, rivers and ponds.
support and public appreciation for these places, and partnered with state and local government successfully. This project successfully tackled a question of regional importance, set preservation priorities, and offered guidance to communities about how to meet these regional goals.

LANDSCAPE CONSERVATION TOOLS ARE STRATEGIC, SUFFICIENTLY FUNDED, AND TAKE A LONG VIEW

Local public policies and conservation programs are the foundational elements of working landscape protections. Local governments and land trusts should develop long-term landscape protection strategies based on the regional vision and the resources within their area. Local strategies for protecting working landscapes will be shaped by community values and local conditions. Strategies will be implemented using traditional conservation tools, such as easements, purchase or transfer of development rights programs (PDR/TDR), acquisition, land banking, land swaps, special districting, and preferential taxation. Local efforts will rely on steady funding streams in order to be strategic about conservation decisions instead of opportunistic.

Layered protections that are tailored to local resources form a strong foundation for the preservation of working landscapes. Municipalities should incorporate conservation tools into their comprehensive plans, and ensure that preservation strategies are not at odds with existing public policy. This will allow communities to make choices that do not place new development at odds with traditional working landscapes. Historic preservation designations can be employed to protect the physical built heritage of these landscapes. Local land conservation groups can acquire conservation easements on key parcels.
One example of a town able to create integrated local protections is Oley, PA, one of the demonstration sites for the National Trust for Historic Preservation’s Rural Project. Oley identified its key resources and implemented different layers of protection for its working landscapes. These protections were developed based on shared community goals of preserving Oley’s agricultural heritage. In Oley there were concerns about an aging farming population, zoning that favored 2-acre residential development, competition over water resources, and conversion of prime agricultural land to quarrying. The timing and type of protections were tailored to address these issues. The entire township was listed on the National Register of Historic Places, an Agricultural Security Area was established restricting land within to agricultural use, and agricultural zoning, new subdivision regulations, and demolition delay were added to the township’s comprehensive plan. Oley Township relied on expert advice from the National Trust for Historic Preservation and the Brandywine Conservancy throughout the process, and focused on integrated approaches to surveying and protecting its natural and cultural resources. [Figure 2.2]

Local land trusts and governments should have a clear strategy and a funding stream. Strategic approaches help guide conservation decisions and make the best use of available funds. Steady funding allows governments and conservation groups to plan conservation programs and transactions well in advance. Through municipal and land trust partnerships, limited funding can be pooled to accomplish shared preservation goals that otherwise might not be feasible. In recent decades voters have approved hundreds of ballot measures to fund billions in land conservation and smart growth measures that protect working landscapes. This funding makes working landscapes protection possible, and enables the public to alert government of their willingness to pay for preservation.
TRADITIONAL WORKING LANDSCAPES THRIVE

Continued use preserves traditional working landscapes. These landscapes will thrive because they are economically viable, and because the culture that sustains them is maintained. Creative entrepreneurship and public support also will contribute to the resilience of traditional working landscapes.

Working landscapes are places of production and to survive they must remain economically viable. But the scale of many traditional landscapes is at odds with industrial agriculture. In America this typified by the “get big or get out” paradigm, demanding increasing production of a commodity at all costs. But traditional working landscapes can forge an alternative path in opposition to dominant industrial paradigm, and do business on the margins.8

Traditional places do not thrive simply because they are economically viable, but because people also make a lifestyle choice to work the land. Traditional working landscapes represent family and community heritage. Their success is partly determined by the commitment of the people who work them to continue, successive generations must choose to continue working the land in traditional ways. These choices are at once personal, financial, and ethical, and as such can be difficult to influence from without. Communities can make room for these places, but it is up to the working individuals to create and define their relationships to the land.

For example, Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, which has long been characterized by its traditional landscapes, many of which are worked by the county’s Plain Sect farmers. [Figure 2.3] Lancaster is home to nearly 20,000 Amish and Mennonite live, whose religious beliefs are realized living in communities of fellowship in rural places where many lead traditional farming lifestyles. While the Mennonite are not as uniformly strict about their use of technology and separation from society, the Amish offer a potent example of a people whose traditional working landscapes represent serious alternatives to modern industrial agriculture, and in so doing maintain intimate and historic connections to the land over time. Lancaster’s Amish communities choose farming as a matter of faith and generations of families work the same land and continue to settle in the county. Their presence is critical to the county’s vibrant agricultural sector as well as its tourism industry.

New entrepreneurship opportunities can sustain working landscapes that otherwise might be pushed out of production. For example, farms can diversify or pursue more lucrative niche markets. Also their revenue stream can be enhanced by less production-oriented ventures, such as seasonal events, bed and breakfasts, or farm camps. Lancaster County’s traditional working landscapes attract more than 8 million visitors a year, who largely come to see the Amish and their way of life. These visitors spend a significant

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9 Lancaster County is an area of southeastern Pennsylvania, approximately 40 miles west of Philadelphia, richly endowed with prime agricultural soils and natural irrigation. It has been farmed since its settlement. Today two-thirds of Lancaster County is in agricultural use, and is perennially a top-20 ranked county in agricultural production nationally. Lancaster County has maintained active farmland protection programs that, since their establishment in the 1980s, have protected a critical mass of farmland, about 80,000 acres, through a variety of tools, and its programs are regarded as national models. Local agricultural zoning, growth boundaries, reliable funding, PDR and TDR, public-private partnerships, and public support enhance the agricultural protection programs of both the county and the county-wide nonprofit land trust.

amount of money to support a tourism economy that is reliant on the health of the traditional agricultural landscapes of the county. The combined agricultural land protections and Plain Sect farms therefore contribute to both the county’s tourism and agricultural economic sectors.

Working landscapes will also thrive because the public supports them. Consumers can use their buying power to enhance the economic viability of traditional working landscapes in their region. Local direct marketing, distribution, and processing systems provide alternatives for both producer and consumer.

HISTORIC LANDSCAPE INTEGRITY AND ECOLOGICAL HEALTH ARE VALUED AND ENHANCED

The production of working landscapes will not be at the expense of historic integrity or ecological health. Working landscapes come to bear the marks of the intertwined human and natural systems that continually reshape them over time. Successful working landscape preservation will respect the integrity of these resources, while placing a premium on contemporary ecological health that will help ensure the productivity of these landscapes into the future.

Historic working landscapes are replete with features linking the past with the present. Historic buildings such as farm houses, mills, barns, windmills or store houses help to engender a sense of community character. Historic land use patterns and boundary demarcations often illustrate the land’s productive past as well as responses to natural features. Historic elements should be reused, repaired and preserved to give these physical reminders of the past a useful future. The overall integrity of these elements as a collection
should be respected when weighing the important decisions about the necessary evolution of these cultural landscapes.

Consider the dramatic example of Cinque Terre in Italy. These picturesque towns on the Mediterranean coast are characterized by their intact, traditional terraced agriculture carved out of the rugged coast. [Figure 2.4] Cinque Terre is an inscribed World Heritage cultural landscape. The continuity of the terraced agriculture has been threatened by abandonment in recent years. Because the area’s authenticity rests in the continued traditional uses of the landscape, traditional terraced viticulture is being taught to new generations, as are traditional construction and repair techniques for the character-defining walls that support terraced agriculture. By reviving and continuing production of traditional products and the agricultural and building traditions, the integrity of the region’s heritage will remain well into the future.

The productivity and economic viability of working landscapes depends on their ecology and its health. Highly competitive global markets in agriculture, fishing, and timber have led to the use of practices which place profit and yield before quality and health. The natural resources that are the foundation of these landscapes can become exhausted without thoughtful management. The collapse of fisheries, clear cut land, and depleted soils are all consequences of industrial landscapes. The development of monocultures can dramatically decrease biodiversity and the continued loss of genetic diversity creates ecological vulnerabilities with far-reaching consequences. These choices can have dramatic and far-reaching ecological effects, such as habitat disruption, water pollution, and erosion.

In the example of Cinque Terre, tourism has taken an environmental toll on the landscape. The steeps slopes are eroding through the impact of tourists, which destabilizes
the terraced agriculture. To counterbalance this there are now tourism initiatives where visitors come to work with locals to repair the distinctive stone walls that support the terraced agriculture, clear trails, and even help harvest the region’s agriculture. The Cinque Terre National Park is also implementing an environmental certification for the tourist industry in an attempt to reduce the negative impact of tourists on the sensitive landscape within the park.

Sound environmental practices are important to ensure that the continued use of working lands do not come at an ecological cost. By harvesting trees closer to their natural maturation, forestry can continue as part of the rural economy. Agricultural methods that rely on crop rotation to replenish nutrients in soils can be pursued instead of spreading synthetic fertilizers. Rare heritage breeds and heirloom varietals can be raised as farmers seek to preserve genetic and biological diversity. Working landscapes are more likely to remain productive over the long term if their ecological health is valued.

PUBLIC HAS OPPORTUNITIES TO EXPERIENCE AND LEARN THROUGH THE LANDSCAPE

The public should have the opportunity to experience working landscapes through outreach and education programs as well as tourism. Through these experiences, the public will appreciate and support working landscapes as part of our common heritage. A broader constituency for working landscape preservation can be forged as more Americans come to value the extraordinary qualities of these everyday places.

As fewer Americans work the land, education and outreach efforts have become increasingly important to build public support for working landscapes. Working landscapes are also becoming tourist attractions as the public becomes increasingly urbanized. The
growth of American interest in agritourism and ecotourism attests to a growing public curiosity about landscapes. People visit Alaskan glaciers to see them before global warming melts them, while others trace the Kentucky Bourbon Trail to experience a special landscape unique to central Kentucky. Tourism dollars can be a boost for struggling rural areas and help working landscapes remain in production.

Direct and authentic experiences with working lands and traditional products can enhance public understanding of working landscapes and help build a broader constituency to support the preservation of working lands. Through school trips, youth group partnerships, camp programs, and family-oriented events, young people can learn how raw materials are produced, harvested and turned into everyday products. At Shelburne Farms in Vermont\(^\text{11}\) the public is invited to learn about sustainable agriculture and forestry practices at the historic farmstead. [Figure 2.5] Shelburne Farm’s youth programming includes school field trips, a 4-H club, a farm-to-school program, and summer camps. Regular programming and special events invite people of all ages to learn about all aspects of their working landscape: Kids can become foresters for a day and take a woodworking class, while adults can shear sheep or take a three-day cheese making workshop. Shelburne Farms also helps farmers and foresters learn how to start or improve their own place-based educational programs, and helps educators develop curriculum that integrates sustainability, ecology and heritage into the classroom.

\(^{11}\) Shelburne Farms is a National Historic Landmark located along Vermont’s shores of Lake Champlain. Shelburne Farms was established as an experimental farm in the late 1880s by a branch of the Vanderbilt family to demonstrate model agricultural practices.
Conclusion

When these five factors are all at work, the preservation of a region’s working landscapes are more likely to be successful. Integrated conservation success will be marked by the protection of landscape resources and their associated cultural resources, and will sustain the connections between the two.

Working landscape preservation requires a guiding regional vision and management entity to help coordinate and organize strategic local protections. In healthy working landscape preservation schemes, places of living heritage will thrive because their traditions can remain alive through entrepreneurship, localization, and public support. The longevity and wellbeing of working landscapes will be sustained because producers and land owners place a premium on ecological health and historic integrity. As educational and tourism programs allow the increasingly urbanized public to experience working landscapes, a broader base for their preservation will emerge. The extent to which working landscape preservation is successful will depend on how these five elements come together and are mutually supportive. To test and illustrate this model, the next chapter examines the case of New York’s Hudson Valley.
CHAPTER 3: THE HUDSON VALLEY

The East belongs to the Hudson. Far more than a short river flowing through New York
state, the Hudson is a thread that runs through the fabric of four centuries of American
history, through the development of the American civilization – its culture, its community,
and its consciousness.

- Tom Lewis, The Hudson: A History

This chapter begins with an explanation of why the Hudson River Valley was chosen
as a study area, a contextual history of the region, and an evaluation of landscape
preservation in the region based on the model articulated in Chapter 2. The Hudson River
Valley helps to illustrate the challenges of the integrated conservation model, and offers
lessons in its successes and shortcomings.

Study Area and Rationale

The Hudson River Valley, defined here as the 12 riverfront counties extending
from Westchester and Rockland northward to Saratoga and Washington, is an ideal place to
study the challenges of integrated landscape preservation. [Figure 3.1] The future of the
Valley’s rich agricultural heritage is tested by economic viability, competition over land uses,
and public appreciation. The region’s southern counties have all but lost their working
landscapes, while to the north struggle to sustain theirs. Development pressure and “sprawl
without growth” plague the region. In the face of these challenges, various land
conservation programs have successfully protected thousands of acres of working lands in
the region. Several heritage management structures support historic preservation in different
parts of this nationally significant region. The landscape’s intertwined historic and ecological

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13 The lower ten counties constitute the Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area.
resources are often protected simultaneously. Outreach and education initiatives engage the public in the health and conservation of the region’s natural and cultural resources. Tourism and direct marketing also have offered the public new opportunities to experience and support the region’s working landscapes.

Context
An evaluation of working landscape preservation in the Hudson River Valley must begin with a contextual understanding of the physical, ecological, and cultural factors that have shaped landscape.

GEOGRAPHIC AND ECOLOGICAL CONTEXT
New York’s Hudson River is in the eastern part of the state, running south 315 miles from Henderson Lake in the Adirondack Mountains to New York Bay. Along its mighty course the Hudson cuts through bedrock to form steep cliffs and ridges that characterize the iconic landscape. Below the falls at Troy the Hudson is an estuary and is a true fjord, a deep valley where freshwater from the north and west mix with oceanic tides. The Hudson River watershed drains about 13,400 square miles touching five states through an area home to eight million people. [Figure 3.2]

The dramatic landscape of the Hudson Valley owes much to the geologic activity which has shaped it over millions of years. Great orogenies first formed the high peaks of the Adirondacks, followed by the soft Taconic range on the Hudson’s eastern side, then the Catskill Mountains and the Highlands on the western side. The Wisconsin Glacier, the last of the most recent ice age’s coverings, receded from the land about 20,000 years ago, again

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15 The source of the Hudson River is Lake Tear of the Clouds atop Mt. Marcy, but the River officially begins just to the southwest at Henderson Lake.
changing the landscape. As the glacier advanced and ultimately receded it left behind large huge glacial lakes and enormous deposits of rocks and sediments, the remnants of which can still be read in the landscape today in kettle ponds, moraines, and striations. The Hudson River itself was formed in the glacier’s wake.

The region’s abundance was immediately recognized by European settlers, and the quality of the Hudson Valley’s natural resources made possible early settlements and natural-resource based economies. The Hudson River moves through three different sections of two the ecological sub-regions, which give the Hudson Valley a rich mixture of flora and fauna in diverse ecosystems. The river itself is home to hundreds of fish species, including and significant sturgeon, striped bass, herring and shad populations that spawn in it. The valley is also part of an important flyway for migratory birds and provides habitat to ospreys, eagles, and herons.

HISTORIC AND CULTURAL CONTEXT

The earliest inhabitants of the Hudson Valley came as early as 10,000 years ago. Native peoples, including Delaware Lenni Lenape, Tappan, Mahican, and the Iroquois League of Five Nations, were at first nomadic and gradually transitioned into settlements based on subsistence farming and hunting. European exploration of the Hudson River began in 1609 with Henry Hudson’s expedition on the Halfmoon, between present-day Manhattan and Troy. Journals of crewmembers note the abundance of the landscape and American Indian settlements along the Hudson’s shores.

The Hudson River’s navigability made the river an important avenue of colonial commerce, first used by trappers and lumbermen. In many ways the Hudson River’s history since the colonial era is tied to the explosive growth of natural-resource based industries. The river was used as a conduit for the fur and lumber trade well into the 18th century, but quarrying, mining and agriculture took hold in the valley early on as well. Many battles in the American War for Independence took place on or near the river, from Manhattan to West Point to Saratoga, because of its strategic importance.

The Hudson River Valley was landscape of intense commerce. The introduction of canal and railroad infrastructure to the valley accelerated the pace of extraction, cultivation, and production, as industries upriver from Manhattan fueled the young nation’s growing economy. Haverstraw bricks, Adirondack lumber and pig iron, and produce were shipped to New York City from upriver. Commerce brought prosperity to canal and railroad towns, which increased when the great mills for paper, pulp, and lumber were built. Later enormous industrial growth characterized development in many river towns, manufacturing everything from electrical capacitors to shirt collars. Industry took advantage of the river’s water power and used it as a convenient outlet for industrial waste.

The history of agriculture in the Hudson River Valley began with native peoples who first lived and farmed the land along the shores, who were followed in quick succession by Dutch, German, French, and English settlers. Hudson himself described the land as “the finest for cultivation that I ever in my life set foot upon.”18 As forests were cleared, the land was sold to farmers for cropland and pasture. In the colonial era, the landscape between

New York Bay and Albany was incredibly productive and known for quality foods: flour, fruit, cash crops, and livestock. One of the benefits to life in Hudson River cities was the quality, variety and freshness of produce from the surrounding countryside. Many farmsteads still date from the colonial era or the early years of the republic.

The richness of the Hudson River Valley’s dramatic beauty also inspired the first professional American writers and artists. More than document or record the landscape, the writers and artists romanticized the landscape. In doing so, they invented a new American identity, rooted in the region’s unique natural beauty. Hudson River School painters, Thomas Cole and Frederick Church, and Knickerbocker writers like Washington Irving created a common national culture originating in the Valley.

**PRESERVATION IN THE VALLEY**

In the Hudson Valley concerns preserving natural and historic are intertwined, and have found common cause throughout the last century of preservation. Industrial forests, agriculture, and manufacturing exacted a cost on the region’s environmental quality, scenic beauty and historic resources.

Conservation began in New York at the turn of the 20th century when the New York State Legislature created the Adirondack and Catskill parks and, in 1894, declared Adirondack Park “forever wild.” The goal of these protections was to protect New York City’s drinking water supply, much like the efforts to protect the Catskill Mountains 60 years later. The Hudson River was heavily polluted from centuries of production in its watershed and along its shores. In 1900 the Palisades Interstate Park was also created to protect a public water supply in a prescient act of interstate planning by New York and New Jersey. The Palisades were protected in response to destructive quarrying practices.
The working landscapes and manufacturing prowess of the Hudson River Valley remained strong until the Post-World War II decades brought changes in production. This resulted in plant closures and shifts in agricultural practices that altered the region’s landscapes of productivity. During the 1950s, the New York State Thruway was completed, and in its wake came waves of development, particularly in the lower Hudson Valley counties of Rockland and Westchester. During the same decades, an environmental and heritage consciousness began to spread, and greater preservation advocacy arose. These preservation impulses emerged largely as responses to loss or degradation. State and federal environmental protections enacted in the 1960s and 1970s improved water quality significantly. The Hudson had become so polluted that much of the river has been listed as an impaired waterway since the classification’s creation under the National Water Quality Standards and Regulations.

By the 1960s, the modern environmental movement had come to the Hudson Valley. In response to the Hudson’s degradation, folksinger and activist Pete Seeger launched the Hudson River Sloop Clearwater, as a mobile research, education and advocacy vessel that continues to work on water quality and river heritage issues today. When Con Edison wanted to build the world’s largest pumped-storage hydropower station at the iconic Storm King Mountain, citizen groups like Scenic Hudson galvanized broad public opposition. They successfully defeated it after 17 years on the grounds that the river’s environmental health, scenic beauty and national heritage were at stake. In the 1990s, the Hudson River was designated by congress as an American Heritage River and the Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area was created.
The cause of preservation in the Hudson Valley has in no small part been aided by its concentration of powerful families – with names like Astor, Gould, Rockefeller, and Vanderbilt – whose great estates in the Valley dot the landscape. Rockefeller money, for example, has created not only enormous parks and preserves but has funded the creation and perpetuation of groups, such as American Farmland Trust (AFT) and Historic Hudson Valley (HHV). AFT is a leading nonprofit dedicated to national farmland protection and research, and has focused much attention on the Hudson River Valley. AFT has worked with many Valley communities to improve their land conservation programs. HHV operates and stewards several historic sites and landscapes on the eastern side of the Hudson, including a museum farm and historic mill complex. Without such powerful allies, and their accompanying deep pockets, many preservation-minded efforts would have gained little traction. Still, it is important to note that countless individuals, many of modest means, have taken steps to protect their land or make contributions to groups whose mission it is to protect and enhance parts of the Valley landscape.

**Evaluating the Preservation of Working Landscapes in the Hudson River Valley**

The National Trust for Historic Preservation named the Hudson River Valley one of its 11 Most Endangered Places in 2000, largely in response to sprawl and significant industrial development which threatens the integrity of the landscape. In the 2007 update to this listing, they note:

In the absence of comprehensive planning, the Hudson River Valley’s great scenic and historic significance continues to be affected by inappropriate development. Sprawl is advancing on the valley in several areas, and
proposals to site telecommunications towers and industrial plants in highly visible and valued historic viewsheds persist.\textsuperscript{19}

In its 1997 report, \textit{Farming on the Edge}, AFT named the Hudson Valley as the nation’s 10\textsuperscript{th} most threatened agricultural region reflecting the loss of nearly 79,000 acres of farmland between 1987 and 1997. Together these dubious designations call attention to the threats that jeopardize the Hudson Valley’s significant landscape.

Of New York State’s 7.6 million acres of farmland, less than 1 percent is protected. Since 1950 New York State has lost 40 percent of its farmland. At current rates of development, it is commonly estimated that 26,000 acres of New York farmland is developed annually, nearly double the number of acres preserved each year. As of 2002, 20 percent of land in the Hudson Valley was agricultural, accounting for about 2,500 farms in full-time operation, covering 900,000 acres between the Adirondacks and New York City. (Ferguson 2002, 4)

Agriculture in the Hudson Valley varies widely depending on infrastructure, farm size, microclimates, and increasingly because some counties and communities have chosen to keep agriculture as a primary land use. Northern counties like Washington, Saratoga, Rensselaer, and Albany have dairy, horse, livestock and crop farms while those in the mid-Hudson, like Ulster, Orange, Columbia and Dutchess have orchards, vineyards, vegetable, livestock and poultry. (Ferguson 2002, 4) Greene has lost much of its dairy sector, and Putnam, while largely wooded, has only about 3,000 acres left in agriculture. The most southerly counties have very little farmland: Rockland has only 500 acres in agriculture.

Westchester County is so urbanized that its agriculture has mostly been reduced to horses and greenhouse or nursery businesses that require little land.\textsuperscript{20} [Figure 3.3]

Preserving the Hudson River Valley’s working agricultural landscapes is a complicated task. The Valley’s agricultural landscapes possess significant preservation value, and they require integrated conservation approaches because the region’s natural, scenic, and cultural resources are deeply interconnected. The Valley’s agricultural landscapes contribute to the region’s identity and scenic beauty, but their viability continues to be threatened by sprawl, high property taxes, fluctuation in agricultural prices and global competition, and an eroding support infrastructure.

\textbf{REGIONAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT STRUCTURES AND VISION}

Regional resource management is a dramatic challenge in New York, as in many northeastern states. New York is a home rule state, with highly fragmented political jurisdictions, and powerless county-level planning. Consequently, regional approaches to protecting the Hudson Valley are rare, and those that exist are focused on specific resources, such as the Hudson River Estuary Program. There are, however, two recent governmental programs that attempt to advance a regional vision for the Valley’s diverse resources, the Hudson River Valley Greenway and the Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area. In the absence of stronger regional responses led by government, nonprofit groups are rising to the challenge in many areas of the Valley.

\textbf{Hudson River Valley Greenway and Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area}

The Hudson River Valley Greenway is a state-led regional strategy created in the early 1990s to protect scenic, natural, cultural, historic and recreational resources by encouraging economic development and regional tourism. The Greenway was created to develop interconnected trails from Battery Park in Manhattan to Battery Park in Saratoga County, at the invitation of communities and in partnership with local government and organizations. While the Greenway is not explicitly concerned with agricultural preservation, it represents a rare effort to think regionally and attempt to link the Valley’s diverse resources.

The Hudson River Valley Greenway Communities Council is a state agency whose mission is to think regionally and work with communities as they plan locally. The Greenway Compact program seeks voluntary participation in a regional agreement to encourage “regional cooperation among the communities and counties of the Hudson River Valley to address issues of collective concern and promote mutually beneficial regional approaches.”

Greenway Compacts address how counties can plan for resource protection, regional planning, economic development, public access, and heritage and environmental education. The compacts also help governments identify developments of regional impact and areas of regional concern. Six of the Valley’s 13 Greenway counties have chosen to participate: Albany, Putnam, Orange, Westchester, Dutchess and Rockland. Most of these counties are including the Compact goals in comprehensive plans or inventorying countywide scenic, natural, cultural, historic and recreational resources with an eye to regional connections. At minimum, the rest of the counties within the Greenway should follow their lead.

21 NYS Hudson River Greenway Community Council.
http://www.hudsongreenway.state.ny.us/commcoun/commcoun.htm
22 Among the economic development strategies for municipalities participating in the Greenway Compact is the incorporation of agricultural and tourism planning.
The Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area (NHA) [Figure 3.4] was designated in 1998 because the region is “an exceptionally scenic landscape that has provided the setting and inspiration for new currents of American thought, art, and history.” It is endowed with nationally significant historic, cultural, and natural resources that collectively represent themes of settlement, migration, transportation and commerce. As of 2002, the Heritage Area included 89 historic districts, 57 National Historic Landmarks, five National Historic Sites, and more than 1000 sites listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The legislation authorizing the Heritage Area sunsets in 2012.

The Heritage Area seeks to protect, interpret, and market heritage sites; to educate the public; to encourage economic development and land use policies that are consistent with the NHA management plan. The three primary themes of the Heritage area are: (1) Freedom and Dignity, as related to the Revolutionary War, abolition and President Franklin D. Roosevelt; 2) Nature and Culture, which highlights the natural landscapes and the artists, writers and designers whose work reflected the valley, and (3) Corridor of Commerce, which focuses on the role the river played in the nation’s early economy and settlement. Nature and Culture includes the stories of environmental advocacy and historic preservation in the Valley, while Corridor of Commerce includes the agricultural landscape.

The Hudson River Valley NHA primary partners are the Greenway, which is responsible for development and implementation of the management plan; the National Park Service, which provides technical and financial assistance; and the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation, which is a large site and land manager.

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23 Hudson River Valley Special Resource Study, 1996
25 Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area Management Plan, 2002
in the area. This work is augmented by other governmental entities at the federal, state and local levels, nonprofits, and economic development corporations. The Greenway in particular is the management model for the Hudson River Valley NHA and is the reason for the emphasis on trails. The Greenway has helped to develop many thematic trails for exploring the Valley’s diverse resources, such as “Art and Artists” or “Industry and Commerce.” The Heritage Area also publicizes tourist itineraries, such as “Wineries and Wine Trails.” The NHA should develop a trail based on region’s agricultural resources.

The Heritage Area and the Greenway both succeed in advancing regional thinking about the Valley as a distinct region with unique assets. The Heritage Area does not explicitly advance any vision about land protections, nor is it helping to advocate for the protection of the area’s distinctive landscapes. It is possible that this is due to concerns about seeming heavy-handed or because other groups are already working on these issues. Instead the NHA seeks to take advantage of sites already designated or protected. The Valley’s common rural landscape heritage appears to be beyond the scope of the NHA’s focus. Furthermore, the NHA seems more intensely focused on lands closest to the river and riverfront communities, which narrows their scope. The Greenway Compact, however, represents important voluntary ways for counties to influence community planning in ways consistent with the goals of the Greenway and the Heritage Area. The NHA and Greenway should be better platforms for communication, cooperation and information sharing among conservation groups, resource stewards, and local governments. The sustainability of the region’s iconic landscape – a foundational element of both the Greenway and Heritage Area – is at stake.
Regional Non-profit Groups

Nonprofit groups are thinking regionally about land conservation in the Hudson Valley, and many of them work in partnership. While Historic Hudson Valley and Hudson River Heritage both focus on the historic preservation and the interpretation of showcase estates throughout the Valley, groups like the Hudson River Foundation are focused on watershed research and stewardship. These groups are working on regional issues, but are focused on specific types of resources. Three powerful nonprofits - Scenic Hudson, Open Space Institute, and American Farmland Trust – take a holistic approach to land preservation. Each of these three nonprofits has regional conducted resource inventories and analysis, and developed conservation priorities. They have also worked in partnership as the Hudson Valley Agricultural Heritage Partnership. The Glynwood Center compliments these programs by helping agricultural communities understand how they can sustain their agricultural economies.

Scenic Hudson

Scenic Hudson is the largest environmental group devoted to the Hudson Valley and is credited with leading many successful preservation battles. Scenic Hudson’s mission is to reconnect waterfront communities with the river, and to protect and restore the River and its landscape. Scenic Hudson plans for preservation at a regional scale, engages in advocacy, and successfully partners with local governments and smaller land trusts. Their work includes planning assistance to communities, and the conservation of scenic, natural and working landscapes. Scenic Hudson regional focus, large membership base, and longevity give it a strong reputation and a significant endowment. Their long-range presence and perspective have enabled a significant amount of strategic analysis and planning.
In 2007 Scenic Hudson undertook a large inventory using Geographic Information System (GIS) to set conservation priorities for both farmland and scenic/ecological resources. This study helped Scenic Hudson establish focus areas for both sets of resources, and generate ranked conservation priorities. They established a goal of protecting 65,000 acres of “the land that matters most” in riverfront communities between Yonkers and Troy, which will guide their work for the foreseeable future. Scenic and ecological resources were evaluated based on overlays of state-designated Scenic Areas of Statewide Significance, the Hudson River Estuary Program’s Biologically Important Areas, and parcels over 45 acres. Farmland was prioritized by overlays of state designated Agricultural Districts, agricultural soils classified as prime farmland or farmland of statewide importance, and land in agricultural use 45 acres and larger.

Scenic Hudson has protected about 7,000 acres of farmland since it began working on agricultural conservation 10 years ago. Scenic Hudson uses is a “critical mass” approach and they pay full market value for their easements. Seth McKee, Scenic Hudson’s Land Conservation Director, says they focus on communities that have viable, intact agricultural sectors, which allows them to make the best use of charitable dollars. While inland communities, such as Warwick in Orange County, have benefitted from Scenic Hudson’s assistance, their current “land that matters most” is on the riverfront. Based on their GIS analysis, Scenic Hudson has three farmland protection priority areas: Red Hook in Dutchess County, Clermont/Germantown/Livingston and Stuyvesant in Columbia County. [Figure 3.5] In each place, there is an intact agricultural sector and significant potential for positive impact. Scenic Hudson has worked on farmland preservation in Red Hook and Stuyvesant for years, helping to develop their public policies, build public support, and fund numerous
deals. [Figure 3.6] Scenic Hudson’s objective is to do as much work as possible in these three priority areas and do it well. As Scenic Hudson conserves land in their priority sites, they are working to create large contiguous blocks of well-managed, protected land in riverfront communities. There is no time limit for completing these projects and they are currently determining by what measures they will determine completion or success.

Through the process of their inventory, analysis, the setting of priority areas, Scenic Hudson’s regional strategy gets translated to the local actions. Scenic Hudson willingly partners with more localized land trusts and governments, bringing their experience, regional vision and financing to complete conservation deals. Scenic Hudson’s work is strengthened by their long-term stake in the landscape, their strategic approach based on a careful analysis, and significant financing capacity. Unfortunately, Scenic Hudson cannot work everywhere. Their renewed focused on riverfront preservation has led the organization to back off from inland communities which had previously benefitted from their conservation assistance.

**Open Space Institute**

Since 1964 the Open Space Institute has focused on land conservation of historic, scenic and natural resources, in the Hudson Valley. OSI focuses on protecting working landscapes, natural resources, and historic preservation through three programs: New York Land Protection Program, Conservation Finance Program, and Conservation Institute. Under its New York Land Protection program OSI develops different strategies for land conservation in the Adirondacks, Catskills, and Upper, Mid, and Lower-Hudson regions, an approach that seeks to tailor their responses to different regional needs.
OSI holds easements on 4,000 acres of Hudson Valley farmland, and has also acquired farmlands which they resold with easements to preferred land owners. OSI’s uses conservation easements, purchase of development rights, direct acquisition, low-interest loans, and leasing or discounted sales to farmers who need more land. OSI’s work explicitly values the role of farmland in contributing to community character and sees the preservation of the region’s agricultural heritage as a major objective in its work, in part because it compliments OSI’s open space protection programs and helps to support local economies. OSI has successfully partnered with land trusts and governmental entities to protect working landscapes, and has worked with prominent historic sites in the region to preserve important viewsheds and critical neighboring properties. They are one of few regional groups that focus on agriculture in western Valley counties, such as Ulster.

**American Farmland Trust**

AFT was formed in 1980 by farmers and conservationists who were concerned about the loss of America’s working landscapes. AFT has helped states develop new programs (including early PDR programs), served as an important advocate, and has provided policy analysis, and serves as an information clearing house through their Farmland Information Center. While American Farmland Trust’s mission to stop the loss of productive farmland and to promote ecologically sound farming practices is not limited to the Hudson Valley, it is an area where AFT has researched extensively.

AFT’s decadal *Farming on the Edge* study maps each state’s high quality farmland and the development pressure it faces based on USDA prime soil classification. In its analysis of New York, AFT identified four areas of the Hudson Valley where high quality farmland is experiencing high development pressure: Orange, Dutchess, Columbia and Saratoga
While these are broad strokes, AFT has been able to make its point clearly: poorly planned development threatens important agricultural regions, and stepped-up protection measures, better local planning, smart growth policies, and endeavors that enhance the profitability of farming are necessary in order to counteract these trends.

**Hudson Valley Agricultural Heritage Partnership**

Scenic Hudson, OSI, and AFT came together at the beginning of the decade forming the Hudson Valley Agricultural Heritage Partnership, spearheading a campaign shared by farmers, nonprofits, businesses, and the public, to strengthen and protect the Hudson Valley’s working landscapes. Each partner’s particular strengths compliment one another. Smaller nonprofits and government benefit from working with the partnership by learning from their expertise as they work toward shared regional goals. While Scenic Hudson’s farmland preservation has mainly been concentrated in Columbia and Dutchess counties, OSI has worked more in Washington and Saratoga counties, and both have also worked in particular areas of Orange and Ulster. AFT has worked throughout the valley helping farmers undertake individual estate planning and aided county agricultural protection boards develop their plans. Together the Hudson Valley Agricultural Heritage Partnership sought to increase governmental support, particularly for significant increases in farmland protection funding.

**Glynwood Center**

Glynwood Center is a nonprofit based on a historic farmstead in Putnam County that focuses on sustaining local agriculture, and thereby protecting a community’s natural and cultural resources. Glynwood focuses farmland preservation as it relates to sustaining a local food economy and regional food systems. Its work compliments that of the regional
nonprofits and local governments in particular Hudson Valley communities, particularly through its Keep Farming program. Keep Farming engages farming communities in participatory planning, research, and education program focused on how to sustain their agricultural economies and strengthen their local food systems. It works to cultivate an informed and supportive public and help governments create favorable policies, based in shared community values. The Glynwood Grange is an initiative that invites Hudson Valley leaders to address agricultural issues and engage in agricultural projects in their communities. Glynwood’s projects help fill the gaps left by governmental and nonprofit programs which focus mainly on implementing conservation strategies, and not enough on building an understanding of the value of agriculture and an informed public.

Evaluation

The Hudson River Valley is at once blessed and cursed with entities concerned with farmland preservation. As New York State Director for American Farmland Trust, David Haight puts it, “There is no shortage of vision to go around,” though not everyone is in agreement. The Hudson Valley benefits from several high-capacity nonprofit groups that work protect its distinctive landscape and fledgling regional governmental structures that advance regional thinking. Despite these entities sharing common concerns, regional coordination is not as strong as it ought to be. These groups informally concur about regional preservation priorities, but there is no explicit and well-defined regional agreement that unifies their work.

There are a few regional approaches to land conservation in the Valley and fewer still that focus on farmland. The Hudson River Valley Agricultural Heritage Partnership represented a first attempt at considering farmland protection from a regional perspective.
This coalition should be revived to coordinate regional farmland preservation, especially in the absence of governmental entities that consider this issue a primary focus.

David Haight feels that the state could do more to offer leadership through its existing programs. He points to the New York State Open Space Plan, a document that is hundreds of pages long which devotes only a couple of pages to farmland protection. Ideally, American Farmland Trust (AFT) would like to see a statewide agricultural protection plan that “gives people some vision” and is backed with adequate funding for planning and programs to purchase development rights.

The Greenway and Heritage Area encourage regional thinking and connect regional resources, but should do more to help advance landscape preservation. They do not focus on helping rural communities protect their working landscapes, which contribute to the area’s character and attract tourism. These structures may, however, lay the groundwork for future cooperation among Valley communities. But without better governmental structures regional nonprofits are leveraging their experience, research, and funding to develop their own strategic approaches. Their work is augmented by the Glynwood Center’s focus on food systems and sustaining agricultural economies.

All of the regional entities share protection goals and seek more public support for farmland protection. The Greenway and NHA should more actively support coordination efforts and conservation in the Valley by nonprofits and local governments. The Heritage Area should partner with local government and nonprofits to help prioritize the protection of working farmland and viewsheds that contribute to historic and scenic resources.
LAND CONSERVATION AND PRESERVATION TOOLS

Local land conservation tools are necessary to support regional preservation strategies. In the Hudson valley many municipalities are only now catching on to farmland protection measures. Counties, municipalities, and local land trusts in the Valley have created varied responses to agricultural preservation tailored to local needs. In many communities, the regional nonprofits led pilot preservation projects, which have helped stimulate public interest and establish governmental programs that strengthen agricultural economies and preserve community character. These structures are enabled and supported in large part by state government.

State Government

New York State legislation has helped to create local farmland protection policies and tools through favorable planning and taxation, and enabling the acquisition of interests in land (development rights). There are three principal land preservation programs administered by New York State, funded through the Environmental Protection Fund (EPF): the Open Space Plan, a grant program to land trusts, and the Farmland Protection Program. In 1993 the EPF was established as a funding stream for state land conservation programs, collected as a portion of the state’s real estate transfer tax. The EPF funding varies annually at the discretion of the governor. This is problematic because it creates uncertainty for recipients about long-term funding opportunities, which leads to opportunistic conservation. In 1992 the Agricultural Protection Act made the state’s Agricultural District legislation stronger and provided partial funding to counties to develop agricultural protection plans and grants for the purchase of development rights (PDR).

New York’s Farmland Protection Program was established in 1996, and is administered by the Department of Agriculture and Markets. The program consists of two
grant programs, one to assist counties in drafting farmland protection plans and one that helps fund the purchase of development rights. County farmland protection plans tend to be ineffective because planning and zoning controls rest at the local level and are not required to be consistent with county plans. The PDR program is significant because, while it is highly competitive, the grants can pay for up to 75 percent of the cost of acquiring an easement. This puts farmland protection within reach of smaller land trusts or local governments who could otherwise not afford to purchase development rights. According to AFT’s Haight, New York State funded $35 million in PDR, covering 14,000 acres in 2007, ranking New York 5th in the nation. Though EPF funding has increased since it began, the demand for farmland protection grants far outpaces the supply, which is a testament to rising landowner interest in participation in easement programs. To address this unmet demand, advocates are pushing to have the PDR program funded at $50 million annually by 2010.

New York’s Farmland Protection Program is far from perfect. The program’s funding is inadequate and should be increased, particularly for counties where exponential growth is occurring at the expense of high-quality farmland. While the EPF funding provides some ability for local protection priorities and planning, the funding level is not reliable, making conservation more opportunistic instead of strategic. As the Environmental Advocates of New York note, “While the state is expected to earmark almost $400 million to address environmental needs [in 2007]; unfunded demand to support preservation efforts

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26 Separate grant funding under the EPF was established in 2002 for private non-profit land trusts to preserve land.
is anticipated to top $1 billion per year over the next 10 years.\textsuperscript{27} While the state awards the grants, it does not hold the interest in the land, and consequently there is no state oversight or monitoring which removes a sense of accountability. Grants should be matched with requirements to manage the farmland in environmentally sound ways.

One hopeful new funding source is the 2007 Hudson Valley Community Preservation Act (CPA). The CPA provides the opportunity for communities in Westchester and Putnam counties to generate funding to protect natural and cultural resources. Under the Hudson Valley CPA communities can opt-in to the program by passing referendum to create a real estate transfer tax,\textsuperscript{28} create a preservation fund, and adopt a preservation plan to establish priorities. A movement is afoot among advocates and politicians to pass a statewide Community Preservation Act. For the purposes of farmland protection, a dedicated revenue stream would enable localities to be strategic and plan for preservation. The legislature should enable a regional CPA to help the fastest growing areas with hot real estate markets to offset the pace of development. Warwick and Red Hook recently enacted community preservation funds, and Fishkill and Chatham residents will vote on the creation of their funds this year. These funding sources could enable significant amounts of land conservation throughout the region.

In places where higher real estate development and land prices may jeopardize farmland preservation activities, community preservation funds present significant potential to raise necessary funds to protect community character and natural resources. Towns in eastern Long Island pioneered community preservation funds in the 1980s. The real estate

\textsuperscript{28} The tax is triggered when property sold exceeds the median home price in the municipality.
transfer tax, enacted for this purpose in Suffolk County towns on Long Island, has raised about $400 million since 1998.

In the absence of regional vision, and without significant dedicated funding sources, communities are hungry for solutions that empower them to make good choices about land to protect.

**County and Local Government**

Since the early 1990s, most Hudson Valley counties have county farmland protection plans. Most countywide plans for farmland protection only articulated loose recommendations, which are not matched with the force of law or funding support. Municipalities have little incentive to implement county recommendations without attendant funding. Most county plans even miss the opportunity to provide strong leadership, technical assistance, or vision for farmland protection. County plans developed in the 1990s are now outdated; the landscape and the agricultural economy has literally changed. Fortunately the state has granted funds to many counties to update their agricultural protection plans, providing real potential for county-level leadership. Hudson River Valley counties should seize the opportunity to protect their working landscapes and to use these plans to coordinate with regional strategies advanced by the nonprofits, Heritage Area or Greenway.

Because the Hudson River Valley is not a homogenous region, the development pressures and economic realities of agriculture vary widely, as do the quality of local planning and zoning. New York enables communities to enact Right-to-Farm laws that seek to protect farmers from nuisance complaints from nonfarm neighbors about normal farm operations, to use agricultural zoning that creates large lots reducing the number of dwelling
units per acres and restricting use, and to establish Agricultural Districts which include preferential tax assessments and eligibility for certain funds/programs. Some towns have taken steps to create more supportive zoning and as-of-right uses included in agricultural zones. There are a few exceptional towns with a breadth of agricultural protections well-tailored to their resources, such as Stuyvesant in Columbia County.

Stuyvesant was one of the Hudson River Greenway Community Council’s first “model communities,” and was provided assistance for a comprehensive plan. This planning process led the town to identify agriculture as its primary land use and economic sector. [Figure 3.8] Since then, Stuyvesant enacted a right-to-farm law, and preferential taxation programs to compliment agriculture-friendly land use regulations. Additionally, Scenic Hudson has acquired thousands of acres of farmland easements in Stuyvesant. More municipalities should follow Stuyvesant’s example. By coordinating with nonprofits and the Greenway, Stuyvesant was able to plan for preservation and make choices about development, rather than allowing the county’s strong growth overwhelm its agricultural community.

Land Trusts

Local land trusts play an important role in farmland conservation because they fill gaps in government programs. They bring professional expertise, strategy, and financing otherwise not available in rural communities. There are several high-capacity local land trusts in the Hudson Valley working to preserve farmland. These land trusts typically focus on one particular county (sometimes two), and seek to protect natural and cultural resources. Many are making good headway protecting farmland in communities where a significant amount of agriculture remains. The Valley’s successful local land trusts earn local credibility and build
trust among the farm community over time, making them valuable conservation partners. Local and regional conservation organizations are more effective when they work together. For example, Scenic Hudson can fund deals in communities where local land trusts have laid the groundwork for farmland protection with government and landowners.

While farmland conservation has occurred in all of the Hudson Valley counties, some have stronger agricultural economies and stronger land trusts, making their prospects for farmland preservation better. Land trusts have made successful inroads in individual communities in Orange and Ulster counties on the western side of the river, but the most comprehensive work is being done on the eastern side of the valley, particularly in Dutchess, Columbia and Washington counties. These three counties all have a strong agricultural base, and have retained support industries, such as feed and seed businesses, veterinarians, and even some processing facilities. Each county has a strong land trust and has worked with Scenic Hudson and OSI. Dutchess and Columbia counties are witnessing development pressure from increasing second-home ownership, rising real estate values, and the conversion of farms to estates and “hobby” farms. Washington County faces challenges common to the rest of New York’s agricultural sector, including an aging farming population and commodity price fluctuations. Washington County is working to build public support for farmland protection and finding money to purchase development rights.

In their 22 years of existence, the Dutchess Land Conservancy (DLC) has preserved 27,000 acres and the Columbia Land Conservancy (CLC) has preserved 20,000 acres. CLC has protected nearly 6,000 acres of farmland and 80% of DLC’s preserved land is in agricultural districts. Both emphasize public outreach and education programs, link economic strength with conservation. Each land trust works with local governments to
analyze and improve local planning and zoning, and advocate for policies that favor agriculture. Both have a membership base, but also rely on PDR funding from the state to execute deals. CLC’s Director of Conservation Programs, Tony Colyer-Pendás, admits that this reliance makes CLC more opportunistic than strategic. The coming years will see CLC trying to act as a broker between farmers who need more land to expand operations and land owners who have land they’d like to see in production. CLC also is trying to develop more creative means to act as an information source for farmers, to increase communication among them, and to maintain the economic viability of the county’s farms. Other local land trusts should look to CLC and DLC as model organizations.

The Agricultural Stewardship Association (ASA) is the only private land trust in the valley devoted to agricultural preservation, and is a new addition to the conservation landscape. ASA works in Rensselaer and Washington counties where agriculture remains a significant economic sector, where dairying is the dominant type of agriculture. These counties are relatively poor, but are incredibly picturesque and productive. ASA depends on state PDR money and has a staff of two people. Their volunteer base helps them involve locals, and build trust among the farming community. ASA has the opportunity to help struggling farmers stay in business, help lower land values for new farmers, and to get ahead of development pressure that is starting to spill over from growth in the Capital Region. They are working to build capacity among local officials and public support.

**Evaluation:**
Many of the Valley’s local land trusts have succeeded placing easements on farmland, at building community trust, and forging partnerships to execute conservation deals. Many are committed to being a long-term presence in the Valley and are willing to invest time and
money to do good work. Overall the local land trusts need to find ways to bolster their membership base, and to become more strategic instead of opportunistic. Increasingly local land trusts are taking on the role of information hub and facilitator to move innovative partnerships and projects forward. These are positive trends that are necessary to farmland preservation.

Still, efforts to protect Hudson River Valley farmland appear incredibly focused on a few strong agricultural areas. Columbia, Dutchess and Saratoga counties are experiencing a lot of development that, despite conservation progress made, is not being offset by strong farmland protections and stronger planning and zoning. Still, there are areas where basic economic viability is the problem, and land trusts and local government have not done enough to help farmers stay in business. The paltry state funding for local PDR programs should be doubled to help overcome these problems.

Of particular disappointment is the lack of attention focused on Ulster County’s significant “fruit belt,” a high concentration of orchards and vineyards in a unique microclimate. The Ulster County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board is actively seeking farmers interested in donating easements, and New Paltz and Marbletown were just awarded state grants to develop farmland protection plans. OSI is acquiring easements in the area’s Rondout Valley, but not in significant enough numbers. Overall there is little in the way of strategy to protect this productive and historic fruit region. There is significant conservation potential here, but it remains to be seen who will make this their mission.

Several few municipalities are reworking of planning and zoning codes to explicitly favor agriculture, and to remove as-of-right two-acre subdivision provisions. More communities should revise their codes to favor agriculture where it still exists. Municipalities
TRADITIONAL WORKING LANDSCAPES IN TRANSITION

The Hudson Valley’s traditional working landscapes exist in precarious balance with modern needs and development. Traditional working landscapes thrive in so far as there remains a high concentration of family farms, some of which are multi-generational, producing the same products as their predecessors.

The small scale of most Hudson Valley farms puts them at odds with the demands of globalized food production, so alternatives are necessary in order for traditional small- and mid-sized farms to remain economically viable. Fortunately there are entrepreneurship opportunities and revitalized networks that provide hope for the future of traditional farming in the region. Among the promising transitions that will enhance the viability of these traditional farms are new cooperatives, processing facilities, direct marketing and more profitable niche markets. Traditional Hudson Valley farming is supported by strong consumer demand and the profitability of alternative outlets.

The evolution of the Valley’s agricultural landscape is largely due to changes in ownership, production, and markets. Still, it is remarkable that so many multi-generational family farms survive in most Hudson Valley counties. Since 1937, The New York State Agricultural Society (NYSAS) annually awards ten “Century Farms,” so honored for continuous farm operation by the same family for 100 years or more, demonstrating “progressive agriculture” and community service. NYSAS added awards for “Bicentennial Farms” recently, and gives these awards every five years. In the 12 Hudson Valley counties,
there are 19 Bicentennial Farms and 65 Century Farms. These awards do not constitute the full measure of Hudson Valley agricultural heritage, but they do point to a lineage on the land for many families over time.

While economic viability remains the main concern of Hudson Valley farmers, also at stake is their way of life, family history, and community character. Many family farmers choose to resist the temptation to “sell out” to a developer because they would like to see their land stay in farming, and many don’t want to be known as the generation who sold the family farm. Many farmers who donate or sell easements on their land offer rationales such as, pride in their work, love of their land, and the ability to pass the farm on the next generation.

Many of the same industries pursued by the region’s early farm families remain today, including fruit and dairy. The record of orchards can be read in the long lots running up hillsides from the river, and in historic barns that pepper the valley’s landscape. To help preserve New York’s agricultural buildings, the state has provided grants for barn preservation, and the New York State Preservation League spearheads the New York State Barn Coalition. But more exciting are efforts by which traditional landscapes find renewed life through entrepreneurial ventures and partnerships which honor the agricultural heritage of an area.

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Entrepreneurship

There is a new face being put many sectors of the Valley’s agriculture, from wineries to creameries, in an effort to maintain the type of traditional operations that were once common.

The Hudson Valley was America’s first wine-making region, and today some of America’s oldest vineyards and wineries are still in operation. Huguenots purportedly planted wine grapes in New Paltz more than 300 years ago. The legacy of Hudson Valley viticulture is present at sites like Brotherhood Winery, Benmarl Vineyard, and Rivendel Winery. After a long period of decline, Hudson Valley wine making is being resurrected. About 35 wineries are in the mid-Hudson today. The resurgence in Hudson Valley viticulture is in part due to the introduction of hybrid varieties that can withstand the climate and make a more elegant product than native varieties, thus appealing to more sophisticated palettes. Also grapes require less land than fruit orchards and typically have a higher profit per acre, making viticulture feasible on smaller parcels. The wine revival in the Hudson Valley, while still small by comparison to Long Island or to the Finger Lakes region, has also brought tourism dollars to the Valley with the opening of wine tours and tasting rooms. Hudson Valley winery “tasting rooms attracted 205,000 visitors in 2000, a 75 percent jump from 1985, according to the most recent figures available from the New York Agricultural Statistics Service.”

Increased marketing through venues like the NHA wine trail will help continue to attract tourism spending.

The Valley’s dairy industry is also getting a makeover as Hudson Valley dairy farmers are taking steps to differentiate themselves from the competition through small-scale

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production geared at a local market. Hudson Valley Fresh is a new dairy cooperative of 10 farmers in Columbia and Dutchess counties, seeking to capitalize on the demand for fresh, local foods, and earn a profit by tapping into a niche market. Because Hudson Valley Fresh milk has fewer miles to travel between the cow and the store, the cooperative asserts that the taste is better, a claim recently affirmed in the New York Times in an article titled “The Dairies Are Half-Pint, But the Flavor Isn’t.” Ronnybrook Farm Dairy in Ancramdale, NY claims that it is “hopelessly out of date and proud of it,” but while this farm and dairy may not suit a globalized model, its regional draw works well for them. Their high-quality pastured milk products, including yogurt, butter and ice cream, are sold throughout the Valley and at New York City’s Greenmarkets. On the smaller end are examples like the new Battenkill Valley Creamery, recently opened by the McEachron family to bottle the milk from their 350 Holstein, Jersey, and crossbred cows. McEachrons have farmed in Washington County for five generations and their glass-bottled milk is now easy to find in Washington and Saratoga counties. Also new to Washington County are several artisanal cheese makers, whose value-added products make dairying more profitable.

What unites these dairies is the pride taken in the care of their animals and the land, and in the quality and freshness of their products, as well as their local focus. Consumers choose these products because of their quality, but also because of an interest in knowing their food sources, to reduce their food miles, and to support farms whose values are in line with their own. By shifting to niche markets these dairies are remaining profitable and continuing traditional dairy farming in the region.

Direct Marketing and Branding

The economic viability of Hudson Valley farms is enhanced by their proximity to urban markets and by growth in demand for local and organic foods. Through direct marketing opportunities farmers earn fair prices for their products, and a new generation of farmers is finding ways to earn a living. As the New York Times recently reported in an article about farming in the Hudson Valley, “the demand from consumers for food produced on a small scale, bought directly from farmers, has allowed a younger generation to enter farming, even as global markets drive many conventional farmers off the land.”

Furthermore, market demand is high.

Regional branding programs are helping inform consumer choice about local products. The state markets New York’s fresh and processed foods under its “Pride of New York” branding program. [Figure 3.11] This logo graces everything from pasta and Angus beef to wine and maple syrup and takes “buying local” from the farm stand to the supermarket. Regional labels have included “Hudson Valley Harvest,” developed by the Cornell Cooperative Extension in Dutchess County for products from mid-Hudson counties, and “Rondout Valley Growers,” for producers in Ulster County’s Shawangunks. For these smaller branding efforts to succeed there should be more processing and wholesaling coordination among growers that make it easier for chain stores to place the large orders to which they are typically accustomed.

A 2002 survey conducted by the state Department of Agriculture and Markets found that direct marketing from farmers to consumers increased 18 percent since 1987. The success of direct marketing is most notable in the marked resurgence in farmer’s markets

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and community supported agriculture in the Valley. Between 1970 and 2003 the number of farmer’s markets in the state grew from single digits to about 300. In New York City the first Greenmarket opened in 1976, and today there are 32 Greenmarkets and 22 other farmer’s markets throughout the boroughs, where thousands of people shop. These outlets have helped connect farmers with customers who seek their products and desire to support the local economy, and in turn have helped small-scale farmers make ends meet. [Figure 3.12]

The enormous demand demonstrated at the major urban farmer’s markets in New York City is a success but wholesale distribution is still a barrier for restaurants, schools and stores. Programs like Farm to Chef Express are helping to connect producers directly with chefs, and to organize ordering and delivery. The program is small but its New York City customers include big names like Blue Hill and Murray’s Cheese Shop. As this program grows, both producers and restaurants will benefit. The state Department of Agriculture and Markets recently sponsored a feasibility study about a New York City Wholesale Farmer’s Market which would also help overcome wholesaling barriers. A wholesale market would allow the city’s many chefs and regional producers to benefit from less cumbersome distribution and procurement.

**Evaluation:**

Traditional landscapes in the Hudson Valley will thrive if they are able to remain economically viable and if a critical mass of family farms can remain in business. Producer-led coalitions are exploring promising entrepreneurship opportunities which will boost the profit margins of small scale agriculture. Pride of New York’s branding must work harder at creating a strong identity and increase participation in the program. Hudson Valley branding should also be much stronger to capture the market demand that already exists for local
foods. Some regional programs, such as Appalachian Harvest, have more successfully coordinated small producers in a cooperative that helps to package and distribute locally grown food to larger outlets. New York’s Hudson Valley should follow this example.

Perhaps nowhere is the potential for sustaining traditional landscapes more evident than in the demand in New York City for locally produced foods. The Hudson Valley landscape may be stressed by development, but it also benefits from the proximity to New York City markets. So, while the Valley is in the pressure zone city residents have become aware of the pleasurable and practical benefits of maintaining a regional agricultural base. They are literally willing to put their money where their mouth is. New York City residents spend some $30 billion annually on food, and, as AFT’s David Haight puts it, capturing one percent of that would be huge for the region’s farmers. Efforts to facilitate smoother wholesaling for both producer and large-scale customer have great potential and could be a boon for the region’s farmers who are increasingly depending on more direct sales. The market demand is there, but the infrastructure to help producers maximize their market capture is not. Unfortunately niche markets and direct marketing aren’t for every farm, and many farmers will be reluctant to attempt to transition their business as they consider retirement.

HISTORIC INTEGRITY AND ECOLOGICAL HEALTH ARE VALUED AND ENHANCED

The historic integrity of the landscape and ecological health of the Hudson Valley are not mutually exclusive goals. By enhancing and protecting both, the region’s agricultural economy will be more sustainable. The Valley’s historic sites are increasingly valuing the integrity of the working agricultural landscapes around them. This living history helps
enliven and authenticate the historic sites in ways previously not considered. The Hudson River watershed’s health necessitates smart agricultural practices that do not value productivity at the expense of environmental quality.

**Agriculture and Historic Sites**

Hudson Valley heritage sites are beginning to value the authenticity and integrity of the rural landscape in which they rest. Several sites have preserved and reanimated agricultural landscapes that surround them. Two significant examples of this approach are Olana, a state historic site near Hudson that was home to Hudson Valley School painter Frederic Church, and Lindenwald, a National Historic Site in Kinderhook that was home to President Martin Van Buren.

Olana sits atop a hill, majestically presiding over the river. Church carefully constructed the landscape of his 250-acre property to provide pleasing views of his rural landscape and those beyond. The experience of the landscape is integral to the experience of the house, so increasingly the state, the Olana Partnership, and other local partners have worked to protect the surrounding landscape. Olana was a working farm during Church’s day, and the state is currently working to restore elements of the site’s agricultural past, including its orchard and its barn complexes.

Viewshed protection has been of huge importance to Olana. The focus on Olana’s surroundings has helped nearby farmers to stay in business, enriched the experience of Olana, and helped advance the regional conservation goals of Scenic Hudson. Since the 1980s Scenic Hudson has been a vigorous advocate for the preservation of the Olana viewshed, and holds two orchards and one vineyard under easement. [Figure 3.12] Cari Watkins-Bates, who runs Scenic Hudson’s farmland protection program, notes that
protecting Olana viewshed means protecting “cultural resources and on-the-ground agricultural resources, as well as a tremendous amount of natural resource protections.” These resources are interdependent. While much of this work has been concerned with scenic resources, it has also helped to keep alive the farmsteads that were characteristic of what Church valued in the rural landscape around his home. [Figure 3.12] Recently the state’s State Environmental Quality Review Act was used to block the construction of a cement plant within Olana’s viewshed.

Lindenwald was President Martin Van Buren’s 221-acre Kinderhook farm from 1839 until his death in 1862. Martin Van Buren National Historic Site (NHS) was designated in 1974 to include 38.6 acres of the original farmstead; of those 14.3 acres of the original farm is held in fee while 10.6 are held under conservation easement. Currently Martin Van Buren NHS is working to expand its park boundaries to include more of the original farmstead, not only to protect and interpret the landscape, but to illuminate Van Buren’s agrarian beliefs. Van Buren’s farm had large pear and apple orchards, Muscat blanc grapes, brewing hops, and field and row crops. Much of his farmstead, while now subdivided, remains in agriculture. The 2003 Boundary Study states,

While it is not essential for the National Park Service to own and operate all remaining lands of Lindenwald, it is vital to the accurate portrayal of Lindenwald and the broader interpretation of Martin Van Buren that these lands remain in agriculture, with allowance made for public access to key resources for educational purposes. It is also essential that these lands be farmed in ways that protect the remaining historic landscape features from the Van Buren era and are compatible with the public use of the adjacent National Historic Site.33

The Open Space Institute has purchased two parcels formerly part of the original Lindenwald farm. One 25-acre parcel will be donated to the site if the boundaries are changed through congressional legislation. Another 126-acre parcel is leased to Roxbury Farm, one of the largest community-supported agriculture farms in the region. By working to maintain the viability of agriculture surrounding Martin Van Buren NHS, a fuller interpretation and understanding of how Lindenwald functioned is possible. Furthermore, these efforts contribute to the land base of Columbia County’s valuable agricultural economy.

**Agriculture and Environmental Protection**

The protection of farmland should be intimately connected to efforts geared at improving the Hudson River’s ecological health. Groups like Scenic Hudson and the Open Space Institute are simultaneously working on conserving land, forests, waterways, wildlife habitat, and farms with an eye also to protecting important public watersheds. Many traditional agricultural areas remain clustered around the Hudson and its many tributaries, such as the Roeliff-Jansen Kill, the Battenkill Creek, and Kinderhook Creek. Many farmers want to keep their land and water healthy and can benefit from working with Cornell Cooperative Extension services programs or New York City Watershed programs to implement environmental best practices.

Scenic Hudson often pairs easements to protect sets of resources under common ownership. This is an excellent practice that should be adopted by all of the region’s easement programs. According to Cari Watkins-Bates, Scenic Hudson will establish a separate, restrictive “resource protection area” that should not be in agricultural operation if there are important natural resources, such as state designated streams or steep slopes that
could erode, and disallows grazing in streams. “We don’t want to work at cross purposes with our other objectives,” she explains.

Columbia County’s Kinderhook Creek Corridor offers interesting example of how linked protection of natural, agricultural and historic resources can be implemented to mutual benefit. In the mid-1990s, landowners approached the Columbia Land Conservancy to develop a strategy for preserving the corridor’s diverse resources. Land along the Kinderhook Creek has been continuously farmed since the Revolutionary Era, is home to Martin Van Buren NHS, and the Creek is an important habitat and fish spawning area. CLC enlisted the Open Space Institute, the National Park Service, Columbia County Historical Society, local officials and landowners to help create a “cultural conservation corridor.” Together these partners have invested about $2 million to protect more than 850 acres through both conservation easements and outright land acquisition. More holistic resource-based partnerships like the Kinderhook Creek Cultural Conservation Corridor would facilitate integrated preservation through the region.

The protection of New York City’s water supply also brings positive compromises in Hudson Valley counties that improve the environmental practices of working landscapes and protect water quality. Catskill Park was created in part to protect the Catskill Delaware Watershed, and in recent decades the purchase of farm and forestland development rights has helped to keep watershed land undeveloped. Today the city’s Watershed Agriculture Program is a voluntary program to reduce and control nonpoint-source pollution from working landscapes in the five Catskill counties, including Ulster and Greene. The overall goal of this program is to get 85 percent compliance without interfering with farm profitability. Since 1993 the program has been administered by the nonprofit Watershed
Agricultural Council (WAC) and funded by New York City. This program help farms develop “whole farm plans” for water and soil conservation, and to implement best practices that prevent nutrient loading, erosion, chemicals and the spread of waterborne pathogens. With best practices in place, pastures and crop land can be important recharge areas that are valued in watersheds because they protect the water supply without compromising its quality. Additionally farms can find assistance to implement environmental management practices that will enhance the quality of their own land and water.

**Evaluation:**

The preservation of agricultural landscapes can enhance historic integrity of heritage sites that once possessed working landscapes, as Olana and Lindenwald demonstrate. Both projects seek to protect real working farms, not the establishment of demonstration sites or museum farms. This creates an authenticity based on continued use, as opposed to artificially freezing the landscape in time. The example set by Scenic Hudson’s carefully crafted easements should be pursued throughout the Valley to ensure that environmental and agricultural quality is appropriately protected with a view to long-term health. Integrated partnership projects like the Kinderhook Creek Cultural Conservation Corridor, which equally valued heritage and ecology, are models that other areas in the Valley should pursue.

If New York wanted to be truly progressive in its pursuit of sustainability, it would also help farmers earn money for the environmental services their land provides by working to establish green markets for carbon sequestration and energy production. By compensating farmers for sustainable practices, more costly pollution and climate-change solutions will be avoided.
PUBLIC OPPORTUNITIES TO EXPERIENCE LANDSCAPE

Land owners and conservationists cannot preserve the Hudson Valley’s farmland alone. A broad public constituency is necessary and should be fostered through opportunities to experience working landscape through education, outreach and tourism initiatives. In nearly every county of the Hudson River Valley there are experiential opportunities large and small to engage with agricultural landscapes. These include you-pick operations, a growing base of community supported agriculture farms, farm tours, and fairs. Through these encounters the public can come face to face with the people who produce the food they consume. Authentic experiences on a farm enrich public appreciation of the work that goes into producing food and what role these landscapes play in the region. In some ways the region’s population growth provides opportunities for profitable agritourism and special programs, such cooking classes and tasting trails for daytrippers and locals alike. These endeavors are also ways for farmers to earn more money through an extended season; March brings maple sugar walks while October sees hayrides, maize mazes, and pumpkin and apple picking. The Hudson River Valley NHA is a good information clearinghouse for these events, and the NHA should develop more agritourism trails to link the region’s rich agricultural resources.

Stone Barns Center for Food & Agriculture

The Stone Barns Center for Food & Agriculture is nestled in a tony corner of Westchester County and offers incredible opportunities to see, taste, smell and hear the working of a sustainable farm and to consume its products. Stone Barns is now a farm, restaurant and educational campus, built around a cluster of 1930s era dairy barns built by the Rockefeller family. Stone Barns’ proximity to urban areas provides easy access to place-based education for a wide spectrum of the public. Stone Barns’ programming appeals
equally to well-heeled foodies through Chef Dan Barber’s Blue Hill at Stone Barns, and to urban school groups who learn about farming and food through its Farm to Table programs. The Farm to Table program lets children collect the food for a meal from the farm, prepare the meal together and then sit down to eat the meal and discuss the experience. Its summer Farm Camp gets kids out working on the farm. Through this type of direct, down to earth, experience children can learn about food systems and how the food on their plates gets there – start to finish. Stone Barns also offers regular tours which reveals sensible, sensitive management without much sentimentality. Lectures and classes in partnership with the New York Botanical Garden offer adults to enhance their understanding of food production, and sustainable gardening practices.

**Evaluation:**

The popularity of CSAs and you-pick operations are testament to public interest in authentic engagement with farmland, and can help build support for farmland preservation. Agritourism has not, however, taken off as much in the Hudson Valley as it has in other regions, such as Sonoma in California. Teri Ptacek, Executive Director of the Agricultural Stewardship Association, notes that for farmland preservation to work land trusts have to work to diversify their constituencies to build membership, but also to appeal to broad public values. Farmland preservation can help the public connect to issues that continue to be in the media: food security, localism, climate change and environmental quality. There should be more coordination and marketing of educational and tourism opportunities throughout the region so that Hudson Valley farmers can capitalize on each other’s efforts.
Conclusion

The Hudson River Valley’s preservation picture is a mixed bag. While the region’s historically rich agricultural landscapes remain in some corners, while in others they do so precariously. The preservation of cultural heritage is not integrated as fully into everyday land conservation practice and many conservation groups do not see themselves as preserving historic resources. Still, the region’s working landscapes benefit from powerful nonprofits, a few high-capacity governments and growing public support. There are model preservation projects throughout the valley that have the potential to lead by example.

The regional vision for preserved working lands is not what it could be. This is perhaps because the region is so diverse and the opportunities and constraints to farmland preservation are not standard across it. The Hudson River Valley NHA has the potential to facilitate regional coordination and initiatives to protect the area’s distinctive landscapes, but it is not pursuing this course at this time. In the absence of regional governmental leadership, the Valley’s capable nonprofits are addressing farmland protection and their visions are becoming the dominant forces shaping local action. In the future they should work together to generate a stronger regional vision and their work should be more coordinated.

Southern counties have lost their critical mass of farmland, so the frontlines for any regional preservation strategy should be mid- and upper-Hudson counties. Columbia, Dutchess and Washington counties have some of the most successfully layered programs and protections - from strong right to farm laws, to capable land trusts, and intact agricultural communities. These are the areas where the future will find strong and diverse agricultural sectors because communities are choosing to prioritize and assist their farmers. Improved local planning, zoning, and designations may prove to be the most effective
response that municipalities can pursue to protect their working landscapes. More communities need to get up to speed about the role their agricultural economy plays and how paying for land preservation can be cheaper than paying for development.

Some of the region’s strongest agricultural counties are being lavished with conservation attention, such as Columbia and Dutchess. Their local governments are creating more favorable conditions for agriculture and land trusts are protecting a critical mass of farmland. But this leads to a fragmented preservation landscape. Conservation is not reaching enough important agricultural areas, particularly in the western half of the Valley. For example, Scenic Hudson’s focus on riverfront areas in Columbia and Dutchess counties forces inland communities to fend for themselves or court a different land trust. As Columbia County thrives, Orange County is left to sprawl around islands of preservation in communities like Warwick.

The Hudson Valley’s working landscapes will have a sustainable future as their ecology, economic viability, and cultural heritage are preserved. Environmentally responsible farming practices, such as organic, integrated pest management, and low-spray methods, can improve the health of the land and water, as well as produce high-quality products, for which consumers are willing to pay more. By cultivating an appreciation of the Valley’s food culture, the region’s agricultural traditions will be preserved. The preservation of the Valley’s farming culture will help to preserve and perpetuate traditional ways people work the land, the patterns of use, historic buildings. The production and consumption of traditional products keeps the region’s agricultural heritage alive.

Economics may be the bottom line to preservation questions. If working landscapes are preserved, it will be in part because farmers are earning a living. Building stronger
regional systems to facilitate wholesaling and direct marketing to urban centers will allow small-scale agriculture to remain. This infrastructure will help more adequately answer skyrocketing consumer demand for local foods, and keep farmers in business. The family farm will be a future, not a memory. Additionally, heritage tourism initiatives are also increasingly recognizing interest in agricultural landscapes and the visitor’s ability experience authentic farmsteads, adding depth and texture to their experience. If the region, particularly in concert with the Heritage Area, were able to develop thoughtful agritourism programs, farmers would be able to earn a little more money on-farm.

The Hudson Valley has a long way to go before its working landscapes are preserved in the full, integrated ways that the model presented in this thesis prescribes. The essential difficulties of integrated conservation are evident in the Valley’s struggles to envision itself as a region, piecemeal local responses, and a fragmented preservation landscape. The cultivation of a conservation ethic among farmers and the public is, however, promising. Despite intense development pressures or threats to economic viability, the region’s farms benefit from proximity to urban markets where demand for local food is high. With market demand in place, it is up to localities to make room for agriculture and support it through favorable policies and programs.
CHAPTER 4: SUSTAINABILITY AND WORKING LANDSCAPE PRESERVATION

Can what we eat be an act of preservation? Can local agriculture help counteract climate change? Is growing a rare variety of garlic a defiant act in a globalized, flat, technology-heavy world? The answer is yes, and farmland preservation can play an important role in local responses to global problems.

There are many things we can live without. Food is not one of them. So if we are to take seriously the cause of creating sustainable places, then part of the challenge is to make room for edible landscapes both within cities, and, more importantly for the purposes of this thesis, in their immediate metropolitan regions. American Farmland Trust research estimated that farmland in urban metropolitan regions nationwide is responsible for approximately 63 percent of dairy products and 86 percent of fruits and vegetables that we consume.34 This is the land that is most threatened by development largely due to inadequate local planning and zoning. To relieve the pressure on working agricultural landscapes, it is necessary to turning the tide of development inward, to the improvement and revitalization of urban areas.

The idea of “living locally” is a topic of national conversation ranging from popular movements like Slow Food, to popular books like Michael Pollan’s The Omnivore’s Dilemma and Eric Schlosser’s Fast Food Nation, to policy papers by the USDA and the text of the 2008 Farm Bill. There is a growing public consciousness linking the visible loss of working farms with sprawl, concerns about carbon footprints with food miles, and food safety with the perils of industrial agriculture. The importance of supporting, strengthening, and preserving agricultural landscapes, and the food systems they make possible, is amplified in light of

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34 From Farming on the Edge, American Farmland Trust, 1997.
significant global trends like climate change. This presents an opportunity to increase the
value people place on landscapes of production, and in turn enable their preservation in the
full sense in which this thesis models it.

The viability of working landscapes – particularly those near large population centers
– contributes directly to the triple bottom line that is the holy grail of sustainability. Sustainable working landscapes will conserve and enhance shared natural resources, contribute to local and regional economies, preserve cultural traditions/resources, and strengthen the social networks between producers and consumers. By balancing these interdependent goals, the preservation of working landscapes can help meet today’s needs while ensuring that future generations can do the same.

If the only metric for food systems is economic, then the dominant paradigm of
globalized industrial agriculture – under which fewer producers feed more people at a lower
cost than ever before through increased productivity and efficiency – could be considered successful. But the costs of this “success” include the gutting of farm-based communities and rural economies, and the increased use of synthetic pesticides, herbicides, fungicides, and fertilizers which exact a dramatic environmental cost. By contrast, the enhancement of local food systems may stimulate the use of environmentally responsible agricultural methods, and make locally produced foods more affordable because of decreased transportation costs, fewer middlemen, and less food spoiling before it even reaches consumers.35 Increased regional food production will lower the consumption of fossil fuels

used for transportation and inputs (by using organic methods), and reduce the dependence on truly distant places to meet local needs.

Ecologically speaking, small scale localized agriculture has much to offer in terms of environmental services, and genetic and biological diversity. The protection of agricultural lands can help to sequester atmospheric carbon and thereby take a small role in reducing greenhouse gasses responsible for climate change. Agricultural land provides wildlife habitat, helping to balance ecosystems pressured by fragmentation and development. Sensitive management can enhance biodiversity on farmland and create more dynamic and healthy soils. Perhaps more importantly, small scale agriculture is where some of the world’s genetic diversity is being tenuously preserved. Genetic diversity enables increased resilience in the event of blight or a significant change in climate. Small-scale farmers are increasingly turning to heirloom agricultural products, planting varieties and raising breeds that industrial agriculture has pushed to the margins, often to the verge of total loss. These products not only can command a higher price tag but they carry important ecological value. This is particularly significant considering that Slow Food estimates that America has lost 93 percent of its food product diversity since 1900.

The Slow Food Ark of Taste demonstrates there are many forgotten, high-quality, traditional foods that are expressions of place and heritage. These traditional products are increasingly rare but exist; In America these include Raw Milk Cheeses and the Sebastopol Gravenstein Apple. Slow Food’s presidia work to support agricultural traditions, and to promote these products. The production of these items cannot be industrialized and globalized which limits their quantities. Given their scarcity and high quality, the farmers are
more able to earn fair prices for their products. This begins to compensate those working the land for their stewardship and craftsmanship.

Slow Food reminds us that culture is an inextricable part of agriculture. So to fully preserve working lands, the culture and traditions of farming must also be preserved. The ways food is produced and what we eat shape working agricultural landscapes in ways rich with cultural meaning and help connect people. Preserving the traditions and ways of working the land helps to enhance the cultural sustainability of agricultural landscapes and adds another layer of value.

From a social perspective, working landscape preservation helps reconnect urbanites with the people and places responsible for producing their food. Some interpret the renaissance of farmer’s markets and interest in local food as another fad of bourgeois taste, but perhaps it is an expression of the desire to build stronger local food systems. It may not be useful to question the merit of bourgeois fads, but it is useful to wonder if this is a legitimate yearning for rootedness. Good food, raised in ways that sustain the environment and cultural traditions, is not the provenance of the privileged. It belongs just as much, if not more, to the people who create it and deserve a fair price. The lessons of the Slow Food movement teach us that an “eco-gastronomic conservation” is possible, and that food heritage, literally rooted in place, does not have a prohibitive price tag. This sort of conservation is not a matter of taste or preference, but of necessity.


Ferguson, K. Saving Working Landscapes: A Campaign for Hudson Valley Farms.


LaBelle, J. M. (Summer 2006.). “Slaughterhouses and Sprawl: Supporting Local Agriculture as a Key to Preserving Local Heritage.” *Forum Journal*. National Trust for Historic Preservation Center for Preservation Leadership. Volume 20(No. 4: Investing In Our Rural Heritage.).


Appendix of Figures

Figure 2.1 Barn on Hog Island, Essex NHA
Source: Essex NHA, by Matthew Shelter

Figure 2.2 Oley Township’s rural landscape
Source: Saving America’s Countryside
Figure 2.3 WPA poster depicting Lancaster’s rural traditions
Source: Library of Congress, Print and Photograph Division

Figure 2.4 The Cinque Terre
Source: European Community, Culture 2000 program
Figure 2.5 Shelburne Farms on the banks of Lake Champlain
Source: National Park Service, Save America’s Treasures

Figure 3.1 Hudson River Counties.
Source: Hudson River Valley Institute
Figure 3.2: Hudson River Watershed
Source: Hudson River Watershed Alliance

Figure 3.3: Distribution of Farmland by County
c. 2002
Source: Glynwood Center, State of Agriculture in the Hudson Valley, 2004
Figure 3.4  Hudson River Valley NHA map

Source: HRV NHA 2002 Management Plan
Figure 3.5 Conservation Priority Sites, 2007
Source: Scenic Hudson
Figure 3.6: Land Conservation in riverfront communities from Red Hook to Stuyvesant

Source: Scenic Hudson, Inc.
FARMING ON THE EDGE
Sprawling Development Threatens
America's Best Farmland
New York

Legend:
- Red: High-Quality Farmland & High Development
- Green: High-Quality Farmland & Low Development
- Tan: Federal & Indian Lands
- Gray: Urban Areas
- Other Colors: Other Lands

High-quality farmland areas have relatively large amounts of prime or unique farmland. High-development areas have relatively rapid loss of high-quality farmland to development. Other areas do not meet the two threshold tests. The relative measures compare sub-county areas against their respective statewide averages.
Figure 3.8 Town of Stuyvesant Zoning

Source: Town of Stuyvesant
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Figure 3.12 Shoppers at the Troy Waterfront Farmer’s Market  
Source: Metroland.

Figure 3.13 Detail of Land Preserved around Olana  
Source: Scenic Hudson, Inc.
Figure 3.14 Winter Landscape from Olana, by Frederic Church
Source: The Hudson River and its Painters

Figure 3.15 Map of Stone Barns Center for Food & Agriculture and surrounding area.
Source: The Stone Barns Center for Food & Agriculture
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