

VII.I Agriculture

The agricultural mission of the Town of Lee is to promote a “Sense of Place” within the community. Our natural resource base and our rural agricultural heritage are primary and integral components of the character of the Town of Lee, and the future character of the town will be determined largely by the wise and sustainable use of these resources. Land, water and air resources are basic to the quality of life and must be used wisely and protected while providing an affordable place to live.

GOALS:

1. The promotion of an economically viable and vibrant rural community by shaping and guiding a sustainable, compatible balance between a working landscape that includes the traditional land uses, such as farming and forestry, with resource protection and “smart” managed residential and commercial growth.
2. The promotion of a Town commitment to follow a responsible and sustainable land stewardship ethic through its regulatory management of the Town’s natural resources.
3. The protection at least 25% of the remaining undeveloped uplands within the Town.
4. The adoption, in the Lee Master Plan and the Zoning Ordinances, of the NH Right to Farm Law (RSA 432:32-35) which supports the active maintenance of a working landscape.
5. The addition of the NH state definition of agriculture, (RSA 21:34-a) to the existing town definition of agriculture.
6. The adoption of a definition of agricultural tourism and agricultural commerce in the Lee Zoning Ordinances.
7. The adoption and implementation of more flexible code provisions and the minimization of the tax burden on old and historic agricultural structures. Refer to the Historic Barn Tax Abatement, (RSA 79-D).
8. The implementation of a strategy for initiating a “Smart Growth” method of guiding growth in the town.
9. Increased awareness of the importance of local agriculture to the past, present and future of our town and recognition by the community that the ability of local agriculture to be economically sustainable is essential to the vitality of the Town of Lee.

ACTION ITEMS:

- a. Encourage traditional and innovative agricultural activities in order to foster the sustainability of farms and farmland and the availability and local production of food and fiber in the community. Examples may include the direct marketing of products through

farmers markets, seasonal farm stands, community-supported agriculture (CSA) programs and agricultural tourism.

- b. Support the farmers in the community through agriculturally supportive zoning.
- c. Continue the Town's commitment to the Current Use (RSA 79-a) method of taxation of open space, even if the State rescinds the requirement that communities offer this program.
- d. Protect tracts of farm and forest land through conservation easements, fee simple purchase, acceptance of donations or other land protection methods.
- e. Inventory the natural resources and agricultural enterprises within the town. Identify and target critical corridors and locations of agricultural soils of statewide and local importance, water, and other resources.
- f. Encourage the maintenance of a working landscape of actively managed farm and forest land throughout the Town, including town owned land.
- g. Adopt, promote and utilize Best Management Practices (BMP's) for the protection and sustainability of each of the Town's natural resources (land, water, air, wildlife).
- h. Manage the waste stream in a sustainable manner in order to protect the land, air, water, and wildlife.
- i. Minimize the overall tax burden by supporting open space use by agriculture, forestry and appropriate sustainable recreational activities.
- j. Protect riparian areas by guarding against erosion, pollution and other destructive practices through the establishment of buffer zones, utilizing Best Management Practices.
- k. Promote a local educational campaign to educate citizens about the Right to Farm Law and its support of agriculture-related activities. Inform citizens of the relationship between a working landscape of farms and forests and open space protection. Actively recognize and support the historic role of agriculture in the past, present, and future of Lee. Create a regionally recognized agricultural identity for Lee, emphasizing its commitment to agriculture.
- l. Require new developments to establish a buffer adjacent to agricultural lands to minimize conflicts and to protect agricultural activities from encroaching on residential neighborhoods.
- m. Exempt and differentiate between subdivision and site review regulations for agricultural and forestry operations versus commercial, industrial, or residential development.

- n. Support a flexible agricultural signage ordinance which takes into account the unique nature of agricultural enterprises.
- o. Adopt town planning and zoning ordinances that reflect “smart growth” relationships of residential, business/industrial, and agricultural/forestry activities, and work toward a livable, walkable community, including an interconnecting trail system throughout town.
- p. Reevaluate current planning and zoning regulations to encourage the sustainability of agriculture.
- q. Encourage the evolution of agriculture in New England from a commodity-based production system to a niche production and direct marketing system, (eg., agricultural tourism, specialty crops and products, and value-added agricultural products).
- r. Establish an advisory Agricultural Commission.
- s. Encourage an increase in the availability and diversity of local agricultural production and products, connecting citizens with their local farms and food production. Establish an agricultural “welcome wagon” for the Town of Lee.