



## **Saratoga County Farmland Protection and Open Space Grant Program**

**2015**

The Saratoga County Board of Supervisors began the Farmland Protection and Open Space Preservation grant program in 2003 to help farmers meet the required local match of the New York State Farmland Protection Implementation Grant also referred to as Purchase of Development Rights (PDR). The purpose of the funding has been expanded beyond farmland to include lands for natural areas, wildlife habitats, parks and other types of open spaces.

During the 9 years the grant program has been was funded, there have been a total of 37 projects approved and completed protecting both farmland and open space. These 37 projects protected 3,550 acres of land across 9 municipalities in Saratoga County. Saratoga County contributed \$4.4 Million dollars towards these projects leveraging an additional \$4 Million from State and Federal programs to protect farmland and \$6 Million from State and Federal programs for open space.

In 2015, the Saratoga County Board of Supervisors allocated \$250,000 to reinstate the matching grant program for the purchase development rights in productive agricultural lands and acquire open space lands whose preservation is deemed to be of significant public benefit. Saratoga County is rich in natural resources and is home to many diverse landscapes across its 30 municipalities. In 2006, the Saratoga County Board of Supervisors adopted the County's Green Infrastructure Plan which inventoried our resources as well as made recommendations to foster open space preservation and farmland protection. The common themes of the Plan recommendations are to protect farmland, natural streams, heritage areas, and to connect and extend our trails and gateways within Saratoga County. Inter municipal cooperation is encouraged to accomplish preservation goals which are not only cost effective but efficient. The County Board of Supervisors as well as the Land Preservation Committee encourages all municipalities within the County to consider applying for project funding. The County Planning Staff is available to assist potential applicants with the application process and questions they may have regarding project eligibility. Feel free to contact them at 884-4705 at any time with questions.

### **Project Eligibility:**

For Open Space acquisition projects, grants will be made up to 50% of an eligible project's total project cost or \$50,000 (whichever is less) shall be made directly to Saratoga County

Municipalities. Eligible open space may include sensitive environmental and natural resource such as wetlands, floodplains and stream corridors and other lands which serve a vital public interest such as watershed protection and wildlife habitat. Eligible open spaces may also include lands that offer a unique recreation opportunity to a community such as a park, nature trail, bikeway or public access to a waterway or waterbody. The County Green Infrastructure Plan provides a comprehensive overview of unique open space resources that would be eligible for county funding and would receive a higher project ranking during review of grant applications. For Farmland Protection projects, grants of up to 50% of total project cost or \$100,000 (whichever is less) where development rights are being purchased shall be made directly to Saratoga County Municipalities. Other lands by their character and location may be considered a fundamental element of a community's character worthy of preservation. Lands identified in local comprehensive plans or in an open space inventory, The New York State Open Space Plan or Municipal Farmland Protection Plan would also be eligible.

Saratoga County Municipalities are eligible applicants to the program. All Not for profit Land Trusts, Conservation Groups and Landowners are eligible applicants but all applications must provide a resolution of support for the project from the municipality where the project is located. If there is not time to submit a resolution of support then a Letter of Intent (LOI) signed by the Town Supervisor/City Supervisor/Village Mayor on letterhead can be submitted in the resolution's place. If the applicant entity is other than a municipality, County payments shall be made directly to Saratoga County Municipalities which will, in turn, convey the County funds to the applicant entity. Both Farmland Protection and Open Space acquisition grants will be contingent on the applicant's demonstration of the commitment of matching funds from Federal, State and/or Local Funding Programs and private contributions. Private contributions may be in the form of a "bargain sale" or donation. Inter municipal applications for open space preservation that includes property crossing municipal boundaries, may apply for funding up to \$100,000 or as long as each municipality supports the proposed project through a resolution included in the grant application. An example of an eligible project would be a land acquisition application along the Kayaderosseras Creek that crosses municipal boundaries.

**Eligible Costs:** Grant funds can be used by an eligible applicant towards the value of development rights or purchase price for open space acquisitions. Stewardship fees or costs associated with Stewardship for the project are not eligible to be included into the total project cost for County Grant funds. If a project consists of complete donation of an easement either open space or farmland then an eligible applicant can request up to \$10,000 or 5% of the total project cost (whichever is less) for transaction costs associated with the donated easement.

**Eligible Local Share:** Local funds expended within 12 months of the submission of that application may be accepted as the required local match. Local funds utilized to purchase the

Development Rights or a fee interest in land may allocate those expenditures towards the required local match for a second parcel if the applicant can demonstrate a clear linkage between the prior acquisition and the application submitted to the county.

**Project Ranking to Receive Funding for Farmland /Open Space:** To determine eligibility for funding under the County Farmland/Open Space Preservation Program, agricultural lands and open space lands will be evaluated based on criteria adopted by the land preservation committee.

**Application Components to be submitted as follows:**

**Project Cover Sheet:**

- ❖ Title of Proposed Project
- ❖ Project Type: Farmland or Open Space
- ❖ Location of Proposed Project
- ❖ Tax Map number, acreage and Landowner Name
- ❖ Project Contact and Sponsoring Organization address, telephone number and email address.

**Project Summary-Brief proposal description:**

- ❖ Description of the property and its current use
- ❖ Property's local and regional importance as an agricultural or opens space resource
- ❖ Description of development pressure
- ❖ Proposed project's compliance with local plans such as comprehensive plan, green infrastructure plan, or farmland protection plan

**Required Project Maps:**

- ❖ Location map showing street names and important landmarks
- ❖ Aerial photo with tax map overlay
- ❖ Soils Map showing prime farmland soils and statewide significant soils and acreages
- ❖ For Open Space applications, locations of connecting trails and associated amenities

**Project Budget:**

- ❖ Total estimated cost of Proposed Project
- ❖ Amount and sources of other outside funding sources

- ❖ Amount of County Grant funds being requested
- ❖ Estimated Cost per acre(if application is successful an appraisal will be required)
- ❖ Survey Cost
- ❖ Appraisal Cost
- ❖ Baseline mapping and documentation
- ❖ Title search and Title Insurance
- ❖ Administrative Costs, including legal
- ❖ Stewardship/Monitoring Costs

### **Letters of Support**

Applications may be submitted to Saratoga County Planning 50 West High Street Ballston Spa, NY 12020 between July 14, 2015 and closes on September 14, 2015.

Following the close of the application period, applications shall be reviewed and prioritized by the County's Land Preservation Committee. Upon completion of its review, the Land Preservation committee will vote on the applications and forward its recommendations to the Saratoga County Board of Supervisors Law and Finance Committee. Grant awards shall be made by resolution of the Board of Supervisors.

Post Award: Prior to the release of grant funds the project applicant shall submit an appraisal of the property certifying the value of the development rights to be purchased with grant funds or the value of the land to be purchased in fee. Successful applicants will also be required to submit copies of all conservation easements and/or deeds prepared in conjunction with the awarded project. An environmental audit may be required if the proposed property's environmental integrity has the possibility of being compromised through a previous use or uses in the vicinity.

Once an award has been made the County will provide the awardee with a list of submission requirements needed to receive grant funds.

### **Ranking Criteria**

**Items will be ranked on a scale from 1 to 5, 1 lowest value, 5 highest value.**

#### **Agricultural Importance**

- Soil Quality
- Economic Viability of Farming Operation
- Protection of Natural Resource
- Inclusion in County Agricultural District
- Proximity to a critical mass of productive farmland

## **Resource Protection**

- Proximity to protected water body/waterway/aquifer
- Wildlife Habitat or wildlife corridor
- Close proximity to significant wetlands complex
- Scenic view shed
- Proximity to other conserved lands
- Provides public access
- Proximity to National/State/County /Municipal/Private Park or Forest Lands

## **Development Pressure**

- Important to rural character of municipality
- Proximity to expanding residential growth
- Located close to public infrastructure

## **Local Support**

- Municipal designation as an important Community Resource
- Inclusion in the New York State Open Space Plan
- Inclusion in the Saratoga County Green Infrastructure Plan
- Inclusion in Municipal/County trail system plan
- Matching Funding Sources confirmed as evidenced by a letter from entities providing the match.

## **Other**

- Applicant can provide additional narrative regarding the proposed project that will help the Land Preservation Committee understand its importance to the surrounding landscape, community and why it is considered to be a top priority for grant funding.

**Submit 10 copies of the application and materials either by Mail or In Person to:**

Jaime L. O'Neill, Planner Saratoga County Planning Department

50 West High Street

Ballston Spa, NY 12020

518-884-4705

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***Saratoga County Farmland Protection Open Space Grant Coversheet***

**2015**

**Applicant Information:**

Municipality:

Name of Primary Project Contact:

Address:

Phone/Email:

**Landowner Information(If different from Applicant):**

Name:

Address:

Phone Number:

**Project Description:**

Project Name:

Street Address/Location of Project:

Tax Map Numbers:

Current Use of the Property:

Projects proximity to other conserved lands:

**Budget Summary:**

Total Project Cost:

Total County Funding Requested:

Total Outside Funding Expected:

**Project Summary-Brief proposal description:**

Description of the property and its current use.

Property's local and regional importance as an agricultural or opens space resource.

Description of development pressure.

Proposed project's compliance with local plans such as comprehensive plan, green infrastructure plan, or farmland protection plan.

**Project Budget:**

Total estimated cost of Proposed Project:

Amount and sources of other outside funding sources:

Amount of County Grant funds being requested:

Estimated Cost per acre(if application is successful an appraisal will be required):

Survey Cost:

Appraisal Cost:

Baseline mapping and documentation:

Title search and Title Insurance:

Administrative Costs, (including legal):

Stewardship/Monitoring Costs:

Required Project Maps:

- ❖ Location map showing street names and important landmarks
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- ❖ Soils Map showing prime farmland soils and statewide significant soils and acreages
- ❖ For Open Space applications, locations of connecting trails and associated amenities

Please attach required Application Components as listed on the first page of the application package. If you have any questions regarding this application and the process please call Saratoga County Planning Department, 884-4705.