

**Cattaraugus County Department of Economic Development,  
Planning and Tourism**

**Update of the  
Agricultural & Farmland Protection Plan**

**Request for Proposals**

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## **I. Introduction**

The County of Cattaraugus Department of Economic Development, Planning, and Tourism (EDPT) is soliciting proposals from qualified consultants to prepare an update of the County's Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan (AFPP). To fulfill grant requirements, the Plan shall be completed by September, 2020 and must be prepared in accordance with Article 25-AAA of the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets (NYSDAM) Law and NYSDAM Circular 1500 Section 324.

### **A. Background Information**

Cattaraugus County, encompassing 1,336 square miles, is located in rural southwestern New York State. It is bordered by Pennsylvania to the south, Chautauqua County to the west and Allegany County to the east. The northern boundary of the County is formed by Cattaraugus Creek, which separates Cattaraugus from Erie and Wyoming Counties. Allegheny River flows through the southern portion of the County. Cattaraugus County is very scenic, characterized by wooded hillsides that form the foothills of the Appalachian Mountains, interspersed with farm fields and settlements. Cattaraugus Creek runs through the picturesque Zoar Valley, a protected conservation area that is home to old growth forest and unique ecological features. Allegany State Park, the largest state park in New York, occupies 65,000 acres along the southern central boundary. The County is also home to two cities, Olean and Salamanca; nine villages; and 32 towns. In addition, there are a number of unincorporated historic hamlets that contribute to the rural character of the County. The Allegany, Cattaraugus and Oil Springs Territories are independent areas in the County, under the governance of the Seneca Nation of Indians. (Please refer to the following County websites for further details: [www.cattco.org](http://www.cattco.org) and [www.enchantedmountains.com](http://www.enchantedmountains.com)).

With respect to agriculture, 28% of the County's total land area is located in one consolidated NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets certified Agricultural District. The majority of the County's prime farmland soils are found in this District. Prime soils provide the basis for stable and productive farms, although only about 15% of the total acres of soil in the county meet the criteria to be considered prime for agricultural production. A considerable number of acres of these prime soils are already in land uses other than agriculture. Continued conversion of these prime farmlands could result in reduced capacity for producing crops and livestock, putting more production pressure on marginal soils that may be more susceptible to increased runoff and erosion problems.

The annual market value of agricultural products sold in Cattaraugus County totals over \$99 million (2012 US Census of Ag.). This value has increased 70% over the last 20 years, representing a significant portion of the county's economic output. The multiplying effects of farm revenues are enormous, with dollars generated spent many times over within the county. It is the consensus of the Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board (AFPB) that updating the County's AFPP is vital to keeping pace with the ever-evolving business of agriculture.

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The future viability of farming in Cattaraugus County appears promising, but could be negatively impacted without proper direction and good land use decision making tools. Farming operations in Cattaraugus County are subject to increasing development pressures as scattered residential construction in agricultural areas continues, especially in the Towns of Ellicottville, Mansfield, and Great Valley near the area's ski resorts. If completed, the proposed extension of the U.S. Route 219 expressway from the north county line south to Interstate Route 86 in Salamanca will traverse agricultural areas, further impacting farming through land losses and likely associated development. Other areas where prime farmland has experienced substantial conversion to non-agricultural uses include the Route 16 corridor through the Ischua Valley and in valley bottom areas in the Town of Allegany. It is Cattaraugus County's viewpoint that agriculture should be encouraged and conflicts between farming and residential uses should be avoided or minimized.

**B. Purpose**

The purpose of the Plan update is to revise the existing Cattaraugus County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan (AFPP) so that it accurately reflects current conditions and provides timely direction for improving the business of agriculture in the County. A focus of the updated plan will be farm economic development strategies that support continued agricultural land uses and encourage farmland protection. Actions that will increase the economic viability of all types of agricultural and agri-business enterprises in Cattaraugus County will be identified and prioritized.

The anticipated outcomes from the updated AFPP include increased public interest in the local agriculture industry, identification of methods to enhance economic opportunities for farmers, development of goals that support farmland protection, and a list of priority projects for funding.

**C. Problems/Opportunities**

As reported by the 2012 USDA Census of Agriculture, there are 1,038 farms in Cattaraugus County totaling 197,257 cumulative acres. Since the 2002 Census, this represents a 2.3% reduction of land in farms and 10% fewer farm operations. As the number of dairy farms decreases, beef, cash grain, and small produce farms are growing in number, driven in part from interest by persons seeking second careers and from young beginning farmers. As earlier stated, development pressure on farms is localized, but additional threats exist, such as conversion to other uses (i.e. absentee owner recreation land) and extractive uses such as gravel mining.

New farm businesses are seeking to capitalize on alternative opportunities. Examples include Community Supported Agriculture (CSA), industrial hemp, and farm sales of items such as Alpaca fiber, maple syrup and horticultural products. Additionally, there is an active equestrian association that has plans to expand its profile in the county. Potential growth may come from value-added farm products sold directly to the consumer (e.g. yogurt & cheese) and in the forest products sector (biorefining of woody

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fiber).

Non-farm residents are accustomed to agriculture operations, and there are few conflicts between groups. There are presently multiple choices for farm equipment dealers, seed companies, crop management services, and dairy equipment supply outfits.

In terms of future prospects, there is a vibrant 4-H presence in the county, along with active Future Farmers of America student chapters. Agriculture Technology programs in public schools are being re-established in the county, with high student interest.

## **II. Goals and Objectives**

Pursuant to Article 25-AAA of the Agriculture and Markets Law, the County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan Update must identify the location of any land or areas proposed/considered for protection. The Plan must also contain a description of the activities, programs and strategies intended to be used by the County to promote continued agricultural land use. Local governments may also incorporate aspects of the County plan into their own planning and decision-making.

The Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan must complement Cattaraugus County's Smart Growth initiative, "Smart Development for Quality Communities," the purpose of which is to stimulate new growth with Smart Growth protections (i.e., identify areas targeted for economic development while encouraging the protection of farmland and open space).

Agricultural industry statistics will be revised, and plan goals and objectives will be updated based on public input, advice of a steering committee, and special studies.

## **III. Information Gathering/Public Input**

Throughout plan development, the consultant awarded the contract will be required to solicit public comment through various means, including inventories, surveys, public planning meetings/focus groups, and outreach to acquire information on key topics and elements of agriculture in the County. Public participation will be encouraged and vehicles to accomplish this will be used (e.g. social media, EDPT Ag Website, community member surveys/input forums).

## **IV. Scope of Work / Deliverables**

The final plan must meet the minimum requirements of NYS Agriculture and Markets law and drive economic development through the detailing of readily implementable projects. The updated plan must also address emerging agricultural issues in Cattaraugus County and will outline paths to improve market access for existing products. The plan will identify opportunities for value-adding of goods and provide

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detailed information on market trends and prospects for business growth in the agricultural economy. The Consultant will accomplish this by:

- 1) Evaluating the existing AFPP plan and summarizing/critiquing implementation results.
- 2) Evaluating agriculture business in the County and emerging trends to inform a viable agricultural economic development strategy.
- 3) Developing revised agriculture business and protection goals for the County.
- 4) Identifying and mapping lands with potential present or future farm value. (some Geographic information System (GIS) assistance will be supplied by Cattaraugus County and/or partners).
- 5) Evaluating and ranking prospective protected farmlands for their contribution to larger comprehensive planning goals of the County.
- 6) Developing realistic agriculture business goals and strategies for successful implementation of same.
- 7) Providing and facilitating ample opportunities for farmers and non-farmers alike to participate in AFPP Updating as a means to develop a better plan and to garner greater local acceptance of same.

The Consultant will be responsible for the following tasks:

1. Assess the county's current agricultural economy and develop updated agricultural goals:
  - "Data mining" to better understand current production, current markets, potential markets, and potential production to serve those markets.
  - Assess national, state and local growth sectors that could impact agricultural production.
  - Identify national, state and local policies which could limit the economic growth of agricultural industries.
  - Assess value added opportunities to expand agricultural production.
  - Assess new technologies to expand agricultural production.
  - Interviews with key farmers in various sectors.
  - Interviews with public and private agencies involved in the agricultural economy including Cornell Cooperative Extension, United States Department of Agriculture, Cattaraugus County Soil and Water Conservation District, Farm Credit, Farm Bureau, banks, agri-businesses, etc. and their boards.
  - Surveys of local elected boards, and planning boards.
  - Interviews with agricultural products consumers, especially institutional users such as Jamestown Community College, St. Bonaventure University, public schools, nursing homes, etc.
  - Interviews with school agricultural teachers.

**Deliverables:** A concise overview of the county's current agricultural economy, including products and existing markets, opportunities for expanded production of current products, potential new products, and untapped markets; an analysis of barriers

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to markets; and an analysis of the agricultural economy's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT analysis), leading to a clear statement of the County's goal(s) with respect to agricultural and farmland protection.

2. Identify farmland worthy of protection, analyze/rank prospective lands identified for protection, develop strategies/methods to retain existing farms and aid farmland ownership transfers while maintaining farm use:
  - Consultation with regional land trusts to assess their priorities and conservation tools (e.g. Western New York Land Conservancy).
  - Consultation with United States Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service to identify prime, unique, or important farmlands or soils.
  - Review of recent local comprehensive plans to identify local goals.
  - Use of County data to identify lands in the consolidated Agricultural District, lands receiving Agricultural Assessments, and other active farms.
  - Analysis of land cover data/imaging to identify development trends as well as underutilized lands potentially available for agricultural production.
  - Updating (as needed), calibration, and use of Cattaraugus County agricultural land protection ranking tool to prioritize farmlands proposed for protection.

**Deliverables:** Identification and graphic depiction of prime, unique, and locally important soils and farmlands, NYS Agricultural District, lands receiving Agricultural Assessments. Land development since the 2007 AFPP, area development trends, and under-utilized but viable farm lands. Identification of agricultural lands in the county that are worthy and/or that are priorities for protection. An assessment of the open-space and economic values of protected land to the county, including the consequences of loss or conversion. A description of the activities, programs, and strategies intended to be used by the county to promote continued agricultural use of land, and recommended actions to support the successful transfer of agricultural lands from existing owners to new owner/operators, especially to new and beginning farmers.

3. Identify other county or municipal planning and land use programs consistent or inconsistent with the agricultural and farmland protection plan:
  - Review and analyze municipal comprehensive plans, land use regulations, subdivision regulations, local economic development initiatives, etc. Rank the level of land conversion pressure across the county and correlate to municipal data on those areas. The agricultural zoning district will be specifically reviewed to assess whether or not allowed uses are protective of agriculture. Subdivision and zoning regulations will be analyzed for requirements that would preserve farmland and insulate it from incompatible developments. In summary, this will be a "farm-friendly" audit of towns.
  - Review and analyze the plans and policies of plan partners, such as the Southern Tier West Comprehensive Development Strategy, Cattaraugus County Comprehensive Plan, and the Western New York Regional Economic Development Council's Strategic Plan.

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**Deliverables:** A matrix indicating the objectives of the selected plans and whether or not they are consistent with goals identified in this process and the overall mission of promoting agricultural land uses. A table showing the status of local regulations and the extent to which they are or are not protective of agricultural lands. A map(s) showing areas of greatest development pressure and anticipated development, coupled with associated municipal land use data.

4. Involve farmers and citizens, working with the AFPB and Advisory Committee to:
  - Identify and implement methods to collect information such as interviews and surveys.
  - Identify methods to involve farmers who historically do not participate in focus groups or surveys. Participation should include a cross section of farmers from a variety of sectors and operation sizes.
  - Collaborate with project partners to identify opportunities for public meetings and workshops.
  - Identify opportunities to use media, websites, and social media to involve the public.

**Deliverables:** An executed public participation plan encompassing the lifespan of the plan development process, including a kickoff meeting and 3 interactive workshops. The public participation plan must recognize the unique challenges of involving farmers from diverse agricultural sectors from a geographically large county. Gathering information from the farming community should be the focus of the public participation plan.

5. Identify and select goals and strategies to invigorate Cattaraugus County's agricultural economy:
  - Meet with focus groups to review the results of Tasks 1- 4.
  - Meet with focus groups to identify attainable and measurable goals with accompanying objectives and implementation projects.
  - Complete return on investment (ROI) models on value added and new technologies to determine their viability.
  - Work with project partners to identify potential implementation strategies and funding sources.

**Deliverables:** At least three (3) attainable and measurable goals with accompanying objectives and projects. Projects will include at least two (2) agriculturally-based economic development ventures ready for implementation, for which implementation funding can immediately be sought. One of the ready- to-implement ventures should have the potential for broad impact throughout the county's agricultural sectors while other ventures may be specific to certain sectors or commodities. Additionally, an implementation matrix will show key projects, responsible agencies, cost estimates, potential funding sources, and an implementation time frame. The implementation strategy will include projects ready for immediate submission to the Western New York Regional Economic Development Council for funding. Business models around value

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added production should show returns on investment in value added opportunities.

The consultant shall deliver at the completion of the project, a strategic and targeted Cattaraugus County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan that meets the requirements of NYS Department of Agriculture & Markets Municipal Agricultural and Farmland Protection Planning Program requirements, addresses all 5 tasks described above with a focus on agriculture-based economic development opportunities.

The plan must be developed in conjunction with the Cattaraugus County Department of Economic Development, Planning, and Tourism and other relevant advisory partners. The plan must be completed to the satisfaction of the Cattaraugus County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board, who will recommend adoption to the Cattaraugus County Legislature.

Final Products will include:

- All documents in electronic format, text in MS Word, and newly created spatial data in ESRI shapefile format, provided in acceptable digital format.
- One original unbound document, including maps.
- Ten (10) complete hardcopy reports.

## **V. Submittal Requirements**

One original and 3 copies of the proposal shall be received no later than 4:00 pm Eastern Standard Time on **Thursday, February 7, 2019**. The proposal shall be filed with the Cattaraugus County Department of Economic Development, Planning and Tourism, to the Attention of Patrick McGlew, either by US Mail, overnight delivery, or in person at 303 Court Street (Second Floor), Little Valley, New York 14775. No fax or electronic proposals will be accepted.

Direct any questions to: Patrick McGlew, Development Specialist  
Phone: (716) 938-2387  
Email: [pjmclew@cattco.org](mailto:pjmclew@cattco.org)

The County discourages the submittal of excessively long resumes and biographical materials that do not add substantively to the proposal or otherwise assist the County in understanding the qualifications of the Consultant and/or firm. To that end, RFP submissions shall be limited to no more than 20 pages in length.



## **VI. Content of the Proposal**

### **A. Statement of Qualifications**

A brief description of the firm submitting the proposal, including: full business name, legal status (corporate, partnership or sole proprietor), number and type of employees, specialties, and longevity. List similar projects and the specific personnel who worked on them that are proposed to work on this project. Include past project's name and client, year completed, dollar amount and telephone number of a contact person at the entity the work was performed that possesses direct knowledge of the referenced project.

### **B. Project Team Members**

List any specialties and or strengths that make the Consultant and the personnel assigned to this project uniquely suited to the task of performing the work as outlined in this RFP. Provide an organizational chart of the employees proposed to work on this project, including the Project Manager who would be assigned to this project and who shall be the County's main point of contact with the Consultant firm. This shall include a listing of each individual's relevant previous project experience in regard to the tasks and responsibilities they would perform in this project. It is very important to include project management experience for the proposed project manager.

### **C. Project Scope of Services and Schedule**

The Consultant shall provide a detailed proposed project scope of services and schedule. This shall include a detailed description of the Consultant's proposed approach, scope of services (to include items identified in Section IV), start and completion time, and timeline to complete each task.

The Consultant shall be responsible for preparing summaries of any focus group meetings or workshops, public meetings/hearings that may be held.

### **D. Cost & Payment Schedule**

The project budget includes a maximum amount of Fifty Thousand and 00/100 Dollars (\$50,000.00) for consultant services. A listing of consultant services and charge for each is requested.

The consultant's cost and payment schedule shall include the scope of work elements, reimbursable expenses, and alternative work items (if proposed), for completion of the entire project as specified herein. The items listed below will be included in the total project cost stated above:

- Item pricing of individual work items provided in the Consultant's proposal.
- Reimbursable expenses: A total, not-to-exceed dollar value, for any reimbursable expenses associated with each individual work scope item must be specified. A rate for each type of expense, such as mileage, printing expenses, etc. must be specified.

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- Alternative work items: The proposal may include a list of alternative work items listed as an additional expense. Each additional work item shall be clearly identified and related to the full description provided in the Consultant's technical proposal. Such alternative work item price shall include a list of staff and hours estimated to complete each work item.

Costs must be listed in detail, i.e., itemizing each component of the work program, as well as the hourly rates, travel, meetings, etc. The proposal should clearly state what is received for the fee quoted.

The Cattaraugus County EDPT and its partners will provide personnel in-kind services to the consultant, as needed but with some limitations, during the planning process. The involvement of the partners is critical to ensure the quality of the product and deliverables.

It is anticipated that the consultant will receive GIS and mapping assistance from Cattaraugus County and/or project partners.

**E. Proposal Conditions**

Compliance with Cattaraugus County standard insurance requirements Appendix A, which is attached to this Request for Proposal (RFP), is required.

**F. Non-Collusion Certification**

Each proposal shall include a signed original of the Non-Collusion Certification, attached hereto as Appendix B.

## **VII. Criteria for Evaluation of Proposals**

Each of the criteria listed below are equally weighted in their importance in evaluating the proposals:

- \* Quality and successful completion of similar plans. Agricultural Planning experience of a similar nature and of a similar scope will be viewed very favorably. The commitment to quality as evidenced by previous plans and client satisfaction will be considered.
- \* Qualifications and Capabilities of the Staffing Team.
- \* Scope of Work & Approach. The creativity and vision of the team is paramount. We do not want an off-the-shelf plan; rather, we will depend on the firm to work with the County Department of Economic Development, Planning and Tourism, and other stakeholders to create an individualized award-worthy plan.
- \* Time Commitment and Cost of the Plan. The County is interested in the level of

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dedication and commitment of the team and a guarantee that the plan will be a priority project. The County will evaluate costs based on quality, detail, time commitments and experience.

The Consultant Selection Committee will make a recommendation in March, 2019 (estimated). It is expected that the selected Consultant and the County will negotiate a contract for services, which said contract shall include specific details as to insurance requirements, timetable for commencement and completion of tasks, schedule for payments and deliverables, and the general and specific responsibilities of the parties under the contract.

**NOTE:** The County reserves the right, among other options, to reject any and all proposals, reissue the RFP, interview, and/or negotiate scope and fees with one or more responding Consultants or firms, and/or request additional information from one or more Consultants or firms.

All costs, including travel and expenses incurred in the preparation of this proposal shall be borne by the proposing firm. All work products, whether electronic or in hard copy, will remain the property of Cattaraugus County, and will be provided to the County upon completion of the contract or upon request.

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