

## Chapter 6 Agriculture and Farmland Protection

**VISION:** *The Town of Veteran recognizes the value of their agricultural resources and works to retain and maintain the agricultural land. The Town will work to create policy and zoning to protect not only agricultural land but also the agri-business that is needed to maintain these lands.*

The Town residents identified in the Town wide survey conducted in 2011, that maintaining the rural atmosphere of the town and supporting the farmers is of the utmost importance. The Town of Veteran adopted a Right to Farm Law in 2008. Veteran has many small farms and a few New York State recognized Agricultural districts (see Map 23). In addition to these farms, the Town also has many farm related businesses. Maintaining and growing these farms is important to the Town, and retaining a critical mass of farmland is vital to keeping farm businesses open. Lastly, the Town and the region is facing new development trends that may impact agricultural growth. The Town will need to work to capitalize on these trends without risking the loss of the rural character and the agricultural economy that defines the Town.



**Figure 14: Scenic Agriculture, Town of Veteran**

### **Agriculture and Water Quality and Quantity**

The Town has mostly smaller scale farms and has few farms that would be considered “large scale corporate farms.” As such, the economics of farms whether small or large is the same. It is important that these farms have the income to implement quality conservation practices such as creating buffers between crops or animals and streams to best protect water quality. Currently, no known farms in Veteran use irrigation, so there are few concerns with depleting aquifers within the Town due to irrigation of crops. While depletion of groundwater in the Southern Tier of New York State is not much of a concern, practicing water conservation in all uses will ensure that local wells do not run dry.

Larger scale farming activities that include a concentration of animals such as livestock or poultry farms may need to work with New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYS DEC) to receive a General Permit for Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs). These permits are necessary in order to comply with state and federal water quality requirements. These permits are regulated by NYS DEC. In order to comply, farmers in Veteran should work with the Chemung County Soil and Water Conservation District, NYS Agriculture and Markets and NYS DEC.

Agricultural issues such as manure on the roads washing into roadside drainage and manure spreading in a close proximity to private wells are difficult to regulate and enforce. Agricultural activity is protected by State, County and Town Right to Farm laws. According to Chemung County

Health Department, the best way to protect private water supplies is to separate uses of residential and agricultural nature through zones and set-backs within zoning. By including set-backs of agricultural activities to residential wells in the zoning, the Town code enforcement officer will have the ability to enforce required setbacks and thus protect private wells.

### **Agricultural Districts**

True protection of farmland and farmers is significantly supported by agricultural districts. Agricultural districts provide property tax benefits to holders of the land in order to better encourage the continued farming practice and maintain agricultural resources. Chemung County holds yearly open enrollment period for landowners desiring to place property within a certified Agricultural District. The County Legislature also reviews all Agricultural Districts every eight (8) years authorizing to continue, terminate or modify any districts based on recommendations from the Chemung County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board, Chemung County Planning Board, and any public comments submitted at a public hearing.



**Figure 15: Ridge Road, Town of Veteran**

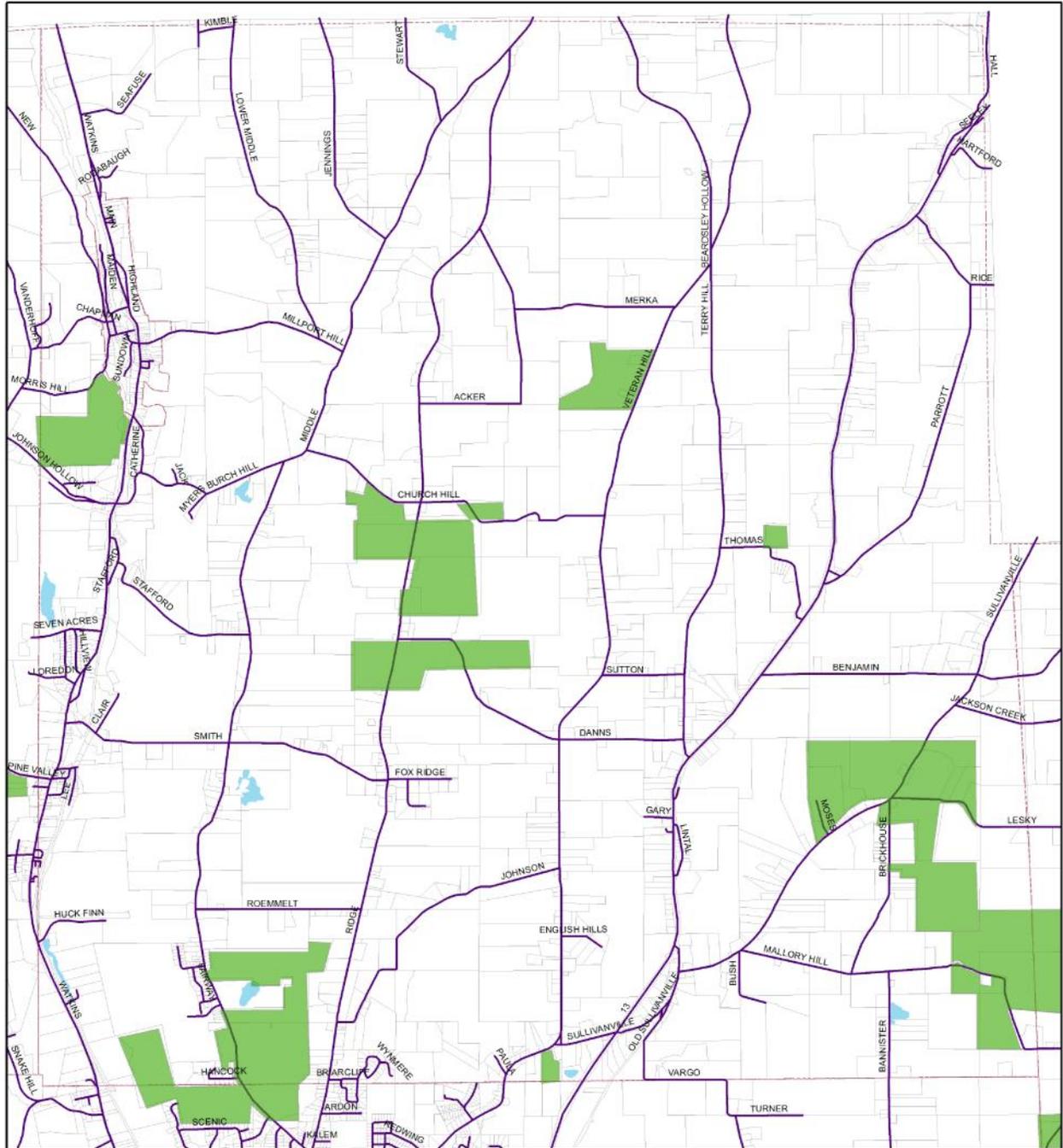
### ***POLICY:***

***Encourage a working relationship between farmers and nearby residents. Ensure that all private drinking wells are protected from potential contaminants.***

### **RECOMMENDATION:**

- 6a. Revise Town subdivision law to require all wells are shown on subdivision plats and lie a minimum of 100' from any property line. All wells shall meet the Standards for Water Wells as noted in Appendix 5-B of NYS Public Health Code and a greater distance can be required by Town Code Enforcement or County Health Department.**

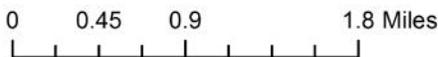
# Map 23: Agricultural Districts



**Town of Veteran  
Agriculture Districts  
Map**

**Legend**

- Chemung\_Ag\_District
- Roads
- Town Boundaries
- Lakes and Ponds
- Tax Parcels



Map Created 5/18/13

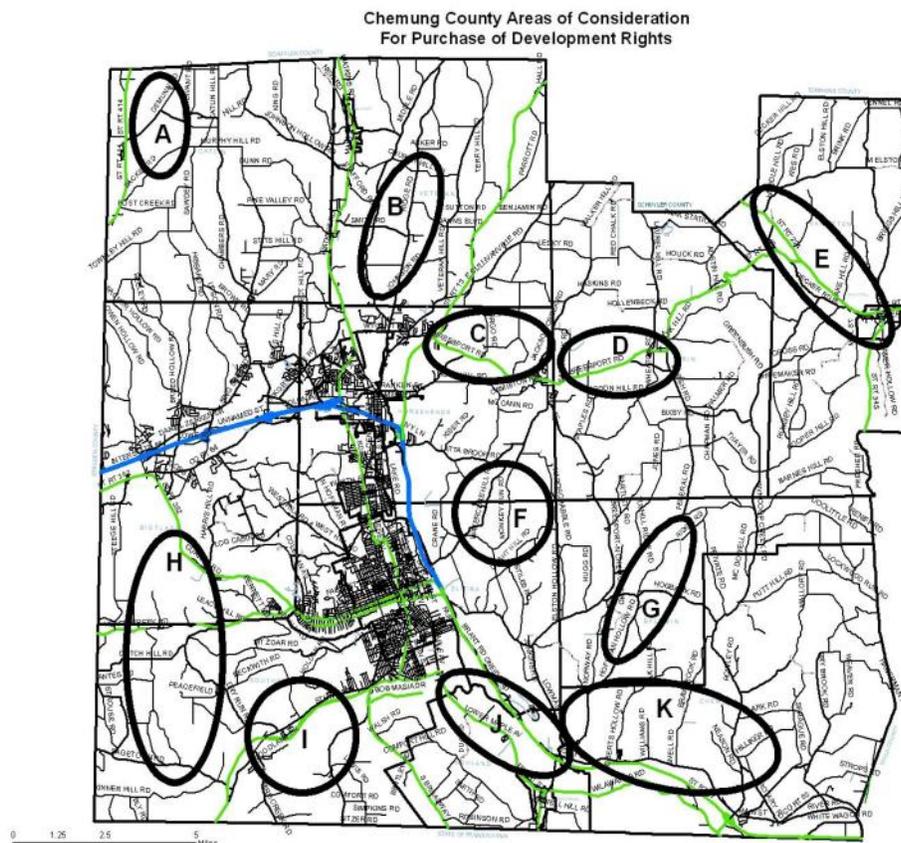
**POLICY:** *Encourage farmers to take advantage of the State Agricultural Districts.*

**RECOMMENDATION:**

- 6b. **Have a packet of information concerning Agricultural Districts in Chemung County and contact information for New York State Department of Agricultural and Markets available at Town Hall for any interested resident.**
- 6c. **Make training available yearly to the town boards and town assessor to learn more about Agricultural Districts.**
- 6d. **Publicize any training concerning Agricultural Districts to known landowners through mailings and Town Bulletin Board in Town Hall.**

In addition to Agricultural Districts, New York State Agriculture and Markets Law also provides Farmland Preservation Program that includes Purchase of Development Rights (PDR). Chemung County identified an area in the Town of Veteran to be considered for PDR (see Map 24, circle “B”). PDR is a program that would allow for New York State or a land trust to purchase the development rights of prime agricultural land. All existing land uses would be able to continue as is, but this would limit more intense development such as erecting commercial buildings and other more intense activities. Participation in the PDR program is voluntary and is one way the Town and County could pursue protection of our agricultural assets.

**Map 24: Chemung County Agricultural Areas of Consideration**



Across the region there are a number of agricultural resources available to local municipalities. In Chemung County, not only is there a County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board but there is also an active Soil and Water Conservation District and Cornell Cooperative Extension that both employ agriculture experts. These organizations often host training opportunities for local government officials and farmers. These groups work close with New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets as well as New York State Farm Bureau. Not only can technical assistance be provided by these groups, but access to information about agricultural loans and grants can also be provided by these groups.

***POLICY: Create a working relationship between the Town, the farmers within the Town and the many agricultural organizations that exist throughout the region.***

**RECOMMENDATION:**

- 6e. The Town Hall to have materials on a variety of agricultural programs to be available for residents and land owners to access. Offering the Town Hall for trainings targeted at local farmers.
- 6f. Appoint a member of the Town or farming community to report on Chemung County's Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board.
- 6g. Encourage the use of NYS Agricultural Environmental Management (AEM) program to help farmers identify and address water quality and quantity concerns on farms. Also provides farmers with access to technical assistance by the county Soil and Water Conservation District.

**Agri-business**

Agri-business can help ensure a farm continues to be profitable. To maintain and grow these types of businesses within the Town, local farms must also be maintained and grown to create the critical mass necessary to support farm businesses. Currently Veteran has one zone throughout the entire Town. With current zoning, agricultural resources may not be protected and agri-business may not be as strongly encouraged as multiple zones may allow (see more on Agri-business in Chapter 8).

***POLICY: Create zoning that best promotes agriculture and agri-business within the Town.***

**RECOMMENDATION:**

- 6h. Revise zoning law definitions to better define agricultural terms such as, "Farm Business", "Horse Farms", etc.
- 6i. Consider the addition of a business or industrial district to direct business and industrial growth to Route 14 and Route 13 while allowing agri-businesses in all districts (Residential, Business and Agriculture).

## **Land Use and Development Trends**

The Town and the Southern Tier Region are facing a few land use and development trends that may have an effect on agricultural resources within the Town. Some of these trends are:

- Highways
- Natural Gas Extraction
- Wind Farms

While all three of these trends are mostly governed by New York State, local zoning is considered when placement and modifications occur. This is all the more reason for the Town of Veteran to adopt more comprehensive zoning to help manage these developments to the extent possible.

### ***Highways***

The Town currently has State Route 13 and State Route 14 running the length of the Town. On both of these highways, there are some pockets of business and residential uses and mostly rural, open space the rest of the way. In addition, a major I-86 interchange is less than 3 miles away from the Town. While this may have no effect at this time, should significant growth to the region or mineral resource extraction occur, the Town of Veteran may begin to feel some impacts in the way of businesses related to this highway interchange (see more analysis of this in Chapter 8).

### ***Natural Gas Extraction***

Currently, New York State does not allow for high-volume hydraulic fracturing for natural gas extraction within the State. It is expected that this ban may soon be lifted. When this ban is lifted, certainly some of Chemung County will experience natural gas drilling and the Town of Veteran may experience new, unfamiliar developments related to the gas industry in the form of actual drilling, increased gravel mining or other ancillary services. These developments will affect farmland and farmers. Some farmers will own gas leases and may lease their land for natural gas extraction. The royalties from these leases may help to continue parts of their farming which they otherwise may not have been able to afford to continue. Yet leasing of farmland for natural gas extraction is a loss of farmland for farming activities and does not maintain the character of the Town. These conflicting land uses may be a challenge to manage should high-volume hydraulic fracturing for natural gas extraction be allowed in New York State.

### ***Wind Farms***

Like natural gas extraction, wind farms can provide much needed income to farmers within the Town, but also can reduce farmland and change the character of the Town. Working with the Chemung County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board, taking advantage of Agricultural Districts and updating the Town's zoning to reflect the desires of the residents will be vital to preserve the rural character.