

Strategies for Promoting Working Landscapes in North America and Europe

A Report for the **Vermont Council on Rural Development**

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Strategies for Promoting Working Landscapes in North America and Europe

Vermonters have a long tradition of attending to the land. In the mid-nineteenth century George Perkins Marsh's observations of environmental degradation in his hometown of Woodstock led to the first significant publication on human impacts on natural landscapes.¹ Today, in forum after forum, Vermonters continue to express concern not only for the health and composition of the land itself, but also the livelihoods of those who make their living working the land.² The state of Vermont has taken many important steps to thoughtfully manage landscape change, as manifest in Act 250, Act 200, the Billboard Act, the Current Use program, the Bottle Bill, town planning and many other initiatives. With the goal of assisting government, environmental, and planning leaders in their attempts to meet the on-going challenges of promoting a vibrant working landscape in Vermont, this report surveys strategies undertaken in other parts of the world. What can we learn from the tools developed in places similar to, but distant from Vermont? This report considers strategies used at multiple scales (state, province, country, and intergovernmental organizations) to promote agriculture, forestry, tourism, and rural community development, with the hope of providing a broader understanding of the many tools available to sustain the unique characteristics of working landscapes here in the state of Vermont.

This report is divided into five sections:

- 1) a definition of working landscapes and a review of the issues addressed in this report
- 2) an overview of planning tools used in North America and Europe
- 3) a survey of the literature comparing working landscape preservation in North America and Europe
- 4) a set of case studies from a number of different places including the states of Oregon and North Carolina, the Canadian province of Prince Edward Island, and several countries in Western Europe
- 5) a catalog of working landscape policy tools

¹ Marsh, George Perkins. 1864. *Man and Nature, or, Physical Geography as Modified by Human Action*. (republished 2003. Seattle and London: University of Washington Press).

² See for example: Vermont Council on Rural Development. 2009. "Imagining Vermont: Values and Visions for the Future"; Center for Social Science Research at Saint Michael's College. 2008. "Vermont in Transition: A Summary of Social, Economic and Environmental Trends" by Vince Bolduc, Ph.D and Herb Kessel, Ph.D; and University of Vermont Center for Rural Studies. "The Vermonter Poll", <http://crs.uvm.edu/vtpoll>.

Defining the Working Landscape

“When most people talk about the ‘Working Landscape’ they are referring to the land actively used in productive agriculture and forestry. Yet to many Vermonters, the working landscape also means additional public values it provides, including aesthetics, contributions to the tourism economy, and its central role in building a common sense of place and the Vermont quality of life. These values are all hard to quantify, but vital to the personal identity of Vermonters.”

This definition of what Vermonters mean when they name the ‘working landscape’ comes from research conducted by the Council for the Future of Vermont, published in 2009 in “Imagining Vermont: Values and Vision for the Future.” The term points to the unique environmental history of the state, in which agriculture—particularly sheep, dairy, haying, vegetable and orchard farming—as well as timber, forest products, and maple syrup production have sustained the extractive economy and shaped the natural landscape.³ Our particular assemblage of pasture, cropped land, hayfields and mixed forests are a product of these landscape activities. Farming and forestry practices helped share a distinctive settlement pattern of center villages, mill villages, station villages, and open lands.⁴

However, today’s agricultural and forested landscape is not a relic of the past; it is very much a contemporary, lived reality for those who farm, log, and reside in the small towns and villages that comprise the majority of the state’s land area. As Vermonters increasingly compete within national and global marketplaces, and as demands on land for development continue, property values rise, and our young people leave the state to make their lives elsewhere, many worry that the way of life that has formed Vermont’s landscape and culture is threatened. It is this concern that motivates research on innovative ways to encourage agriculture and forestry, promote tourism linked to these practices, and sustain local economies in small towns and villages.

To accomplish this task, we review the academic literature on open space planning and land conservation and also take a look at recent initiatives in places around the world, using phone interviews

³ See: Albers, Jan. 2000. *Hands on the Land: A History of the Vermont Landscape*. Rutland, VT: Orton Family Foundation; and Daniel, Alicia and Thor Hanson. 2001. “Remote, Rocky, Barren, Bushy Wild-woody Wilderness’: A Natural History of the Northeast”, in *Wilderness Comes Home: Rewilding the Northeast*, Christopher McGrory Klyza, ed. Hanover, NH: Middlebury College Press, University Press of New England.

⁴ For more on Vermont’s settlement pattern and cultural geography, see: Searls, Paul. 2006. *Two Vermonts: Geography and Identity, 1865-1910*. Hanover, NH: University Press of New England; and Harrison, B. 2006. *The View from Vermont: Tourism and the Making of an American Rural Landscape*. Lebanon, NH: University Press of New England.

and internet research. There are several planning terms related to working landscapes that are used in the literature. We begin by distinguishing these terms.

Definitions

- **‘Open Space’** is defined as “farmland and timberland, environmental resources such as wildlife habitat and wetlands, and a variety of other socially valued landscapes such as scenic sites, wilderness areas, historic and cultural resources, and recreation areas.”⁵
- **‘Urban Sprawl’** refers to residential and commercial development which tends to use a relatively large amount of land for the number of people it serves, is automobile-dependent, is comprised of low-density and non-contiguous housing units.⁶
- **‘Protected Landscapes’** are “lived-in, working landscapes, subject to a particular conservation scheme.”⁷
- For the purposes of this report, **‘Working Landscapes’** refers to areas of land that are actively used in agricultural and forestry production, and which may also support the associated livelihoods of tourism, outdoor recreation, the creative economy, and commerce in rural communities.⁸

These terms refer to planning practices whose aims or consequences overlap and impact each other. For example, while the intended goal of an urban growth boundary (UGB) may be to curb urban sprawl, it may in effect protect open lands beyond the UGB from development, therefore unintentionally conserving land for agriculture, forestry, or recreation. Likewise, open space protections, like zoning, can do the work of promoting working landscapes by limiting new housing development to large parcel sizes, such as 10 acre lots, therefore leaving acres of land ‘untouched’. However, zoning in and of itself does not promote any particular livelihood, it is simply a set of rules about how land can be developed (or not developed). Therefore, this report necessarily covers additional initiatives beyond zoning and land conservation, such as differential tax rates for productive activities, rural community development

⁵ Bengston, D. N., J. O. Fletcher, and K. C. Nelson. 2004. Public policies for managing urban growth and protecting open space: policy instruments and lessons learned in the United States *Landscape and Urban Planning* 69, 271-286, p. 272.

⁶ This is an adaptation of Burchell et al.’s 1998 definition, cited in: Bengston, D. N., J. O. Fletcher, and K. C. Nelson. 2004. Public policies for managing urban growth and protecting open space: policy instruments and lessons learned in the United States *Landscape and Urban Planning* 69, 271-286, p.271. (Burchell et al. citation is listed in the References at the end of the report.

⁷ Beresford and Phillips, 2000. p. 23, cited in: Hamin, E. M. 2002. Western European approaches to landscape protection: A review of the literature. *Journal of Planning Literature* 16(3): 339-358, p. 340. (Beresford and Phillips, 2000 is listed in the References at the end of this report.)

⁸ In other rural communities around the world, the working landscape may include fisheries, mining, energy production, and other natural resource-based industries, but as these do not pertain to Vermont, they are not included in Vermont’s working landscapes definition.

plans, and voluntary educational programs that support agriculture, forestry, and value-added production.

Concern for Open Spaces and Public Support for Protected Landscapes in the United States and Vermont

Concern about the conversion of rural lands to developed lots and fragmented parcels is expressed by many: scholars publishing in academic journals, planners hashing out municipal development, and by citizens gathering at Town Meeting and local events. A recent article on national forest policy reports that the US Forest Service has identified loss of open space as one of four core problems that threaten the health of national forests.⁹ Indeed, the conversion of rural land to developed land has increased pace in recent decades, both nationally and in Vermont.¹⁰ And, as reported in “Imagining Vermont: Values and Vision for the Future,” Vermonters articulate an understanding of the value of conserving open space while also expressing anxiety over gentrification of the landscape.

While it appears many different stakeholders see loss of open space as a problem, what propels government leaders and citizens into policy change? A nation-wide analysis of public open space initiatives in the United States identified four key conditions and societal perceptions associated with successful open space preservation campaigns.¹¹ These four factors are:

- Proximity to urban growth areas
- Areas with development pressure
- Higher income and higher educational attainment areas
- Communities with traditional landscapes

To summarize, those communities located near growing urban areas or that have open spaces with long and culturally meaningful productive activities, and that therefore visually and imaginatively ‘saw’ their landscapes as threatened were more likely to support some kind of public open space protection scheme. Furthermore, those communities with higher income or education levels were also more likely to vote in favor of landscape protections.

⁹ Nie, M. and C. Miller. 2010. National forest management and private land development: Historical, political, and planning considerations. *Society & Natural Resources* 23(7): 669 — 678.

¹⁰ For national and state figures, see White, E. M., A. T. Morzillo, R. J. Alig. 2009. Past and projected rural land conversion in the US at the state, regional, and national levels. *Landscape and Urban Planning* 89(1-2): 27-48; and for a discussion of Vermont trends, see Kujawa, R. “Land Use” in Center for Social Science Research at Saint Michael’s College. 2008. “Vermont in Transition: A Summary of Social, Economic and Environmental Trends” by Vince Bolduc, Ph.D and Herb Kessel, Ph.D, pp. 33-40.

¹¹ Kline, J. 2006. Public demand for preserving local open space. *Society and Natural Resources* 19(7): 645-659.

Vermont fits this profile in a number of ways. For example, there are areas of the state, such as Chittenden County, which have experienced urban growth as well as low density residential development in peripheral towns. Vermont is located close enough to major urban centers such as Boston, Hartford, New York City, and Montreal to be exposed to how those areas have ‘sprawled’ over time, and also for Vermont to serve as the site of those urban residents’ vacation homes. Vermonters also have relatively high educational attainment, as compared to residents of other states.¹² And, the ongoing traditions of farming, logging, and living rural lives are meaningful to many. However, as the contentious debates over the proposed arrival of Wal-Mart stores (first in Williston and then in St Albans) have shown, Vermonters are not unanimous in our values or visions for the future. When it comes to selecting and implementing possible programs, zoning, and policies to promote working landscapes, there will be many important and vigorous discussions.

The goal of this report is to present options—initiatives that other communities around the world have implemented—so that future discussions on Vermont’s rural landscapes and livelihoods will benefit from the experiences of our rural neighbors elsewhere.



¹² Vermont ranked 6th in the nation for adults holding a bachelor’s degree, as reported in: Center for Social Science Research at Saint Michael’s College. 2008. “Vermont in Transition: A Summary of Social, Economic and Environmental Trends” by Vince Bolduc, Ph.D and Herb Kessel, Ph.D, p.111, citing data from “Pulse of Vermont: Quality of Life Study 2005,” Vermont Business Roundtable, Bolduc and Kessel.

Working Landscape Planning and Policy Tools

There are four categories of landscape and rural development planning tools in use today. Rarely does one community, be it at the local, national, or international scale, use just one instrument; typically several are packaged together. (Here in Vermont we already employ several tools including town planning and zoning, Act 250, Current Use tax valuation, private and public land conservation, and public education programs.) Below is a brief description of each kind of planning tool.

Acquisition

The oldest method to control what takes place on a piece of land is to purchase it. This is also the most expensive method. Acquisition strategies include public purchase of land for parks and wildlife reserves, public purchase of agricultural land for land banks, private land trust purchases, the purchase of temporary conservation easements, and the purchase of development rights by public or private organizations. Acquisitions are done by non-governmental organizations (such as the Nature Conservancy), governments, and the private sector. Money to fund programs is raised through private fundraising as well as public referenda in the form of property taxes, bonds, sales taxes, income taxes, and private donations to public programs. As stated earlier, the broadest public support for open space preservation is in areas that see *population pressure* and *higher income* communities.¹³

Regulation

A regulatory approach involves placing legal restrictions on what can be done on a parcel of land. Strategies include mandatory zoning, such as agricultural and forest district zoning, urban growth boundaries, greenbelts, minimum building lot sizes, and commercial business restrictions.¹⁴ Colloquially understood as the “stick” approach, violators of zoning may incur a financial penalty, legal action, or in some cases, can be mandated to remove buildings or repair damaged ecosystems. Town zoning in Vermont is an example of the regulatory approach.

A second form of regulation is voluntary compliance programs (an example of this follows in the section on North Carolina’s Voluntary Agricultural Districts). In these

¹³ Kline, J. 2006. Public demand for preserving local open space. *Society and Natural Resources* 19(7): 645-659.

Interestingly, areas with very high incomes do not tend to support public referendum for open space protection, presumably because residents of these areas can afford their ‘own’ private open spaces, such as large property holdings, or memberships to country clubs.

¹⁴ “Urban growth boundaries are designed to concentrate growth in and around cities and are characterized by a mapped boundary that defines areas where residential and commercial development is and is not allowed.” (from: M. Nielsen-Pincus, C. S. Goldberg, A. Pocewicz, J. E. Force, L. Watts, P. Morgan and L. Vierling. 2010. Predicted effects of residential development on a northern Idaho landscape under alternative growth management and land protection policies. *Landscape and Urban Planning* 94: 255-263, p.256.

programs, participants opt in to a set of restrictions, in exchange for some kind of benefit like access to reduced tax rates, entry into educational or business assistance programs, or the personal satisfaction of participating in a program with perceived social and environmental value, like soil and water quality protection. Often, disenrollment from these programs entails a penalty such as the requirement to pay back some of the reduced property taxes, but these penalties tend to be less stringent than the standard regulatory penalties.

Third, “right to farm” bills are regulatory tools. Usually legislated at the state level, their purpose is to protect farmers from nuisance suits regarding noise from farm machinery or the scent of manure spreading and silage brought by neighbors, among other complaints.

Incentives

In contrast to the “stick” of regulatory systems, incentive programs are the “carrot” approach. Incentive programs provide benefits to farmers and forest products producers, landowners and/or business owners for good stewardship practices. These programs might involve providing awards to outstanding businesses, and offering competitive grants programs for innovative, socially beneficial, or ecologically sensitive practices, or lower property tax rates for land in active production.

Information and education initiatives

The logic behind informational and educational programs is that information on improvements in agriculture, forestry, and economic development will result in better stewardship of resources and build stronger businesses. Much of Extension programming, from business education to marketing websites to invasive species workshops, fits within this category. Curiously, the planning literature seems to have little to say about educational campaigns as a planning tool, however, educational campaigns hold much potential to share ideas with the public, and even encourage support for new policy initiatives aimed at working landscape promotion.¹⁵

¹⁵ For more detailed information on policies and programs, see Bengston, D. N., J. O. Fletcher, and K. C. Nelson. 2004. Public policies for managing urban growth and protecting open space: policy instruments and lessons learned in the United States. *Landscape and Urban Planning* 69: 271-286.

Analysis of Planning Policies in the United States

Bengston et al.'s 2004 analysis of US public planning policies came to several important conclusions which are helpful to this survey of working landscapes initiatives.¹⁶ First, the researchers found that there is too little research into the effectiveness of planning policy. Simply put, there is a lack of empirical investigation of initiatives that have been put into place 'on the ground'. Therefore, it is difficult to ascertain which policies have been successful, by any definition. They call for further research of this kind.¹⁷

Secondly, the researchers conclude that while there are many policy tools available, the administrative efficiency and effective implementation of any given policy is more important than the general kind of policy tool. Next, the use of multiple policy instruments, crafted to work well together, increases the effectiveness of all planning efforts, and also reduces unintended negative consequences. They call for both 'horizontal' and 'vertical' coordination amongst groups and agencies. In other words, all levels of government and agencies (from local to federal) should be aligned, and, neighboring communities should also coordinate policies together. Finally, meaningful stakeholder participation throughout the planning process is crucial to a policy's success.

In summary:

- More empirical research into the outcomes of planning policy is needed
- Administrative efficiency and effective policy implementation is more important than the general kind of policy
- Use more than one policy tool, but be sure they are coordinated
- All levels of government and organizations should be aligned, and neighboring communities should also work to coordinate their planning policies
- Involve everyone. Meaningful stakeholder participation throughout the planning process and implementation is foundation of success

¹⁶ Bengston, D. N., J. O. Fletcher, and K. C. Nelson. 2004. Public policies for managing urban growth and protecting open space: policy instruments and lessons learned in the United States. *Landscape and Urban Planning* 69: 271-286.

¹⁷ Of course, there is some evaluative research in the literature, for example Dawkins and Nelson conducted an analysis of urban growth planning outcomes, and Pincus et al. provide an example of the way modeling can be used to predict how different policy instruments may impact development patterns, before the policies are put into place. Williams et al. reviewed the success of Tennessee's Forest Greenbelt Program and found that too few people knew about the program and the program ultimately fails to protect forestlands. See: Dawkins, C. J. and A. Nelson. 2003. State growth management programs and central-city revitalization', *Journal of the American Planning Association*, 69: (4) 381-396; M. Nielsen-Pincus, C. S. Goldberg, A. Pocewicz, J. E. Force, L. Watts, P. Morgan and L. Vierling. 2010. Predicted effects of residential development on a northern Idaho landscape under alternative growth management and land protection policies. *Landscape and Urban Planning* 94: 255-263; and Williams, E.D., R. R. Gottfried, C. D. Brockett and J.P. Evans. 2004. An integrated analysis of the effectiveness of Tennessee's Forest Greenbelt Program. *Landscape and Urban Planning* 69(2-3): 287-297.

Others investigating working landscapes also emphasize the recommendation that landscape conservation initiatives ought to be comprised of a blend of policies. Writing about conservation of forest lands, Mortimer suggests a mix of regulatory controls over forest management, voluntary regulatory programs and financial incentive programs.¹⁸ Similarly, Nie and White describe a policy ‘toolbox’ or ‘portfolio’ approach to forest protections.¹⁹

Comparing American to Canadian and European Working Landscape Policies

The remainder of the report considers initiatives undertaken in places beyond Vermont, including international locations. It is important to bear in mind that every state, province, country, and regional organization works within a particular geographic, political and cultural context. What proves effective in one setting may not be possible in another. There are a few key social values and laws at work in the United States that differentiate it from other countries and for this reason, it is important to take note of them here.

Private Property Rights and ‘Taking’

Property rights in the United States are quite different from property rights elsewhere. In particular, the ‘takings’ issue sets American property rights apart from others. Alterman explains, “In applying land-use controls, American planners must contend with the ‘takings issue’—the constitutional limitation on regulation under which the courts can rule it to be tantamount to a taking of property without just compensation.”²⁰ Describing how the takings issue impacts forest conservation, Mortimer states, “The degree to which a government may adversely impact private real property by occupying the property (physical taking) or limiting its uses by the enactment of law (regulatory taking) permeates the future development for conservation measures for privately owned forestland.”²¹ Using private land for a public purpose, such as a walking trail or applying zoning restrictions on property in the US can be interpreted as an uncompensated taking, while in Europe and Canada there is the recognition that the public or the state has the right to regulate and permit the public good on private land. Planning regulation is generally much more accepted in Europe than in the United States, and the notion that landowners have the right develop their land as they wish does not exist in the same way.²²

¹⁸ Mortimer, M. J. 2008. Private property rights and selective private forest conservation: Could a Nordic hybrid policy address a United States problem? *Environmental Management* 41: 640-653.

¹⁹ Nie, M. and C. Miller. 2010. National forest management and private land development: Historical, political, and planning considerations. *Society & Natural Resources* 23(7): 669 — 678.

²⁰ Alterman, Rachelle. 1997. The challenge of farmland preservation: Lessons from a six-nation comparison. *Journal of the American Planning Association* 63(2): 220-243, p. 224.

²¹ Mortimer, M. J. 2008. Private property rights and selective private forest conservation: Could a Nordic hybrid policy address a United States problem? *Environmental Management* 41: 640-653.

²² See Hamin, E. M. 2002. Western European approaches to landscape protection: A review of the literature. *Journal of Planning Literature* 16(3): 339-358

This points to two separate conditions: the legal takings issues which must be considered in the US context and also a cultural difference in the way that land and land ownership is viewed in European countries and Canada.

Scale

Scale emerges as an important concept in two respects. First, planning takes place at varying levels of government across international contexts. For example, much of Canada's land use planning is directed by the province, but in Europe planning initiatives tend to be multi-scalar, meaning that planning happens at the local, national, and international (European Union) levels. In the United States, with the exception of a few states such as Oregon, planning policy and regulation is managed and enforced at the local, municipal level. This fact makes it difficult to compare national level programs. How does one compare an agricultural initiative in Italy that happens to get some of its funding from the European Union's Common Agricultural Policy, to zoning initiatives in Vermont that must be achieved through town planning commissions and select boards.

The issue of scale has been noted in the planning literature, as evidenced by forest policy researchers' call for collaborative and 'tiered' planning processes across national, regional, and local levels, and Bengstrom et al.'s contention that successful open space and urban growth policies are coordinated at both the vertical and horizontal levels.²³

Scale and Modeling Outcomes

The scale at which planning is articulated and envisioned is also critical. The promotion of biodiversity, retention of wildlife habitat, corridors and flyways, maintenance of contiguous forest or farmland, and construction of recreational pathways are typical priorities for open space conservationists and those concerned with the physical geography underpinning agricultural landscapes. Planning conducted in isolation at the local level is challenged to produce these contiguous elements of the green infrastructure unless they are working with the planning commissions of neighboring towns. Further, as Huber et al. state, the regional scale of ecological processes and patterns "may not be effectively captured through the combination of conservation plans derived at the local level, where land use planning frequently takes place."²⁴ Further, they point out that regional planning also misses core ecological features at the intraregional scale. Does conservation of farmland in one town have the same ecological, scenic, and economic impact as the conservation of farmland in a contiguous set of towns?

²³ See Nie, M. and C. Miller. 2010. National forest management and private land development: Historical, political, and planning considerations. *Society & Natural Resources* 23(7): 669 — 678 for US Forest Service policy recommendations and Bengston, D. N., J. O. Fletcher, and K. C. Nelson. 2004. Public policies for managing urban growth and protecting open space: policy instruments and lessons learned in the United States. *Landscape and Urban Planning* 69: 271-286 for open space and urban growth public policy analysis.

²⁴ Huber, P. R., S. E. Greco, and J. H. Thorne. 2010. Spatial scale effects on conservation network design: Trade-offs and omissions in regional versus local scale planning. *Landscape Ecology* 25(5): 683-695, p.683.

Finally, as this report considers the planning initiatives undertaken by other states, provinces, and countries, it is important to bear in mind that we are comparing entities with disparate and diverse administrative, legal, and financial resources, another set of scalar differences.

Differing Working Landscape Goals

This report casts a wide net over policies and practices that in the most general way promote, enhance, and protect working landscapes in order to provide an array of planning possibilities to Vermont leaders. However, it should be acknowledged that the rural community development goals underlying some of the European Union programs, for example, differ from the goals of that motivated the state of Oregon to institute urban growth boundaries around its cities. The initiatives presented here are an eclectic bunch.



Planning Examples from the United States

OREGON

Oregon's Statewide Planning Model

Oregon, a state with large agricultural and timber sectors, low population density, and a predominantly urban-based population, began statewide planning in 1973. Since that time the planning process has undergone revision but has remained a key state function.

Oregon's multiple planning instruments include:

- Exclusive agricultural and forest zoning
- Differential farm and forest tax rates
- Right to farm laws
- Urban growth boundaries (and Portland's new [2010] Urban and Rural Reserve designation)
- Incentive programs like "Oregon Agricultural Opportunities Fund"
- Educational programming and technical assistance offered by non-profits and university extension offices

Assessments of Oregon's Planning

Critics of Oregon's planning process assert that zoning constitutes a "taking" of property and that land is "mis-zoned", in other words, given the wrong designation.²⁵ Others believe that the present zoning and urban planning processes do not go far enough to prevent farmland conversion to development.²⁶ A study published in 2003 suggested that states such as Oregon that have state-wide planning are successful in concentrating housing growth in urban centers.²⁷

Oregon's Statewide Goals

The foundation of Oregon's statewide planning process is a set of 19 Statewide Goals. State law requires local governments to adopt a Comprehensive Plan and supporting zoning ordinances that adhere to the 19 Statewide Goals. These goals include categories for: 1. Citizen Involvement; 2. Land Use Planning; 3. Agricultural Lands; 4. Forest Lands; 5. Natural Resources, Scenic and Historic Areas, and Open Spaces. Most of these goals have attached guidelines however, the guidelines are not mandatory. Local plans

²⁵ 'Oregonians in Action' (<http://www.oia.org/>) is an example of a landowner group that criticizes planning as taking.

²⁶ For example, the organization '1,000 Friends of Oregon' (<http://www.friends.org/>) contends that Oregon's planning should be strengthened.

²⁷ See: Dawkins, C. J. and A. Nelson. 2003. State growth management programs and central-city revitalization', *Journal of the American Planning Association*, 69: (4) 381-396.

are submitted to the Department of Land Conservation and Development (DLCD), but the DLCD neither writes Comprehensive Plans nor grants variances to the local plans.²⁸ Local governments maintain the ability to draft their own plans and ordinances, and to hear calls for appeals or waivers of the ordinances.

By way of example, the ***Agricultural Lands*** guidelines state that agricultural and forested lands should be conserved for agricultural purposes, that land use activities that negatively impact agricultural activities on this land should be limited, and that local/county governments should inventory and zone agricultural lands and set parcel limit sizes.

The DLCD is directed by the ***Land Use Conservation and Development Commission*** that is comprised of seven unsalaried volunteer members, who are appointed by Governor, confirmed by the Senate, and serve a four year term. The DLCD has a headquarters in the state capital and also has small regional offices throughout the state. The department is also served by the *Land Use Board of Appeals* (LUBA) – a three member (‘referees’) committee who hears land use decision appeals.

Other Programs of Interest in Oregon: Agriculture

Oregon’s agricultural community is assisted by the Oregon Department of Agriculture and a large Oregon Extension Service (36 offices across the state and 90 FTE faculty). Programs of note include:

- The Department of Agriculture’s ***“Oregon Agricultural Opportunities Fund”*** – a competitive funding program for cities, county and local governments, private non-profits, and consortia of these who are working to enhance and extend agribusiness, and promote agribusiness that promotes Oregon products.
- The Department of Agriculture’s ***“Agripedia”***, an on-line resource guide to statistics, regulations, worker’s information, farm issues, taxes, marketing, certification, inspection, safety, water quality, invasive plants, animals.²⁹
- Oregon State University’s ***Extension Service*** provides information, training, and educational programs to forestry, homeowner, youth, small farm operator, and marine interest groups. (See the forestry programs highlighted in following section.)

²⁸ Department of Land Conservation and Development (<http://www.oregon.gov/LCD/goals.shtml>).

²⁹ Agripedia is available at: http://oregon.gov/ODA/pub_agripedia.shtml.

Other Programs of Interest in Oregon: Forestry, Timber, and Non-Timber Forest Products

The forest sector is the second-largest contributor to Oregon's economy. State agencies, the Oregon State University (OSU) Extension service, and nonprofit organizations all provide resources to Oregonians about forest enterprises and opportunities. OSU's Extension service provides some interesting resources and information clearinghouses regarding timber and non-timber forest enterprises. Programs of note include:

- Oregon Department of Forestry's Climate Change committee is working with Western Climate Initiative to develop a carbon cap-and-trade program.
- Oregon State University Extension's Oregon Forest Industry Directory is an online resource where producers and suppliers of timber and nontimber forest products and services can find each other, network, and join in discussion forums. This directory was created in response to reported difficulties in locating potential customers for niche timber products. It lists over 1700 forest-based businesses and searches can be tailored for users' specific needs and wood or NTFP species and includes a classified section where people can post one-time needs or products (like a bumper crop of mushrooms).
- Master Woodland Manager (MWM) program and Women Owning Woodlands Similar to the Master Gardener and Stewardship of the Urban Landscape (SOUL) programs offered in Vermont by UVM Extension and State agencies, the nearly 20-year-old MWM program targets small woodland owners and provides them 85 hours of training in best management practices and stewardship of family forests. In return, MWMs volunteer at least 85 hours in their own communities, providing guidance to other woodland owners, giving educational workshops, and so on. Annual events like a Resource Fair, an MWM Mini-College, and various regional property tours, demonstrations, and workshops build the network of forest stewards. Women Owning Woodlands seems to be more of an online network in Oregon, rather than a specific program, but it does host some one-off workshops. Both programs have a social networking (blogging and/or Twitter) presence.

Other Programs of Interest in Oregon: Tax Incentives for Forestland

Oregon has two main kinds of tax incentives for forestland owners: the Forestland program and the Small Tract Forestland program. The Oregon Department of Forestry website states,

“Most property in Oregon is valued and taxed based on real market value—the price for which land would sell on the open market. Because forestlands are important to Oregon's economic and environmental health, Oregon's private forestlands are taxed differently than other kinds of property. Recognizing

this, the Oregon Legislature established a special assessment program for forestland. Currently, timber is not taxed through the property tax system.”³⁰

Forestland program: This program is for land owners with at least two acres of forest. (Owners with fewer than 10 acres or more than 5,000 acres are required by law to remain in the Forestland Program.) The land is taxed at a timberland rate each year.³¹

Small Tract Forestland: Landowners of 10-5000 acres can opt to be part of the Small Tract Forestland program, in which land is taxed at 20% the timberland rate, but then owners pay a Severance Tax on timber harvests. This program benefits those who have fewer timber harvests or longer rotations between harvests, as well as longer-term land ownership. Both programs require approval from a state/county Stewardship Forester. This is a slightly different model than Vermont’s Current Use model.

NORTH CAROLINA

North Carolina: Encouraging Working Landscapes through Voluntary Agricultural Districts

North Carolina’s agricultural and forestry communities face the same categories of pressures as Vermont farmers and forest products producers: conversion of land to development, an aging farming population, demand for cost-sharing programs exceeds available funding, and high property values.³² Over the years, North Carolina leaders have assembled a number of tax, conservation, cost-sharing, right to farm and practice forestry protections, and educational programs to address these issues. These are explained in a document called the Working Lands Strategy (see footnote 30), which was envisioned at a Working Lands Summit which included many federal and state organizations, including Carolina Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts, Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Farm Bureau, among others. This Working Lands Summit followed a successful Forests Policies Summit. Today numerous agencies coordinate programming ranging from Conservation Tax credits to Climate Change workshops, and funding for these initiatives come from a variety of sources. For the purposes of this report, we focus on just a few of their key programs.

Voluntary Agricultural Districts

Authorized by legislation in 1985, North Carolina’s Voluntary Agricultural Districts (VADs) enabled counties to pass ordinances which triggered policies designed to protect and enhance agriculture as well as encourage a less conflictual relationship between farmers and development. An agricultural trust fund, which has received varying levels of funding, was established with General Appropriation funds in

³⁰ Oregon Department of Forestry. 2010. *Oregon’s Forest Tax Programs*.
<http://www.oregon.gov/DOR/TIMBER/index.shtml>.

³¹ The Oregon Department of Forestry website explains their formulae for determining tax rates at this web address: http://www.oregon.gov/DOR/TIMBER/2004_choosing.shtml.

³² North Carolina Working Lands Strategy Plan. 2006. Document obtained from Jerry Dorsett, Working Lands Coordinator, North Carolina, Department of Environment and Natural Resources

1986. In 2005 the N.C. General Assembly modified and extended the trust fund into the N.C. Agricultural Development and Farmland Preservation Trust Fund. Its goals include supporting the purchase of conservation easements, supporting public and private enterprise development programs for the agricultural community, and funding conservation efforts.³³ Linked with the NC current use program and a Right-to-Farm approach, VADs enhanced the visibility of agriculture. The establishment of a VAD also created a county-scale consultative body which may be engaged in other planning/development regulatory processes. A 2004 report on the program by the American Farmland Trust characterizes the program in this way:

“Authorized by the North Carolina General Assembly in the 1985 Farmland Preservation Enabling Act (61:106-738) and implemented at the county level, VADs form partnerships between farmers, county commissioners and land use planners. Landowners receive a set of benefits in exchange for restricting development on their land for a specific time period. They establish a quantifiable presence for farmers in counties with active farming communities, raise public awareness of agricultural activity and help leaders plan future development that will support and encourage the continued viability of local agriculture.”³⁴

Enhanced VADs

Following statewide policy development processes related to both agriculture and forestry, the VAD policy was extended to allow counties to pass ordinances which declared them as “Enhanced” VADs. This enabling legislation was passed in 2004. The Enhancement allowed farms in the designated counties access to additional state resources, particularly in the cost-share programs of the state and technical assistance but in return required farmers to agree to more durable and lengthier restrictions on the non-agricultural use of their land. The state cost share program requires a match from county government. This is graduated based on a category-based assessment of development pressure. Counties with the most development pressure do not have to match cost-share funds. It should be noted that Enhanced VADs allow for a proportion of income for an individual farm to be from non-farm activities (up to 25%).³⁵

³³ See the N.C. Agricultural Development and Farmland Preservation Trust Fund website for more information: <http://www.ncadfp.org/index.htm>.

³⁴ Farmland Information Center. 2004. North Carolina Voluntary Agricultural Districts: A Progress Report. http://www.farmlandinfo.org/documents/29926/Voluntary_Agriculture_Districts.pdf

³⁵ North Carolina’s Voluntary Agriculture District brochure: <http://www.ncadfp.org/documents/VADBro.pdf>.

The 'Toolbox' Clearinghouse Model

State-wide policy summits on forestry and working landscapes in North Carolina have led to a broader consideration of policies that influence the viability of rural economies and working land.³⁶ Several aspects of this address the need for “clearing house” approaches to policies related to working landscapes policy. The VADs are linked with state planning by design. The web-based “One N.C. Naturally Toolbox” website is one example of this. This website offers links to VADs materials, taxation information, conservation programs, climate change workshops and a host of related resources.³⁷

Grouping Resources: Family Farm Innovation Fund

In early August of 2010, North Carolina’s Governor Beverly Purdue announced the institution of the “Family Farm Innovation Fund”. The fund is the result of the partnering of five state and federal programs who together will provide \$18.4 million in assistance to farmers. The partners include the U.S. Department of Agriculture Office of Rural Development, the N.C. Farm Bureau, the Rural Advancement Fund International-USA and N.C. Market Ready (a program of N.C. State University College of Agriculture and Life Sciences and N.C. Cooperative Extension).

The combined programs aim to:

- Lower energy costs or implement renewable energy projects
- Develop and implement value-added production
- Develop other new sources of farm income

According to the 16 page booklet released at the time of the Governor’s announcement, the programs are expected to provide grants for up to 1,500 farmers and assist another 2,400 farmers with training on energy efficiency.³⁸ The funding comes from existing programs funding, bolstered by a new \$1 million state appropriation (administered by the N.C. Rural Economic Development Center) and \$1 million in matching funds from the N. C. Tobacco Trust Fund Commission. Examples of grant projects include energy assessments for farm buildings, community initiatives to diversity agriculture, assistance with grant writing, feasibility and marketing studies, and energy generation projects.

³⁶ For example, see the Implementation Strategy for 2006-2011

³⁷ The web address for the One N.C. Naturally website is: http://www.onencnaturally.org/pages/WL_Toolbox.html.

³⁸ Family Farm Innovation Fund: Announcing Investments in North Carolina Agriculture. August 2, 2010. Posted on North Carolina Rural Economic Development Center website: <http://www.ncruralcenter.org/images/PDFs/AAC/ageventbooklet072310printtest.pdf>.

Provincial Planning in Canada

In Canada, landuse planning efforts take place at the provincial level. A review of American, Canadian, and European farmland preservation programs explains that provincial planning shows the effects of the different political parties' ideologies.³⁹ For example, in the 1970s, 80s and 90s, when Ontario was led by the Progressive Conservative Party, decentralized planning authority was given to local government. Yet Saskatchewan's socialist NDP instituted a public land banking program to purchase farmland for lease back to farmers who could not afford to purchase land. And, Quebec constructed a highly centralized, rural-oriented province-wide zoning plan, overseen by a separate administrative structure. Comparisons between planning schemes in Canada and the United States are difficult to make, not only because there are various levels of planning authority in the mix but because property rights and the amount of publicly owned land (Crown land and provincial land in Canada vs federal and state lands in the US) differ greatly as well. In fact, one researcher chose not to include Canada in his study of forestlands conservation because so much of Canadian forestlands is publicly owned, while in the US, Finland and Sweden, forests are predominately in private ownership.⁴⁰ Nevertheless, Canadian planning efforts, in particular developments in the province of Prince Edward Island, can be instructive to the Vermont context.

Prince Edward Island's Comprehensive Rural Action Plan

Geographically and culturally, the province of Prince Edward Island, located on an island in the Canadian Maritimes, is remarkably similar to Vermont. While its population and areal extent are both about a quarter of the size of Vermont's population and territory, it has a mainly rural-dwelling population and low population density which makes its settlement pattern similar to Vermont's. PEI struggles to keep small schools open due to low enrollments. Access to high-speed internet services is limited. PEI, like Vermont, relies heavily on agricultural exports, tourism, and some high-tech manufacturing. PE Islanders report that their identities are based on the Island as a rural place with small communities.⁴¹

In response to these challenges, PEI has recently undergone a review that matches closely with the "Council on the Future of Vermont" process. PEI's provincial government surveyed residents, interviewed leaders, and conducted focus groups with stakeholder parties on the topics of rural life, livelihoods, primary industry and tourism. The Prime Minister's office subsequently wrote a **Rural Action Plan** based on these findings. The Rural Action Plan is an ambitious undertaking, identifying forty action steps, grouped within seven key goals in agriculture, fishing, broadband access, business development, biofuels, and land use planning. The

³⁹ Alterman, Rachelle. 1997. The challenge of farmland preservation: Lessons from a six-nation comparison. *Journal of the American Planning Association* 63(2): 220-243.

⁴⁰ Mortimer, M. J. 2008. Private property rights and selective private forest conservation: Could a Nordic hybrid policy address a United States problem? *Environmental Management* 41: 640-653.

⁴¹ Rural Development PEI. *Rural Action Plan: A Rural Economic Development Strategy for Prince Edward Island*. Department of Fisheries, Aquaculture and Rural Development. Montague, PEI, Canada. <http://www.gov.pe.ca/fard/ruraldevelopment>.

elements of the plan were rolled out in late 2009 and 2010. While it is far too early to assess the progress of these initiatives, some of their plans bear consideration for the Vermont context.

The action steps are centered on the development of Rural Action Centers. Kim Klein, an employee of the Department of Fisheries, Aquaculture, and Rural Development, explained that in the past it has been very time-consuming for citizens seeking information on assistance with agriculture, for example, to find the pertinent information, as some programs are run by the federal government, others by the province or private groups. Rural Action Centers will physically group the offices of agencies with related missions, therefore creating efficiencies and easier information transfer. These Rural Action Centers will be located throughout the island. A recent press release announced the opening of the first centers in PEI:

“Rural Action Centres will be client-focused, partnerships between multiple Federal, Provincial and non-government organizations that are focused on business and community development services. A Memorandum of Understanding is being developed to articulate the principles and priorities of this innovative partnership that has been designed to facilitate and accelerate the pace of development in rural areas of Prince Edward Island. All services in the Rural Action Centres will be coordinated through a cooperative service model to ensure complete and seamless access to government support development programs for entrepreneurs, business people and community groups.”⁴²

The funding for the Rural Action Centers and for most of the action steps comes from redirecting existing federal and provincial funds, and gaining efficiencies from grouping various units together.

A second significant development associated with the Rural Action Plan will be the establishment of a Land Use Commissioner’s office and province-wide land use planning and zoning. Up until this point, any land use planning that existed was accomplished at the local level. Many small towns did not have the resources to undertake planning and therefore 70% of the island had no land-use plan. During the research phase, residents expressed concerns about “ribbon development” along roadways (what Vermonters refer to as “strip development”) and the loss of coastal farmland to housing developments.

The provincial planning process, called “New Foundations” will be housed by the Department of Finance and Municipal Affairs and will be constructed with citizen input.⁴³

⁴² Prince Edward Island Department of Fisheries, Aquaculture and Rural Development website, July 12, 2010 news release, “Rural Action Centres One Step Closer to Opening Across Prince Edward Island Thanks to Federal and Provincial Support”, <http://www.gov.pe.ca/fard>.

⁴³ Data and information provided by a phone interview with Kim Klein, PEI Department of Fisheries, Aquaculture, and Rural Development, May 2010. Klein explained that in the mid 20th-century, many homeowners in PEI had to

The Rural Action Plan takes a comprehensive view of natural resource-based industries, tourism, and rural community development. It sees the preservation of landscape and rural ways of life as interlocking with rural development. The PEI Department of Agriculture website states, “As outlined in the 2008 Speech from the Throne, the Rural Action Plan will bring a rural lens to all government policies, helping to ensure that primary industries remain an integral and growing part of the Prince Edward Island economy and its rural communities.”⁴⁴ The wording from a few of the Plan’s Seven Key Goals is evidence of this rural lens:

- **Goal 1:** *To create a sound basis for rural businesses to grow, for new ones to be formed and for new sectors to emerge.*
- **Goal 2:** *To enable the growth of innovative, competitive and sustainable primary sectors, in order to ensure that they remain pillars of the rural economy and community for generations to come.*
- **Goal 3:** *To augment rural areas of Prince Edward Island as tourist destinations; to expand and grow products, such as festivals and events, that complement the primary sectors and strengthen local culture, while increasing visitations Island-wide.*

In addition to setting broad Goals and articulating Action Steps for each, the Plan also lists Measurement Standards, so that progress towards each can be assessed. We list a few of the action steps below to offer a sense of the multiple planning initiatives included in the Plan.

Agricultural Aspects of the Plan:

- \$1,000,000 for research and innovation to diversify agricultural crops
- Land Protection Act changes: exemption of environmentally sensitive lands from total landholdings
- Culinary Alliance to increase local and off-island sales of PEI food
- \$9.9 million for Farm Energy – on-farm energy program to promote generation of renewable and energy efficiency on farms

Forestry Aspects of the Plan:

- Province-wide inventory of forest resources
- Forest Steward Certification Program
- Biomass Heat Energy Pilot Project

build new foundations under their homes; the province is using this cultural reference to instill the idea that just as lifting and rebuilding the foundations under buildings was a difficult process, it was a necessary undertaking, with the hopes that citizens will accept the difficult process of developing a province-wide planning system. Klein anticipates there will be both resistance to and support for landuse zoning.

⁴⁴ PEI Department of Agriculture website: <http://www.gov.pe.ca/af/agweb>.

Tourism Aspects of the Plan:

- Province investment in festivals, trails, parks
- Province broadband initiative including “Book PEI” program for accommodations
- Month-long “Cultural Explosion” and province-wide “Festival of Festivals”
- Funding scheme for regional tourism associations
- Support of Culinary Alliance
- Promotion of PEI “brand”

Comparison of US, Canadian, and European Working Landscapes Policies – an overview

A 1997 review of farmland preservation efforts in the US, Canada, European countries (namely, the Britain [England and Wales], France, Netherlands, and the European Union) and Israel took account of the political and cultural differences amongst these places, but forged ahead in an attempt to determine what made some countries more successful in conserving agricultural lands. Noting the takings issue in the United States and the prevalence of planning at the local level, and the fact that Canadian planning schemes differ widely by province, and that even with the presence of European Union-wide planning, European countries differ in the execution of planning policy, the researcher drew some key conclusions regarding what works in slowing farmland conversion. Her key findings include:

- A focus on “countryside preservation” rather than specifically “farmland preservation” is a more successful approach. It encompasses rural lifestyles and community activities beyond agriculture alone.
- National policies that are applied effectively at local and regional levels are less reactive to developer initiatives.
- A focus on urban containing urban growth, high density housing, and infill of urban areas slows the rate of farmland conversion.
- Countryside preservation policies that have wide and diffused support among the public are more successful. This happens in places like Britain where ‘the rural’ is regarded as part of the national identity.

This analysis, similar to other research reported on in this document, highlights the importance of coordination through vertical layers of government, the crucial role of policies that support one another, and the difficult-to-measure, but central function of the value that people place on the rural landscape.

Western European Views of Rural and Working Landscapes

Western Europeans, to generalize broadly, take a different view of natural landscapes than do North Americans, who consider true wild lands to be devoid of human influence.⁴⁵ Partly because much less undeveloped land exists in Europe, partly because Europe has been relatively densely settled for a long time, and perhaps also because there are few publicly owned large national parks or forestlands, Europeans include human activity as a 'natural' and accepted element of 'natural' landscapes.⁴⁶ The landscape formed by ongoing interaction between people and place is understood as part of the cultural heritage of place. As noted earlier, European property laws allow for greater public access to private lands, and more government influence on landscape activities. These cultural and political differences impact how public policy on landscape protection and promotion is understood and implemented in the European context.

Lessons from European Parks

In the European geographic imagination, natural landscapes include human activities like traditional farming and forestry, tourism and recreational activities such as hunting, walking, and mushroom gathering⁴⁷. As there are few publicly owned lands and parks, European parks include villages, grazing lands, farms, forests, recreation areas, and resort towns. They are an assemblage of private lands, subject to varying kinds of zoning. Often, parks will be built around a core geography of most protected land, with strict restrictions on extractive activities and access, surrounded by a buffer of land zoned to allow activities such as farming and forestry. Parks often provide business assistance and other incentives to those who reside within the park. The parks are managed by boards including stakeholders from the local to federal scales, including people representing different professions and special interests. Examples of such parks include Italy's Parco Nazionale delle Foreste Casentinesi, Monte Falterona e Campigna, Cevennes National Park and Biosphere Reserve in France, and Lake District National Park in England. Hamin suggests that this model could work within the United States where rural landscape, rural production, and sense of place are essential to the regional economy; places like the Amish country of Pennsylvania, and the Napa Valley and Sonoma Counties in California.

The European Union's Common Agricultural Policy and Rural Development

The presence of the European Union, as a regional inter-governmental structure, greatly influences individual European countries' working landscapes. Members of the EU fall within the overarching net of

⁴⁵ For a discussion of American views of nature, see: Cronon, W. 1996. The trouble with wilderness; Or, getting back to the wrong nature. In *Uncommon ground: Rethinking the human place in nature*. W. Cronon, ed. New York: W.W. Norton & Co. pp. 69-90.

⁴⁶ Hamin, E. M. 2002. Western European approaches to landscape protection: A review of the literature. *Journal of Planning Literature* 16(3): 339-358.

⁴⁷ Hamin, E. M. 2002. Western European approaches to landscape protection: A review of the literature. *Journal of Planning Literature* 16(3): 339-358.

the **Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)**, whose funding makes up the largest portion of the EU budget.⁴⁸ Funding moves from the EU to national programs and/or to specific programs at other levels of government within member states. The CAP has two foci: Rural Development and Food. Their mission statements define rural development as encompassing food production but going beyond agriculture to include diversified livelihoods in rural communities:

Rural Development Policy Statement: *“With over 56 % of the population in the 27 Member States of the European Union (EU) living in rural areas, which cover 91 % of the territory, rural development is a vitally important policy area. Farming and forestry remain crucial for land use and the management of natural resources in the EU's rural areas, and as a platform for economic diversification in rural communities. The strengthening of EU rural development policy is, therefore, an overall EU priority.”*

Agriculture and Food Statement: *“The main aim of the CAP is to promote quality and safety and a farm sector in tune with the environment and animal welfare. We need to develop an even more sustainable farm and food sector for the future.” Further, “...we aim to create a market-oriented, competitive European farm sector that improves living conditions and employment opportunities in rural areas and lives up to good environmental practices and maintain habitats, biodiversity and landscapes.”⁴⁹*

The most recent Rural Development Policy Plan includes the traditional agriculture and forestry sectors but also includes environmental conservation and economic diversification as key goals:

Three Axes of Rural Development Policy 2007-2013:

- improving the competitiveness of the agricultural and forestry sector;
- improving the environment and the countryside;
- improving the quality of life in rural areas and encouraging diversification of the rural economy

In recent years, EU Agricultural Policy has moved toward reducing agricultural surpluses and also to reduce direct payments to farms and to transfer these funds to Rural Development Measures. There is an increased emphasis on agro-environmental stewardship, such as reduction in the number of inputs, reducing the number of animals per hectare, creation of ponds and natural features, and the establishment of trees and hedges. To accomplish these goals the EU has instituted fixed quotas on milk production, limits on the area of crops/number of animals for which a farmer can claim subsidies, and farmers must leave a percentage of their land uncultivated. Further, farmers have to respect environmental, food safety, phytosanitary and animal welfare standards. Farmers who fail to do this will face reduction in their direct payments. Farmers who commit to follow agro-environmental measures receive financial incentives.

⁴⁸ See the European Union's Agriculture website: <http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/>.

⁴⁹ From: EU website: http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/rurdev/index_en.htm.

The EU has also paid close attention to issues of food quality and standards. To that end, they have developed three “quality logos”:

- *PROTECTED DESIGNATION OF ORIGIN*: characteristics solely from the terrain/ability of producers in the region of production
- *PROTECTED GEOGRAPHICAL INDICATION*: characteristic/reputation associated with that area, at least one stage in production process is carried out in that area
- *TRADITIONAL SPECIALITY GUARANTEED*: traditional ingredients or are made using traditional methods

These logos underscore an appreciation for traditional artisanal food production techniques, the geography of food production, and the historical and cultural traditions of specialty food production (for more on Geographical Indications, see below).

EU and Rural Development

For the period of 2007-2013, the CAP has made available through its *Rural Development Policy*, 88.3 billion Euro for rural development projects in the 27 member states. A minimum of 25 percent must be spent on projects that support land management and improve the environment. However, in reality, national and regional authorities often decide to spend a far bigger part of the budget on green measures. Member States and regional development groups are required to spread their rural development funding across the Three Axes of Rural Development. Further, Member States must also support “**Leader Community Initiatives**.” According to the EU CAP website, “The ‘Leader approach’ to rural development involves highly individual projects designed and executed by local partnerships to address specific local problems.” In other words, funds are directed to local and specific public-private initiatives.

Leader Program (French acronym: “Liaison Entre Actions de Développement de l’Économie Rurale” or, “Links Between Actions for the Development of Rural Economy”)

Originally launched in 1991, the Leader Program will be mainstreamed into all EU national/regional rural development programs for 2007-2013. The program is guided by the philosophy that: *Development strategies are more effective and efficient if decided and implemented at the local level by local actors, accompanied by clear and transparent procedures, the support of relevant public administrations and the necessary technical assistance.* Therefore, the EU is encouraging public-private partnerships, forged and put to work at the local level to do execute rural community development as well as agricultural and forestry innovation.

Hundreds of Leader Action Group (LAG) programs exist across Europe.⁵⁰ We offer three examples here:

Promoting Natural Heritage of Northumberland Coast: This project will pilot a new approach to promoting the natural heritage assets of the Northumberland coast to local people, and to potential visitors from outside the region. Working from a base in the new Northumberland Seabird Centre on Amble Harbour, we aspire to raising awareness of Northumberland's unique coastal wildlife using, amongst other things, the live interactive CCTV link with RSPB's Coquet Island nature reserve.

Rural Aberdeenshire, Scotland LAG: This LAG is now accepting local community grant applications for the "Rural Broadband Challenge Fund" to improve access to broadband internet services.

Northern Irish LAG: Under this theme the LAG would like to develop a co-operation project that would work with farmers and landowners, particularly on uplands, to look at how the recreational use of land by walkers, climbers and other social users can be complementary to traditional farming practices.

While these three examples appear to stray far from the planning tools associated with working landscapes, they do illustrate the fact that agricultural and forestry support in Europe is inextricably linked with rural development, environmental conservation, and social geography.

Geographical Indications: Lessons from France and Mexico

Increasingly, food and beverage producers have used place-based 'branding' to ensure control over the production techniques, quality, and marketing of their traditional, local products. Famous branded products include Roquefort cheese and Champagne from France, Parmigiano Reggiano cheese from Italy, and Kalamata olives from Greece. This practice is called Geographical Indication (GI), defined as "a place-based name that conveys the geographical origin, as well as the historical and cultural identity of an agricultural product."⁵¹ It has been suggested that Vermont agricultural producers may benefit from drawing attention to the linkage of certain locally-made foods to local geography, a concept known as 'terroir'. Bowen writes,

"GIs are fundamentally tied to the notion of terroir, the idea that the 'special quality of an agricultural product is determined by the character of the place from which it comes (Gade 2004: 289). In order to preserve the link to terroir, then, each GI theoretically relies on a set of specifications that define and protect the cultural practices, farmer knowledge, and local environmental resources that have interacted in the evolution of the product."⁵²

⁵⁰ Taken from an internet search of "Rural Leader Action Groups".

⁵¹ Bowen, S. 2010. Embedding local places in global spaces: geographical indications as a territorial development strategy. *Rural Sociology* 75(2): 209-243, p.210.

⁵² Ibid, p. 210.

The end goal of GIs is to support local producers and local agricultural economies. Bowen conducted a comparative study of two well-established GIs: Comte cheese in France, and tequila in Mexico, to assess how well each achieves the goal of supporting local producers whose product is sold in extralocal (global) markets. She found that Comte cheese production was more successful in terms of marketing, milk prices, and support of farmers than in the Mexico where it seems extralocal distillers and distributors reap the most profit. The dairy farmers, agers, and cheesemakers of Comte cheese maintain a strong and productive agro-economic system. In Mexico, where agave production is conducted by farmers who have little power in the production and distribution of tequila, and where quality and the growing techniques are defined by the distillers and distributors, the GI system does not support sustainable rural development. She identifies the important elements to a successful GI program:

- The manner in which supply-chain actors define quality
- The way that the GI places value on terroir (which includes environmental practices, local know-how, the link between humans and a specific place, and acknowledgement that quality is shaped by a variety of factors in the supply chain)
- A strong and cohesive organizing body which involves people along the supply chain

The research finds that some state involvement can help, such as in the case of France where farmers receive extra-local (EU) subsidies for pasture management. However, central state control is not essential to the GI system.

It is striking that the elements of a successful GI program match to a certain extent with the elements that make for strong planning policy: coordination amongst organizations, meaningful stakeholder participation, and practices that make good sense ‘on the ground’.

Forestlands and Wood Production: Lessons from Scandinavia

Mortimer considers efforts to protect working forestlands in the United States and compares them to programs in Scandinavia. He selected examples from Finland and Sweden because like the US, much of the forestlands in Scandinavia are privately owned, and while these countries do not have the ‘takings’ aspect of property law that exists in the United States, the notion that property owners who lose some aspect of control over their land should be compensated is culturally supported.

Mortimer describes the tension between property rights and the desire to support conservation goals in the United States in this way:

“At the heart of the matter is the notion of an individual’s right to be secure in the ownership of property, and that such property may not be arbitrarily seized, or “taken” by the government. It is the reverence for this individual right that has inevitably clashed with more communitarian views, linked to

*broader ecological concepts, that private property rights are not absolute and may in some instances be constrained for the public welfare. Though conservation values and goals appear ascendant in the U.S., constitutional protections for private property require thoughtful approaches for conserving forests and forest biodiversity.”*⁵³

Because of the takings issue, and because forest land is mostly privately-held, forest conservation practices in the United States have relied mainly on market mechanisms, essentially voluntary and incentive-based compliance programs such as conservation easements or reduced tax programs. In Sweden and Finland, by contrast, national policy states that forests, including private forests, can be managed for biodiversity and commodity production, and their management should take into account other public interests. Further, in Sweden, the Forest Service can establish forest habitat protection areas on private lands. The landowner is legally obliged to accept the designation but the landowner is compensated in the form of a lump sum payment for the market value loss of that property. Finland provides similar compensation. In these national forestry policies, timber production and conservation of biodiversity are equally valued.⁵⁴

Mortimer suggests that this model could be applied to the United States at the state level, contending that private forest policy is typically developed at the state level. Funding would be the primary obstacle but could come from the federal government in the form of ‘pass-through funds’ to that state, similar to the way Land and Water Conservation Funds pass to states for land acquisition grants now. First, though, protection of forested open space would need to be written in to federal and state forest policy.

⁵³ Mortimer, M. J. 2004. in *Forest biodiversity: lessons from history for conservation*. O. Honnay, K. Verheyen, B. Bossuyt, and M. Hermy, eds. IUFRO Research Series 10. Wallingford and Oxfordshire, UK: CABI Publishing: 269-280, p.643.

⁵⁴ Mortimer, M. J. 2008. Private property rights and selective private forest conservation: Could a Nordic hybrid policy address a United States problem? *Environmental Management* 41: 640-653.

Concluding Statements

There is a plethora of acquisition, regulation, incentive and educational-based planning instruments. This report has not found any single tool which alone has promoted working landscapes. Rather, this survey of the literature shows that each community, regardless of its scale, assembles a mix of policy tools to meet the unique needs of its political, cultural, and geographic place. Research into a variety of approaches reveals that it is not the form of any particular policy itself that explains success; it is the coordination, administrative efficiency, and implementation of the policy that matter. The most successful initiatives, be they Geographical Indications or agricultural zoning plans, involve people representing each scale of government and organization. We note that in Europe and Prince Edward Island agricultural and forestry planning are just two pieces of overarching rural development and countryside preservation goals. Finally, we have learned that public willingness to support working landscapes rests on the value they put on rural places and livelihoods, the extent to which their identity and sense of place is tied to rural landscape and the perception that these lands and livelihoods are at risk. Vermonters involved in agriculture, forest products production, tourism, and associated livelihoods, as well as those who feel our state's identity derives in part from our working landscapes have expressed deep concern for our rural place. If planning policy can be understood as a barn, perhaps it is time to fortify the beams that support us, remove the components that no longer serve us, and add new features that will ensure a sturdy, well-functioning, and reliable structure in the future.

Clearly, there are a number of possible directions that Vermont leaders may consider to improve, enhance, and sustain working landscapes and livelihoods. Below we offer a list of tools that have been used in other places.



Catalog of Planning Policy Tools and Working Landscape Programs

Acquisition

- Land trust land acquisitions – private, public, a blend
- Land trust development rights acquisitions – private, public, a blend
- Land banking
- Public acquisition of lands for parks, forests, recreation, agriculture by federal, state, local governments
- Temporary conservation easements

Government Planning, Grouping of Resources

- State-level planning office and resource center
- Green infrastructure mapping
- Development modeling at multiple scales
- State-Level agriculture and forestry zoning
- Local-level agriculture and forestry zoning
- Voluntary agriculture, forest, or conservation districts
- Urban growth boundaries
- Greenbelts

Incentives for Innovation, Technical Assistance, Enterprise Development

- Financial and recognition awards for excellence and innovation in agriculture, food production, forest products
- Geographical Indication for agricultural products
- Grant assistance in food and forest product development, marketing, and business creation
- Assistance with farm and forest business plans, financial management, farm transfer
- Incubator programs (access to land, equipment, technical expertise, business planning) for new farmers and forest products producers
- Conservation education workshops
- Private leasing of publicly owned lands for agriculture, timber and forest products production
- Websites featuring products of very small, seasonal, or specialized producers
- Workshops and technical courses on a range of diversification possibilities, included value added products, tourism sites, recreational entrepreneurship, biofuel and energy production, processing

- Increased coordination and information sharing among related public and private entities to make access to information and programs easier for farmers, food producers, loggers, forest products producers
- Increased cooperation among public and private organizations who are competing for grant funding

Taxation Systems

- Tiered current use agricultural and forestry tax systems
- Differential inheritance tax and property transfer tax for agricultural or forested lands

Legislation and Policy Protections

- National and state forest policy providing protections and conservation of forest lands, including private lands
- “Right to farm” legislation, right to practice forestry legislation
- Rural Development Centers, grouping federal, state, and local organizations

Rural Community Development

- Rural community infrastructural support in transportation, telecommunications, access to high-speed broadband
- Investment in secondary production sites: cheese caves, slaughterhouses, sawmills, milk processing plants, packing facilities, vegetable and fruit storage facilities

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