



Tel: 607 687 8255

Fax: 607 687 1435

[developtioga.com](http://developtioga.com)

[tiogacountyny.com](http://tiogacountyny.com)

**ANALYSIS & FINDINGS**  
**NORTH TIOGA AGRICULTURAL DISTRICT (#3) EIGHT YEAR REVIEW 2017**  
**Pursuant to NYS Agriculture & Markets Law - Article 25AA**

**Analysis per Section 303-a (2b):**

**(1) The nature and status of farming and farm resources within such district, including the total number of acres of land and the total number of acres of land in farm operations in the district.**

The proposed district will have parcels located throughout the Towns of Newark Valley, Berkshire, Richford, and the Village of Newark Valley. Land uses in this area are principally agricultural and residential. Small concentrated areas of commercial and industrial uses exist in the Village of Newark Valley and the hamlets of Berkshire and Richford. The extractive industries of farming and logging dominate the landscape. This area has evolved around agriculture, which has been the County's historic economic base. Protection of farmlands by agricultural districting has not negatively impacted adjacent uses.

Larger farming enterprises in the North Tioga Agricultural District #3 are located in the terrace and floodplain areas of the East and West branches of the Owego Creek. These deep, fertile, moderately well-drained, fairly level alluvial and glacio-fluvial soils, without fragipans, have few limitations on crop varieties that can be grown. Howard-Chenango, Tioga-Middlebury, Wayland and Chenango-Wayland soils predominate in these intensely farmed areas. Upland farming activities are more limited, depending on slope, soil quality, erodibility, runoff and permeability, and soil depth to fragipan and bedrock. Slope ranges throughout the upland farming areas from rolling, 5 to 16%, to over 35% in extremely steep areas. Volusia-Mardin soils developed by glacial till predominate. As such, these upland farms are generally more suited to growing pasture crops, hay, and corn on a non-intensive basis since irrigation opportunities rarely exist.

Limited development has taken place over the past eight (8) years in the municipalities included in this district. Some residential development has occurred and is scattered throughout the area. These scattered residences results in some fragmentation of contiguous farmland area.

The total number of acres of land in the North Tioga Agricultural District #3 has grown to a total of 29,336, with 21,494 acres of land in farm operations, resulting in 78% of district acreage being actively farmed.

**(2) The extent to which the district has achieved its original objectives:**

The purpose of Agricultural District creation is the protection and preservation of viable farmlands. The previous North Tioga Agricultural District Review Modification of 2009 reported 23,776 acres in the District. The proposed 2017 district is 29,336 acres. This is a 23% increase in the amount of acreage in the program.

Data collection during this eight-year review show that farmers own a total of 21,494 acres and rent a total of 1,311 acres of land to augment their agricultural operations. Additionally, this current review resulted in 31 more farms enrolled in this agricultural district; an increase from 62 to 93 in the eight-year period. Hay is the most numerous with 31 farmers reporting this principal farm operation on their farm in the district. Dairy and other livestock follow in the number of farms reporting these as their principal agricultural enterprise. The following table illustrates the current picture of farm enterprises by type within this district:

FARM ENTERPRISE	FARM COUNT
Hay	31
Dairy	20
Livestock (other than dairy)	18
Silviculture	4
Grain Cash Crop	3
Fruits	2
Vegetables	2
Honey	1
Nursery/Ornamentals	1
Poultry	1
Timber	1
Checked More Than One	22

The North Tioga Agricultural District #3 is still achieving its original objectives, which is preserving farmland within the district. This particular area of Tioga County contains less farming and agricultural land than other areas of the county, due to existence of state forest land plus rugged terrain. Juxtaposed to that is the narrow, fertile valley of the West Brach of Owego Creek running along the western boundary of the municipalities in this agricultural district, which contains highly valuable and productive farmland. It is important to keep this pristine, scenic valley in productive agriculture. Presence of the agricultural district and its significant role in preserving farmland has spread among farmers through word of mouth, especially during these eight-year reviews when direct correspondence with farmers regarding the NYS Agricultural District Program takes place.

Methodology for petitioner recruitment was intensive and included direct mailings, key farmer reviews, cross-referencing to previously reported agricultural lands, and follow-up telephone interviews for the purpose of accurate data collection and mapping.

**(3) The extent to which county and local comprehensive plans, policies and objectives are consistent with and support the district.**

The Town of Richford completed and adopted an updated comprehensive plan 2016, and the Towns of Berkshire and Newark Valley, as well as the Village of Newark Valley are all currently updating their comprehensive / master plans. County planning works with the municipalities in these efforts to ensure that there are no conflicts between the goals and objectives of these plans and this eight-year review of the North Tioga Agricultural District. The composition of this

agricultural district should not prohibit implementation of any planning activities in any of the said municipalities. In general these plans provide support in preserving and protecting of farmland.

Tioga County updated and adopted its Agricultural & Farmland Protection Plan in 2015 and is working on implementation of many of the recommended actions. Tioga County has partnered with Cornell Cooperative Extension of Tioga County to fund an Agriculture Development Specialist in 2016. The main goal of that position is to implement Tioga County's Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan. To that end, Tioga County Planning, GIS and CCE Tioga have worked cooperatively to make this North Tioga Agricultural District eight-year a success in preserving and enhancing the district by a comprehensive scanning of the agricultural community resulting in increased farm enrollment.

**(4) The degree of coordination between local laws, ordinances, rules, and regulations that apply to farm operations in the district and their influence on farming:**

The Towns of Richford, Berkshire and Newark Valley as well as the Village of Newark Valley all exempt local agricultural uses and activities from Site Plan Review regulations. None of these municipalities have zoning laws. These planning boards send all local laws and comprehensive plans, and updates thereof, to New York State Ag & Markets for review and comments before adoption. This helps eliminate any conflicts between local laws and farming enterprises in the North Tioga Agricultural District.

Additionally, the Tioga County Planning Board requires that a municipality referring an action subject to GML §239 l and m which is within 500 feet of an agricultural district parcel, complete and Agricultural Data Statement form and process. County Planning also consults the Tioga County Agricultural & Farmland Protection Plan of 2015 if applicable, to ensure project compatibility with that Plan.

**(5) Recommendations to continue, terminate or modify such district:**

Based on staff work and the findings in this report, the Tioga County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board recommend continuation with the stated modifications of the North Tioga Agricultural District to the Tioga County Legislature.