

DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT

DIVISION OF AGRICULTURE

FY 2000-2001 WORKPLAN

This document represents the Division of Agriculture's FY2000-2001 workplan. It also is a component of the Performance Partnership Agreement (PPA) between the Department of Environmental Management and the U.S. Environment Protection Agency for the federal fiscal years 2000 and 2001.

1. Program Name and Description

The Division of Agriculture (DAG), within the Bureau of Natural Resources, is responsible for a broad range of functions that sustain a viable agricultural industry in Rhode Island, protect human and animal health and preserve natural resources. The office is divided into seven sections as follows:

Animal Health Section - This section prevents public health threats from animal-borne diseases by administering and enforcing federal and state laws pertaining to the control of animal and zoonotic (i.e. rabies) diseases and the humane care and treatment of animals. The section consists of 3 FTE's.

Marketing and Promotion Section - This section provides assistance to the agricultural industry and promotes Rhode Island grown products through various marketing programs, administers programs to ensure standards are met for produce, fertilizers, soil amendments, etc. sold and/or produced in Rhode Island, and administers the farm portion of the Farm, Forest and Open Space Program. The section consists of 3 FTE's.

Farm Ecology Section - This section works with farmers to prevent or minimize negative impacts on the state's natural resources. The section administers the agricultural wetlands program, works with farmers on environmental and regulatory issues, and assists in administering the purchase of farmland development rights program. The section consists of 1 FTE.

Mosquito Abatement Program - This section administers programs to ensure effective and environmentally sound municipal programs for mosquito control, conducts annual surveillance and response programs for EEE in mosquitoes, and participates in salt and freshwater marsh restoration activities. The section includes 1 FTE.

Pesticide Section - The section administers and enforces federal and states pesticide laws, conducts training and certification programs for pesticide applicators, and conducts various related programs including groundwater monitoring for pesticides and nitrates etc. The section is staffed by 4 FTE's.

Plant Industry Section - This section administers programs to protect the nursery industry and native plant species from devastating insect and disease infestations, certifies farms to meet organic standards, and provides grants for methods of reducing reliance on chemical pesticides (Integrated Pest Management). The section includes 3 FTE's.

A Chief and Deputy Chief provide management of the Division, and administrative support is provided by three clerical positions. Section supervisors (within the above FTE's) are responsible for the day to day operation of each section. Total FTE's for the Division is 21, with nine seasonal positions on average hired on an annual basis.

2. Mission of the Division The primary mission of the DAG is to:

Sustain a viable agriculture industry in Rhode Island, protect human and animal health and preserve natural resources.

3. Program Highlights and Key Strategies

There are over 700 farms in Rhode Island occupying over 55,000 acres (of which 25,000 are cropland). Cash receipts from the industry totaled nearly \$84,000,000 dollars in 1997 (forest products not included). The number of farms and land in farmland have increased within recent years mitigating the trend, especially post World War Two, of dramatic declines in the number and acreage of land in farms. Rhode Island agriculture is generally healthy, and is ranked first nationally in net farm income per acre. In addition to its economic value, agriculture provides open space, wildlife habitat, watershed protection, outdoor recreation etc. A sustainable environment and economy are closely linked to a healthy and viable agricultural industry.

However, urban sprawl and related pressures and problems, continue to threaten the long-term existence of agriculture in Rhode Island. Prime agricultural land continues to be lost to development and frequently results in conflicts between farmers and homeowners unfamiliar to farming ways. Farmland land values in Rhode Island are second highest in the nation, and consequently farmland real estate taxes are higher than in any other state. Zoning, regulatory issues, water supply, estate settlement etc. all factor into the sustainability of individual farm operations. Given the importance of agriculture, and its vulnerabilities, the Division of Agriculture therefore concentrates foremost on sustaining, and providing for a viable agriculture in Rhode Island.

The Division of Agriculture has an equally important mission to protect public health and safety, through programs which for example monitor for Eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEE) in mosquitoes or rabies in wildlife and domestic animals, or pollution prevention activities such as promoting the use of alternatives to chemical pesticides or monitoring groundwater for nutrient levels etc. Trends for these issues are often unpredictable (EEE) or cyclical in nature (rabies), and require long range planning, constant surveillance activities, and the ability to respond immediately and effectively to issues affecting public health and safety.

Major Division strategies and initiatives include:

Sustainable Agriculture/Sustainable Economy. Build partnerships with EDC and others to develop a long-range plan to promote Agriculture, along with other resource based industries, as a key element of Rhode Island's economic and environmental future. The DAG has also joined the recently formed Northeast Agricultural Forum of the Council of State Governments. This forum, composed of agricultural commissioner and legislators from the Northeast, will coordinate efforts and activities to provide support for agriculture on regional basis.

Pollution Prevention. Protect public health and safety by partnering with stakeholders and the Department's Pollution Prevention program to increase the use of Best Management Practices (BMP's) and to reduce the use of products and practices that degrade natural resources and threaten health and safety. The Division's Pesticides and Integrated Pest Management Programs will revise Integrated Pest Management Grant procedures and requirements to ensure grants maximize the development of practical alternatives to chemical pesticides, expand environmental monitoring efforts, and explore development and implementation of a commercial pesticide disposal program.

Watershed Approach. Develop agricultural elements for watershed plans in pilot areas and work with watershed teams to develop long-term strategies for water quality, conservation and stream flow issues.

Regulatory and Operational Streamlining. The Division will explore opportunities to increase the effectiveness of its programs by assessing current staffing conditions and structures. The Division will also explore opportunities to coordinate with other DEM Divisions and partners to streamline regulatory requirements and procedures and improve its ability to assist farmers.

Key objectives and strategies for accomplishing them are outlined on the following pages.

OBJECTIVE 1: PROTECT NATURAL RESOURCES, HUMAN AND ANIMAL HEALTH		ENVIRONMENTAL INDICATORS: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Development and use of Integrated Pest Management ▪ Water conservation methods in agriculture and other good agricultural practices ▪ Non-chemical mosquito abatement techniques by cities and towns, incidences of rabies or EEE.
STRATEGIES	ACTIVITIES	Performance Measures
POLLUTION PREVENTION: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Encourage IPM and ensure availability of grant funds. - Encourage and promote the use of good agricultural practices on farms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develop a Good Agricultural Practices Manual, and continue to work with RI Farmers to implement practices that protect natural resources. - Maintain an effective Mosquito Abatement Grant program. Encourage city and town participation and maximum utilization of grant funds. - Explore the feasibility of developing a pesticide disposal program for commercial operations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Improve the practicality and effectiveness of IPM grants issued for grant period 1999/2000. Grants should be distributed more equitably among research, education, agriculture etc. - -Draft of Good Agricultural Practices Manual complete by mid 2000. - Increased utilization and effectiveness of Mosquito Abatement Grant funds for grant period 1999/2000. - Draft of pesticide disposal program prepared by mid 2000 (regardless of funding)
WATERSHED APPROACH <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develop agricultural elements for watershed plans in pilot areas. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develop long term strategies for water withdrawal and stream flow, drought response, water quality and conservation, pesticides and nitrates in groundwater. - - Continue monitoring efforts in watersheds for pesticides and nitrates in ground and surface waters as part of pesticides and nitrates groundwater management plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - -Agricultural elements for pilot watersheds prepared and implemented by mid 2000. - Strategy document for drought response developed and in place prior to year 2000 growing season. - Draft strategy for water withdrawal initiated in year 2000. - - Expansion of existing monitoring effort in year 2000.

<p>PROTECT PUBLIC HEALTH AND SAFETY: - Maintain a comprehensive program for surveillance of EEE in mosquitoes, respond effectively to outbreaks.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Maintain an effective Mosquito Abatement Grant program. Encourage maximum utilization of grant funds. - Maintain and expand on opportunities for salt and freshwater marsh restoration to reduce mosquito populations, evaluate the feasibility of a dedicated FTE for this program. - Work with URI to implement and evaluate the new laboratory at the Center for Vector Borne Diseases in regard to EEE. testing and reporting. - Maintain a comprehensive program for surveillance of rabies and other zoonotic diseases in domestic animals and wildlife, respond effectively to outbreaks. - Develop a surveillance program for the West Nile Virus in mosquitoes and birds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Maintain current number and location of traps set and monitored. - -Improve participation by cities and towns and utilization of grant funds. - Maintain and improve the number and effectiveness of completed marsh restorations for mosquito control. - Evaluate the number and accuracy of mosquito pools tested by URI. - -Evaluate reports of incidences of rabies in wildlife or domestic animals and effectiveness of response. - Develop draft West Nile Virus surveillance program by Dec 31, 1999. - Implement program by June 1, 2000
<p>PROTECT ANIMAL HEALTH: - Continue inspection and monitoring program to ensure protection of animal health, food safety and enforcement of care standards at establishment where animals are housed.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develop and update animal care standards and regulations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Improve on the number and percentage of facilities inspected. Evaluate the amount and nature of violations. - - Develop and promulgate standards by May, 2001

Partners: USDA, Farmers, Agricultural Land Preservation Commission, Land Trusts, EPA, DEM Divisions, Conservation Districts and State Conservation Committee, RI Agricultural Council, DEM Agricultural Advisory Committee, RI Farm Bureau, Farm Advocacy Organizations, Mosquito Abatement Board, Pesticide Relief Advisory Board, Watershed Groups, RI Veterinary Medical Association, City and Town Governments and many others.

<p>PESTICIDE ENFORCEMENT:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ensure proper use and handling of pesticides by continued inspection and monitoring of agricultural and commercial applicators, respond to suspected violations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide assistance to the general public on the proper use of and alternatives to pesticides. - -Expand the availability of pesticide application information by electronic mean (i.e. internet) and print means to interested parties. - -Continue and increase pesticide sampling as part of inspection and compliance monitoring activities. - -Coordinate with EPA to address and implement all national pesticide related priorities. - -Complete stakeholder review, public hearing process & promulgate the proposed amendments to the Rules & Regulations Pertaining to Pesticides. - -Collaborate with other Pesticide Control Officials on related issues to foster a better relationship between federal and state agencies, industry and agriculture. - Work towards development and implementation of groundwater, worker protection, and endangered species plans regarding pesticides. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Conduct approximately 15 - 20 agricultural use inspections, 40 non-agricultural use inspections and 40 marketplace inspections on an annual basis, increase the number of physical samples taken during inspections. - -Utilize agricultural web page under development and proposed newsletter to provide information on pesticides - - Promulgate amendments to pesticide rules by mid 2000.
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STRATEGIES	ACTIVITIES	Performance Measures
<p>PESTICIDE CERTIFICATION AND TRAINING: -Coordinate with URI to continue to offer Pesticide Applicator Safety Training Sessions for licensing and certification of applicators, educate pesticide applicators in the proper use and the potential impact of pesticides on the environment and human health, promote IPM as a part of pest management strategies.</p>	<p>Review state certification plans and examinations, revise as appropriate to address new information and emerging issues -Review the EPA/States Certification & Training Assessment Group recommendations and initiate implementation of applicable recommendations -Negotiate reciprocal pesticide certifications with other northeastern states where agreements do not currently exist. -Coordinate with educational institutions & Pesticide Trade Associations in developing training sessions for educational credits -Provide assistance to Federal, State, & Municipal offices on effective pest management strategies & proper pesticide application</p>	<p>Increase the number of applicators completing training sessions and examinations administered. - Update and revise licensing and certification examinations and guidance materials. - Implement recommendations of the EPA/States Certification & Training Assessment Group. - Enter into certification and licensing reciprocity agreements with other states, where lacking. - Develop additional training session for continuing education credits for licensed and certified applicators.</p>

OBJECTIVE: SUSTAIN A VIABLE AGRICULTURAL INDUSTRY		ENVIRONMENTAL INDICATORS: Land in farmland, number of farms, total farm income and income per acre, and distribution of farms statewide.
STRATEGIES:	ACTIVITIES	Performance Measures
<p>PARTNERSHIPS - Build and strengthen partnerships to promote and sustain agriculture:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Partner with the EDC and others to develop a long range plan to promote Agriculture as a key element of Rhode Island's economic and environmental future. - Partner with the Northeast Agricultural Forum of the Council of State Governments to coordinate efforts and activities to provide 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Development and strengthening of partnerships, memorandums of understanding as appropriate. - Evaluate feasibility of an agriculture roundtable and develop coordination plan by March 1, 2000.

	<p>support for agriculture on a regional basis.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Continue and further develop partnerships with the USDA, Conservation Districts, and State Conservation Committee to support and assist farmers. - Continue partnership and coordination with the DEM Agricultural Advisory Committee, RI Farm Bureau and other advocacy organizations. - Encourage livestock and milk producers to participate in voluntary disease control herd health programs. 	
<p>MARKETING AND PROMOTION - Develop and increase marketing initiatives to promote Rhode Island grown farm products: -</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Work with the EDC to develop promotional opportunities for Rhode Island agriculture. - Work with the USDA and RI Center for Commercial Agriculture to develop and implement an agricultural web page for Rhode Island. - Explore the feasibility of a permanent, year round farmer's market in Rhode Island, and establishment of a second state supported farmers market at a state park or beach. - Explore the feasibility of publishing a periodic newsletter; review and update the Rhode Island Agricultural Digest and all marketing brochures and promotional materials. - Work with the RI Seafood Council to explore marketing opportunities specifically for aquaculture. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develop and initiate marketing opportunities with the EDC. - Prepare marketing proposal by Dec 31, 2000 and initiate discussions with EDC by January 1, 2000. - Complete and evaluate consultant's report on the feasibility of a year round market. - Evaluate the feasibility of an additional market at a state park or beach, and implement if possible for year 2000 growing season. - Update all promotional material for year 2000 growing season, and print and distribute a periodic newsletter if funding resources allow. - Develop aquaculture marketing opportunities, especially for inland operations. - Establish an alternative agricultural marketing and uses committee with DEM and partners. - Increase promotional efforts for Rhode Island agricultural products. - Develop marketing promotional material by Dec. 31, 2000.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Work with DEM Strategic Planning and others to develop an Alternative Agricultural Uses Committee to develop and promote alternative uses of typical agricultural products. - Work with the Farm Bureau to assist with the Agriculture in the Classroom program to educate schoolchildren on the importance of agriculture. - - Explore opportunities to develop and promote agriculture in urban areas. 	
<p>FARMLAND PRESERVATION :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Continue efforts with the Agricultural Land Preservation Commission and various partners to purchase the development rights to farmland. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develop promotional material for the PDR program, and a database to match PDR lands available for use to farmers seeking to rent or purchase land. - Work with the State Conservation Committee to develop a statewide resource based method for tax assessment on farm, forest and open space land. - Explore the technical feasibility of developing a GIS coverage for PDR properties. - Explore the financial feasibility of dedicated FTE for the PDR program. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increase the number of farms and acreage protected by development rights. - Increase partnerships and coordination with land trusts, cities and towns etc for purposes of farmland preservation. - Develop by mid 2000 a draft statewide resource based method of tax assessment for farmland. - Develop by mid 2000 promotional material for the PDR program.
<p>OUTREACH AND ASSISTANCE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <u>Regulatory Streamlining</u>: explore opportunities to coordinate with other DEM Divisions and partners to improve the Division's ability to assist farmers. - <u>Operational Streamlining</u>: assess current staffing conditions and structures to increase the effectiveness of programs for assisting farmers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develop a Good Agricultural Practices Manual to assist farmers and the Division in addressing various resource issues. - Continue development of long range response strategies to address water withdrawal and usage, drought management and pesticide and fertilizer management. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develop by December 1, 2000 a draft of a Good Agricultural Practices manual for Rhode Island. - Review and evaluate by February 1, 2000 staffing structures and needs within the Division. - Develop by April 1, 2000 a drought response management plan for RI agriculture. - Continue development of long range strategies to address water withdrawal and conservation, pesticide and fertilizer management in relation to groundwater.

-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Continue development of a Conservation Farm Program to acknowledge and identify the use of good agricultural practices on farms. - Evaluate the Massachusetts Farm Viability Program and explore implementation of a similar program in Rhode Island. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Prepare internal draft on a Rhode Island Farm Viability program by July 1, 2000.
<p>STANDARDS PROTECTION: Ensure that standards for agricultural products and inputs are maintained to ensure quality, consistency and consumer protection.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Maintain inspection and certification program to ensure nursery stock and apiaries are free of pests and diseases. - Maintain phytosanitary inspection and certification program for plant materials, insect species etc. transported across state lines to ensure protection of RI agricultural crops, native flora and fauna. - Maintain and expand testing of commercial fertilizers, soil amendments, and pet foods to ensure consumer protection and maintenance of required standards. - Maintain, expand and promote organic certification program for farms using non-chemical methods of pest control. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Expand fertilizer and feed testing program from 1050 to 1200 quaretees in year 2000. - Maintain and improve on existing certification programs for nursery stock, plant materials etc crossing state lines. - Inspect a high percentage of apiaries within Rhode Island, and all hives by migratory beekeepers. - Review and update all standards and regulations for agricultural products and inputs.