



WHAT IS IT?

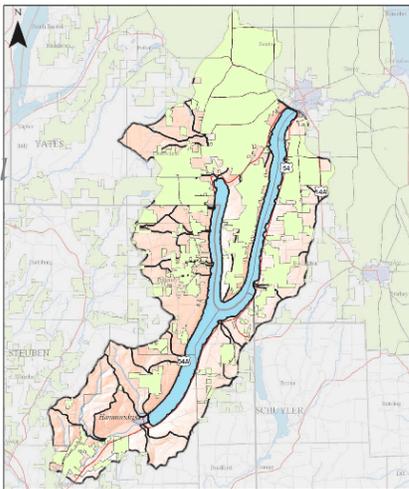
Working agriculture is an important element of the Keuka Lake Watershed and its rural character. Agricultural activities provide incomes, local food and workforce diversity to the area. Responsible agriculture is also more environmentally sustainable than many other land use types.

Practices like establishing stream setbacks for grazing areas, planting buffer vegetation next to streams and limiting the use of pesticides can ensure that agriculture does not reduce the water quality of the lake, groundwater in the area or other waterways in the watershed. State and local policies can help to preserve and improve agriculture.



The hills around the Keuka Lake Watershed provide prime soils for agriculture

This map by the GFLRPC shows agricultural districts in green



WHY DOES IT MATTER?

While New York State has a strong agricultural base, small farms continue to come under pressure from rising land and capital expenditure costs. Proximity to Keuka Lake makes development pressures particularly acute, as the demand for residential development is relatively high. High costs can also put pressure on farmers to use unsustainable farming practices.

Watershed communities can use planning tools to ensure that farmland is protected, and help the owners of agricultural lands to preserve them for future generations. Policies can also be established or encouraged that promote responsible farming practices through incentives and technical support.

POLICY OPTIONS

Preserve Prime Lands

Prime agricultural lands can be preserved by identifying areas with ideal soil, slope and other factors for agricultural use.

These areas can be protected through zoning and subdivision regulations that can preserve lands while building on smaller parcels.

Directing future development toward established villages also relieves development pressures on farmlands.

Agricultural Easements

Property owners can preserve their lands for future agricultural use by attaching a conservation easement to the deed for the property.

This strategy may require legal assistance which can be provided by the Finger Lakes Land Trust.

Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) programs can also be set up, which pay landowners to place agricultural easements on property.

Responsible Agriculture

The NYS Agricultural Environmental Management (AEM) program provides financial incentives to farmers for practices that preserve natural resources.

The NYS Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) provides funding for vegetated buffers around waterways.

Local municipalities can continue to promote these incentive programs.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Agriculture Preservation

Learn more about how to preserve working agriculture in Keuka Lake and why its important by visiting these websites:

Report from Cornell University Planning Workshop - www.stcplanning.org/usr/Program_Areas/Water_Resources/KeukaLake/Farmland%20and%20Agricultural%20Protection%20Plan.pdf

Benefits of preserving farmland from the American Farmland Trust - www.farmlandinfo.org/sites/default/files/Why_Save_Farmland_1-03_1.pdf

Prime Lands Preservation

Learn more about identifying and protecting prime farmlands for agricultural use by visiting these websites:

Planning for agriculture from the Farmland Information Center- www.farmlandinfo.org/planning-agriculture/about-planning-agriculture

Agricultural Easements

Learn more about the use of agricultural easements to preserve working farmland by visiting these websites:

Fact sheet from the Farmland Information Center - www.farmlandinfo.org/sites/default/files/FIC_ACE_09-2013.pdf

Information about the state of agricultural easements in the US from the American Farmland Trust - www.farmland.org/resources/national-view/default.asp

Responsible Agriculture

Learn more about programs that provide financial support to incentivize the use of sustainable agriculture techniques by visiting these websites:

Information about the NYS AEM program - <http://www.nys-soilandwater.org/aem/>

Information about the NYS CREP program - <http://www.nys-soilandwater.org/crep/>

Watershed Information

G/FLRPC Keuka Lake Watershed Planning Guide - www.gflrpc.org/Publications/Keuka/Plan/Guide/LandUseGuide.pdf

Watershed Plans: Protecting and Restoring Water Quality from NYS Dept. of State - www.youtube.com/watch?v=gTtqfVN3MfQ

Watershed information from the EPA - water.epa.gov/type/watersheds/index.cfm

Canandaigua Lake Report - www.fllt.org/linkfiles/cndgareport.pdf

Seneca Lake Watershed Management Plan - www.gflrpc.org/Publications/SenecaLakeWMP.htm

For more information, or to fill out our survey, visit www.sustainablekeuka.net

This project was prepared for the New York Department of State with funds provided under Title 11 of the Environmental Protection Fund.