Farmland Partnership Program

Cohort Meeting 3

Thursday, October 1, 2026 from 9am – 3pm
John W Olver Transit Center, 12 Olive St, Greenfield MA

Facilitated by Katharine Otto, Farmland Action Plan Coordinator
Katharine.s.otto@mass.gov

MDAR
MASSACHUSETTS DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES

What to do before the meeting starts

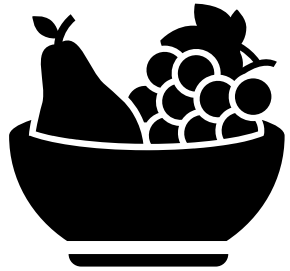


Write you name tent and name tag

- First and last name
- Organization



Introduce yourself to someone you don’t already know



Grab coffee, juice and/or snack



Welcome!

Gerard Kennedy, Director of the Division of Agricultural Conservation and Technical Assistance (DACTA), MDAR

Logistics

Restrooms and water fountains

- Go out the door at the back.
- Walk straight ahead to a small corridor where they are all located

Breaks

- Regularly spaced, but if you'd like to stand at the back of the room to stretch your legs at any time, feel free

During the big room sessions

- Phone for mentimeter polling

Agenda and Goals

9:00	Welcome and introductions
9:30	Speed networking (Part 1)
9:55	Farmland Transfer and Succession in MA
10:55	**Break**
11:10	Equity capacity building for FPP partners
11:30	Quick tips for accessibility
11:40	Speed networking (Part 2)
12:00	**Lunch**
12:40	Agricultural Commissions and how they could overlap with FPP work
1:40	Bringing FPP to a close
2:00	**Break**
2:10	Making referrals
2:50	Next steps and closing
3:00	**Finish**

Today's Goals

- Connect partners both formally and informally
- Dive into some details from your projects and learn from each other
- Explore what is needed in the coming months for FPP

Introduce yourself

30 seconds each

1. **What's your name?**
2. **Which partner do you work for?**
3. **In one sentence, explain what you do in your every day job without using technical terms.**
   For example, Katharine is a planner who connects people and resources, helping different groups work together to shape the future together based on a variety of skills, perspectives and resources.



Cohort expectations

Please see the agenda for additional description of these expectations.

For partners

- Prepare ahead of time
- Balance your participation
- Stay present
- Be open minded
- Be constructive
- Be aware of potential bias and power dynamics
- Juggle individual and collective perspective

Katharine's Role

- Share agenda with clear expectations for meeting
- Define roles and responsibilities for participants
- At the end of the meeting summarize next steps

Discussion Facilitator Roles

- Encourage some people to speak up more
- Monitor whether a specific side topic should be moved to another meeting
- Bring conversation back to topic as needed

Speed networking
Part 1

Short orientation by Katharine Otto

Introducing the concept

Why is this important?

- Many partners in the room do not yet know each other well
- Some types of people struggle with large unstructured networking time
- One-on-one conversations can help to build rapport, understanding and connection.
- Some may have tried this more in interview format where you ask a person questions for 5 minutes and then switch. But research has shown that alternating questions is a better format

What will you do?

- In your assigned pair, take it in turns to ask a question of each other.
- You can choose to ask each other the same questions or different questions.
- You can choose to ask questions that are work related or personal life ones. There are some examples in your handout.
- You have 10 minutes total. We will give a warning at 5 minutes and 2 minutes before you are finished.

Sample questions for speed networking

1) What do you value about the work that you do?
2) What keeps you motivated, interested and engaged in your work?
3) What are the areas where you see need for improvement?
4) What major activities do you do in a typical week or month?
5) What is your background?
6) What kind of job would you have if you weren't doing this?
7) What's something you do really well?
8) What's a mistake you made that you learned the most from?
9) What's the best advice you've ever been given?
10) What's something that has been on your 'to do' list (work or personal) for the longest time because you keep putting it off?

Farmland Transfer and Succession in MA

Several presenters and discussion

Farmland Access in Massachusetts: Transfer & Land “Linking”

Presentation by Land For Good

Johanna Rosen johanna@landforgood.org

Land For Good

Gaining ground for farmers



About Land For Good

- **Access** - How farmers find and get on to land
- **Tenure** - How farmers hold land: Own or Lease
- **Transfer** - How a farm (business, land, infrastructure) is passed on



Photo: Cordelia's Farm, MA





Farm Seekers - Cara and Michael, Free Living Farm, Petersham, MA

How we help



Farmers

access land to start or expand a farm business or transfer their farm



Landowners

make land available for agriculture or find the right farmer for a property



Service Providers

work with farmers to improve land access, tenure, and transfer, offer resources







Land For Good

Farm Access Methods

A DECISION GUIDE



Resources

Land For Good

Farm Access Methods

This decision tool organizes the basic farm access methods into three categories. Each category lays out the division of interests (rights) in the property, the legal vehicles, and the parties involved. Most land tenure arrangements will fall into one of these categories. This tool helps you compare methods and make informed decisions. It accompanies the Farm Access Methods Guide found at www.landforgood.org/resources/toolbox/.

WHAT IS MY FARM ACCESS GOAL?

Ownership Now | **Ownership in the Future** | **No Ownership**

WHICH ARRANGEMENTS MIGHT WORK FOR ME?

Sole Ownership	Whole Shared Ownership Interests	Partial Ownership Interests	Path to Ownership	Leasehold Interest	Other Interests in Land
Farmer acquires title to land; known as Fee Simple ▸ **Outright Purchase** ▸ **Financed purchase** with conventional or alternative financing ▸ **Gift** or **Inheritance** from family member or other	A group of farmers, or farmers with non-farmers, forms a legal entity to own the farmland. ▸ **LLC or Corporation** ▸ **Cooperative**	Farmer and other entities own different interests (rights) in the land ▸ **Ground lease** where entity owns land; farmer owns structures and rents land ▸ **Life estate** where non-farmer retains rights to occupy ▸ **Easement**	Farmer purchases a specific farm over time ▸ **Lease-to-own** with right of first refusal or purchase option ▸ **Land contract** where farmer pays landowner toward purchase ▸ **LLC or corporation** within which equity in the farm is gradually transferred ▸ **Gift** of land over time	Farmer (tenant) has a contractual agreement assigning use rights and responsibilities; may be written or oral ▸ **Short-term lease** ▸ **Long-term lease** ▸ **Ground Lease** where entity owns land; farmer owns structures and rents land	Farmer has agreement granting permission to use the land (technically not a tenant) ▸ **License or Permit** ▸ **Agreement**
WHO MIGHT BE INVOLVED?					
▸ **Private bank** ▸ **State/Federal lender** ▸ **Seller-financer** ▸ **Community/Alternative lender** ▸ **Family/trust** ▸ **Employer** ▸ **Other private landowner**	▸ **Other farmers** ▸ **Community members** ▸ **Investors** ▸ **Family**	▸ **Community land trust** ▸ **Conservation land trust** ▸ **Other Non-profit** ▸ **Public/Gov't entity** ▸ **Private landowner** ▸ **Investors**	▸ **Private landowner** ▸ **Family** ▸ **Non-profit** (e.g., land trust, school) ▸ **Public/Gov't entity** ▸ **Investors**	▸ **Private landowner** ▸ **Family** ▸ **Public/Gov't entity** ▸ **Non-profit** (e.g., land trust, school) ▸ **Investors** ▸ **Retired farmer**	▸ **Private landowner** ▸ **Public/Gov't entity** ▸ **Non-profit** (e.g., land trust, school) ▸ **Other landholding entity**

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New England
Farmland Finder

Post a Property

Make your land available for farming; create a profile to submit your property

Find Farmland

View farmland available across New England; create a profile to contact owners

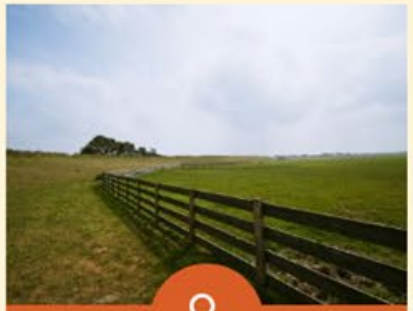
Find a Farmer

View a database of farmers looking for farmland; create a profile to contact them



Achieve your farmland vision

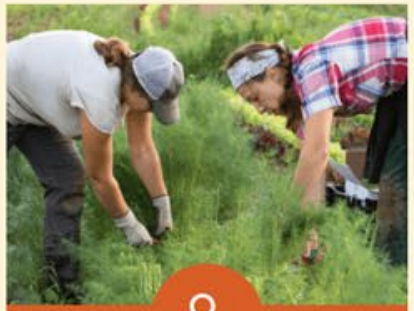
Helping to connect farm seekers and landowners across New England, and facilitate farmland transfer.



Post a **Property** ▸



Find **Farmland** ▸



Find a **Farmer** ▸

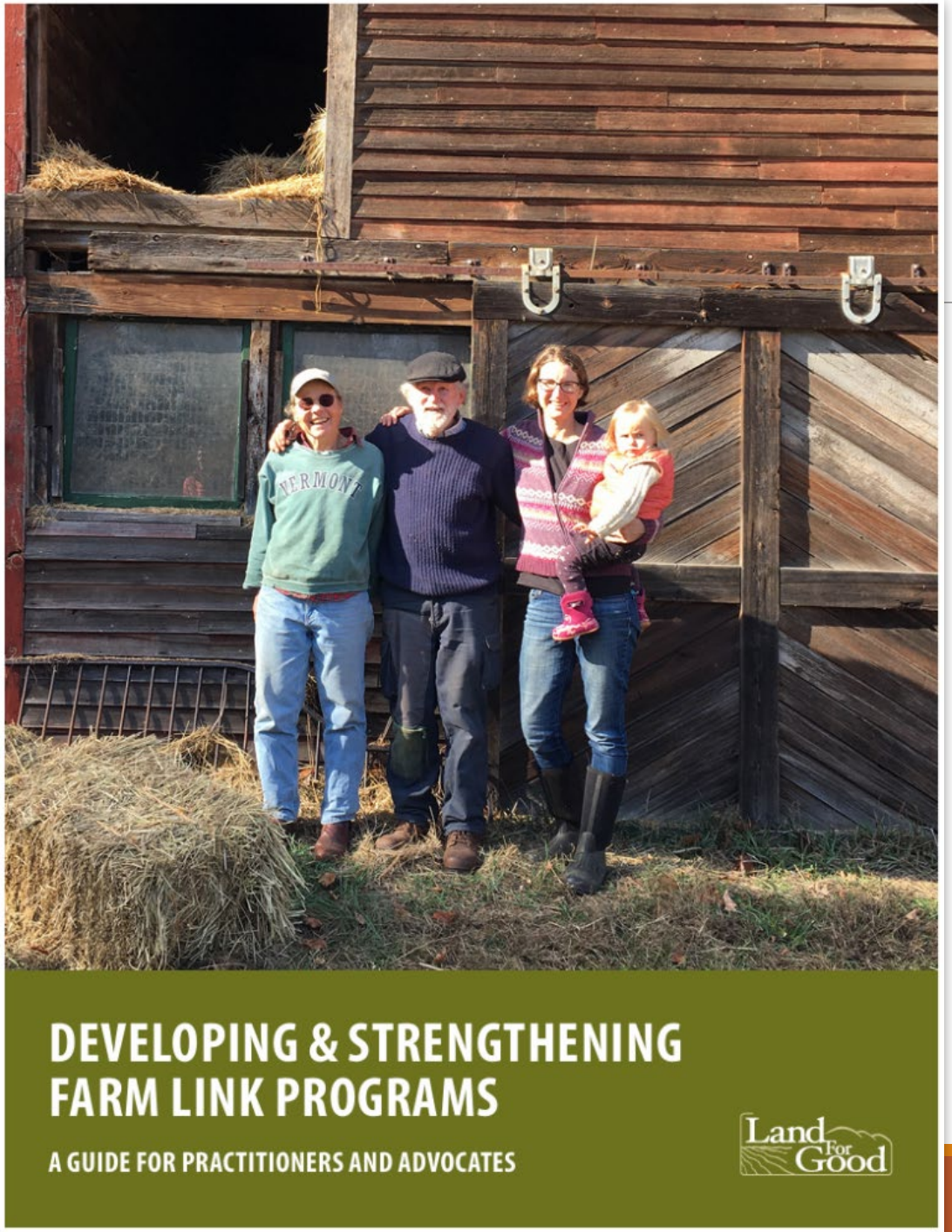


Get **Resources** ▸

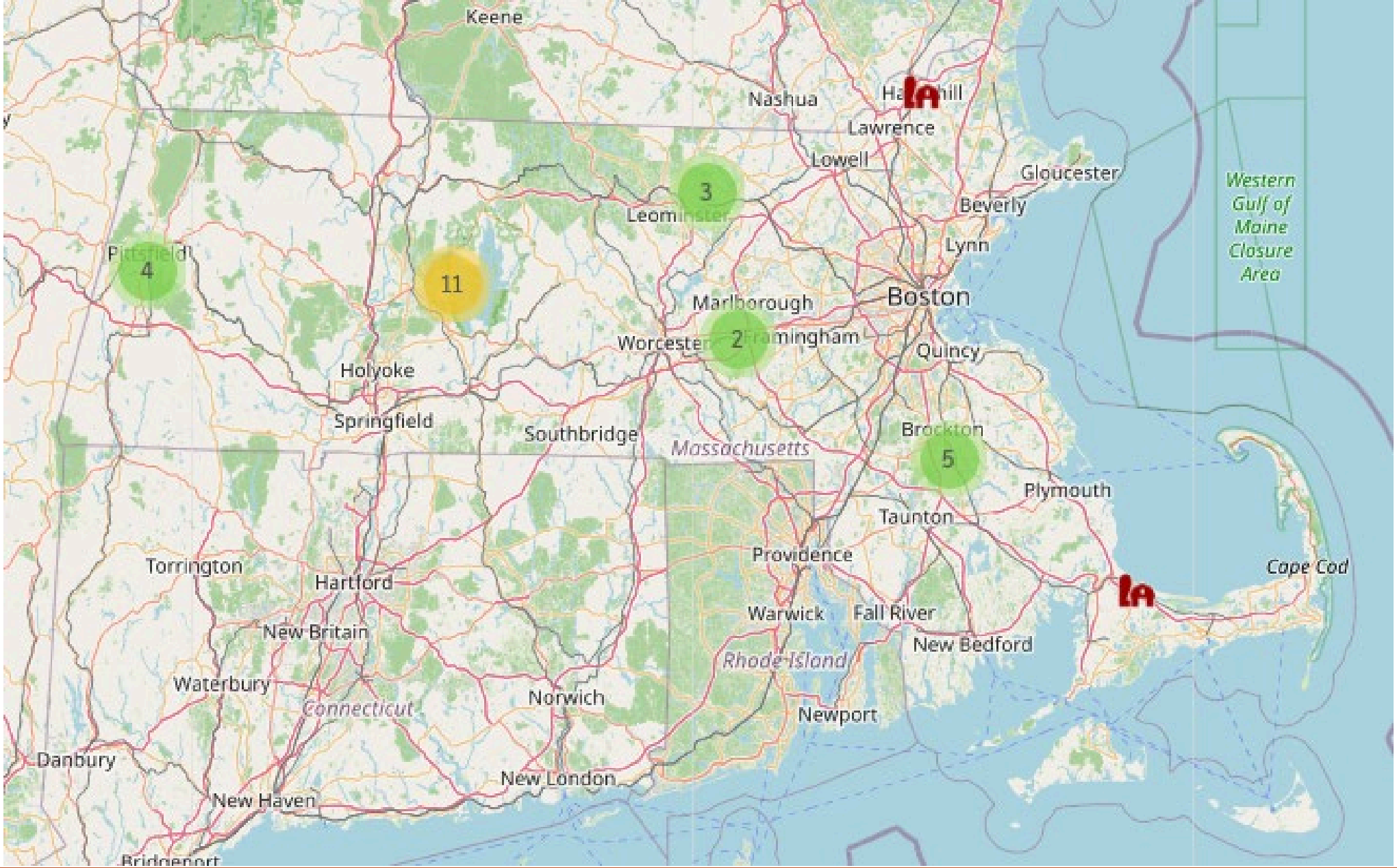
New England Farmland Finder

Farm Link Programs

- Core Services - connecting, linking, matching
- Wrap-Around Services - education, technical assistance



New England Farm Link COLLABORATIVE



NewEnglandFarmlandFinder.org

Odd Pine Farm - Blueberry Farm with 33.5 acres for sale, with house - Ashburnham, MA



The Land

Property owner: Farmer or farm family

Location: 122 Ferin Road, Ashburnham, MA

Total number of acres available with this property: 33.5

Acres of cropland or tillable land: 5

Acres of pasture: 3

Acres of forested land: 24

Other open and/or non-farmable land: Property consists of two parcels - house with 27.70 acres - a portion is in CH 61A. Second parcel has 10.78 acres

New England Farmland Finder

How to Create Effective Online Property Postings for Farm Link Websites

By The New England Farm Link Collaborative
and the Land Access Project Listing and Linking Task Force

PUBLISHED SEPTEMBER 2017

New England Farm Link COLLABORATIVE · Land For Good · Land Access Project · USDA United States Department of Agriculture National Institute of Food and Agriculture

The Land Access Project (LAP, 2015-2018) is directed by Land For Good in partnership with over 40 collaborating organizations, agencies and individual experts in six New England states.

LAP is funded by the USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture through its Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program, Grant # 2015-04544.

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Property Postings

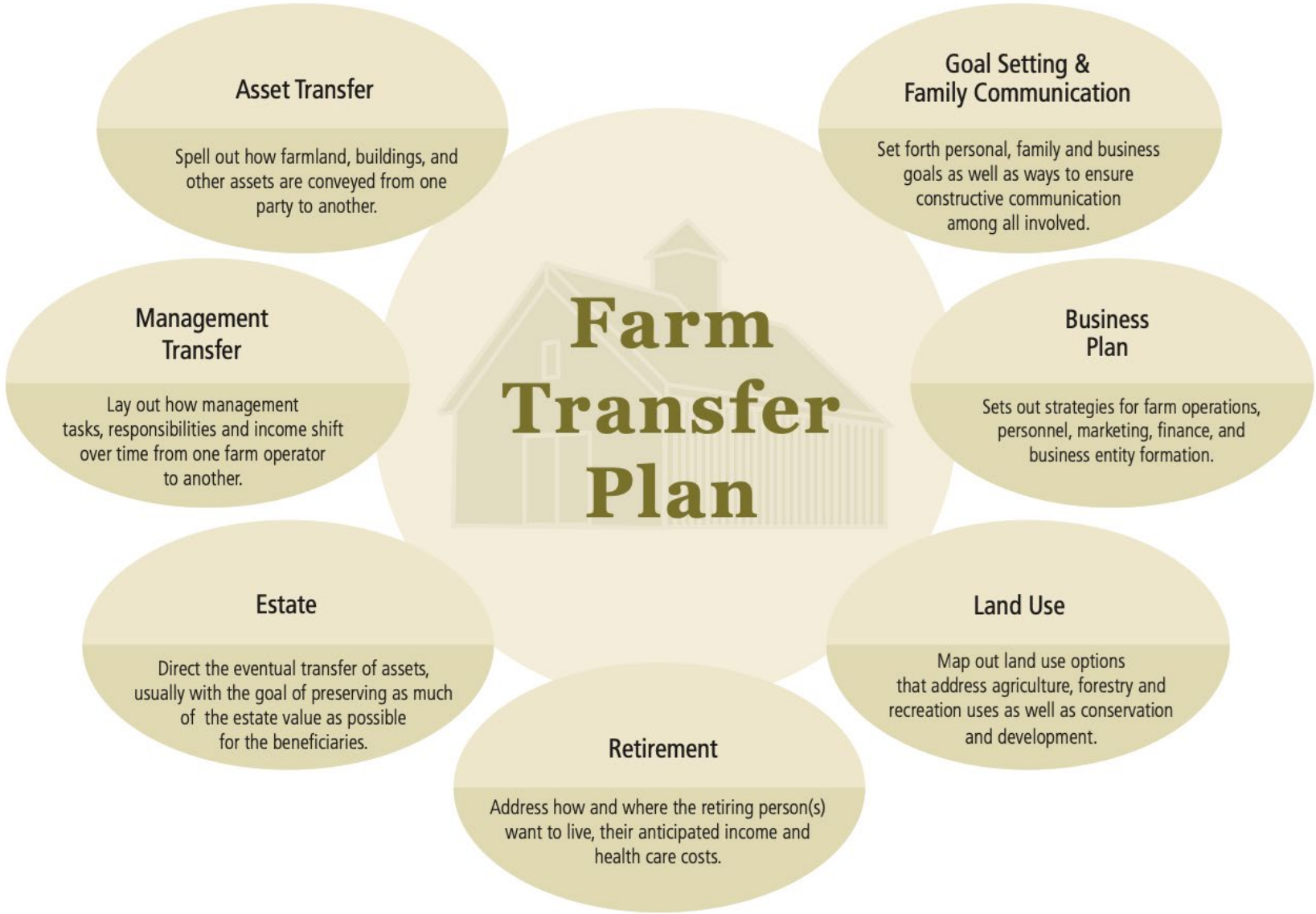


Farm Transfer - John & Beth Haynes, Morgan & Baird Swift, Haynes Dairy Farm, NH

Farm transfer planning

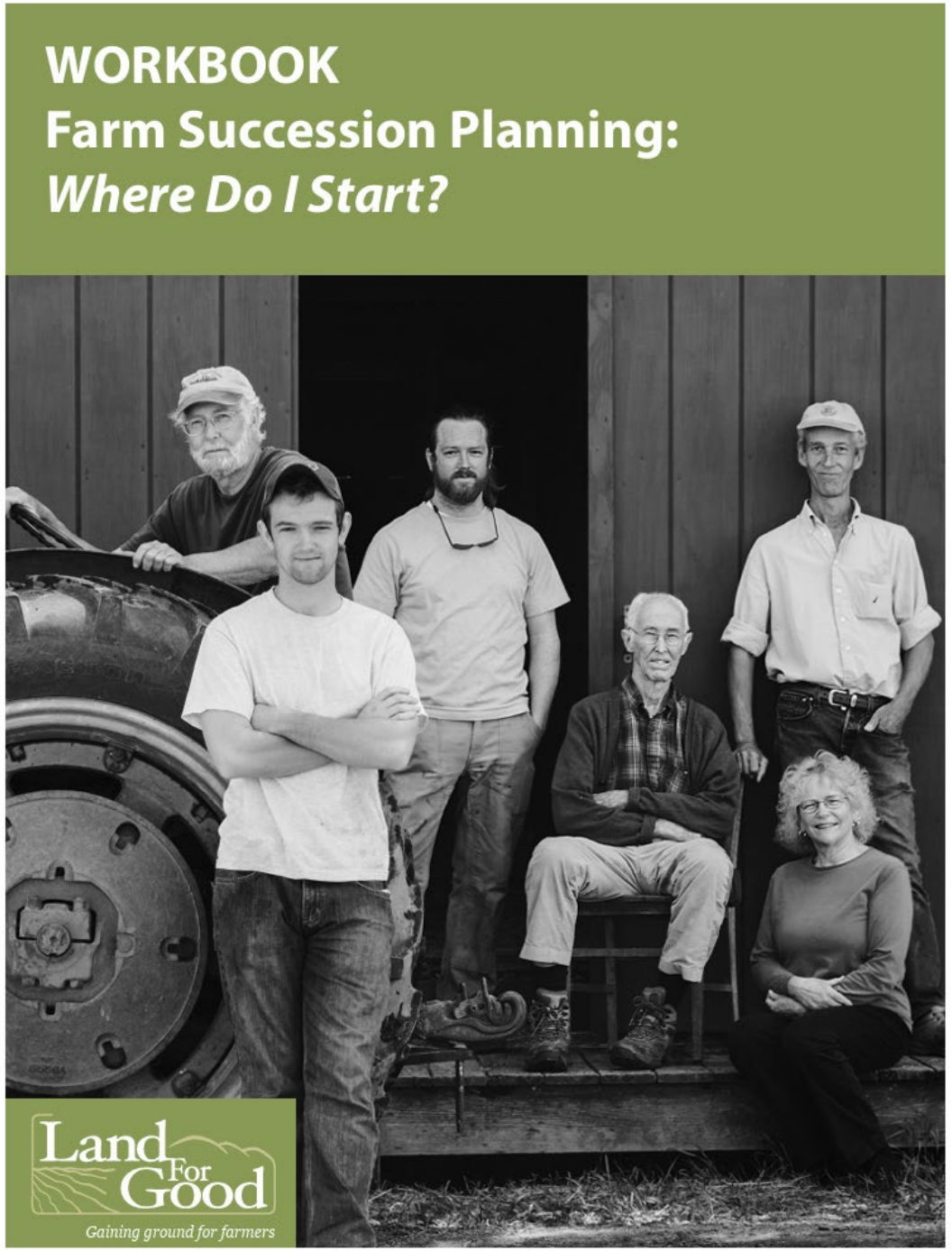
A farm transfer plan includes:

- an **action plan**,
- a **timeline**,
- and the **documents** needed to accomplish the transfer.



Succession Planning Support

- Individual technical assistance
- Workshops
- Winter webinar series
- 3-day Farm Succession School
- Training other service providers



RESOURCES

TRANSFERRING A FARM



REFINE SEARCH

Where Do I Start? Transferring the Farm

Use this workbook to explore what you already know, consider the bigger picture, and get ready to take action.

BY LAND FOR GOOD | WORKSHEET

The Farm Transfer Process

One-page diagram outlining the steps in the process of passing a farm from one generation or owner to another.

BY LAND FOR GOOD | PDF

Farm Succession and Transfer: Strategies for the Junior Generation

Guidebook for the next generation that presents the issues from the perspective of the incoming farmer.

BY LAND FOR GOOD | PDF

Contact

Johanna Rosen

johanna@landforgood.org

Follow us!

www.LandForGood.org

www.NewEnglandFarmlandFinder.org

YouTube, Instagram, Facebook and X

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Gaining ground for farmers

MDAR Farm Transfer Resources

Overview of farm transfer planning & support that MDAR offers

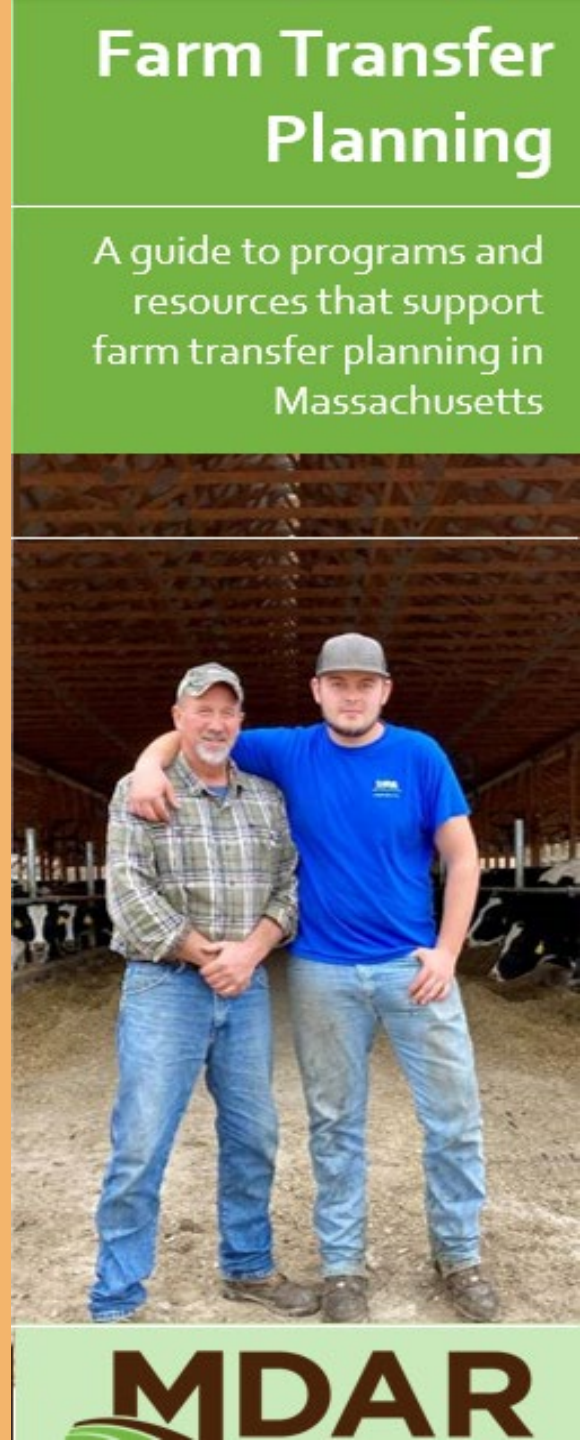
Presentation by MDAR staff

- Melissa Adams

melissa.L.adams@mass.gov

- Laura Barley

laura.barley@mass.gov



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MDAR Farm Transfer Planning Collaborations



MDAR provides succession planning TA through its Farm Viability programs.

MDAR also sponsors Land For Good's **Succession School**, to make it happen in MA annually.

- Course geared at senior farmers ready to start succession planning in peer-supported environment. Next year's course expected in Metro West of Boston: **Jan - March 2027**

- Land For Good is the best contact for Succession School, but we're always happy to help refer and triage folks to resources based on their needs.

MDAR Farm Transfer Planning Programs

MDAR **Farm Pass** program launched in 2024

- One-on-one farm transfer planning process is a collaboration of owners and **identified successors** over the course of a year. Results in written plan at **no cost**.
- We contract with experienced Planners to place strong emphasis on **financial planning** throughout the process
- Next application expected to be released **early Nov. 2026 with due date** before the holidays. Subsequent Round expected to start in early spring 2027.

Contact Laura Barley at 857-507-5548 or laura.barley@mass.gov for any interest or questions about Farm Pass.



Photo: Farm Pass participant Full Well Farm in North Adams, MA

How transfer and succession fits into MDAR stewardship of APR protected farmland

Example from MDAR APR Stewardship Team

- Nathan Moyer Nathan.moyer@mass.gov

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When APRs are monitored, we ask about planned transfers and succession plans

Is there a succession plan in place?

- Plant the seed of the importance of having a succession plan.
- Connect the landowners with technical assistance (Land For Good and MDAR resources) to help develop a succession plan.

If considering a future transfer of APR:

- Make landowner aware of the requirements in the APR (none, Right of First Refusal /ROFR, or Option to Purchase at Agricultural Value/ OPAV) and how this will impact the future transfer.

What are those terms?

- A Right of First Refusal (ROFR) is included in the protection agreement to ensure emphasis is placed on the buyer's plan to keep the land in production.
- Option to Purchase at Agricultural Value (OPAV) is included in the protection agreement so that land remains at agricultural value which helps it be more affordable for the next generation of farmers to purchase. It is also a helpful tool that should require that the land be transferred to another farmer.

For more about these tools visit MDAR's Planning for Farmland resource

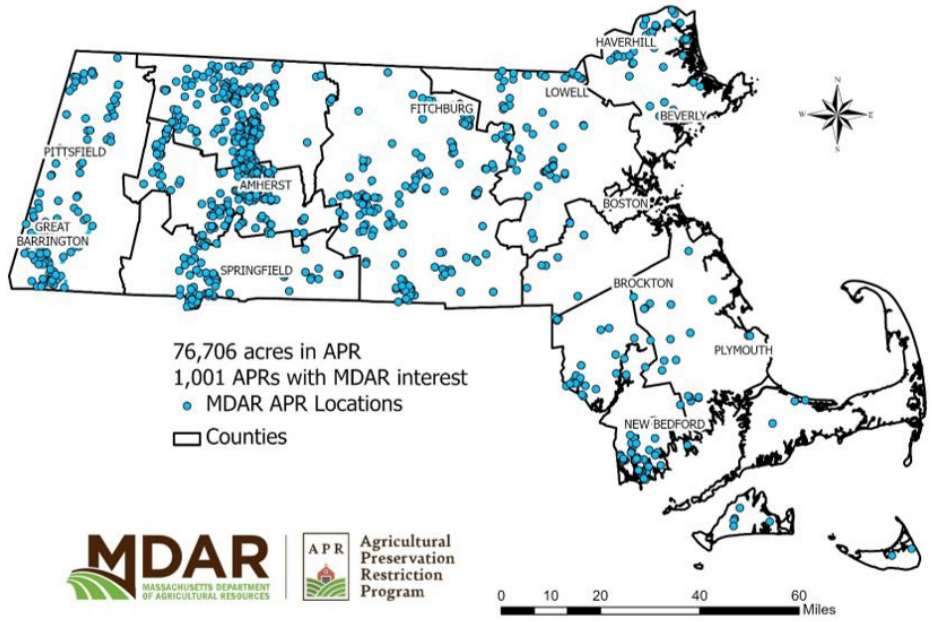
When APR Properties are Transferring

Transfer Coordinator ensures ROFR or OPAV requirements are met:

- Pre-sale conference with buyers and sellers.
- Obtain documentation (i.e., Purchase and Sales Agreements, appraisal, farm plans, etc.)
- Determines whether MDAR Exercises or Waives our right.

Stewardship Planner ensures APR transfers with no issues or violations:

- Review property records and monitor if the APR hasn't been monitored recently.
- Work with seller and proposed buyer to address any concerns prior to the transfer, if necessary.



Short Q&A on Transfer and Succession

Facilitated by Melissa Adams

Up to 5 minutes

For any questions after today, please email them to the contacts for each section

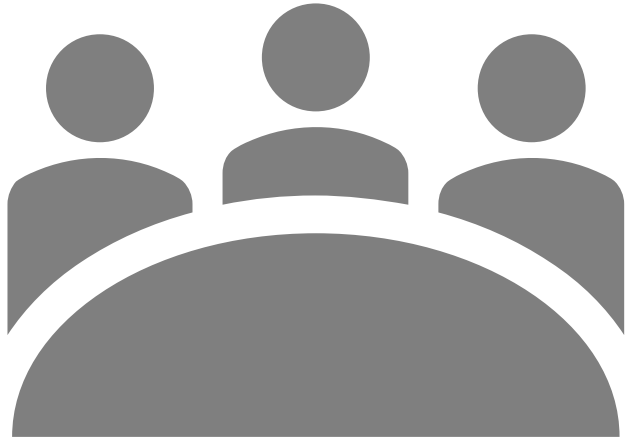


Break out discussion on transfer and succession

Discussion in breakout groups

- 10 mins for introductions
- 20 mins for discussion topic

Please return to the main room at _____



Discussion questions

1. How do you see your FPP work intersecting with transfer planning? What about your non-FPP work?
2. What obstacles and opportunities do you see in folks making use of New England Farmland Finder (NEFF)?
3. What obstacles and opportunities do you see for farm transfer planning support?
4. How would you like to see farm transfer support expanding in Massachusetts?
5. Are there new connections in your group (or in the room) to pursue that will benefit your support of farm transfer or land linking?
6. How does your organization get involved with making connections between seekers and landowners?



Break time!

Restart at 11:25

Equity capacity building for FPP partners

Upcoming training to increase access to public lands through equity-centered technical assistance

Presentation from Pocasset Pokanoket Land Trust (PPLT)

- Nate Erwin nate@pocassetlandtrust.org
- Michelle Nikfarjam michelle@pocassetlandtrust.org

POCASSET POKANOKET LAND TRUST

Who we are

Pocasset Pokanoket Land Trust (PPLT)

A land-trust perspective on equitable access to land and relationships among farmers, land, and institutions.

Nuestras Raíces

A partner perspective grounded in supporting historically underserved farmers and communities.

New Entry

A partner perspective on farmer-centered technical assistance and access to land and resources.

What this training is

Purpose

- Build the practical skills and organizational awareness technical service providers need to better support historically underserved farmers.

Three areas of focus

- Land access
- Safe options for funding
- Cultural competency

What participants will leave with

- Concrete tools for finding public land, assessing whether funding and institutions are safe, listening to farmers' goals, and identifying changes they can make in their own practice and organizations.

Small group discussion (3-4 people)

Discussion in breakout groups

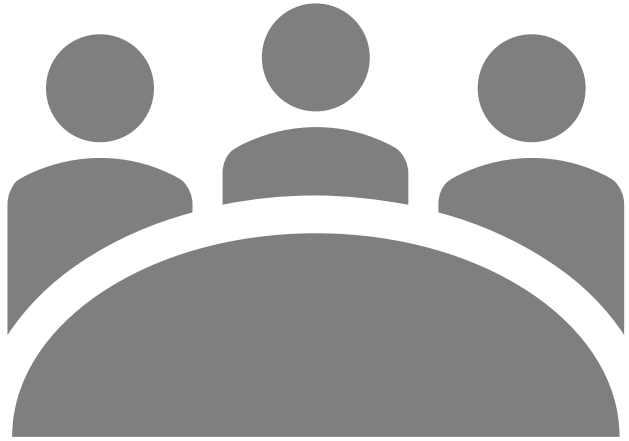
- 12-15 mins

Start with your experience

- Share one example, challenge, and hoped-for takeaway.
- Listen for themes we can return to throughout the day.

We will come back together at

_____



Discussion questions

1. What is one situation your staff regularly encounter where you feel underprepared to support a historically underserved farmer?
2. Where does your organization currently face the biggest challenges in supporting historically underserved farmers with land access, funding, or technical assistance?
3. What is one concrete tool or outcome you would want to leave this training with that you could immediately use in your organization?



Lunch time!

Restarting at 12:25

Speed networking
Part 2

Potential questions for speed networking

1) What do you value about the work that you do?
2) What keeps you motivated, interested and engaged in your work?
3) What are the areas where you see need for improvement?
4) What major activities do you do in a typical week or month?
5) What is your background?
6) What kind of job would you have if you weren't doing this?
7) What's something you do really well?
8) What's a mistake you made that you learned the most from?
9) What's the best advice you've ever been given?
10) What's something that has been on your 'to do' list (work or personal) for the longest time because you keep putting it off?

Agricultural Commissions (AgComs) and how they could fit with FPP Work

How AgComs fit into MA Farmland Action Plan (MFAP) and Farmland Partnership Program (FPP)

Introduction from MDAR Division of Agricultural Conservation and Technical Assistance (DACTA)

- Gerard Kennedy Gerard.kennedy@mass.gov

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How AgComs fit into MFAP and FPP

- Farmland protection ultimately happens at the local level
- AgComs can connect farmers, landowners, municipal government, land trusts and community partners
- Many Massachusetts communities already have AgComs
- There may be opportunities to strengthen connections between AgCom work and FPP projects
- AgComs may be an existing local partner for work already underway.

Mentimeter questions

How much do you know about AgComs? (Select all that apply)

- I've been a member of an AgCom
- I've worked with one or more AgComs
- I've attended one or more presentations on Ag Coms, or an AgCom Roundtable hosted by Pete Westover and/or Sarah Gardner since 2024
- I have some awareness of what AgComs are, but not much
- I don't know what an AgCom is

If you have worked with an AgCom, what did you work with them on? (write in your answer)

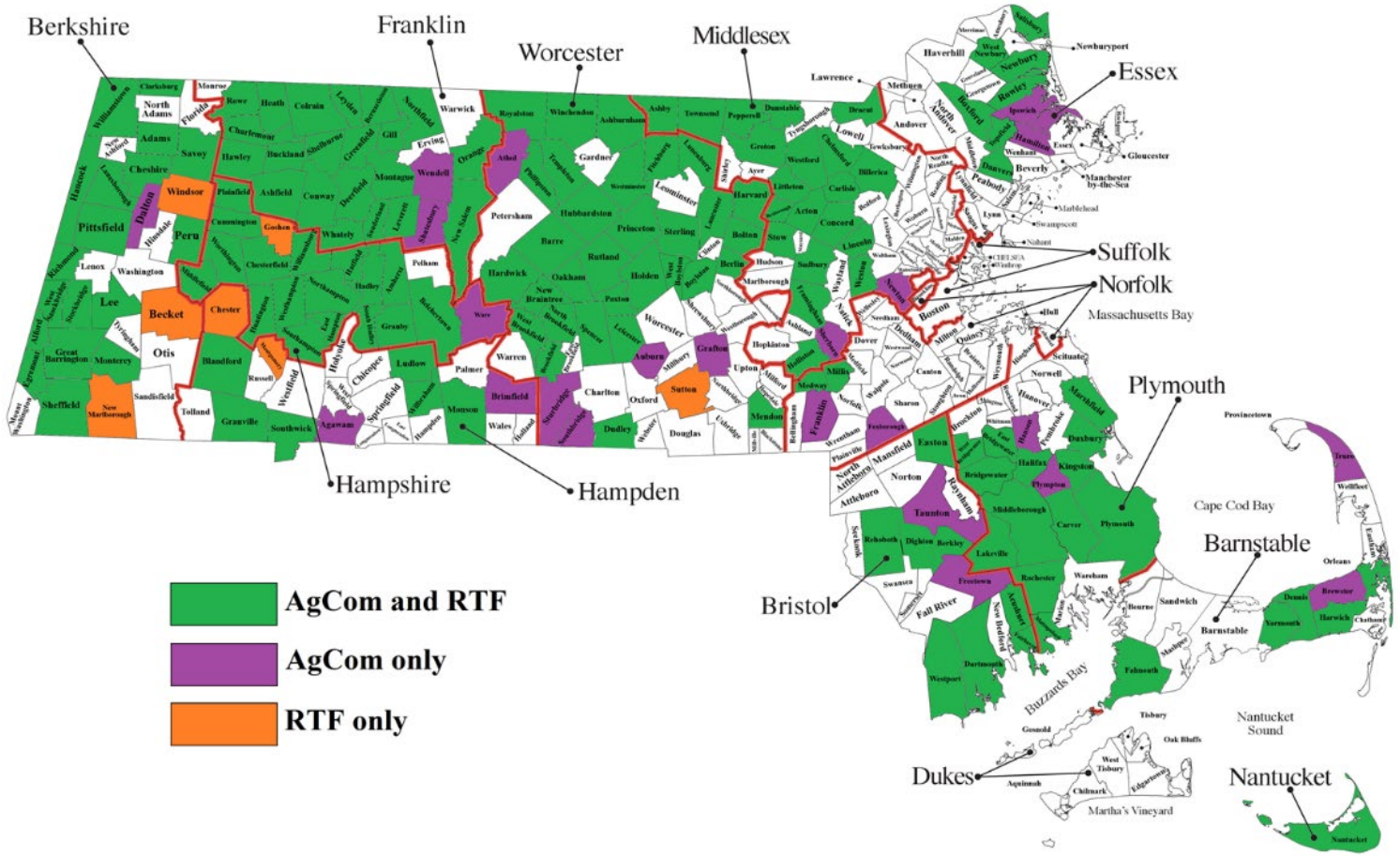
MA Agricultural Commissions – Ag Commission Technical Assistance Project

Presentation by Conservation Works

- Pete Westover westover03@comcast.net

CONSERVATION WORKS

Status of AgComs in Massachusetts



- More than 170 towns have voted to create Agricultural Commissions. 150 towns have Right to Farm Bylaws. Many AgComs have recently been inactive, but in general those are hoping to get back in gear.
- The Mass Association of Agricultural Commissions, MAAC, has been inactive for several years, but there is a current plan supported by Mass Farm Bureau and former board members to bring it back to life.
- MDAR is again sponsoring technical support for AgComs.
- The Mass Association of Conservation Districts (MACD) is beginning an effort to help reactivate the Agricultural Commissions of eastern Massachusetts.

Accepting Chapter 40, Section 8L

Municipalities that created their AgCom before August 9, 2016, automatically fall under Chapter 40, Section 8L, and have the powers created by this section. Municipalities that approved their AgComs after that date should ask their Town Meeting or Town or City Council vote to accept this section.

Sample City Council Ordinance/ Town Meeting Article

"To see if the City Council/Town will vote to adopt Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 40, Section 8L, and will by adopting this section establish under that section all rights and powers provided to the Framingham Agricultural Commission, including to: (i) buy, hold, manage, license or lease land for agricultural purposes, (ii) hold Conservation Restrictions on farmland, (iii) accept donations of farmland, (iv) apply for and receive grants, gifts, bequests in accordance with this section, (v) establish a comprehensive agricultural land plan, and (vi) establish a municipal Agricultural Preservation Fund."



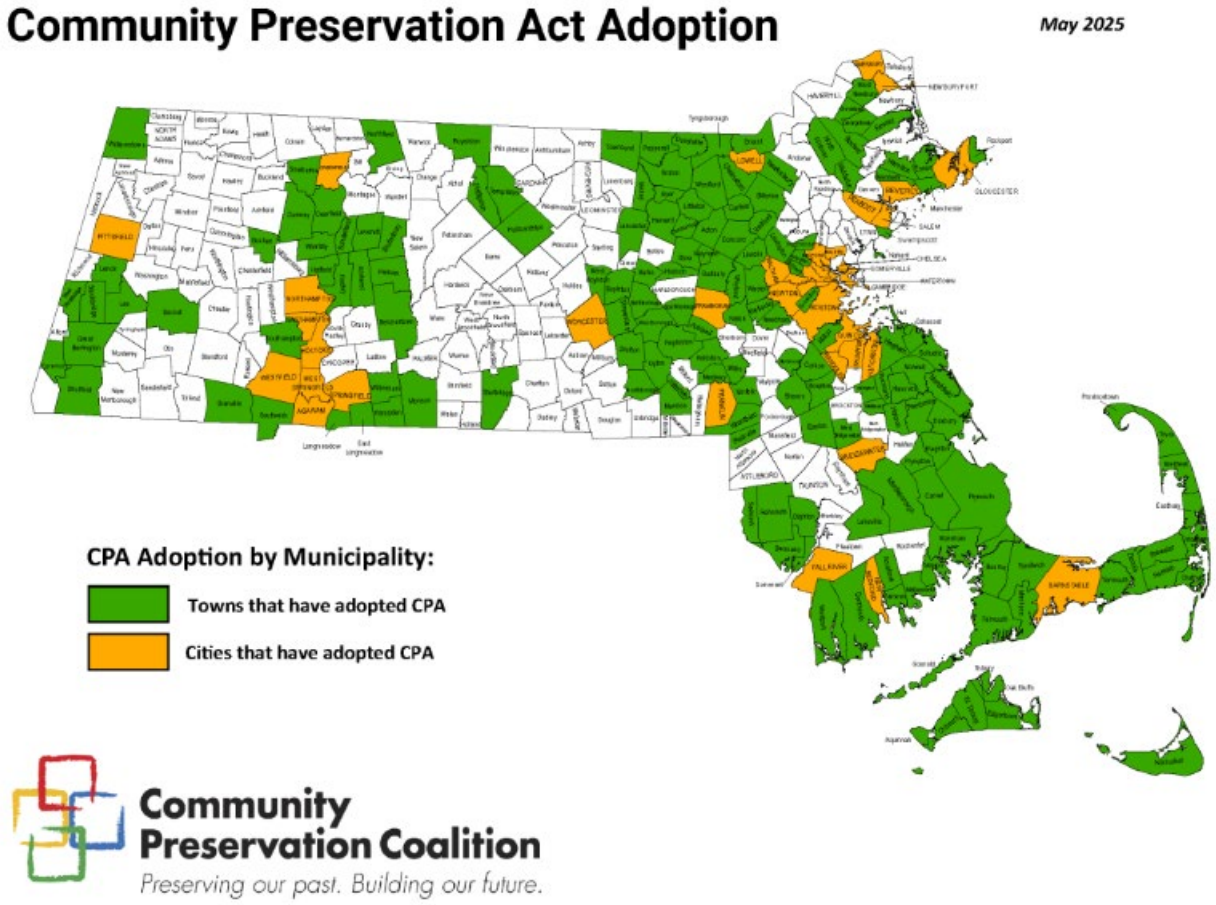
Sources of Money for Municipal Farmland Preservation Funds

- Community Preservation Act if adopted by the municipality
- Outright Town appropriations to the Farmland Preservation Fund
- Donations
- Farm lease payments for land controlled by Ag Commission
- Other Programs or Sources for Farmland Preservation
- Mass Conservation Land Tax Credit Program (pays up to $75,000 for a donated Conservation Restriction)
- Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP-ALE)
- Forest Legacy Program (administered by MA DCR)
- NRCS Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)
- State LAND (Land Acquisitions for Natural Diversity) Program
- Mass Audubon Catalyst Fund



Photo: “LexFarm” – Lexington Community Farm is under a recent Conservation Restriction held by Citizens for Lexington Conservation Preservation Foundation, Inc.

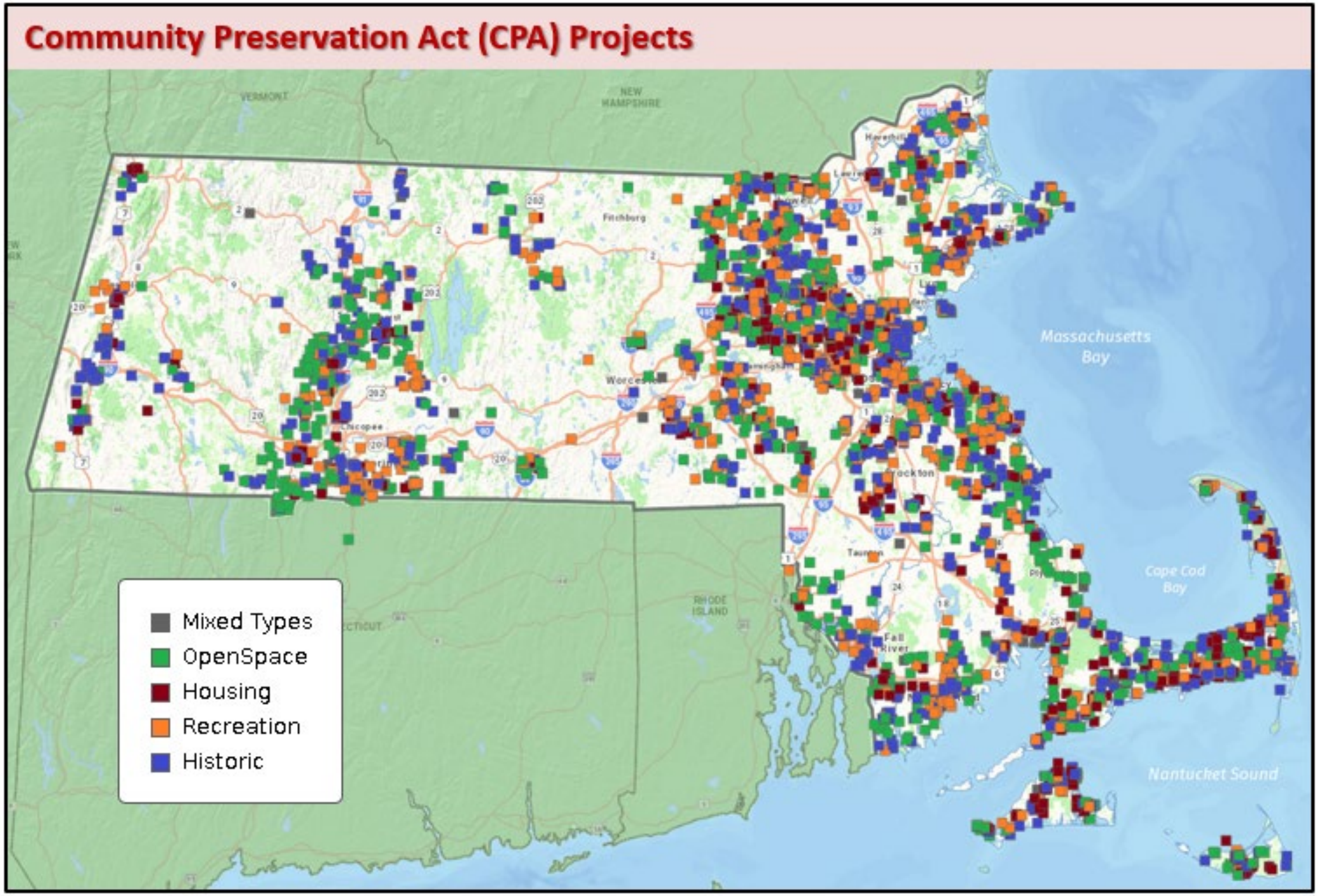
Community Preservation Act



The Massachusetts Community Preservation Act (CPA) allows local municipalities to fund projects for open space, historic preservation, and affordable housing through a local surcharge on property taxes, matched by a state fund.

- Permanent Restrictions: Any real property acquired with CPA funds must have a permanent restriction placed on it to ensure its use aligns with the CPA purpose.
- Adoption: A town can adopt the CPA through a ballot question petition signed by 5% of registered voters or by voter approval at a municipal election.

Map of Community Preservation Projects



What Makes a Good Ag Commission?

- Spearhead person leading the effort and keeping things moving
- Membership that includes young farmers, variety of farm experience
- Good relations with other town boards
- Knowledge of Chapter 40, Section 8L
- Townwide Farmland Preservation Plan and plans for funding farmland protection
- Collective knowledge of every farm within the town



Photo: Soybean crop in Hatfield, Hampshire County

Who Does the Work? Finding Staff Support



Photo: Just Roots CSA, Greenfield

- Arranging a few hours a week from town planning or conservation agent
- Possible multi-town shared support position
- Regular volunteer(s) familiar with the farm community
- Grant-funded position
- Assistance from regional planning agency or land trust

Projects that give AgComs life

- Town logo for farm produce
- Survey of all farms in town to learn about crops, labor, future outlook, succession plan
- Right to Farm road signs
- Sponsorship of school gardens, community gardens
- Townwide farmers dinners
- Town farm brochure
- Community forums, farm workshops

(The above all funded by past MAAC small grant program)



Photo: Allen Farm, Sterling, Worcester County

Other Tools for Agricultural Commissions



- Town First Refusal Rights under Chapter 61A
- MAAC: Mass Association of Agricultural Commissions
- Mass Farm Bureau – Free memberships for Agricultural Commissions
- Ag Commission Roundtables
- Ag Mediation Services from the Mass Office of Public Collaboration, UMass Boston
- Land For Good for Succession Planning

Photo: Farmland in Whately, Franklin County

Ag Commissions in Berkshire County

- Town Agricultural Funds with appropriations from CPCs (Community Preservation Act Committees): Williamstown - $25,000 appropriated. Stockbridge – process in progress.
- Williamstown has an Affordable Housing Trust that its CPC funded in the same manner.
- Other active Berkshire AgComs: Sheffield, Egremont, Lanesborough, Great Barrington, Clarksburg, West Stockbridge, and others.



Photo: Recent Berkshire County AgCom Gathering

Ag Commissions in the Southeast

- Duxbury has successfully acquired farmland with CPA funds and created a 10-year lease to a local farmer.
- East Bridgewater is working with local farmers to go through succession planning with help from Land For Good.
- The Westport AgCom has a brochure called “Living Next to a Farm,” which are glad to distribute to other towns.
- Some AgComs are contracting Cost of Community Services studies. COCS studies typically show that housing costs roughly $1.25 for each dollar it brings in tax revenue, compared with 80 cents for farmland.



Photo: Ag Commission Gathering in Westport

AgComs that Set an Example for Others



Photo: 1st Middlesex Representative Margaret Scarsdale addressing AgComs in Middlesex County

Pepperell AgCom – Example of Active, Effective AgCom

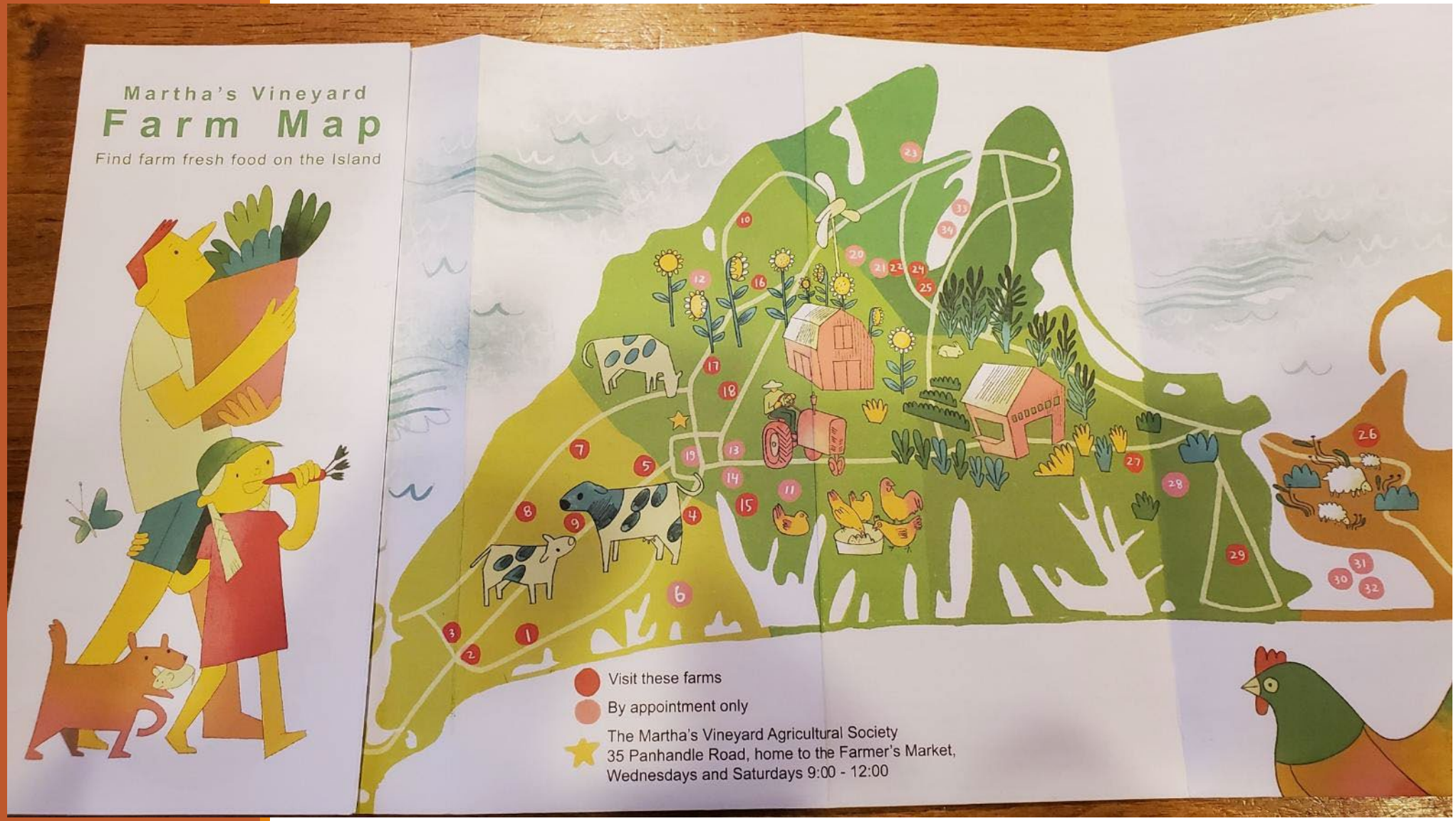
- The AgCom has made presentations to other boards and committees and is encouraging farmers to have open farm days and use agritourism to get community onto farms.
- The AgCom went to the Planning Board to get money to hire a consultant to do a stakeholder engagement process – what their farms produce, how they access markets, and what their capacity is to grow.
- Carried out a Cost of Community Services study using a protocol outline from Mass Woods.
- The Town is becoming a Right to Farm Community and the AgCom is always trying to find partners. The AgCom has made presentations to the Select Board, Planning Board, and ConCom.
- Partnered with a food hub – Growing Places – to apply for and receive an FSIG grant for a cold storage facility.

Falmouth AgCom Purchases Farmland and Collaborates with Cape Cod Compact

- Falmouth AgCom collaborated with Farming Falmouth and the 300 Committee in purchasing “The Patch,” which provides:
- Produce for local pantries
- Affordable land and housing for farmers
- Community gardens
- Educational programming
- Note: The Cape Cod Compact of Conservation Trusts (Mark Robinson) helps AgComs with farmland protection



Island Grown Initiative and the Vineyard Agricultural Society are conducting meetings to see about getting Ag Commissions started on the island



Resource Organizations able to Partner with or Assist AgComs

- MDAR AgCom Technical Assistance Program
- Mass Farm Bureau Federation
- Land For Good (Keene, NH)
- American Farmland Trust
- Mass Farm Mediation Program (Office of Dispute Resolution at UMass Boston)
- Regional Planning Agencies
- Buy Local Organizations (SEMAP and others)
- Conservation Law Foundation Legal Food Hub
- Conservation Land Trusts (140 in Mass)
- Mass Food System Collaborative
- Mass Farmers Markets
- NOFA Mass
- New Entry Sustainable Farming Project
- Food Bank of Western Mass
- Food is Medicine programs like that of Just Roots

Q&A on AgComs

Facilitated by Winton Pitcoff

15 minutes

For any questions after today, please email them to Pete Westover westover03@comcast.net and Sarah Gardner sarahsperrygardner@gmail.com



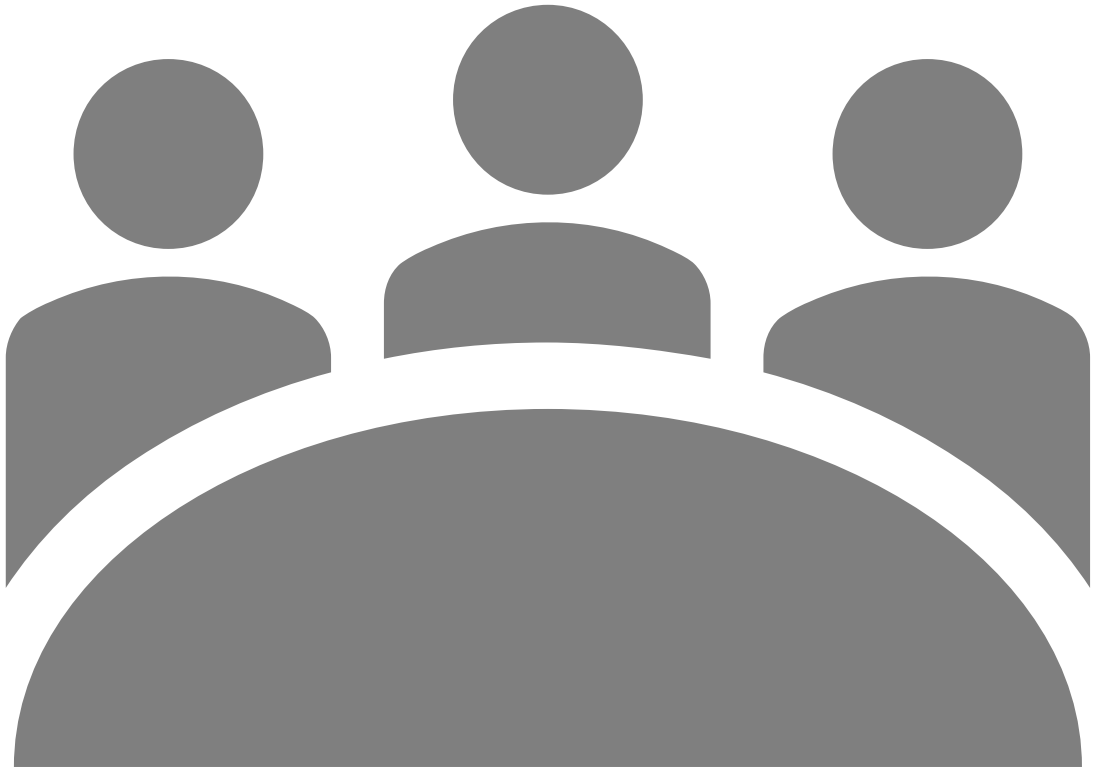
Break out group discussion on AgComs

Discussion in breakout groups

- 15 mins for discussion topic

Same assignments as this morning

Please return to the main room at _____



Quick tips for Accessibility

Presentation and live demonstration by Katharine Otto

Digital Accessibility

Major things to think about content

- Plain language
- Sensory language
- Abbreviations
- Language used for links
- Images – alt text, captions
- Unique titles for each slide

Major things to think about type and format

- Sans-serif fonts
- Text size
- All capitals
- Color contrast
- Underlines only for hyperlinks
- Hierarchy of headings using the “Style library”

We will provide additional information to support making your work accessible.

Common, but easy to fix, issues I'm often seeing

Issue	Quick solution
Use serif font	Use a sans serif font (eg calibri, aptos, arial, ie ones without the bars within the letters)
Text size too small	Use at least size 18 for powerpoint and 12 for word docs
Not enough color contrast	Use accessibility checker to see if the color contrast works. Sometimes increasing the text size and/or making text bold can help if borderline
Underlined text not hyperlink	Change to bold
Missing alt text	Include alt text for every image, or mark as decorative as relevant
Random text boxes	Set up template slides in powerpoint
Computer not sure order to read slide	Using slide templates can help, and accessibility checker can flag the remaining issues
Multiple slides with the same name	Make small edits to slide names to make them unique

Additional resources

As shared via email on 5/22, MDAR and other state agencies are using the following resources created by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts to help them to understand and meet accessibility requirements. From these pages, you will also find links to additional resources.

- Digital Accessibility Fundamentals: Content and Typography
- Digital Accessibility Fundamentals: Color
- Digital Accessibility Fundamentals: Document and Page Structure
- Making accessible Word documents for PDF Export
- Making accessible PowerPoint slide decks
- Creating accessible Electronic Documents and Communications
- Creating accessible PDFs with Acrobat Pro
- Creating accessible excel documents (coming soon)
- Accessibility Testing Checklists
- Writing alt text for images

Bringing FPP to a close

Gerard Kennedy and Katharine Otto

What's left to do by the 10/31/2027 deadline

All work must be completed for all contracts by 10/31/2027 (No extensions)

For all projects

- Annual reports
- Performance indicators
- Present at final webinars
- Check in meetings

Cohort meetings

- Jan/Feb 2027 (online)
- April/May/early June 2027 (in person)
- Sept/Oct 2027 – final webinars

Draft and final deliverables (documents, trainings, events, etc)

- Review by MDAR and final edits
- Accessibility changes
- Post to MDAR webpage

Timelines for review

- For documents, always assume 3 weeks for MDAR to return their review. They will try to be faster where they can.
- For trainings and events MDAR needs to review your draft materials at least 6 weeks before the event date.
  - Up to 3 weeks for MDAR to review – around all our other work and events, and to coordinate internally
  - 3 weeks when partner works through things identified and make corrections as needed.

Cohort meetings going forward

Cohort meetings we've had so far

- February 2026 online
- May 2026 in person
- October 2026 in person (Today!)

What we are thinking comes next

- Jan/Feb 2027 – Online. 2-3 hours
- April/ May/early June 2027 – in person
- Sept/Oct 2027 – Series of 3 webinars.
  - 1.5 hours each. Every project present. All expected to attend.
  - Counts as 3 online cohort meetings.

Mentimeter questions

1. What are the benefits that you get out of cohort meetings in person?
2. What are the benefits that you expect to get out of cohort meetings online?
3. What would you like the last in person cohort meeting to focus on? Topics and/or type of activities



Break

10 minutes



Next steps and closing

Facilitated by Katharine Otto

Next steps

Follow up from today

- Katharine will be compiling notes for what was shared
- Powerpoint will be posted to the MDAR website in the next few days

Takeaways

- Agenda topics for next time
- Unresolved discussion
- Other observations

Next meeting

- Online
- Date to be determined via doodle poll
- More details to come shortly

Closing thoughts and thank you!

Any questions?

For any questions after today, please email them to Katharine.s.otto@mass.gov

