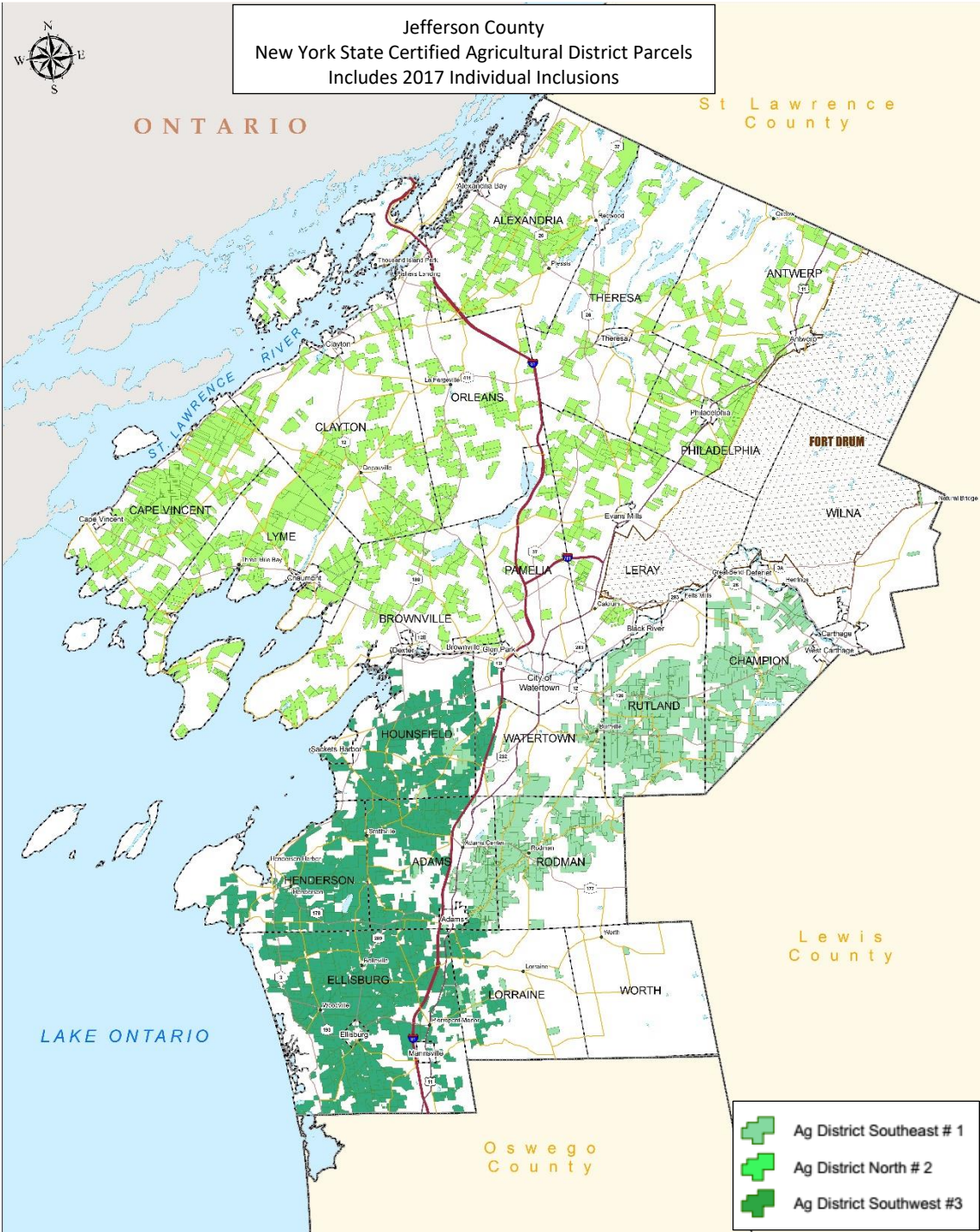


2018 REPORT ON THE INCLUSION OF VIABLE AGRICULTURAL LANDS TO THE EXISTING NYS CERTIFIED AGRICULTURAL DISTRICTS

JEFFERSON COUNTY AGRICULTURAL & FARMLAND PROTECTION BOARD

JULY 19, 2018



Jefferson County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board

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Michael Bourcy, Planning Department Director

DRAFT

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

This report presents the findings of the Jefferson County Agriculture and Farmland Protection Board's (AFPB) review and recommendations to the County Legislature for the 2018 Agricultural District Inclusion Requests.

Article 25-AA of the NYS Agriculture and Markets Law was enacted in 1971 to help keep farmland in agricultural production through a combination of landowner incentives and protections that discourage the conversion of farmland to non-agricultural uses, including:

- providing reduced property tax bills for agricultural lands (agricultural landowners must apply to the local tax assessor for an annual agricultural assessment);
- providing the framework to limit unreasonable local regulation on accepted agricultural practices;
- providing Right to Farm provisions that protect accepted agricultural practices from private nuisance suits;
- modifying state agency administrative regulations and procedures to encourage the continuation of agricultural businesses;
- modifying the ability to advance public funds to construct facilities that encourage development;
- limiting the power to impose benefit assessments, special ad valorem levies or other rates or fees in certain improvement districts or benefit areas such as water, sewer or nonfarm drainage; and
- reducing the ability of public agencies to acquire farmland through eminent domain.

Agricultural districts primarily benefit owners of land that is farmed. Being part of an agricultural district does not require that the land be used for agriculture and it does not directly affect tax assessments (agricultural landowners must apply to the local tax assessor for an annual agricultural assessment).

There are two processes at the county level for the addition and review of these districts. Each Certified Agricultural District is required by New York State to undergo an Eight-Year Review to determine if the district still consists of predominantly viable agricultural land. There is also an annual individual inclusions process where agricultural land may be added to an existing certified agricultural district. There are three Agricultural Districts in Jefferson County comprising over 236,000 acres.

The New York State Agricultural Districts Law requires counties to establish an annual 30 day period to allow parcels of predominantly viable agricultural land to be added to existing New York State Certified Agricultural Districts. The Jefferson County Board of Legislators has set **June 1st through June 30th** of each year for this purpose.

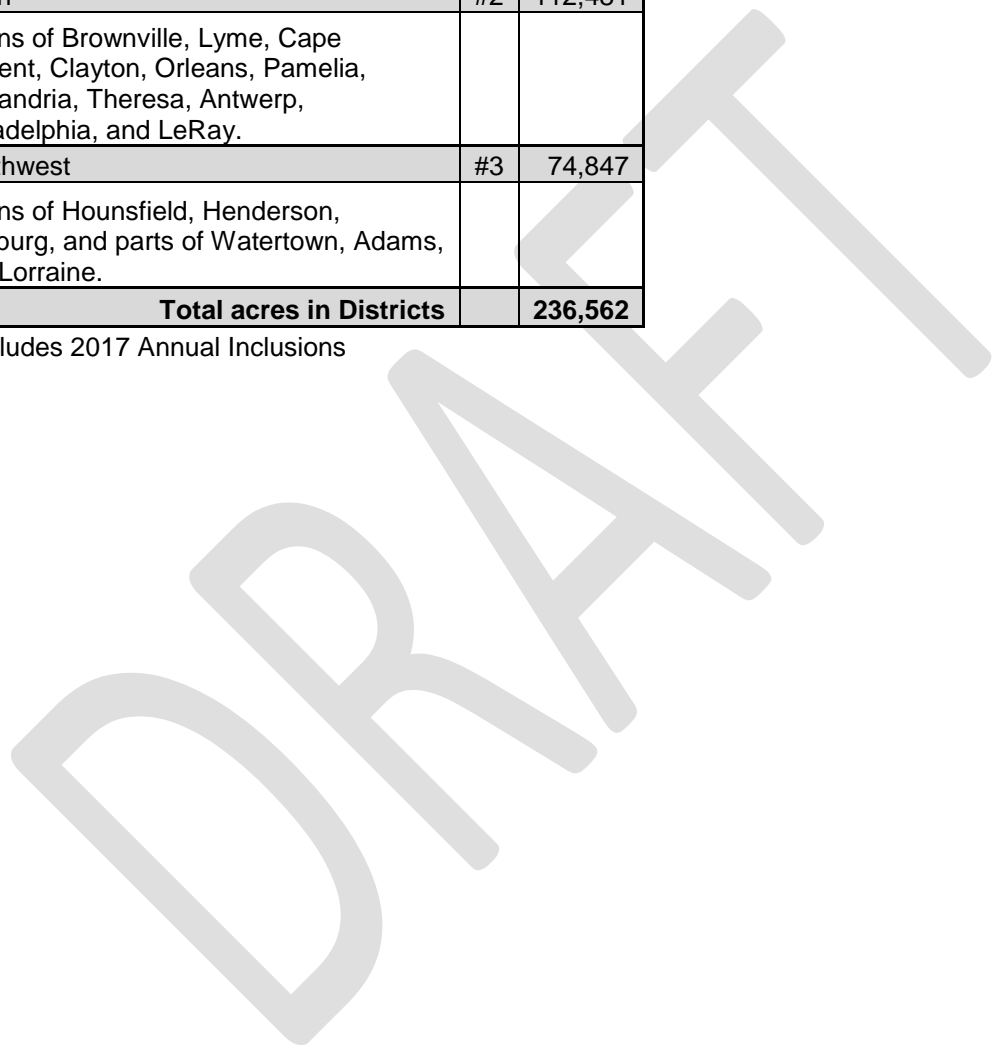
Viable agricultural land is land that is actively farmed as well as inactive and non-farm acreage which is highly suitable for agricultural production. A parcel of land is "predominantly" viable if a minimum of 51% of the parcel meets the above definition.

There are three NYS Certified Agricultural Districts in the County. The Southeast District #1, North District #2, and Southwest District #3.

Jefferson County NYS Certified Agricultural Districts

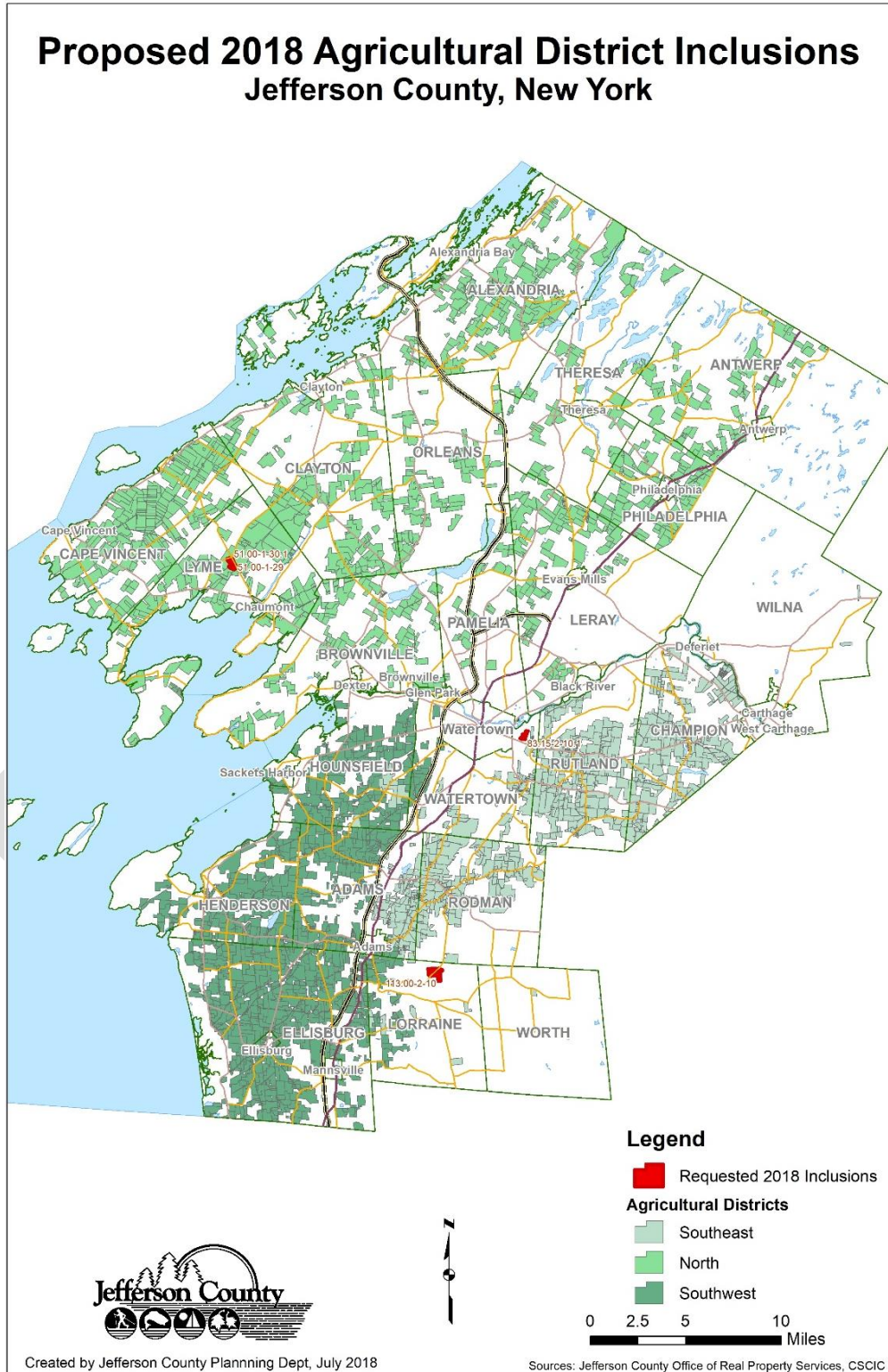
Southeast	#1	49,234
Towns of Wilna, Champion, Rutland, Rodman, Worth, and parts of Watertown, Adams, and Lorraine.		
North	#2	112,481
Towns of Brownville, Lyme, Cape Vincent, Clayton, Orleans, Pamela, Alexandria, Theresa, Antwerp, Philadelphia, and LeRay.		
Southwest	#3	74,847
Towns of Hounsfield, Henderson, Ellisburg, and parts of Watertown, Adams, and Lorraine.		
Total acres in Districts		236,562

* Includes 2017 Annual Inclusions



LANDOWNER REQUESTS

The County received requests from three landowners to consider the addition of 4 parcels consisting of 305 acres. The parcels are located in the Towns of Lyme, Watertown and Lorraine.



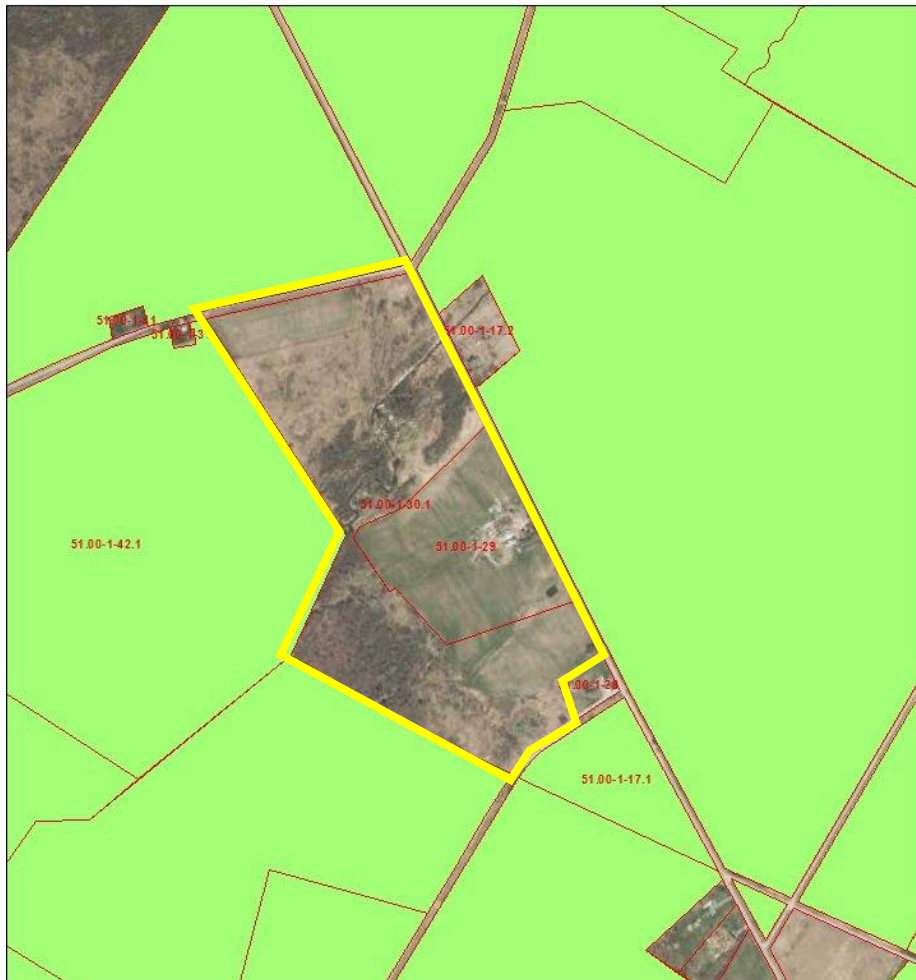
Michael Bourcy from the County Planning Department and Jay Matteson, the County Agricultural Coordinator, conducted a windshield survey of the requested parcels. Notes from that survey are included in this report.

1. James Cronkite

Parcel Number	Town	Acres	District
51.00-1-29	Lyme	26.67	2
51.00-1-30.1	Lyme	78.60	2

The applicant is requesting to add two parcels to the North District. It was indicated that the land is being used for hay, sheep, goats, donkeys, and cattle.

Cronkite



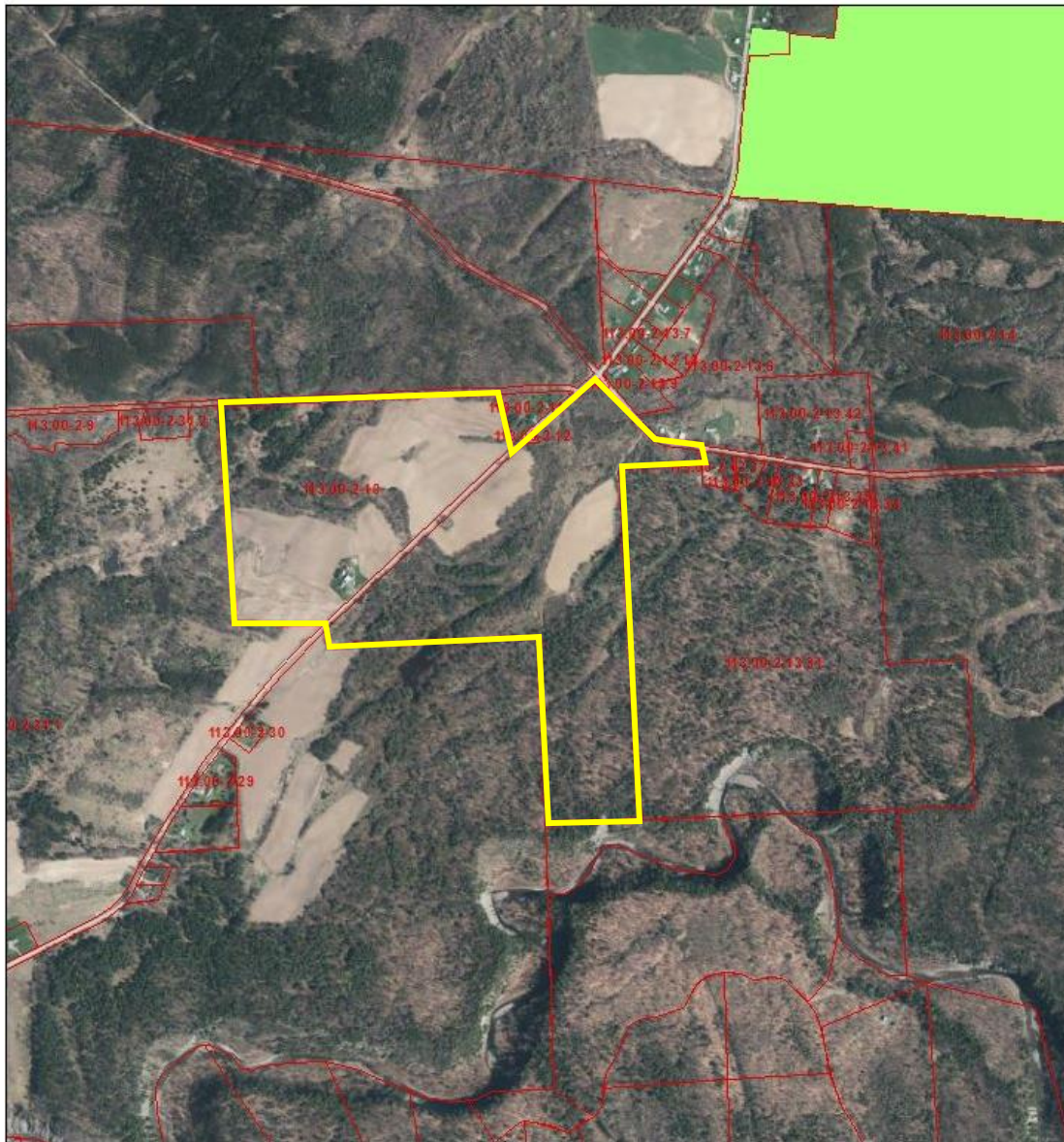
During the site visit staff observed sheep, goats, pens and cut hay.

2. Norman Yerdon

Parcel Number	Village	Acres	District
113.00-2-10	Lorraine	164.4	1

The applicant is requesting that one parcel be included in the Southeast District. It was indicated that the parcel is used for crops.

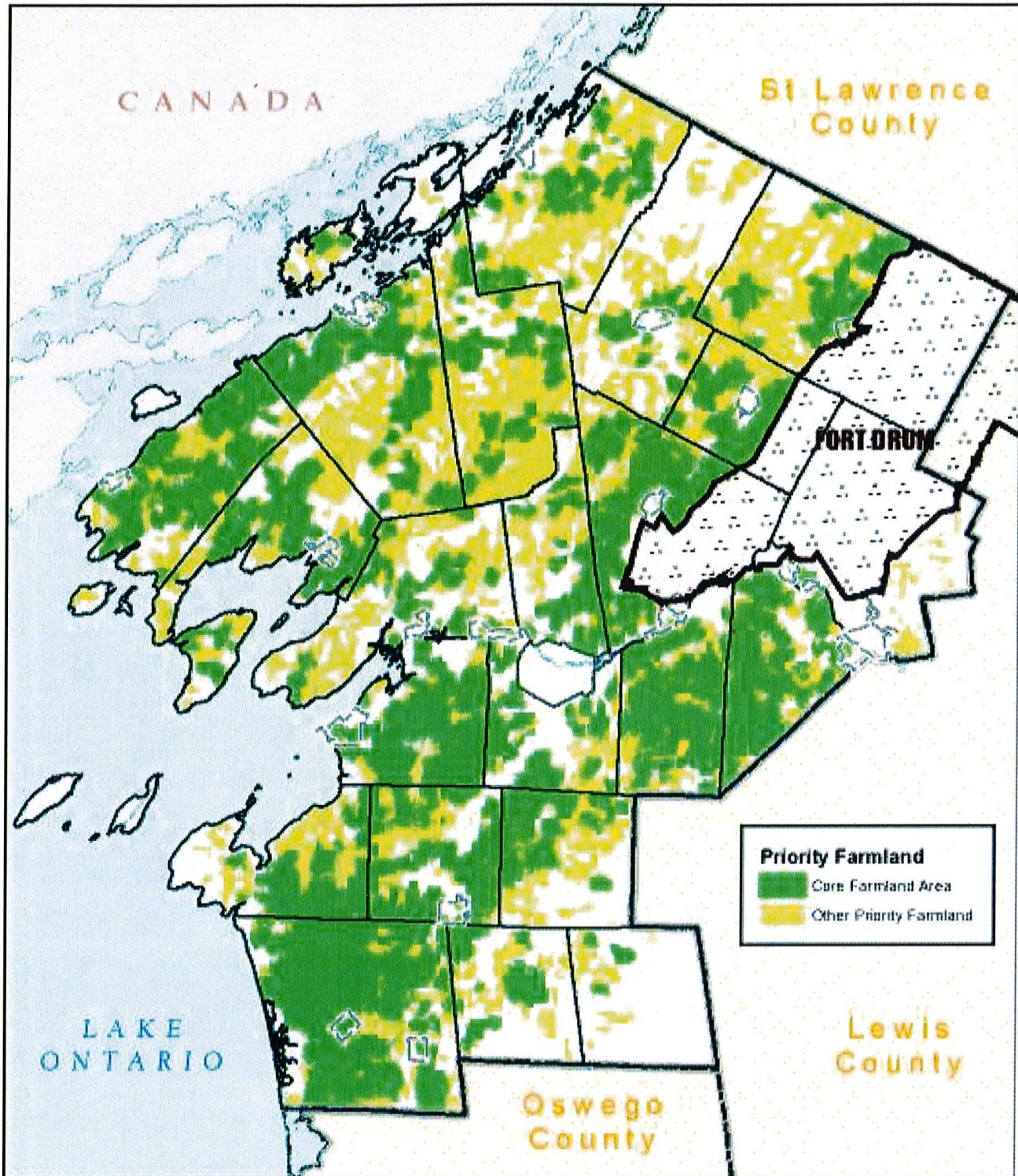
Yerdon



Jay Matteson drove by the parcel and observed corn and hay.

PRIORITY FARMLAND – JC Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan, 2016

The recently adopted Jefferson County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan indicated priority farmland in the County. The map below identifies the areas. Most of the requested additions are within one of the areas or in close proximity.



PRIORITY AGRICULTURAL SOILS

While the identification of specific soil type's location is not possible, this general soil map shows that all of the proposed additions contain one or more of the soils identified below.



Sources: U.S. Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service, U.S. Geological Survey, National Aeronautics and Space Administration, National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency, ESRI, Jefferson County Real Property Tax Services, Fort Drum Engineering

**Recommendation of the Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board
for the 2018 Agricultural District Inclusion Requests**

The Jefferson County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board recommends that the following parcels be added to existing agricultural districts:

Recommendation		Landowner	Parcel Number	Town/Village	Acres	District
Approve	Disapprove					
		James Cronkite	51.00-1-29	Lyme	26.67	2
		James Cronkite	51.00-1-30.1	Lyme	78.60	2
		Norman Yerdon	113.00-2-10	Lorraine	164.40	1
		Alex Thomas	83.15-2-10.1	Watertown	35.51	1
					305.18	

Motion made by: _____, seconded by, _____.

All in favor ___

Opposed ___

Absent ___

Motion carried.

