

NEWS RELEASE

Jefferson County Annual Thirty Day Period for Landowners to Request the Addition of Viable Agricultural Land to Existing Agricultural Districts

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 an existing NYS Certified Agricultural District in the County. The Jefferson County Board of Legislators has set June 1st through June 30th of each year for this purpose. There are three NYS Certified Agricultural Districts in Jefferson County comprising over 236,000 acres.

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.

The purpose of NYS Certified Agricultural Districts is to encourage the continued use of farmland for agricultural production. The Agricultural District Program is based on a combination of landowner incentives and protections, all of which are designed to forestall the conversion of farmland to non-agricultural uses.

Possible benefits to farm operations within NYS Certified Agricultural Districts: potential eligibility for a special agricultural assessment; support of farming through state agency policies; limitations on the exercise of eminent domain; limitations on benefit assessments in certain improvement districts; and limitations on the enactment of local regulations that unreasonably restrict or regulate a farm operation.

At the termination of the thirty day period, the requests will be referred to the Jefferson County Agriculture and Farmland Protection Board for review and recommendation. A public hearing will be scheduled later this year to discuss the requests and the recommendation of the Jefferson County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board.

Landowners who wish to submit a request to add land to an existing NYS Certified Agricultural District may download the form from the Jefferson County Department of Planning web page under NYS Certified Agricultural Districts, or you may call the Jefferson County Department of Planning, (315) 785-3144 and ask for the 2020 Agricultural Annual Inclusion Form.

All requests must be submitted on the form provided by the Planning Department and can be hand delivered, mailed or faxed to the Jefferson County Department of Planning, 175 Arsenal Street, Watertown, NY 13601. Fax number (315) 785-5092. Regardless of method of delivery, all requests must be received no later than June 30th, 2020.

THE REQUEST FORM TO ADD LAND MUST BE SIGNED BY THE CURRENT LAND OWNER.