**Skowhegan**

**Chapter 9: Farming and Forestry (Goal H)**

**Overview and Issues:** (In Plan not here)

**Policies:**

• Safeguard lands identified as active farmland or capable of supporting commercial

forestry.

• Promote the use of best management practices for timber harvesting and agricultural

production.

• Ensure the economic viability of farming and forestry.

**Strategies:**

1. Utilize appropriate expertise, such as the Maine Forest Service and the board and staff of

Somerset County Soil and Water Conservation District, when revising land use

regulations which would affect agricultural or forest management practices.

**2. The Conservation Commission will identify areas of prime farmland and suitable**

**mechanisms for protection of the resource.**

3. Limit the impact of commercial development in all rural areas, and incorporate regulatory

standards in areas of prime farmland to limit commercial development to natural resource-dependent businesses and services, nature tourism/outdoor recreation businesses, farm

stands, and home occupations.

4. In its revision of the Subdivision Ordinance, the Planning Board will protect priority areas

and utilize strategies developed by the open space plan – the use of open space subdivision

and other techniques

5. Encourage owners of productive farm and forest land to enroll in the current use taxation

programs.

6. Encourage small scale agriculture and forestry operations, such as road-side stands,

sugarhouses, improvements to the Skowhegan Farmers market and pick-your-own/cutyour-

own operations, and incorporate value-added processing as an economic cluster in

local and regional economic development plans.

7. Extend the Project Canopy planning process by developing and implementing a treeplanting

plan.

**Skowhegan**

**Implementation** (Farm and Forest)**:**

1. **The Conservation Commission will include farm protection planning in its open space**

**plan, by identifying areas within rural Skowhegan that include Prime Farmland Soils or Soils of Statewide Importance, and which are by virtue of ownership patterns, capable of supporting agriculture. The commission will consult with the Maine Department of Agriculture, Food, and Rural Resources (DAFRR), the Maine Farmland Trust (MFT), Somerset Woods Trustees (SWT), and other advocates, to determine appropriate protective strategies to recommend for those areas. The proposed completion for the open space plan is 2012.**

1. In revising Subdivision and Site Review Ordinances, the Planning Board will seek to limit

the impact of development on prime farmland and active forest land. The Board will invite the

Maine Forest Service and the board and staff of Somerset County Soil and Water Conservation

District to participate in the ordinance development process. In subsequent revisions to these

ordinances, the Planning Board will incorporate state requirements to identify areas of prime

farmland and protection strategies recommended in the town’s open space plan.

In its ordinance review, the Planning Board will also ensure that no provisions unduly

limit opportunities for rural landowners to market or process agricultural products or develop

value-added processing.

1. **The Conservation Commission will sponsor a farmer’s appreciation dinner with local**

**farmers. As part of the program, the commission will invite the town assessor and the Maine**

**Farmland Trust to discuss current use programs as well as easements and other mechanisms**

**available to permanently protect their farmland. The dinner should be held in the winter of 2010-11, with possible annual dinners to follow.**

1. **The Conservation Commission will organize a forum in cooperation with the town’s**

**Economic and Community Development Department in order to explore ways to support and**

**expand the town’s resource-based economies. Invitees may include the DAFRR, MFT,**

**SCSWCD, Small Woodlot Owners Association of Maine (SWOAM), the American Tree Farm**

**Association (ATFA), and local entrepreneurs. The Conservation Commission will also request**

**that these associations bring informational materials on sustainable agriculture and forestry**

**opportunities that town officials can share with local landowners. This forum should be**

**scheduled for late 2010.**

1. In planning for downtown improvements, the Town should include larger, more visible,

and more permanent space for the Skowhegan Farmers Market.

1. The Community Forest Committee will complete the tree planting plan phase of its project by 2010.