

# TOWN OF WAWARSING

*Office of the Supervisor*

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Councilpersons

Stephen Bradley

Michael Durso

Terry Houck

Dan Johnson

September 5, 2017

Ulster County Economic Development Alliance  
P.O. Box 1800, 244 Fair Street  
Kingston, NY 12402-1800

Subject: Application for Ellenville Million Grant Matching Program  
Colony Farm Agritourism Feasibility Study

To Whom It May Concern;

The Town of Wawarsing is seeking funding to do a feasibility study of the Colony Farm which will include the re-use of the Colony Farm and related vacant parcels for public purposes, including, but not limited to, use as an agricultural-tourism center, as an educational center modeling traditional and contemporary agricultural practices, as an assemblage of recreational open space with access to existing trails as protected lands conserving vital wetlands, view sheds and natural corridors with continual use as agricultural land preserving and enhancing existing flood plains and forests. Thus, maintaining the rural character of the Town of Wawarsing while providing new and vital economic opportunities for the Town.

Enclosed please find our application for Ellenville Million Grant Matching Program for the Colony Farm Agritourism Feasibility Study with attachments.

Sincerely,



Leonard M. Distel

Supervisor

LMD/bb

Encs.

**About the Applicant**

Organization name:	Town of Wawarsing
Type of organization:	<input type="checkbox"/> For-Profit <input type="checkbox"/> Not-For-Profit <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Municipality <input type="checkbox"/> Other (_____)
Contact name:	Leonard M. Distel
Contact title:	Supervisor
Contact phone:	(845) 647-6570 Ext. 6
Contact email:	wawsupervisor@hvc.rr.com

**About Your Project**

Title of project:	Colony Farm Agritourism Feasibility Study
Description of project:	See Project Narrative from USDA RBDG Legal Notice
How does this project advance economic development in Ellenville/Wawarsing?	See attached description with advance economic development in Ellenville/Wawarsing question
Total project budget (including all expected uses of funds):	\$48,240.00
Amount of matching funds requested:	\$10,873.60

**Grant Funds Awarded (list each source separately)**

Grant Source	Grant Amount	Proof of Award* <small>*attach documentation to your application</small>	Status
USDA Rural Business Development Grant	Up to \$25,000 Or 26% of \$48,240.00 (\$12,542.40)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Commitment Letter <input type="checkbox"/> Grant Contract <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please describe): <u>Letter of Conditions</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> All grant funds are in-hand <input type="checkbox"/> Amount in-hand is \$_____ <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Reimbursement grant in hand
Empire State Development Feasibility Study Grant	\$20,000.00	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Commitment Letter <input type="checkbox"/> Grant Contract <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please describe): <u>Incentive Proposal</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> All grant funds are in-hand <input type="checkbox"/> Amount in-hand is \$_____ <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Reimbursement grant in hand
		<input type="checkbox"/> Commitment Letter <input type="checkbox"/> Grant Contract <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please describe): _____	<input type="checkbox"/> All grant funds are in-hand <input type="checkbox"/> Amount in-hand is \$_____ <input type="checkbox"/> Reimbursement grant
		<input type="checkbox"/> Commitment Letter <input type="checkbox"/> Grant Contract <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please describe): _____	<input type="checkbox"/> All grant funds are in-hand <input type="checkbox"/> Amount in-hand is \$_____ <input type="checkbox"/> Reimbursement grant

<i>Other Sources (list each source separately)</i>			
Non-Grant Source	Amount	Type	Status (for cash sources only)
Town of Wawarsing Cash Equity	\$4,824.00	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Cash <input type="checkbox"/> In-Kind <input type="checkbox"/> Debt	<input type="checkbox"/> Full amount in-hand <input type="checkbox"/> Amount in hand is \$ _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Funding commitment
		<input type="checkbox"/> Cash <input type="checkbox"/> In-Kind <input type="checkbox"/> Debt	<input type="checkbox"/> Full amount in-hand <input type="checkbox"/> Amount in hand is \$ _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Funding commitment
		<input type="checkbox"/> Cash <input type="checkbox"/> In-Kind <input type="checkbox"/> Debt	<input type="checkbox"/> Full amount in-hand <input type="checkbox"/> Amount in hand is \$ _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Funding commitment
		<input type="checkbox"/> Cash <input type="checkbox"/> In-Kind <input type="checkbox"/> Debt	<input type="checkbox"/> Full amount in-hand <input type="checkbox"/> Amount in hand is \$ _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Funding commitment



Signature of Applicant

September 5, 2017

Date

Leonard M. Distel

Name

Town of Wawarsing Supervisor

Title

## Section D: Project Narrative

### Town of Wawarsing

Planning Study for the Proposed Re-Use of Colony Farm and Related Parcels in Wawarsing, NY



#### **I. An explanation of why the Project is needed, the benefits of the proposed Project, and how the Project meets the grant eligible purposes:**

The Town of Wawarsing proposes a feasibility study to determine the most economically and ecologically productive re-use of Colony Farm, a huge swath of unused, New York State-owned property located in the Rondout Valley between the Catskill and Shawangunk Mountains. Though the nearly 500 acres of land offer a rich history, stunning landscapes, and convenient access to other state parks in the area, it lies dormant and inaccessible to the public. As a result, a major asset for potential agritourism-related economic growth is left untapped, and the Town of Wawarsing, a severely impoverished area of Ulster County and one of the few designated REAP zones in the country, is overlooked as hundreds of thousands of people visit neighboring parks, like the Minnewaska and Mohonk Preserves in nearby New Paltz. For this reason, the Town of Wawarsing requests \$50,000 through USDA's Rural Business Development Grant to fund a much-needed feasibility study that will provide a comprehensive plan for moving forward with the best and most effective redevelopment of this land, revitalizing Wawarsing as a recreational gateway community that will serve as an economic engine in the region for years to come.

In the early 1990's, the New York State Department of Corrections and Community Supervision (NYS DOCCS) purchased four parcels of land adjacent to the Colony Farm parcel of land (already owned by NYS DOCCS) in the Town of Wawarsing in western Ulster County, New York. These nearly 500 acres were never used for any purpose by the Agency. The parcels had been used by local families for nearly 200 years as productive farms, but were now restricted-access DOCCS land. A group of community leaders recognized the inherent potential of exploring the possibility of returning the nearly 500 acres to productive agricultural, educational, and public recreational use. In 2012, this group, having organized into an informal "Friends of Colony Farm," met with the Town of Wawarsing Supervisor to map out a possible plan to reuse the parcels. Over subsequent years, a number of attempts were made to secure funding for a comprehensive strategic plan and feasibility study designed to research, assess, and define implementation strategies for the re-use of the five parcels. In April of 2016, the Wawarsing Town Board voted to submit a Rural Business Development Grant (RBDG) from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) for just that purpose.

Located in the ecologically sensitive and fertile Rondout Valley in rural western Ulster County, the five parcels, comprising nearly 500 acres, are largely undeveloped open space, offering a picturesque blend of lowland agricultural parcels, wetlands, and forest, bordering the Rondout

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Creek and lying in the shadow of the world-renowned Shawangunk Ridge, a distinctive alpine formation popular with climbers and hikers, and recognized as a National Scenic Byway. The Colony Farm parcel contains several barns, outbuildings, and a main house that originally supported the now defunct dairy farm. Much of the rolling upland property includes meadows, pastures, fields and woodlots extremely well suited to future passive recreational uses.

Over the past 15 years, the Town of Wawarsing has suffered severe economic distress after several manufacturing facilities—all major employers—began to downsize, and then closed permanently. Two of the largest facilities, originally owned by Channel Master, maker of TV antennas, were sold in the 1980's. Both sites, the 450,000 SF Imperial Schrade plant, a major cutlery manufacturing company, and the similarly sized Hydro-Aluminum / V.A.W. aluminum pipe manufacturing plant closed in the mid-2000's, resulting in the layoff of the remaining hundreds of skilled workers there. The community's economic distress was compounded in 2008, when the famed Nevele Hotel, itself a significant employer, closed its doors in bankruptcy, resulting in the loss of over 200 permanent jobs and hundreds of seasonal jobs.

The cumulative impact of these losses upon this once prosperous community has been dramatic and pervasive. The unemployment rate in the Town of Wawarsing, according to the United States Census Bureau 2010-2014 American Community Survey, is currently over 9%, which is twice that of Ulster County's (4.5%) and New York State's (4.8%) overall unemployment rates. (New York State Department of Labor, March 2016). According to the same American Community Survey (US Census Bureau) and other economic indicators, Wawarsing's population is 13,189, with nearly 30% of the populace falling below the poverty line, as compared to Ulster County's poverty level of 12.3%. Furthermore, in 1999, the USDA designated the Town of Wawarsing as a REAP Zone, due not only to its poverty, but its geographic isolation, historic dependence on agriculture, and economic upheaval. Additionally, the school district's population is declining and the quality of public amenities and infrastructure is poor. In keeping with local, county, and regional planning initiatives, the Town of Wawarsing recognizes that its future economic revitalization depends upon a diversified approach, one that capitalizes upon its natural assets and ties the Town into a broader regional vision that seeks to attract recreational and agricultural tourism.

Toward this end, the Town of Wawarsing is collaborating with Open Space Institute, Hudson Valley Economic Development Corporation, Ulster County, and the Friends of Colony Farm, a group of community leaders led by organic farmer John Adams, to determine the best possible public uses for the unique properties described previously. The NYS

DOCCS has formally expressed its support of these pursuits to someday make these parcels available to the public for future recreational, educational, and agricultural use (see attached letter). The Town of Wawarsing will use RBDG grant funds to contract with a

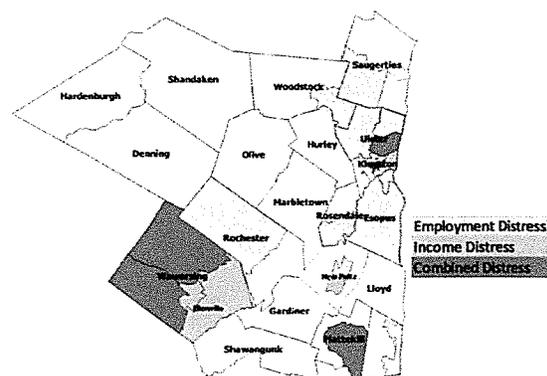


Figure 18: ULSTER COUNTY ECONOMIC DISTRESS

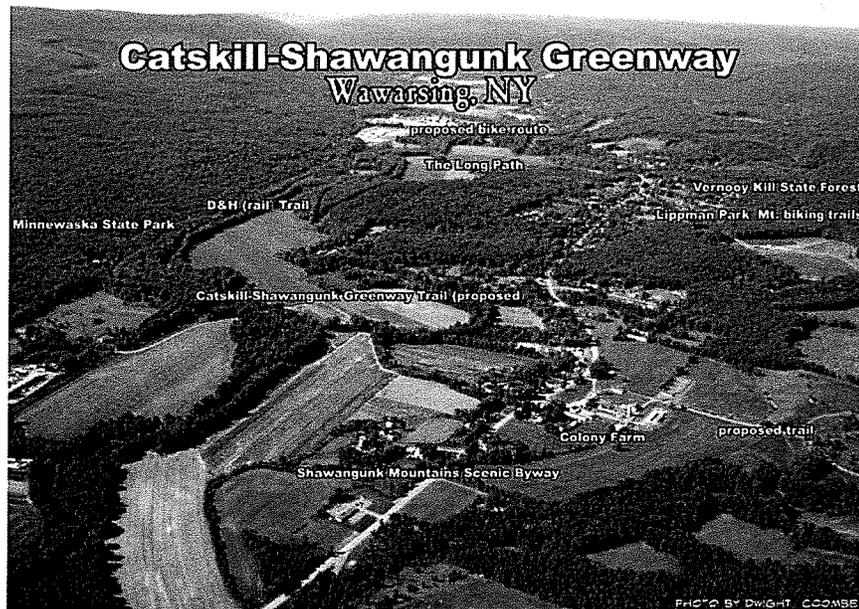
Figure 1: Hudson Valley Region Distress Criteria Statistical Report, Hudson Valley Regional Council, April 2015

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highly specialized planning firm with specific experience in devising strategic plans for publicly or possibly nonprofit-owned multi-use recreational, educational, and agricultural entities. It is believed that the results of this study will give the project partners, listed above, the knowledge to move forward with a new ownership model for the land, enabling it to be transformed into one or more of the following entities:

1. A productive working farm, with possible leases to local farm families;
2. An educational facility, to inform the public about model agricultural practices, farm productivity, farm life, and healthy lifestyles;
3. Public purpose space, such as parkland, access to nearby trails, state parks, wetlands and open spaces;
4. As an important economic driver, based on new agricultural and tourism opportunities in this underserved part of Ulster County: employment, visitation, cost & income projections for above scenarios;
5. A business model for re-use, including R.O.I., jobs created, maintenance costs, insurance costs, etc.

The Colony Farm parcels cannot be overstated in their importance to the future vitality of this area. Now functionally vacant and overgrown in sections, the Colony Farm parcels present an opportunity to re-use and develop the land as an agritourism site, preserve open spaces and viewsheds, and link nearby state and local parks and trails. In October 2016, Governor Andrew Cuomo set out on a “Ride the Catskills” motorcycle tour to announce a series of actions to promote tourism in the Catskill Mountain region, including a \$7.3 million plan to develop Minnewaska State Park



Preserve. However, on this ride, Governor Cuomo passed through the Town of Wawarsing without making any stops, which is in large part due to the fact that the Town does not offer many sites worth showcasing in this type of press tour. Located only six miles from Minnewaska, redevelopment of the Colony Farm property is essential in attracting more of Minnewaska’s tens of thousands of visitors deeper into the Valley, spurring economic growth in impoverished areas of the Catskills that need it most. Because the Colony Farm parcels are currently controlled by the NYS DOCCS, they are off-limits to the public and underutilized. However, through the assessment of land and location and with the vision and participation of local stakeholders, all of which will be considered within the proposed Feasibility Study, this

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land has the potential to transform the Town of Wawarsing and surrounding communities into a hub of agricultural and recreational activity that attracts new investment and tourism dollars and creates greater economic and employment opportunity.

In regards to the recreational contribution of this project, Colony Farm could ultimately consist of a myriad of new and enhanced recreational opportunities for all ages, to include expanded hang gliding (which already takes place at Colony Farm), hiking, biking, picnicking, horseback riding, and farmers' markets, among other possibilities. The land could also accommodate festivals and large-scale events that attract new tourism to the area, and it will expand access to and connectivity between state and local parks, preserves, and waterways. All such opportunities will attract visitors to the Town and in turn contribute to its economic growth and overall revitalization. Additionally, the land and former dairy farm have the potential to create value-added products, including ice cream, Greek yogurt, and artisan cheese, contributing to NY State's vibrant agricultural industry and enhancing the agricultural landscape of the Mid-Hudson Region.

Historically, it should be noted that in the 1920s, Colony Farm was created as a model prison farm, facilitating the rehabilitation of young male prisoners in a dairy farm reformatory environment, a uniquely idealistic endeavor for its time. Penal physician Dr. Walter N. Thayer Jr. was responsible for the "Napanoch Plan" named after the nearby hamlet, which became a model for prisoner rehabilitation across the country. Thus, New York State became a leader in humane treatment and rehabilitation of prisoners due to the initial effort at Colony Farm. This forgotten aspect of prison reform can become an element in the interpretation of Colony Farm to tourists and educators.

This project meets the RBDG program's eligible purposes because it will support a feasibility study that is the necessary first step in determining how to best develop a major asset in a poverty-stricken rural area and designated REAP zone that will result in direct and indirect job creation and economic growth. This project aligns with RBDG's opportunity-type grant, and will be used to develop an in-depth feasibility study to guide all future plans for effectively re-using the 500-acre parcels of Colony Farm. Attached to each of the above scenarios will be, in addition to varying levels of job creation, a significant attraction of tourists and out-of-town visitors who will also support economic development in the Town by utilizing local establishments such as restaurants, bed and breakfasts, the theater, etc.

### **II. Area to be served, identifying each governmental unit, i.e. town, county, etc., to be affected by the Project**

The Colony Farm and surrounding parcels to be studied by the proposed feasibility report are located in the Town of Wawarsing in Ulster County, New York, and will most directly affect the economic development of that area. The New York State Department of Corrections and Community Supervision (NYS DOCCS) will also be affected as it currently owns the (underutilized) land and is in support of the project. It is believed that portions of Ulster and Sullivan Counties will be positively affected by increased traffic and tourism in the area as well.

### **III. Description of how the Project will coordinate Economic Development activities with other Economic Development activities within the Project area**

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The proposed feasibility study and its projected outcomes align directly with the Mid-Hudson Regional Economic Development Council's (REDC) Strategic Plan. The Mid-Hudson REDC is one of ten units across New York State created by the Governor to spur and support economic development in the State. Out of fifteen strategic goals put forth by the Council for the region, this project supports five of them:

1. Leverage the region's outstanding natural resources, its tourism industry, and agriculture in a "natural infrastructure" strategy that protects agriculture and the environment and recognizes these as important to tourism and as quality of life attributes that are critical to attracting and retaining high-quality jobs for all key industry sectors.
2. Develop non-mandated programs that encourage, educate, and foster green development projects as part of developing a green Hudson Valley economy.
3. Make the Mid-Hudson region more attractive to young educated professionals in order to stop "youth flight" and "brain drain" in the region.
4. Build on the unique location of the Hudson Valley (situated between the majestic Hudson River, the Delaware River, and Long Island Sound) and promote waterfront development in order to enhance tourism, recreation, and trade.
5. Align public-private support to ensure implementation of the regional Plan and consideration of new opportunities.

Furthermore, redevelopment of this 500-acre property will come at an opportune time, as traffic past the parcels on the Route 209 Corridor will increase significantly when the Montreign Resort Casino (Sullivan County, New York) opens. Montreign is part of the larger Adelaar resort, a proposed \$1 billion four-season destination resort poised to become one of the most comprehensive destination gaming resorts in the Northeast, and will feature a variety of world-class leisure and recreational options. Adelaar is expected to create more than 5,000 construction and permanent jobs.

Additionally, the famed Nevele Hotel that closed its doors in bankruptcy in 2008, resulting in the loss of over 200 permanent jobs and hundreds of seasonal jobs, is the focus of a proposed \$150 million redevelopment project to turn the once-prosperous resort into a state-of-the-art sports complex. According to the "Community Mitigation Plan Agreement Relating to the Nevele Resort" for the original proposal to redevelop the Nevele Hotel into a casino, provisions were included to offer guests discounts at New Paltz's Minnewaska Preserve and Mohonk Preserve so that visitors would have exciting day trip opportunities. Even though this proposal didn't come to fruition, it is indicative of a larger issue, which is that the Town of Wawarsing does not currently offer an appealing open-space site for a day trip. Rather than spending their dollars within the Town of Wawarsing itself, these visitors would be directed out of the impoverished community where the Nevele is located and into neighboring New Paltz. However, a revitalized Colony Farm would act as a solution to this problem, keeping visitor's dollars within the community in order to sustain much-needed growth.

Finally, this project complements the economic development work being coordinated by the Hudson Valley Farm Hub, part of the Local Economies Project, in the northern Rondout Valley. The Hudson Valley Farm Hub is a center for resilient agriculture located on 1,255 acres of farmland in Hurley, NY, that serves as an educational resource for advances in food and farming,

## Section D: Project Narrative

and particularly works to build a resilient local economy via sustainable agriculture. The Colony Farm would complement the work of the Hudson Valley Farm Hub by serving as a southern anchor for farmland preservation and agritourism in the Hudson Valley Region, offering a point of access for agritourism in the Rondout Valley for tourists coming from 44-55 and Minnewaska State Park.

### **IV. Business to be assisted, if appropriate; and Economic Development to be accomplished**

Specific businesses have not yet been targeted at this stage of the project. Once the feasibility report is complete, it is believed that a number of educational, agricultural, tourism-related and recreational non-profits and small businesses will begin to use the land. This will lead to business assistance, creation and/or expansion. As stated above, the transformation of the underutilized parcels into a tourist destination will have a multiplier effect on the surrounding amenities, creating employment and economic development within and around the Town of Wawarsing as well.

A May 2010 “Study of the Economic Impact of the Local Economy of Minnewaska State Park Preserve, Mohonk Preserve, and Sam’s Point Preserve” reported that these three Shawangunk Ridge Park Preserves attract close to 400,000 visitors annually who spend over \$13 million while in the area, spending an average of \$33.24 per visitor. Visitor spending generates nearly \$460,000 in local sales taxes alone. Direct effects of visitor spending are valued at \$5,371,000 with secondary effects at \$2,418,000. This economic activity is responsible for a total economic impact of over \$12 million on the local economy, with more than 350 direct and indirect jobs supported. (Study of the Economic Impact of the Local Economy of Minnewaska State Park Preserve, Mohonk Preserve, and Sam’s Point Preserve, May 2010).

Additionally, Glynwood published a paper in 2014, “From ‘Agri-tainment’ to Engagement: A New Era of Agritourism for the Hudson Valley,” that explored the importance of more participatory forms of agritourism. According to the report, further development of more hands-on agritourism experiences—“an approach that synchronizes a craft-oriented aesthetic of sustainable agriculture with tourism”—would: “Allow farms to diversify and increase revenue; act as a form of regional economic development; create substantive urban-rural linkages; attract monetary investment in farms; strengthen the connection between sustainable food production and regional ecosystems for visitors; and bolster the Hudson Valley’s identity as a food and farming region” (2). The study determined that “Farmer-friendly strategies that connect the food and travel sectors are needed in order to encourage consumer demand for local products and support for farmers as they launch and expand agriculture businesses” (4). According to the 2012 USDA Census of Agriculture, there are 26 farms that offer agritourism and recreational services in Ulster County, generating \$1,109,000 in income. While these numbers are impressive, there is more potential for a large-scale agritourism market in Ulster County and the region as a whole. Colony Farm represents a critical missing link in the Catskill-Shawangunk Greenway along the Route 209 Corridor. In direct agreement with the 2014 New York State Open Space Plan, redevelopment of this land will protect “floodplain areas and priority undeveloped agricultural lands” as well as stimulate “tourism-based economic activity, including agritourism, in Wawarsing.” While the exact economic impact of Colony Farm’s adaptive re-use cannot be predicted until the proposed feasibility report is complete, the cited numbers suggest

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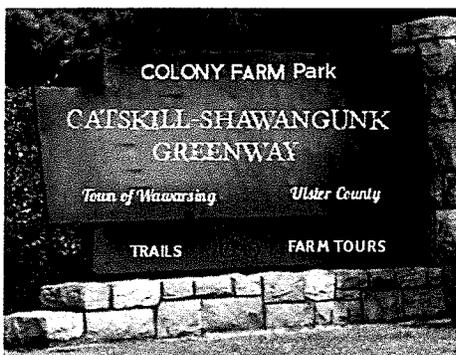
considerable impact and growth is probable based on development of a highly accessible and complementary regional agritourism destination.

### **V. An explanation of how the proposed Project will result in newly created, increased or supported jobs in the area and the number of projected new and supported jobs within the next 3 years**

As previously discussed, the exact number of newly created, increased, or supported jobs in the area cannot be accurately predicted at this stage. However, according to the Shawangunk Ridge Park Preserves study, neighboring state parks support 358 direct and indirect jobs annually. The Town of Wawarsing anticipates job creation on this scale as a result of adaptive re-use of the Colony Farm parcels (Study of the Economic Impact of the Local Economy of Minnewaska State Park Preserve, Mohonk Preserve, and Sam's Point Preserve, May 2010).

### **VI. A description of the applicant's demonstrated capability and experience in providing the proposed Project assistance or similar Economic Development activities, including experience of key staff members and persons who will be providing the proposed Project activities and managing the Project**

Founder of the "Friends of Colony Farm", John Adams, will coordinate this project. Mr. Adams has significant experience with agricultural development in western Ulster County. Since 1981, he has owned and run an organic farm. He is on the Ulster County Agriculture & Farmland Protection Board, Ulster County Trails Advisory Committee (hiking and biking liaison), NYS Department of Conservation (DEC) Region 3 Open Space Advisory Committee, the Town of Wawarsing Environmental Conservation Committee, and the Ellenville-Wawarsing Complete Streets Committee. In the past he has served on the Sullivan/Wawarsing Rural Economic Area Partnership, Agriculture and Environmental Committees, Rondout Esopus Land Conservancy Board of Directors, Sullivan County Area Farmers' Market Association, Joint Economic Team for Wawarsing & Village of Ellenville, Wawarsing Comprehensive Plan Committee, Ellenville Farmers' Market (founding member), Shawangunk Mountains Wild Blueberry & Huckleberry Festival (co-founder), and the Ellenville Gateway Committee.



Additionally, the grant will be administered by the Town of Wawarsing Supervisor's designee, whose responsibilities will include contract and grant administration, fiscal accounting and project management. Consultant firms that specialize in agritourism/recreational venues and community development were provided with a Scope of Work to request a project estimate. Once funding has been approved, a firm will be hired by a selection committee chosen by the Town Supervisor, and including a member of the grant writing team, the Friends of Colony Farm, a

representative of the citizens of Wawarsing and associated local political leadership. The selected firm will then carryout the proposed feasibility study over the course of approximately nine months.

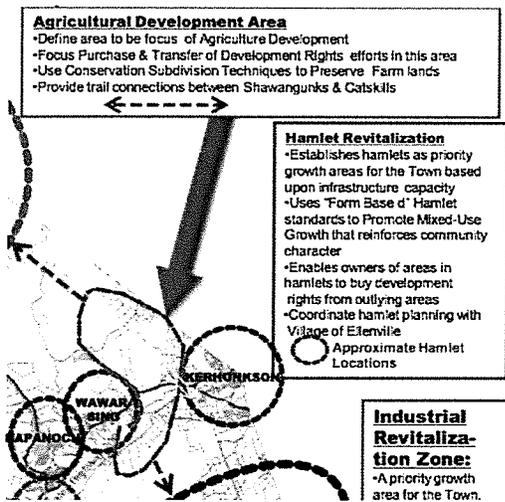
**Section D: Project Narrative**

Finally, Hank Alicandri, Director of Sam’s Point Preserve and Chairman of the Town of Wawarsing Environmental Conservation Commission, will represent and report on this project at all of the Town’s Environmental Conservation Commission meetings.

**VII. The method and rationale used to select the areas and businesses that will receive the service**

The 500 acres of land, to be studied by the proposed feasibility report, were chosen as an ideal location for development based on the fact that the parcels have long been under- or un-utilized, are State controlled, and are in a prime location—between the well-established hiking trails of the Shawangunk and Catskill Mountains, and on a well-traveled interstate highway in a municipality sorely in need of economic development. The land borders the Rondout Creek and is near the renowned Shawangunk Mountains and Scenic Byway, which attract approximately 500,000 visitors to the area each year (NYS Open Space Conservation Plan, 2009), as well as Minnewaska State Park, which attracts 250,000 annual visitors (NYS Council of Parks Annual Report, 2013). The Town of Wawarsing's elected representatives passed a resolution supporting the creation of the Catskill-Shawangunk Greenway Trail on August 16, 2012. As part of this initiative, the Town specifically listed the potential of an "agricultural tourism venue at the Colony Farm located on State Route 209 in the Town of Wawarsing."

The Town of Wawarsing’s proposal to adaptively re-use the Colony Farm parcels would help to implement at least two goals of the Sullivan/Wawarsing USDA Rural Economic Area Partnership Strategic Plan (1999) in the Catskill-Shawangunk Greenway: the Farmland Protection Program and Trail Development Program. The Farmland Protection Program seeks to “allow the purchase of agricultural conservation easements on the USDA designated prime soils within the Rondout Valley” (42); the Trail Development Program seeks to “expand the network of trails and pedestrian connections to recreation areas and provide for other needed recreational amenities” (24).



The Ulster County Open Space Plan (2007) refers to the land that is included within or surrounded by Colony Farm as one of the State's greatest open space resources (Executive Summary). This section also states the importance for communities to "plan ahead" to protect, preserve, and develop, which is the precise intent of the proposed Feasibility Study. Nearly every Resource listed within this plan (Executive Summary, Resource Strategies) will be included within the Feasibility Study, as each is either included in or in close proximity to Colony Farm and the related parcels, including open space, water resources,

working landscapes (forest and agricultural land), landforms and natural features, ecological communities, and recreation sites. Strategies for these resources that are of particular relevance to this project include: protecting and improving connectivity of open spaces (3-5); maintaining viable agricultural land to advance economic development (3-20); and strengthening recreational resources (3-31), to include trail systems (3-33). The Feasibility Study will address how the re-use of Colony Farm would advance each of these goals, assessing the potential linkage of

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existing and isolated parks, trails, and bodies of water, and evaluating scenic open spaces close to the Shawangunk Ridge, Minnewaska, and Mohonk Preserve, etc. The Open Space Plan also indicates County support and possible funding for projects that are consistent with the recommendations of this plan and that develop comprehensive plans at the local level (4-16). This is particularly relevant to this project, as the proposed Study will guide the potential re-use of Colony Farm.

The Mid-Hudson Region Sustainability Plan (2013) lists as one of the region's strategic priorities to "Benefit from and Preserve the Region's Unique Assets through Tourism (9-5)." As part of this goal, the plan lists agritourism as one of the Region's assets and one with potential to grow (9-6). The Feasibility Study will assess how best to leverage the Region's agricultural assets and enhance its agritourism industry by developing productive and educational working farms, offering leases to local farm families, and establishing a farmers market. The plan also cites "Colony Farm/Catskills-Shawangunk Greenway" as a project idea for economic development (C-18).

The Ellenville Million Task Force (2015) recommended projects directly aligned with the potential re-use of land examined within this Feasibility Study. These projects include: 1) Upgrading parks and rail trails: The proposed Study will examine the best ways to leverage Colony Farm's unique positioning among some of the region's and state's most popular parks and trails and promote greater connectivity between them. 2) Pursuing marketing campaigns to attract more tourists to the area and promote outdoor recreational activities such as hiking, biking, and hang-gliding: The Feasibility Study will assess the most effective ways to establish the land as an agritourism destination and increase year round tourism.

Lastly, the Town of Wawarsing's Comprehensive Plan (2006 & 2015 Draft) and Open Space Inventory (2014) directly address Colony Farm and the related parcels in regards to agricultural development and connectivity between the Catskill and Shawangunk Mountains.

Furthermore, a number of statewide plans support this type of project. The NYS Open Space Conservation Plan's goals are directly aligned with this Project (2). In addition to enhancing recreational opportunities and protecting the region's natural resources, plans for Colony Farm include leases to local farm families and an educational facility to inform the public of agricultural practices. The Plan also lists specific priorities, including fostering healthy communities by connecting open space corridors (30). Connectivity will be a critical part of the Study; Vernoo Kill State Forest, Minnewaska Preserve, Mohonk Preserve and Sam's Point Nature Conservancy, among others, are all in the immediate Colony Farm area and can be better linked with the addition of the subject land. Another priority within the Open Space Conservation Plan is safeguarding our State's natural and cultural heritage, specifically farmland (43). The land examined in the Feasibility Study was part of a dairy and prison farm for years and could leverage this agricultural history and capability to establish itself as an agritourism destination, complete with working farms. The Plan also lists a series of priority project areas in the Lower Hudson Valley in close proximity to the subject land: Rondout Wetlands (70), Karst Aquifer (71), and Shawangunk Mountains (76). It also names the "Catskill-Shawangunk connection in Wawarsing ( NYS Department of Correctional Services –Wawarsing Farmland)" (76) and the Shawangunk Mountains Scenic Byway (77), where Colony Farm is located.

## Section D: Project Narrative

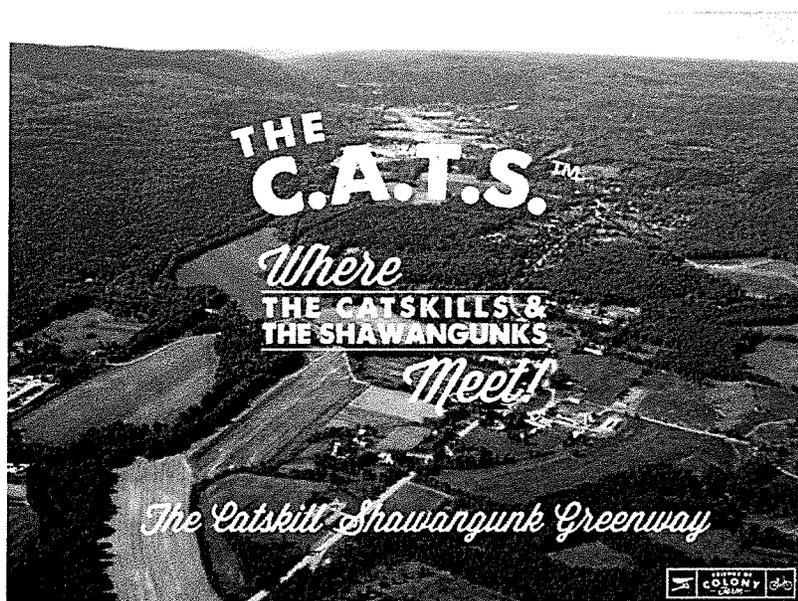
The 2014 Draft NYS Open Space Conservation Plan cites the "Catskill-Shawangunk Greenway area in Wawarsing . . . including farmland owned by [DOCCS]" (90) as a "priority farmland cluster" critical to agricultural economy and wildlife habitat. The land is again cited as a "prime example" for landscape connectivity that would protect open space and floodplains, connect parks and trails, and stimulate "tourism-based economic activity, including agritourism, in Wawarsing" (100).

The NYS Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) highlights the need for comprehensive planning with public participation (11). The proposed Feasibility Study has already garnered the support of numerous state, regional and local entities and organizations. These groups will be included throughout the Study and public information presentations will be held. SCORP also cites Ulster County as having a need for "parks" and "biking" (31); both will be included in the Study. SCORP also lists a number of goals that will be central elements of the Feasibility Study (pages 34, 39, 40, 41, and 42). Recommendations toward these goals encourage planning, the reuse of existing facilities and for multiple purposes, new recreational opportunities for underserved communities, public-private partnerships, and the protection of open space. The Project is in line with these recommendations: Colony Farm remains functionally vacant in a distressed community but has the capacity to become a multi-functional agritourism destination that provides greater connectivity between parks and trails and preserves open spaces.

The businesses that benefit from the feasibility report will be selected after the report is complete and the Town of Wawarsing, in conjunction with the NYS DOCCS, decide how to best proceed. Decisions will be made based on the businesses success in similar areas or the businesses' alignment with the needs of the area.

### **VIII. A brief description of how the work will be performed including whether organizational staff or consultants or contractors will be used**

The Town of Wawarsing will seek bids from reputable firms with experience in providing feasibility studies for future agritourism sites.



How does this project advance economic development in Ellenville/Wawarsing?

The funding for the project is a Rural Business Development grant and an Empire State Development grant. Re-development of the defunct prison farm for food manufacturing, agricultural production, recreational tourism, and agritourism in order to revitalize the local economy and bring money into Wawarsing is the purpose of the project.

Governor Cuomo came to the area two years ago to announce improvements to Minnewaska State Park and at the time he stated that Minnewaska would become the gateway park to the Catskills. In the past, visitors to Minnewaska have returned to New Paltz after a day at the park, unaware of the Ellenville area. The DOCCS farmland forms a land bridge between Minnewaska in the Shawangunks and the Catskill Park, that the NYS Open Space Plan calls the "Catskill-Shawangunk Greenway", and recommends for agritourism and trail development. Colony Farm can also be a gateway to the Catskill Park, with 1300 feet of road frontage on the Shawangunk Mountains Scenic Byway. Currently, there is not even a sign to indicate the tens of thousands of acres of Catskill Park land accessible from Wawarsing.

Colony Farm and the Greenway will change Wawarsing's image from a "prison town" to a "parkland" and a "trails town" while coexisting with the prisons that will remain on the other half of the DOCCS' 1440 acres. It will create a new tourist attraction that will contribute to making the area a tourist destination again and bring in tourist dollars. A New Paltz outfitter calls the western slope of the Shawangunks the "Sleeping Giant" because of its recreational potential.

Colony Farm and the Greenway can be a Rt 209/ Scenic Byway trailhead for the O&W Rail Trail and the Ulster County Rail Trail System, with connectivity via the proposed "Catskill-Shawangunk Greenway Trail". The farmland will serve as the view shed for the rail trail.

Some of the food products that might be manufactured at Colony Farm are NYS Greek yogurt, artisan cheeses and ice cream. Proposed new zoning would make it easier to add cafes and eateries to farms in the immediate Colony Farm area.

The Greenway area can accommodate hikers, mountain bikers, rail trail users, kayakers and hang glider pilots. Amenities are needed to retain recreational tourists.

The recreational activities and scenic beauty will attract second home owners who will subsidize the Ellenville School District.

In short, the project will re-brand the Ellenville Area by transforming the vicinity of the Rt. 209 and Rt. 44-55 intersection into the Catskill-Shawangunk gateway.

**TOWN OF WAWARSING**  
**SPECIAL WORKSHOP MEETING**  
**August 30, 2017 –11:00 AM**

**PRESENT**                      Supervisor Distel                      Councilman Houck  
   Councilman Durso                      Deputy Town Clerk Collier  
   Councilman Johnson

**ABSENT**                      Town Clerk Shamro, Councilman Bradley

**TOWN BOARD TO APPROVE FAIRWEATHER CONSULTING, 124 MAIN STREET, SUITE 2, NEW PALTZ, NY TO DO A FEASIBILITY STUDY FOR THE REUSE OF COLONY FARM AND RELATED PARCELS**

On a motion by Councilman Johnson, seconded by Councilman Durso, the Town Board approves Fairweather Consulting of 124 Main Street, Suite 2, New Paltz, NY to do a feasibility study for the reuse of Colony Farm and related parcels. Total cost of study is \$48,240.00.

**TOWN BOARD ADJOURNS SPECIAL WORKSHOP MEETING AT 11:16 AM**

On a motion by Councilman Johnson, seconded by Councilman Houck, the Town Board adjourns special workshop meeting at 11:16 am.

**MOTION VOTE                      AYES                      4                      NAYS                      0                      ABSENT                      1**  
**MOTION CARRIED**

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**Jacqueline Collier**  
**Deputy Town Clerk**

**PROPOSAL OPENING  
FEASIBILITY STUDY FOR THE RE-USE OF THE COLONY FARM  
AND RELATED PARCELS  
AUGUST 16, 2017 - 12 NOON**

(1 proposal)

Fairweather Consulting  
124 Main Street Suite 2  
New Paltz, NY 12561  
(845) 255-0611

<b>Total Project Cost</b>	\$ 48,240.00
<b>Task A-Initial Data Gathering and Assessment</b>	\$ 12,480.00
<b>Task B-Public/Stakeholder Outreach</b>	\$ 5,520.00
<b>Task C-Identity and Assess Scénarios for Parcel Ownership &amp; Control</b>	\$ 4,680.00
<b>Task D-Identify and Define Possible Models for Active Re-Use of the Parcels</b>	\$ 10,500.00
<b>Task E-Identification of Possible Models for Passive Re-Users of the Parcels</b>	\$ 10,560.00
<b>Task F-Action Plan</b>	\$ 4,440.00

## LEGAL NOTICE

Town of Wawarsing

The Town of Wawarsing is seeking a Consultant to do a feasibility study of the Colony Farm which will include the re-use of the Colony Farm and related vacant parcels for public purposes, including but not limited to, use as an agricultural-tourism center, as an educational center modeling traditional and contemporary agricultural practices, as an assemblage of recreational open space with access to existing trails as protected lands conserving vital wetlands, view sheds and natural corridors with continual use as agricultural land preserving and enhancing existing flood plains and forests. Thus, maintaining the rural character of the Town of Wawarsing while providing new and vital economic opportunities for the Town.

Applications can be picked up at the Town Clerks Office, 108 Canal Street, PO Box 671, Ellenville, NY and RETURNED to the Town Clerks Office on or before August 16 , 2017 at 12 noon.

The Town of Wawarsing is an equal opportunity employer.

By Order of the Town Board  
Town of Wawarsing  
Roxanne Shamro, Town Clerk