

Earle Family Farm
RR 1, Box 27, Baird Hill Rd.
Center Conway, NH 03813

Community Partnering, Education, and Marketing FNEOO-333

Farmer/Grower Final Report

Project Goals: This grant was primarily for education, promotion, and marketing. Our goals were to identify marketing strategies, partner with local environmental education organization to increase farm education, and to identify options for acquiring and producing on more farmland.

Farm Update: The farm has completed two successful growing seasons since this grant was awarded in March of 2000. As we are a CSA, we grow as many as thirty different vegetable and small fruit items each year. The acreage farmed was reduced in 2001 when we did not renew a rental agreement on 5 acres of farmland in nearby Fryeburg, Me. Currently the farm comprises 140 acres with approximately 20 acres cleared for crop and pasture and the remainder in forest.

Project Cooperators: There were three cooperators in this grant;

- 1.) David Thurlow – Cumulus Consulting. Dave was instrumental in writing and implementing this grant. He recognized that the goals of the grant were essential to the projects development and he followed through to be sure these goals were met.
- 2.) Mt. Washington Valley Community Supported Agriculture – The ten person board of this organization were involved in the financial planning, publicity through expanded mailings and advertising, and the development of a farm plan and handbook for members.
- 3.) Tin Mt. Conservation Center was involved in the educational outreach of the grant. They implemented a successful day camp for children ages 5-12 during the month of July. They also helped our publicity efforts by allowing the farm's newsletter to reach an additional 1000 people with our spring newsletter and farm proposal.

What was Done: A fundamental need that this grant helped initiate was a long term farm plan. This included a sound accounting system. Through this planning process a five year financial plan was developed that increased farm income through increased farm publicity and farm membership. This membership increase was substantial in both 2000 and 2001 due to expanded mailings, advertising, news releases, a web page, and education at the farm. In addition a local land trust called the Upper Saco River Land Trust was formed. A principle mission of the land trust is to protect local agricultural lands from development.

Findings: Through increased outreach we discovered that there was a considerably larger market for the farm than had previously been identified. We also discovered a ground swell of interest in protecting agricultural lands from further development.

Site Conditions: Both the 2000 and 2001 growing seasons were challenging for vegetable production. Our CSA gardens diversify to a wide range of crops that require a wide range of conditions. Therefore some crops always perform well while others suffer from drought or excessive moisture and cool weather. Despite the conditions our members were satisfied with the farm's production during both years.

Economic Findings: Despite the farm's increase in membership from approximately 74 households in '99, to 105 in 2000, to 115 in 2001, additional income is required to make the farm financially viable.

New Ideas: The next step for the Mt. Washington Valley CSA is a broader production base than the *limited resources* of Earle Family Farm. The boards work will be to solicit interest from prospective growers throughout the Mt. Washington Valley to share the production and/or with the help of the land trust secure farmland suitable for increased production.

Outreach Program: Enclosed are copies of newspaper articles and advertisements that were used during the grant implementation.

This Final Report was written and submitted by Tom Earle.