



June 2008

Words of Windham

A Newsletter For People Who Care About Agriculture

Towns of Windham County Highlights of an Agricultural Town and a local Farmer in Thompson, Connecticut

The Town of Thompson was incorporated in May of 1785 and is one of the largest geographic areas in northeastern Connecticut covering approximately 48.7 square miles. The population is approximately 8,879 residents spread throughout the ten villages that comprise the town. Thompson has a rich history related to the mills that prospered on the rivers, the railroad that served the mills and agriculture. The villages of are: East Thompson, Wilsonville, Fabyan, Quaddick, Quinebaug, Mechanicsville, Grosvenordale, N. Grosvenordale, Thompson Hill and West Thompson. This "Quiet Corner" of Eastern Connecticut became quite famous on December 4, 1891, when on that foggy morning there was a horrific train wreck. To this day, this is the only 4 train wreck in the history of the United States. Did you know that General George Washington ate breakfast at Jacob's Tavern in E. Thompson in 1791. Also, it is believed that the term "Swamp Yankee" originated here during the American Revolution in 1776. Thompson has a diverse landscape that appeals to both the residents and the many visitors to the rivers, Quaddick Lake, West Thompson Dam and recreational area, the Thompson Speedway, and the farm stands to purchase fresh produce, milk and ice cream.

(information from Town of Thompson website)

A popular location in Thompson is Fort Hill Farms at 260 Quaddick Road. Much of the land that the farm owns today comprises the original land grant to Major Robert Thompson from the King of England dated May 16, 1683 and has been in continuous agricultural production for greater than 300 years.

Today, Peter and Kristin Orr operate, with three generations of family involvement many agricultural pursuits on this scenic and historic site. The Dairy farm at Fort Hill milks over 200 cows and the milk is sold through the local label "The Farmers Cow". Over 500 acres of forages are grown by the farm supporting an overall cattle herd of over 450. From the peak of Fort Hill a vista of three states can be seen which makes for a spectacular setting for featuring many unusual plant offerings, an educational corn maze, and a Lavender labyrinth for visitors to enjoy. The farm also grows strawberries and blueberries for pick-your-own. The farm plans on further developing its farm market with the sale of its dairy products in the near future. Fort Hill's pictorial settings have been featured in Yankee Magazine (twice), Reader's Digest, The New York Times (twice), and numerous regional newspapers. Peter and Kristin are actively involved in promoting the sustainability of Connecticut's agricultural industry and contributions that it makes.

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Other local producers in Thompson are:

Ed Babula, Babula Farm Greenhouse, Babula Road;
Mark & Deborah Balfour, Balfour Farm, Country Home Rd.;
Arthur Johnson, Brandy Hill Farm, Brandy Hill Rd.;
Warren & Jayne Reynolds of Chase Road Growers, Chase Rd.;
Walter Eddy, Eddy Farm, Sand Dam Road;
Jonathan Eddy, Boston Beef, Quaddick Road;
Al & Lynn Landry, Sun Run Gardens, Randall Road;
Doug Langer of Sweet Sue's Sugar Shack, Thompson Road
Randy & Myrtie Blackmer, Blackmer Farm & Greenhouse, Quinebaug Rd. Rt. 131, N. Grosvenordale

FARM RECONSTITUTIONS

In program terminology, farms are *constituted* to group all tracts having the same owner and the same operator under one farm serial number. When changes in ownership or operation take place, a farm *reconstitution* is necessary. The reconstitution—or recon—is the process of combining or dividing farms or tracts of land based on the farming operation.

The following are different methods used when doing a farm recon. Remember, to be effective for the current year, recons must be requested by Aug. 1st.

Estate Method: the division of bases, allotments and quotas for a parent farm among heirs in settling an estate;

Designation of Landowner Method: may be used when (1) part of a farm is sold or ownership is transferred; (2) an entire farm is sold to two or more persons; (3) farm ownership is transferred to two or more persons; (4) part of a tract is sold or ownership is transferred; (5) a tract is sold to two or more persons; or (6) tract ownership is transferred to two or more persons. In order to use this method the land sold must have been owned for at least three years, or a waiver granted, and the buyer and seller must sign a Memorandum of Understanding;

DCP Cropland Method: the division of bases in the same proportion that the DCP cropland for each resulting tract related to the DCP cropland on the parent tract;

Default Method: the division of bases for a parent farm with each tract maintaining the bases attributed to the tract level when the reconstitution is initiated in the system.

SODBUSTER REGULATIONS

The term “sodbusting” is used to identify the plowing up of erosion-prone grasslands for use as cropland. Sodbuster violations are unauthorized tillage practices on highly erodible lands that converted native vegetation such as rangeland or woodland, to crop production after December 23, 1985.

Farmers and ranchers should be aware that if they use highly erodible land for crop production without proper conservation measures, they risk losing eligibility to participate in Farm Service Agency Programs.

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If Natural Resources Conservation Service indicates on a CPA-026 that the area will be highly erodible land, the producer will be required to develop and implement a conservation plan on the affected acreage, before bringing land into production.

In addition, producers and the producer's affiliates have to file an AD-1026 with the staff in the administrative or control county office before any farm program payments can be made. The AD-1026 is the producer's signed certification the HELC, as well as wetland conservation, provisions will not be violated.

Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)

CRP is a private lands environmental improvement program where land is enrolled for ten to fifteen years, with an annual rental payment. No crop is harvested and the fields are maintained to reduce invasive species. Mowing and removal of growth to discard is done annually after the primary nesting season ends in the first week of August.

Acreage and participants must be eligible to sign up. Call 860-774-8397, x 1.

Spring Planting & Acreage Report-

Both the Farm Service Agency and your Crop Insurance Agent require that you report things like prevented planting and late planting. At FSA, we ask you to also report the date fields were planted. We will be sending acreage appointment letters to remind you to do an annual acreage report. Be sure to note changes in field owners, shapes of fields and other pertinent information to keep your records up to date.

Shelby Grant, NE Marketing Agent Crop Growers LLP, asked us to remind you to contact your agent if you have delayed or prevented planting, or if you need to replant. The final planting for field corn is June 10th and for fresh market sweet corn it is June 30th. These crops are considered late planted after that date.

Your acreage report to FSA is due by July 15th. If you have crop insurance, you may want to request a copy of your FSA 578's to also report farm numbers, fields and acreage planted to your agent by their due date which is also July 15th.

Farm to Chef Program Wants You!

Participants needed to provide fresh produce to restaurants. Please contact Linda Piotrowicz at the Connecticut Department of Agriculture. Phone: 860-713-2558 or email Linda.piotrowicz@ct.gov

June is Dairy Month!

If you are interested in taking a "virtual tour" of a dairy farm visit www.dairyfarmingtoday.org This website will take you through the many steps of milk production from animal care to the milking parlor to how the milk is transported.



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Farm Loans for Socially Disadvantaged

A socially disadvantaged person is one of a group whose members have been subjected to racial, ethnic or gender prejudice because of his or her identity as members of the group without regard to his or her individual qualities. For purposes of this program, socially disadvantaged groups are women, African Americans, American Indians, Alaskan Natives, Hispanics, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders.

Persons, primarily and directly engaged in farming and ranching on family-size operations, may apply. A family-size farm is one that a family can operate and manage itself.

Socially disadvantaged loan applicants do not receive automatic approval. They must meet all requirements of FSA's regular farm loan program assistance.

For more detailed information regarding this program you may access the FSA website: <http://www.fsa.usda.gov> or contact Ron Clark, Farm Loan Manager at (860) 887-9941, ext. 105.

June Events—Dairy Month -

Saturday, June 7th: Woodstock Historical Society: Presents Lost Barns. Speakers & tour of Woodstock barns, 8:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m., Fee & Pre-registration required by June 2nd. Contact: Gail White @ Rose-land Cottage (860) 928-4074 or gwhite@historicnewengland.org

Saturday, June 7th: 12th Annual Herbfest CT: 9:00-4:00 @ Topmost Farm, 244 North School Rd., Coventry. For information: www.ctherb.org

Saturday, June 7th & 8th: AG Day at Brooklyn Fairgrounds.

Tuesday, June 10th: County Committee Meeting: 7:30 p.m., Brooklyn Agricultural Center, 139 Wolf Den Road.

Saturday, June 14th: Ekonk Grange, 114th Annual Strawberry Supper, 5-7 p.m. Ham, Beans, Salads & Strawberry shortcake. Contact: Ekonk Grange @ (860) 564-7614.

Saturday, June 14th: Three Centuries on a New England Farm: 10:00 a.m., Blue Slope Farm, Franklin, CT. Advanced registration required. Contact: Sandy Staebner @ (860) 486-4460.

Monday, June 23rd: Eastern CT RC&D Area 2008 Annual Meeting @ 11:00 a.m. @ CT River Museum, Essex. "Where the River Comes to Life". For more information: contact : www.easternrcd-ct.org

Friday, June 27th: Round & Square Dances w/Farmer Joe Lopresti & the Country Friends. Blue Slope Farm, Franklin, CT 7:30 to 10:30. For information contact Sandy & Ernie Staebner @ 860-642-6413.

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COUNTY COMMITTEE:

Harold Bishop, Chairman
Betsy Molodich,
Vice-Chairman
Charles Tyler,
Regular Member