



Farmland Access Consultant

The Watershed Agricultural Council (WAC) seeks qualified consultants to support a farmland access initiative focused on identifying privately owned agricultural lands that may be available for lease, or other arrangements, to farmers within the New York City (NYC) West-of-Hudson (WOH) Watershed region.

Background

Access to affordable farmland remains one of the most significant barriers facing beginning, expanding, relocating, and other farmers in the NYC WOH Watershed region (portions of Delaware, Sullivan, Ulster, Schoharie, and Greene counties). WAC seeks to better understand the availability of privately owned farmland and farm infrastructure that could support agricultural production through leasing, lease to own, or other arrangements. Consultant will prioritize engagement with landowners who have permanently protected their farmland with a WAC conservation easement.

Scope of Work

The selected consultant will conduct outreach to agricultural landowners, develop a dataset that identifies potential opportunities for farmland leasing, organize at least one roundtable event bringing landowners together to discuss opportunities and challenges in leasing arrangements, and develop and promote the opportunities for media and communications. This opportunity is funded through a grant with American Farmland Trust (AFT) and the State of New York. The selected consultant will also be responsible for uploading lease/lease-to-own/other opportunities on the NY Farmland Finder website.

Responsibilities include:

- 1. Landowner Survey Development and Administration**

- Develop and implement a survey of agricultural landowners (both producers and non-operating landowners). Prioritize engagement of landowners with WAC conservation easements.
- Gather information regarding interest in leasing farmland to farmers.
- Develop materials to promote the project via WAC and other channels.

- 2. Landowner Outreach and Interviews**

- Conduct one-on-one conversations with landowners.
- Assess willingness to lease land to farmers.
- Identify opportunities, concerns, and support needs related to farmland leasing and/or other farm transition/estate planning inquiries.
- Outline potential uses of land for agricultural enterprise(s) per property.
- Document landowner concerns, motivations, and perceived barriers to leasing.

- Document key themes and recommendations.
- Upload opportunities to NY Farmland Finder website.
- 3. **Farm Property and Infrastructure Inventory**
 - Collect and organize information on participating properties, including:
 - Approximate acreage available for agricultural use.
 - Existing farm infrastructure (barns, equipment sheds, greenhouses, fencing, livestock facilities, water access, storage facilities, housing, etc.).
 - Current land use and agricultural suitability.
 - Access considerations and operational constraints.
- 4. **Organize Roundtable Event**
 - Develop material promoting event for landowners interested in increased agricultural production on their farmland.
 - Organize event, including space, food, and logistics.
 - Goal is for at least 50 landowners to attend roundtable.
- 5. **Data Management and Reporting**
 - Create a comprehensive searchable database or spreadsheet of participating properties.
 - Maintain records of outreach activities and survey responses.
 - Prepare a final summary report highlighting findings, opportunities, barriers, and recommendations for future WAC programming.

Compensation & Working Conditions

This is an Independent Consultant position. This opportunity is fully funded by WAC through grant funding provided by AFT and the State of New York, not to exceed \$15,000 reimbursement.

- Work Period: assumed October 1, 2026 – May 30, 2027, with an anticipated average of 10-15 hrs. per week on the project. Compensation to not exceed grant allocated funds of \$15,000.
 - Consultant to be paid monthly, based off submitted and verified invoices. Such invoices shall detail hours spent working towards project deliverables.
- This is a remote position, with anticipated bi-weekly check-ins held at the WAC Hamden Office (33195 State Highway 10, Hamden NY)
 - Consultant must have own vehicle with proof of insurance. Percentage of landowner surveys anticipated to happen in-person/on farm.
- Project will be under the direction of the WAC Easement Program Manager.

Project Deliverables

Timeline	Task
October 1, 2026 – November 30, 2026	• Survey development / submit landowner survey instrument • Begin landowner outreach and interviews

December 1, 2026 – January 30, 2027	• Continue landowner outreach and interviews / Provide summary analysis of landowner attitudes toward farmland leasing, lease-to-own, and other arrangements. • Assist WAC Easement Program Manager with AFT Interim Report
February 1, 2027 – March 31, 2027	• Organize and hold roundtable event • Upload goal of 20 opportunities to NY Farmland Finder Website
April 1, 2027 – May 30, 2027	• Submit complete database of surveyed properties and available farm infrastructure. (Both for internal use at WAC and through the NY Farmland Finder website). • Present Final Report to WAC including recommendations to increase farmland access and leasing opportunities in the NYC WOH Watershed region. Incorporates report on goal of 5 landowner to farmland seeker match(es).

Preferred Qualifications

- Experience working with agricultural landowners and farmers.
- Knowledge of farmland leasing and agricultural production.
- Strong communication, interviewing, and interpersonal skills.
- Experience conducting surveys, outreach, and data collection.
- Basic familiarity with farming within the NYC West-of-Hudson Watershed.
- Bachelor's degree and/or demonstrated years of professional experience in related pursuits.

Submission Information

Interested consultants should submit to Serena Orleski at sorleski@nycwatershed.org:

1. Brief summary of applicable experience(s);
2. Resume;
3. Two professional references.

Selected consultant shall be the applicant determined to be the most advantageous to WAC.

For more information about this opportunity, contact: 607-865-7790 x118