

Jefferson County Announces Thirty-Day Period for Landowners to Submit Requests for Modifications to the Jefferson County Southeast Agricultural District #1

Since 1971, the creation of certified Agricultural Districts under NYS Agriculture and Markets Law has been important to the State and County level efforts to preserve, protect, and encourage the development and improvement of agricultural land for the production of food and other agricultural products. NYS Agriculture and Markets Law requires the County Legislature to review a District every eight years. The County's Southeast Agricultural District #1 is located within the towns of Champion, Rodman, Rutland, Wilna, and Worth and portions of the towns of Adams, Hounsfield, Watertown, and Lorraine. The Southeast District consists of over 49,000 acres. The eight-year review process starts with a thirty-day review period beginning on March 1, 2021 and ending on March 30, 2021. During this period landowners may request to add or remove land by completing a survey and submitting it to the Jefferson County Department of Planning.

Town maps showing agricultural district parcels may be viewed on the Jefferson County website under GIS Maps, Property Search & Assessment Rolls then click on the Jefferson County Resource Maps Page: <https://co.jefferson.ny.us/town-agricultural-districts-with-2016-inclusions>. Farmers currently in the District will receive a survey to fill out and farmers who are not currently in the district should contact the Jefferson County Department of Planning (315) 785-3144 to obtain a survey and request being added to the district. This form may also be downloaded from the Jefferson County website, <https://co.jefferson.ny.us>.

Possible benefits to farm operations within NYS Certified Agricultural Districts include: potential eligibility for a special agricultural assessment; support of farming through state agency policies; limitations on the exercise of eminent domain; limitations on benefit assessments in certain improvement districts; and limitations on the enactment of local regulations that unreasonably restrict or regulate a farm operation. Further information on the benefits of agricultural districts may be found on the Planning Department's web page under NYS Certified Agricultural Districts.

At the termination of the thirty-day period, the District and any proposed modifications will be referred to the Jefferson County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board for review and recommendation. A public hearing will be scheduled later to discuss the current District, any proposed modifications, and the recommendation of the Jefferson County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board.

Completed surveys must be returned by March 30, 2021 to the Jefferson County Department of Planning by US mail, email or FAX: 175 Arsenal Street, Watertown, NY 13601, Sfreda@co.jefferson.ny.us or FAX number (315) 785-5092. If you have any questions please contact Sara Freda, Jefferson County Department of Planning, (315) 785-3144.