2015

COUNTRYSIDE INITIATIVE

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

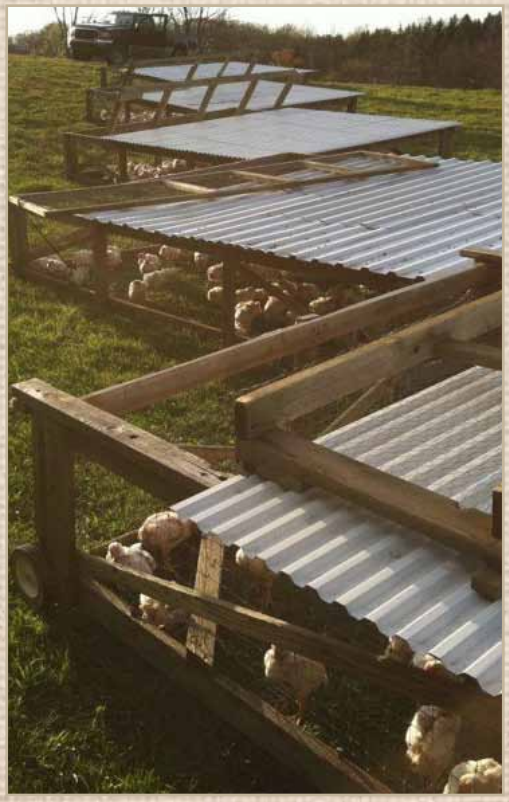


TABLE OF CONTENTS

SUMMARY OF THE LEASING OPPORTUNITY

4 About this Request for Proposals
5 The Countryside Initiative
6 Appropriate Types of Farming
6 Long-term Leases
6 An Innovative & Significant Project
7 Pursuit of Enlightened Self-Interest
7 Threefold Partnerships
7 Competitive Proposal Process

Trapp Family Farm

HISTORICAL CONTEXT & FUTURE VISION

8 The National Park Idea
8 Parks to the People
9 Cuyahoga Valley National Park
> Purpose of the Park
> Loss of Rural Landscapes
10 The Countryside Initiative
> The Countryside Image
> Parks as Lived in Places
> The Concept of Sustainable Agriculture
> Self-Interest: Personal, Shared, Altruistic
> Retail Farming and Niche Markets
> Farm Sizes and Enterprises
> Landscape Aesthetics
> Recapturing a Sense of Place for the Purpose of Preserving and Protecting for Public Use and Enjoyment…
15 Meeting the Farmers

CULTIVATING THE VISION

16 Connecting to Larger Worlds
17 To Market, To Market

LEASING AUTHORITY & CONDITIONS

18 Legislative Authorization
18 Duration & Transferability of Leases
18 Responsibility for Residency
18 Responsibility for Continuous Active Farming
19 Fair Market Value Rent
> Dual Components of Rent
> Residential Component
> Productive Component
20 Edgar Farm
22 Schmidt-Foster Farm

PROPOSAL DEVELOPMENT & CONTENT

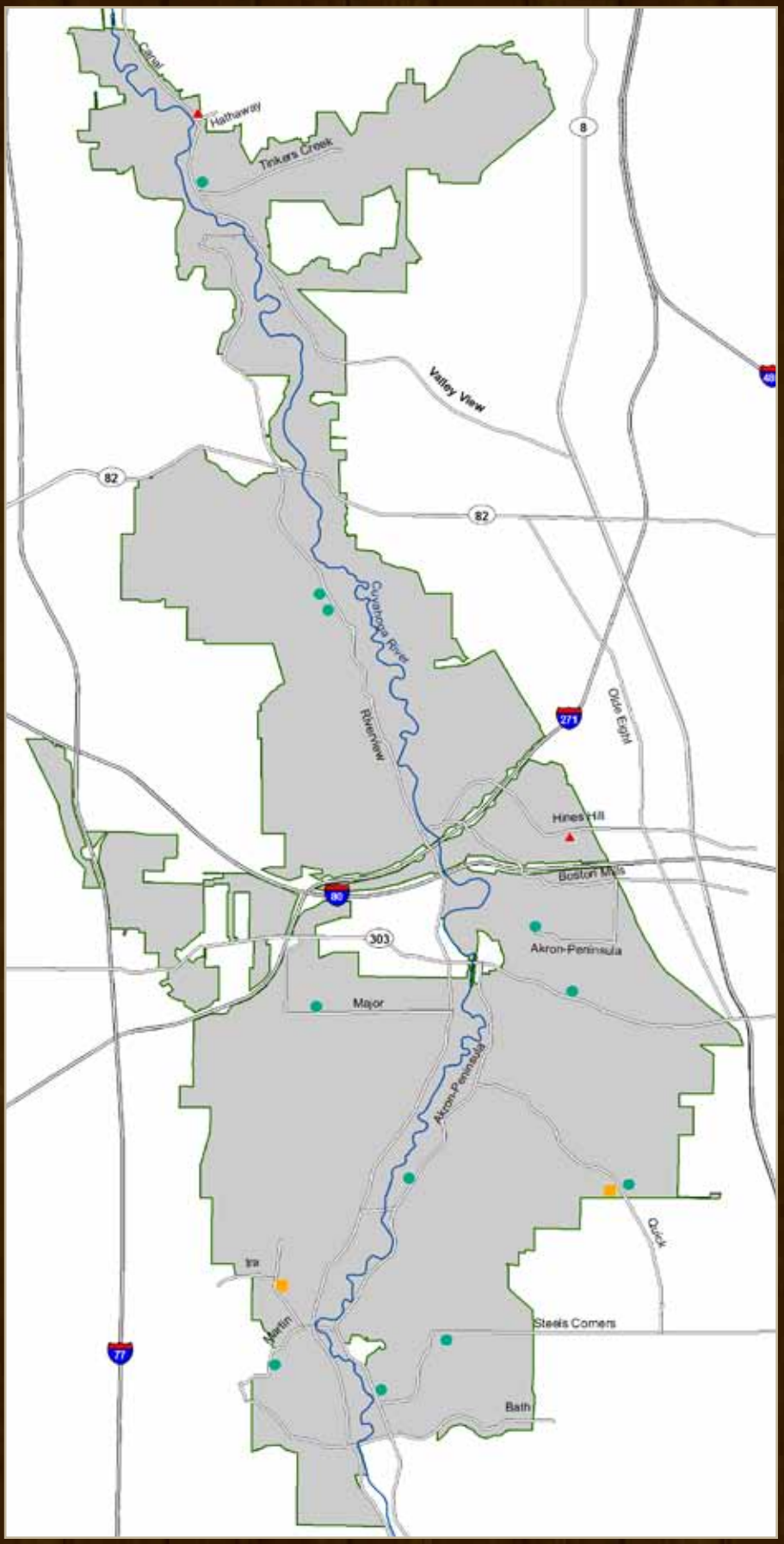
24 Proposal Development
> Invitation to Compete
> Format and Accuracy
> Purpose of the Information Requested
> Inquiries and Explanations
24 Proposal Content
28 Submission of Proposals
> Items to Include
> Number of Copies, Methods of Transmittal
> Late Proposals, Modifications and Withdraw
29 Acceptance and Evaluation Proposals
> Proposal Acceptance
> Proposal Evaluation

SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION & APPENDICES

30 Supplemental Information
31 Appendix A
> Cover Letter
32 Appendix B
> Preferred Production Practices for Sustainable Agriculture
> Production Practices for Sustainable Livestock Enterprises
> Animal Welfare
> Grass-based Livestock Production
35 Appendix C
> Typical Budget Categories, Details, and Format
> Typical Annual Operating Budget Summary Example
36 Back to the Future

COUNTRYSIDE INITIATIVE FARM SITES

This map depicts the locations and distribution of Countryside Initiative farms rehabilitated and made operational.



MAP KEY

- ▲ Farms in 2015 RFP
- ● Operational Farms
- ■ Potential Future Initiative Farms

SUMMARY OF THE LEASING OPPORTUNITY

About this Request for Proposals

This Request for Proposals (RFP) is the seventh issued for the Countryside Initiative. Like previous requests it continues the process of introducing and defining Cuyahoga Valley National Park's innovative program for managing rural landscapes.

The RFP is addressed first, to persons who would like the opportunity to lease the farm properties available. For potential proposers, it provides guidelines necessary to prepare a strong proposal. More importantly, it gives the proposers sufficient detail and perspective to understand that taking responsibility for an Initiative farm could significantly change the proposers' lives. And for others – interested parties who hope to support and promote the Countryside Initiative in various ways, or who hope to apply its concepts elsewhere – this RFP offers a thorough description of how the program works.

CVNP is responsible "for preserving and protecting for public use and enjoyment, the historic, scenic, natural, and recreational values of the Cuyahoga River and adjacent lands of the Cuyahoga Valley..."

Canal Corners Farm & Market

2015 REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

to: Lease two farm properties in Cuyahoga Valley National Park;

to: Conduct Sustainable agriculture enterprises thereon;

to: Help reestablish a working agricultural landscape in CVNP;

to: Help preserve and protect for public use and enjoyment, the historic, scenic, natural, and recreational values of the Cuyahoga River, and adjacent lands of the Cuyahoga Valley.

Brunty Farms

The Spicy Lamb Farm

The Countryside Initiative

Cuyahoga Valley National Park (CVNP) is responsible "for preserving and protecting for public use and enjoyment, the historic, scenic, natural, and recreational values of the Cuyahoga River and adjacent lands of the Cuyahoga Valley…" Since the park's establishment in 1974, park managers have understood the above statement, taken from the park's enabling legislation, to include the rural countryside – the Valley's working agricultural landscape. Yet despite various attempts to stem the decline of agriculture within park boundaries, most farms continued a century-long slide into disuse and disrepair, until the Countryside Initiative was established. The goals of the Countryside Initiative, begun in 1999, are to sustain the agricultural heritage of the Valley and preserve the remaining agricultural land and buildings by rehabilitating and revitalizing many of the old farms that operated in the valley from the mid-1800's to the mid-1900's. This ambitious effort has, as its core, a precedent-setting partnership between the national park, the nonprofit Cuyahoga Valley Countryside Conservancy, and selected farmers.

The Countryside Initiative enables privately supported, economically viable, and environmentally friendly approaches to agriculture in a National Park setting. The initiative also successfully merges rural landscape management objectives with more traditional National Park Service natural and cultural preservation practices. All of which are accomplished through long term leasing of farm residences, outbuildings and land to individuals who successfully compete in the RFP process.

Trapp Family Farm

Appropriate Types of Farming

This RFP offers two farms for leasing in 2015. Both are suitable for culturally intensive fruit and vegetable production, small intensive grazing operations, or small integrated crop-livestock enterprises. Certified organic production systems are encouraged, though not required; non-certified organic production systems are expected to operate in the same general part of the sustainability spectrum. Marketing methods may take forms such as: pick your own, community supported agriculture, roadside stands, local farmers' markets, and direct sales to individuals and restaurants. Each farming enterprise will reflect the characteristics and capabilities of the particular farm site and the particular knowledge, skills, and preferences of the farm lessees.

Long-term Leases

Countryside Initiative farm properties may be leased for periods of up to 60 years. Hence, a Lessee may make a significant capital investment to establish a particular farming enterprise, and fully amortize the investment over the period of the lease. Long-term leases also allow lessees to pursue land stewardship practices, which may require years to implement – and years to recover one's costs. Once competitively earned, a leasehold interest may be transferred or assigned to a third party – subject to CVNP approval. By law, all leases must be re-offered competitively at the termination of the lease. And all leases must be made at fair market value rent.

This RFP offers two farms for leasing in 2015. Both are suitable for culturally intensive fruit and vegetable production, small intensive grazing operations, or small integrated crop-livestock enterprises.

An Innovative & Significant Project

The Countryside Initiative offers lessees the opportunity to be part of a truly innovative and significant project. In other parts of the world, especially in Europe, an appreciation of farming's potential to create and maintain aesthetically pleasing and ecologically healthy landscapes is well understood. Farming is often used for such purposes in large regional and national parks, and used to carefully manage non-park landscapes around urban centers.

The Countryside Initiative brings such concepts and practices to America. First, and most specifically, it allows CVNP to better fulfill its preservation and protection functions, while greatly enhancing the Park's educational and recreational offerings. Secondly, the Initiative serves as a useful model for certain other multi-use parks within NPS and elsewhere. And third, it showcases alternative types of farming which can become important components of smart growth development in urban fringe communities across America.

Photo by: Gary Whipple

Canal Lantern Theater

Photo by: Scott T. Morrison

The Countryside Initiative seeks farm lessees who see themselves as simultaneously cultivating profit, community, and ecological health.

Pursuit of Enlightened Self-Interest

The Countryside Initiative makes small farms with excellent production and market potential very accessible and affordable – and explicitly encourages the pursuit of personal financial profit. That profit provides the financial basis for supporting quality-of-life goals – such as being able to work closely with family and friends while contributing to the natural beauty and environmental health of one's locale (in this case CVNP). The Countryside Initiative seeks farm lessees who see themselves as simultaneously cultivating profit, community, and ecological health.

Threefold Partnerships

CVNP has frequently relied on close working relationships with other governmental agencies and private organizations (both for profit and non-profit) to achieve common goals. In 1999, a new non-profit organization, the Cuyahoga Valley Countryside Conservancy (CVCC), was established to help develop and manage the Countryside Initiative. CVCC provides technical information and guidance on sustainable agriculture, helps prioritize rehabilitation of farm properties, supports the park's recruitment and selection of prospective lessees, and helps evaluate and monitor each farm's annual operating plan. CVCC works closely with each farm lessee to align their private goals and operating plans with the public objectives of the Initiative. This represents an intentional threefold partnership, drawing on the distinctive strengths and resources of the government sector (CVNP), the cultural sector (CVCC), and the business sector (lessees).

Competitive Proposal Process

This RFP is open to all interested parties on a competitive basis. Whoever submits the proposal judged most likely to achieve a particular farm's best use within the context and purposes of the Countryside Initiative – and demonstrates the capacity to successfully implement the proposal – will be awarded the opportunity to sign a lease agreeable to both the proposer and CVNP. The Countryside Initiative needs a few good farmers – farmers committed to the concepts of sustainable agriculture and a vision for sharing those concepts with some of the nearly 2.5 million annual visitors to CVNP.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT & FUTURE VISION

Photo by: © Jeffrey Gibson

Photo by: © D.J. Reiser

The National Park Idea

The world's first national park – Yellowstone – was established by the United States Congress in 1872 as "a public park or pleasuring ground for the benefit and enjoyment of the people." Since then, the idea of creating nationally significant parks has spread to over 100 countries, and resulted in more than 1,200 parks. The care and management of Yellowstone was placed in the hands of the U.S. Secretary of the Interior. And in 1916, Congress created within the Department of the Interior, a National Park Service to "promote and regulate the use of federal areas known as national parks, monuments, and reservations." Today, NPS manages over 400 units variously designated as national parks, monuments, preserves, lakeshores, seashores, wild and scenic rivers, national trails, historic sites, military parks, battlefields, historical parks, recreation areas, memorials, and parkways. All protect and oversee public use of some nationally significant aspect of America's natural or cultural heritage.

Parks to the People

Although several units of the National Park System existed near urban centers prior to the 1960s, few NPS employees regarded the provision of recreation for nearby urban populations to be a function of their agency. However, the social and political turmoil of the 60s caused a profound rethinking of the roles played by many governmental and non-governmental organizations, including NPS. The Park Service was regarded by some as remote, and neglectful of urban citizens. Responding to such criticism, and to other needs, NPS developed a high profile and highly successful Summer in the Parks program in 1967, for federal parks in the Washington, D.C. area. And by 1972, Gateway National Recreation Area (in New York Harbor) and Golden Gate National Recreation Area (in San Francisco) were formally established. These so-called gateways were intended to serve as models for large, multi-use parks near urban centers. As Interior Secretary Rogers Morton said at the time, "We can no longer accept the premise that parks are where you find them; we must identify – and create – parks where people need them." Thus was formed a new initiative popularly known as Parks to the People. Five national urban parks have been created since 1970, including Cuyahoga Valley National Recreation Area (CVNRA) – since renamed Cuyahoga Valley National Park.

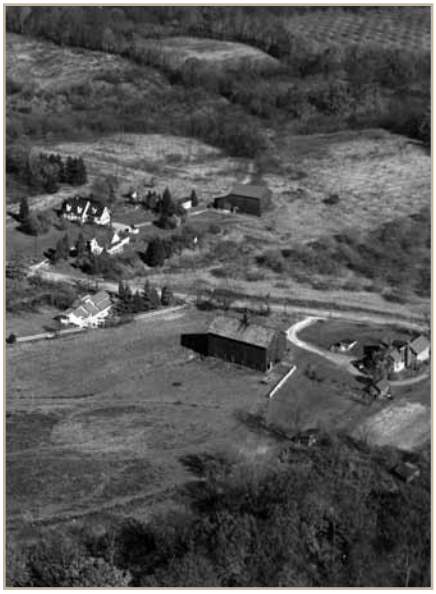
Cuyahoga Valley National Park

PURPOSE OF THE PARK

In 1974, Congress established CVNRA (renamed a National Park in 2000), "for the purpose of preserving and protecting for public use and enjoyment, the historic, scenic, natural, and recreational values of the Cuyahoga River and the adjacent lands of the Cuyahoga Valley, and for the purpose of providing for the maintenance of needed recreational open space necessary to the urban environment…"Most local park proponents believed that CVNP's creation occurred just in the nick of time. Although the Cuyahoga Valley, situated between Akron and Cleveland, Ohio, escaped the sort of industrial and commercial growth experienced by these two urban centers, development was creeping into the Valley itself by the 1960s and 70s. Subsequently during the 80s and 90s, suburban sprawl piled up against the eastern and western boundaries of the new park.

By its 25th birthday in 1999, CVNP had an impressive array of achievements to its credit. An extensive infrastructure of improved roads, trails, shelters, and visitor centers were in place. Three major recreational/educational features envisioned for the park had been established: the 20-mile Towpath Trail, the Cuyahoga Valley Scenic Railroad, and the Cuyahoga Valley Environmental Education Center. In short, most of the park's original management and program goals had been successfully accomplished – with one major, nagging exception.

Preserving and protecting the park's rural countryside for public use and enjoyment had turned out to be an extremely complex and elusive goal. Looking back, by the 1870s, many Clevelanders and Akronites were already venturing into the Cuyahoga Valley to escape the pressures of urban industrial life. They came for carriage rides down country lanes, boat rides on the canal, and by the 1880s scenic excursions on the Valley Railway. They came for picnicking, hiking, and nature study. They came to enjoy the beauty of the open countryside and to buy fresh produce from Valley farmers. By the beginning of the 20th century, the Cuyahoga Valley was, in effect, an urban recreation area – a country retreat for city folks. CVNP's Statement for Management (1993) notes that "the Valley's real magic and magnetism will always be rural charm set in relief against an urban background…" And the official NPS index of national parks says matter-of-factly that CVNP "preserves rural landscapes along the Cuyahoga River between Cleveland and Akron, Ohio."



LOSS OF RURAL LANDSCAPES

In fact, rural landscapes would become one of CVNP's most "endangered species" – mainly because the activity most responsible for creating and maintaining them had all but disappeared from the Valley by the 1990s. Without a viable community of working farms, the countryside – that appealing patchwork of pastures, cropland, and woodlots – quickly disappears. Although the old farms within the boundaries of CVNP have been protected from the concrete and asphalt blanket now covering their counterparts in surrounding suburbs, most park farms continued their long slide into disuse and disrepair even after the park was established – and quickly became overgrown with weeds and brush. Prior to the establishment of the Countryside Initiative, the distinctive look and feel of a working agricultural landscape was largely gone, scenic vistas increasingly obscured, and the park as a whole felt more and more closed in.

The Countryside Initiative is an ambitious program to revitalize 15 or so of the old farms in CVNP – and thereby restore for public use and enjoyment many of the distinctive historical, scenic, natural, and recreational values for which the park was originally established.

The Countryside Initiative

"You know this image: a mix of crops weaves a varied field pattern, livestock graze on the land, woodlands and streams make sensuous borders along the fields, tidy farmsteads dot the landscape. There are fish in the pond, birds in the sky, and wildlife in the woods. The air is clean. There is a small town nearby with a school, stores, and churches. You might not live in this landscape, but you would like to visit it, and when you did, you could stop and enjoy a friendly talk with the farmer and buy fresh produce you couldn't buy in the city."

– Joan Iverson Nassaur, "Agricultural Landscapes in Harmony with Nature," Visions of American Agriculture, ed. by William Lockeretz. Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1997.

Spice Acres

THE COUNTRYSIDE IMAGE

Visitors venturing into the Cuyahoga Valley in the 1870s no doubt carried a similar image in their minds. And, no doubt, found it reinforced by their experiences there (though the fish, we may be sure, would have been in the canal rather than farm ponds!). Such realities lingered in the Valley through mid 20th century. And so, the image remained strong in the minds of thousands of volunteers who worked to establish a major park.

That image still lingers in the minds of many, though the reality has largely slipped away. Indeed, today the image doesn't fit well with much of rural America, where industrial agriculture predominates. Some would say it is now just generic nostalgia. But it is a strong popular image, widely shared in Western society for hundreds of years. It is what many of us want the countryside to look like, to be like – and most would support efforts to make reality fit the image.

The Countryside Initiative finds its inspiration and its name in that popular image of the countryside so deeply embedded in Western minds. Recent English writers occasionally speak of the middle landscape – a place poised midway between the city and the wild, between civilization and wilderness. Middle landscape is an evocative and appealing term – but for most of us the older term countryside, is the more familiar, and comfortable. It evokes an image of humans working in harmony with one another and with nature. It conjures up a sense of tended, cared for, valued nature. It offers a powerful and appealing vision of what farming could and should be like in the Valley again – especially since it will now be part of a national park!

PARKS AS LIVED IN PLACES

Farming in a national park (or any other park) is a most unconventional idea in America. Americans tend to perceive parks as places to visit, not live in – regardless of whether it is a Yellowstone-like wilderness, or a manicured metropark. That is not the case in many other parts of the world. In Great Britain, for example, over 10% of the English landscape is located within the boundaries of a national park – over 90% of that is privately-owned, and most of it is in farms. In Great Britain, farming in the boundaries of national parks is considered the only practical way to maintain the openness, beauty, and diversity of the countryside.

CVNP has much in common with English and other European parks, and to a degree can draw on their experiences. Yet many of the cultural assumptions about parks are quite different in North America, and there are few park management traditions to guide a project, such as the Countryside Initiative. Hence, the Initiative is breaking new ground conceptually, philosophically, and legally – in addition to cultivating old farmlands physically.

THE CONCEPT OF SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE

The countryside encompasses much more than farming and agriculture. Yet, those are the main forces or processes honing the general look and feel of most countryside's. And the kind of agriculture pursued, the values and assumptions on which it is based, the means it uses, and the ends it seeks, determine the character of the countryside. So, it is critical to ask what kinds of farming would be appropriate for CVNP, what kinds would be compatible with the values, purposes, and traditions of NPS.

There are three points of view worth noting here. First, some environmentalists see agriculture as generally destructive of nature, and therefore better limited to zones which can be isolated and sacrificed for food production. But that is an extreme view even within the environmental movement, and it is not widely held in our society. It is certainly not responsive to the purposes for which CVNP was established. The opposite extreme (which provides considerable justification and fuel for the prior view) is what is often labeled modern, mainstream, conventional, or industrial agriculture. And a third option is generally referred to as alternative, or sustainable, agriculture.

Sustainable agriculture is the generic term now most commonly used to identify those diverse kinds of farming which may be regarded as appropriate for the Initiative. Included under this conceptual umbrella are several discreet schools of thought and practice bearing names like organic, biointensive, biodynamic, permaculture, holistic, civic, integrated, and low-input. The term sustainable came into wide use following the 1988 establishment of a small program within the United States Department of Agriculture, named Low Input Sustainable Agriculture (LISA). After several years, that program was renamed the Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program (SARE) – as it became more apparent that sustainability was far more complex than limiting expensive production inputs and avoiding ecologically harmful practices.

Even in its early years, sustainable agriculture explicitly rejected most of the assumptions and practices of industrial agriculture. It advocates more and smaller farms; limited capitalization and limited use of credit; selective appropriate mechanization; replacement of most agricultural chemicals with biological, cultural, and mechanical alternatives; and grass-based, free-range livestock systems. Equally important, sustainable agriculture rejects the assumption that maximizing short-term economic profit is the overriding end which drives all decision-making.

In recent years, as sustainable farming has emerged as a viable alternative in certain contexts to industrialized food production methods, a broad consensus is forming regarding its fundamental nature. To be truly sustainable, practitioners now argue, agriculture must be economically profitable, socially responsible, and ecologically healthy. A box which lacks length, breadth, or depth is not a box. Agriculture which lacks any of these three dimensions is not sustainable over time.

Greenfield Berry Farm

Goatfeathers Point Farm

SELF-INTEREST: PERSONAL, SHARED, ALTRUISTIC

Agricultural economist John Ikerd describes the concept of sustainability as being focused on intergenerational equity – meeting the needs of the present while leaving equal or better opportunities for the future. Sustainable farmers, he says, pursue an enlightened self-interest, comprised of personal, shared, and altruistic interests. Personal self-interest is primarily about individual monetary gain and material possessions. Shared interests focus on relationships, community, and social values. Altruistic interests focus on ethics, morality and stewardship – doing what is right with little expectation of direct personal gain.

"These new farmers are a diverse lot, but they share a common pursuit of a higher self-interest. They are not trying to maximize profit, but instead are seeking sufficient profit for a desirable quality of life. They recognize the importance of relationships, of family and community, as well as income, in determining their overall well being. They accept the responsibilities of ethics and stewardship, not as constrains to their selfishness, but instead, as opportunities to lead successful lives."

– John Ikerd, "New Farmers for a New Century," Youth in Agriculture Conference. Ulvik, Norway (February 14–15, 2000).

RETAIL FARMING AND NICHE MARKETS

Many find Ikerd's words profound and inspiring. Certain economic skeptics suggest they are nice, but naive – and assert that they cannot be made to work in the real world. In fact, Ikerd is describing what already is working for thousands of individual farmers across America and around the globe. He has identified critical factors that allow such farmers to confound the conventional wisdom of conventional agriculture. Many of the contrasting assumptions and practices that distinguish these farmers from their conventional brethren were noted earlier. But Ikerd emphasizes an additional, little understood distinction between conventional and sustainable agriculture. Conventional agriculture is usually a wholesale enterprise, while sustainable farming is typically a retail enterprise. And therein lies the key to economic success for small scale farming – and the answer to economic skeptics.

Industrial agriculture produces generic commodities for mass markets and global trade. Producer and consumer never see one another, know and care little about one another. Sustainable farming usually focuses on high quality specialty products for direct, local, retail sale – to regular customer/friends. Conventional farmers receive approximately 20 cents from each dollar spent by American consumers for food, half of which covers production costs such as equipment, supplies, and labor. The remaining 80 cents goes to middlemen for transportation, storage, processing, distribution, advertising, and retailing. The economic success of farmers using sustainable methods rests in part on eliminating most of these middlemen. More importantly, it rests on niche marketing – marketing directly to people who care about (value), and are willing to pay a premium price for, food that is of higher quality, grown to their specifications, and grown without the social and ecological harm resulting from industrial farming practices.

Trapp Family Farm

FARM SIZES AND ENTERPRISES

Initiative farms range in size from 2 to 35 acres, averaging approximately 20 acres. Most Initiative farms will grow and sell the kind of food and fiber crops which were grown and sold in the Valley from the early 19th Century through the mid 20th Century – even though their methods will be decidedly post-modern (sustainable). Of the current Initiative farms, some focus on vegetables, some on livestock (meat goats, sheep, chickens, eggs, turkeys), one is a vineyard and winery, one is a pick-your-own berry operation, one grows culinary and medicinal herbs, and many offer Community Supported Agriculture shares (CSA).

All Initiative farms must utilize ecologically sustainable production practices. Many Initiative farmers will choose to become certified organic growers, although that is not a requirement of the Initiative. Those who do not must still follow production methods which strictly limit the use of conventional agricultural chemicals and excessive tilling. Livestock grazers will use management intensive grazing systems, moving their animals from paddock to paddock every few days, to enhance rather than degrade pasture health. And all livestock handling systems must respect the animals' basic physical nature and welfare; close confinement systems are not appropriate. The Initiative has no rigid categorical prohibitions or exclusions for specific crop or livestock species. In general, however, exotic or newly popular livestock enterprises, such as bison, deer, elk, ostriches, emus, rheas, llamas, alpacas, miniatures, and equine boarding are of limited interest to the Initiative.

Initiative farms will use the full range of marketing methods now common in sustainable farming. Some farmers will develop PYO (Pick Your Own) operations for blueberries, raspberries, strawberries, apples, pumpkins, and so on. Some will establish CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) programs in which shares of each season's production are sold in advance to, say, 50 to 150 families. RSA (Restaurant Supported Agriculture) arrangements will provide dependable outlets for others. Livestock raisers will build strong ties to area ethnic communities providing fresh, high quality, specialty meats for cultural and religious celebrations and traditions. Some farmers will maintain a roadside stand, attend weekly farmers' markets, deliver direct to customers, or have customers pick up produce at the farm. And most Initiative farmers will probably maintain close communication with their customers via the Internet.

Over 2,500,000 visitors use CVNP facilities annually. And, perhaps two to three times as many residents of nearby communities traverse the park each year. Visitors and local community members offer enormous market potential for Initiative farmers. And farmers have enormous potential to offer them new ways to use and enjoy the park. Marketing success – marketing security – for Initiative farmers will be based on the personal relationships that develop between farmers and their customers.

LAND SCAPE AESTHETICS

Conservationist Aldo Leopold observed in 1939 that "every farmer's land is a portrait of himself" – a poetic way to describe an understanding common among farmers and homeowners alike. A simple drive through most middle class American suburbs on a summer weekend reveals an army of turf warriors doing battle with long grass and dandelions.

They hold this truth to be self-evident: The way your place looks is a reflection on you. And Initiative farmers may expect that many of the turf warriors living near CVNP will be driving into the Valley to view the farms. What those farms look like will be a reflection on the farm operator, the Initiative, CVCC, CVNP, and NPS. And so, Initiative farmers will need to pay very careful attention to the aesthetics and appearance of their farms – in a sense, they will always be farming in a fishbowl. Initiative farms should be expressive of valued natural beauty in the countryside – tended, cared for.

WHAT WOULD THE PARK'S IDEAL FARM OPERATION ENTAIL?

1. The proposers have a strong farming business/enterprise proposal based on food production that is well-suited to the selected farm property, fully uses available acreage, and shows an ambitious but realistic developmental timeline.
2. The proposers have farming/business/management knowledge and experience – as well as the financial and human resources – to successfully implement their proposal.
3. The proposers will conduct their farming activities in a sustainable manner, and other activities in a way appropriate to the National Park setting.
4. The proposers will respect and protect the natural, cultural, historic and archeological resources of the property.
5. The proposers understand the importance of, and are committed to, providing opportunities for the public and National Park visitors to experience the property

RECAPTURING A SENSE OF PLACE

It is expected that 15 or so farms, encompassing less than 1,000 acres, will eventually be included in the program. Typically, one or two farms have been leased every year or so to private individuals. Collectively, this group of farms has begun to recapture some of the look and feel of the rural countryside, admired by Valley visitors from the mid-nineteenth century to the mid-twentieth. Of course, these farms represent only a small fraction of the landscape devoted to farming a century ago. Agricultural census reports from the 1870s and 80s describe the landscape of Valley townships as ranging from 60% to over 90% improved (cleared) for agriculture.

Today, CVNP encompasses some 33,000 acres, 19,000 owned by NPS. Of that, some 400 acres (about 2%) were devoted to agricultural purposes in year 2010, and an even smaller fraction of non-federal land is now in any form of agriculture. It would be optimistic to think that the Initiative could eventually restore even 7% of federal lands to farming. But, like the bits and pieces of the canal and railroad previously rehabilitated, this smattering of small farms will make the Valley's recent history and beauty much more imaginable and accessible.

FOR THE PURPOSE OF PRESERVING AND PROTECTING FOR PUBLIC USE AND ENJOYMENT…

So begins the legislation that created Cuyahoga Valley National Recreation Area in 1974. Preservation and protection of the park's natural and cultural resources, in this case, the rural landscape, are fundamental goals of Cuyahoga Valley National Park. At the same time, doing so in a manner that provides for the visiting public's use and enjoyment of those resources is also part of the park's core mission.

With that in mind, the park always has an eye towards ensuring that the public is an active part of any program initiatives. Although preservation of the cultural landscape is the principal goal of the Countryside Initiative program, the program also promotes the visitor experience objectives as well. Too, another important consideration for ensuring public enjoyment, is that, quite simply, this program could not exist in the park without the investment of public funds for land acquisition, building rehabilitation and staff commitment. So, while these farms are offered for a 'private' use, it is important that the selection process also gives consideration to the extent that proposers incorporate opportunities for the public to visit the farm. Good examples of the types of public opportunities that CI farmers have pursued include: school programs, special events, ranger programs.

Meeting the Farmers

Spice Acres

Brunty Farms

Countryside Conservancy's mission is to connect people, food, and land. The following is a list of Countryside Initiative farms as of Spring 2015.

BRUNTY FARMS
2470 Martin Road, Akron 44333
Phone: 330-594-7315
Web: bruntyfarms.com
Community Supported Agriculture Program
On-farm Sales (meat, eggs, honey)
Countryside Farmers' Market Vendor

CANAL CORNERS FARM & MARKET
7243 Canal Road, Valley View 44125
Phone: 216-624-3916
Web: facebook.com/canalcorners
Community Supported Agriculture Program
On-farm Sales (produce, flowers)
Countryside Farmers' Market Vendor

GOATFEATHERS POINT FARM
4570 Akron Peninsula Road, Peninsula 44264
Phone: 330-657-2726
On-farm Sales (meat, eggs)

GREENFIELD BERRY FARM
2485 Major Road, Peninsula 44264
Phone: 330-657-2924
Web: greenfieldberryfarm.com
Community Supported Agriculture Program
On-farm Sales (produce, honey)
Countryside Farmers' Market Vendor

NEITENBACH FARM
3077 Akron Peninsula Road, Akron 44313
Phone: 330-321-9026
Web: facebook.com/TheNeitenbachFarm
Community Supported Agriculture Program
Countryside Farmers' Market Vendor

SARAH'S VINEYARD
1204 W. Steels Corners Road, Cuy. Falls 44223
Phone: 330-929-8057
Web: sarahsvineyardwinery.com
On-farm Sales (wine, art), Restaurant

SPICE ACRES
9570 Riverview Road, Brecksville 44141
Email: hello@spiceacres.com
Web: spiceacres.com
Community Supported Agriculture Program
Countryside Farmers' Market Vendor

THE SPICY LAMB FARM
6560 Akron Peninsula Road, Peninsula 44264
Phone: 330-657-2012
Web: thespicylamb.com
On-farm Sales (meat, wool crafts)

TRAPP FAMILY FARM
1019 W. Streetsboro Road, Peninsula 44264
Phone: 330-657-2844
Web: facebook.com/TrappFamilyFarm
Community Supported Agriculture Program
On-farm Sales (produce, meat, eggs)

CULTIVATING THE VISION

Connecting to Larger Worlds

"Countryside Initiative Farms do not exist in a vacuum. During the 19th Century, farms spread up and down the Cuyahoga Valley as a result of myriad influences and forces originating regionally, nationally, even globally. Then, during the 20th Century, those farms began disappearing from the Valley – as a result of influences originating regionally, nationally, and globally. Not surprisingly, the farms now being revived through the Countryside Initiative will also prosper or fail in part because of influences emanating beyond CVNP and the Valley.

"Where and how American food is grown has changed radically. At the beginning of the 20th Century most food was grown "nearby." At the beginning of the 21st Century it is grown far away – in places like California, or Chile, or China. Most long distance food is grown on a grand scale – and therefore necessarily grown using industrial production methods. Some say our modern industrial food system provides a food supply that is abundant, cheap, and convenient. Unfortunately, it also comes with an inherent pattern of undesirable side effects: Food of inferior taste and nutrition, environmental pollution, intensive consumption of energy, exacerbation of climate change, depleted aquifers, farm worker abuse, and narrow corporate control of our national food supply. Over 98% of all food consumed in America is now produced by a long distance industrial system – and there are consequences.

"What we do not know about we cannot care about. And today in America, few of us – less than 2% – have any direct connection to the land and people that feed us. Countryside Initiative farms and educational programs offer an unusual array of opportunities to reacquaint modern urbanites with the connections between land, farmers, food, and themselves – so that they can understand, care, and act to help build socially and ecologically responsible local food systems.

Darwin Kelsey, Photo by: Sara Graca

"CVCC plays a critical role helping the Countryside Initiative appropriately navigate such complex realities. Countryside is a small "think-and-do tank" working to rebuild local farming and food systems across Northeast Ohio. Its four interrelated program centers focus on farmland preservation and farm viability, growing a new generation of sustainable farmers, rebuilding local food systems, and developing citizen/community support for socially and environmentally responsible food economies. Working with and through CVCC's various programs enables CVNP to greatly enhance its cultural and economic impact on Northeast Ohio."

– *Darwin Kelsey, Cuyahoga Valley Countryside Conservancy, March, 2008.*

Countryside Farmers' Market, Photo by: Gary Kroggel

Countryside U, Photo by: Kimberly Stakes

Photo by: Gary Whipple

To Market, To Market

It's 9:00 a.m., Saturday morning: The cowbell rings, the ribbon drops – and the stampede is on. By 9:02 lines are forming for juicy peaches, freshly dug fingerling potatoes, grass-fed beef, heritage pork, artisan cheeses, and flakey croissants. There is music in the air. A local chef is getting a cooking demo ready. And, there is a tomato tasting (30 varieties) at 10:00. It's a community happening.

The Countryside Farmers' Market in CVNP is the first in a National Park. Originally located at Heritage Farms in Peninsula (2004-2008) it moved to Howe Meadow, the Park's main festival field, in 2009 to allow continuing growth in both scale and length of season. During the winter (November-April) the market moves indoors at Old Trail School located immediately adjacent to Howe Meadow. And in addition to these weekend "country" markets, CVCC operates a weekday "city" market at Highland Square in nearby Akron.

CVCC manages all markets to balance the needs of participating farmers and food vendors, the Park itself, and the community at large.

While both markets serve as important sales venues for Countryside Initiative farms, they could not exist without participation (for product diversity and volume) of 60+ other nearby farmers and food producers. Farmers in the Countryside Initiative are linked to and dependent upon peers beyond the park. And, both are utterly dependent upon an informed and supportive community.

Ultimately, the success of Countryside Initiative farmers (and their peers outside the park) depend upon rebuilding a broad, deep public enthusiasm for cooking – and the knowhow. Although superior taste and nutrition begin in the soil, and are greatly affected by how food is harvested and handled, cooking is the final critical gateway to making food truly enjoyable and healthy.

Countryside Farmers' Markets are launching sites for youth and adult cooking classes taught by local food professionals and enthusiasts. "Junior Chefs" or adults join experienced chefs and cooks for a guided trek through the market to buy food from local farmers – and then head for a nearby kitchen for hands-on cooking instruction.

LEASING AUTHORITY & CONDITIONS

Legislative Authorization

Long-term leasing of federally owned or administered property, for purposes such as the Countryside Initiative, is authorized by Congressional Acts 16 U.S.C. 1a-2(k) and U.S.C. 470 h-3. Leasing regulations allow leases of up to 60 years, at fair market value rent. Prior to these authorizations, use of NPS lands for agricultural purposes was limited to Special Use Permits (SUPs) covering periods of one to five years. Although short-term SUPs are intended to prevent or limit serious damage to park lands, ironically, they act as a negative incentive to basic land stewardship. It is economically infeasible for farmers to undertake costly long-term land care programs, which can take years or decades to implement, since they have little assurance of a reasonable return on their investment. The leasing authority now available for the Countryside Initiative resolves this inherent dilemma.

Duration & Transferability of Leases

The maximum term or duration of any lease will be 60 years, at which point a new open competitive process is once again required by law. Some lessees may prefer a shorter-term lease. However, a competitively earned leasehold interest is transferable (by assignment or transfer) to the lessees' children, or to other persons, subject to approval by CVNP. Any transfer of the right to occupy and operate a Countryside Initiative farm is contingent upon the lessee and transferee satisfactorily demonstrating that such a change will result in equal or superior management of the farm.

Responsibility for Residency

A goal of the Countryside Initiative program is to revitalize the park's heritage as a lived-in rural place. Hence, lessees are expected to occupy the farmhouse provided, as full-time residents as well as actively farm the associated fields. The farm is expected to be the lessee's primary daily residence unless a farm manager/operator is approved to perform that function. Should a farm have a second residence, it may be used for farm interns, staff or other approved activities.

Responsibility for Continuous Active Farming

Achieving the purpose and objectives of the Countryside Initiative depends upon all leased farms being actively and continuously operated – as described in lessees' winning proposals, in their subsequently negotiated leases, and in annually approved operating plans. If a lessee becomes unable to fulfill the obligations of his or her lease, for whatever reason (illness, injury, insolvency, divorce, death, and so on), the lessee (or lessee's agent) must transfer the remaining leasehold interest as described above, or relinquish the remaining interest directly to CVNP. Either option must be completed within twelve months of the date on which the lessee notifies CVNP of an inability to continue, or of the date that CVNP notifies the lessee that the lessee is in default of agreed upon lease requirements.

Fair Market Value Rent

DUAL COMPONENTS OF RENT

All Countryside Initiative farms must be leased at fair market value rent. In the market place, Farm leases are commonly based on two distinct financial factors: the rental value of a residence, and the rental value of agricultural buildings and land (or the productive income from using the buildings and land.) This practice is followed in establishing fair market value rent for Initiative farms.

RESIDENTIAL COMPONENT

The residential component of fair market value rent is determined by first obtaining an appraisal, prepared by an independent certified appraiser, which compares Initiative farm residences with similar properties in surrounding communities. This raw number is then adjusted to reflect several limitations, restrictions, and requirements. First, only persons with the knowledge, resources, and willingness to affirmatively farm according to Initiative guidelines are eligible to lease and live in these residences. Lessees must affirmatively comply with all applicable federal regulations and NPS requirements related to archaeological, historical, and natural resources (e.g., National Environmental Policy Act, National Historic Preservation Act, and Endangered Species Act). Moreover, lessees will experience a significant loss of privacy due to the residence's location on a park farm where limited but regular public access is encouraged. For these and other reasons, the raw appraisal will be reduced 50% for all residences, and an additional 10% for all residences listed in, or eligible for listing in, the National Register of Historic Places. Once leases are established, the residential rent component is adjusted annually based on published Consumer Price Index (CPI) information for local residential rents.

PRODUCTIVE COMPONENT

The productive component of fair market value rent will be computed as a percentage of gross farm revenue derived from farming and all other sources related to the use of the Initiative property. Off-site sources of lessee revenue, shall have no bearing on this rental component. This method of determining farm rent is one of several methods commonly referred to in the market place as flexible cash rent. This particular form of flexible cash rent allows the lessor and lessees to share in both the risks of production and in opportunities for profit.

The precise percentage paid by Midwestern farmers for rental of land varies widely by agricultural enterprise: 30% to 40% of gross revenue in conventional corn and soybean operations and 10% to 20% of gross revenue in chemically intensive fruit/vegetable enterprises.

Photo by: Gary Whipple

While Countryside Initiative farm enterprises will more closely resemble the latter, they carry an additional affirmative responsibility to use only approved sustainable production practices. Hence, the productive component of Initiative farm rent will be benchmarked at 10% of gross farm income. That benchmark will be reduced by 1% of gross income for certified organic producers since verification of sustainable production practices will be largely assumed by the certifying agency.

Goatfeathers Point Farm

Initiative farmers are expected to be active land stewards, enhancing soil health and productivity through ecologically natural and beneficial practices which are relatively slow. Such practices often require five to ten years to reach (and stabilize at) optimum levels of production. Similarly, Initiative farmers are expected to create new retail markets where none currently exist – a process which also typically follows a slow growth curve, requiring five to ten years to achieve a high optimum level. Hence, a lessee's productive component of rent will be discounted during the first ten years of operation: beginning at 5% of gross farm income in year one (4% for certified organic enterprises), and increasing thereafter 0.5% annually until reaching 10% in year ten (9% for certified organic).

EDGAR FARM

The Edgar Farm is located at the northern edge of CVNP, in the Village of Valley View, Cuyahoga County. Its mailing address is 6885 Canal Road, Valley View, Ohio 44125. The two story farmhouse sits on the northeast corner of Canal and Hathaway Roads. The nearby field associated with the farm is approximately 9 acres, with potentially another 3+ acres available.

HISTORICAL SKETCH

The farmhouse, built in 1909, is a two story gabled ell frame structure – with a one and a half story rear ell, and a one story front porch. The farmhouse has been extensively rehabilitated by CVNP.

The Edgar Farm is not listed in the National Register of Historic Places. The property is, however, considered historically significant to the heritage of the Cuyahoga Valley. It is a valuable cultural resource, as it provides an opportunity to maintain the rural landscape of the park.

The 1880 US Census of Agriculture, as well as period tax records, indicates that John W. Edgar was owner of a 96 acre farm at this location – described as typical of nearby farms at the time. Edgar grew corn, oats, wheat, potatoes, and had a one acre apple orchard. Livestock included horses, milk cows, other cattle, swine, and poultry. In 1892, John's brother Harley and his sister Mary acquired a one fifth interest in the property.

The existing farmhouse was built in 1909, most likely for Harley and his wife Margaret. The property was occupied by the Edgar family until 1944, when it began to be rented out. William and Clara Kukoleck purchased a portion of the Edgar property in 1976 – 5.6 acres including the two houses, and an old garage no longer extant. While CVNP purchased this property in 1978, the Kukoleck family continued to live there under a rental agreement until late 2007.

FIELD MAP

FARMHOUSE DESCRIPTION

- Two Story
- 3 Bedroom
- 2 Baths
- Approx. 1600 Square Feet
- Forced Warm Air Heat
- Central Air
- Municipal Sewer and Water
- FMV Rent: $500/month
- Fields: There is one field north of the house that is approx. 9 acres. In addition, there may potentially be another 3+ acre field available located behind the house.

SCHMIDT-FOSTER FARM

The Schmidt-Foster Farm is located on the eastern edge of Cuyahoga Valley National Park in Summit County. The mailing address is 458 Hines Hill Road, Hudson, Ohio 44236. The two-story farmhouse and associated barn with attached four-car garage are located on the south side of the road. Available fields, including some of the original Foster fields, total 12 acres.

HISTORICAL SKETCH

William Foster was a substantial landowner and farmer in Boston Township. At the height of its development, the Foster Farm encompassed 118 acres of contiguous land. According to the Agricultural Schedule, the farm produced above average amounts of all crops.

Built in 1852 by William Foster, the original farmhouse was a two-story, wood-framed residence constructed in the Greek Revival style. Introduced by settlers from New York and New England, this style was a common building type in the formative period of farming in Cuyahoga Valley. The farm features a Raised Bank Barn, located to the east of the house, with an earthen ramp built on the western eave-oriented elevation. Other associated farm buildings have not survived.

Significant additions and improvements to both the house and the barn have substantially altered the original construction. The property does, however, remain a valuable cultural resource as it provides an opportunity to maintain the rural landscape of the valley.

FIELD MAP

FARMHOUSE DESCRIPTION

- Two Story
- 4 Bedroom
- 2.5 Baths
- Approx. 2,800 Square Feet
- Forced Warm Air Heat
- Central Air
- LP Gas
- Well Water and Septic
- FMV Rent: $825/month
- Fields: There are approx. 12 acres which includes and agricultural pond.

PROPOSAL DEVELOPMENT & CONTENT

Proposal Development

INVITATION TO COMPETE

As noted earlier, this RFP is, by law, open to all interested parties on a competitive basis. Hence, the proposals judged most likely to achieve the best use of the farms in the current offering will be selected for implementation. We are encouraging all interested parties to prepare a creative and strong proposal. Superior ideas may well be proposed by persons having limited experience or resources.

FORMAT AND ACCURACY

Proposals submitted in response to this request should follow the simple format suggested below. You are asked to answer questions or supply specific information to seventeen numbered items. Please number your responses correspondingly, from one to seventeen, and respond fully and accurately to all questions/requests. Honest, accurate responses are essential to determining the best match between proposals/proposers and a particular farm. False statements are a basis for disqualifying any proposal, or for voiding a lease if discovered at a later date. Additional penalties for false statements are prescribed in 18 U.S.C. 1001.

PURPOSE OF THE INFORMATION REQUESTED

The information requested here will serve as the substance of your proposal. Straightforward and thoughtful responses to the information requested will effectively demonstrate what a proposer would like to accomplish, and why. And thorough responses will give proposal evaluators a good basis for judging whether a proposer has the knowledge, experience, and resources to accomplish their vision.

INQUIRIES AND EXPLANATIONS

Any explanation desired by a proposer regarding the meaning or interpretation of the RFP must be submitted in writing and with sufficient time allowed for a reply to reach the proposer before the submission of their proposal. Oral explanations or interpretations given in reply will not be binding. Any information given in writing to a prospective proposer will be furnished to all prospective proposers as Supplemental Information: Questions & Answers (see page 30) if such information is necessary to proposers in submitting a proposal, or if the lack of such information would be prejudicial to uninformed proposers.

Note: *All such questions and answers are posted on NPS and Countryside Conservancy websites (www.cvnp.gov/cvnp and www.cvcountryside.org).*

Proposal Content

Please respond thoughtfully, creatively, and accurately when providing the following information. Your proposal should address all of the issues raised by the following 17 points of ***proposer information*** and ***proposal evaluation factors***. The overarching criteria associated with the individual questions are noted as headers. Factors will be scored according to the Factor Weight shown; ‘critical’ weighted items will receive the highest numerical score followed by ‘high’ then ‘medium.’

Photo by: Sara Graca

1	**PROPOSER IDENTIFICATION** Please provide full identification of the person(s) responsible for the proposal submitted: Name(s), address(es), telephone number(s), fax number(s), or e-mail address(es). In addition, please supply the name(s), address(es), and phone number(s) of two personal and two professional references.
2	**FARM OF CHOICE** Which of the two farms being offered for lease in 2015 are you most interested in? Why? Are you interested in the other farm? If you are not selected for your first choice, do you wish to be considered for the other? If a proposer would consider leasing the farm that is not the proposer's first choice, the proposer must provide sufficient information about how their farming enterprise would be modified to fit the second farm.

POINT	PROPOSAL EVALUATION FACTORS:	WHAT WILL THE PARK BE LOOKING FOR:	FACTOR WEIGHT
FARMING ENTERPRISE The farming concept is feasible and appropriate for the intended property, and the business/marketing strategy is likely to ensure long-term business success.			
3	Describe in sufficient detail your farming enterprise. Include all elements such as the type of operation, the planned locations, and the proportion of your operation (acreage, funding and effort) dedicated to each element.	Is the farming enterprise appropriate in the National Park setting? Does it seem realistically achievable? Are all major elements included and sufficiently described? Does it utilize all assigned acreage?	**Critical**
4	Describe in detail all proposed construction or rehabilitation projects desired for your farming enterprise. Include type of project, location, aesthetics, dimension/ scale, etc.	Are the type of proposed construction and rehabilitation projects appropriate in the National Park Service setting and planned locations? Are the type and number of projects compatible with the farming enterprise proposed and acceptable?	**Critical**
5	Develop a timeline and narrative describing what you might expect to accomplish in years one through five of your operation. Also what will you accomplish by year ten and any other critical milestone years based on your plans. Describe your assumptions and contingencies.	Does the timeline seem realistically achievable? Are the associated assumptions and contingencies accurate and supported by the timeline?	**Critical**
6	Describe in detail how you are going to market and sell your products. Explain your retail and niche marketing strategies and venues including the specific practices you intend to implement. Include associated buildings, equipment, and staffing needs for processing, storing, distributing and selling your product (as applicable) and how will you meet these needs.	Are the strategies appropriate to the Countryside Initiative program? Do they seem realistically achievable? Is there sufficient detail and supporting information provided?	**High**
7	Describe any non-farming enterprises proposed for the property such as a personal business enterprise. Explain the relationship of the non-farming enterprise to the farming enterprises including its scale, time and labor required, impact on the farming operations, etc. Proposers should be aware that, while the park understands the necessity of off-farm income and the possible need for non-farm income from the property, the primary objective of the CI program is the restoration and maintenance of the rural landscape through farming.	Is the non-farming enterprise appropriate and compatible with the park setting and their farm proposal? Does it enhance or detract from the farming enterprise?	**Medium**

POINT	PROPOSAL EVALUATION FACTORS:	WHAT WILL THE PARK BE LOOKING FOR:	FACTOR WEIGHT
EXPERIENCE The experience of the proposers demonstrates the capability to carry out the terms of the lease (farming, marketing, business management, etc.).			
8	Describe in detail the farming knowledge, skills, and experience that you and any partners have. Include the type of farming, number of years, as well as demonstrated success such as certifications, awards and other recognition.	Is the farming experience applicable to the type of farming desired for the Countryside Initiative Program? Is the number of years of experience sufficient? Are there forms of demonstrated success provided to support the experience?	**Critical**
9	Describe and explain any directly relevant non-farm experience that would be helpful to your farming/ business enterprise. Please describe, in detail, any non-farm experience such as food safety/preparation, mechanics, etc. Include the type, number of years, demonstrated success and certifications, awards and recognition, if any. Describe how this experience strengthens your farming proposal.	Is the non-farm experience directly relevant to the proposed farm enterprise? What kind of experience is it? Are there forms of demonstrated success provided to support the experience? Does it strengthen the proposed farming enterprise?	**Medium**
10	Describe in detail any related business experience including the type, number of years, demonstrated success and certifications, awards and recognition, if any. Describe how this experience strengthens your farming proposal.	Is the business experience applicable and supportive of the farming enterprise? Does it strengthen the proposed farming enterprise? Are there forms of demonstrated success provided to support the experience?	**High**
11	Describe in detail your marketing experience (ie: promotion, distribution and sales). Include the type of marketing, the number of years, as well as demonstrated success such as certifications, awards and other recognition. Describe how this experience strengthens your farming proposal. (The terms business and marketing are related but distinct. We understand marketing to include promotion, distribution and sales.)	Is the marketing experience applicable and compatible with the farming enterprise? Does it strengthen the proposed farming enterprise? Are there forms of demonstrated success provided to support the experience?	**Critical**
FINANCIAL CAPABILITY The financial capability of the proposers to implement their proposal and carry out the terms and conditions of the lease.			
12	Provide a five-year start-up budget showing anticipated capital expenditures, annual farm operating expenses (including rental of the property), annual living expenses, annual income, and annual revenues. (See Appendix C for desired format). Demonstrate that the budget is realistic for both your farming enterprise and personal needs. Provide supporting data such as real experience or market research to justify the budget numbers presented.	Is the budget adequately developed? Does it cover all categories of income and expense? Does the budget balance? Does it seem realistic for the proposed farming enterprise? Is there supporting data?	**Critical**

POINT	PROPOSAL EVALUATION FACTORS:	WHAT WILL THE PARK BE LOOKING FOR:	FACTOR WEIGHT
13	Describe your financial resources for implementing your proposal. Include specific, individual funding plans for start-up capital, projected major capital investments planned overtime (barn, hoop house, etc.), and long-term operating plans to finance your operation over time. Describe your funding sources (farm and non-farm), amounts and availability of funds. NOTE: You must include a completed Financial Capability Form or comparable document and information. If you are relying on loans or financial commitments from others also include a commitment letter or other documentation to substantiate funding availability.	What is the source of funds and availability? Do the available funds seem realistic to cover costs and investments relative to the farming proposal? Is the Financial Capability Form, or comparable document, included and completed adequately? Are their commitment letters or other documentation provided, if applicable?	**High**
AVAILABLE RESOURCES The resources, abilities, and commitment of the proposers demonstrate high potential for effective, long-term implementation of both the letter and spirit of a Countryside Initiative lease.			
14	Describe the physical resources (equipment, tools, etc.) readily available to implement your farming enterprise.	What type and quantity of physical resources are described? Do these resources seem applicable to the proposed farming enterprise?	**High**
15	Describe the human resources beyond yourself that are available to contribute to your proposed farming enterprise (hired staff or interns, family members, friends, volunteers, expert advisors, etc). Include the amount of time anticipated, and the reliability of the commitment. If you are relying on others to provide critical contributions of labor or expertise, provide a commitment letter to substantiate their support.	What type and number of individuals are available? What work will be performed? What is the associated time commitment? Is there an associated cost or is it volunteer basis? Are there commitment letters provided, if applicable?	**High**
SUSTAINABLE PRACTICES The proposer's adoption of sustainable practices appropriate to a National Park including farming operations, residential practices and any other property uses.			
16	Describe in specific detail your intended farm production practices. Explain where you fit on the spectrum of sustainable production practices outlined in Appendix B. Describe other planned sustainability practices (residential and farm) you intend to implement such as energy conservation, waste reduction, recycling, composting, etc.	What are the production practices described? Where do they fit on the spectrum? Are they adequately sustainable to meet the expectations of the Countryside Initiative Program? Are they appropriate to the proposed farming enterprise? Are other sustainability practices are described?	**Critical**
PARK COMPATIBILITY The compatibility of the proposers' intended use of the lease property with respect to preservation, protection, and visitor use of the park.			
17	Describe how your farm will encourage interaction with park visitors and residents from surrounding communities (educational programming, tours, farm stand, etc.). Include the types of interaction, type and number of people targeted, and frequency of events.	What kind of interaction is described? Is it appropriate to the proposed farming enterprise, the park and local communities? Is it passive or active? Does it include outreach to few or many people? Is it seasonal or year round?	**Medium**

Photo by: Robert George

Submission of Proposals

ITEMS TO INCLUDE

Proposers are requested to review the preceding general section, Proposal Contents, to be certain that all seventeen questions/requests have been carefully addressed. A transmittal letter (based on the model in Appendix A) will complete the required information. The National Park Service assumes no responsibility for a proposal submitted on the basis of an incomplete package.

NUMBER OF COPIES, METHODS OF TRANSMITTAL

Proposals shall be on 8-1/2" x 11" paper, and unbound. Six (6) copies of the cover letter and proposal must be enclosed in a sealed envelope or envelopes, and received at the National Park Service office before the local prevailing time and date stated in the cover letter accompanying this RFP. The face of the sealed envelope(s) shall show the proposer's name and address, and the receiver's address as shown here:

Countryside Initiative RFP
Cuyahoga Valley National Park
15610 Vaughn Road, Brecksville, OH 44141

Telephonic proposals, faxes, e-mail, and other means of transmittal will not be considered. Please note that proposals will not be returned to the proposers and will be retained by the National Park Service.

LATE PROPOSALS, MODIFICATIONS AND WITHDRAW

Any proposal received at the designated location after the time specified for receipt (see the cover letter accompanying this RFP) will not be considered unless: (1) It was sent by mail and it is determined by the Government that the late receipt was due solely to mishandling by the National Park Service after receipt at the Park Service office; or (2) It is the only proposal received.

Modifications to any proposal are subject to conditions (1) and (2) above. Proposals may be withdrawn by written notice, signed by the proposer or an authorized representative.

Acceptance and Evaluation Proposals

Trapp Family Farm

PROPOSAL ACCEPTANCE

NPS reserves the right to reject any or all proposals and to waive information and minor irregularities in proposals received. Proposals will be conditionally accepted or rejected within sixty (60) days of the date specified for receipt of proposals. Final acceptance of any proposal will be conditional upon satisfactory negotiation and execution of a lease, and upon the lease's approval by the Regional Director, Midwest Region, NPS.

Acceptance of a proposal will not create any rights on the proposer's part including, and without limitation, rights of enforcement, equity or reimbursement, until the lease and all related documents are approved and executed. All obligations of NPS are subject to the availability of appropriated funds.

In brief, proposers must present a clear and appealing vision of what they want to accomplish and why; and they must convincingly demonstrate that they have the knowledge, skills, and resources to effectively implement their vision.

Brunty Farms

PROPOSAL EVALUATION

All proposals will first be screened for adherence to the requirements of this RFP. The NPS will not consider non-responsive proposals. (A non-responsive proposal is a proposal that was not timely submitted or fails to meet the material terms and conditions of this RFP as determined by NPS.)

All proposals will then be scored on the quality of their response to the forgoing seventeen points of information and evaluation factors. Each point and factor is important, and failure to satisfactorily address any can result in a lower score. In brief, proposers must present a clear and appealing vision of what they want to accomplish and why; and they must convincingly demonstrate that they have the knowledge, skills, and resources to effectively implement their vision.

Responses to the foregoing evaluation factors will be used to score each proposal. A panel comprised of National Park Service employees along with technical advisers will evaluate all proposals and provide a recommendation for selection. Final selection approval rests with the NPS Midwest Regional Director. It is the intention of the NPS to select the best-submitted proposal (highest score) as determined under the selection criteria without further submittals or presentations. If this cannot be done, the NPS will select those lease proposals that appear most suitable under the selection criteria, and from that group will request additional information or presentations so that the best proposal can be selected.

Note: *Selectees must successfully clear a criminal and financial background check prior to lease signing.*

SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION

Sarah's Vineyard

Supplemental Information Available

Supplemental information is available to help potential proposers better understand the initiative in general, and the specific farm in the current offering. The following information is available on the CVNP and CVCC websites (www.cvnp.gov/cvnp and www.cvcountryside.org).

The Spicy Lamb Farm

Neitenbach Family Farm

1. Soil Maps – http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/surveylist/soils/survey/state/?stateId=OH
2. Countryside Initiative Model Lease
3. Sustainable Agriculture Select Bibliography
4. The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation
5. Supplemental Questions & Answers
6. Financial Capability Information Form

Countryside Conservancy
2179 Everett Road
Peninsula, OH 44264
Phone: 330-657-2542
Fax: 330-657-2198
Web: www.cvcountryside.org

Note: *CVCC serves as the primary public contact for the Countryside Initiative. CVCC is a non-profit 501(c)(3) corporation chartered in 1999 by the State of Ohio. While, the corporation's full legal name remains Cuyahoga Valley Countryside Conservancy (and is used in the main text of this RFP), it now generally "does business as" the Countryside Conservancy.*

APPENDICES

The three appendices referred to in this RFP text, and listed here, are presented on the following pages.

A. Model Cover Letter
B. Preferred Production Practices for Sustainable Agriculture
C. Typical Budget Categories, Details, and Format

Appendix A

COVER LETTER
Countryside Initiative RFP
Cuyahoga Valley National Park
15610 Vaughn Road, Brecksville, OH 44141

Dear Superintendent

(I)(We) hereby propose to lease (name of farm) located in Cuyahoga Valley National Park, in accordance with the terms and conditions specified in your RFP. (I)(We) are prepared to execute a lease without substantive modification of the Countryside Initiative Model Lease, except or as may be required by NPS pursuant to the terms of the RFP and any changes or additions to governing regulations.

(I)(We) certify that the information furnished herewith is complete, true, and correct, and recognize that false statements may subject (me)(us) to criminal penalties under the United States Code (18 U.S.C. 1001).

(I)(We) have responded fully and accurately in (my)(our) proposal to each of the points of information and evaluation factors for information identified on pages 25-27.

(I)(We) certify in accordance with 2 C.F.R. Part 180 and 1400 the following:

- None of the individuals or entities seeking participation in this Lease are presently debarred, suspended, proposed for debarment, declared ineligible, or voluntarily excluded from a public transaction by a federal department or agency.
- Within the three years preceding submission of the Proposal, none of the individuals or entities seeking participation in this Lease have been convicted of or had a civil judgment rendered against them for commission of fraud or a criminal offense in connection with obtaining, attempting to obtain, or performing a public (federal, state or local) transaction or contract under a public transaction, or for violation of federal or state antitrust statutes or for commission of embezzlement, theft, forgery, bribery, falsification of records, making false statements, or receiving stolen property.
- None of the individuals or entities seeking participation in this Lease are presently indicted for or otherwise criminally or civilly charged by a federal, state or local unit of the government with commission of any of the aforementioned offenses.
- The individuals or entities seeking participation in this Lease have not had one or more public transactions (federal, state or local) terminated for cause or default within the three-year period preceding the submission of the Proposal.

By: _____ Date: _____
(TYPE OR PRINT NAME)

Original Signature: _____ Original Signature: _____

Title: _____ Title: _____

Address: _____ Address: _____

Appendix B

PREFERRED PRODUCTION PRACTICES FOR SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE

Countryside Initiative farmers will be expected to possess substantial knowledge of sustainable production practices. Proposers must demonstrate awareness of preferred production practices in their RFP submission. Subsequently farm lessees will have to provide greater detail on expected production practices in annual operating proposals.

There are a wide range of practices which are acceptable for most enterprise types, and Initiative farmers will be free to choose whichever practices they prefer, provided they do not violate general principles of sustainability. The charts shown here suggest a spectrum of practices from less sustainable to more sustainable. Farming in the real world is not abstract; it involves specific conflicting circumstances and pressures which are not easy to balance. In general, however, Initiative farms must strike a balance which puts them clearly within the more sustainable parts of the spectrum.

MIND-SET FOR SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE*			
LESS SUSTAINABLE THINKING > >			> > MORE SUSTAINABLE THINKING
Get through this year	Next few years make or break	Transfer farm to kids or to another good farmer	Stewardship for many generations

PRODUCTION PRACTICES FOR SUSTAINABLE VEGETABLE / CROP ENTERPRISES*			
LESS SUSTAINABLE PRACTICES > >			> > MORE SUSTAINABLE PRACTICES
CROP ROTATION			
Monoculture (same crop in same field each year)	Two years between the same crop planted in the same field	Three years between the same crop planted in the same field	Four years between the same crop planted in the same field
ORGANIC MATTER MAINTENANCE			
Add crop residues only	Add animal manures + crop residues	Add cover crops, animal manures, + crop residues	Add compost, cover crops, + crop residues to soil
NITROGEN FERTILIZATION			
Broadcast bagged fertilizer in fall	Broadcast bagged fertilizer in spring	Band and side dress fertilizer to match timing of crop uptake	Rely on N from organic residues, in addition to timely fertilization
INSECT MANAGEMENT			
Calendar spray insecticides (on predetermined schedule)	Scout for insect pests, then spray non-selective insecticide	Scout for insect pests, then spray selective, least-toxic pesticide	Use cultural practices and beneficial insects to control pests
WEED MANAGEMENT			
Apply herbicides as primary weed control tool	Apply reduced rates of herbicide and cultivate	Cultivate to remove weeds	Use allelopathy, smother crops, and mulches to suppress weeds
DISEASE MANAGEMENT			
Apply fungicide on a predetermined schedule	Use disease modeling to time fungicide applications as needed	Employ cultural practices that prevent disease	Plant disease-resistant cultivars

*Adapted with permission from *Sustainable Vegetable Production from Start-Up to Market* (NRAES-104).
Natural Resource, Agriculture, and Engineering Service, (NRAES), PO Box 4557, Ithaca, NY 14852-4557, www.nraes.org.

PRODUCTION PRACTICES FOR SUSTAINABLE LIVESTOCK ENTERPRISES

Like sustainable crop production, sustainable livestock production involves a wide range of production practices which are acceptable for Countryside Initiative farms. Initiative farmers are free to choose among literally hundreds of specific management options related to livestock species, breeds, genetics, facilities, feeds and feeding, grazing systems, health care, butchering and processing, marketing, and so forth – provided those choices result in humane care of all farm animals during the course of their lives, and provided that the environmental consequences of the livestock enterprise are positive.

ANIMAL WELFARE

Countryside Initiative livestock operations must use what are generally referred to as loose confinement systems. That is, poultry are not caged, swine are not tightly crated, beef cattle are not packed into feedlots, and dairy cattle are not confined to small exercise areas. All livestock must have regular access to open air and pasture. All livestock facilities must be properly ventilated and provide animals with clean, dry rest areas (sheltered from wind during cold weather). Each proposer/lessee is responsible for recommending specific livestock management practices for CVCC/CVNP review and approval.

GRASS-BASED LIVESTOCK PRODUCTION

In simplest terms, Countryside Initiative livestock enterprises are expected to be grass- based. Plant scientist and grazing researcher E. Ann Clark, University of Guelph (Ontario, Canada), describes certain recent concepts of grass-based farming as attempts to mimic or mirror natural processes. In nature, there is no waste, because the output of every process constitutes the inputs for other processes. In contrast, conventional livestock production systems (which depend on specialized crop production to support livestock fed in confinement) break many of the natural cycles that protect ecological systems.

Clark notes that properly managed grass-based livestock production will mimic nature in at least five key ways, which are described below in very simplified form. Fuller, technical discussions by Clark and others are available in publications on sustainable livestock production by the Natural Resource, Agriculture, and Engineering Services (NRAES), a consortium of the Cooperative Extension Services of thirteen eastern land grant universities and the United States Department of Agriculture.

Trapp Family Farm

1. **Ground Cover.** Perennial pasture provides year-round ground cover protecting bare soil from crusting, pore clogging, and the erosive effects of rainfall. Ground cover acts as a mulch, reducing moisture loss, stabilizing daily soil temperatures, and inhibiting weeds and insects associated with annual plowing (which are conventionally treated with biocides). Note: The sustainable crop production practices described in this appendix also ameliorate many of the problems related to conventional annual plowing.

2. **Soil Conservation.** Perennial pastures grow and contribute to soil organic matter from early spring to late fall. Moreover, uncultivated land promotes the accumulation of organic matter and nutrients frequently lost during conventional cultivation. This enhances a vigorous soil biotic community, and strong plant growth. In turn, that enhances water infiltration and reduces runoff, thereby reducing soil erosion and off-site contamination.

3. **Nutrient Cycling.** Perennial sods reduce the risk of off-site pollution through efficient nutrient cycling. They provide active nutrient uptake during high precipitation in early spring and late fall (in marked contrast to annual crops). Grassland impedes overland movement of water (hence the use of grass waterways). And deep-rooted pasture plants (like alfalfa) intercept and take up beneficial nutrients (which could become pollutants if they were to percolate past the plant root zone).

4. **Manure.** Livestock produce manure – a valued source of nutrients (in limited quantities) on a well-integrated farm. But manure is a huge waste/contamination problem for confinement feeding operations. In most large-scale livestock enterprises, where most of the livestock feed comes from off-site, there is little possibility that the site can absorb the manure generated. Initiative livestock enterprises will be expected to match livestock numbers to both the grazing capacity and the manure utilization capacity of a particular farm site. ***Note:*** *It is also assumed that properly managed grass-based farms do not allow livestock direct access to streams or ponds, thereby avoiding water pollution and bank collapse/erosion.*

5. **Biocide Independence.** Well-managed perennial pastures do not require any type of pesticide or herbicide.

In short, properly managed grass-based livestock production removes several serious environmental harms which frequently result from conventional, grain-based, close-confinement systems. Grass-based systems are well suited to the type of small scale, diversified farming preferred for the Countryside Initiative.

Additionally, proposers should be aware of two specific management practices commonly used in grass-based farming appropriate and preferred for Countryside Initiative enterprises – management intensive grazing and multi-species grazing.

1. **Management Intensive Grazing.** One of the key tools of grass-based livestock production is commonly termed management intensive grazing (MIG). The keyword here is management: MIG is knowledge and labor intensive, not capital, chemical, or technology intensive. Indeed, some of today's finest graziers describe the management of soil, plants, livestock, weather, market demand, and other factors, as an art. That is an apt term for the depth of understanding, and creative adjustments, required to balance and guide so many subtle factors toward desirable ends.

   Traditional/conventional pasture management in America has been anything but management intensive – or an art form. Traditional/conventional pasture management is often termed continuous grazing. The basic strategy here is to do nothing: Turn livestock into a pasture for the entire season, letting them pick and choose to eat whatever, and wherever they like. The many economic and ecological drawbacks to this practice need not be detailed here.

   MIG systems operate at the opposite end of the sustainable grazing spectrum, using what is usually called rotational grazing or strip grazing. Here livestock are moved from one grazing paddock or area to another ever day or so (every few hours in some systems), depending on how a grazier chooses to balance the many factors involved. It is important to note that rotational grazing actually allows animal stocking rates from two to ten times as high per acre as continuous grazing – while avoiding the overgrazing problems commonly associated with continuous grazing.

2. **Multi-species Grazing.** The Initiative will encourage multi-species grazing in its various forms (grazing sheep, goats, cattle, and poultry sequentially or together). Multi-species grazing pushes pasture ecosystems toward diversity, complexity, and stability – while simultaneously reducing herd/flock disease and parasite pressure, and market cycle risks associated with single species production.

   Proposers, future lessees, and others wishing to pursue the issues raised here in Appendix B, are encouraged to refer to the technical publications cited in the CVCC Sustainable Agriculture Select Bibliography (see page 30, supplemental information available).

Appendix C

TYPICAL BUDGET CATEGORIES, DETAILS, AND FORMAT

The generalized operational budget form/format shown below suggests the kind of financial details proposers should supply to demonstrate a grasp of their enterprise's financial requirements.

However, this form presents financial information in a highly summarized way, and greater detail would strengthen a proposal; evaluators need to understand how proposers computed or estimated each line item. Since any proposed budget, at this point, must be quite tentative and speculative, proposal evaluators will want to be certain that proposers know how to generate hard, accurate numbers that they (the proposers) could act on.

This simplified budget form makes no attempt to fit enterprise income and expenses into a larger family/household budget, or vice versa. However, it will be helpful to proposal evaluators to understand what the enterprise will contribute to the financial support of the family/household. Or conversely, what the family/household's other financial resources are expected to contribute to the farming enterprise.

Note: *The budget categories shown below are merely intended to represent a plausible mix of activities for a diversified Initiative farm. It is assumed that the line items of any budget submitted with an actual proposal will vary considerably from these hypothetical line items.*

Capital investments for buildings, ponds, fences, equipment, etc., will be highly individualized. Proposers should provide reasonable cost estimates for expected improvements, and indicate their source of financing. Such improvements should be treated as a brief capital budget, separate from the operating budget. (However, such improvements/investments may result in significant annual fixed expenses, which will appear in the operating budget.)

TYPICAL ANNUAL OPERATING BUDGET SUMMARY EXAMPLE

FARM EXPENSES	
FIXED COSTS	
FMV Rent (residence)	$ _____
Capital Improvement Loans	$ _____
Vehicle & Equipment Loans	$ _____
Liability & Property Insurance	$ _____
VARIABLE COSTS	
FMV Rent (%G. income)	$ _____
PICK YOUR OWN	
Machinery/Labor Hours	$ _____
Plants/Seeds/Production	$ _____
Sales Supplies	$ _____
FARMSTAND	
Labor Hours	$ _____
Sales Supplies	$ _____
FARMERS MARKET	
Labor Hours	$ _____
Sales Supplies	$ _____
LIVESTOCK	
Breeding Stock	$ _____
Food/Hay	$ _____
Butchering	$ _____
Veterinary	$ _____
Labor Hours	$ _____
REPAIR & MAINTENANCE	
Vehicles & Equipment	$ _____
Portable Sheds	$ _____
Fences/Pens	$ _____
MARKETING	
Advertising/Flyers	$ _____
Farmers Market Fees	$ _____
TOTAL FARM EXPENSES =	$ _____

FARM INCOME	
PICK YOUR OWN	
Strawberries	$ _____
Pumpkins	$ _____
FARMSTAND	
Vegetables & Fruit	$ _____
Herbs & Flowers	$ _____
FARMERS' MARKET	
Vegetable & Fruit	$ _____
Herbs & Flowers	$ _____
Poultry	$ _____
Lamb	$ _____
CUSTOM MEATS	
Broilers	$ _____
Turkeys	$ _____
Lambs	$ _____
OTHER	
Breeding Stock	$ _____
Cull Sheep	$ _____
TOTAL FARM INCOME =	$ _____
ANNUAL NET RETURN	
TOTAL FARM INCOME	$ _____
TOTAL FARM EXPENSES	$ _____
NET PROFIT (LOSS) =	$ _____

Reproduction or use of pictorial content from the HDA Photo Collection in any maner is prohibited without written permission.
Maps produced by Cuyahoga Valley National Park, Resource Management Division.
Historic photographs provided by Cuyahoga Valley National Park and Peninsula Library & Historical Society.

BACK TO THE FUTURE

"Some folks have a hard time believing that the future can be much different, and possibly much better than the past or the present," observes agricultural economist John Ikerd. "In reality the future is almost never like the past or present. The challenge is to help shape a future that we want...".

Greenfield Berry Farm

In the mid 20th century, humankind (energetically led by Americans) embarked on a radical, grand-scale experiment with food production and distribution – based on concepts and methods derived from the industrial revolution of the 19th century. It seemed like a good idea at the time.

In retrospect, it seems less so. Growing food using large-scale industrial production methods, and distributing it over vast distances increasingly appears misguided. In general, it results in generic foods of inferior taste, limited diversity, and lowered nutritional value. More often than not, such production and distribution systems degrade the communities and environment where they occur.

While these might seem like good and sufficient reasons to abandon the grand experiment with industrial food production, our enormous economic and intellectual investment in this paradigm guarantees equally enormous inertia and resistance to charting a different course. Still, change will come. In the near-term, transitioning to ways of food production and distribution which are smaller and more local will be a matter of consumer driven choice – a desire for better food, more vibrant communities, a healthier environment. In the not-so-distant future (twenty years or less), rescaling and reorganizing food production and distribution will cease to be a matter of choice. Industrial style food production and distribution cannot exist without massive inputs of cheap fossil fuel energy – and that appears virtually certain to become a memory.

The farms of the Countryside Initiative are, of course, intended to finally achieve the hope and intent of Cuyahoga Valley National Park's founders: Prevent the disappearance of the Cuyahoga Valley's rural landscape and rural character. But they are also part of an emerging national grassroots movement to change the way 21st century America thinks about, buys, and uses food. They are an attempt to model a different future – a future possibly much better than the past or present.