



June 29, 2007

### **2007 Targeted Block Grant – Lakes Region Farm Tour**

The purpose of this project was to demonstrate how internet mapping, a form of Geographic Information Systems (GIS), can be used as an economic development planning tool. By creating a web-based portal, this project highlights the visibility and economic welfare of agricultural based businesses in the Lakes Region.

To identify potential farm tour participants, a subcommittee was formed and included Herb Cooper (Tamworth, NH), John Hodsdon (Meredith, NH), and Robert Ward (Sanbornton, NH). A list of 41 farms was produced by referencing NH Department of Agriculture publications, including *New Hampshire Farm Stand Directory* and *Who's Who in New Hampshire Agriculture*, and personal knowledge of existing farms. The subcommittee targeted farms that retail products, as opposed to wholesalers, as well as farms that encourage visitors. Additional advice was requested from Amy Ouellette (Extension Educator, Agricultural Resources & Environmental Stewardship at UNH Cooperative Extension) and Gail McWilliam Jellie (Director, Division of Agricultural Development) to refine the list. A total of 21 farmers were then invited to participate in the Lakes Region Farm Tour, see Appendix B. 12 responded with a show of interest and all were included in the tour. An additional farm was included in the project after contacting LRPC in response to an article about the project in the *Gilford Steamer*, see Appendix C.

Farm tour participants were interviewed in order to develop a overview and history of the farm, and to answer questions found in Appendix A. Also, images were taken or pre-existing ones were acquired. This information was compiled to create four web pages for each farm. These pages are accessed through a Google Maps “mashup” web page, customized to show the participating farms. Development of the map page was expedited by using Mapbuilder.com.

Although, the tour contains a sample of the wide array of farms located in the Lakes Region of New Hampshire, the Lakes Region Planning Commission believes this model can be used by others to include a broader range of farms, or in support of fields other than agriculture. Multiple factors lead to the development of this project: (a) farms have an important role in this region, including enriching the rural character, economics, and beauty while providing local products and services for its people, visitors, and businesses; (b) the internet is portal through which business is conducted; (c) recent advancements in internet-based mapping have brought GIS into the public eye by allowing non-technical users to realize the power of the technology. The Lakes Region Farm Tour harvests local farming with a cutting-edge mapping technology to yield a model for use as an economic development planning tool.

The Lakes Region Farm Tour is viewable at:

[www.lakesrpc.org/farmtour](http://www.lakesrpc.org/farmtour)

## Appendix A – Interview Questions

### **Lakes Region Agricultural Land Virtual Tour Interview questions**

Interview questions:

- Provide some history about the origin of your farm.
- What do you harvest? What do you sell? What do you consume from your farm?
- What are some unique characteristics about your farm that could attract visitors?
- Would you like to see more people visit or inquire about your farm?
- Do you advertise? Would advertisement be beneficial to your farm?
- What can your community do to help maintain local farms?
- What is your long-term outlook for your farm?
- What are your hours, days, and seasons of operation?

## Appendix B – Invitation to farmers

Lakes Region Planning Commission  
103 Main St, Suite #3  
Meredith, NH



June 27, 2007

# Virtual Farm Tour

The purpose of this transmittal is to inform you of an exciting new farm project by the Lakes Region Planning Commission (LRPC). LRPC recently secured funding from the NH Office of Energy and Planning to create an online Virtual Driving Tour of farms in the Lakes Region. The Virtual Tour will be a website, accessed through LRPC's webpage that will have the following information about each farm: a mapped location with detailed driving directions, photographs, information regarding hours of operation, and products sold. Also as part of the project, an interview will be conducted with the farm owner with the answers posted on the website. LRPC is hoping that the Virtual Farm Tour will stimulate interest in regional farms as a valuable component of the local economy.

If you are interested in participating in the Lakes Region Virtual Farm Tour, please contact Adam Kurowski, Regional Planner, by email ( [akurowski@lakesrpc.org](mailto:akurowski@lakesrpc.org) ) or phone (603-279-8171) by October 18, 2007 to set up a visit. Interviews can be conducted anytime before the end of the calendar year, but Adam is very interested in taking photographs immediately.

Thank you for your consideration.

# Planning Commission working to highlight local farms

BY SARAH SCHMIDT  
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LAKES REGION — It's true that one of the main industries in the Lakes Region is tourism, but a new virtual tour will shed light on one of the other draws to the region — agriculture.

The Lakes Region Plan-

ning Commission is working on a project that will highlight some of the farms in the 30 towns served by the LRPC. The commission is in the final selection process of choosing which farms will be featured on the virtual agricultural tour of the.

"We're trying to emphasize

this, to remind people it's a fundamental part of our economy and life, and to increase its visibility," said Kimon Koulet, executive director of the LRPC.

The prototype of the virtual agricultural tour debuted at a booth in the Beginner Farmer's Conference in

Meredith in November. Koulet described it as a "merging of Geographic Information Systems and the Internet" to highlight the agriculture of the region.

Viewers will open on a map of the Lakes Region, then move their mouse to a point on the map to get information

about the highlighted farm.

"It will be a map-driven Web site," said Adam Kurowski, regional planner at the LRPC. "It's not like Google Maps, but viewers will be able to see

the location of the farms and get information and directions, as well as a link to the farm's Web site. If they have

one." Clicking on a farm on the virtual agricultural tour will link viewers to a page that identifies the farm, gives directions, provides photos of the farm, and describes the farm's offerings and background. The LRPC will interview the farmers, covering a wide range and variety of area agriculture, according to Koulet.

Although the project is still in development with a projected completion date of June, Koulet has hopes for this project to be of use in a more expansive manner to the Lakes Region Association or the area chambers of commerce.

"This is a new venture for us," said Koulet. "It's a possibility that this approach may be of interest to those interested in marketing the region. We could let New Hampshire use it to portray agriculture in the state."

The LRPC's mission statement is to "provide a quality environment, to increase economic opportunity and to encourage cultural development by supporting local efforts with education, technical assistance, information, advocacy and responsive representation."





Visit online at:  
[www.lakesrpc.org/farmtour](http://www.lakesrpc.org/farmtour)

The **Lakes Region Virtual Farm Tour** is a demonstration of how internet mapping, which is a form of Geographic Information System, can be used for economic development. The tour contains a sample of the wide array of farms located in the Lakes Region of New Hampshire. Farms have an important role in this region, including enriching the the rural character, economics, and beauty while providing local products and services for its people, visitors, and businesses.

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Created by:  
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Postcard was distributed at the Lakes Region Planning Commission's Annual Meeting in June, 2007.

Other publicity includes the following:

- Display table allowing users to interact with the Lakes Region Farm Tour website at the Small and Beginner Farmers Conference in Meredith, November 2007.
- Announcement of public release and interactive display of the Lakes Region Farm Tour website at the Lakes Region Planning Commission's Annual Meeting in Meredith, June 2007.