

Appendix 1: Profile of Agriculture and Inventory of Farm Resources and Features

Soil Data

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) conducts an inventory rural lands that may support the production of food, feed, fiber forage, and oilseed crops. This exercise is conducted both at the national level and, with cooperation from interested groups at the local and state levels, at the state level, yielding two classifications important to farmland protection planning: prime farmland and soils of statewide importance.

Prime farmland is land that has the best combination of physical and chemical characteristics for agriculture. Prime soils generally have the soil quality, growing season, and moisture supply needed to produce economically sustained high yields of crops. These soils are not excessively erodible or saturated with water for a long period of time and do not flood frequently or are protected from flooding. Soils of statewide importance do not meet prime farmland criteria but are nearly prime farmland and can produce high yields of crops in an economic manner when treated and managed according to acceptable farming methods. Criteria and classification is determined at the state level in concert with NRCS.

As Table 1 shows, there are nearly 22,000 acres of land classified either as prime farmland or as having soils of statewide importance. Most of this land area falls into the latter category, as there are few acres of Prime Farmland in Town. This acreage, highly suitable for agricultural production according to state and federal criteria, comprises 60% of all land in Meredith. Table 2 also indicates the degree of overlap between these lands and identified farmland in Town. While almost all farms (99%) are coincident with lands falling into one of these classifications, only slightly over half of land identified as either prime farmland or of statewide significance is currently found on identified farmland in Meredith. This overlap is also depicted graphically by the map entitled "Farmland Soils" in Appendix 3.

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Table 1. Farmland soils

Prime Farmland in the Town	1,611 acres
Soils of Statewide Importance in the Town	21,364 acres
Prime Farmland Soils on farms	819 acres
Soils of statewide importance on farms	11,565 acres
% of farms having prime or soils of statewide importance	99%

Parcel Data

The map entitled "Farmland Identification," found in Appendix 3, shows the distribution of farmland parcels throughout Meredith. Table 2 summarizes the land uses, according to assessment data, of these parcels by acre. In general, these results support the Ag Census data (See below) in that livestock production is significant by total acreage. Vacant and residential lands have a higher number of parcels.

Table 2. Acres by type of farm.⁵

Feature	Acres	Number of Parcels
Productive Vacant Land (105)	3,840	90
Dairy (112)	3,545	21
Cattle (113)	1,316	12
Sheep (114)	633	3
Other Livestock (116)	437	4
Nursery (170)	103	1
Rural Residential and Ag (241)	512	4
Other Vacant Land (300's)	1,316	43
Other Non-Farm class properties, but identified as farmland through planning process (Primarily Residential)	7,543	105
Total Farmland	19,245	283
Average Size of Farm Parcels	68	-

⁵ Each parcel of land is assigned a property class code by the Town Assessor. All agricultural land uses are coded between 100 and 200. The codes presented in this table represent the different types of parcel classifications given to agricultural operations by the local assessor. *Source: Town of Meredith Assessor, Committee, and field observation*

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These farm parcels contribute significantly to the total assessed value of land in Meredith, as Table 3 shows. It is notable that a high proportion of farm parcels (67%) receive agricultural exemptions.

Table 3. Parcel, Acres, and Values of Farms

Property Class Code	Category Description	No. of Parcels	No. of Parcels with Ag. Exemption	Average Assessed Value of land*	Total Assessed Value of Land*
105	Productive Vacant Land	90	62	\$71,122	\$6,401,000
112	Dairy	21	18	\$271,857	\$5,709,000
113	Cattle	12	10	\$173,250	\$2,079,000
114	Sheep	3	2	\$322,500	\$967,500
116	Other Livestock	4	3	\$187,125	\$748,500
170	Nursery	1	1	\$171,800	\$171,800
241	Rural Residential and Ag	4	4	\$219,950	\$879,800
300's	Other Vacant Land	43	19	\$58,174	\$2,501,500
200's other than the 241 property class code	Other Non-Farm class properties, but identified as farmland through planning process (Primarily Residential)	108	53	\$130,974	\$14,145,200
Total		286	180	\$117,494	\$33,603,300

*Not including buildings

Agricultural Districts in Meredith

Table 4. New York agricultural district information

Total Land in a NY Certified Ag District	20,504 acres
Farmland in a NY Certified Ag District	16,646 acres
Number of farmland parcels in a NY Certified Ag District	214 parcels
Total Acres in Town	37,946 acres
Acres receiving an Agricultural Assessment	13,413 acres

Farm Operations and Farm Characteristics

This section presents data from the U.S. Census of Agriculture at the zip code as well as county levels.

Background

The United States Department of Agriculture has conducted the Census of Agriculture every five years since 1997. Prior to that, agriculture censuses were taken by the United States Census Bureau. Detailed data of farms and farm operators are available for counties nationwide, and somewhat less detailed data are tabulated for zip codes as well. The following provides a summary of these data pertinent to Meredith, specifically agricultural census data for Delaware County and the six zip codes within and adjacent to the Town.

Meredith Zip Codes

There are six zip codes either wholly or partially contained within the Town (Figure 1).

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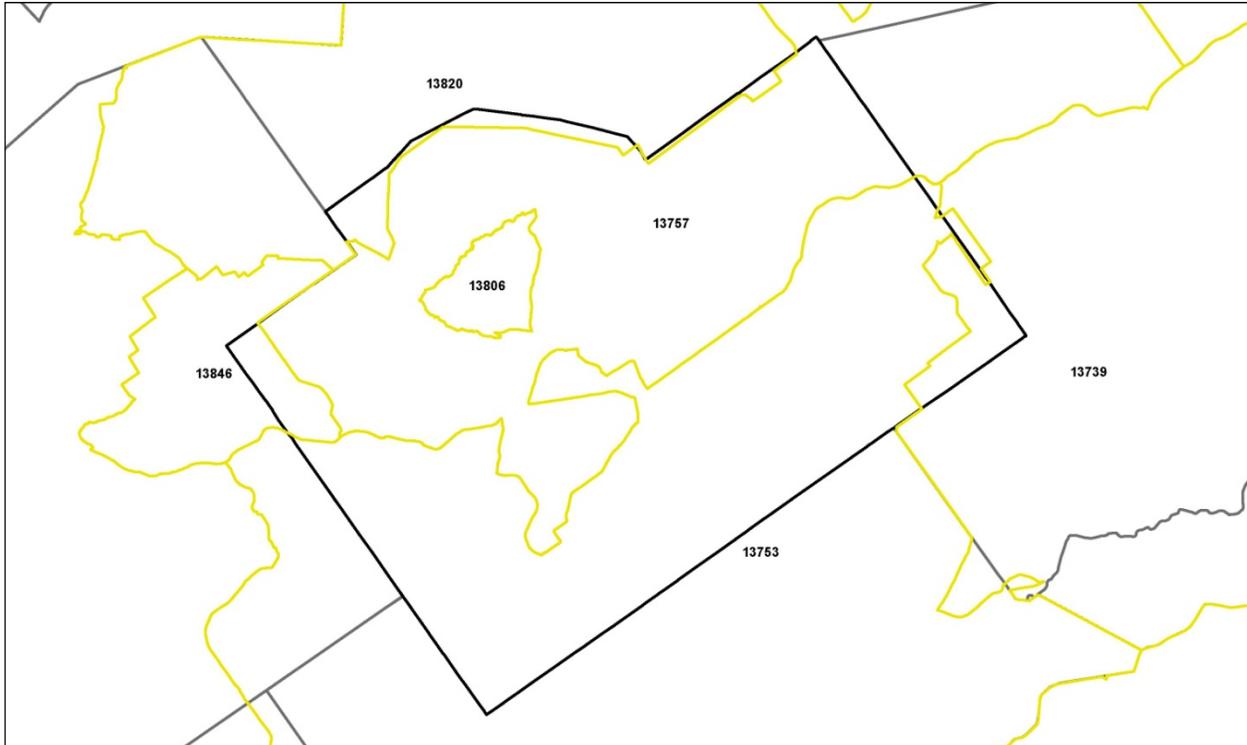


Figure 1: Zip Codes of Meredith

The information presented in this section presents aggregated data from these zip code areas. Only one zip code, Meridale (13806), is situated completely inside Town boundaries; the remaining five areas, to varying degrees, overlap the Town. While not directly indicative of the precise counts for the Town itself, these data do produce a finer-grained image of agriculture in this portion of Delaware County. So for example, the inclusion of zip codes such as Oneonta and Bloomville, while small in terms of land area inside the Town, serve to provide additional comparison and insight into agriculture in the region.

Figure 2 depicts the distribution of and rate of change of all farm operations within the Meredith zip codes. In 2007, the total number of farms in this region stood at 229, down 5.8% from the 243 farms counted there in 1987. After reaching a low of 194 in 1997, the total number of farms in the region increased by 16.5% in 2002, and climbed 1.3% 2007, to a total of 229 farms. While the majority of farms in this region are situated within Oneonta and Delhi, farms in Meridale and East Meredith—areas mostly or completely contained within the Town boundaries—account for an increasing proportion of farms in this area (17.3% in 2007). In 1992 and 1997, no farms were counted in Meridale, but there were six farms counted there in both 2002 and 2007.

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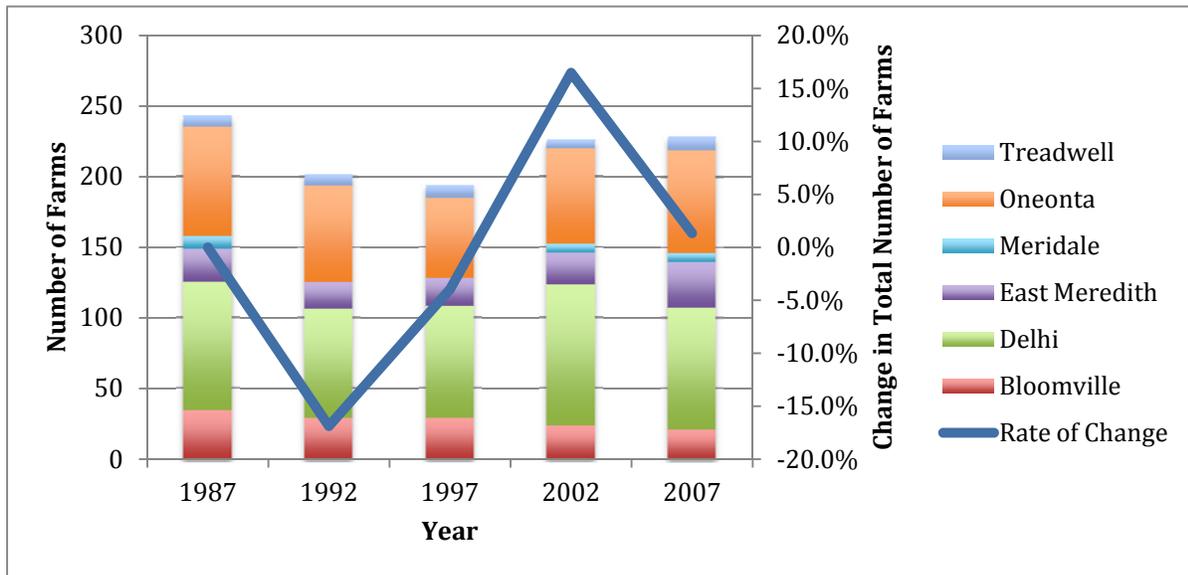


Figure 2. Number of farms by zip code and rate of change in total number of farms, 1987-2007, Meredith Zip Codes.

In the five years between 2002 and 2007, the total number of farms in this region grew by 7% (Table 5). The majority of farms (77.7%) in the Meredith region are 50 to 999 acres in size, although small farms (those less than 50 acres) represented an increasing proportion of farms in 2007. Between 1987 and 2007, farms of between 1 to 49 acres have grown by 80%, while the number of farms 50 to 999 acres has declined by 18%. Since 1997, the region has lost half of its very large farms, although the number of very large farms has generally remained stable during these years.

Table 5. Number of farms by size, 1987-2007, Meredith zip codes.

Year	1 to 49 acres		50 to 999 acres		1000 acres or more		Total
	n	%	n	%	n	%	
1987	25	10.3%	216	88.9%	2	0.8%	243
1992	17	8.4%	182	90.1%	3	1.5%	202
1997	27	13.9%	160	82.5%	7	3.6%	194
2002 ⁶	37	17.3%	177	82.7%	-	-	214
2007	48	21.0%	178	77.7%	3	1.3%	229

Source: United States Department of Agriculture, Census of Agriculture.

⁶ In 2002, certain data were withheld by the USDA where the release of such data would result in the identification of particular farming operations, particularly if only one or two farms fell into a category. This means that for 2002, these tables may represent an undercount of categories with few farms.

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Livestock-related commodities, including cattle and dairy products, continue to be the principal types of agriculture in the Meredith region, and most farms have had, and continue to have, some acreage for cropland, which includes hay and silage crops. Yet the number of farms with these commodities has largely declined, both in relative and absolute terms, over the 20 years represented by the census counts in Table 6. This is particularly true of dairy and dairy products. Categories with the most growth are hogs and pigs and hens, poultry, and eggs.

Table 6. Types of farms by inventory or sales, 1992-2007, Meredith zip codes.

Farms With Sales or Inventory	1992		1997		2002		2007	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Cattle and calves	148	73.3%	135	69.6%	90	42.1%	91	39.7%
Cropland Harvested	184	91.1%	172	88.7%	173	80.8%	172	75.1%
Hens & pullets	13	6.4%	7	3.6%	15	7.0%	21	9.2%
Hogs and pigs	9	4.5%	3	1.5%	5	2.3%	18	7.9%
Horses and ponies	11	5.4%	8	4.1%	10	4.7%	8	3.5%
Milk cows/products	116	57.4%	96	49.5%	68	31.8%	59	25.8%
Sheep and lambs	14	6.9%	10	5.2%	22	10.3%	20	8.7%

Note: Proportions were calculated based on total number of farms for that census year.

Annual sales of farms in the Meredith zip codes tend to be below \$250,000. Between 2002 and 2007, farms in the middle sales category (i.e. those with sales of between \$50,000 and \$250,000) decreased, while farms in the lowest and highest categories increased; proportionally, farms falling into the less than \$50,000 sales category saw the greatest increase in these years. The difference in data tabulation, which started in 2002, notwithstanding, prior to 2002, census counts reflect a more even distribution of sales (Table 7).

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Table 7. Market value of agricultural products for farms, 1987-2007, Meredith zip codes.⁷

Category	1987	1992	1997	2002	2007
Less than \$10,000	93	66	73		
\$10,000 to \$99,999	73	68	66		
\$100,000 or more	77	68	55		
Less than \$50,000				148	167
\$50,000 to \$249,999				51	39
\$250,000 or more				10	23
Total Farms	243	202	194	209	229

Source: United States Department of Agriculture, Census of Agriculture.

Since 1992, the number of full-owner operations has increased, the number of part-owner operations has decreased, and the number of tenant operations has remained relatively flat (Figure 3). The number of operators stating that farming is their primary occupation has fluctuated between 149 in 1992 and 135 in 1997; in 2007, the figure stood at 138.

⁷ Shaded areas of the table represent a change in the way data were reported in 2002 compared with earlier counts.

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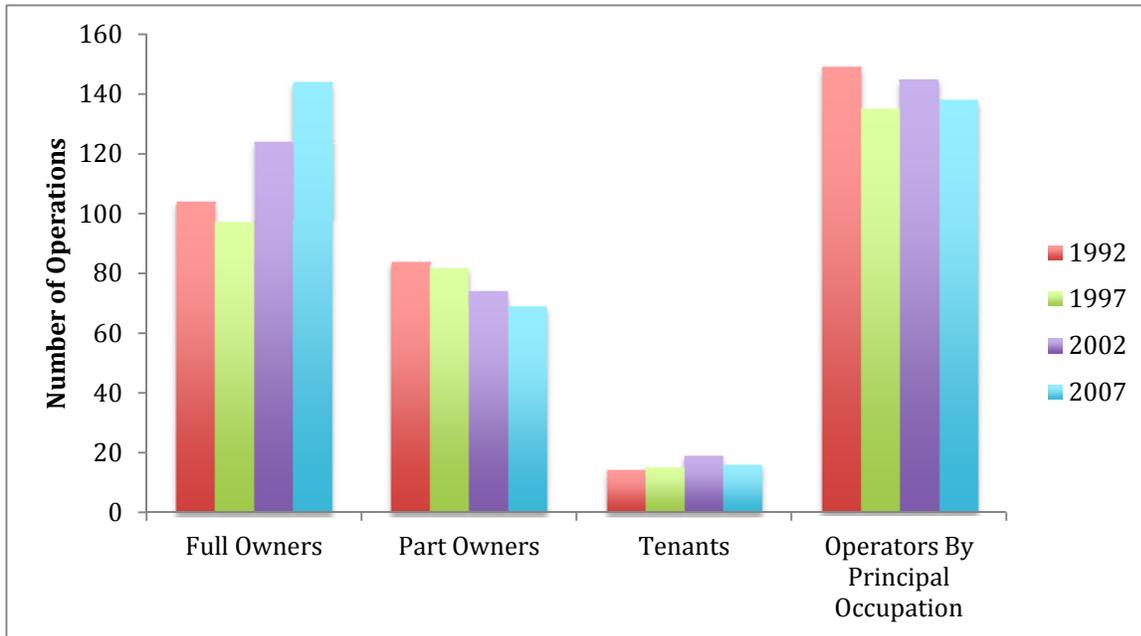


Figure 3. Change in operator characteristics, 1992-2007, Meredith zip codes.

Delaware County

Historically important to the economy of Delaware County, agriculture remains a mainstay industry today. The Delaware County Agricultural Growth and Sustainability Plan, 2010-2015 ("Delaware Ag Development Plan") provides the following summary of agriculture and related trends taking place in the county, based on 2007 Ag Census data:

- 1,217 'farm owners': 437 identify agriculture as their primary business. Net farm income is \$13,000,000. Most owners are also residents.
- Farms employ at least 760 people. Farm payroll is \$5,600,000
- \$55,000,000 in sales of agricultural product (fluctuates with milk prices)
- Increase in number of vegetable, small ruminant, hog and poultry farms
- Increase in the largest and the smallest farms
- Growth in farms doing 'direct marketing'
- Decrease in the number of dairy farms, increase in average size.
- Since 2002, the county has lost 5% of farms, but sales have increased
- Farm production expenses have risen 5%

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Further county-level data are provided in Table 8. Between 2002 and 2007, the total amount of land in farms, having declined slightly between 1997 and 2002, decreased by 13.6%.

Table 8. Selected agricultural characteristics, 1997-2007, Delaware County.

	2007	2002	1997
Value of products sold (inflation-adjusted, 2007 dollars)	\$55,143,000	\$54,349,416	\$52,302,618
Farms	747	788	848
Land in farms (acres)	165,572	191,537	195,554
Farms with sales > \$10,000	348	358	381
Farms with sales > \$100,000	142	153	156
<i>Number of farms with sales of</i>			
Dairy	161	204	246
Crops	381	327	370
Cattle and calves	319	347	499
<i>Percent of County sales from</i>			
Dairy products	62.4%	67.6%	77.8%
Cattle and calves	18.0%	16.8%	9.9%
Nursery, greenhouse, etc.	6.6%	6.9%	4.9%
Other crops and hay	5.6%	4.5%	5.1%
Total percentage of county sales	92.6%	95.9%	97.7%
Primary occupation is farming	437	497	428
Jobs on farms	760	770	n/a

Source: USDA Agricultural Census and Delaware County Agricultural Growth and Sustainability Plan, 2010-2015, and USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service

Appendix 2: Updated Demographics and Housing Trends

Census Data

The principal demographic trends affecting agriculture and farmland in Meredith are three: a decreasing population, the aging of its residents, and an increasing vacancy rate for housing units in the Town.

According to the most recent census count, the Town had a population of 1,529 in 2010. Meredith lost about 3.7% of its population between 2000 and 2010, although the number remains above the level of 1,513 recorded in 1990. This compares to a net population increase of 2.6% in Delaware County. Although the population has declined, the number of households has increased slightly by 2.6%, which is commonly associated with sprawl.

The population in Meredith is also aging. The median age increased by over 18% between 2000 and 2010 (Table 9). This rate of increase is nearly twice that for Delaware County, which had a 9.7% increase in median age over the same period, and Meredith is also older than the County (46.9 versus 45.4). According to census data, the categories experiencing the greatest rates of increase in the same period were men and women aged between 60 and 69 years old (over 100%), while most age categories below age 45 show decreases of around 50%. However, males aged 25 to 29 increased 63.4%.

Although the 2010 housing vacancy rate has declined by 0.6% when compared to 1990, the 2010 figure of 29.8% represents an almost 5.0% increase in vacant units since 2000. The US Census includes seasonal houses as part of the vacant house count. The County rate increased more slowly over the same time period. While the vacancy rate is less than the countywide vacancy rate, which was 36.3% in 2010, it remains much higher than the comparable statewide rate of 9.7%. Most of these vacant units appear to be seasonal residences, indicating the presence of a substantial seasonal population.

Table 9. Selected demographic and housing trends, 1990-2010, Town of Meredith

	1990	2000	2010
Persons	1,513	1,588	1,529
Median Age	n/a	39.6	46.9
Households	525	612	628
Persons on Farm	120	128	n/a

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	1990	2000	2010
Non-farm persons	1,293	1,495	n/a
Housing units	754	816	894
Occupied housing units	525	612	628
Vacant housing units	229	204	266
For seasonal use	147	160	208
Vacancy rate	30.4%	25.0%	29.8%

Source: United States Census Bureau, 2010 Census of Population.

Finally, employment and occupation data (Table 10) provide an indication of farm employment in Meredith. A key source of the apparent decrease in farm occupations is changes to the classification system used by the census.⁸ People employed in the agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining industry category have decreased since 1990, albeit not as sharply as the Table 10 suggests. A further review of the ACS data show, by occupation, that owners and managers (i.e. of farms) account for most of the occupations in the census farm industry category, although sales and office occupations comprise a small percentage, too. The Farmer Survey (Appendix 4) results are also summarized here. The survey counted full- and part-time seasonal and temporary workers; about half were full-time, year-round employees.

This information suggests, first, that the industry is generally composed of a fairly stable set of owners and managers; second, that farm employment appears to have decreased since 1990, a trend that is generally supported by Ag Census data (Figure 3, above); and, third, that, when combined with the Farmer Survey information, part-time and seasonal work constitute a slice of farm employment potentially not captured by the census.⁹

Table 10. Number of persons by farm-related industry and occupation.

	People with Farm Occupations	People Employed in Farm Industry
1990 census	83	81
2000 census	10	49

⁸ Due to changes in definitions and classification systems, some caution is needed to interpret these data. Much of the decrease in farm occupations between 1990 and 2000 is due to the fact that farmers and farm managers were classified with management occupations in 2000. Similarly, the industry data reflect the fact that the landscape and horticultural services category was moved to the "Administrative, support, and waste management services."

⁹ The census counts reflect "the persons job during the reference week. For those who worked at two or more jobs, the data refer to the job at which the person worked the greatest number of hours during the reference week." *Source: <http://www.socialexplorer.com/>*

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	People with Farm Occupations	People Employed in Farm Industry
2005-2009 ACS	7 (+/- 10)	39 (+/- 23)
2006-2010 ACS	0 (+/- 123)	29 (+/- 23)
Farmer Survey (2011)	n/a	68

Building Permits

Construction or property improvements requiring building permits from the Town have generally decreased since 2003 (Figure 4). There have been very few permits for commercial construction issued in the Town over this period. A total of 76 residential permits have been issued since 2003, most (47%) for site-built housing; modular housing accounts for 27%, mobile homes for 16%, and cabins, some of which are seasonal and lack basic facilities like plumbing, for the remaining 9% of all residential permits.

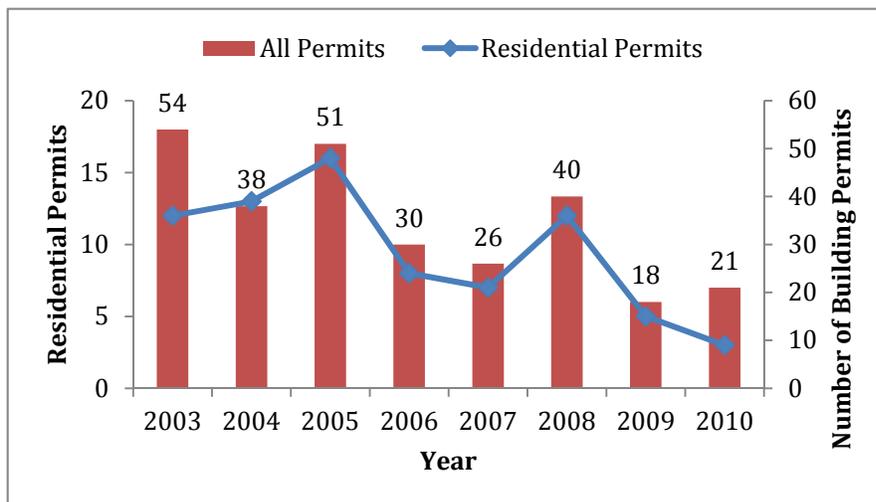


Figure 4. Building permit data, 2003-2010, Town of Meredith.

Subdivision Activity

While highlighting a high degree of parcelization since the 1950s, the Town of Meredith Comprehensive Plan (“The 2006 Comprehensive Plan”) also notes that subdivision activity has generally decreased since the 1980s. This is a trend that has continued since this plan was adopted. Between 1985 and 1990, there were 133 approved subdivisions—more than in the 21 years since 1990. As Table 11 indicates, there have been 36 subdivisions approved since 2003, and the majority of these have been simple subdivisions. Only one application for a major subdivision has been received by the Town since 2003. Boundary line adjustments (BLA), which do not result in the creation of new lots, have been nearly as common as subdivisions. In fact, many BLAs result in the consolidation of formerly

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separate parcels, in the end reducing the number of parcels.

Since 2003, the average size of parcels receiving approval has been 114 acres. As Figure 5 demonstrates, recent subdivisions have also involved a smaller amount of acreage. For six of the past nine years, parcels totaling fewer than 400 acres have been approved for subdivisions. Yet as 2011 data show, this trend may be reversing, the relatively small number of lots created in 2011 notwithstanding. The pace of lot creation per year has also slowed from its peak of 20 in 2005 to just two in 2010 and six through the summer of 2011; a total of 76 lots have been created since 2003.

Table 11. Boundary line adjustments (BLA) and subdivisions approved, 2003-2011, Town of Meredith.

Year	Number of Approvals					
	BLA	Subdivisions				Total
		Simple	Minor	Major	Total	
2003	6	6	1	0	7	20
2004	5	3	0	0	3	11
2005	3	8	1	0	9	21
2006	6	5	2	0	7	20
2007	3	1	0	0	1	5
2008	5	0	3	0	3	11
2009	0	0	2	0	2	4
2010	2	0	1	0	1	4
2011	4	0	3	0	3	10
Total	34	23	13	0	36	106

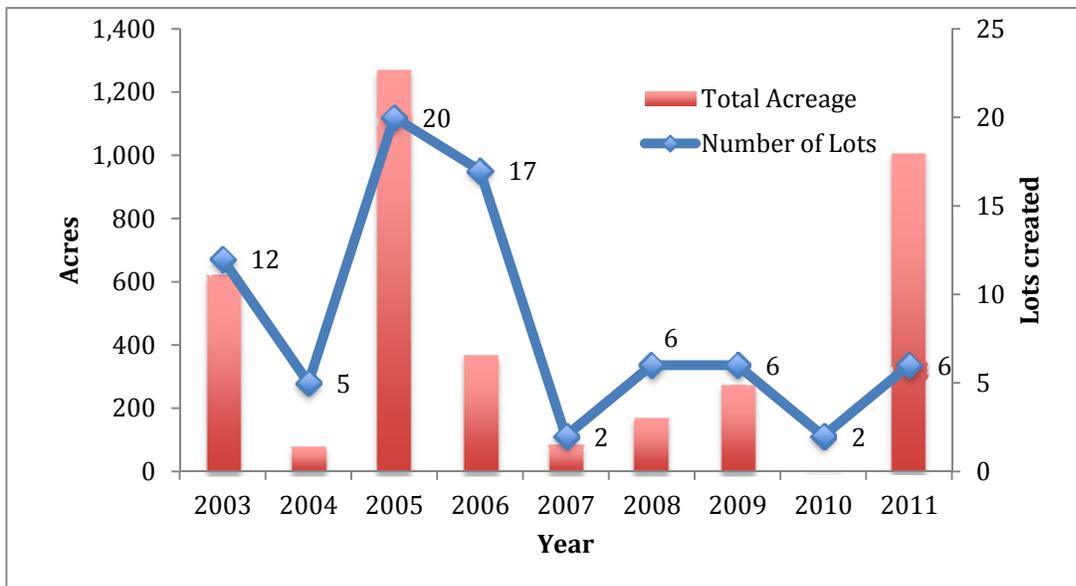


Figure 5. Total acreage of parcels subdivided and number of lots

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created, 2003-2011, Town of Meredith.

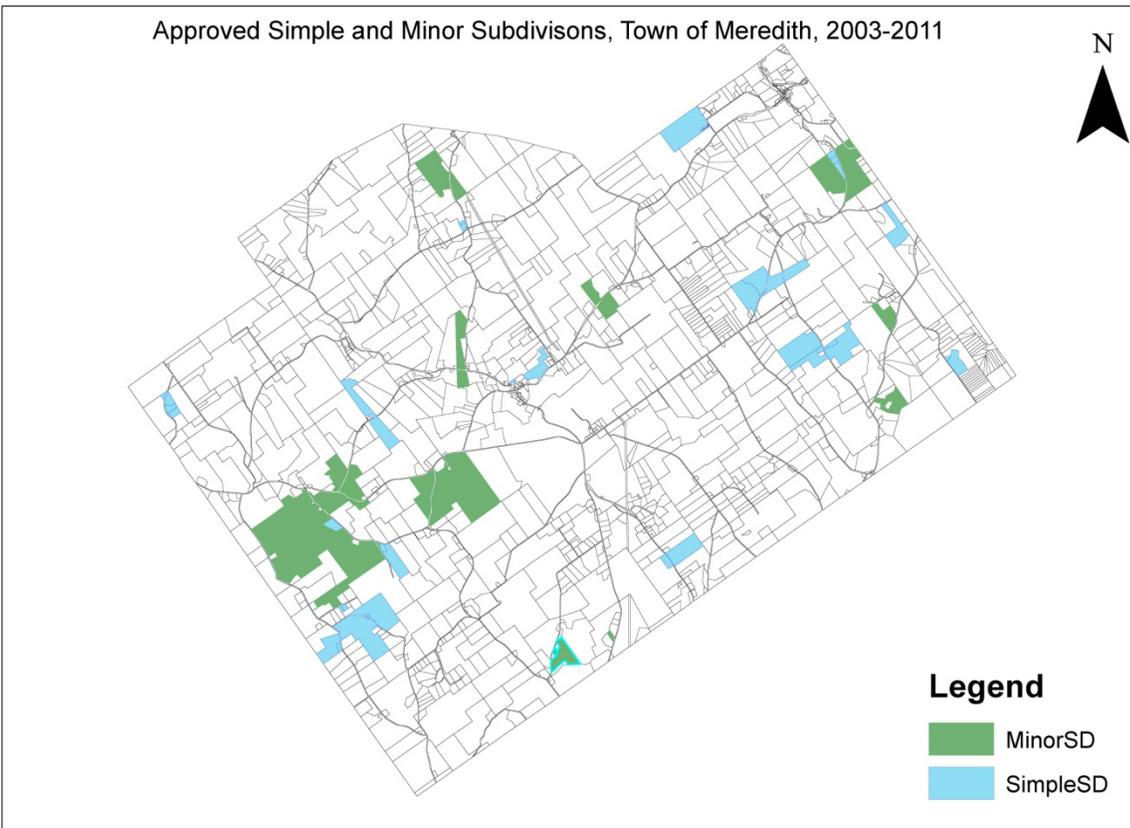


Figure 6. Location of approved simple and minor subdivisions, Town of Meredith, 2003-2011.

When considered together, subdivision, building permit, and census data indicate that the supply of buildable lots is keeping pace with residential construction. Indeed, the number of lots created roughly equals the number of residential permits issued. The increase in residential permits also approximates the 2010 Census-derived figure for housing units. However, the past decade in Meredith saw a net decrease of residents, pointing toward a moderate level of sprawl and conversion pressure.

Land Use Regulations

From local laws to interstate compacts, a variety of land use regulations, enforced in different ways, may affect agricultural land uses and farm lands in Meredith. The Town itself adopted several pieces of legislation. Meredith is also partially within the Delaware River Basin and the Susquehanna River Basin, each of which are subject to the regulations of interstate compact commissions, and a portion of the Town lies within the New York City Watershed ("City Watershed"). The following presents a brief outline of laws and regulations related to farmland protection in Meredith.

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Local Laws

Local land use laws related to agriculture and farmland are presented in Table 12. The Town does not maintain a zoning code, nor does it presently have a Right-to-Farm law, although one was recommended to be adopted in the 2006 Comprehensive Plan.

Subdivision regulations, last amended in 2007, are intended to promote “the orderly, efficient and economical development of the Town.” These include design and procedural standards for plans, plan review, and submission to the Town; lot configuration and size; drainage, sewerage, and water supply; roadway layout; grading and flood prevention; and open spaces, parks, and playgrounds. The law includes provisions for environmental review to be done according to State Environmental Conservation Law. It also creates a minimum lot size of two acres for all areas of Town.

In addition to boundary line adjustments, the subdivision law establishes two broad categories of subdivisions: major and minor. The former are defined as subdivisions of seven or more lots, or where Town facilities (roads, utilities, etc.) are extended or new public facilities created. Minor subdivisions are defined as containing no more than six lots, all of which front on an existing road. This latter category further includes “simple subdivisions,” which, according to the 2006 Plan, result in the creation of three or fewer new lots. Both major and minor subdivisions require that public hearings as well as an environmental review of the proposed action be conducted.

Table 12. Local laws related to land use, Town of Meredith.

Year Enacted	Last Amended	Title
1985	2007	Subdivision Law
1995	-	Regulation of Placement & Storage of Junk
2000	-	Manufactured/Mobile Home Park
2001	-	Town of Meredith Communication Tower and Facilities Law
2008	-	Telecommunication Tower and Facilities Law of 2008
2008	-	Wind Energy Facilities Law of 2008

New York City Watershed

Over nine million residents of New York City receive high-quality drinking water from a vast watershed area covering parts of the Catskills and the Delaware River Basin. The City Watershed covers a portion of the eastern half of Meredith. In 1997, the Town was among the signatories of the

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agreement between the City and communities in the watershed known as the New York City Watershed Memorandum of Agreement (MOA). The MOA provides for a series of reciprocal arrangements between the City and watershed towns, including Meredith, in an ongoing effort to allow the City to maintain its Filtration Avoidance Determination (FAD) and improve water quality. The most important aspects of this relationship include environmental regulations enforced by the City Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), the City's land acquisition program (LAP), and the City-funded Watershed Agricultural Program (WAP).

Land use regulations in the City Watershed proscribe standards and specifications designed to protect water quality and include, but are not limited to requirements for buffering, impervious surfaces, set-backs, and septic systems. These regulations affect the configuration and extent of urbanization and land conversion in the watershed. Under City law, agriculture is also defined as a regulated activity. Certain aspects of this law that may affect agricultural land uses include standards for petroleum storage, and pesticide and fertilizer handling and application.

The City's LAP is an extensive effort to acquire, in fee or through easements, lands within the NYC Watershed to limit development and protect water quality. As per the MOA, Meredith has designated a portion of land lying within the watershed as a "hamlet designated area" in order to prevent City acquisitions in this area. The WAP is administered by the Watershed Agricultural Council (WAC). Its programs include whole farms planning, forest management plans, and conservation easements. WAC itself receives over 92% of its funding from the City, but operationally, it is a public-private partnership. At the end of June 2010, its top two expenditures were related to its easement program and on-farm best management practice (BMP) implementation and construction.

Susquehanna River Basin

A significant portion of Meredith is within the Susquehanna River Basin, which is a part of the Chesapeake Bay—the largest estuary in the US—with a 64,000 square mile watershed that covers parts of six states. Regulations in this watershed are carried out by the Susquehanna River Basin Commission (SRBC), which was created by an interstate agreement in effect since 1971. According to the 2006 Plan, SRBC regulations primarily target water consumption or use, in addition to flood management. Currently, agricultural water projects are exempt from the SRBC's system of fees and payments. However, certain agricultural water uses (i.e. surface or groundwater withdrawals in excess of an average of 10,000 gallons per day over a 30 day period) may be required to register their withdrawal with the SRBC.

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In 2010, the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) released specific pollutant reduction targets, or total maximum daily load (tmdl) requirements, for the entire Chesapeake Bay watershed for nitrogen, phosphorous, and sediments in a regional effort to restore water quality in the Bay. In New York State, the Department of Environmental Conservation is responsible for the required statewide Watershed Improvement Plan, and is working in partnership with several other entities to reduce pollutant loads from agricultural land uses. A significant component of this effort is known as Agricultural Environmental Management (AEM), which, according to the Delaware County Soil and Water Conservation District (DCSWCD), is “a voluntary, incentive-based program that documents current environmental stewardship on farms and suggests possible room for improvement.” Although the relationship between agriculture and federally-mandated TMDLs is still fluid, this program could potentially result in additional pressure on farms in Meredith.

Delaware River Basin

The Delaware River watershed includes the West Branch of the Delaware River and its tributaries in the Town. Watershed management is carried out by the Delaware River Basin Commission (DRBC), which was created by an interstate compact signed in 1961. According to the 2006 Plan, its “component programs [include]: water quality protection, water supply allocation, regulatory review and the issuance of permits, water conservation initiatives, watershed planning, drought management, flood control, and recreation. While primarily concerned with large water users and wastewater generators, it is anticipated that the DRBC may in the future become more heavily involved in the agricultural and residential water sectors.” Agricultural irrigation projects are currently exempt from water withdrawal reporting requirements.

Other Plans

Town Comprehensive Plan

Agriculture figures prominently in the 2006 Plan. While that document notes that two important demographic trends—decline of people employed in farm occupations and an increase in the population of second homeowners—are potential threats to farming in Meredith, it also counts agriculture as among the Town’s strengths, suggests several strategies to preserve farmland in the Town, and imagines a shift in management to what it calls “alternative agriculture.”

Concerning the protection of agricultural land uses in the Town, the 2006 Plan states that “it must be remembered that agriculture is still a dominant land use and the main economic engine.” To this end, the 2006 Plan recognizes the importance of agricultural districting—the combination of

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protections and incentives for farming administered by the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets. The 2006 Plan also includes support for a Town Right-to-Farm law, which would mirror and augment a similar Delaware County law.

In Section 6.2 of the 2006 Plan, "Local Economics," goals related to the local economy are discussed. In addition to a discussion that lends support to the Delaware County Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan of 2000 (DCAFPP), providing encouragement to organic agriculture in Meredith is also listed. Here, regional marketing opportunities, as outlined in the DCAFPP, are discussed. The 2006 Plan suggests that a shift toward alternative or organic farming in the Town has already begun and must be further supported in order to capitalize upon changes in food-buying habits in local and regional markets. Indeed, in the section entitled "A Look at Meredith in 10 Years," smaller-scale and boutique or specialty alternative agriculture is listed.

County Plans

Delaware County hosts numerous agriculture-related planning efforts as well as economic development and environmental protection initiatives, particularly water quality initiatives. According to the 2006 Plan, "Meredith is also part [of] two countywide initiatives to protect and enhance agriculture: the Delaware County Right-to-Farm Law and the [DCAFPP]." The 2006 Plan notes that the countywide Right-to-Farm law provides protections to farmers and farming activities, and it encourages agriculture as a matter of policy.

The 2000 DCAFPP represents a significant farmland protection effort undertaken by Delaware County. In addition to providing a snapshot of farming and agriculture trends affecting the County in 2000, the Plan contains many specific recommendations related to farm protection and how agriculture can contribute to the enhancement of local economies. Several of the five goals listed in the DCAFPP relate specifically to land use issues, include the loss of farmland through conversion or urbanization, farm-specific land use issues and challenges, the identification of important agricultural lands for targeted preservation efforts, and the institution of transfer of development rights programs. Specific implementation strategies are also provided, including adopting new or changing existing zoning, subdivision, and local laws to ensure support of agricultural land uses.

In addition, the Delaware County Action Plan (DCAP) also sets out goals and contains strategies related to agriculture. The DCAP is a comprehensive, locally-based strategy for watershed protection, specifically the reduction of phosphorous, a potent nutrient found in runoff. It was written pursuant to a section of the MOA that is intended to both demonstrate that the City

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“controls” land use in its source waters as well as provide for the reduction of economic harm related to this control. The DCAP is targeted specifically toward phosphorous reduction in the Cannonsville Reservoir basin, which was formed from the West Branch of the Delaware River, and which is a part of the NYC Watershed. It sets out specific phosphorous reduction targets, and the most recent (2002) revision identifies agriculture as a major historical source of phosphorous pollution. The document includes several strategies farmers can take to stem this water pollution under the heading of comprehensive precision farm nutrient management.

Finally, the Delaware County Department of economic Development recently completed The Delaware County Agricultural Growth and Sustainability Plan, 2010-2015 (“Delaware Ag Development Plan”). Oriented primarily toward offering strategies for economic development, it identifies the following trends and opportunities in County agriculture: the exploitation of new markets and branded specialty products; new farm business development; the desire of most farmers it surveyed to increase and grow their farm operation; and increasing interest in local products, such as the Pure Catskills buy-local campaign. It also outlines strategies and implementation steps related to market development, new farm business development, workforce development, and policy changes. The latter largely concerns land in the NYC Watershed.