

Community Farm Track at NOFA/Mass Winter Conference

Saturday, January 17, 2009

[Worcester Vocational Technical High School, Skyline Drive, Worcester, MA](#)

The Northeast Organic Farming Association, Massachusetts Chapter (NOFA/Mass) is holding a track of workshops addressing three key components of forming a successful Community Farm. The day-long event is a project of the NOFA/Mass Community Farm Initiative and will take place as a part of this year's NOFA/Mass Winter Conference, which includes a keynote by Elliot Coleman and a potluck lunch.

Community farms are growing increasingly popular and serving deeply felt needs in towns across Massachusetts. This track of workshops is an excellent opportunity for conservation professionals, community activists, and private farmers. Registering for the NOFA/Mass Winter Conference provides entry to this track of workshops.

What is a community Farm?

- A not-for-profit, publicly accessible farm that conducts educational programming for the public.
- A center providing opportunities for meaningful work, learning, service and self-development.
- A local source of healthful produce, and a demonstration site for local food systems.

How can community farms serve farmland conservation purposes?

- Community farms represent a financially viable approach for managing open space.
- A community farm provides partners including land trusts and municipal conservation commissions with valuable platforms to reach their constituencies and promote active public engagement with preserved land.
- If maintaining open space is a liability for your organization, a community farm can turn that space into a prized asset.

Workshop 1. Organizing a Community Farm in your Town (9:00am-10:30am)

Lynda Simkins, director of Natick Community Organic Farm for 30 years, highlights public needs that community farms fulfill and strategies to form a dedicated citizen group out of latent desires for these institutions. Greg Maslowe, addresses how he has managed community involvement, political tensions, and competing demands as Newton Angino Community Farm's first farm manager. Heather Scott, leader of the Medway Community Farm Initiative, conveys tools for starting a community farm, based on recent progress.

Workshop 2. Financing Community Farms (1:00pm-2:30pm)

Jed Beach covers basic business planning principles – legal structure, marketing, finances, and staffing – for community farms, using case studies and personal experience as assistant director at Natick Community Organic Farm. Amanda Cather, farm manager, demonstrates how Waltham Fields Community Farm finances its mission through earned income. Verena Wieloch, farming coordinator, explains strategies to foster deep support -- both financial and volunteer -- of Gaining Ground's (Concord, MA) mission to give all produce for hunger relief.

Workshop 3. Educational Programs on Community Farms (4:00-5.30pm)

Regina Fritz and Ursula King of Natick Community Organic Farm trace their path of building a learning community that engages the public in farming. Participants are invited to think about their communities and consider latent educational opportunities there. Brooke Redmond of the Farm-Based Education Association presents a recently completed national survey of farm-based education projects. Participants will gain inspiring ideas based on best practices and affirmation of their commitment to this rewarding and fast-growing field.

To register for these workshops, you must register for the regular winter conference. For information, see www.nofamass.org under "Conferences" → "Winter Conference."

For information on this event, please contact organizer: Ben Grosscup, NOFA/Mass Community Farm Initiative, 22 High St #1, Amherst, MA 01002. Phone: 413-658-5374; e-mail: Ben.grosscup@nofamass.org