Land and Site Management on Incubator Farms

Brought to you by the National Incubator Farm Training Initiative (NIFTI)

Made possible by generous support from the

CEDAR TREE FOUNDATION

The Claneil Foundation
Agenda

- Technology Training – 3 minutes
- NIFTI Overview – 2 minutes
- Land and Site Management – Intervale – 15 Minutes
- Fertility management and organic certification – MNFA – 15 minutes
- Landlords and assigning plots – NASAP – 15 minutes
- Leadership Development – IRC – 15 minutes
- Next Steps – 5 minutes
- Q & A – 15 minutes
National Incubator Farm Training Initiative (NIFTI)

- National demand for new farmers and their products
- Proliferation of new incubator projects
- Shared challenges
- Increasing requests for TA
National TA Initiative: Major Activities

- **Webinars**
  - Transitioning Farmers (Mar. 26th)
  - Advocacy for incubators (April, TBD)

- **One-on-one Technical Assistance**

- **Online Resources** (Wiki, ListServe, etc.)
  - nifti.wikispaces.com

- **Toolkit** (Sept. 2013)

- **Field School** (Sept. 12 -13, 2013)
  - 2 Days at Minnesota Food Association
  - Site visit
  - Workshops
  - Networking
National TA Initiative: Partners and Technical Assistance (TA) Providers
Land and Site Management
Maggie Donin
Beginning Farmer Specialist
The Intervale Center
Land & Site Management

NIFTI Presentation
February 26th, 2012
Maggie Donin
Beginning Farmer Specialist
Intervale Land Overview

- Manage 350 acres of land
- 232 are conserved through the Vermont Land Trust
- 140 acres of prime agricultural soils, 4370 feet of river frontage, 58 acres of flood plain forest, and 9 acres of wetland
- Bordered by the Winooski River
- ~1 mile from downtown
- Historic farmstead
- Many uses of the Intervale
- Miles of recreation trails- bike, hike, ski, boat, fish, run, relax.
- 11 farms on acreage ranging from 1 acre to 40 acres
- Conservation nursery
- Annual vegetables, perennial berries, chickens, and bees.
Intervale Infrastructure Overview

- **Cooler**
  - Farmers are charged by the pallet
  - Some farmers have chosen to build their own coolers and are charged a fee to cover electrical costs.

- **Water**
  - Farmers are charged a flat fee for water access in addition to a fee per gallon
  - Meter at each field

- **Greenhouse complex**
  - If farmers choose to build a greenhouse, they are charged a yearly rate for the land it is on and IC cover the utilities

- **Other space available to lease**
  - Hay barn, farmer barn loft space, corn crib, pole barn, loft space

- **Land management fee**
  - Equipment and greenhouse benches are operated through Intervale Farmers Equipment Company (IFEC)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Annual Fee for Mentor Farms</th>
<th>Annual Fee for Incubator Farms (yr 1-3)</th>
<th>Unit of measurement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Land</td>
<td>$195</td>
<td>$156</td>
<td>Per Acre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water Access</td>
<td>$267</td>
<td>$214</td>
<td>Per Meter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water Rate</td>
<td>0.005</td>
<td>.005</td>
<td>Per Gallon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land Management Fee</td>
<td>$735</td>
<td>$588</td>
<td>Per Farm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Propane</td>
<td>Market rate</td>
<td>Market rate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greenhouse Lot</td>
<td>$230</td>
<td>$230</td>
<td>Per Lot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooler Pallets</td>
<td>$310</td>
<td>$248</td>
<td>Per Year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hay Barn Basement</td>
<td>$9.20</td>
<td>$7.36</td>
<td>Square Foot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farmer Barn Loft Space (1/2 bay minimum)</td>
<td>$420/bay</td>
<td>$336/bay</td>
<td>Bay = roughly 1/3 loft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farmer Barn Access Fee (for general use of facilities in and around the farmer barn)</td>
<td>$200</td>
<td>$160</td>
<td>Per Farm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farmer-Owned Cooler space (for the installation of farmer-owned coolers &amp; assoc.)</td>
<td>$300</td>
<td>$300</td>
<td>Per Year</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Land & Site Management with Farms Program

- We view ourselves and our farmers as land stewards
- We want the Intervale to serve as an example of land stewardship
- “Land Use Protocols”
  - Cover cropping and rotation
  - Compost application
  - Weed management
  - Soil testing
  - Etc.
- Livestock protocols
  - Must be able to be certified organic
- Leases
  - Incubator farmers sign one year leases
  - We bill May-October
Budgeting

- Increase our rental fees by the standard CPI each year
- Land stewardship budget is comprised of income from all rental fees in addition to a small operating grant and fundraising specifically for this program.
- Incubator program budget is comprised of mostly grant funding. No rental payments go to the incubator program budget.
- Because the IC’s land is used for so many purposes, the lease fees do not cover our land management of all 350 acres
Staffing

- One full time staff member dedicated to land management.
- Maintenance, upkeep and utilization of all Intervale land and structural assets (buildings, trails and trail markers, tools).
- Management of all non-rented space is the land managers responsibility. This includes fallen trees, cover cropping, mowing, and haying.

Responsibilities change seasonally
- **Spring**- getting irrigation put back together and running, cleaning up property, servicing machines.
- **Summer**- maintaining roads, mowing, lots of equipment repair.
- **Fall**- winterize buildings, put equipment to sleep for the winter.
- **Winter**- Admin work, hedgerow maintenance, permitting.
- Lots of work around ensuring proper permitting
- Serves as the IC’s point of contact for land/structural related issues and development
- Serves on the land committee and as a manager for the Intervale Farmers Equipment company.
Land Committee

- Committee of the board
- Made up for 2 farmers, 2 staff members, 2 board members.
- Members have farming, land acquisition, finance, project management, and or an understanding of food/farm market trends.
- Meets quarterly
- Provide support to ED and Board of Directors as they assess land related opportunities and advise on future land development, including, but not limited to, acquiring new land, developing new infrastructure and/or repurposing existing land/infrastructure
Intervale Farmers Equipment Company, LLC (IFEC)

• Established in 2007
• Own 2 greenhouses, 4 tractors and various implements
• Purpose of the company is to own equipment and make it available to members
• Rent to members at cost effective rates
• Shared maintenance and repair of equipment
• Farmers are able to build equity, leverage bank financing, learn how to repair equipment and decide on new purchases of equipment
IFEC Continued

- Purpose of the company is to own equipment and make it available to its members
- Members have to have farmed at the Intervale for at least 2 years (can be waived)
- Both institutional and farmer members. Currently IC is the only institutional member
- Net profits and net losses are allocated in proportion to ownership interests

- Managed by a board of directors. Various committees exist.
- Non-members can rent equipment at a more expensive rate.
- All members are responsible for contributing work hours to maintain and repair equipment.
- Each farm is responsible for certain pieces of equipment.
Thanks!

Maggie Donin
Beginning Farmer Specialist
maggie@intervale.org
(802) 660-0440 ext 116
Land and Site Management
Aaron Blyth
Farm Manager
Minnesota Food Association
BIG RIVER FARMS
LAND AND SITE MANAGEMENT
Organic Farming is about the health of the soil. If we ask farmers to be Organic then we must help them have good ground to farm from day one in the program.

This idea has driven how we think about our land and how farmers are integrated into our farm community.
1. A minimum of 7 yds./acre of good compost is added to every acre that has vegetables on it each year.
2. We practice a fairly intensive covercrop regiment.
3. We have experimented with adding minerals to our soil as well.
Land Management
We have 60 acres of land inside of a deer fence.

- Since 2012, 25 acres have good access to irrigation
  - Each year there are 10 farms in the program using about 12 acres of land.
  - BRF farms roughly 4 acres
  - The rest is in soil building covercrop

- 12 acres in Alfalfa hay
- Remainder not currently being used
1\textsuperscript{st} year farmers get \(\frac{1}{4}\) acre

2\textsuperscript{nd} year farmers get 1 acre

3\textsuperscript{rd} year farmers get 2 acres

Cost to farmers is $350/acre for land and $200/infrastructure
## Land Costs
- 1 acre = $150
- 7 yds. Compost = $200
- Covercrop Seed = $50
- Tractor Work = $250 (5 hrs @ $50/hr)

Total Costs = $650

## Infrastructure Costs
- Fence = $100
- Irrigation = $200 ($40/Month)
- Packing shed = $100
- Cooler = $200 ($40/Month)
- Hand Tools = $100

Total Costs = $700
Total Value = $1350
and we charge $550
Farm Manager and full-time seasonal Production Coordinator

- Manage the BRF Farm Plot of 3-4 acres plus two hoophouses
  - Responsible for almost half of 160 member CSA production plus $10,000 in wholesale
- Overall Farm Maintenance and tractor work
- Farm Manager works 1 on 1 with farmers in their fields.
- Production coordinator plays less of a direct role with farmer participants.
2012 operating budget

- $32,000
  - 25% New Irrigation system
  - 10% Seed Costs
  - 15% Machinery Repairs and Upkeep
  - 15% Fertility Inputs (compost, minerals, covercrop seed)
Successes

- Soil Fertility Up
- Farmers much more successful in their growing
- Have Created a Wonderful Feel of Community on the Farm among Staff and Farmers

Struggles

- Too Much Land/Not Using all of Our Land
- Get Farmers to Cover Higher Percentage of True Costs
- How much Land should we give Farmers?
Landlord Considerations and Assigning Plots

Daniel Ungier
Director of Farmer Training
New American Sustainable Agriculture Project
The New American Sustainable Agriculture Project assists immigrant and refugee farmers to build successful farm businesses that are...
Communications with Landowners

- Clear criteria
- Expectations
- Infrastructure needs
- Enterprise options
- Tenure (program and farmer)
- Production philosophy (OG vs Conv)
- Neighbors / Community

Incubator Farm Specifics

- Confront stereotypes/racism
- Cultural acceptance
- Different/unfamiliar type of land use
- Multiple users, extended families, etc…
How to facilitate the distribution?

- Hand the process over to the community
- If working with different groups, let each be responsible for an area
- Decide on the land with participants present
- Study and discuss maps indoors with participants
- Leave assignment to staff
- Set staff-driven parameters but involve participants in the specifics
Additional factors

- What pattern are you setting for future years?
- ...especially if you have involved participants in the decision-making process?
- Measuring fields should not involve calculus...but it often does
- How does your layout connect with a broader farm management plan?
- How do you address inequalities in the land type?
An inherited layout
Field inequities
Farm management factors

- **Crop rotations**
  - Within a farmer’s field, or within the incubator farm?
  - If the latter, who decides how farmers rotate through the site – and how?

- **Field access by multiple users -- roads**

- **Cover cropping**

- **Tilling, mowing, and general tractor access**

- **What types of practices does your farm layout support or discourage?**
Site Management and Community Building

Priya Reddy
Grace Henley
International Rescue Committee
Is community building.
management: The process of dealing with or controlling things or people. The responsibility for and control of a company or similar organization.
We’re moving away from a management mindset in farming...
and embracing a more natural system that favors diversity.
New Roots operates or collaborates on 25 urban farms and gardens across 13 U.S. cities.

We operate 4 incubator farms...3 are urban.

So, we’re trying to do the same thing with operationalizing our farms.
Urban is just MORE.

The same issues on any incubator farm are present in an urban context.

Plus...

• There are more people to coordinate
• More pressure from more neighbors
• More diversity of life experience and culture to integrate (especially in low income neighborhoods)
• More chances for theft/vandalism
It’s all about the people.
Cultivating **human** diversity.

*Understanding who is at your table.*

Collective site management means establishing a common understanding of ownership.
Cultivating human diversity.

First you have to understand the background of your participants – how have they approached ownership in the past?
Cultivating human diversity.

Develop cultural and agricultural context

**Tools:** assessments, evaluations, interactive trainings
Advocating for a "new normal".

*Neighborhood relations*

Address & embrace a complex aesthetic and pro-actively engage the neighbors in seeing the resourcefulness and uniqueness of things they may not like.

Be aware of your own perceptions & biases.
Advocating for a “new normal”.

Take the time up front

Lay all perspectives on the table

Co-develop standards for our garden that reflect the diversity of cultures instead of imposing a rule
Advocating for a “new normal”.

*Urban farms as a community-owned space*

Establish a leadership group

Ask them to develop a vision for the garden and goals members want to pursue

Support participants to develop their vision (don’t do the work for them)
Cross-cultural collective responsibility.

Different ideas of accountability.

Organize trainings by ability level, NOT language group
Cross-cultural collective responsibility.

Meet participants where they are at – capacity and responsibility should be evenly matched.
Cross-cultural collective responsibility.

Empower communities to develop shared expectations

Encourage participants to see farming as a job
Cross-cultural collective responsibility.

Prepare clear guidelines and protocols, but approach individual situations with flexibility.
Use non-verbal communication and encourage community building!
Getting to the root of conflict.

The sub-context of conflict is critical

Conflict will happen. It’s a sign that you are creating a safe space for people to address issues in the broader community.
Getting to the root of conflict.

In order to organize and create functional management systems we must understand each other and what challenges each community faces.

Create spaces to address the challenges that trouble us all: Social Justice workshops
Evaluating our success

**Management Model:**
- Listen to instructions
- Follow rules
- Attend meetings
- Implement trainings
- Seek staff leadership and feedback

**Community Building Model:**
- Ask for instruction, when needed
- Create group agreements
- Self-organize meetings
- Innovate based on trainings
- Ask lots of questions and share ideas of their own
At the end of the day, it’s all about who is turning the compost...
NIFTI Next Steps

- **Technical Assistance**
  - A limited amount of TA is available through project partners
  - Initial intake and first 5 hours free
  - Contact New Entry for more info (eagudelo@comteam.org)

- **Online Resources**
  - Website
  - Wiki – Share your resources!
  - List Serve

- **Webinars**
  - NEXT: Transitioning Farmers Off the Incubator
    - March 26th 1 – 2:30 (EST)
  - Advocacy for Incubators
    - April - TBD

- **Your input is critical!**
  - Please complete the evaluation after this webinar
  - Feel free to email with ideas, feedback or questions
Questions?
Thank you for attending

Please fill out your evaluations!

Contact us:
Eva Agudelo Winther
National Incubator Farm Training Initiative Coordinator
New Entry Sustainable Farming Project
eaqudelo@comteam.org
978-654-5731