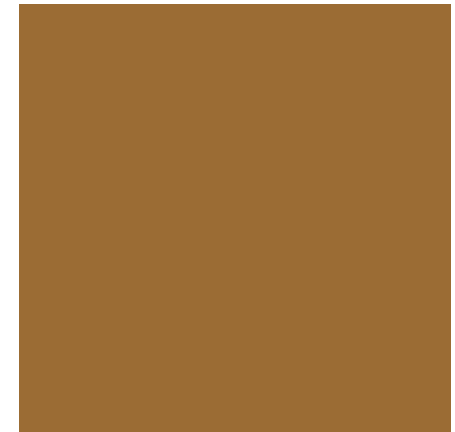
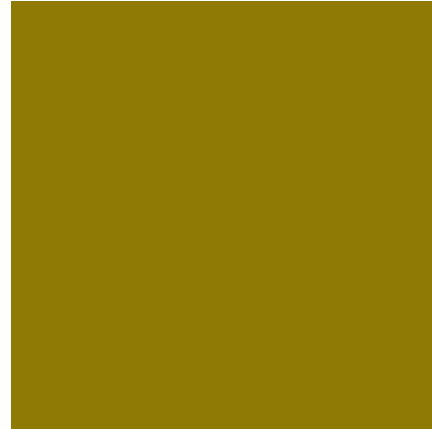


Fields of Gold



Planting the Seeds for a Regional Agritourism Program



Central Shenandoah Planning District Commission
Shenandoah Valley Partnership



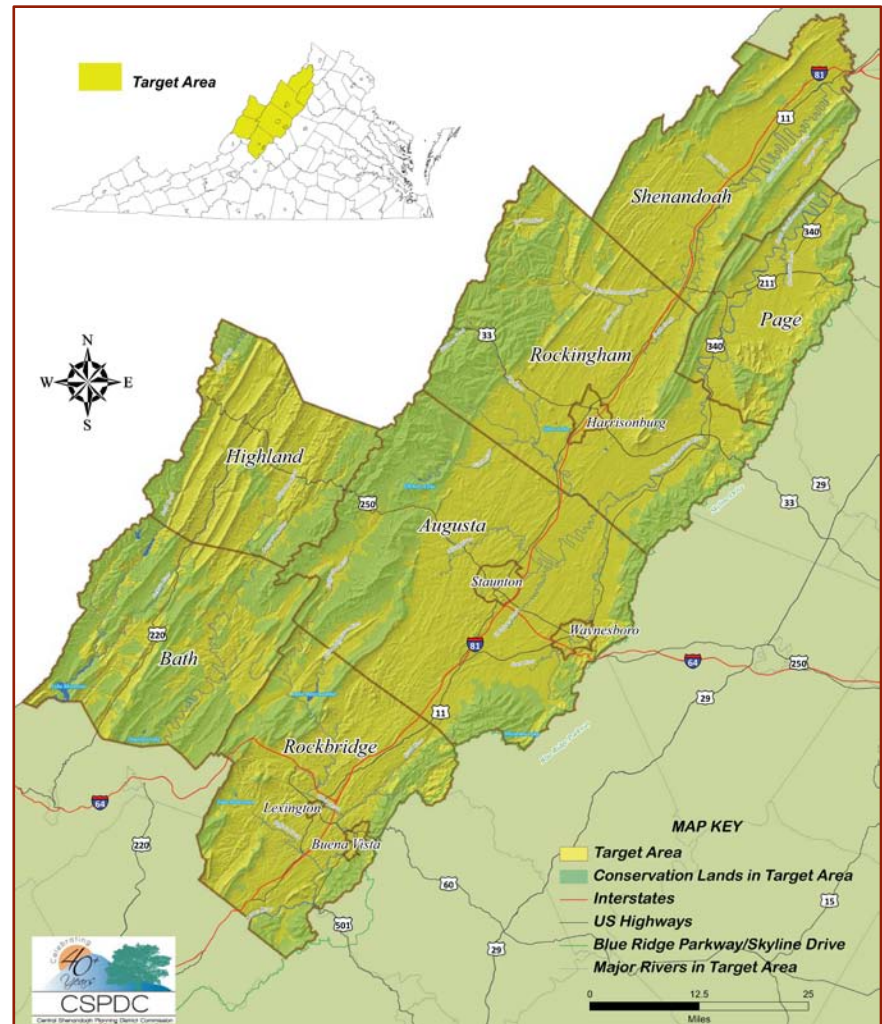
Fields of Gold Region

Counties of:

- Augusta
- Bath
- Highland
- Rockbridge
- Rockingham
- Shenandoah
- Page

Cities of:

- Harrisonburg
- Lexington
- Staunton
- Buena Vista
- Waynesboro





What is Agritourism?

- Merges two complex industries—agriculture and tourism.
- Defined as, “any activity carried out on a farm or ranch allowing members of the general public, for recreational, entertainment or education purposes to view or enjoy rural activities.”





Agritourism Activities

Aside from traditional farming operations, the region is home to many agritourism activities.

- Wineries/Breweries/Cideries
- Farmers Markets and Produce Stands
- Farm Tours and Farm Stays
- Hay Rides/Corn Mazes
- Ag Festivals/County Fairs
- Farm-to-Table Restaurants
- Trout Farms
- Pick-Your-Own Farms
- Event Facilities/Ag Venues





Agriculture in the Region

- Farming has been central to the region's way of life.
- The region has a large and diverse agricultural industry.
- Home to 4 of the top 5 agricultural producers in Virginia: Rockingham, Augusta, Shenandoah and Page.
- Bath, Highland and Rockbridge are also competitive agriculture localities with numerous cattle, sheep and poultry operations.





Agriculture in the Region

- **Farm Land:** 914,000 acres
- **Farms:** 5,900 farms
- **Market Value of Products Sold:** \$867,207,000 (30% of State total)





Tourism in the Region

- In 2011, travelers spent over \$1 billion in the region.
- Region includes:
 - Blue Ridge Parkway/Skyline Drive
 - Shenandoah National Park
 - George Washington and Jefferson National Forests
 - Headwaters of the James and Shenandoah Rivers
- Outdoor and cultural activities are among the most popular reasons for visiting the region.





It's about the Experience

Agritourism attractions provide convenient, safe, educational and family fun experiences.

- Gives the general public opportunities to enjoy farming and other outdoor activities.
- Rebuilds valuable connections between farmers and consumers.
- Supports the region's recreation opportunities, cultural attractions, and local artisans.
- Region lies within a day's drive of half of the U.S. population.





Economic Impacts

Agritourism is proven to be financially beneficial.

- Increases on-farm sales of value-added products.
- Produces a secondary income source.
- Spurs other economic activity for entrepreneurs.
- Generates expenditures by tourists for other community goods and services.
- Increases the region's draw of agritourists while preserving farm values.



Fields of Gold



**The program has been named Fields of Gold
to reflect the region's:**

- Fertile farmland
- Abundance of agricultural products
- Potential for economic impact
- Wealth of travel experiences





What Have We Done?

Partnership
Communities

Augusta County CDBG Recipient

CDBG Project
Management
Team

Steering Committee

Survey-Map
Subcommittee

Economic
Impact
Analysis
Subcommittee

Partnership
Development
Subcommittee

Marketing
Subcommittee



Partnership Development



- Engaged a broad base of private and public sector stakeholders
- Sponsored Agritourism workshops
- Participated in Ag-related events:

- Shenandoah Valley Agritourism Festival
- Virginia Farm Show
- Buy Fresh, Buy Local Forum
- Highland Maple Festival



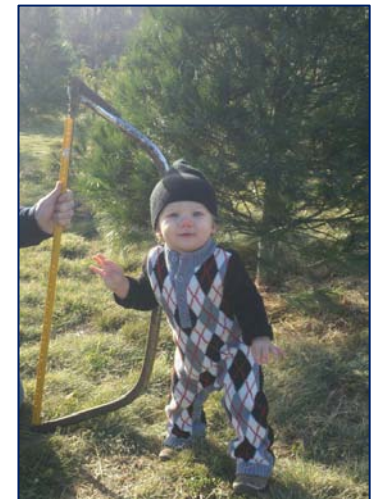
Asset Inventory and Mapping



Agritourism Destinations

-  Ag-Venue
-  Christmas Trees/Nursery
-  Experience the Farm
-  Farm Stand
-  Farmers' Market
-  Local Foods Restaurant
-  Local Grocery/Store
-  On-Farm Lodging
-  Pick-Your-Own
-  Trout Farm/Aquaculture
-  Winery/Brewery

- Surveyed over 135 Agritourism operators
- Categorized and mapped these sites
- Produced interactive, web-based map of agritourism sites

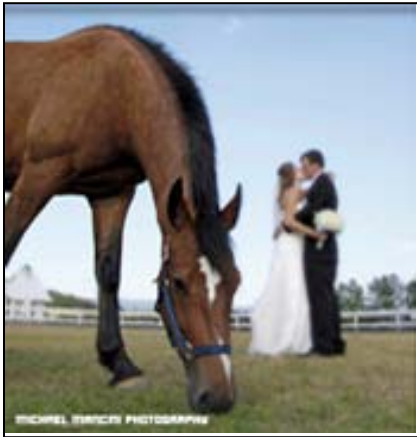




Marketing

Promote the Shenandoah Valley as an Agritourism Destination

- Marketing Plan
- Website:
www.cspdc.org/fieldsofgold
- Face Book
- Promotional and informational materials





Economic Impact Analysis



Purpose: Evaluate the economic impact of the agritourism industry in the Fields of Gold region

- Collected regional demographic and visitor profiles
- Defined the size and economic impact of agritourism
- Determined the market potential of regional agritourism



The Next Season

- Continue Partnership Development
- Create website
- Complete interactive, web-based map
- Brand the Fields of Gold image
- Implement Marketing Plan
- Develop a Business Support Program for Farmers
- Complete 3-5 year Strategic Plan
- Develop Funding Plan
- Seek Funding to Sustain the Program





Key Lessons

- Did Our Homework
- Built a Coalition of Partners
- Divided Up the Tasks
- Public Relations and Communications
- Identified Funding and Resources





Challenges

- Diversity of Agritourism
 - From hay rides to wineries
 - From trout farms to pumpkin patches
 - From corn mazes to farmers markets
- Size of the Region
 - 7 counties
- Multiple Stakeholders Involved
 - Private sector (farms and businesses)
 - State and Local Government
 - Elected officials
- Resources Needed
 - Financial and Staff
- Communication
- Trying to Keep Everyone Happy!



Thank you for supporting
Fields of Gold

