

Countryside Initiative 2008 RFP: Supplemental Information Farm Tour Questions and Answers

General Questions

- 1) Q. Who are the main contact persons from the Countryside Conservancy (CC) and Cuyahoga Valley National Park (CVNP) coordinating the Countryside Initiative (CI) program.**

A. Most general questions regarding the CI program should be directed first to Stephanie Webb, Administrative Coordinator for the CC. If necessary, she will forward your question(s) to Darwin Kelsey, Executive Director of CC, or to Darlene Kelbach, Historical Landscape Architect for CVNP. Darlene coordinates the CI for CVNP and will direct questions to other staff when necessary.
- 2) Q. How long does it take to get proposed plans for the properties approved?**

A. That depends on several factors. When a proposal is accepted, most of its items are approved in principle. In practice more information and review are often necessary. Depending on the extent, complexity, or impact (environmental, archaeological, historical) of the request, approval can go quickly (a few hours/days) or extend over many months. Major physical impacts can trigger formal (legally required) studies that require a much longer period. Normal, routine, repetitive request from year to year, and farm to farm, can usually be approved in a few days or weeks.
- 3) Q. Is there an ongoing renewal of my initial proposal?**

A. Yes, each November lessees submit an Annual Farm Report (AFR) – which consists of two parts, a year-end report for the current calendar year, and a proposed operations and development plan for the upcoming calendar year. All proposed plans must be reviewed and approved in advance of being implemented. Copies are submitted to both Darlene Kelbach and Darwin Kelsey.
- 4) Q. Who would be involved or responsible if an Environmental Assessment (EA) is required?**

A. Normally, the CI farmer, CC staff, and CVNP staff are all involved in preparing an EA. However, CVNP is legally responsible for conducting/managing the EA process.
- 5) Q. Since the Countryside Conservancy is a non-profit organization can CI farmers partner with CC to apply for grant funding?**

A. Yes, and no. CC can collaborate with CI farmers to identify potential funding. CC can also serve as the fiscal agent for certain kinds of grant funding for CI farmers. However, the actual availability of grant funding for private, for-profit farming operations is less than many suppose.
- 6) Q. Are lessees responsible for providing their own appliances for the home?**

A. Yes, appliances are normally the responsibility of the lessee. The Leyser property in this offering is something of an exception since several appliances were left in place by the previous lessee: Refrigerator, oven, cook top, washer and dryer. New lessees may use or replace them as desired.

- 7) **Q. Could CI farmers conduct weekly “historic restoration tours” of their farm house?**
A. Yes.
- 8) **Q. How green (environmentally friendly) do building materials need to be?**
A. We encourage the use of green materials and practices, but do not specifically require them.
- 9) **Q. Who is responsible for maintenance of the home?**
A. In general, the lessee is responsible for the routine maintenance of the property. For example, if the furnace needs to be cleaned, or requires a new filter, the lessee will be responsible for taking care of it. If the furnace should need to be replaced, CVNP is responsible. However, it is the responsibility of the lessee to perform all scheduled maintenance and keep a record of services performed. If the furnace repair is due to negligent maintenance and maintenance records cannot be provided, the repair would then be the responsibility of the lessee.
- 10) **Q. Is the lessee responsible for paying property taxes while residing at the property?**
A. No, the lessee is not responsible for paying any property taxes.
- 11) **Q. How often is the residential component of the Fair Market Value Rent reassessed?**
A. The residential component of rent will increase or decrease annually based on increases or decreases of the Consumer Price Index. The precise formula for such annual changes is shown in the model lease (Section 5.2). In addition, the lessee and/or lessor can periodically request a reappraisal of the residence’s rental value.
- 12) **Q. Is there a cap on the residential rent?**
A. There is no formal cap apart from the limitations of the CPI and periodic reappraisals.
- 13) **Q. Is the Consumer Price Index based on national or local numbers?**
A. Local: We now use the U.S. Department of Labor’s data for “Cleveland-Akron”.
- 14) **Q. How is the productive component of rent determined?**
A. See Section 5.5 of the model lease for a detailed explanation of how the productive component of fair market value rent is based on a percentage of gross revenue and adjusted over the first ten years of the lease.
- 15) **Q. Can electric fencing be used on CI farms?**
A. Yes. NPS and CC have developed fencing guidelines for the program which allow many (but not all) common commercial forms of electric fencing.

16) Q. Approximately how much does farm fencing cost?

- A. That varies greatly depending on many factors – such as purpose, materials, length, height and so forth. One good source for information on fence types, materials, and costs is Fences That Work – from folks who use them everyday! which is published by Premier 1. This company’s information, materials, and service are excellent – but their prices can often be beaten locally.

The CI program expects that most permanent perimeter fencing will use untreated wooden posts (such as black locust) and various forms of electrified or non-electrified wire (no barbed wire). Wire type, height, (and source) will affect costs greatly. However, most such fence types will cost at least \$1.00-\$1.50 per running foot for materials. And that cost will normally double if installed by a contractor. Like most costs, fencing costs will reflect the knowledge, experience, and resourcefulness of the lessee.

17) Q. Would CI farms be eligible for government funding for fencing?

- A. There are no programs we are aware of that provide funding for fencing on CI farms.

18) Q. What do the brown stakes in the fields represent?

- A. The brown stakes found in many farm fields mark the line between the lessee’s usable farmland and a buffer area protecting nearby wetlands or streams.

19) Q. If I wanted to dig a well for irrigation purposes, would that be permitted?

- A. Historically, wells have seldom been successful in the Valley. We would encourage you to be serious and creative with rainwater collection.

20) Q. Would equestrian facilities be considered a good enterprise for the CI program?

- A. No. The CI is focused mainly on food and fiber crops and livestock. A couple of riding or work horses on any farm would be fine, but an equine enterprise per se will not be ranked highly.

21) Q. What would happen if the house were a total loss to due fire or another natural disaster? Would the park rebuild the house? How will the lessee fulfill the remaining years on the lease if this were to happen?

- A. If a historic structure should be destroyed by fire or some natural disaster it would not normally be rebuild/replaced by NPS. However, in the case of CI leases, if a lessee wanted to use insurance money to build an approved replacement residence, so that they might continue their lease that would probably be approved. Note: Lessees are expected to protect their own personal property with adequate insurance, as well as the replacement value of the residence with adequate insurance (see model lease Section 13).

22) Q. Can a proposal be submitted for two properties in order to manage both of them as a collaborative effort?

- A. While that has not yet been done, such a proposal is allowable – and would be judged on its merits.

- 23) Q. Could a current CI farmer submit a proposal in a future offering to manage another property cooperatively?**
A. Yes.
- 24) Q. Where do the water haulers get the water they haul?**
A. Most residences and businesses in the Park below Route 82 which require hauled water are serviced by Alexander Water Service (which fills its trucks in Cuyahoga Falls, near the southeast corner of the Park).
- 25) Q. How often does organic recertification take place through OEFFA?**
A. Annually.
- 26) Q. Will there be other farms in the Brecksville area coming available through the CI program in the future?**
A. Possibly one very small farm – possibly in 5-7 years.
- 27) Q. Does the public still have access to the fields and trails on Countryside Initiative farm property after a lease has been executed?**
A. In general, no. Leased property is treated as private/restricted and the public may be restricted from general access should the lessee choose to do so.
- 28) Q. If there is an issue of vandalism or an emergency on a CI farm who should be contacted?**
A. The police department from whichever community the farm happens to be located in.
- 29) Q. When is the Exploring the Small Farm Dream course offered?**
A. Exploring the Small Farm Dream is offered twice annually, in the Spring and Fall. It takes place in CVNP at the Boston Store. Applications for Fall 2008 are now being taken.
- 30) Q. Are there certain animals that are not permitted in the Countryside Initiative program?**
A. As noted above (and in the RFP, p. 7) equine and other exotic species are of limited interest: Bison, deer, elk, ostriches, emus, rheas, lamas, alpacas, and miniatures.
- 31) Q. Could a second residence be added to a CI farm?**
A. That would be unlikely to receive approval. However, some farm residences could conceivably be given modest additions to meet the needs of the selected lessees. Each case will be judged on its merits and any specific limitations on a site.

32) Q. How do you mitigate deer in the CI program?

A. CVNP's deer population poses a serious predation problem for CI farmers. Given legal restrictions on their removal from CVNP owned land, there is no practical way to deal with deers' grazing pressure apart from good farm fences. The good news is that normal well constructed farm fences (4'-5') are working very well for current CI farmers.

Gleeson Farm

33) Q. Has phase one Environmental Assessment Plans been conducted on this property?

A. A full Environmental Impact Study (EIS) has been conducted for the entire Countryside Initiative program: Its findings apply to all CI farms. Particular projects requested for specific farm sites may trigger the need for an additional Environmental Assessment (EA) – for example, the building of a winery at Sarah's Vineyard.

34) Q. Are exterior walls fully insulated?

A. No, only the exterior walls of the new addition and the attic are fully insulated.

35) Q. Are all rooms wired for telephone service?

A. Most are wired and ready for telephone hook-up.

36) Q. Is the kitchen set-up for a gas or electric cook stove?

A. The kitchen can accommodate either gas or electric.

37) Q. Has the chimney been sealed off in the house?

A. Yes.

38) Q. What have the fields offered with this property been used for in the past?

A. That is described in the RFP (p.15). Additional field data is now posted on the CC's website (RFP Supplemental Information, No. 1).

39) Q. Do any of these fields flood?

A. Rarely, but fields 19A and 24 should be considered subject to flooding.

40) Q. Who is responsible for insuring the property?

A. The lessee is required to maintain adequate insurance of several types: Property, workers' compensation, employer's liability, and general liability (\$2,000,000 aggregate). See the model lease Section 13 for full details of minimal requirements.

41) Q. Does the Countryside Initiative have any restrictions on high tunnels, hoop houses, etc.?

A. Hoop houses and high tunnels are permitted – but appropriate scale and placement are key. All such significant additions to the landscape require review and approval prior to installation.

- 42) Could the canal/river be used to irrigate?**
A. Yes. But, special permitting may be required for this.
- 43) Q. Will the barn be rehabbed before the lessee moves in?**
A. The barn was extensively rehabbed about ten years ago. And, several minor structural repairs have been completed during the past year. All further alterations and rehabilitation are the responsibility of the lessee (except as specified in the model lease, Section 11).
- 44) Q. Who would be responsible for replacing the roof on the barn?**
A. If the entire roof needs to be replaced, the park would take care of that. If a few shingles need to be replaced that would be the responsibility of the lessee.
- 45) Q. What has the barn recently been used for?**
A. The barn most recently has been used for hay/straw, and equipment, storage.
- 46) Q. Can CC provide the name(s) of property insurance providers that other CI farmers use?**
A. Yes. Several CI farms utilize Jim McGuire (740-743-1822) of Starkey Insurance which specializes in small farms and related businesses. However, proposers may/should investigate other agencies as well.
- 47) Q. Can the natural spring be used for irrigation?**
A. Yes. It would be possible to use the spring to irrigate.
- 48) Q. What school system does the Gleeson Farm reside in?**
A. The Gleeson Farm is considered to be in the Cuyahoga Heights Local School District.
- 49) Q. Will the fencing that is currently on the property remain?**
A. The fencing that is currently on the property belongs to a local farmer currently using Field #19A on an annual special use permit (SUP). The farmer has the right to remove or leave the fence onsite when the property is leased for CI use. A lessee would be free to negotiate with the SUP farmer to leave the existing fence.
- 50) Q. If I am only interested in using the acreage closest to the house will my proposal be disqualified?**
A. No. While proposals using the entire acreage offered in the RFP are preferred, obviously an outstanding proposal using only a portion of the offered acreage would be scored more highly than a mediocre proposal using the entire acreage.

Leyser Farm

- 51) Q. Are those baseboard heaters throughout the house?**
A. Yes, they are circulating hot water heaters.
- 52) Q. Is the cistern self-filling?**
A. No, the 5,000 cistern is not self-filling. It must be regularly filled by a local water delivery service. Nearly all residences and businesses in this area of the Park use Alexander Water Service.
- 53) Q. What is the structure on/near the front porch that looks like an old well?**
A. It is an older well, used by former residents. Its suitability for any current use (such as irrigation or vegetable watering) is unknown and would have to be determined by a lessee. All usage would be subject to local health standards.
- 54) Q. Can the pond be used for irrigation purposes?**
A. Yes, it can – and was by the previous lessee.
- 55) Q. Will I be able to access fields 56, 58A, 58B and 58C by using the Bridle Trail?**
A. Yes. When the RFP was being prepared it was assumed CVNP would clear connector paths/trails between the fields. However, approval to use the Bridle Trail and provide field entrances from the trail has now been received.
- 56) Q. I notice that the carpeting on the stairs is loose? Will that be replaced/repaired?**
A. No.
- 57) Q. Is the fireplace in working condition?**
A. No, the fireplace can not be used.
- 58) Q. What does the water treatment tank in the basement do?**
A. This is a water softener.
- 59) Q. What has been done to secure the safety of the electrical system of this property?**
A. The existing electrical service for the Leyser Farm has been inspected and meets applicable codes.
- 60) Q. Were all windows replaced in this house? When?**
A. Yes, in 2005.
- 61) Q. What kind of work has been done on the dam?**
A. CVNP has made no significant repairs or changes to the dam.

Martin Farm

62) Q. What is the situation with the free gas? Can it be used for heating a greenhouse?

A. CVNP is attempting to clarify with the gas company whether and under what conditions gas is available to the lessee from the onsite wells.

63) Q. What is the water source for the property?

A. Potable water for the residence is provided by a newly installed 5,000 gallon cistern. It is serviced by Alexander Water Service.

64) Q. I noticed a hydrant just down the road, is that for city water?

A. No, that is a decorative, non-functional hydrant.

65) Q. Could the current cistern be modified to collect rain water?

A. Probably at the lessees expense, and subject to all local health regulations for filtration and purification.

66) Q. Can trees be removed in the field?

A. Yes, with pre-approval it would be possible. The remaining large trees were left in place in case a grazing operation requiring livestock shade would be established on the site. Should another type of enterprise be selected for the site, and need removal of some of these trees, that would probably be approved.

67) Q. Who would be responsible for removing the trees once approved?

A. The lessee would be responsible.

68) Q. Can the wood from fallen trees be used for firewood?

A. Yes, within demarcated field boundaries. However, lessees are not permitted to go into the surrounding woods to harvest fallen trees.

69) Q. What are the soil types in this field?

A. Field 16 on the Martin Farm (like most CI farms) is a silt loam which is considered a prime agricultural soil. See the detailed field/soil map for Field 16 in RFP Supplemental Information No. 1 on CC's website. And, more detailed descriptions of the area's soils are available from the Summit County Soil & Water Conservation Service.

70) Q. Can we get information on past chemical use on this property?

A. This field has been unused/abandoned for several years/decades and is considered suitable for immediate organic certification. Detailed soil tests are of course possible if a lessee is so inclined.

71) Q. If the soil testing shows there are deficiencies in the soil will we get approval to supplement?

A. Yes, normal/reasonable soil fertility amendments are expected.

72) Q. Can the property be terraced to create gardening areas?

A. Probably. Limited terracing would be carefully evaluated. Extensive regrading is unlikely to be necessary (or approved).

73) Q. What if I find artifacts on the property during plowing and cultivating? Who do I call?

A. CI Coordinator Darlene Kelbach will work with lessees to establish a protocol for such circumstances.

74) Q. Who would pay for the necessary archaeological study?

A. Archaeological site evaluations are the responsibility of CVNP (including associated costs).

75) Q. What is the well pump outside?

A. The well with a manual pump located on the south side of the farmhouse formerly provided water for the residence. However, prior to rehabilitation for this lease offering, the house had no plumbing except for a small kitchen sink with a drain pipe through the side of the house (emptying on to the lawn/ground). Water was carried inside from the manual pump as needed. The well's quality and capacity are unknown. Lessees would be permitted to evaluate and use the well as desired, consistent with local health codes.