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**AGRICULTURAL DISTRICTS IN NEW YORK STATE  
AFTER SOME EIGHT-YEAR REVIEWS  
MAY 15, 1982**



Compiled by

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Preface

Agricultural districts were first formed in New York in 1972. In the ensuing ten years districts continued to be formed and at the same time legally mandated reviews were carried out on districts after being in existence for eight years.

This paper resulted from a need to follow the course of some districts as they proceeded through the eight-year review process. During this process some districts retained their original configurations while others changed. Some districts were modified in such a manner that they lost acreage while other districts added acreage.

In order to determine the net effects that modifications had on districts, a study was carried out on all districts created through May 1982 and all districts that were reviewed up until that time.

Official records from New York State agencies, county records and communications with county planners, Extension agents, as well as agency personnel, provided the data contained in this report.

Special thanks are due Nancy Brinthaup for not only studying the official records and documenting both the creation and review of the districts, but also her special skills in preparing the tables and typing the manuscript.

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The author assumes responsibility for any shortcomings or oversights in the final draft of this paper.

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# Agricultural Districts in New York State

After Some Eight-Year Reviews

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New York's Agricultural District Law was enacted and became effective on September 15, 1971. The purpose of the law was... "to provide a means by which agricultural land may be protected and enhanced as a viable segment of the state's economy and as an economic and environmental resource of major importance," to the state.<sup>1</sup>

Districts created under the provisions of the law are established for a period of eight years. At the end of the eight-year period, districts are reviewed to determine their future status.

This report is intended to provide the reader with a summary of:

- a) the number of districts and the acreage of districts by county created under the provisions of the Agricultural District Law;
- b) the number and acreage of districts reviewed under the eight-year review provisions of the law.

As of May 1982, 448 separate districts in 49 counties comprising 6,698,270 acres were established by county governments or certified by state agencies. Table 1 shows the number and acres of districts originally formed or certified by counties from 1972 until May 1982.

Districts range in size from 535 acres (Allegany County) to 243,340 acres (St. Lawrence County). The average size of districts before the review process was initiated was 14,957 acres.

Figure 1 shows the annual growth in districts and districted land for the 1971-1982 period. Efforts to create districts have moderated since the mid-1970's when more than 1,000,000 acres were added to the program each year.

As the full eight-year term of certain districts has occurred, 39 of New York's participating counties have been notified by the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets that some districts within their county are eligible for the eight-year review. Counties are required to review districts and to hold public hearings on each district prior to the eighth anniversary date.

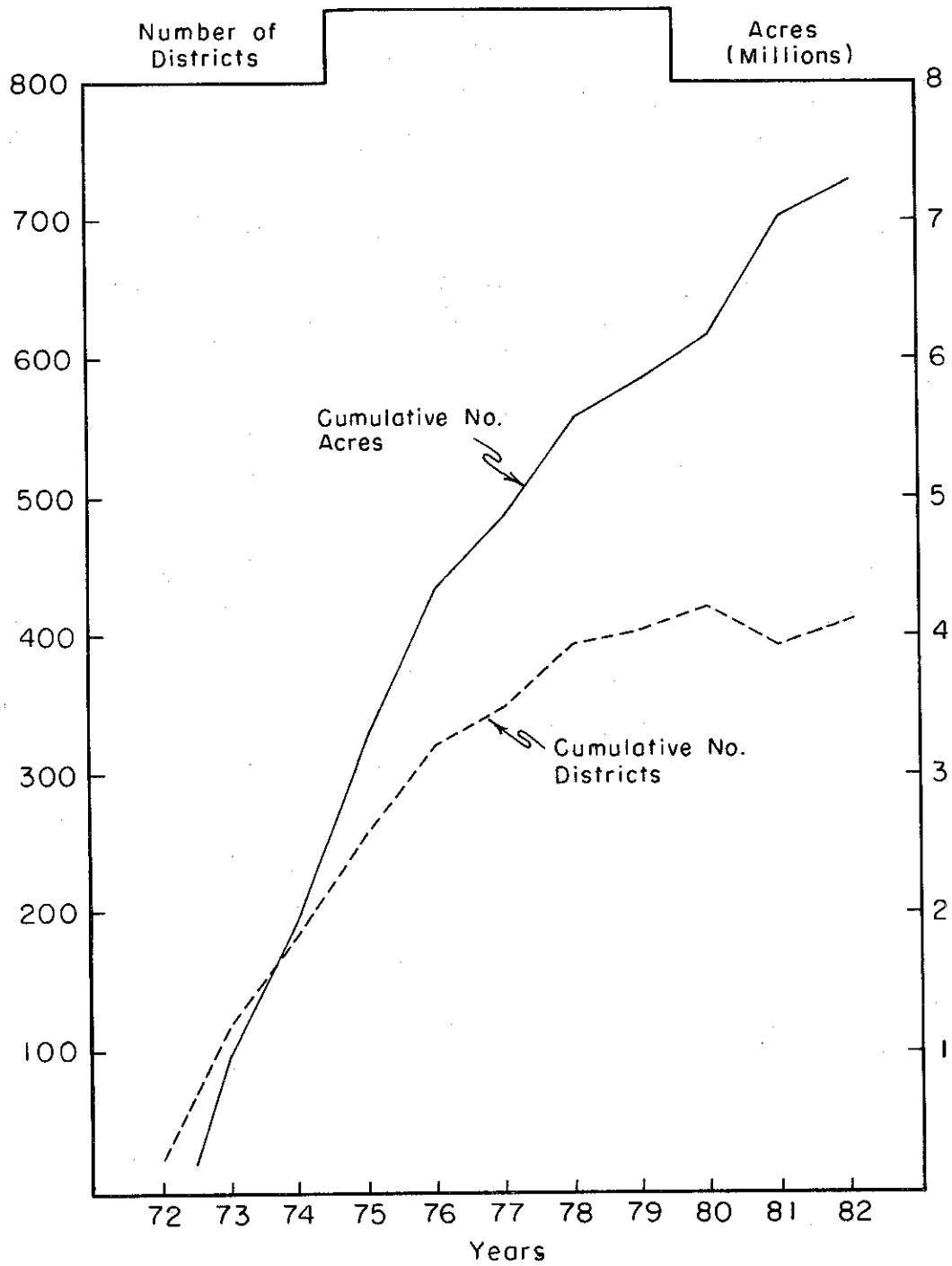
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<sup>1</sup>Article 25-AA N.Y. Agriculture and Markets Law. L. 1971, C. 479.



FIGURE 1. GROWTH IN THE NUMBER AND ACRES IN AGRICULTURAL DISTRICTS, FORMED, CERTIFIED AND REVIEWED IN NEW YORK STATE, 1972-1982



The eight-year review serves several purposes. A principal purpose is to provide the opportunity for counties and state agencies to re-examine the original districts and to determine whether or not any changes have taken place during the past eight years that warrant modifying the boundaries of the districts. Counties can exercise the following options with regard to boundary decisions at the time of the eight-year review:

- a) Retain the original district boundaries.
- b) Remove land no longer considered viable agricultural land.
- c) Add viable farmland not previously included in the district.
- d) Combine parts or whole districts.
- e) Discontinue the district completely.

As of May 1982, one-hundred twenty-one (121) districts have undergone the eight-year review. An additional forty-seven (47) districts are in the process of the eight-year review. As a result of the consolidation of districts during the review process, the original 121 districts were reformed into 78 districts. Twenty-one (21) districts were maintained in their original configuration. Five (5) districts lost acreage during review. Ninety-five (95) districts were enlarged by adding either new lands or by consolidating previously established districts.

Table 2 summarizes the results of the eight-year review on the 121 districts. The number, acres and average size of districts both before and after review is shown. While the number of districts declined from 121 to 78, the amount of land increased by 508,839 acres. The average size of districts increased from 9,124 before review to 20,680 acres after review.

Table 2. Summary Results of the Eight-Year Review of 121 Agricultural Districts

Review Outcome	Before Review			After Review		
	Districts	Acres	Avg/Dist.	Districts	Acres	Avg/Dist.
No Change	21	233,985	11,140	21	233,985	11,140
Acres Deleted	5	48,314	9,662	5	44,138	8,827
Acres Added	95	821,773	8,650	52	1,334,788	25,669
Total	121	1,104,072	9,124	78	1,612,911	20,680

Source: New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets

The changes in the number and size class distribution that resulted from the eight-year review is shown in Table 3. The consolidation of districts resulted in fewer small districts and more large ones.

No districts were terminated at the time of the review.

Table 3. Summary of Shifts in Size of Agricultural Districts

Size Class	Before Review		After Review	
	Districts	Acres	Districts	Acres
Under 5,000 Acres	56	163,651	19	52,468
5,000 - 9,999	28	190,474	14	106,809
10,000 - 19,999	27	387,496	25	353,102
20,000 - 39,999	6	158,967	6	174,146
40,000 - 79,999	4	203,484	10	534,269
80,000 and Over			4	392,117
<b>Total</b>	<b>121</b>	<b>1,104,072</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>1,612,911</b>

Source: New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets

Table 4 shows the counties that retained district boundaries at the time the districts were reviewed. A total of 233,985 acres in 21 separate districts were maintained in the original configurations. The average size of these districts is 11,140 acres with a range of 712 to 58,146 acres.

Table 4. Agricultural Districts Which Retained the Original Configuration After the Eight-Year Review

County	Total	Size of District (Acres)				
		≤ 5000	5-9,999	10-19,999	20-39,999	40-80,000
Allegany	1			11,268		
Chautauqua	3			25,245	20,500	
Chenango	1		8,675			
Clinton	1		5,462			
Columbia	1					52,000
Dutchess	1	4,500				
Erie	1		5,918			
Montgomery	1					58,146
Onondaga	1	2,736				
St. Lawrence	1	1,207				
Saratoga	1			13,861		
Schoharie	1	2,730				
Ulster	3	7,982	6,141			
Washington	3	5,560				
Wayne	1	2,054				
<b>Total</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>26,769</b>	<b>26,196</b>	<b>50,374</b>	<b>20,500</b>	<b>110,146</b>

Source: New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets



Five districts comprising 44,138 acres lost acreage as a result of the eight-year review process. The average size of these five districts before review was 9,662 acres; after review the average size dropped to 8,827 or a loss of about 835 acres per district. Table 5 shows the counties and distribution by size class of these districts.

Table 5. Agricultural Districts Which Decreased in Size  
As a Result of the Eight-Year Review

County	Total	Size of District (Acres)			Acres Lost
		≤ 5000	5-9,999	Over 10,000	
Broome	1	668			225
Chautauqua	1			17,000	126
Erie	1			15,739	3,461
Essex	1	3,999			364
Schoharie	1		6,732		
<b>Total</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4,667</b>	<b>6,732</b>	<b>32,739</b>	<b>4,176</b>

Source: New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets

Ninety-five (95) districts increased in size as a result of the eight-year review process. The increase in acreage of these 95 districts resulted from modifications by either adding new lands not previously included in districts or by consolidating other acreage included in established districts or a combination of both of these cases.

As a result of the consolidation of districts during the review process, the 95 districts have been reformed into 52 districts. However, the acreage now included has risen from 821,773 to 1,334,788 or an increase of 513,015 acres.

The average size of these districts increased from 8,650 acres to 25,669 acres -- nearly a three-fold increase. Table 6 provides a summary of these 95 districts by county and size class. Special note should be made of the major consolidations that occurred in Orange County where twenty-two districts were combined into two districts after review. Cortland, Oneida, Tioga, Tompkins, Livingston and Sullivan Counties also enlarged districts significantly either by consolidation or by adding new lands to the districts when reviewed.

Table 6. Agricultural Districts Which Increased in Size As  
A Result of the Eight-Year Review

County	No. of Districts		Size Districts (Acres)					Added Acres	
	Before	After	Less Than 5,000	5,000-9,999	10,000-19,999	20,000-39,999	40,000-79,999		Over 80,000
Allegany	1	1		5,750					4,957
Cattaraugus	1	1			14,916				8,497
Cayuga	1	1					68,293		62,280
Chautauqua	1	1			16,085				215
Chenango	5	3		5,964	11,448		44,291		3,492
Columbia	1	1			17,350				1,350
Cortland	11	4				86,248	44,790		25,763
Delaware	1	1					58,675		29,175
Erie	3	3		7,005	29,806				11,635
Essex	2	2	3,458		10,092				1,906
Greene	1	1	3,681						1,458
Herkimer	1	1			13,387				10,076
Livingston	5	2					98,950		22,364
Madison	1	1	3,892						1,192
Monroe	1	1			15,463				5,463
Niagara	1	1				38,076			37,091
Oneida	8	5	2,022	30,212	28,594				23,895
Onondaga	3	3	1,478	12,637					5,795
Ontario	2	2		6,339	14,455				12,036
Orange	22	2					65,770	92,197	19,188
Otsego	1	1			10,656				1,906
Rensselaer	1	1			11,500				500
Seneca	1	1			15,940				11,940
Steuben	1	1				29,322			17,662
Sullivan	4	1						114,646	74,353
Tioga	2	2			10,554			104,846	93,585
Tompkins	6	2			15,634			80,428	4,616
Ulster	3	2	3,880	5,974					450
Washington	4	4	2,621		34,109		43,354		20,175
Total	95	52	21,032	73,881	269,989	153,646	424,123	392,117	513,015

Table 7 indicates the shifts that have taken place in the number of districts falling into size classes resulting from the eight-year reviews.

Table 7. Formed Agricultural Districts in New York State by Number  
And Size Class Before and After Eight-Year Review

No.	Size Class (Acres)	≤ 5000	5,000-9,999	10,000-19,999	20,000-39,999	40,000-79,999	80,000-149,999	150,000+	Total
		Before Review	161	112	79	54	37	4	1
	After Review	125	86	91	52	42	8	1	405

Source: New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets

Summary

New York counties continue to create new agricultural districts while at the same time the process of conducting eight-year reviews is also moving forward.

Over the past ten years a total of 448 districts were established comprising 6,698,270 acres in 49 counties.

At the same time, 121 districts established over eight years ago have been reviewed. After taking into account deletions, additions and consolidation of lands at the time of review, the total number of districts dropped from 448 to 405. However, the acreage increased from 6,698,270 to 7,211,285. The result of the review process has been that the statewide average size of all districts has increased to 17,805 acres.

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