Municipality of Pictou County – Agriculture Policy

2026.04.17 DRAFT Amendments

The following proposed amendments would amend the Municipality of Pictou County Municipal Planning Strategy and Land Use Bylaw to implement land use policy and regulations for the protection of agricultural land.

These amendments are DRAFTS and are intended to provide tangible details for members of the community to review and provide feedback. These drafts are subject to change as a result of community engagement.

Please visit the project website for:

- More information about the project
- Fact sheets that summarize the effects of the proposed amendments
- Opportunities to provide your feedback

https://speakupland.ca/pictou-county-agriculture

MPS

1. Subsection 1.3.3 is amended by deleting the text in strikeout and adding the text in bold, as shown below:

Statement of Provincial Interest Regarding Agricultural Land

GOAL: To protect agricultural land for the development of a viable and sustainable agriculture and food industry.

Pictou County has extensive agricultural soils and a long history of agricultural activity. These planning documents help to promote continued agricultural activity and protect agricultural soils by:

- **Establishing an "Agriculture Potential" Zone to prioritize agricultural activities in areas of good agricultural land.**
- **Limiting subdivision activity on Class 2 soils and actively-farmed lands.**
- Permitting agriculture-related uses and agritourism on the majority of the land area in the municipality.
- Providing for animal agriculture in most areas of the municipality, at a scale tailored to the context.
- Identifying good agricultural soils.
- Prohibiting the removal of topsoil in areas of good agricultural soils.

Applicable policies: 3-2, **3-27A, 3-27B**, 3-28, 3-29, **3-29A, 3-29B** ~~3-30~~

2. Table 1 is amended to add the following row to the table immediately following the header row, as shown below in bold:

Zone Name	Zone Purpose
Agriculture Potential Zone (A1)	**This zone is intended to recognize and preserve agricultural lands as described in Section** Error! Reference source not found.**, as well as the general rural nature of these areas. This zone is also intended to prioritize agricultural activities. The Agriculture Potential Zone shall permit a wide range of agriculturally related uses, as well as other resource-based uses, small-scale residential development, community and intuitional uses suited to a rural context, and a very limited range of commercial uses that could complement agricultural activities. Light industrial and other similar uses shall also be permitted due the equipment, warehousing, processing, and trucking needs of the agriculture industry. However, hazardous and heavy industrial uses, as well as other land uses that could cause long-term contamination or irreversible development of agricultural land shall not be permitted.**

3. Table 2 is amended to add the following row to the table immediately following the header row, as shown below in bold:

Zone Name	Conservation Designation	Serviced Community Designation	General Designation
Agriculture Potential	-	-	P

4. Section 3.6 is amended by deleting all the preamble text as well as Policy 3-30, Policy 3-30A, and Policy 3-30B, and replacing them with the text and policies as shown below in bold:

With good soils and a mild climate, Pictou County has a long history of extensive agricultural activities. As an example, the series of publications titled "Farms and Farmers of Pictou County" by R.H. Ward includes 426 pages accounting the agricultural operations in the county in the late 1910s and early 1920s.

Today, Pictou County accounts for approximately 9 percent of the province's active agricultural lands (by area) and 3.1 percent of the province's farm operating revenues[1], with the bulk of this activity located in the Municipality of Pictou County. Key agricultural industries include cattle ranching, blueberry farming, and haying, as well as smaller numbers of other crop and animal farms.

[1] Nova Scotia Federation of Agriculture. Pictou County Agricultural Profile 2021

In Nova Scotia, the *Municipal Government Act* requires municipalities to identify and protect high-value agricultural soils, which are defined as Class 2, Class 3, and actively-farmed Class 4 soils as identified by the Canada Land Inventory (Nova Scotia has no Class 1 soils), as well as specialty crops (e.g. blueberries) and dykelands suitable for commercial agriculture. Pictou County has a substantial amount of high-value agricultural soils, with 50.8 percent of the county's land area within Class 2, 3, and 4 soils. Much of these soils are clustered in the northern half of the county. Conversely, the southern portion of the county features a high number of blueberry farms, which thrive on "poor" soils. Appendix 'A' illustrates the municipality's agricultural lands as defined by the Statement of Provincial Interest Regarding Agriculture.

Agricultural Zoning

Agricultural operations in Nova Scotia are facing challenges, including a large number of operators nearing retirement age, land use conflicts with other forms of development (*e.g.* complaints about odours), and the fragmentation and loss of agriculture land to other forms of development. Council wishes to support agricultural activities and preserve agricultural land within the municipality and has therefore established the Agriculture Potential Zone in Section Error! Reference source not found.**. This zone prioritizes agriculture, agricultural-related industries, and other rural land uses. It also allows other limited forms of development that support rural communities and have a lower risk of land use conflicts with agriculture or of permanently removing the potential of lands to be used for agriculture.**

The Statement of Provincial Interest recognizes that not all areas of agricultural land can be protected, due to factors such as existing development, existing sewer and water services, or the small size of some areas of good soil. In this vein, the Agricultural Potential Zone has only been applied to agricultural lands that would otherwise be zoned Rural General. In addition, very small areas of agricultural land have been omitted due to the challenges of farming them. Finally, some coastal areas that have historically seen high levels of development have also been omitted due to the nature of existing development in these areas and the potential to offer a "release valve" for rural development pressures that would otherwise impact the remaining agricultural lands.

Other Agricultural Protections

Beyond land use there are other key planning considerations when it comes to preserving agricultural land: topsoil removal and subdivision.

Topsoil is, on human timescales, essentially a non-renewable resource. Once good soils are damaged or removed it can take hundreds or thousands of years for them to regenerate to a level where they are suitable for agriculture. The Land Use Bylaw will, therefore, prohibit the removal of topsoils from agricultural lands as defined

by the Statement of Provincial Interest, with exceptions for the limited extent of existing topsoil businesses.

Subdivision activity can also have significant impacts on agriculture. The creation of new lots—and in particular residential lots—can fragment agricultural land and encourage the development of incompatible land uses next to agricultural operations. However, it is also reasonable to allow some level of subdivision activity to provide limited opportunities for rural housing, especially when such housing is associated with the farm (*e.g.* to create homes for the children of the farmer). In order to preserve the best agricultural areas while still enabling appropriate rural housing options, subdivision will be limited to one lot per year on actively farmed land and on Class 2 soils. This will prevent "subdivision development" in these areas, as well as provide an opportunity for the Municipality to monitor development trends in these areas over time. If even this limited level of subdivision proves to threaten agricultural activities, Council may revisit the matter through future amendments to this Plan.

Policy 3-27A: Council shall, through the Land Use Bylaw, establish a Topsoil Overlay to identify high-value agricultural soils, as defined in the *Municipal Government Act*, and shall prohibit the removal of topsoil on these lands except for existing operations and removal incidental to an approved development.

Policy 3-27B: Council shall, through the Land Use Bylaw, establish a Limited Subdivision Overlay to apply to lands within the Agriculture Potential Zone that are actively farmed or are on Class 2 soils. Subdivision of lands within the Limited Subdivision Overlay shall be limited one (1) lot per year from an area of land as it existed on August 28th, 2025, with exceptions for boundary adjustments, consolidations, and lots large enough to be intended for resource purposes.

Supporting and Promoting Agriculture

In areas outside the Agriculture Potential Zone, Council intends to be permissive of agriculture-related land uses and development, such as barns, feed mills, and agritourism activities. Council also recognizes the importance of animal-based agriculture in the municipality and will widely permit commercial livestock operations in the Agriculture Potential Zone, Rural General Zone, and Rural Mixed Use Zone, as well as smaller-scale ("hobby") livestock operations anywhere dwellings are permitted.

While this Municipal Planning Strategy and the Land Use Bylaw focus on land use and development regulation—the main tools related to agriculture available to

municipalities—Council also recognizes that there are many factors outside of municipal control that affect the viability of farming, such as the aging demographics of farmers and shifting financial supports for activities such as land clearing. There are also many tools that the agricultural community is exploring to help ensure farming remains sustainable, such as agricultural land trusts.

Policy 3-1: Council shall, through the Land Use Bylaw, widely permit agritourism and agriculture-related uses except in zones intended to implement more restrictive land use controls for a specific purpose, such as the Conservation Zone or the Residential Community Zone.

Policy 3-2: Council shall, through the Land Use Bylaw, permit livestock operations in the Agriculture Potential Zone, Rural General Zone, and Rural Mixed Use Zone and shall permit hobby livestock farms in all zones that permit single-unit dwellings.

Policy 3-3A: Council shall seek ways to show municipal support for the agricultural industry such as, but not limited to, encouraging agricultural land trusts and encouraging programs that provide investments in improvements to agricultural lands.

Map Amendments (Rezoning)

The mapping of agricultural soils in Nova Scotia is currently done at a relatively large (and therefore somewhat imprecise) scale. There are also areas where soils are good, but other factors such as topography or access mean the land is unlikely to ever be farmed. It is therefore reasonable to consider proposals to amend the maps related to agricultural regulations on the basis of site-specific context and study.

Policy 3-4B: Council shall consider proposals to amend the boundaries of the Agriculture Potential Zone, Topsoil Overlay, and/or Limited Subdivision Overlay, provided:

(a) the proposed areas of amendment are limited in size as much as practical and are located in a manner that minimizes the impact on surrounding agricultural activities;

(b) the proposal is supported by an investigation of on-site soil conditions and/or a thorough rationale for why the lands will never be suitable for agriculture;

(c) the nature of the uses or activities proposed for the lands is unlikely to impact surrounding agricultural activities; and

(d) the proposal complies with all other policies of this Plan applicable to amending the Land Use Bylaw.

5. Policy 3-33 is amended to add the following text as shown below in bold:

Policy 3-5: Council shall only consider proposals for racetracks by development agreement in the **Agriculture Potential Zone,** Commercial Recreation Zone, Highway Commercial Zone, Rural Commercial Zone, and Rural General Zone.

6. Policy 3-34 is amended to add the following text as shown below in bold:

Policy 3-6: Council shall only consider proposals for outdoor shooting ranges by development agreement in **the Agriculture Potential Zone,** Commercial Recreation Zone, Rural Commercial Zone, and Rural General Zone.

7. The attached Appendix 'A' is appended to the end of the Municipal Planning Strategy.

LUB

1. Section 5.5 is amended to rename the section to "Topsoil Removal" and to replace the Agricultural Soils Overlay with the Topsoil Overlay, as shown below in bold and strikeout:

5.5 ~~Agricultural Soils~~ Topsoil Removal

5.5.1 On lands within the ~~Agricultural Soils~~ **Topsoil** Overlay, as identified on Schedule 'C', the following restrictions shall apply in addition to all other applicable requirements of this Bylaw: […]

2. Section 5.5A is added between Section 5.5 and Section 5.6, as shown below in bold:

5.5A Agricultural Areas – Limited Subdivision

5.5A.1 This Section shall not apply to:

(a) boundary adjustments where no new lots are created;

(b) consolidations; or

(c) the creation of new lots with a minimum lot area of 100,000 square metres (25 acres).

5.5A.2 On lands within the Limited Subdivision Overlay, as identified on Schedule 'C', no more than one (1) new lot shall be created per year from an area of land as it existed on August 28th, 2025.

3. Subsection 6.1.1 is amended to add the following row to the table immediately following the header row, as shown below in bold:

Zone Name	Zone Symbol
Agriculture Potential Zone	**A1**

4. Subsection 6.1.2 is amended by deleting the following rows in the table, as shown in strikeout, and adding the following rows, as shown in bold:

Overlay Name	Overlay Symbol
~~Agricultural Soils Overlay~~	~~ASO~~
Floodway Fringe Overlay	FFO
Limited Subdivision Overlay	**LSO**
Source Water Protection Overlay	SWPO
Topsoil Overlay	**TSO**

5. Subsection 6.2.3 is amended by deleting the text in strikeout and adding the text in bold, as shown below:

6.2.3 Schedule 'C' attached hereto may be cited as the "Agricultural ~~Soils Overlay~~ **Overlays** Map".

6. Table 7A is amended by adding the following "A1" column between the "use" column and the "G1" column, as shown below in bold:

Use	A1	G1
Accommodations	**P**	P
Agritourism	**P**	P
Animal Care	**P**	P
Auto Body Shop	**-**	-
Automobile Fueling	**-**	P
Automobile Repair	**-**	P
Automobile Sales and Rentals	**-**	-
Automobile Washing	**-**	P
Banks and Financial Institutions	**-**	P
Campground	**PC**	PC
Commercial Recreation – Indoor	**-**	-
Commercial Recreation – Outdoor	**-**	-
Craft Food and Beverage Production	**P**	P
Display Court	**-**	-
Drinking Establishment	**P**	P
Farm Machinery Sales and Service	**P**	P
Farmers' Market	**P**	P

Garden and Nursery Sales & Supplies	**P**	P
Heavy Equipment Sales and Rentals	**-**	-
Kennel	**-**	-
Marina	**P**	P
Marine Recreation Provider	**P**	P
Office	**-**	P
Personal Service Shop	**-**	P
Private Club	**P**	P
Racetrack	**DA**	DA
Restaurant – Drive-thru	**-**	-
Restaurant – Eat-in	**P**	P
Restaurant – Take-out	**P**	P
Retail Lumber and Home Improvement Yard	**P**	P
Retail Store	**-**	P
RV Park	**-**	-
School – Commercial	**-**	-
Self-storage Facility	**-**	-
Service and Repair Shop	**P**	P
Shooting Range – Indoor	**-**	-
Shooting Range – Outdoor	**DA**	DA
Tour Operator	**P**	P
Wholesale	**-**	-

7. Table 7B is amended by adding the following "A1" column between the "use" column and the "G1" column, as shown below in bold:

Use	**A1**	**G1**
Boarding (Rooming) House	**P**	P
Dwellings – 1 or 2 units per lot	**P**	P
Dwellings – 3 or 4 units per lot	**-**	P
Dwellings – 5 to 8 units per lot	**-**	-
Dwellings – more than 8 units per lot	**-**	-
Nursing Home	**-**	-
Residential Care Facility	**-**	-
Small Options Home	**P**	P

8. Table 7C is amended by adding the following "A1" column between the "use" column and the "G1" column, as shown below in bold:

Use	**A1**	**G1**
Abattoir	**P**	P
Building Supply and Equipment Depot	**P**	P
Hazardous Industrial Uses	**-**	DA

Heavy Equipment Repair	**P**	P
Heavy Industrial Uses	**-**	DA
Light Industrial Uses	**P**	P
Recycling Depot	**-**	P
Scrap Yard	**-**	DA
Solar Collector System – Large-scale	**P**	P
Solid Waste Disposal	**-**	-
Transportation and Logistics	**P**	P
Warehousing	**P**	P
Workshop	**P**	P

9. Table 7D is amended by adding the following "A1" column between the "use" column and the "G1" column, as shown below in bold:

Use	**A1**	**G1**
Community Centre	**P**	P
Correctional Facility	**-**	-
Cultural Facilities	**P**	P
Daycare Centre	**P**	P
Emergency Services	**P**	P
Funeral Home	**P**	P
Government Uses	**P**	P
Hospital	**-**	-
Interpretive Centre	**P**	P
Medical Clinic	**P**	P
Place of Worship	**P**	P
Post Office	**P**	P
School - Academic	**P**	P
School – Post-secondary	**P**	P

10. Table 7D is amended by adding the following "A1" column between the "use" column and the "G1" column, as shown below in bold:

Use	**A1**	**G1**
Agriculture-related Uses	**P**	P
Cemetery	**P**	P
Fishery-related Uses	**P**	P
Forestry-related Uses	**P**	P
Hobby Livestock Farms	**PC**	PC
Livestock Operation	**PC**	PC
Mineral-related Uses	**-**	-
Parking Lot	**-**	P
Parks and Playgrounds	**P**	P
Public Recreation	**P**	P

Public Transportation	**P**	P
Telecommunications Towers	**P**	P
Trails and Conservation	**P**	P
Water Access	**P**	P

11. Table 8A is amended by adding the following "A1" column immediately prior to the "G1" column, as shown below in bold:

Standard		**A1**	**G1**
Min. Lot Area (m^2)	Sewer-serviced Lot	**2,700**	350
	Unserviced Lot	**2,700**	2,700
Min. Lot Frontage (m)	Sewer-serviced Lot	**15.0**	12.0
	Unserviced Lot	**15.0**	15.0
Min. Front Setback (m)		**6.0**	6.0
Min. Rear Setback (m)	Main Buildings	**8.0**	8.0
	Accessory Buildings	**4.0**	4.0
Min. Side Setback (m)	Main Buildings	**4.0**	4.0
	Accessory Buildings	**4.0**	4.0
Min. Flankage Setback (m)	Main Buildings	**6.0**	6.0
	Accessory Buildings	**6.0**	6.0
Max. Building Height (m)	Main Buildings	**12.2**	12.2
	Accessory Buildings	**8.0**	8.0

12. Part 10 is amended by renaming Schedule 'C', as shown below in bold and strikeout:

Schedule 'C' – Agricultural ~~Soils Overlay~~ **Overlays** Map

13. Schedule 'A' is amended to rezone lands from the Rural General (G1) Zone to the Agriculture Potential (A1) Zone, as identified in Appendix 'B'.
14. Schedule 'C' is deleted and replaced with a new Schedule 'C' as attached in Appendix 'C'.

Appendix ‘A’

MPS Appendix 'A'
Agricultural Lands

Legend
- Agricultural Lands as defined by SPI
- Town
- First Nations Lands

North
N

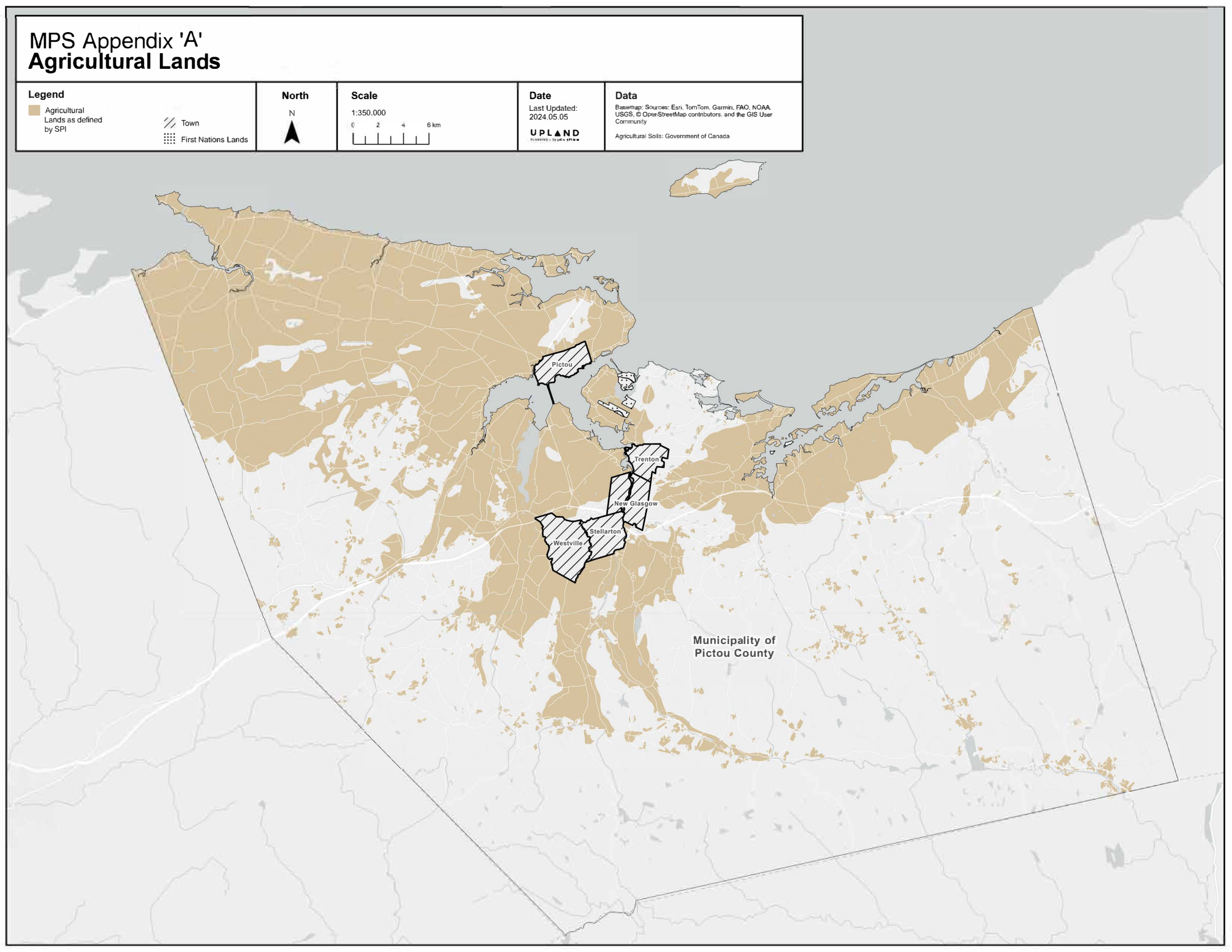
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Date
Last Updated: 2024.05.05

UPLAND PLANNING + DESIGN STUDIO

Data
Basemap: Sources: Esri, TomTom, Garmin, FAO, NOAA, USGS, © OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS User Community

Agricultural Soils: Government of Canada



Appendix ‘B’

Rezoning

Legend

Zoning

- Lands rezoned from G1 to A1

Other

- Town
- First Nations Lands

North

N

Scale

1:125,000

0 2 4 6 km

Date

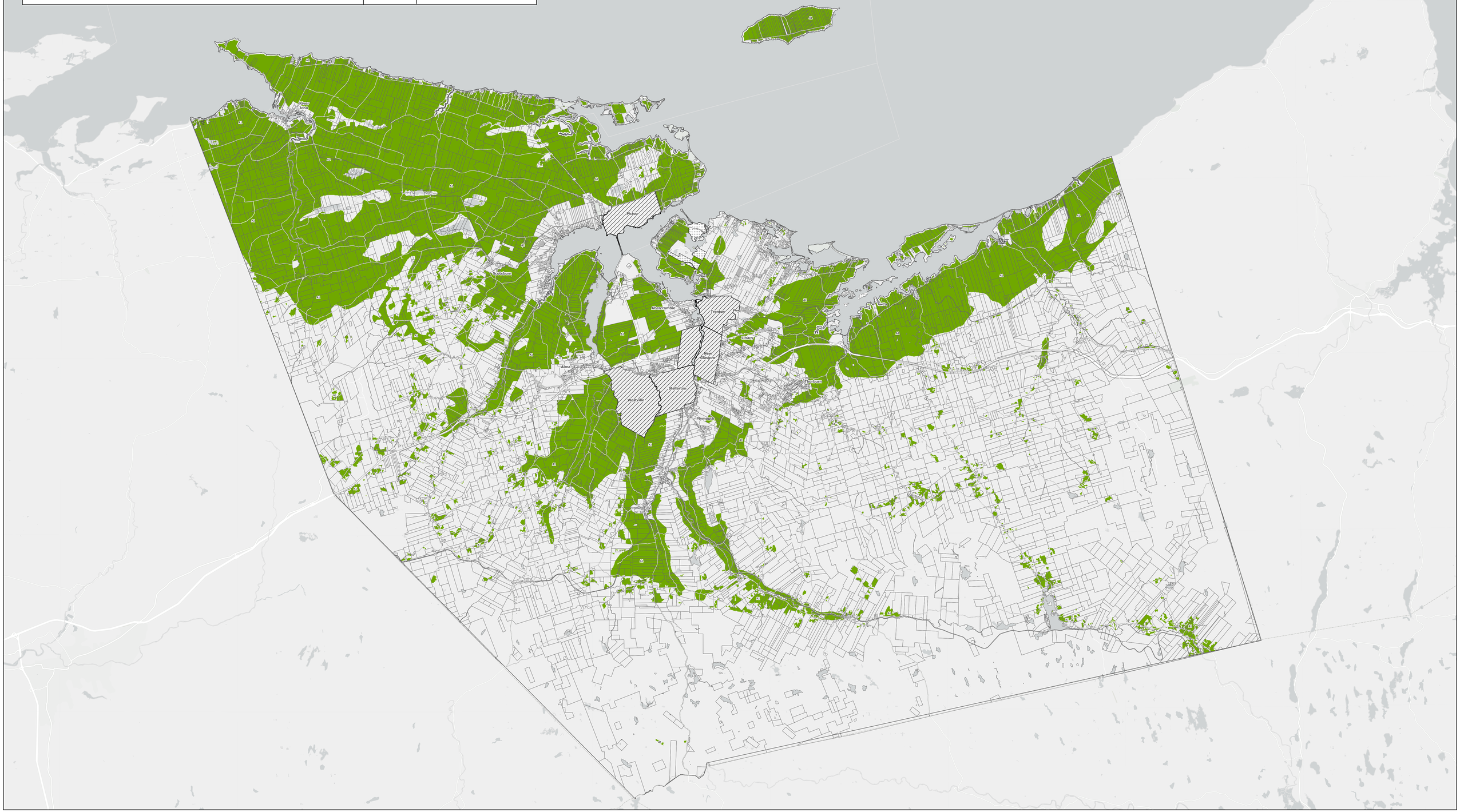
Last Updated:
2026.04.07

UPLAND
PLANNING + DESIGN STUDIO

Data

Credits: Sources: Esri, TomTom, Garmin, FAO, NOAA, USGS, © OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS User Community

Zoning Layer: UPLAND Planning + Design



Appendix ‘C’

LUB Schedule 'C'

Agricultural Overlays Map

Legend

- TSO - Topsoil Overlay
- LSO - Limited Subdivision Overlay

Other

- Town
- First Nations Lands

North

N

Scale

1:350,000

0 5 10 km

Date

Last Updated: 2026.04.07

UPLAND PLANNING + DESIGN STUDIO

Data

Basemap: Sources: Esri, TomTom, Garmin, FAO, NOAA, USGS, © OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS User Community

Agricultural Soils: Government of Canada

