



Planning Grant Received. Thanks to a CDBG planning grant from the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development and matched with local funds, many of the activities described below have been possible. The goal of the planning grant is to establish a regional agritourism program that promotes the Shenandoah Valley as an agritourism destination and creates jobs on and off the farm. Augusta County is the fiscal agent for the planning grant.

Steering Committee Appointed and Sub-committees Formed. Each of the participating localities appointed two representatives to serve on the Fields of Gold Steering committee. The role of the Steering Committee is to oversee the planning grant, guide the process forward, and act as a liaison to their respective locality and organization. Four sub-committees along with a project management team were also formed to carry out specific tasks and activities of the planning grant. (See roster attached)

Marketing Plan Begins. The Fields of Gold Marketing Sub-committee began the important task of developing a marketing plan that would define and market the Region as an agritourism destination. Several initial activities have been completed including the development of a Fields of Gold micro-website at www.cspdc.org/fieldsofgold, a FaceBook page, and request for logo-redesign and tag line. In addition, numerous marketing materials such as fliers, brochures, and displays have been created for the Fields of Gold initiative. Please visit us (*and Like Us*) on Shenandoah Valley FaceBook where you can keep up with the latest news and blogs about the program.

Agritourism Survey Launched. One of the first tasks of the Fields of Gold planning grant to get underway was the survey of the agritourism sites and businesses that exist in the Region. An on-line survey has been widely distributed and to-date over 90 surveys have been returned. The results of this survey will be used to inventory and map the many agritourism sites that we have in our Region. If you know of an agritourism business that would like to participate, please direct them to the survey at: https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/Fields_of_Gold

Economic Impact Analysis Released. In December, an RFP for an Economic Impact Analysis (EIA) was released for proposals to perform an assessment of the economic impact of agritourism activities on the regional and local economies. The purpose of the EIA is to determine the current direct, indirect and induced economic impacts of agritourism; estimate the impact of agritourism on the income of Shenandoah Valley farms; and set a baseline of data from which to make future assessments of the effectiveness of the Fields of Gold program. Seven proposals were received and are currently under review by the EIA sub-committee.



Shenandoah Valley Ag Festival Held. On October 23, 2011, the Fields of Gold staff helped organize and sponsor the first agritourism festival in the Shenandoah Valley. This event, sponsored by the Greater Augusta Chamber of Commerce, was held at Hermitage Hill Farms and Stables in Augusta County. Over 50 vendors displayed their wares and products and 600 visitors attended the event. Plans are underway to host a similar event next fall.

The Truth on the Table. James Overton (aka Jimmy O) and Alpha Vision Films have produced a documentary titled *The Truth on the Table*. Fields of Gold staff plays a role in the film about the Shenandoah Valley Agritourism Festival and the emerging agritourism movement. To view a clip of the film, go to: <http://www.alphavisionfilms.net/documentaries/the-truth-on-the-tablevirginia-agritourism-festival/>

Virginia Farm Show. Fields of Gold shared a booth with the Greater Augusta Chamber of Commerce at the Virginia Farm Show held Jan. 19-21 at ExpoLand in Fishersville. The Virginia Farm Show is the only agricultural trade show in Virginia that caters to the full-time as well as the part-time farmer.

HeART and Soil of the Shenandoah Valley. Fields of Gold is partnering with the Artisans Trail Network of Virginia and the Greater Augusta Regional Tourism (GART) to develop an artisans trail in the Staunton-Augusta-Waynesboro region. The trail recently named the *HeART and Soil of the Shenandoah Valley* will highlight the artisans, craftspeople and agri-artisans of the area. For more info; go to www.artisanscenterofvirginia.org

Grow Local; Buy Local: A Community Showcase. Fields of Gold will be an exhibitor at the Grow Local; Buy Local event on Jan 30, 2012, at the Rockingham County Fair Grounds. This event is for local buyers and producers and others interested in growth and networking opportunities to build and support the local and regional food economy. For more information, go to <http://growlocalbuylocalhburg.eventbrite.com/>

Agritourism Workshops Planned. A series of workshops are planned throughout the Region to provide valuable information to the farmer, agri-business owner and entrepreneur. These workshops will focus on “how to” start or expand an agritourism business on a farm as well as the “need-to-know” details. Stay tuned for more details on these workshops.

Highland Maple Festival. Fields of Gold is pleased to be an exhibitor at the 54th annual Highland Maple Festival on the weekends of March 10-11 and March 17-18. The Highland Maple Festival showcases the art of maple syrup-making and welcomes upwards of 50,000 visitors to its festival each year.