



# EarthWatch Rhode Island



**Topic: Fall Apple Harvesting**

**Location: Harmony Farms, Glocester**

**Date: October 10, 2008**

## **Background**

Rhode Islanders can help preserve the states' farms by purchasing locally grown products from local farmers and by participating in the fun fall agri-tourism provided by many farms throughout Rhode Island. The Department's Division of Agriculture promotes and markets Rhode Island farms so that Rhode Islanders are aware of all the fun opportunities and activities provided by farms throughout the seasons, particularly what lies in store this fall.

The Rhode Island agricultural business offers great activities for people of all ages. This fall season presents a perfect time for apple picking. Harmony Farms offers the opportunity to "pick your own" apples, blueberries, raspberries, blackberries and peaches. Harmony Farms also has an herb garden, grows its own pumpkins and gourds, harvests its own honey and produces homemade jam. All, including pre-picked fruit, are available for purchase at the Farm Stand.



Harmony Farms is a local farm that was permanently protected in June 2008 with state bond funds. The state purchased development rights to the 23.5 acre farm with funding (\$357,575) from the Agricultural Land Preservation Commission's State Farmland bond funds. The farm is located in the Scituate Reservoir Watershed and its preservation also provides watershed protection. This farm is but one example of the type of properties that can be protected under the Open Space Bond Fund that will be on the ballot before voters in November.

Agri-tourism is an industry that is experiencing increasing popularity. With the public's growing interest in farm life, farmers have spanned the definition of agri-tourism to include everything from farmers' markets to educational tours of their farms to this season's fun fall activities of hayrides, corn mazes and apple and pumpkin picking. It

provides a new way to help sustain small farms as it offers alternatives to improving farmers' incomes and boosting the economic viability of small farms and rural towns. No matter what type of activity is offered, agri-tourism is a growing industry and with it expected to increase by 30% per year over the next decade, many farmers are jumping on the agri-tourism bandwagon.

### **More Information for Consumers**

- DEM' RI Grown Website ([www.rigrown.ri.gov](http://www.rigrown.ri.gov))
- *Rhode Island Agriculture Guide*, published by DEM, lists local farms, roadside stands and farmers' markets by location as well when specific products are available. (<http://www.dem.ri.gov/programs/bnatres/agricult/pdf/agguide.pdf>)

### **Interviews:**

Ken Ayars, Chief, DEM's Division of Agriculture - provided background on the importance of farming and how farmers have learned to diversify activities to stay in business. Ken also discussed the importance of protecting farmland such as Harmony Farms.

Bernie Smith, farmer- talked about this year's apple crop and the various opportunities for pick your own fruits at Harmony Farms