

Intervale Center Land Use Protocols

Updated May 2013

All Intervale farms produce crops by following the organic standards set by the Vermont Organic Farmers (VOF) organization. The following land use protocols are additional standards that all farms in the Intervale must comply.

1. Cover Crops and Rotation.

As the first step in the process of restoring the Intervale land, the Intervale Center will be responsible for cover cropping newly acquired fields for the first 3 years or until management is assumed by a farmer(s). Farmers must cover and rotate crops once they acquire land as a standard practice to maintain soil tilth and health.

Farmers must lease enough land for proper crop rotation. Intervale Center recommends for all non-perennial farmers an equal number of acres in cover crops as in cash crops. A minimum of 2/3 tillable acreage in cash crop and 1/3 tillable acreage in cover crop is required. A winter cover crop on all parcels is required whenever possible. Lease agreements will be the same for cash crop and cover crop parcels.

Perennial crop farms do not need to maintain this ratio of cover crop land. However, farmers must rotate perennials when feasible. Perennial crops require extra attention to under-sowing and compost applications. Practicing interplanting and companion planting is required to avoid a monoculture. After moving perennials, different crops must be grown or a cover crop planted in the interim.

Any farmer(s) that require an exemption from these protocols must do so in writing. The Land Committee will review requests on a case-by-case basis.

2. Compost Application.

Organic matter such as compost is a valuable addition to the Intervale soils where the percentage of organic matter is low. Annual soil tests, taken in the fall by farms, will be used as a guide to determine the compost needs for each field.

Proper compost application and soil management is the responsibility of each farm.

Farmers must spread compost shortly before planting in a field or over cover crops. Once applied, farmers need to manage their fields properly to conserve nutrients and organic matter.

Compost may not be applied between December 15 and April 1. It is acceptable to apply organic mulches, which may include partially composted materials (not including manures), at any time.

3. Weed Management

Preventing weeds from reseeding and regenerating is essential to organic farm management. Acceptable means of controlling weeds are as follows: mulching, mowing, hoeing, cultivating and torching with flame weeders. Farmers may not use chemical substances to control weeds unless approved for organic use by VOF. Farmers are responsible for making regular field inspections for weed growth. Fields, field edges, roadsides and around buildings are required to be regularly maintained. Areas determined mismanaged by Intervale Center staff will be subject to a written complaint submitted to the Land Committee.

4. Insect Management

Insect management requires attracting and encouraging beneficial insect populations as a means to balance populations of insect pests.

Farmers are required to understand current organic methods of control. They should be versed in IPM monitoring techniques such as scouting. All farmers must work cooperatively and with Intervale to discourage pests.

Chemical pesticides that are not approved and regulated by VOF are not allowed. If new organic products appear on the market that VOF has not certified, the farmer(s) must present the pesticide to VOF for review. If VOF approves the pesticide, the farmer(s) must also receive approval of the Land Committee before using it in the Intervale.

Farmers must keep records of all pest controls in a log from year to year. This log is subject to inspection by Intervale Center staff. The Intervale may request this information for annual reporting.

5. Disease Management

The Intervale Center does not allow the use of chemicals, fungicides, or bactericides in Intervale operated land. Acceptable controls include: crop rotation, VOF approved organic fungicides, diseased plant removal and disposal, tool sanitation, restriction of foot traffic, cleanliness, black plastic mulch use and/or drip irrigation or watering at ground level.

Farmers need to be familiar with plant diseases and be able to identify them when they appear. Resources for plant disease identification are available through Intervale staff, other farmers, VT Department of Agriculture, UVM Diagnostic Lab, outside labs and textbooks. Farmers must keep records of disease infections and controls to provide for the Intervale Center in annual reports.

6. Irrigation

Water is available from the drilled well near the pumphouse, the drilled well in the home garden area, a temporary pump at the river and from natural precipitation. Hauling water from a

source outside the Intervale is acceptable as long as it comes from an approved and tested source. Intervale Center staff will conduct water tests annually on all water sources.

Intervale is responsible for making sure all wells and water sources are operable and set up to accommodate main line hook ups. If mainline equipment is not available on a given field, the Intervale and the Farm will reach an agreement to accommodate water needs.

Farmers must present irrigation needs to Intervale Center staff. The Intervale Center will devise an operating schedule based on the needs of every farm. Each farm is responsible for maintenance on their main line from pump to field.

7. Testing

Farmers must submit a yearly soil test during the Incubator years. Tests must include macronutrients, NPK, pH and CEC. Fields just coming into production must also include micronutrient testing. Yearly farmers must also test for organic matter content as specified in the Compost Applications section of this document.

8. End of Year Reports

Farmers are required to submit an end of year report each year as part of this agreement. A form for this report will be submitted at the beginning of each growing season so that farmers will know in advance information that must be tracked.

9. Buildings and Improvements

As the Intervale is situated on a floodplain, many legal restrictions apply to construction in the Intervale. Any land improvements (moving or altering of soil, building construction, fence construction, growing or removal of trees or any activity that could impact the topography of the land) are subject to formal approval by the Intervale. Overnight camping or structures intended for those purposes are not allowed.

10. Soil Disturbance and Archeology at the Intervale Center

Prior to undertaking any activity on Intervale Center property that may cause soil disturbance greater than 18 inches (“soil disturbance activity”), farmers need to notify IC of the proposed location and nature of the activity.

- Notice must be given to the IC by September 15th for an activity to take place prior to May 31 of next season.
- Notice must be given to IC by February 1st for any activity from June 1 through the rest of the season.