

## **Climate Smart Communities - New Innovative Actions Submission**

### **The Town of Bedford 2030 and Bedford 2030**

The Town of Bedford and Bedford 2030 are leading a community initiative to assess and establish “natural vegetative management” (i.e. goat-grazing) as a mainstream green economy practice. Our goal is to educate and empower our community to embrace this practice as a natural, climate-friendly way to address native vines, manage land and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

**Why this is important:** The Town of Bedford has committed to a community wide goal to reduce polluting greenhouse gas emissions 80% by 2030 and to protect our natural resources. Providing community members with natural, climate friendly land management solutions to enact in their yards and on local land is a priority in addressing our 2030 goals. One of the most critical natural resource issues faced by our community is fast-growing native vines that threaten our local ecosystems, biodiversity and tree canopy. Of particular concern is the threat invasive vines pose to the natural carbon capture and storage services provided by trees.

Goats offer a way to manage land and invasive vines without carbon-emitting, gas-powered equipment and without chemicals or pesticides that are harmful to our soil. Goats provide several services to revitalize soil health, maintain native tree canopy, and preserve groundwater health by preventing use of chemical weed management.

Because of these ecological and climate benefits, over the past 18 months Bedford 2030 has partnered with our Town Government, a local goat farmer, a local school and residents to facilitate and implement a pilot to establish natural vegetative management as a green economy solution.

#### **Implementation:**

- **Local law:** Our first step in establishing this green economy practice was for our Town Board, Planning Board, Planning Department and Building Department to create a policy that would establish parameters—including siting, solar-powered electric fencing, safety and others—for goat grazing. Last winter the Bedford Town Board adopted a [Targeted Vegetative Management Law](#) and set up permitting and approval practices for goat grazing projects in our community.
- **Identify vendors and assess opportunity:** The Town of Bedford and Bedford 2030 identified and vetted goat farmers in our region with experience and an interest in establishing a goat-grazing business in our area. Ultimately the farmers at [Fat and Sassy Goats](#), based in Rhinebeck, NY, were chosen. The first step was to meet with local land-owners (residential, preserves, parks and schools) to assess interest in goat-grazing as a natural land management practice. Next, Fat and Sassy Goats

connected with a local land-owner to arrange for a “home-base” for their herd to live and “work” in the Bedford community.

- **Demonstration project:** The Town, Bedford 2030, Fat and Sassy Goats and The Harvey School (located in Bedford) are collaborating on a demonstration project. The Harvey School hired Fat and Sassy Goats to manage an infestation of invasive porcelain berry vines on a forested area of their property using natural methods as an alternative to chemical herbicides and gas-powered equipment. The project is anticipated to take 2-3 seasons with spring / summer grazing, after which time it is anticipated that the vines will have been “exhausted” and are no longer viable for re-growth. The project also includes plans for re-claiming and re-planting this land post-grazing.

The initial grazing took place this past August and September. The Town, Bedford 2030, and The Harvey School all promoted the project. Working with a neighbor whose property was adjacent to the school, community members were invited to come and see the goats in action. The site and project was also visible from a main road (Route 22).

- **Results:** The initial grazing is viewed by all partners to be a success. The project garnered PR and news coverage as well as community interest. The Harvey School will hire Fat and Sassy Goats for another season of grazing in 2023 which will be promoted to the community. This demonstration project has generated incremental interest in goat-grazing as a natural land management practice and business for Fat and Sassy Goats.

The project was featured in:

- a segment on [News-12](#), the local Westchester TV station
- our local paper, the Record Review
- [The Harvey School News](#)
- The [Town of Bedford Supervisor's weekly e-newsletter](#)
- [Bedford 2030 e-newsletter](#), [social media](#) and [blog](#)

The Town Supervisor, Planning Director, Building Director and Clerk all did site visits.

[Initial results provided a vivid demonstration](#) of how impactful goat grazing could be in naturally managing land and invasive vines.

As a result of this project, Fat and Sassy Goats has done 6 local property assessments and has completed 2 projects with an additional project planned in our area.