

## Farms sprout up in park

### Program plants seed for three new specialty farms in Cuyahoga Valley

By Bob Downing  
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**BOSTON TWP.:** - Take it from Cindy Smith: Goats are entertainers with lots of character.

Smith and her husband, Terry, ought to know. They have 73 of the animals, and that total is likely to grow to 225 on their newly leased farm in the Cuyahoga Valley National Park.

The couple moved in May from Akron to the old Point Farm off Akron-Peninsula Road. In doing so, they began operating one of six specialty farms in the 33,000-acre park.

The three newest are the Smith farm and ones run by Daniel and Michelle Greenfield of Akron, and Heather Kuhne and Eric Walters of Columbia Station.

The Greenfields will grow pick-your-own berries off Major Road in Boston Township. Kuhne and Walters will grow vegetables and fruit off Quick Road, also in Boston Township. Those operations will open to the public next year.

The new farmers were among 25 applicants screened by the Cuyahoga Valley Countryside Conservancy, a grass-roots, nonprofit organization, and selected by the National Park Service.

The conservancy is working with park officials to promote so-called niche farms that will help the park maintain its cultural landscape. The goal is to develop sustainable agriculture in the park and promote local markets for the farmers.

### Goats, turkeys

“Becoming a farmer has not been a lifelong dream,” said 48-year-old Cindy Smith, a quality manager for Quality Synthetic Rubber in Twinsburg. “But it seems like a good idea for us.”

She and her husband, a 53-year-old chief pilot for Akron’s Aero Fliers, started researching the Cuyahoga Valley program in 2000. Now they are busy putting in long hours getting settled on the 35-acre farm.

They are raising goats to be sold for meat -- about \$100 per live animal -- when they are 12 to 18 months old.

Next year, they intend to add at least 50 turkeys to the farm. They’ll specialize in heritage turkeys, starting with the Standard Bronze, which is known for its flavor.

“We’re doing what we want, and we enjoy that,” Cindy Smith said. “It’s a challenge... but we can handle it.”

### Fresh produce

Kuhne, 32, and Walters, 36, are setting up what is called community-supported agriculture.

They will grow produce for up to 200 members of their operation on 35 acres. Members will pay fees averaging \$25 a week and get 12 to 20 pounds of fresh produce for 20 to 24 weeks a year.

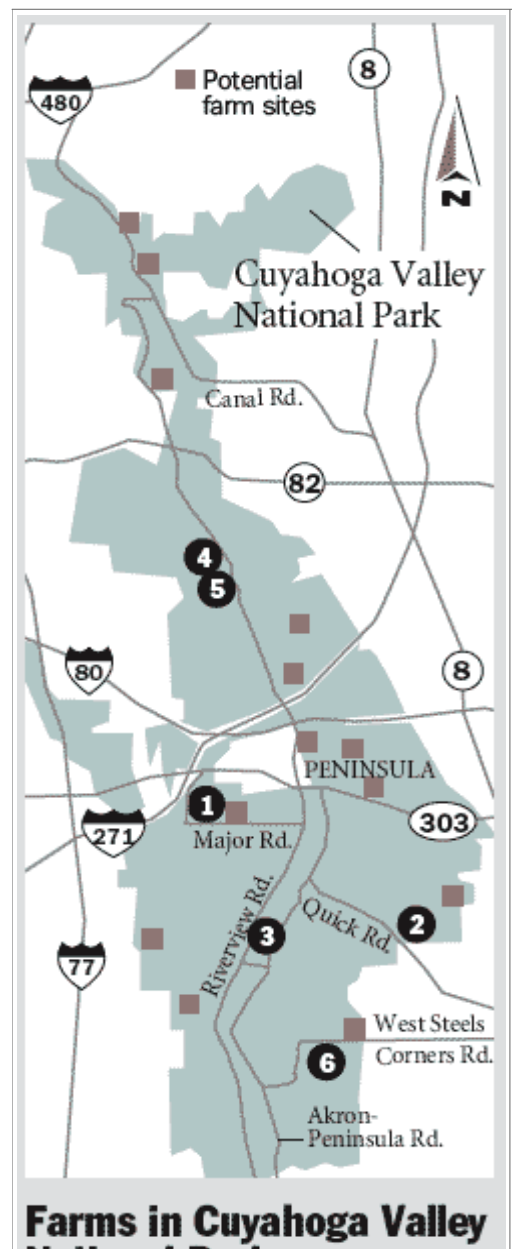
They previously operated a similar but smaller operation in Lorain County.

Their plans include raising nearly 100 varieties of produce, including older vegetables not commonly grown, Kuhne said.

The couple -- they will be married on the farm in October -- plan to build a small greenhouse this year, plant cover crops and install electric fencing to keep the deer away.

### Pick-your-own berries

The Greenfields, who intend to move to their Major Road farm as soon as they can sell their Akron house, have planted nearly 400 raspberry plants and will add about 500 blueberry bushes in the fall on about four acres. They also plan to



grow strawberries.

They are confident that a pick-your-own operation in the Cuyahoga Valley park will succeed.

Daniel Greenfield, a 39-year-old college professor, and his wife Michelle, a 38-year-old technical writer, looked at other farm options, including beekeeping and sheep-shearing, before deciding on berries.

It is important to be part of a bigger movement: to provide locally grown food to people in Northeast Ohio, Daniel Greenfield said.

### Other farms in park

The park began investigating the farm program in 1998, with the first farms selected in 2001. In those operations:

- Mike and Margaret Lytz of Cuyahoga Falls grow grapes at Sarah's Vineyard off West Steels Corners Road. They produced their first wines this year.
- Alan and Susan Halko of Brecksville offer eggs, vegetables and cut flowers off Riverview Road.
- Bob and Joan Hall of Brecksville also offer eggs and vegetables off Riverview Road.

But after the establishment of those farms, the program was halted until the park could complete an environmental impact statement, a detailed federal report analyzing the program.

“It's taken us a long time to get here,” said Darwin Kelsey, executive director of the Cuyahoga Valley Countryside Conservancy.

Kelsey, who raises goats on a park farm under a different program, helps the park farmers find local markets -- from restaurants to farmers' markets. A local food guide will be published in August.

### Plans for more

Ultimately, the park service wants to set up specialty farms on perhaps 30 plots totaling 1,350 acres in the Cuyahoga Valley.

The park intends to offer two new farm sites later this year: one in Cuyahoga Falls and one in Boston Heights, Kelsey said.

Park officials want to maintain an agricultural presence in the Cuyahoga Valley because farms were historically significant there.

The park service has fixed up old farmhouses, farm buildings and fields. It spent an average of \$150,000 renovating the first farmhouses.

The homesteaders must pay fair-market house rent, discounted 50 percent because of the public park setting, and land rent on a scale up to 10 percent of gross farm income, estimated at \$40,000 annually for the first five years. The farmers must limit the use of herbicides and accommodate park visitors if possible.

For more information, contact the Cuyahoga Valley Countryside Conservancy at 2179 Everett Road, Peninsula, OH 44264, 330-657-2542, [www.cvcountryside.org](http://www.cvcountryside.org).

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## National Park

### NEW FARMS

Three farms, all in Boston Township, are under new leases in the Cuyahoga Valley National Park.

**1. The Welton Farm** off Major Road will open to the public next year for picking berries.

**2. The Duffy Farm** off Quick Road will offer vegetables and fruits next year.

**3. The Point Farm** off Akron-Peninsula Road offers goats this year and will add turkeys next year. Call 330-657-2726 for information.

### EXISTING FARMS

There are three other farm operations in the national park, and their goods often are available at farmers' markets in Akron and Peninsula and to the public by appointment. These are:

**4. Spring Hill Farm** off Riverview Road, Brecksville, sells eggs and produce. 440-546-0652

**5. Blue Hen Farm** off Riverview Road, Brecksville, sells produce. 440-746-0869

**6. Sarah's Vineyard** off West Steels Corners Road, Cuyahoga Falls, sells wines. 330-929-8057

