

THE CARMAN BLUEBERRY FARM

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225 Old County Road, West Tisbury, MA 02568

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Rationale and Purpose

The Carman Family has been present on the land at and around 225 Old County Road for five generations now. In those circa 100 years, the woods surrounding the small cottage, which has been a part of each generation's summers growing up, have never been well utilized. They have been hiked through, played in, and hunted on but not much more. The Carman Family, led on this project by Meg Carman and her son, Steven Sredzienski, would like to use the land in a more meaningful way, which is good for the community, fun for the Carman Family, and a part-time job for Meg who will soon be in retirement and enjoys agriculture.

The Carman Blueberry Farm will have over 500 blueberry plants available to visitors and members of the community on "U-Pick" basis within two to three years¹. The scale of the blueberry farm will be large enough that there is sufficient supply to open a couple days a week during late summer for people to come pick, but small enough that there will be no impact to local traffic.

The vision of the Carman Family is to create a fun summer activity for the community, which has longevity and purpose. Blueberries support this vision due to long plant lives, relatively low labor intensity for those working the farm, do-it-yourself picking potential, favorable soil conditions and they are a delicious fruit which should be locally sourced (not imported from off-island).

Over the next decade, we hope the Carman Blueberry Farm will become a staple experience for families in West Tisbury during mid-July through the end of August. Once the plants are fully mature, The Carman Blueberry Farm will produce 5,000 pints of blueberries per season², that is 1.4 pints³ for each West Tisbury resident!

The Carman Blueberry Farm layout

Extensive thought was put into the location of the Carman Blueberry Farm, given the property is c.18 acres and various configurations would have been possible. Due to our knowledge of the sensitive nature of the land, we decided to first speak with the Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife and get MESA⁴ approval (see Approvals). Five types of moths and one type of beetle, which are present on the property, are protected under MESA resulting in the Division of Fisheries and Wildlife having the authority to grant or not grant approval for activities that disturb the natural habitat. Following discussions with the team at the Division of Fisheries and Wildlife, a four-acre piece of the property was agreed on and approved for agricultural activities. This approval sets the perimeter for the Carman Blueberry Farm, including where additional access to the property would be required.

The Carman Blueberry Farm will be located on the opposite side of the property, which is bifurcated by two pieces of land not belonging to the Carman Family, abutting Old County Road. A straight driveway into the middle of the four-acre portion of the land will be in between two plots of blueberry bushes. The hedgerows of blueberry plants will be 8 to 10 feet apart and running perpendicular to the driveway and parallel to Old County Road. Enough room on either side of the driveway will be allowed for any visitors to park their cars. Near the front of the blueberry farm during picking season there will be a small area

¹ <https://blueberry.org/about-blueberries/how-blueberries-grow/>

² Production of 10 pints p.a. per plant per Rutgers article - <https://njaes.rutgers.edu/fs750/>

³ Using population of 3,555 per

https://data.census.gov/profile/West_Tisbury_town,_Dukes_County,_Massachusetts?g=060XX00US2500778235

⁴ Massachusetts Endangered Species Act

with instructions and any materials required. Near the back of the driveway there will be a small shed for farming equipment as well as a renewable-powered, off-grid well which will provide the water for the plants.

The four acres approved for the blueberry farm will be bordered on the northern side by the State Forest, to the southern side by the owners of the adjacent property and to the west by land which will remain undisturbed habitat (part of the family's c.18 acres).

The land where the farm will be located has had the soil tested and confirmed that it has the right mixture for blueberries. The land has a substantial amount of organic matter built up due it being undisturbed habitat, and soil with a ph level of 4.5, which is suitable for all plant types planned for (attributes shown in figure 4). Please refer to the below figure for further details on the soil.

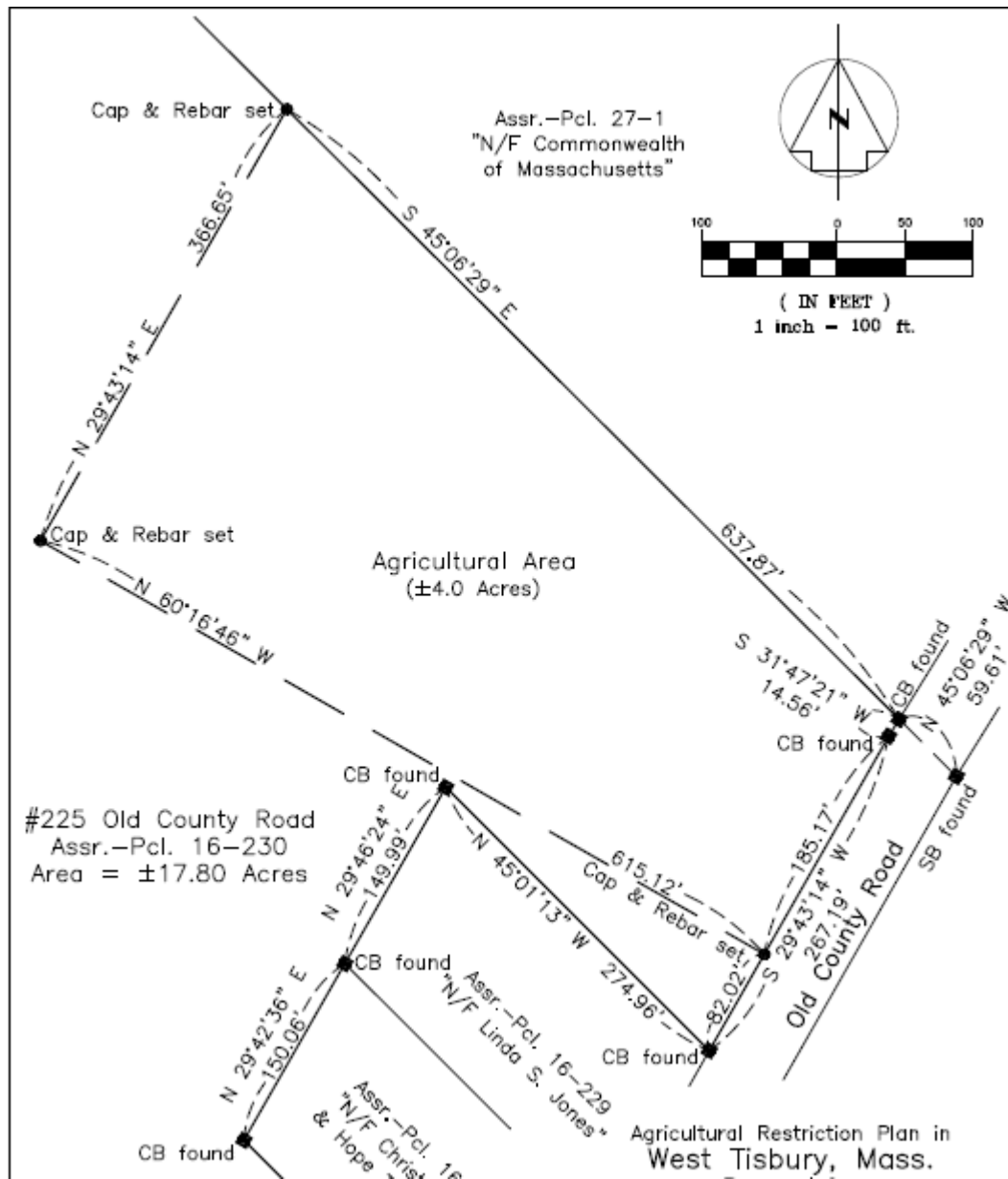


Figure 2 Soil test results

Measured Soil Textural Class: **coarse**
 Sand: --% - Silt: --% - Clay: --%

Group	Indicator	Value	Rating	Constraints
<i>physical</i>	Surface Hardness			Not rated: No Field Penetrometer Readings Submitted
<i>physical</i>	Subsurface Hardness	200	81	
<i>physical</i>	Aggregate Stability	72.4	92	
<i>biological</i>	Organic Matter Soil Organic Carbon: 3.54 / Total Carbon: 3.55 / Total Nitrogen: 0.15	4.7	99	
<i>biological</i>	Active Carbon	376	35	
<i>chemical</i>	Soil pH	4.5	0	Low pH: Toxicity, Nutrient Availability (note exception for acid loving crop species)
<i>chemical</i>	Extractable Phosphorus	3.5	100	
<i>chemical</i>	Extractable Potassium	60.1	85	
<i>chemical</i>	Additional Nutrients Ca: 73.9 / Mg: 29.1 / S: 12.2 Al: 216.3 / B: 0.03 / Cu: 0.01 Fe: 49.0 / Mn: 1.6 / Zn: 0.5		33	

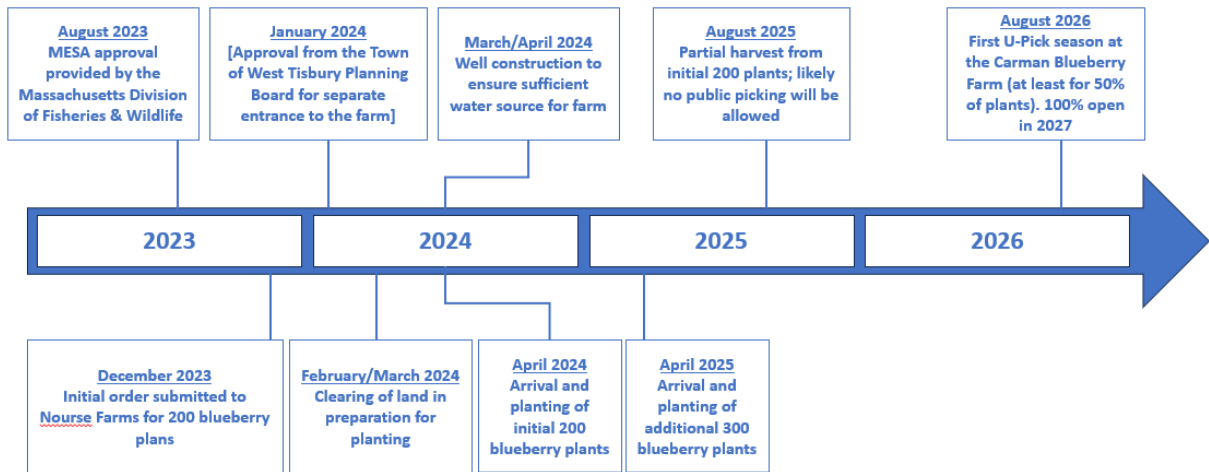
Overall Quality Score: **66 / High**

Project Timeline

The Carman Blueberry Farm project is a multi-year project which the family is uniquely positioned to realize due to no time constraint and all year residency on the property by Meg. The project kicked-off with the Division of Fisheries and Wildlife's approval earlier this year, after which the family firmly concluded that the time was right to dedicate time and financial resources toward the project and execute it within a two-year period. The key hurdle for the project is planning approval for access to the property where the approved farm will be started. Without access, it would be very difficult to realize a blueberry farm operation due to only access by the family via a small walking path behind the adjacent properties.

As of December 2023, the project timeline is on track. The blueberry bushes will be ordered in two large batches from Nourse Farms in Whately, MA. The initial order has been submitted and the plants are on track to be delivered in April 2024. The Carman Family is working with a local entrepreneur for the land clearing and setting up of the access. There are no issues foreseen. Please refer to Figure 2 for further details of the project.

Figure 3 Development timeline



Approvals and Permits


State and local approvals are required to complete The Carman Blueberry Farm. These are detailed in the table below.

Approval or permit	Comment
MESA approval	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife has provided approval
Special Permit for access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Application submitted to Town of West Tisbury Planning Board on Monday, November 20, 2023 Public discussion to be held in January 2024
Permits for shed and well	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Carman Family will ask the contractor for the construction and installation to acquire said permits

Plant types and pricing

The Carman Family has tested various blueberry plants on the property and consulted with Nourse Farms regarding suitable plant types. After consideration of the testing and various consultations, Patriot, Blueray, Jersey and Elliot plants will be used. The below pictures highlight the qualities of these plants.

Figure 4 Blueberry plant types



Patriot
4 Reviews


Quantity: [Add to cart](#)

Plants ship between January - July. Ship dates are selected during checkout process.

Quantity	Price
1 - 9	\$11.55
10 - 49	\$10.50
50 - 99	\$9.70
100 - 499	\$8.95
500	\$8.15

Berry Size: Large
Best in Zones: 4 - 7
Firmness: Moderate
Freezing Quality: Excellent
Winter Hardy: Excellent
Maturity Height: 3-5 feet
Age of Plant: 1.5 years
Ships as: 1 Liter Pot
Soil pH Level: 4.5 - 4.8

pH We recommend a soil pH level of 4.5 - 4.8 for blueberry plants.
Blueberry plants bear fruit 1 year after planting.
Contains high levels of Nutraceuticals, a substance providing a healthy benefit to the human body!
This is what one blueberry plant looks like when it is shipped.



Blueray


Quantity: [Add to cart](#)

Plants ship between January - July. Ship dates are selected during checkout process.

Quantity	Price
1 - 9	\$11.55
10 - 49	\$10.50
50 - 99	\$9.70
100 - 499	\$8.95
500	\$8.15

Berry Size: Large
Best in Zones: 4 - 7
Firmness: Firm
Freezing Quality: Excellent
Winter Hardy: Excellent
Maturity Height: 4-6 feet
Age of Plant: 1.5 years
Ships as: 1 Liter Pot
Soil pH Level: 4.5 - 4.8

pH We recommend a soil pH level of 4.5 - 4.8 for blueberry plants.
Blueberry plants bear fruit 1 year after planting.
Contains high levels of Nutraceuticals, a substance providing a healthy benefit to the human body!
This is what one blueberry plant looks like when it is shipped.



Jersey
4 Reviews


Quantity: [Add to cart](#)

Plants ship between January - July. Ship dates are selected during checkout process.

Quantity	Price
1 - 9	\$11.55
10 - 49	\$10.50
50 - 99	\$9.70
100 - 499	\$8.95
500	\$8.15

Berry Size: Medium
Best in Zones: 4 - 7
Firmness: Firm
Freezing Quality: Excellent
Winter Hardy: Excellent
Maturity Height: 6-8 feet
Age of Plant: 1.5 years
Ships as: 1 Liter Pot
Soil pH Level: 4.5 - 4.8

pH We recommend a soil pH level of 4.5 - 4.8 for blueberry plants.
Blueberry plants bear fruit 1 year after planting.
Easy to grow!
Contains high levels of Nutraceuticals, a substance providing a healthy benefit to the human body!
This is what one blueberry plant looks like when it is shipped.



Elliott

Quantity: [Add to cart](#)

Plants ship between January - July. Ship dates are selected during checkout process.

Quantity	Price
1 - 9	\$11.55
10 - 49	\$10.50
50 - 99	\$9.70
100 - 499	\$8.95
500	\$8.15

Berry Size: Medium
Best in Zones: 4 - 7
Firmness: Firm
Flavor: Good
Freezing Quality: Excellent
Winter Hardy: Good
Maturity Height: 4-6 feet
Age of Plant: 1.5 years
Ships as: 1 Liter Pot
Soil pH Level: 4.5 - 4.8

pH We recommend a soil pH level of 4.5 - 4.8 for blueberry plants.
Blueberry plants bear fruit 1 year after planting.
Contains high levels of Nutraceuticals, a substance providing a healthy benefit to the human body!
This is what one blueberry plant looks like when it is shipped.

After allowing the plants to grow for one season, the progress of the various types will be examined and the order for the second batch of c.300 plants will be submitted. I

Farm Management and Operations

The Carman Family is fully aware that managing the blueberry farm will require substantial resources. This is the main reason the family has opted for a U-Pick operation, where the labor (and fun) is taken over by the customers, who in turn pay less than in supermarket or other source. There would be minimal required assistance for customers coming to pick at the farm – Instructions will be made clear at the entrance and payment via Venmo or cash would be made before leaving based on the quantity of blueberries picked.

Meg, who works from home and is a year-round island resident, is planning to be able to spend sufficient time in the fall, winter, and spring seasons to maintain the farm. Depending on how labor intensive the first years are, the family would plan to assess further resources to maintain a stable operation. Aside from hourly labor, we believe there could be the potential to collaborate with people assessing agricultural career paths who are completing their undergraduate degrees. Offering a student the opportunity to assist in managing a blueberry farm as an internship could be compelling and the peak season in August works well around college semesters. This will be tested with universities in Massachusetts when the time is right.

The Carman Blueberry Farm will work with required advisors to ensure proper operation, including insurance, tax and accounting. Steven will lead on all organizational items here.

A budget is in place for the required operational equipment, including among others a riding mower and small utility vehicle, such as a John Deere Gator.