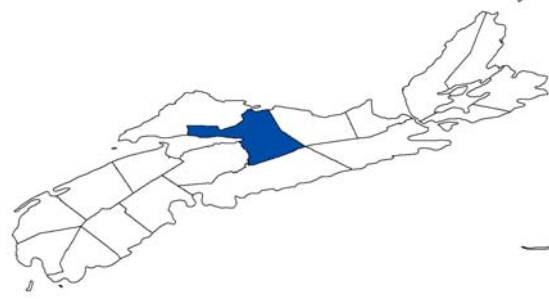


COLCHESTER COUNTY



PROFILE of AGRICULTURAL LAND RESOURCES

Overview of county land resources

Land most suitable for agricultural production (Canadian Land Inventory (CLI) classes 2,3 and 4ⁱ) covers half of Colchester County (see Table 1). Colchester has 20 percent of the province's CLI 2 soils, 10 percent of CLI 3 and 12 percent of CLI 4.

Colchester has approximately 30,000 hectares in agricultural production. This amounts to 13 percent of Nova Scotia land in agriculture. Farming in Colchester uses about 8 percent of the county land area.

	Hectares	Percent of provincial total	Percent of county land area
CLI 2,3,4 TOTAL	181,843	11.6	50.3
CLI 2	33,684	20.4	9.3
CLI 3	99,242	10.0	27.5
CLI 4	48,917	11.7	13.5
Agricultural land (ALIP)*	33,025	14.0	9.1
Agricultural land (DNR)**	30,108	13.2	8.3
Blueberry land (DNR)**	3,128	19.0	0.9

* As indicated by the NSDA Agricultural Land Identification Project.
 ** Based on forest coverage files from NS Natural Resources (blueberry land is low-bush/ wild)
 Source: Nova Scotia Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Canada, Nova Scotia Department of Natural Resources.

Colchester also has 3,100 hectares of wild blueberry production. This amounts to 19 percent of the Nova Scotia total, making Colchester second to only Cumberland County in wild blueberry production.

Figure 1a. Agricultural lands in Colchester County

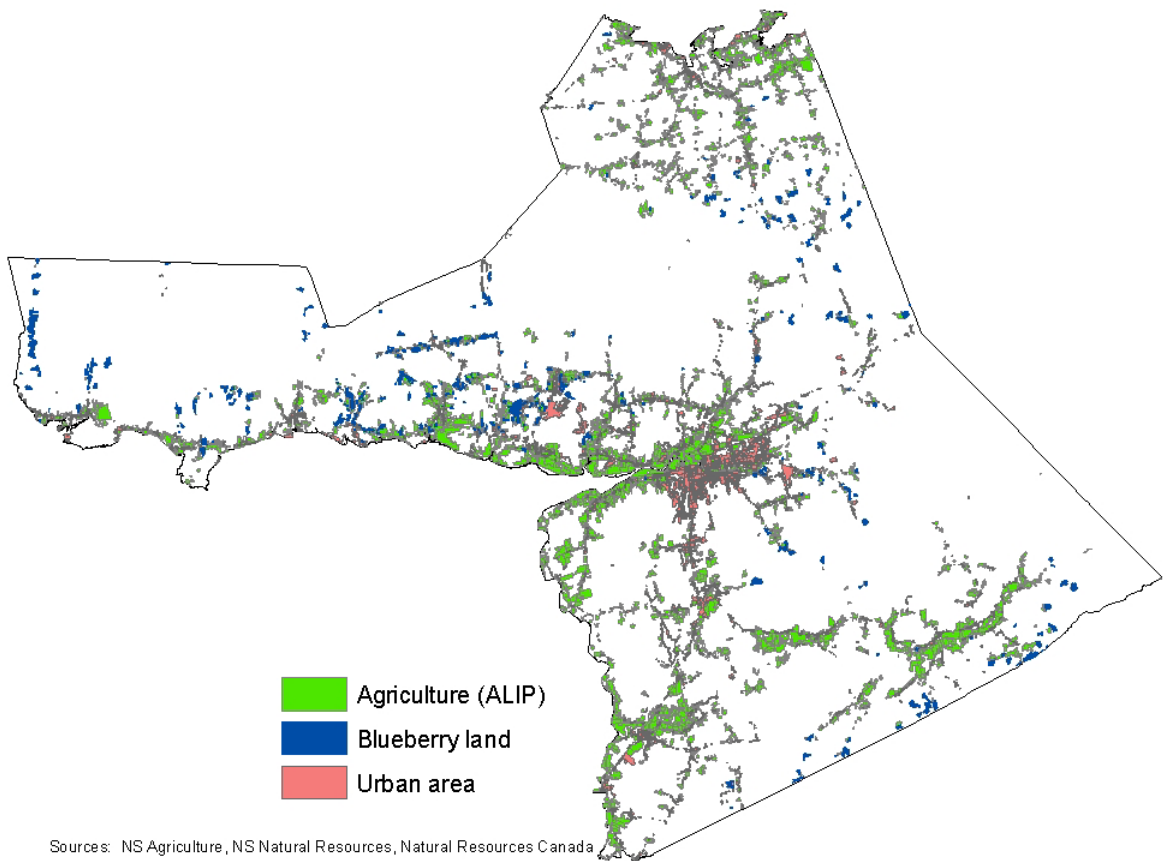
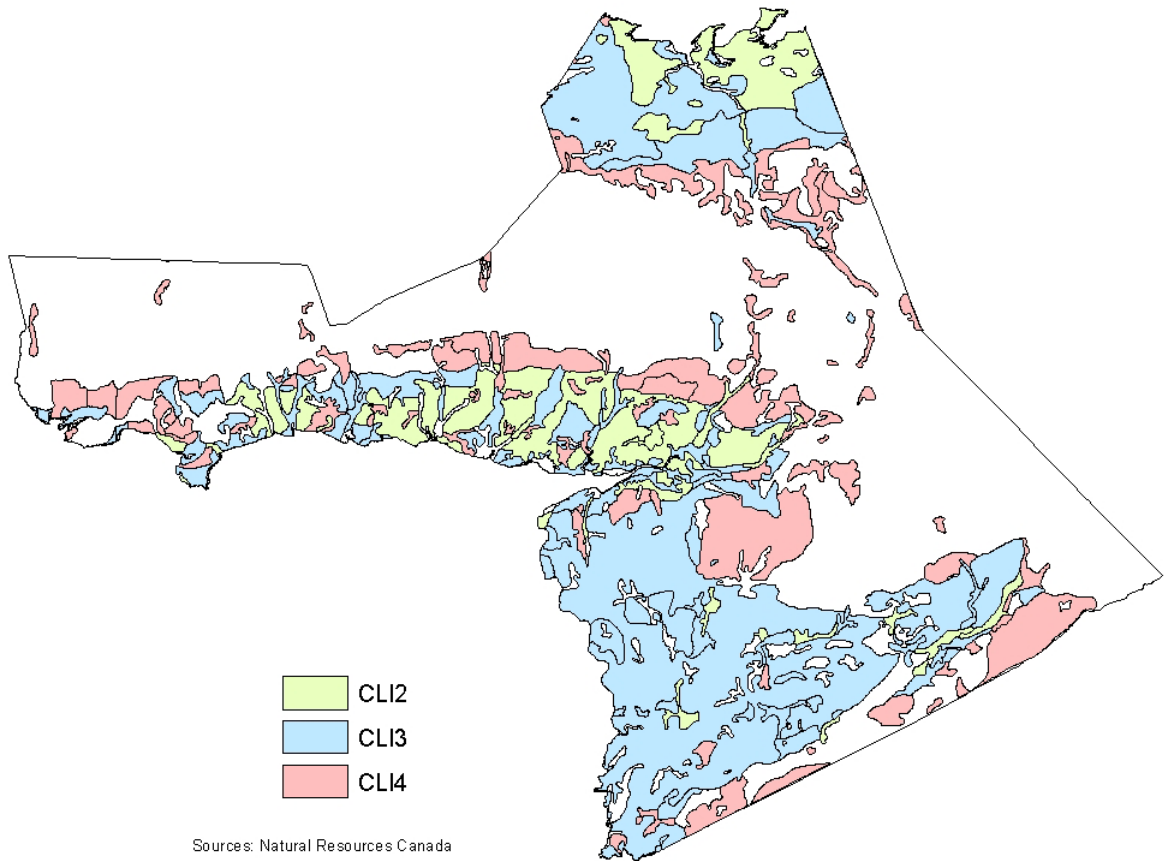
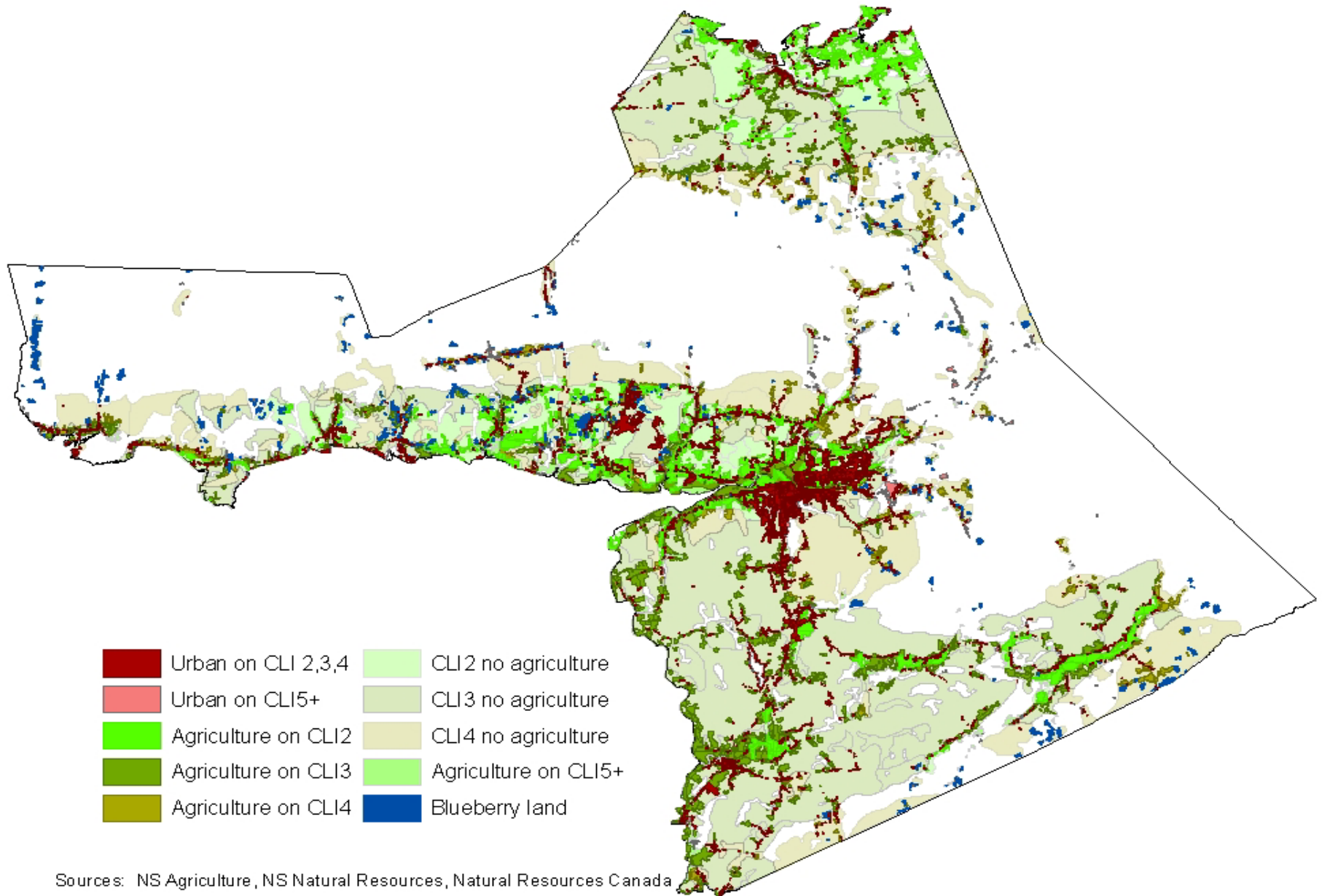


Figure 1b. Agricultural lands in Colchester County (overlay)

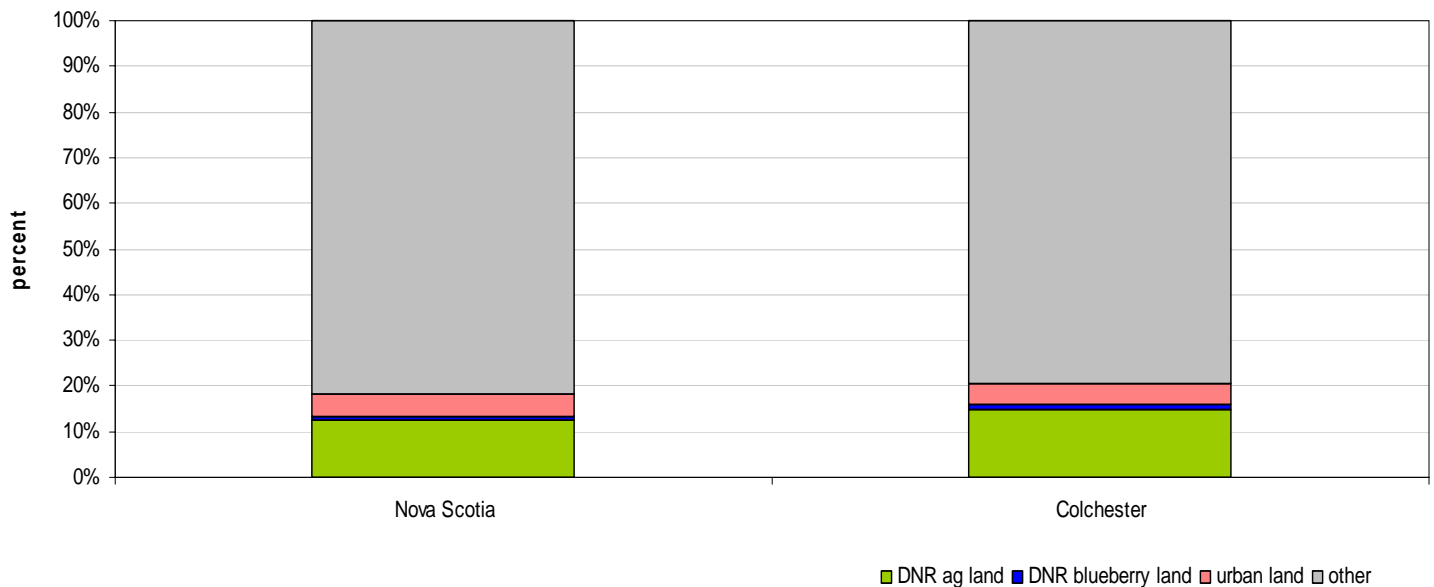


Sources: NS Agriculture, NS Natural Resources, Natural Resources Canada

Usage of arable land and composition of farmed land

Land most suitable for agricultural production (CLI classes 2, 3 and 4) are used for agriculture in Colchester County at a rate slightly higher than the provincial average (see Figure 2 and Table 2). About 15 percent of suitable agricultural land is used for agricultural production in Colchester compared with 13 percent provincially. This places Colchester 4th among the 18 counties in terms of utilization of arable land for farming.

Figure 2. Utilization of soils suitable for agriculture- Colchester vs Nova Scotia



Premium agricultural land (CLI 2) is moderately utilized for farming in Colchester with approximately 29 percent in agriculture (6th out of 14 counties with CLI 2 land). This is identical to the Nova Scotia average of 29 percent of CLI 2 lands used for agriculture.

Colchester has about 5 percent of its good agricultural soils under urban development ranking Colchester 12th. This compares to the provincial average of 5.4 percent. The relatively low urban encroachment on good agricultural soil can be attributed in large part to the large endowment of arable land in the county.

Table 2. Use of agricultural soils (CLI classes 2,3,4) in Colchester County and Nova Scotia

	CLI 2		CLI 3		CLI 4		TOTAL CLI 2,3,4	
	Colchester	Nova Scotia	Colchester	Nova Scotia	Colchester	Nova Scotia	Colchester	Nova Scotia
	Percent							
Agricultural land (DNR)*	29.1	29.3	13.6	12.0	7.7	7.9	14.9	12.7
Blueberry land (DNR)*	1.4	0.5	0.6	0.3	2.3	1.8	1.2	0.7
Urban area	8.3	6.9	4.5	5.4	2.2	4.6	4.6	5.4
Other	61.2	63.3	81.4	82.3	87.7	85.7	79.3	81.2

* Based on forest coverage files from NS Natural Resources (blueberry land is low-bush/ wild)
Source: Nova Scotia Department of Agriculture,
Natural Resources Canada,
Nova Scotia Department of Natural Resources.

Looking at the land base from a slightly different perspective (the composition of lands in agriculture, Table 3) it is apparent that Colchester County agriculture is generally taking place on good agricultural soils, and at a slightly higher percentage than the provincial average. One-third of agricultural land is on class 2 soils, while 45 percent is on class 3 soils and 13 percent on class 4. Approximately 10 percent of Colchester agriculture is on less than class 4 soils.

Table 3. Composition of lands in agriculture- Colchester County

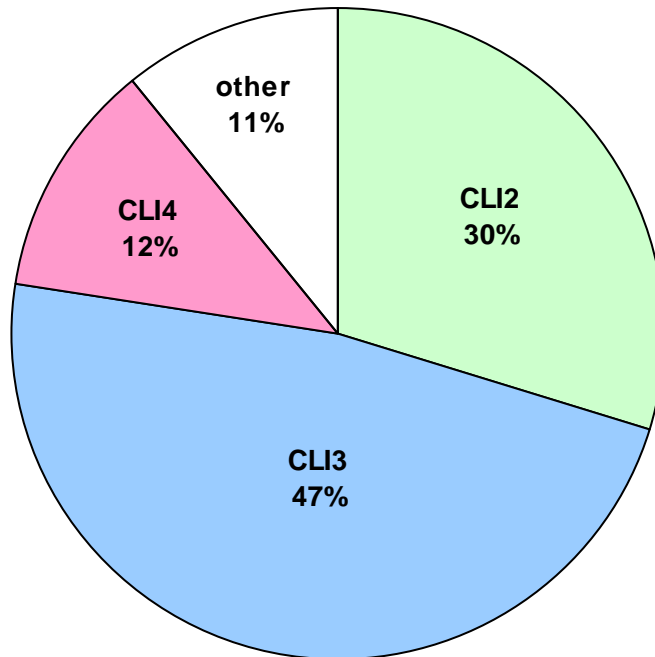
	Agricultural land (ALIP)*		Agricultural land (DNR)**		Blueberry land (DNR)**	
	Colchester	Nova Scotia	Colchester	Nova Scotia	Colchester	Nova Scotia
	Percent					
CLI 2	30.8	20.5	32.6	21.1	15.0	4.7
CLI 3	42.6	49.4	44.7	51.8	17.7	16.4
CLI 4	14.7	16.3	12.6	14.5	36.6	44.5
Other	11.9	13.8	10.1	12.7	30.7	34.4

* As indicated by the NSDA Agricultural Land Identification Project.
** Based on forest coverage files from NS Natural Resources (blueberry land is low-bush/ wild)
Source: Nova Scotia Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Canada,
Nova Scotia Department of Natural Resources.

Urban use and property fragmentation of the agricultural land base

As shown in Figure 3, the majority of urban development in Colchester is on good agricultural soils. Only 11 percent of urban land in Colchester is on poorer than CLI4 soil; the third lowest percentage in the province. Almost half of urban development in Colchester has been on class 3 land, while a further 30 percent is on class 2. As indicated in Table 2, the proportion of urban land encroachment on CLI soils is higher on higher quality land, consistent with the provincial average.

Figure 3. Composition of urban land- Colchester



Some lands currently in agriculture may be relatively easily removed for other forms of development. A contributing factor is lot size. Colchester County has 2,646 properties that are less than two hectares in size that are centered in ALIP lands (Table 4). These properties amount to 1,832 hectares, 1,602 of which are on ALIP.

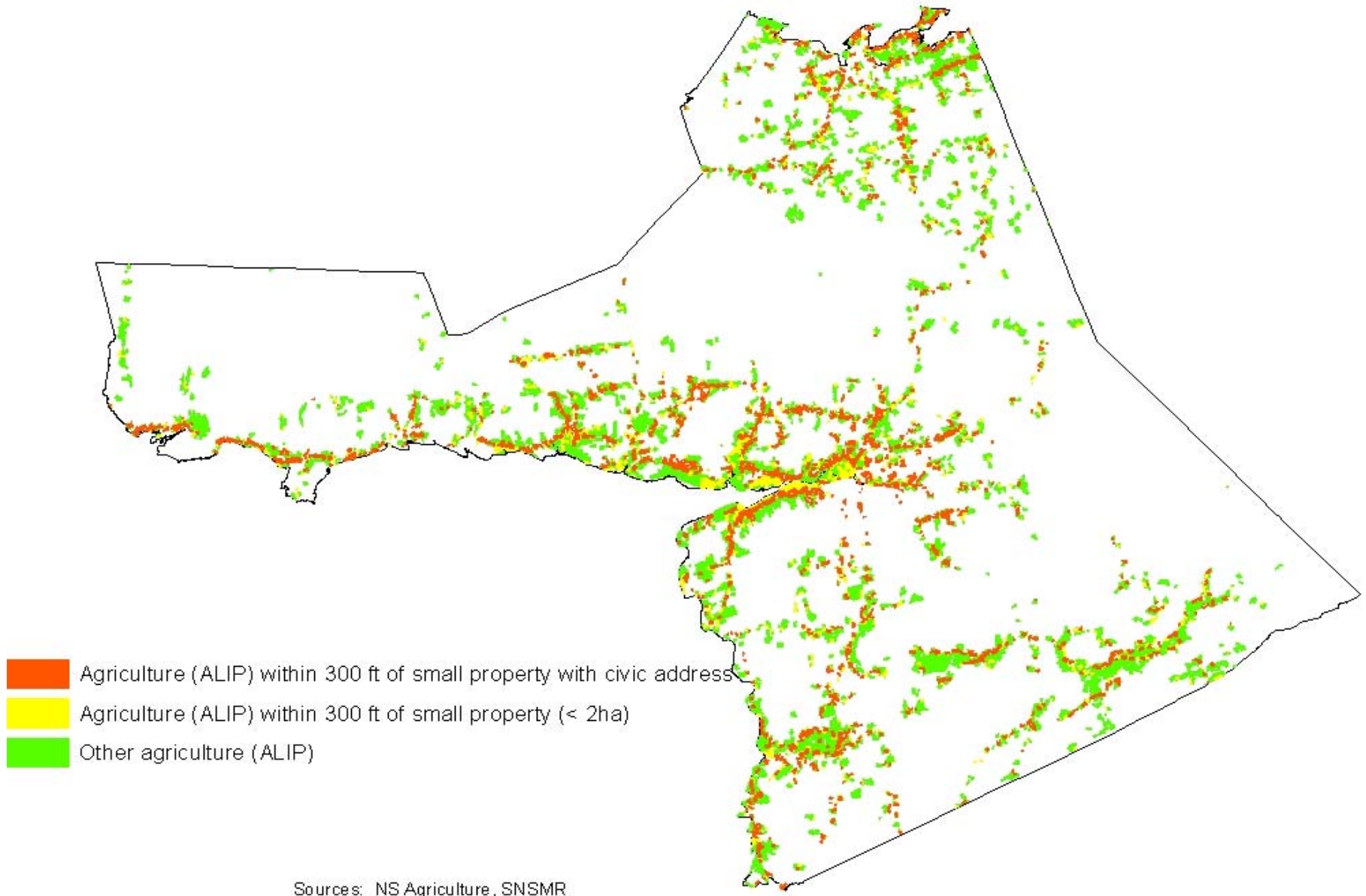
Table 4. Analysis of small properties (< 2ha) encroaching on farm land- Colchester County, Nova Scotia						
	Vacant properties		Properties with civic address		TOTAL of small properties (< 2 ha)	
	# properties	Hectares	# properties	Hectares	# properties	Hectares
Centered in ALIP farmland	1,393	994	1,253	838	2,646	1,832
Area in farmland of properties centered in ALIP	1,393	893	1,252	709	2,645	1,602
Within 10 meters of ALIP farmland	2,588	1,641	4,140	2,195	6,728	3,853
Source: Provincial PID data, NSDA (ALIP data)						

A total of 6,728 properties less than two hectares in size are on or adjacent to ALIP lands, 62 percent of which have civic addresses (i.e. are not vacant). This amounts to 24 percent of the provincial total of these properties. Relative to the amount of farming in Colchester, the county has the 12th highest rate of small developed properties that are adjacent to farmland (2nd in absolute terms).

Ultimately, approximately 819 hectares (2.5 percent) of ALIP lands in Colchester have been lost to urban development since 1998. This places Colchester 3rd in terms of percentage farmland lost to development and 1st in terms of area of farmland lost.

While physical occupancy of land by non-farm development or land with the potential for non-farm development can be used to estimate potential loss of land to the sector, the effect of development on adjacent agricultural lands is probably of greater significance in terms of area affected. In order to estimate the area of farmland that is at risk due to the proximity of development, a 300 ft (91.44m) buffer was drawn around each small (<2ha) property and the amount of ALIP farmland falling under this zone was calculated (Figure 4). Colchester has approximately 29 percent of its ALIP farmland falling under this category, tied for the 9th highest in the province (2nd highest in absolute terms). Approximately 19 percent of Colchester farmland is within 300 feet of a small property with a civic address (i.e. likely developed property).

Figure 4. Agriculture (ALIP) within 300 feet of small properties (< 2ha)



Sources: NS Agriculture, SNSMR

ⁱ Nova Scotia does not have any CLI class 1 soil. Class 2 to 4 soils have moderate to severe limitations that restrict the range of crops or require special conservation practices or both. Class 5 soils and below have very severe limitations for agriculture.

Sources

Natural Resources Canada. Canada Land Inventory. Available from: <http://geogratis.cgdi.gc.ca/CLI/frames.html>. Accessed [25 January 2010].

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Nova Scotia Department of Natural Resources. Forest Inventory - Geographic Information Systems. Available from: www.gov.ns.ca/natr/forestry/gis/forest-inventory.asp. Accessed [25 January 2010].

SNSMR (Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations). 2009. NS Civic Address File and property polygons.