



**United States  
Department of  
Agriculture**

### **Tioga County REAP Zone**

**Lead Entity:** Tioga County Department of Economic Development & Planning, New York

**Demographics:** Population: 51,784, Poverty Rate: 9.32%

**Background:** Tioga REAP Zone area experienced a substantial drop in non-agricultural and manufacturing jobs between 1990 and 1993. Over 2,400 jobs were lost through reductions in force by IBM and Department of Defense spending cutbacks. The lack of adequate employment within the Tioga County requires up to 55 percent of the County workforce to commute outside the county.

At the same time, Tioga County has many assets and natural amenities that contribute to its appeal and potential as a highly desirable and livable rural community. The Susquehanna River running along the southern tier of the County provides commercial, recreational, and educational opportunities to the communities located on its banks. Tioga agricultural based economy is experimenting with agri-clusters and agri-tourism with some early signs of success; and large stands of privately held forests provide local businesses an opportunity to develop a value-added wood product industry. In addition to these attributes, Tioga County educational system is competitive and local elected officials seem eager to capitalize on this track record to build stronger ties between the school system and local communities it serves.

**Purpose:** The Rural Economic Area Partnership (REAP), as a pilot program, was established to mitigate the negative effects of a lack of employment opportunities and job losses. REAP Zones were also established to create an environment for communities to find strategies to solve their own problems. The outcomes and lessons learned will help USDA to assist other communities throughout rural America experiencing similar problems.

Dirk Bierl, President Tioga REAP Zone  
c/o Cornell Cooperative Extension - Tioga CO  
56 Main St  
Owego, NY 13827  
[reap@co.tioga.ny.us](mailto:reap@co.tioga.ny.us)