



Agricultural Stewardship Association

ENSURING A FUTURE FOR FARMING AND FOOD IN THE UPPER HUDSON VALLEY OF NEW YORK STATE

A FARMLAND CONSERVATION PLAN FOR WASHINGTON AND RENSSELAER COUNTIES
MAY 2015



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Ensuring a Future for Farming and Food in the Upper Hudson Valley is a five-year strategic farmland conservation plan that was developed during 2013 to 2015 by the Agricultural Stewardship Association. We are grateful for the assistance of the many advisers, colleagues, community members, and friends who made this effort possible by providing their knowledge and expertise. These include Cornell Cooperative Extension of Washington County, Cornell Cooperative Extension of Rensselaer County, Washington County Farm Bureau, Rensselaer County Farm Bureau, United State Department of Agriculture Natural Resource Conservation Service, Washington County Soil and Water Conservation District, Rensselaer County Soil and Water Conservation District, and the Rensselaer County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan Working Group.

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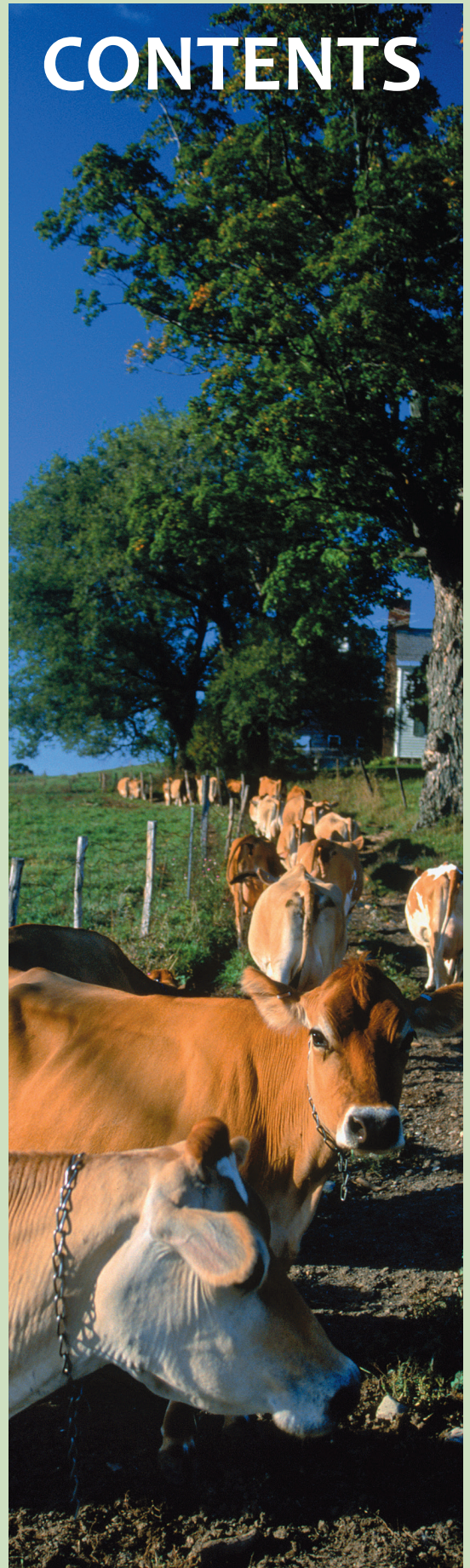
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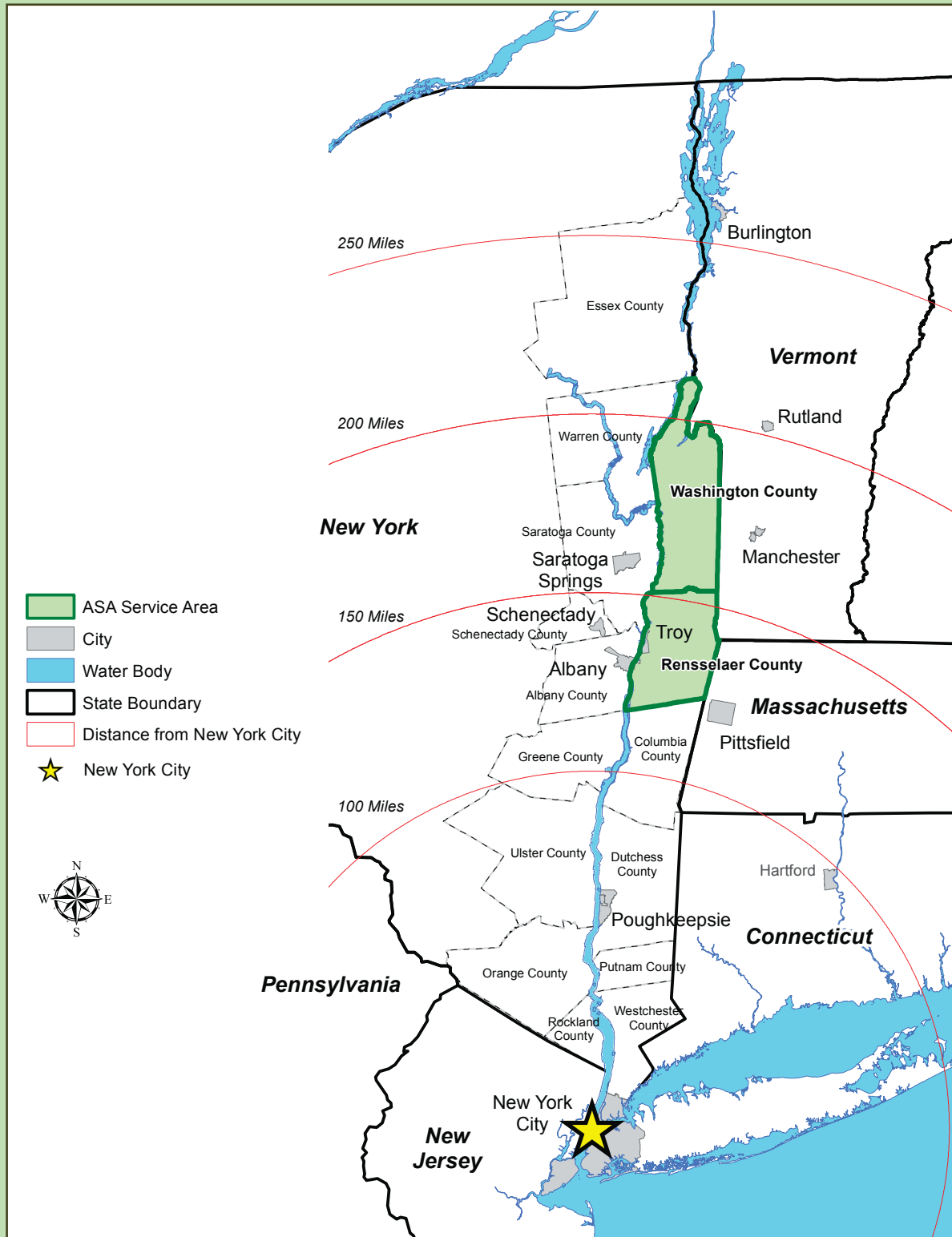
Ellie Markovitch – Outreach Coordinator (part-time)

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MAP OF ASA SERVICE AREA IN CONTEXT OF THE HUDSON VALLEY



PURPOSE

In April 2015 the Agricultural Stewardship Association (ASA) celebrated its 25th anniversary. ASA also celebrated the conservation of its 100th farm, bringing the total acreage protected to date throughout Rensselaer and Washington counties to 15,600 acres.

We are extraordinarily fortunate to live in a region with rich productive land and many talented farm families who have been working this land for generations. Farmers are a key component of any successful food system.

Their commitment to farming and strong ties to the land are what drive their decision to permanently conserve their land for current and future farming needs. While selling development rights may not be the right option for all families, ASA has a long list of farmers who wish to conserve their farmland and ensure its availability to the next generation of farmers.

Recognizing that there is much more work to be done, ASA has developed a new five-year Forever Farmland Conservation Plan with the goal to protect a total of 24,000 acres by the end of 2020. To reach this goal, ASA will need to protect another 45 farms or 8,400 acres in five years at an estimated cost of approximately \$9.4 million.

This will be no small feat. To reach our goal, ASA will need to raise \$1.9 million in private funding over the next five years to leverage around \$7.5 million in state and federal awards. This \$1.9 million is over and above ASA's annual operating expenses (currently about \$600,000).

The purpose of this plan is to focus ASA and its supporters on key priorities for the next five years. The plan identifies priority farmland as well as the funding needed to achieve these goals.



FARMS HERE ARE EXTREMELY IMPORTANT FOR THE FOODSHEDS OF NEW YORK'S CAPITAL DISTRICT, NEW YORK CITY AND BOSTON



A recent study found that nearly 100% of Americans could get all the food they need from within a 200 mile radius. ASA's service area in Washington and Rensselaer counties is a key part of the 200 mile circle around several major cities in the Northeast. There are 60 million people living within five hours of this service area who need a proximate, secure food source.



Rensselaer and Washington counties serve as anchor counties to the overall agricultural economy of the Hudson Valley, accounting for one fourth of the Valley's farms and farmland, and nearly a third of the Valley's total annual farm sales. There are a total of 1,300 farms in the two counties with 278,000 acres of land in agricultural production, with 152,000 of those acres being tilled.

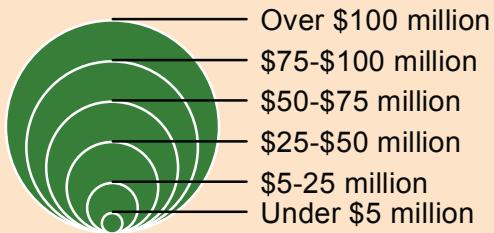
Washington County is the strongest agricultural county in the Hudson Valley, containing the highest number of farms, the most farmland and the largest market value of agricultural products sold in the region. Due to the viability of its farms, Washington County serves as a hub for a robust agricultural business sector that services farms up and down the Hudson Valley, including farm equipment distributorships, as well as feed, fertilizer, financial and veterinary service providers. These businesses provide supplies and services to farms in the greater Capital District, western Vermont, northwest Massachusetts, Columbia and Dutchess counties, and as far away as Connecticut and Rhode Island.



MARKET VALUE OF FOOD PRODUCTION BY COUNTY

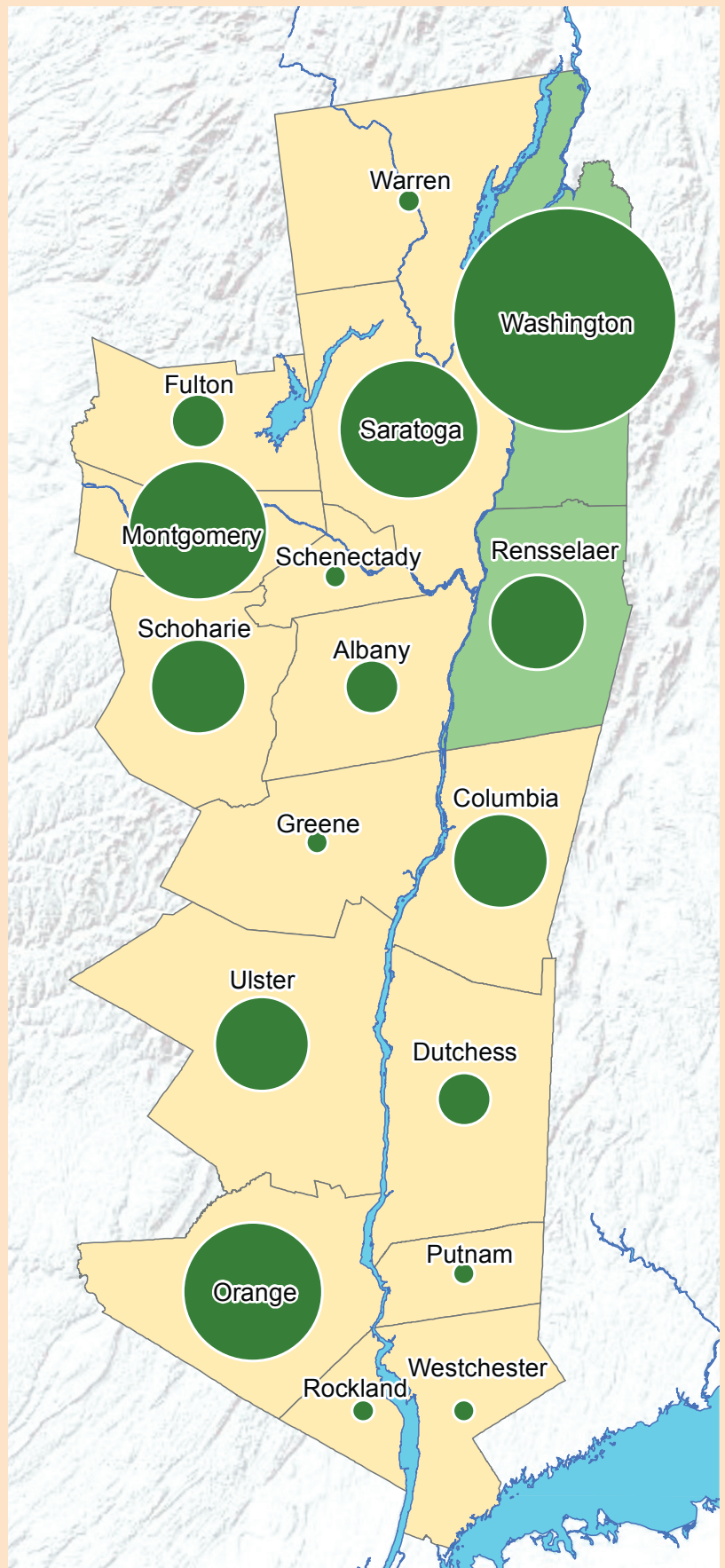


Legend



Sales in Food Production, including vegetables, fruit, nuts, poultry, eggs, beef, pork and milk.

Source 2012 USDA Census of Agriculture



INTRODUCTION

ASA WAS ESTABLISHED in 1990 by a small group of visionary farmers and landowners in Washington County who realized that if they did not conserve productive farmland in this region, they had much to lose, including neighboring farms and local agricultural support businesses, access to fresh local food, their close-knit farming communities, and not least of all, the scenic working landscapes that lie among the Adirondack, Green and Taconic Mountains.

Eventually, those countless barnyard and kitchen table discussions about protecting local farms came to fruition when ASA became an official land trust in Washington County. Led by George Houser (1931-2014), those farmers and conservationists not only donated their time to organizing ASA, but also donated conservation easements on several of their farms to ensure that their land would remain available for farming in perpetuity.

In 2003, ASA extended its service area to northern Rensselaer County. By the time ASA completed its first Farmland Conservation Plan in 2006, ASA had conserved over 5,400 acres of productive farmland and forestland in Washington and Rensselaer counties. In that 2006 plan, ASA set a highly ambitious goal to conserve an additional 10,000 acres of strategic agricultural land by 2010 for a total of 15,400 conserved acres in the Upper Hudson Valley.

ASA reached that goal at the end of 2013, having conserved 15,600 acres of farmland and forestland. It took three more years than anticipated to achieve this goal due to the recession that began in 2008, just two years after ASA's 2006 plan was established. The recession caused New York State to suspend funding new farmland conservation projects for about five years. In 2014, New York State resumed funding farmland conservation as a means of stabilizing the land base used for agriculture.

Since 2006, ASA has more than doubled the number of conservation easements that it holds and stewards, from 45 to 100. The organization has also expanded its service area to encompass all of Rensselaer County.

This organization is proud to have remained vibrant and active throughout its 25-year history. ASA is one of only two land trusts in New York State that

focus exclusively on conserving productive land, and one of only 28 land trusts in the United States that have protected over 14,000 acres of farmland. [American Farmland Trust Survey of Land Trusts 2012.]

With the help of funding from the New York State Environmental Protection Fund, as well as private funding, ASA is poised to assume an even more critical and energized role in conserving farm and forest lands in the Upper Hudson Valley.

What is so special about Washington and Rensselaer counties?

The spectacular rolling hills and valleys of the Upper Hudson Valley are blessed with many attributes that make this area a unique resource not only for Upstate New York, but also for the greater Northeast.

These attributes include:

- Important and fertile soils formed when the Hudson Valley lay at the bottom of a vast ocean tens of thousands of years ago;
- Plentiful, clean water;
- A critical mass of farms that supports a robust agribusiness sector;
- Over 200 years of shared agricultural experience and expertise within our farming communities, as has been annually showcased at the Washington County Fair since 1883 and the Schaghticoke Fair since 1819;
- An existing leadership role in dairy farming; (According to the 2012 USDA Census of Agriculture, New York State has the third highest dairy sales in the United States; Washington and Rensselaer Counties combined make up 5% of New York State's total dairy sales.)
- New startup ventures in vegetable farming, grass-fed livestock, vineyards and farm breweries, and an increased interest in grain farming;
- A five-hour travel time point of access to over 60 million consumers - the largest consumer



food market in the United States; (New York City represents just one-third of that market with an estimated \$7 billion in unmet demand for locally grown food and beverages.)

- Ready access to major railroad and truck transportation routes;
- Excellent farmland that is still very affordable; (It costs nearly four times as much to conserve an acre of farmland in counties south of Rensselaer as it does to conserve an acre of farmland here.)
- And far from least, a region-wide appreciation for these historic working landscapes, many of which lie within view of the Saratoga Battlefield, the site of the “Turning Point” during the Revolutionary War. Another important revolutionary battle site, the Bennington Battlefield, is also located in this region.

Agriculture is not a fringe or "nice to have" local industry in Washington and Rensselaer counties; it is a key component of our economy that annually generates close to \$200 million in sales and provides thousands of jobs in these two counties. Moreover, it should be kept in mind that, as the old adage goes,

cows don't go to school. Only 29 cents of each \$1 in tax revenue is used for government services on farmland. By contrast, residential housing requires \$1.27 in government services for each \$1 of tax revenue. [source: AFT.] Thus, agriculture keeps local property taxes lower than if the land were developed for most residential types of development.

In addition to the role that this land plays in our regional economy and foodshed, these scenic working landscapes play a vital role in promoting tourism and enhancing the quality of life for communities throughout the region. It is land well worth protecting if we are to ensure that the most fundamental piece of our local food system remains intact for current and future food production.



ABOUT THE AGRICULTURAL STEWARDSHIP ASSOCIATION

ASA is a well-run and highly-respected organization with a professional staff and a current annual operating budget of \$600,000. ASA is proud to have remained vibrant and active throughout the recent recession. The organization has stepped up communications and outreach efforts to increase visibility, strengthen and broaden support for farmland protection, and build the local long-term stewardship ethic. The all-volunteer board of directors continues to be comprised of local farmers and citizens from all walks of life, bringing a wealth of diverse knowledge, experience and local perspective to the work of ASA. The organization offers a variety of interesting community and family-oriented programs, many of which take place on farms that ASA has helped to conserve.



- 100+ local families have worked with ASA to protect 15,600 acres (100 total properties) of valuable farm and forest land from future development. More than two-thirds of these conservation easements have been completed in the past eight years.
- ASA achieved accreditation in 2013 through the national Land Trust Accreditation Commission, strengthening its ability to provide solid long-term land protection through streamlined internal operations.
- A land stewardship and defense fund of \$600,000 ensures that conservation values are upheld and enforced in perpetuity, as required by national accreditation standards.
- The Association's funding comes from individuals, private foundations, and state and federal farmland protection programs. The past eight years of accelerated pace of conservation has been spurred, in large part, by two leading funders. New York State's Farmland Protection Program has provided more than \$9.5 million in support of various ASA projects, and the private Castanea Foundation has directly invested \$1.8+ million in ASA's Farmland Protection Initiative.

How ASA Conserves Farmland

ASA works with willing landowners who sign a deed (called a "conservation easement") which restricts the property to only those activities that would not harm the agricultural resources and viability of the land. Once completed, the landowner has "extinguished" (given up) the non-agricultural development rights forever. ASA then has a long-term stewardship responsibility to ensure the terms of the conservation easement are upheld.

Depending upon funding availability, ASA may purchase the conservation easement from the landowner (also called purchase of development rights or PDR). The purchase price of the easement is determined by an appraisal prepared by a New York State certified appraiser. The appraisal uses comparable sales and includes a "before" easement valuation and an "after" easement valuation with the development rights extinguished. The difference between the values is the value of the conservation easement or development value.

A landowner can also choose to donate a conservation easement to ASA. There are many reasons why people choose to donate easements, including estate planning and family consensus-building between generations, state and federal income tax deductions, state property tax credits, a desire to leave a legacy to future generations, or simply because they feel it is the "right thing to do" as stewards of the land.

ASA's Stewardship Commitment

ASA makes a major commitment when it accepts conservation easements. Once the land is permanently protected, ASA has the ongoing responsibility to uphold and enforce the terms of its conservation easements. Everything ASA does to fulfill this ongoing, long-term obligation is referred to as conservation easement stewardship.

In order for ASA to care properly for every easement it holds, it must perform the following functions: monitor the property at least annually; make sure the easement terms are being observed; respond to landowner notifications and requests for approval; enforce the easement in the event of a violation; explain the easement terms to new owners when the easement property changes hands; maintain the records associated with the easement; periodically supplement the baseline documentation report; and carry out other administrative and management responsibilities. In addition, ASA serves as a resource to landowners and their agents (farm managers, foresters, caretakers, real estate brokers, etc.) when they have questions about the easement. ASA also sends special mailings and offers educational opportunities on land management topics that are of interest to landowners, such as workshops on pond management, timber harvesting, stream bank restoration and land leasing.

ASA believes that maintaining a collaborative relationship with our easement landowners is the best strategy for avoiding easement violations and ultimately achieving our shared goal of ensuring that future generations enjoy the same benefits of the conserved land. ASA's professional staff has the training, expertise and capacity to handle our long-term stewardship obligations and the resources available to address landowners' questions when they arise.

Conserving land through the use of a conservation easement is an ongoing, collaborative partnership between ASA and its landowners to ensure that the conservation values of easement properties are protected forever.



ASA's Key Challenges

ASA is at a crossroads. Nearly ten years ago the Castanea Foundation, a private conservation foundation, undertook a ten-year giving program totaling more than \$1.8 million that enabled ASA to conserve nearly 6,000 acres of land. That program is about to end. (See page 45 for more about this program.) ASA is at risk of losing critical momentum if we cannot replace that source of private funding.

Increased development pressure, particularly from Saratoga County, is another challenge. Saratoga County, which borders Washington and Rensselaer counties to the west, is New York State's fastest growing county. ASA is grateful for the jobs being generated just 15 to 20 miles west of ASA's service area. However, economic growth should not come at the cost of our productive farmland. Business campuses, housing developments and strip malls do not belong on good agricultural land that can produce food.

The economic downturn of 2008 created another hurdle for ASA. This led to a significant loss of both state and private financial support for farmland protection. Fortunately, New York State resumed funding in 2014 for new farmland protection projects. However, we will not be able to take full advantage of that funding unless we have adequate private funding to match government grants, pay staff and continue our outreach to farmers.



DEVELOPING A FOREVER FARMLAND PLAN

Recognizing that there is much more work to be done, ASA has developed this new Forever Farmland Conservation Plan to focus limited resources and efforts on protecting priority land. Adopted by ASA in the spring of 2015, the Plan is a product of over two years of planning and 25 years of land conservation experience.

The plan identifies land protection priorities and assesses fundraising needs and capabilities in order to meet the goal of protecting 8,400 additional acres by the end of 2020. It was created through a process of stakeholder outreach, data gathering and computerized analysis.

ASA will need to raise more than \$1.9 million in private funding over the next 5 years to leverage state and federal awards to reach this goal. This \$1.9 million is money needed over and above ASA's annual operating expenses (currently about \$600,000). Further, this is money needed in addition to the \$7.5 million ASA hopes to raise from federal and state farmland protection programs. ASA's record of success through five long years of economic recession demonstrates our ability to make this new plan a success.

Plan Methodology

This plan identifies those farm soils that are important to conserve, prioritizes farm parcels based on their agricultural values, and shows where the concentrations of the most important farmland are located. In drafting this plan, ASA relied upon geographic information systems (GIS) analysis and digital soils data to identify areas for farmland protection efforts. GIS data was obtained from Washington and Rensselaer counties, New York State, the United States Department of Agriculture Natural Resource Conservation Service (USDA NRCS) and other land conservation organizations.

ASA's Land Projects and Stewardship Committee next prioritized these areas based on six criteria identified through meetings with farmers and agricultural organizations in both counties, including Farm Bureau, USDA NRCS, local Soil and Water Conservation Districts, and the Planning Committee of the Rensselaer County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board. Each criterion was assigned a number of points to reflect its importance as follows:

- Land in current agricultural production, as identified by the most recent aerial photography (5 points)
- Prime soils, as identified and classified by USDA NRCS (4 points)
- Statewide Important and Unique soils, as identified and classified by USDA NRCS (3 points)
- Land within 1/4 mile of conserved land (ASA easements, state land, etc.) (3 points)
- Land within 1/8 mile of current agricultural parcels (2 points)
- Land within 100 feet of a water resource (1 point)



Once the data layers were combined and mapped, seven “Priority Areas” and seven, secondary “Special Areas” were delineated based on the highest concentrations of the ranking criteria. See Appendix C for maps of Soil Classifications, Ranking Criteria, Priority Areas and Special Areas.

A separate category of Independent Project Sites was also identified for projects located outside of the Priority Areas and Special Areas, but which otherwise meet the ranking criteria.

Priority Areas contain significant amounts of high quality farmland and productive soils that are conducive to a long-term agricultural business environment. Priority Areas also include current concentrations of conserved farmland and other important anchor farms.

A total of seven Priority Areas have been identified:

1. Hudson River Corridor (along Route 40)
2. White Creek Valley (along Route 153)
3. Batten Kill (along Route 313)
4. Hoosic River Watershed
5. Brunswick (along Route 7)
6. Schodack
7. Stephentown

Special Areas are areas that contain productive farms and woodlands, areas of scenic, environmental or historic significance and farms that define our unique community character. Special Areas are of secondary priority after Priority Areas.

A total of seven Special Areas were identified:

- A. Kingsbury-Fort Ann Flats
- B. Champlain Canal Corridor
- C. Granville/Hebron
- D. Black Creek Valley (along Routes 30 and 31)
- E. Historic Route 22 Corridor
- F. Greenwich-Cambridge Corridor (along Route 372)
- G. West Hoosick Hills

Independent Project Sites are individual or contiguous properties that otherwise meet the criteria for Priority or Special Areas, but fall outside of Priority Areas and Special Areas. These properties are important to protect by reason of location, farm viability, scenic quality or specific development threats. This category also includes properties for which the owners are willing to donate their development rights and/or properties for which private funding is available.



LAND CONSERVATION GOALS BY AREA

Once Priority and Special Areas were delineated, a three-step process was used to establish how much land to protect in each Area, given an overall goal of protecting an additional 8,400 acres. To begin, we set a farmland protection goal totaling 1,000 acres for Independent Project Sites, and subtracted that from the 8,400 acre goal. The initial acreage goals for Priority Areas and Special Areas were then calculated based on the amount of unprotected agricultural land in each area proportionate to the total amount of unprotected agricultural land found in all areas combined. Next, to put higher emphasis on farmland protection efforts within the Priority Areas, the acreage goals were weighted approximately 60% in Priority Areas and 40% in Special Areas. Additional adjustments were made to reflect the feasibility of farmland protection efforts in each area.



Priority Areas	Total Acreage Goal
Hudson River Corridor	1,150
White Creek Valley	400
Batten Kill	200
Hoosic River Watershed	1,800
Brunswick	500
Schodack	350
Stephentown	200
Special Areas	
Kingsbury-Fort Ann Flats	500
Champlain Canal Corridor	700
Granville/Hebron	350
Black Creek Valley	200
Historic Route 22 Corridor	300
Greenwich-Cambridge Corridor	150
West Hoosick Hills	600
Independent Project Sites	1,000
TOTAL	8,400



For a glossary of terms used in this report, see Appendix A

MEET SOME OF OUR FARMERS

Buying the Farm Next Door

Rocky Ledge Farm, Kingsbury (116 acres)



Larry Steele purchased the 116-acre Rocky Ledge Farm in 2003. He grew up next to this dairy farm that had been in the Keech family since the late 1800s. Larry is passionate about his land, cherishes its history, and has a clear vision for how he will manage it. He describes a small apple orchard that was planted in 1918 by the Keech family to celebrate the end of World War I, the flocks of snow geese that stop there on their migration, and about how he, like the Keech family before him, will raise Guernsey cows for the rich milk they produce. He feels strongly that conserving small farms and utilizing sustainable agricultural techniques helps ensure a secure and healthy local food source.

When Larry decided to donate a conservation easement to ASA in 2007, he was not in a position to cover the project costs in addition to donating an easement. ASA's Easement Fund, made possible by Castanea Foundation, made this project feasible.

"Every time I turn into my lane and head toward the farm, I get such a good feeling knowing that it will always be like this."

—Larry Steele, Easement Donor

TOTAL PROJECT COST:

\$166,200

SOURCE OF FUNDING:

LANDOWNER DONATION \$155,000

CASTANEA FOUNDATION \$11,200

Transferring the Farm to Another Young Farm Family

Homestead Farms, Brunswick (165 acres) *In process*



Homestead Farms in the Town of Brunswick has been continuously farmed since the 1700s. Rich and Linda Bulson are just the third family to farm this land. Today, Homestead Farms offers more than 150 varieties of vegetables and flowers through a Community Supported Agriculture operation and the Troy Waterfront Farmers' Market. When the Bulsons decided to retire, they wanted to transfer the operation to Zack and Ann Metzger, an experienced young farm couple, in order to continue this long agricultural tradition. However, buying the land outright was beyond the Metzgers' means.

The Bulsons turned to ASA for help. ASA secured funding from New York State and the Scenic Hudson Land Trust to enable the Bulsons to place an easement on the property. Prohibiting the land from ever being developed will reduce the value of the farm and will make it possible for the Metzgers to buy the land at an affordable price. At the same time, the proceeds from the sale of the easement and conserved farm will provide the Bulsons with the means to retire.

"The state Farmland Protection grant will make it possible to meet our goals of conserving the farm and providing for our retirement while enabling the transfer of Homestead Farms to the next generation of young farmers."

—Rich and Linda Bulson

TOTAL PROJECT COST:

\$474,202

SOURCE OF FUNDING:

**NYS ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION
FUND \$360,651**

**SCENIC HUDSON LAND TRUST
\$113,551**

Conservation Supports a Growing Family

Stearns Farm, Hoosick (407 acres) and Clark Farm, Jackson (132 acres)



Skip Clark is a third generation dairy farmer. His grandfather started the family farm on Ashgrove Road in Cambridge in 1919 with 14 cows, managing to keep the farm through the Great Depression. After his dad passed away, Skip realized there wasn't enough tillable land to expand the dairy, but still, it was home. To support their growing operation, the Clarks rented land on Route 313, just outside the village of Cambridge, to grow crops as well as land in Petersburg owned by the Stearns brothers.

When the Stearns brothers retired from dairying, they offered to sell the land to Skip. At the same time, the land Skip rented on Route 313 came up for sale. Skip turned to the Castanea Foundation and ASA for help. Castanea, a key ASA supporter, purchased both parcels. Castanea continued to rent the land to the Clarks while the Clarks worked with ASA and Washington County to secure funding to conserve all 540 acres.

Once conserved, the Clark family was able to purchase both parcels from Castanea at their reduced agricultural value. Skip and Selena hope their son, Tyler, will follow in their footsteps.

"I was skeptical at first, after all the hard knocks and struggle it seemed too good to be true. But I can't say enough good about working with Castanea and ASA. I wouldn't have been able to secure this land, which is so important to my business, without their help."

–Skip Clark

TOTAL PROJECT COST:

\$881,558

SOURCE OF FUNDING:

NYS ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION FUND

\$608,668

CASTANEA FOUNDATION \$247,890

WHIPSTOCK HILL PRESERVATION SOCIETY \$25,000

Conserving the Hand Melon Farm Legacy

Hand Melon Farm, Easton (419 acres)



In 1925, Allen F. Hand decided to plant a new exotic cash crop—muskmelons—on the 175-acre “county sand pile” that his family had been farming since 1908. By 1939, Allen was growing 18 acres of melons, had trademarked the name Hand Melon, and was selling melons all over the nation. The county sand pile had become a thriving business. Today, Allen’s grandson, John, runs the farm which produces over 140 varieties of fruits, vegetables, herbs and ornamental fall gourds on 419 acres.

In 2007, John heard about another melon farm selling out to a developer for a mall and a parking lot. He didn’t want that to happen to his farm. With ASA’s help, John was able to secure funding from New York State and the Open Space Institute in return for selling the development rights on the land. This enabled John to invest in an irrigation system and solar panels, ensuring that his family legacy would carry on. With no debt, a state-of-the-art irrigation system, and no power bill for the next 30 years, John thinks his dad would approve.

“When the last parcel was transferred to me, it brought tears to my eyes. Finally owning the entire farm changed my whole perspective.”

—John Hand

TOTAL PROJECT COST:

\$815,111

SOURCE OF FUNDING:

**NYS ENVIRONMENTAL
PROTECTION FUND**

\$608,843

OPEN SPACE INSTITUTE

\$206,268

PRIORITY AREAS

HUDSON RIVER CORRIDOR PRIORITY AREA



(ALONG ROUTE 40) TOWNS OF FORT EDWARD, ARGYLE, GREENWICH, EASTON, SCHAGHTICOKE, PITTSTOWN

Description



One of the most significant Priority Areas is the Hudson River Corridor along Route 40. This corridor includes around 35,808 acres of unprotected farmland. Located along the Hudson River, this Priority Area contains some of the most

productive agricultural soils in the region.

The Hudson River Corridor is home to many large, productive dairy operations and a number of successful fruit and vegetable operations.

Across the Hudson River from this Priority Area is the Saratoga National Historical Park (also known as the Saratoga Battlefield). Saratoga Battlefield, in conjunction with ASA and Saratoga PLAN, has developed a viewshed protection plan for the battlefield. The plan ranks many of the properties within this Priority Area as medium- or high-priority for viewshed protection to maintain the historical context surrounding the Park.

ASA's Conservation Work

ASA holds 25 conservation easements on 3,587 acres in this Priority Area. Since 2007, ASA has conserved ten farms in this Area using state or federal funds to purchase conservation easements (or development rights), most recently for the 155-acre McArthur-Suaert Farm in Greenwich.

ASA has worked in partnership with the Castanea Foundation on five easement projects totaling over 584 acres. These collaborative projects were a mix of publicly and privately-funded "purchase of development rights" (PDR) projects as well as donated easement projects.

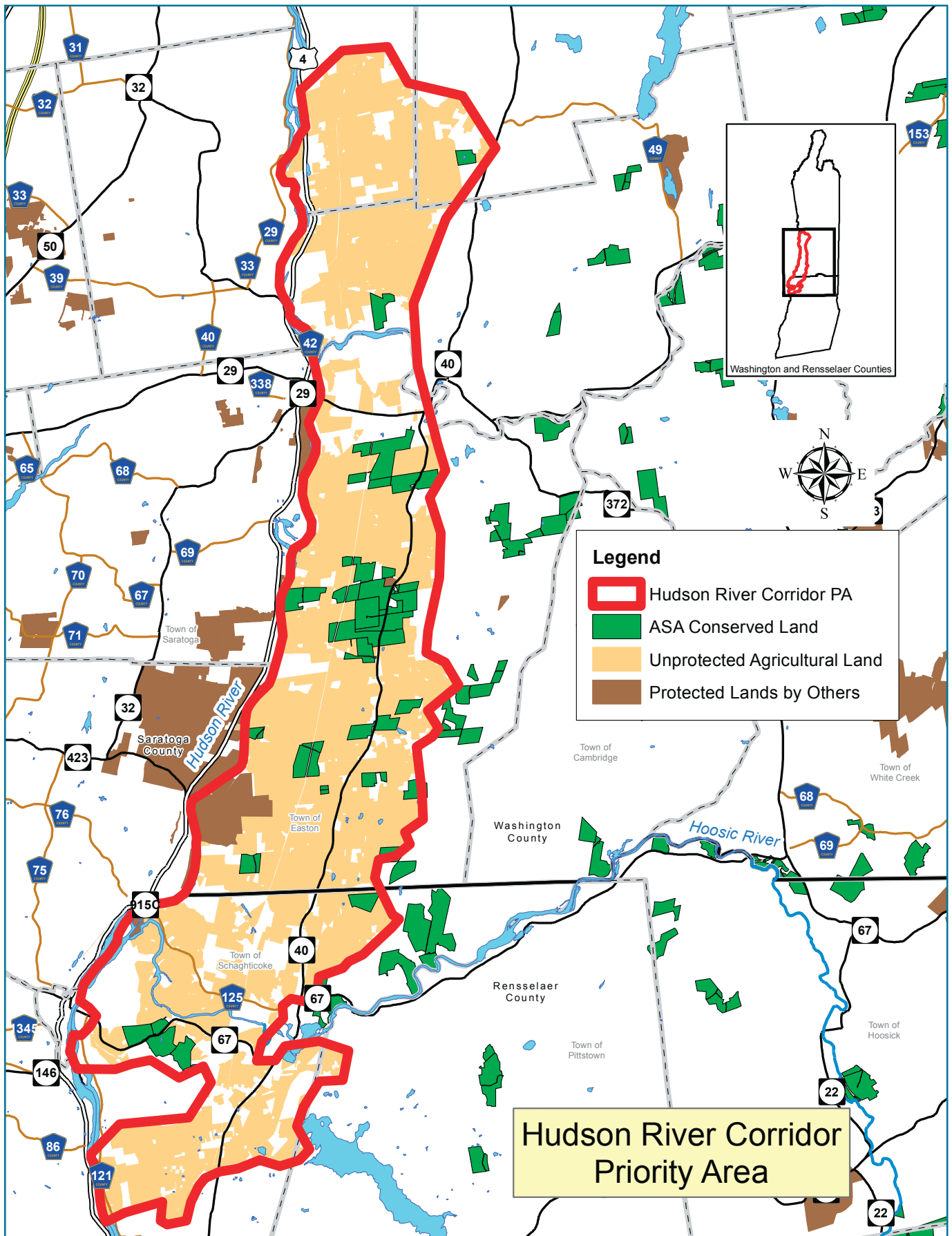
Land Conservation Goals

Protect six farms on 1,150 acres within this Priority Area. An estimated \$569,203 in private funds and \$1,117,000 in public funding is needed to accomplish this goal.

ASA CONSERVED LAND TO DATE:

3,587 ACRES

**ASA'S 2020 GOAL: CONSERVE AN
ADDITIONAL 1,150 ACRES**



WHITE CREEK VALLEY PRIORITY AREA

(ALONG ROUTE 153) TOWNS OF SALEM, GREENWICH, JACKSON



ASA has worked in partnership with the Castanea Foundation and The Conservation Fund on ten total easement projects totaling over 1,781 acres. These collaborative projects were a mix of publicly and privately-funded PDR projects as well as donated easement projects.

Land Conservation Goals

Protect 400 acres on two farms within this Priority Area. To meet this goal, it is estimated that ASA will need \$364,000 in public funding and \$29,150 in private funding.

Description

This Priority Area contains around 9,153 acres of unprotected farmland. Located along portions of White Creek and the renowned Batten Kill trout stream, this Priority Area contains some of the most productive agricultural soils in the region.

The White Creek Valley Priority Area includes the watershed of White Creek as it flows through Salem toward Black Creek and the Batten Kill, and also includes the area around Cossayuna Lake. The highly fertile and productive river bottomlands in this area support a variety of agricultural operations.

This Priority Area also contains the 446-acre Carter's Pond Wildlife Management Area (owned by New York State) and a 17-acre property owned by the Battenkill Conservancy. The Vermont Land Trust is also active in farmland protection efforts across the state border to the east and holds numerous easements in close proximity to this area.

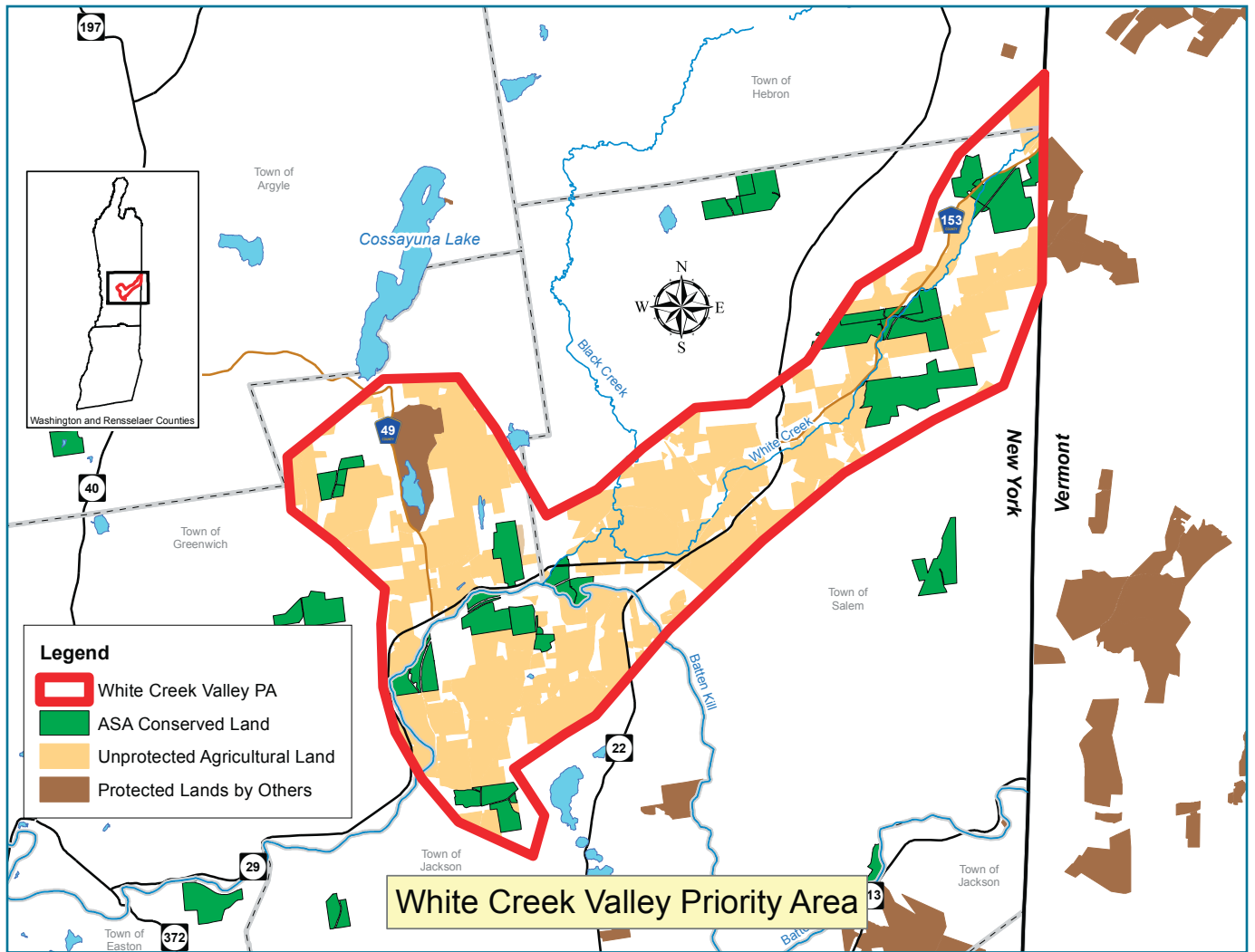
ASA's Conservation Work

ASA holds 13 conservation easements on 2,177 acres in the White Creek Valley Priority Area.



ASA CONSERVED LAND TO DATE
2,177 ACRES

ASA's 2020 GOAL: CONSERVE AN
ADDITIONAL 400 ACRES



BATTEN KILL PRIORITY AREA

(ALONG ROUTE 313) TOWNS OF SALEM, JACKSON, WHITE CREEK

Description

This Priority Area contains approximately 2,594 acres of unprotected farmland. Located near the famous Batten Kill trout stream, this area runs between Route 22 and the Mount Tom State Forest. This Priority Area contains some of the most productive agricultural soils in the region.

Land owned by many prominent dairy operations is located within this Priority Area.

This Priority Area contains 643 acres of land conserved by New York State, including the Eldridge Swamp State Forest and a portion of the Batten Kill State Forest.

ASA's Conservation Work

ASA holds three conservation easements on 214 acres in the Batten Kill Priority Area.

ASA has worked in partnership with the Castanea Foundation to conserve 132 acres of fertile farmland along County Route 313. This collaborative project used a mix of public and private funding.

Land Conservation Goals

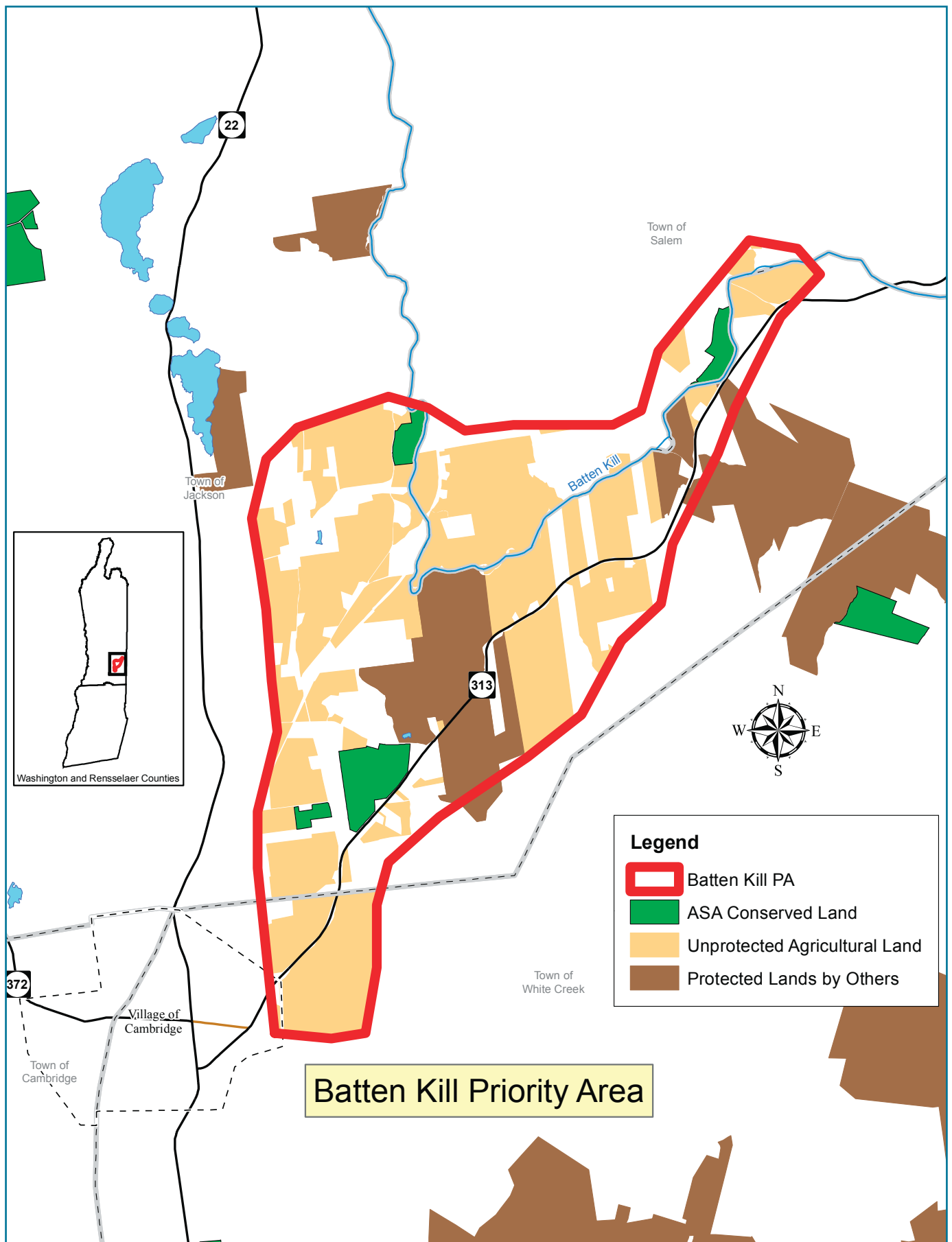
Protect one PDR project on 200 acres within this Priority Area. ASA estimates a need for \$298,375 in public funds.



**ASA CONSERVED LAND TO DATE:
214 ACRES**

**ASA'S 2020 GOAL: CONSERVE AN
ADDITIONAL 200 ACRES**





HOOSIC RIVER WATERSHED PRIORITY AREA

TOWNS OF EASTON, CAMBRIDGE, WHITE CREEK, SCHAGHTICOKE, PITTSTOWN, HOOSICK, PETERSBURGH

Description

The Hoosic River Watershed Priority Area contains approximately 43,080 acres of unprotected farmland. Located in the Hoosic River Valley, this Priority Area supports a number of highly productive dairy farms and vegetable operations along its river bottom soils. The area is rich in archaeological evidence of the people who hunted, fished and farmed here for thousands of years.



The Hoosic River Watershed serves as a major tributary of the Hudson River and was identified in the 2009 New York State Open Space Conservation Plan as a Regional Priority Conservation Project Area. The Open Space Conservation Plan supports the conservation of open space resources, including

working farmland and forestlands. 467 acres in this area have been protected by New York State. This Area includes the Bennington Battlefield, the location of a Revolutionary War battle during

which British troops unsuccessfully tried to raid storehouses in nearby Bennington, Vermont.

ASA's Conservation Work

ASA holds 27 conservation easements on 5,032 acres in the Hoosic River Watershed Priority Area. Since 2007, ASA has conserved 11 farms in this Priority Area using state or federal funds for the purchase of development rights, most recently for the 195-acre Ruth Hill Farm and the 234-acre Buckland Farms in Schaghticoke.

Land Conservation Goals

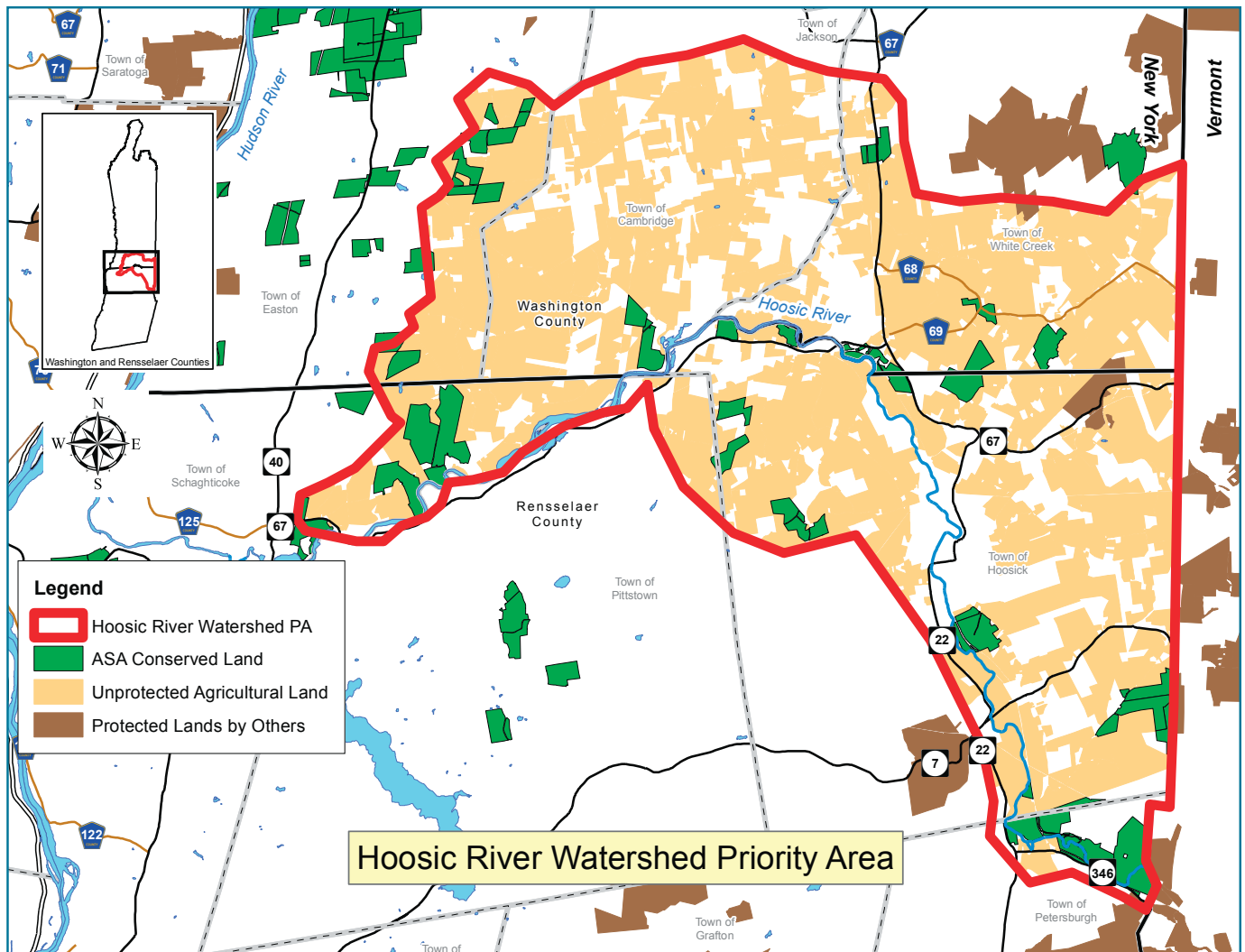
Our goal is to protect another eight farms on 1,800 acres within this Priority Area. In order to reach this goal, ASA needs to raise \$249,700 in private funds and \$1,570,125 in public funding.

ASA CONSERVED LAND TO DATE:

5,032 ACRES

**ASA'S 2020 GOAL: CONSERVE AN
ADDITIONAL 1,800 ACRES**





BRUNSWICK PRIORITY AREA

(ALONG ROUTE 7) TOWNS OF PITTSTOWN, BRUNSWICK, POESTENKILL

Description

The Brunswick Priority Area contains approximately 12,757 acres of unprotected farmland. This Area is south of the Tomhannock Reservoir (the drinking water source for the City of Troy) and is just east of Troy. Portions of State Routes 7, 2, 351 and 278 are found within this Priority Area. This Area is home to robust dairy and crop operations on multi-generational farms, and also contains the “Wagner Flats,” an area with highly productive agricultural soils.

Because of its close proximity to the City of Troy and the main traffic routes to the city, the development pressure on the Brunswick Area is very high. Historically an agricultural area, many farms have ceased operations because of this pressure.

ASA's Conservation Work

ASA currently holds no easements in this Priority Area since Rensselaer County only asked ASA

to administer PDR programs in this part of the county as of 2007. (Previous to 2007, ASA's service area included only Schaghticoke, Pittstown and Hoosick in Rensselaer County.) However, ASA was awarded state PDR funding in 2014 for the 160-acre Homestead Farms, the organization's inaugural farmland protection project in this Area. This farm has been in agricultural production since the Van Rensselaer Patent was granted in 1685.

Land Conservation Goals

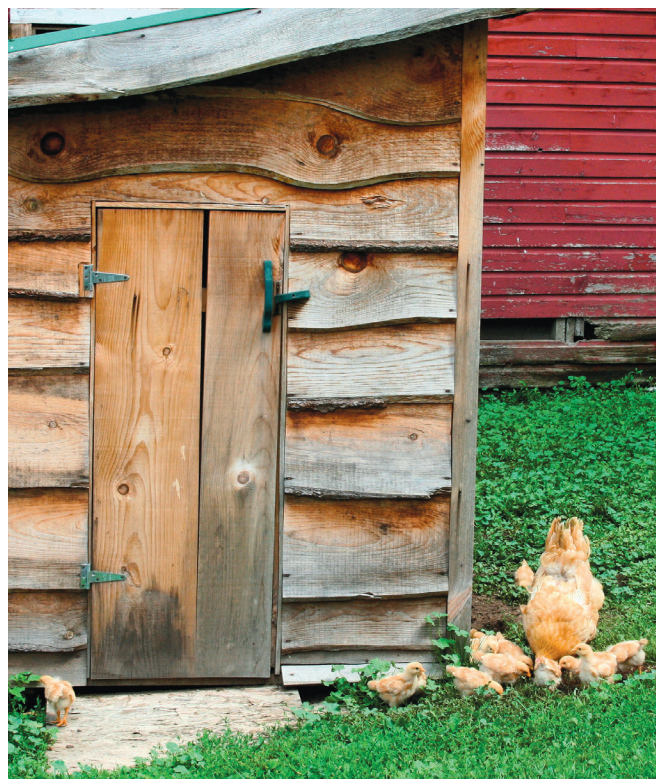
ASA has set a goal to protect 3 farms on 500 acres within this Area. An estimated \$811,500 in public funding and \$336,528 in private funding is needed to accomplish this goal.

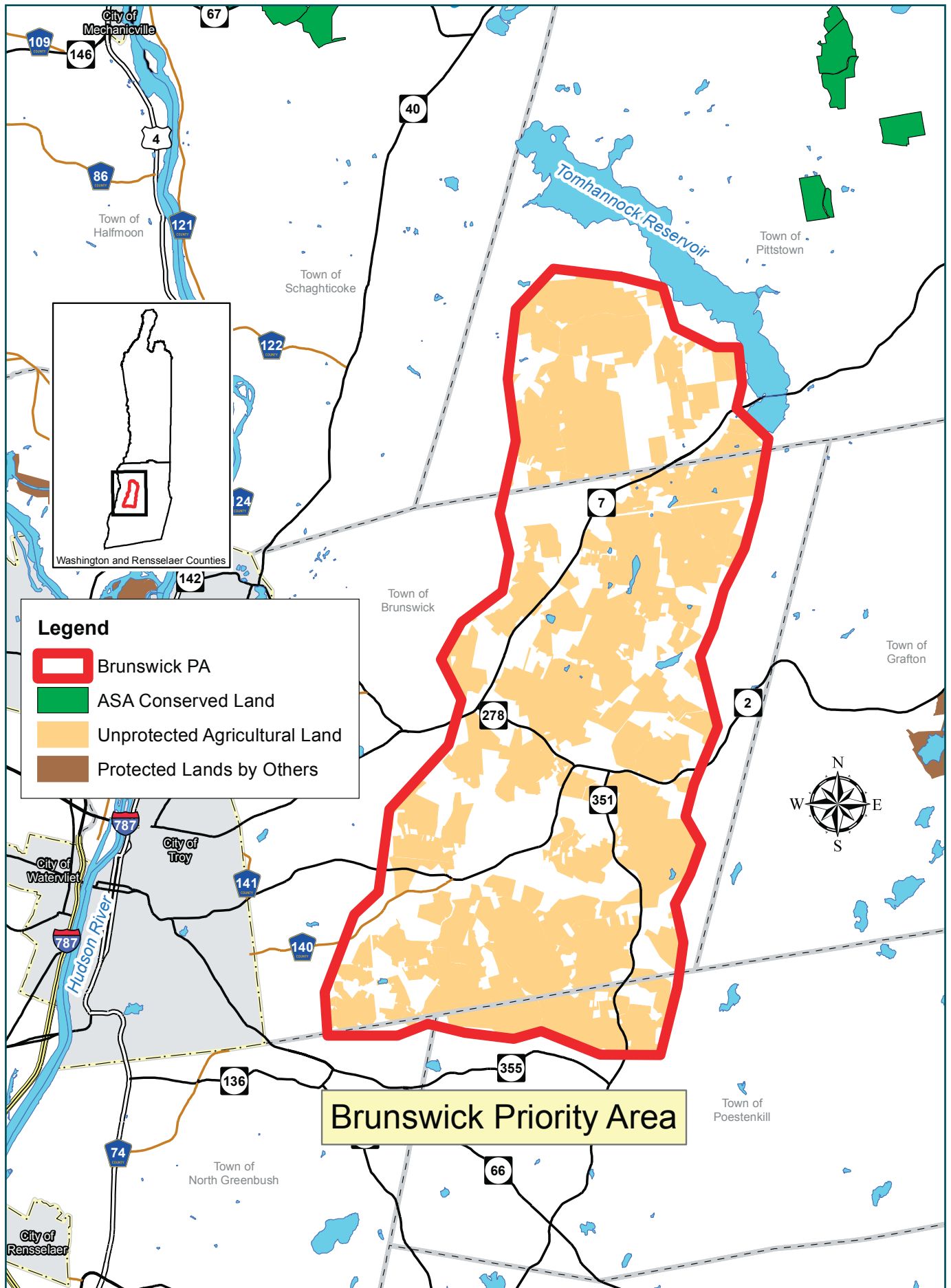
ASA CONSERVED LAND TO DATE:

0 ACRES

ASA's 2020 GOAL:

CONSERVE 500 ACRES





SCHODACK PRIORITY AREA

TOWNS OF EAST GREENBUSH, SCHODACK

Description

The Schodack Area contains approximately 11,726 acres of unprotected farmland. This Area is bounded by the Hudson River to the west, Columbia County to the south, and the City of Rensselaer to the north.

The Hudson River Valley and its soils are still highly valued for agriculture, and this Priority Area is a northern extension of major fruit and vegetable operations in Columbia County.

The Mohican tribe farmed these flat, rich soils along the Hudson River for thousands of years. The area was later settled by Dutch farmers shortly after Henry Hudson's exploration of the Hudson River in 1609. Because of this area's close proximity to the Capital District and Columbia County, the threat of residential and commercial development is ever present. Interstate 90, the main east-west route between Boston and Buffalo, bisects this Area before entering Columbia County. This has led to increased pressure to develop commercial distribution centers.

This Priority Area contains 187 acres of Schodack Island State Park.

ASA's Conservation Work

ASA holds no conservation easements in this Area since this is a new Priority Area for the organization.



Land Conservation Goals

Protect two farms on 350 acres within this Area. To accomplish this, ASA has estimated a need for \$630,750 in public funding and \$268,144 in private funding. The cost of farmland protection efforts is considerably higher in southern Rensselaer County than farther north due to the proximity to Columbia County where land values are significantly higher.

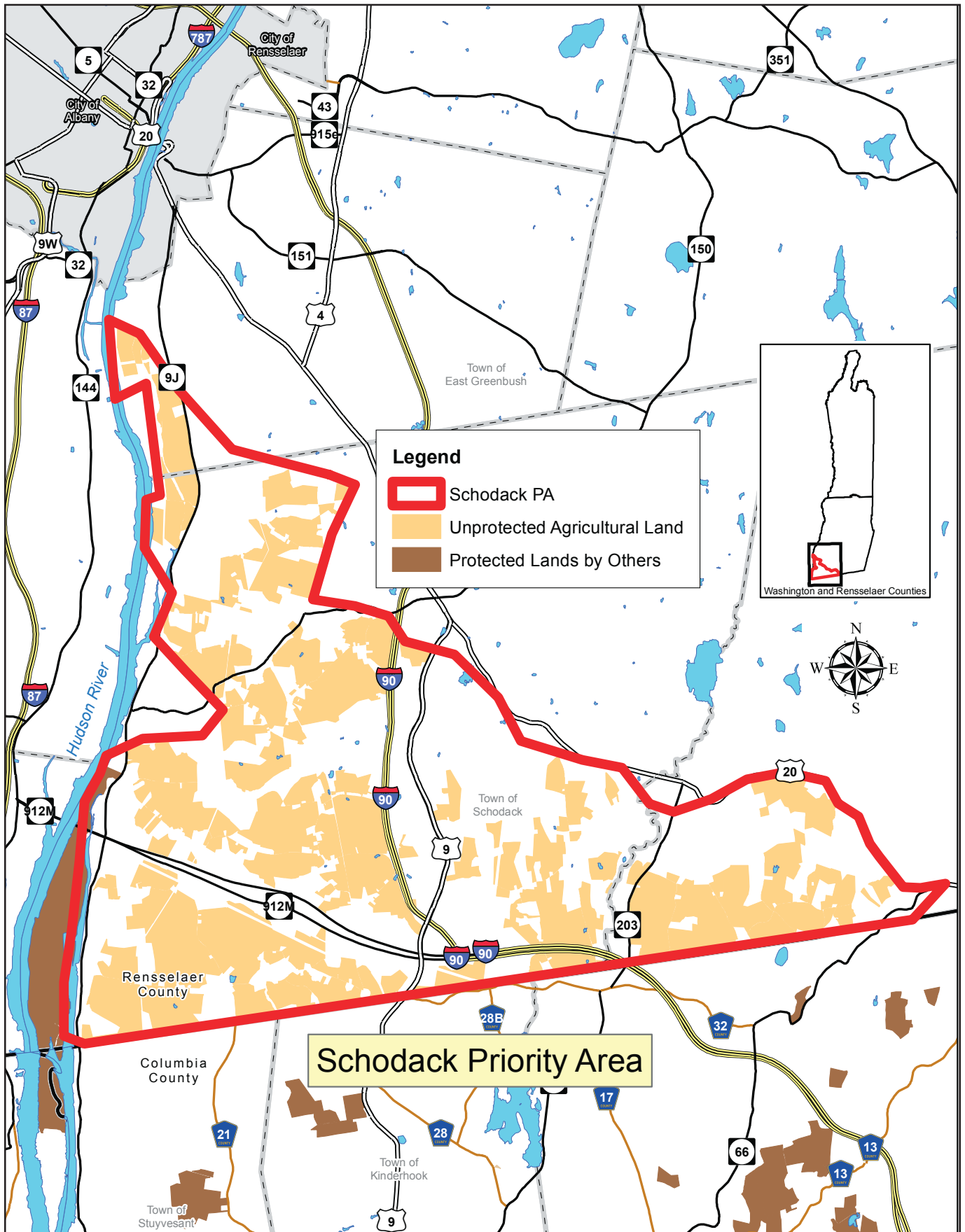
ASA CONSERVED LAND TO DATE:

0 ACRES

ASA's 2020 GOAL:

CONSERVE 350 ACRES





STEPHENTOWN PRIORITY AREA

TOWNS OF BERLIN, STEPHENTOWN

Description

The Stephentown Priority Area contains around 6,892 acres of unprotected farmland. State Routes 22 and 43 converge in the center of this area, which also borders the Massachusetts state line to the east and Columbia County (NY) to the south. This Area is home to a variety of agricultural operations, including dairies, dairy support land and vegetable and fruit operations.

Berlin and Stephentown are in close proximity to the Taconic Ridge and Berlin State Forests as well as the Capital District Wildlife Management Area (NY), the Pittsfield State Forest (MA), and numerous conservation easements held by the Columbia Land Conservancy. The Rensselaer Plateau borders this Area to the west, and Forest Legacy funding was recently awarded to protect over 12,000 acres of working forestland in this Area.

ASA's Conservation Work

ASA holds a conservation easement on the 108-acre Stone Wall Hill Farm, home of the popular Berry Patch, a farmstore and u-pick operation. Located along Route 22 in Stephentown, that easement utilized state funding. This is a new Priority Area for ASA.



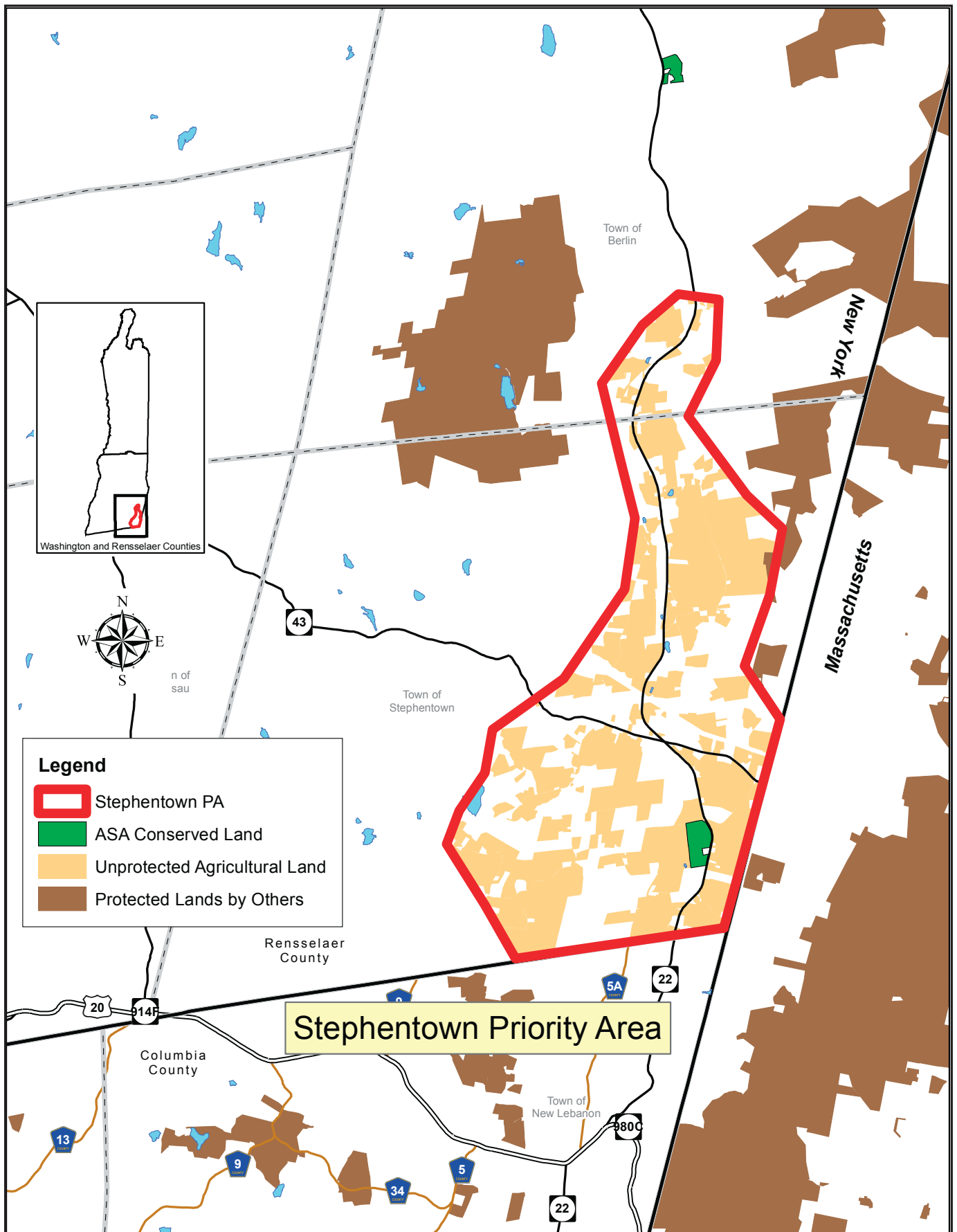
Land Conservation Goals

ASA has set a goal to protect one farm on 200 acres within this Area. ASA needs \$473,375 in public funding to reach this goal.

ASA CONSERVED LAND TO DATE:
108 ACRES

ASA's 2020 GOAL: CONSERVE
AN ADDITIONAL 200 ACRES





SPECIAL AREAS

KINGSBURY-FORT ANN FLATS SPECIAL AREA

TOWNS OF FORT ANN, KINGSBURY

Description

This Special Area contains around 16,739 acres of unprotected farmland. The Kingsbury-Fort Ann Flats Special Area is centered along State Route 4 and County Route 16, and contains a number of active dairy farms and dairy support land.

The proximity of this Special Area to the urban centers of Glens Falls and Fort Edward/Hudson Falls contributes to development pressure, threatening the loss of farmland.

ASA's Conservation Work

ASA holds three conservation easements on 462 acres in the Kingsbury-Fort Ann Flats Special Area. ASA is currently nearing completion on the protection of the 345-acre Deep Roots Holsteins dairy farm, which was awarded state funding.

Land Conservation Goals

Protect two farms on 500 acres within this Area. To accomplish this, ASA has estimated a need for \$345,750 in public funding and \$35,185 in private funding.

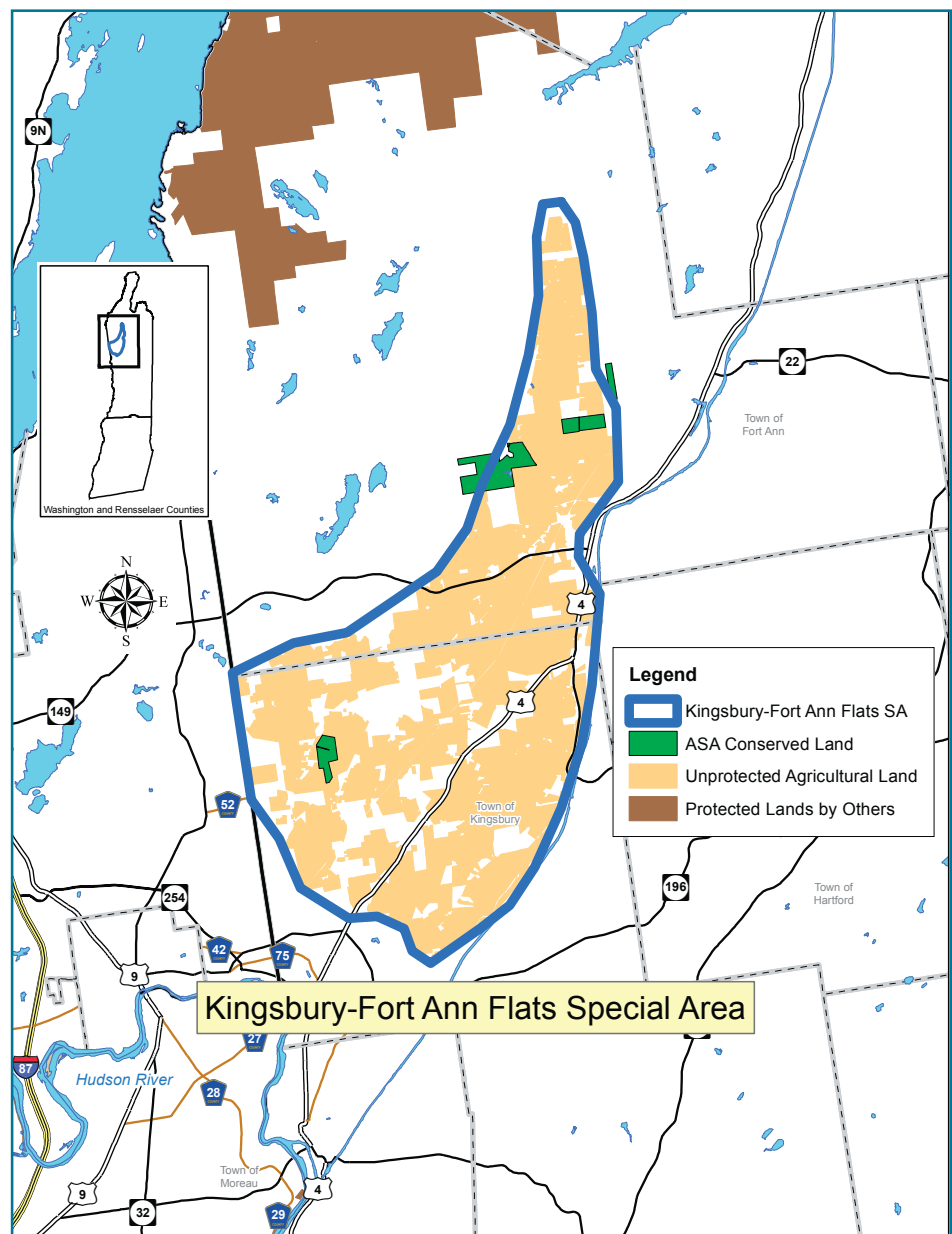
ASA CONSERVED

LAND TO DATE:

462 ACRES

ASA'S 2020 GOAL:

**CONSERVE
AN ADDITIONAL
500 ACRES**



CHAMPLAIN CANAL CORRIDOR SPECIAL AREA

TOWNS OF FORT ANN, GRANVILLE, HARTFORD, KINGSBURY, FORT EDWARD,
ARGYLE, HEBRON

Description

This Special Area contains around 41,382 acres of unprotected farmland and is the largest Special Area, encompassing portions of seven towns. This Area includes the Fort Edward Important Bird Area and the Washington County Grasslands, which are identified in the New York State Open Space Plan as areas of special environmental interest. The Washington County Grasslands is a 13,000-acre area that provides critical habitat for a number of threatened or at-risk bird species, including the short-eared owl.

ASA's Conservation Work

ASA currently holds no easements in this Special Area.

Land Conservation Goals

ASA's goal is to protect four farms on 700 acres within this Area. To accomplish this, ASA has estimated a need for \$345,750 in public funding and \$94,205 in private funding.

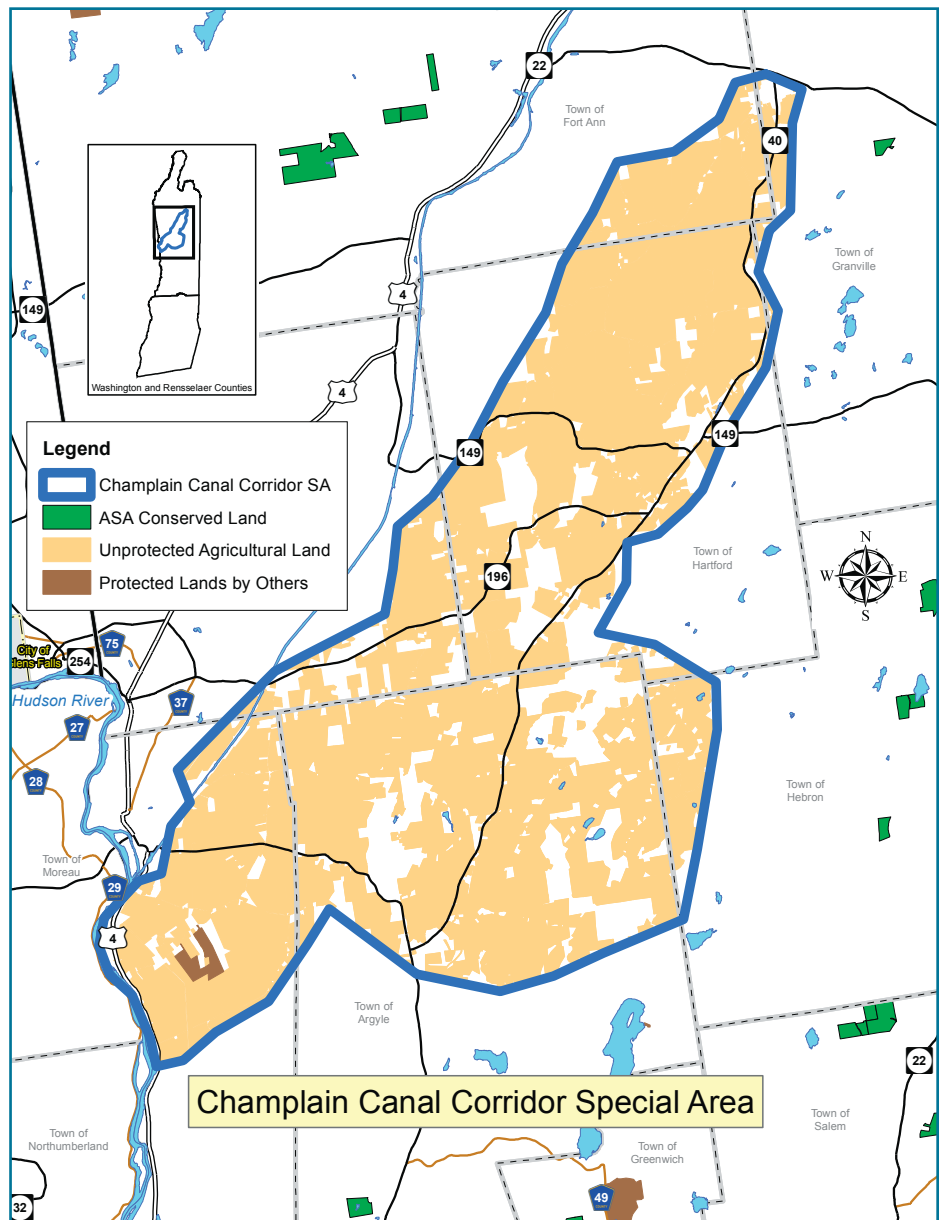
**ASA CONSERVED
LAND TO DATE:**

0 ACRES

ASA's 2020 GOAL:

CONSERVE

700 ACRES



GRANVILLE/HEBRON SPECIAL AREA

TOWNS OF GRANVILLE, HEBRON

Description

This Special Area contains around 11,644 acres of unprotected farmland. State Route 22 runs through this area, which is located just south of the Village of Granville. The eastern boundary of this Special Area is the state boundary with Vermont. The Vermont Land Trust holds a number of nearby easements across the state border and is also actively engaged in agricultural land conservation.

ASA's Conservation Work

ASA holds three donated easements on 279 acres in the Granville/Hebron Special Area.

Land Conservation Goals

Protect two farms on 350 acres within this Special Area. ASA estimates a need for \$240,750 in public funds and \$35,185 in private funds to reach this goal.

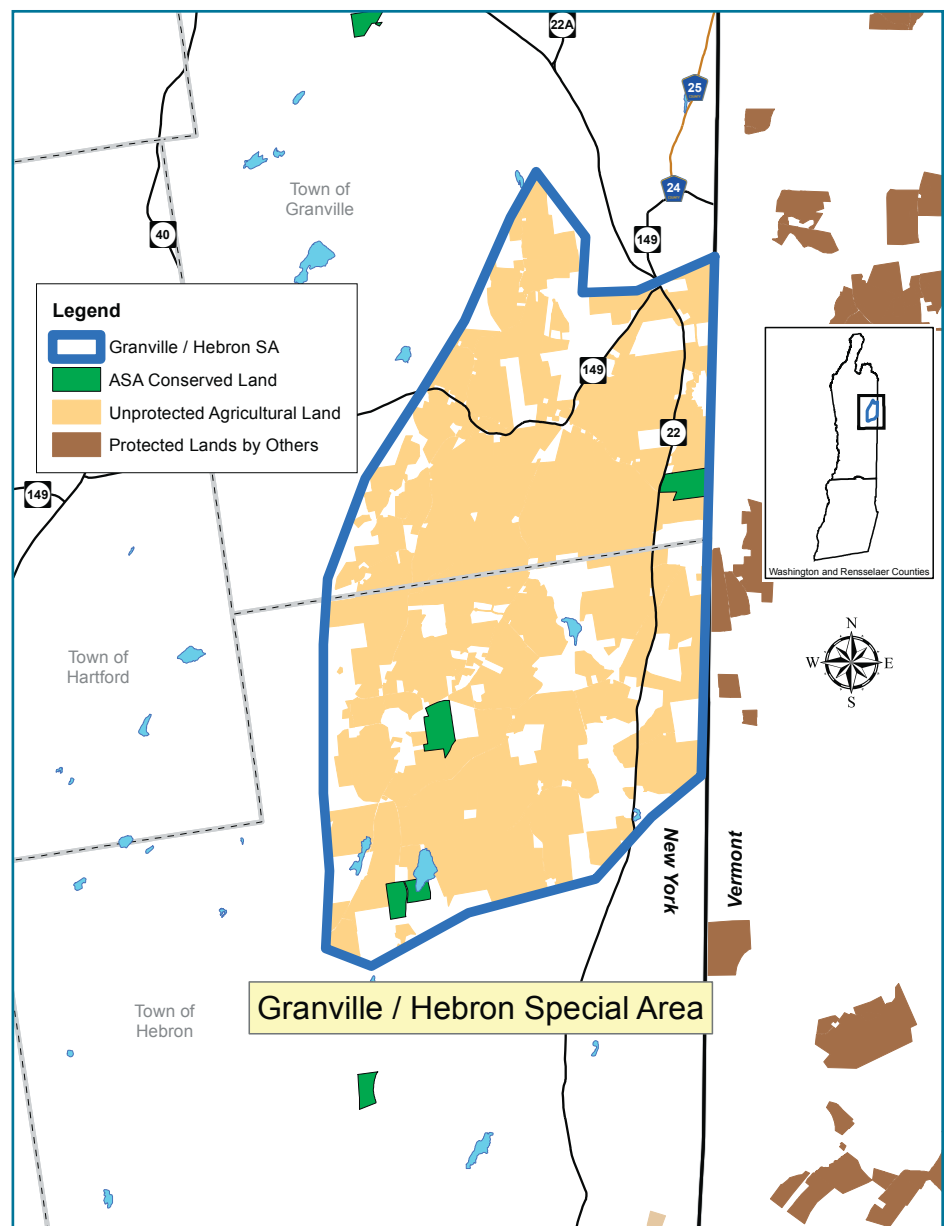


**ASA CONSERVED
LAND TO DATE:**

279 ACRES

ASA'S 2020 GOAL:

**CONSERVE
AN ADDITIONAL
350 ACRES**



BLACK CREEK VALLEY SPECIAL AREA

(ALONG ROUTES 30 AND 31) TOWNS OF HEBRON, SALEM

Description

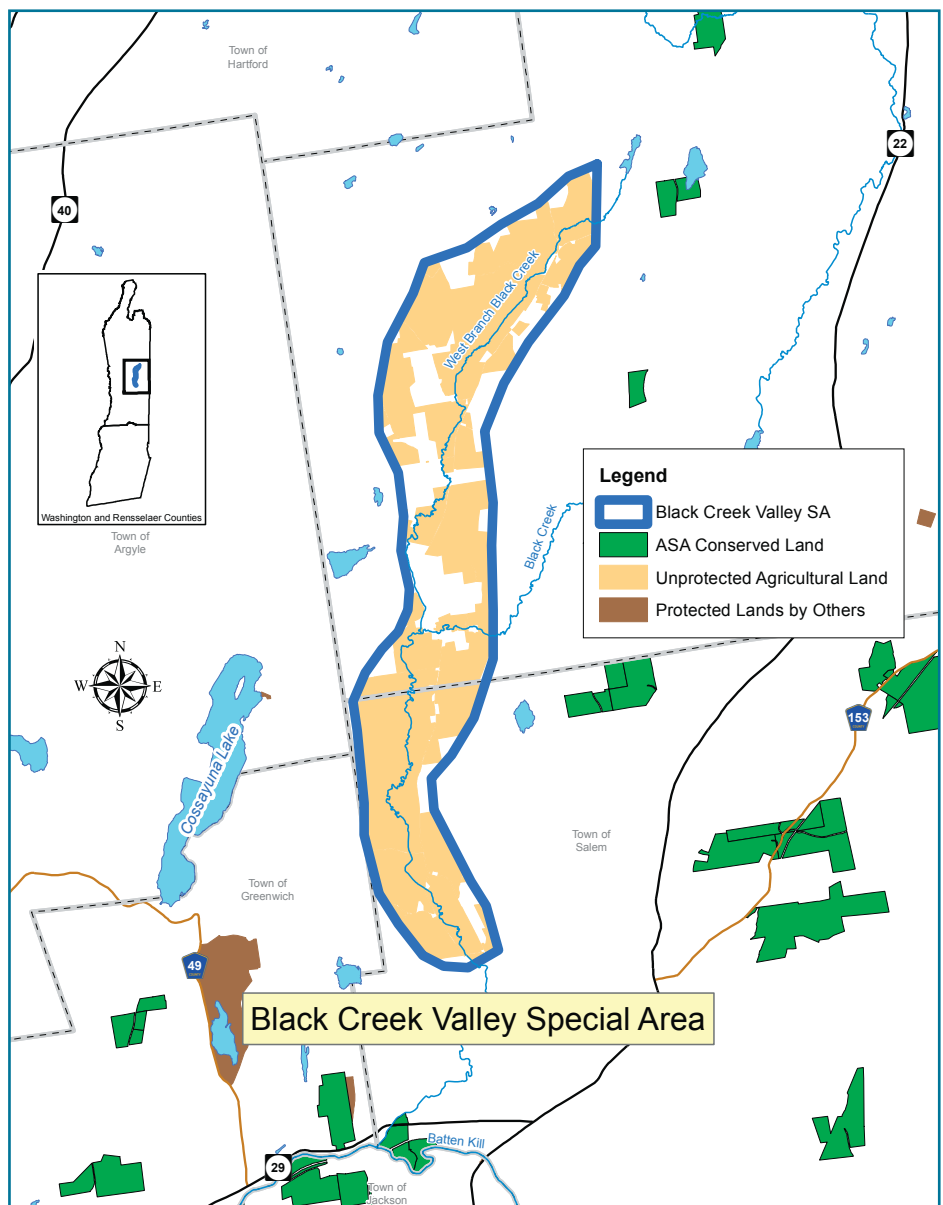
This Special Area contains around 4,533 acres of unprotected farmland. A long, narrow band running along Routes 30 and 31, this is the smallest Special Area. Despite its relatively small size, it is home to an award-winning dairy with direct retail outlets in the Capital Region and Saratoga Springs.

ASA's Conservation Work

ASA holds no easements in this Special Area.

Land Conservation Goals

ASA has set a goal to protect one farm on 200 acres within this Special Area. An estimated \$240,750 in public and \$5,675 in private funding is needed to reach this goal.



**ASA CONSERVED
LAND TO DATE:
0 ACRES**

**ASA's 2020 GOAL:
CONSERVE 200
ACRES**

HISTORIC ROUTE 22 CORRIDOR SPECIAL AREA

TOWNS OF FORT ANN, GRANVILLE, HEBRON, SALEM, JACKSON, PETERSBURGH, BERLIN

Description

Originally an old Indian path, Route 22 (341 miles long from the Bronx to the Canadian border) was heavily used during the American Revolution to transport iron from mines in the Adirondacks. This Special Area is segmented where it intersects with Priority Areas or other Special Areas. This Special Area contains around 10,630 acres of unprotected farmland.

This Special Area contains a portion of Lake Lauderdale State Park in Washington County and borders the Taconic Ridge State Forest and the Berlin State Forest in Rensselaer County.

ASA's Conservation Work

ASA holds two easements on 91 acres.

Land Conservation Goals

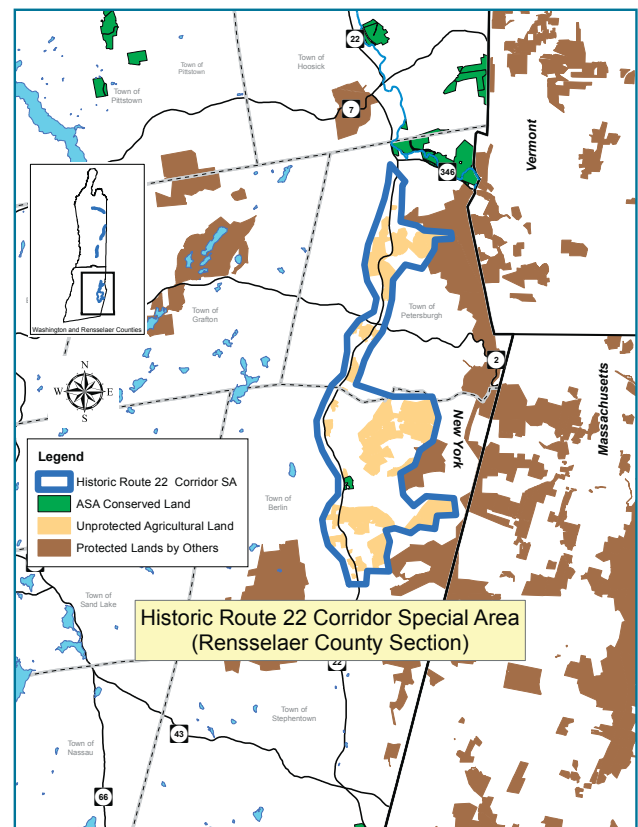
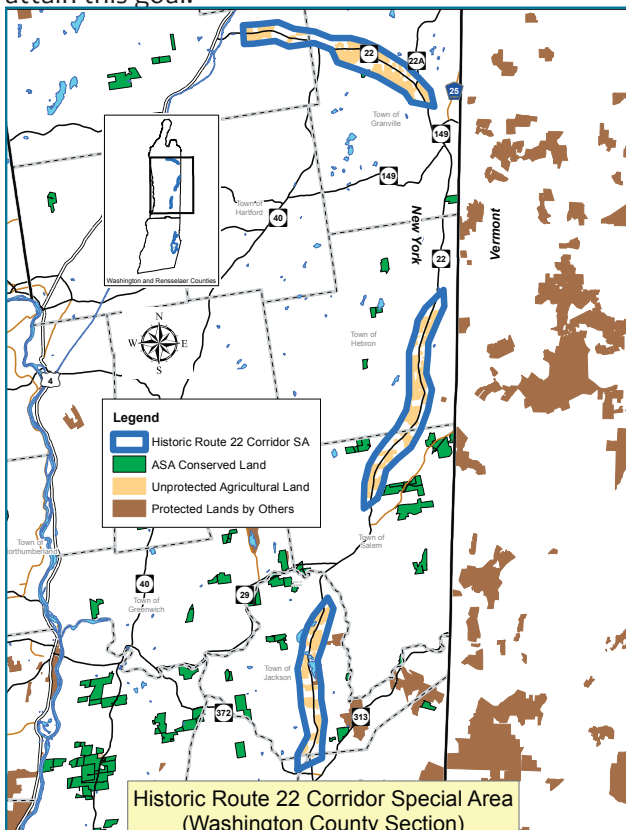
ASA has set a goal to protect two farms on 300 acres within this Special Area. ASA estimates \$240,750 in public funds and \$35,185 in private funds is needed to attain this goal.



ASA CONSERVED LAND TO DATE:

91 ACRES

**ASA'S 2020 GOAL: CONSERVE
AN ADDITIONAL 300 ACRES**



GREENWICH-CAMBRIDGE CORRIDOR SPECIAL AREA

(ALONG ROUTE 372) TOWNS OF GREENWICH, EASTON, JACKSON, CAMBRIDGE

Description

This Special Area follows County Route 372, the main road between the Villages of Greenwich and Cambridge. Portions of County Route 74A and State Route 29 are also found in this area, as is a portion of the Batten Kill. This Special Area contains around 9,867 acres of unprotected farmland. There is widespread public support for conserving this scenic road with its panoramic views of the Vermont Green Mountains.



ASA's Conservation Work

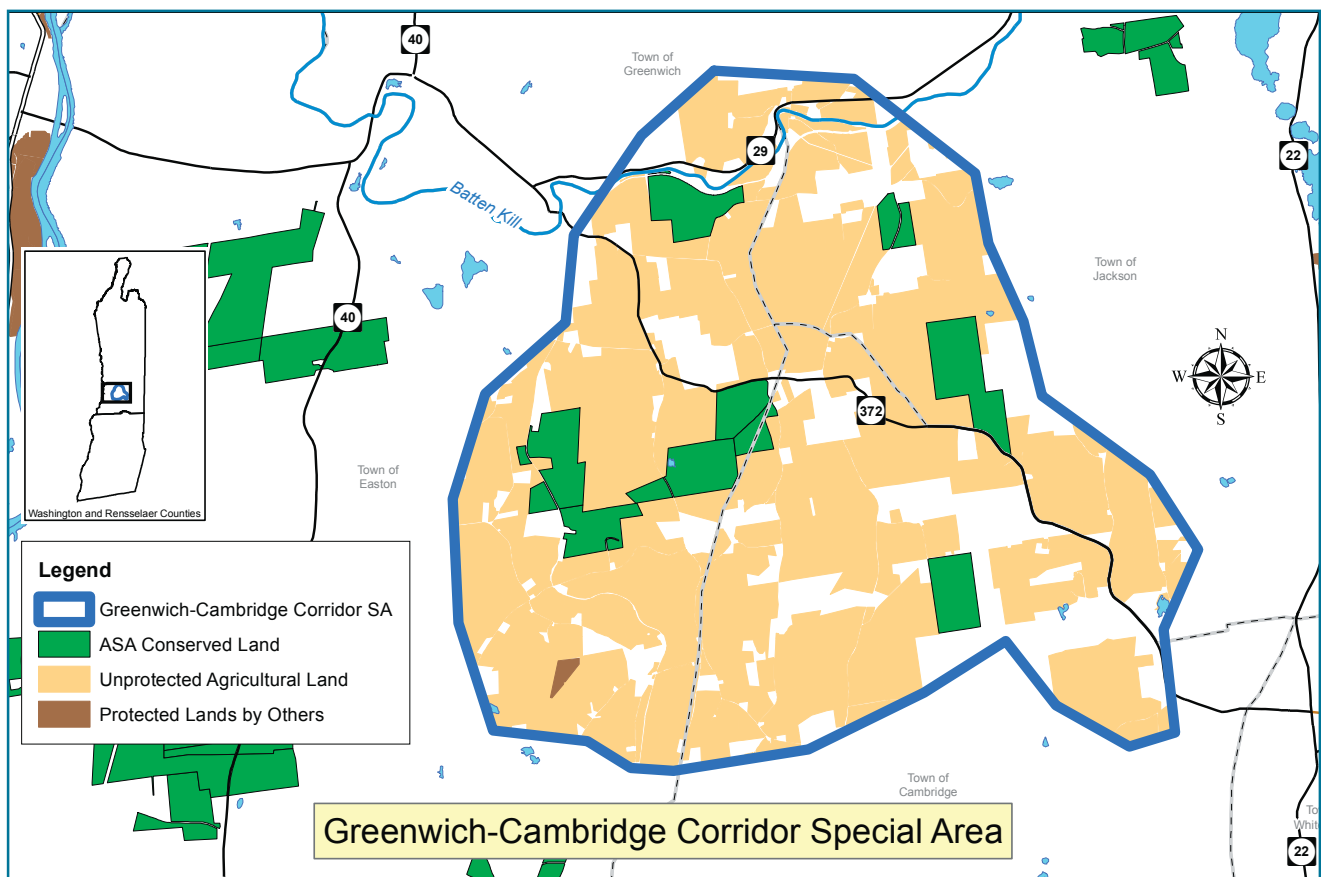
ASA holds nine easements on 1,240 acres. ASA's most recent project in this Area is the 157-acre Fedler easement, which involved federal and private foundation funding.

Land Conservation Goals

Protect one farm on 150 acres with a donated easement within this Special Area. An estimated \$29,510 in private funds is needed to accomplish this goal.

**ASA CONSERVED LAND TO
DATE: 1,240 ACRES**

**ASA's 2020 GOAL: CONSERVE
AN ADDITIONAL 150 ACRES**



WEST HOOSICK HILLS SPECIAL AREA

TOWNS OF PITTSTOWN, HOOSICK

Description

The West Hoosick Hills Special Area is bounded by the Hoosic River Watershed Priority Area, the Tomhannock Reservoir (the drinking water source for the City of Troy), and the Rensselaer Plateau. This Special Area contains approximately 21,958 acres of unprotected farmland.

The West Hoosick Hills provides a direct link to farming patterns and settlements that go back to the late 1600s. The historic mosaic of agricultural, natural and cultural lands inspired many of the landscape paintings of Grandma Moses.

This Special Area includes the 893-acre Tibbits State Forest in Hoosick and a portion of the 1,105-acre Pittstown State Forest in Pittstown.

ASA's Conservation Work

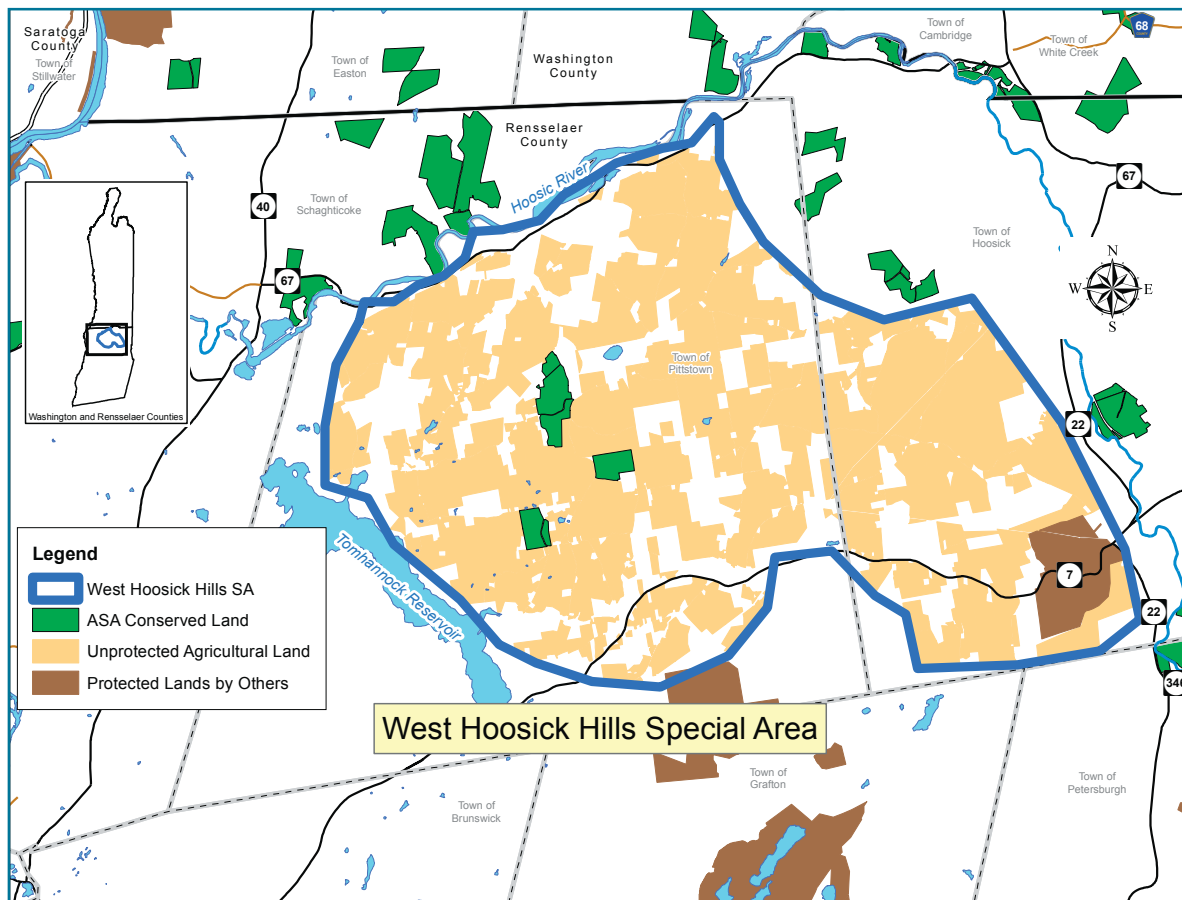
ASA holds three easements on 514 acres in this Area. ASA's most recent project is the 391-acre easement

on the Cannon Cattle Ranch in 2011, which involved a combination of state funding and private funding from the Castanea Foundation.

Land Conservation Goals

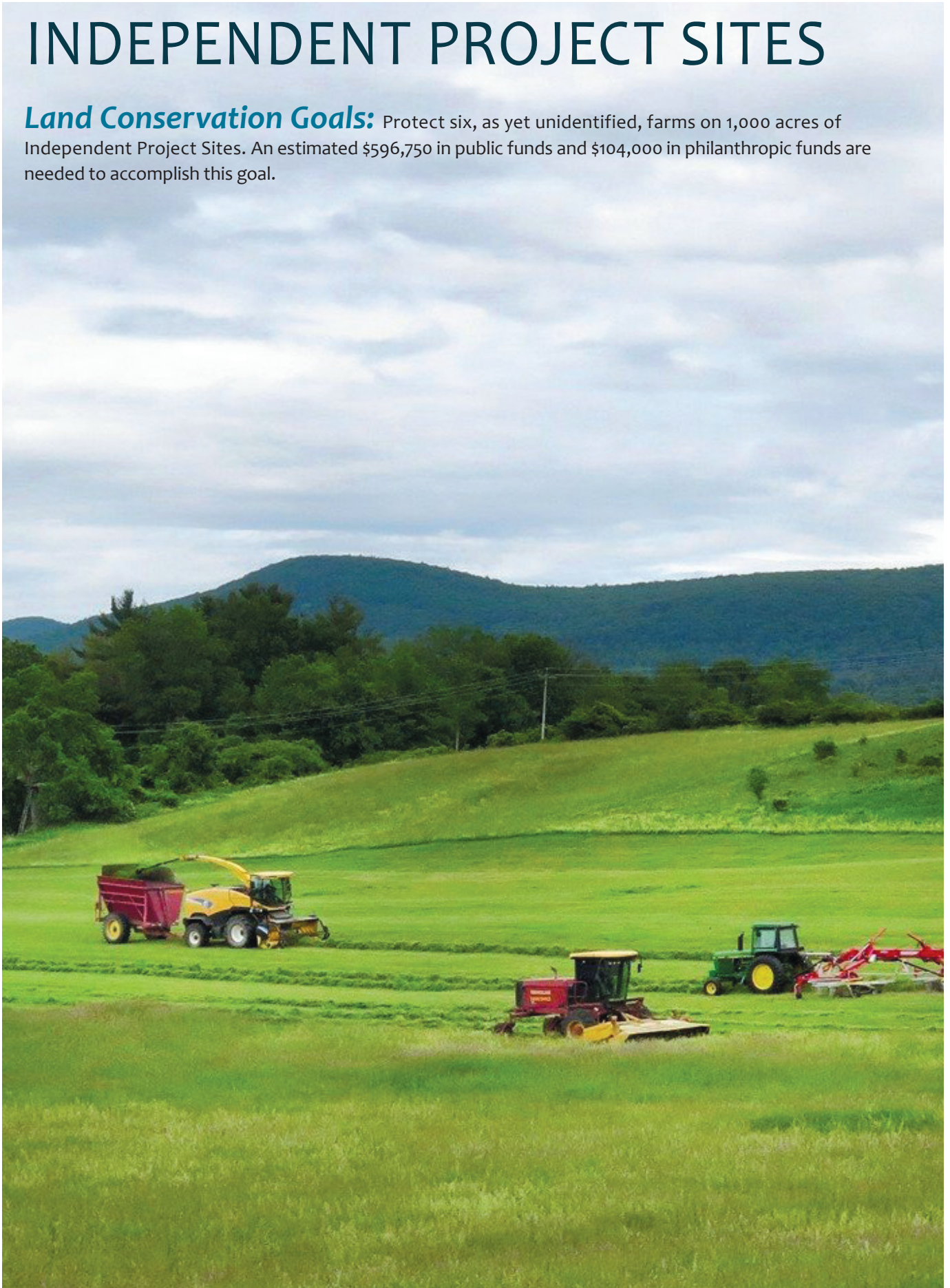
ASA has set a goal to protect four farms on 600 acres within this Special Area. To meet that goal, ASA needs \$240,750 in public funding and \$94,205 in private funding.

ASA CONSERVED LAND TO DATE:
514 ACRES
ASA'S 2020 GOAL: CONSERVE
AN ADDITIONAL 600 ACRES



INDEPENDENT PROJECT SITES

Land Conservation Goals: Protect six, as yet unidentified, farms on 1,000 acres of Independent Project Sites. An estimated \$596,750 in public funds and \$104,000 in philanthropic funds are needed to accomplish this goal.



WHAT WILL IT TAKE TO CONSERVE ANOTHER 8,400 ACRES?

Completion of the ASA Farmland Conservation Plan sets ambitious goals for ASA. It will protect, at a minimum, an additional 8,400 acres of strategic farmland on 45 projects in the next five years. If this goal is met, ASA will have conserved a total of 24,000 acres by the end of 2020.

Conserving 8,400 additional acres in the next five years will require additional resources to initiate and develop the projects, fund easement acquisition and project costs as well as steward and manage conserved farmland. ASA will evaluate the plan annually and expect to make adjustments accordingly.

Below is ASA's estimate of the cost to achieve this goal:

Projected Funding Needs for ASA's 2020 Goal

	Total Acreage Goal	# of PDR Projects	# of DDR Projects	Total Project Costs	Public Funding Needed	Private Funding Needed
PRIORITY AREAS						
Hudson River Corridor	1,150	3	3	\$1,686,203	\$1,117,000	\$569,203
White Creek Valley	400	1	1	\$393,150	\$364,000	\$29,150
Batten Kill	200	1	0	\$298,375	\$298,375	\$0
Hoosic River Watershed	1,800	4	4	\$1,819,825	\$1,570,125	\$249,700
Brunswick	500	2	1	\$1,148,028	\$811,500	\$336,528
Schodack	350	1	1	\$898,894	\$630,750	\$268,144
Stephentown	200	1	0	\$473,375	\$473,375	\$0
SUBTOTAL				\$6,717,150	\$5,265,125	\$1,453,085
Special Areas						
Kingsbury-Fort Ann Flats	500	1	1	\$380,935	\$345,750	\$35,185
Champlain Canal Corridor	700	1	3	\$439,955	\$345,750	\$94,205
Granville/Hebron	350	1	1	\$275,935	\$240,750	\$35,185
Black Creek Valley	200	1	0	\$246,425	\$240,750	\$5,675
Historic Route 22 Corridor	300	1	1	\$275,935	\$240,750	\$35,185
Greenwich-Cambridge Corridor	150	0	1	\$29,510	\$0	\$29,510
West Hoosick Hills	600	1	3	\$334,955	\$240,750	\$94,205
SUBTOTAL				\$1,983,650	\$1,654,500	\$329,150
Independent Project Sites	1,000	2	4	\$700,750	\$596,750	\$104,000
TOTAL	8,400	21	24	\$9,416,649	\$7,516,375	\$1,900,275

PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

Launch a Campaign to Fund ASA's Forever Farmland Conservation Plan

This Plan provides a framework for ASA to strategically work with public and private programs and partners to conserve a total of 45 farms on 8,400 acres. This entails acquiring 21 easements through the purchase of development rights (PDR) and 24 easements through donations (DDR). The total budget to accomplish this goal is estimated at \$9.4 million.

It is anticipated that the majority of the funding needed, or \$7.5 million, will come from state and federal awards to purchase easements on eligible farms. ASA will need to raise \$1.9 million over the next five years, apart from its operating budget (currently \$600,000) and in addition to government grants in order to achieve this goal.

ASA will initiate a Forever Farmland Conservation Campaign to raise the \$1.9 million from individuals, private foundations and conservation organizations. This funding will enable ASA to leverage the additional funding needed to protect 45 properties with a conservation easement value (see Appendix A) totaling more than \$13 million.



Protect 21 Farms through Purchased Easements or PDR

ASA will work with farm families who want to protect their land by selling their development rights. These farms must meet state and federal eligibility requirements for soil quality and farm viability. ASA will apply for grants from state and federal programs to raise the \$7.5 million needed over the next five years to help acquire easements on 21 farms.

For the most part, both state and federal farmland protection programs require matching funds for easement acquisition as well as project transaction costs. ASA will partner with conservation organizations and solicit major gifts from individuals and private foundations to raise the approximately \$1.9 million in matching funds needed to complete the 21 projects.

Protect 24 Farms through Donated Easements or DDR

Slightly more than one half of the 15,600 acres previously conserved by ASA were protected by landowners donating the value of their development rights based on independent appraisals. Many of these protected properties contain high-quality farmland rented to farmers. ASA will continue to work with landowners interested in donating their development rights using criteria established for this purpose. (See Appendix B.)

Transaction costs associated with donated easement projects include ASA's attorney fees, title insurance and easement stewardship, and typically range from \$20,000 to \$26,000 per project. The goal is to raise the majority of the \$624,000 needed for stewardship and transaction expenses for the 24 donated easement projects from private sources. ASA will reach out to private foundations and solicit major gifts from individuals to raise these funds.



Promote the Use of Farm Affordability Options When Purchasing Easements

While conservation easements keep land available for farming activities, they do not necessarily keep land affordable for farmers to purchase. Factors such as the “estate” market in an area and the residential infrastructure on the protected property may increase the market price for the land. This can make the conserved land prohibitively expensive for future generations of farmers. To help agricultural land remain in active production and keep it affordable, ASA offers a Pre-Emptive Right to Purchase, which is often referred to as an Option to Purchase at Agricultural Value in other states. This agreement is entered into voluntarily between ASA and the landowner and is signed at the same time as the conservation easement. It gives ASA the right to purchase the farm at its agricultural value if the property is being sold to a non-farmer. The landowner is paid for this additional right that is being conveyed. ASA will work with partnering organizations, such as Equity Trust, to promote farm affordability options and seek funding to purchase such options from interested farmers.

Collaborate With Partners

Recognizing that collaboration and regional cooperation are critical to ASA’s success, the organization will continue to partner with both private and public entities at local, regional and national levels. ASA’s current partners include a host of regional and national land trust affiliates, conservation and agricultural organizations and government agencies.

Advocate for Increased and Consistent Public Funding

State and federal funding to protect farmland through the purchase of conservation easements is critical to maintaining the agricultural land base that supports the state’s growing food industry and next generation of farmers. Increased funding on a consistent basis is important for planning purposes. Easement transactions need to be efficient and take farmers’ interests and concerns into consideration.

Encourage New and Beginning Farmers to Locate to the Region

Over 60 percent of New York's farmers are set to retire in the next decade. To help address this situation, ASA has partnered with the Hudson Valley Farmlink Network to connect new farmers with landowners hoping to sell their land while ensuring it remains in agricultural production. As part of this initiative, ASA has started a young farmers group to provide technical assistance and educational programs to encourage farm transfers to the next generation.

Continue to Expand ASA's Outreach Efforts to Engage a Broader Audience

ASA is located in a predominantly rural, economically-challenged service area. We need to reach beyond our service area into the greater northeast where our farmers' products are consumed. To reach consumers who are passionate about local food, ASA needs to offer expanded programming and other opportunities to increase involvement with our mission. We have a long list of farmers who wish to conserve their farmland and ensure its availability to the next generation of farmers. But without the ability to reach greater philanthropic support, we face a tremendous challenge.



CURRENT PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR FARMLAND PROTECTION

State and federal money is used by ASA to pay farmers to place permanent agricultural conservation easements on their land. These farms must meet state eligibility requirements for soil quality and farm viability. Additional private funding is usually required to match state and federal awards.

New York State Program

New York's Farmland Protection Program was established in 1996. To date, the program has provided \$131,289,109 in funds to protect 223 farms statewide encompassing 53,388 acres.

Nearly half of ASA conserved land to date has been protected through the use of \$7.9 million in state funding. Over 3,018 acres on 14 farms in Washington County and 3,631 acres on 12 farms in Rensselaer County have been protected with this funding.

State funding does not cover 100% of the payments to farmers. Currently, the state provides from 25% to 87.5% of the cost to acquire easements. If a landowner donates the full or partial value of the landowner's development rights, state money may be used to cover transaction costs (such as attorneys' fees, appraisal costs, and the cost to steward, i.e., monitor, the property in perpetuity).

The state program is largely funded through the Environmental Protection Fund. Additionally, in 2015 Governor Cuomo earmarked a one-time payment of \$20 million from a Wall Street settlement fund for farmland protection in the Hudson River Valley.

State Conservation Partnership Program funding administered by the Land Trust Alliance has also added significantly to ASA's success by enabling ASA to hire professional staff, build capacity and match transaction expenses. Combined with private funding, this has resulted in a quadrupling of acres conserved since 2003 and an improvement in the quality and sophistication of land transactions and stewardship.

Federal Program

The U.S. Department of Agriculture Natural Resource Conservation Service (USDA NRCS) administers the federal farmland protection program, which is funded through the Farm Bill. The program covers 50% of the easement acquisition cost, requiring a

local cash match of 25% for easement acquisition and 100% of project transaction costs.

ASA has successfully secured federal funding as the required 25 percent match for state awards to complete ten projects. Federal funding was also used as the main source of funding for five projects where the local match came from fundraising campaigns and private sources (Castanea Foundation, The Pew Charitable Trust, Open Space Institute).

Local Municipalities

Projects using state funding are undertaken in cooperation with the local governments, mainly Rensselaer and Washington counties, as well as towns that have applied directly for funding. ASA has operated the Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) program for Washington County since 1997 and for Rensselaer County since 2007. ASA's role includes developing grant applications, grant implementation, easement negotiation, project transactions and stewardship of the easements in perpetuity.

Rensselaer County and the Town of Schaghticoke have provided funding to help offset some of the costs in implementing several farmland protection projects located in our southern service area.



POTENTIAL SOURCES OF PRIVATE FUNDING

Individual Donors

ASA is located in a predominantly rural, economically-challenged service area. Most of the products grown or produced in this part of the Upper Hudson Valley feed the greater NYC and Boston markets as well as the Capital District, Saratoga and Glens Falls. In order to reach our goal of protecting a minimum of 24,000 acres by the end of 2020, we need to reach beyond our service area where our farmers' products are consumed. Increased contributions from donors throughout the region will help leverage easement donations and provide additional support needed for purchased easements.

Private Foundations and Conservation Organizations

As with any complex real estate transaction, there are many costs involved in implementing a conservation easement. Most state and federal grant programs cover only a portion of the expense, and landowners donating easements rarely can fully afford all of the transaction and stewardship costs. Philanthropic supporters are necessary to "fill the gap," having an important, direct and lasting impact in the conservation continuum.

In addition to the generous support of the Castanea Foundation (see sidebar), ASA has also teamed up with the Open Space Institute to protect three farms in the viewshed of the Saratoga Battlefield. More recently, the Scenic Hudson Land Trust working in partnership with ASA is providing the local match to state funding on a farm near Troy.



With Thanks to the Castanea Foundation

ASA owes much of its success to the continuing support and leadership of the Castanea Foundation, a private conservation foundation that has invested more than \$1.8 million (\$1.3 million for projects and \$500,000 for operating support) in ASA since 2006.

Collaboration with the Castanea Foundation has enabled ASA to facilitate projects and leverage additional public and private funding as opportunities arose.

Castanea's investment in ASA's Easement Fund has helped ASA to protect 5,962 acres of farmland in Washington and Rensselaer counties. This money was also used to leverage another \$3.7 million in additional funding and \$4.7 million in donated easement value. Without leadership contributions like these, ASA would not have been able to accomplish all that it has in the past nine years.

ASA is actively seeking the support of other private foundations, since it should be noted that the Castanea Foundation is approaching the last year of a giving program established ten years ago.

APPENDIX A: GLOSSARY OF TERMS

APPRAISAL: The value given in a report prepared by a professional appraiser that provides an estimate on the fair market value of the property or conservation easement. A “qualified” appraisal is one prepared to substantiate the value of a donated property or easement, and meets Internal Revenue Service (IRS) requirements.

AGRICULTURAL CONSERVATION

EASEMENT: A legal agreement between a landowner and a qualified organization that restricts future activities on the land to protect its conservation values. An agricultural conservation easement is created through a voluntary contract entered into between ASA and a landowner under which the landowner “extinguishes” (gives up) the development rights to a piece of land in perpetuity. The landowner still owns the land and can sell the land or give it to the landowner’s heirs. The landowner (and any subsequent landowners) continues to pay taxes on the land. The only change is that the land cannot be developed for non-agricultural purposes.

CONSERVATION EASEMENT VALUE: The difference in appraised value between the property without a conservation easement (the “before” value) and the same property with a conservation easement (the “after” value). The value is on land only, not residences and structures.

DONATED EASEMENTS OR “DDR”: The donation of land use rights in the form of a conservation easement.

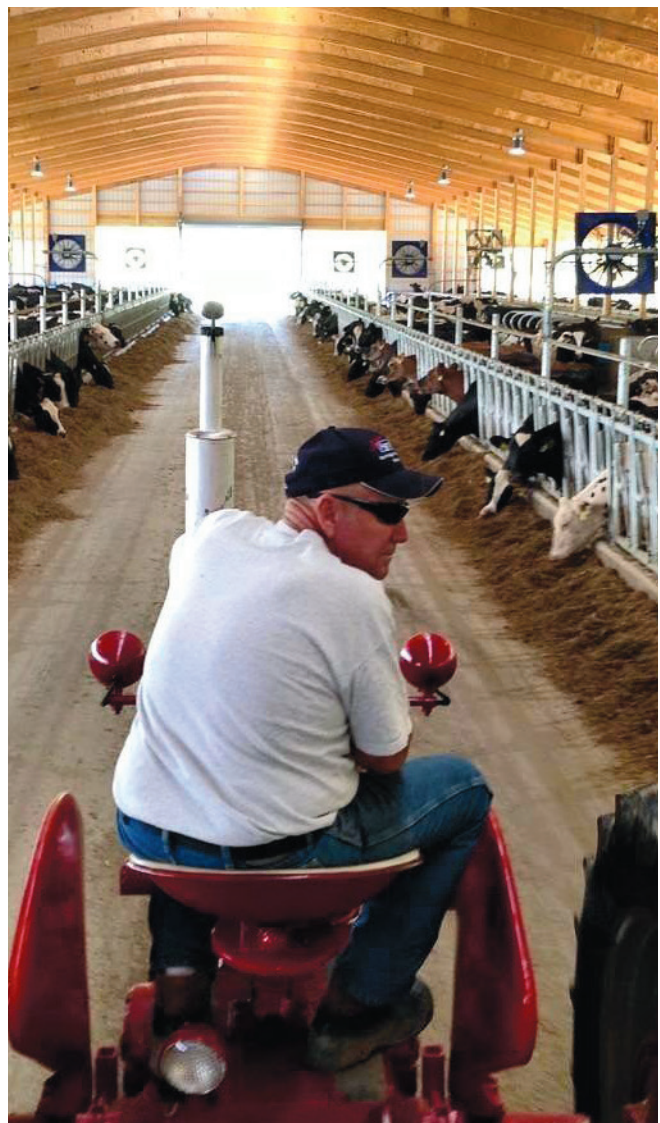
FAIR MARKET VALUE: In real estate, the price that a willing buyer would pay a willing seller for a property offered for sale on the open market, when both have reasonable knowledge of all relevant facts and are not under undue pressure to buy or sell.

MONITORING: A site visit to an easement property to check for compliance with the conservation easement terms. Conserved properties are visited on a regular basis, at least annually.

PURCHASE OF DEVELOPMENT RIGHTS

OR “PDR”: The purchase of development rights pursuant to the terms of a conservation easement.

STEWARDSHIP: These are the activities performed by ASA to ensure that its obligations as easement holder are upheld. Some examples include monitoring conserved properties, assisting easement landowners with questions, handling notice and approval requests by landowners, enforcing the terms of the easement, building landowner relationships and meeting with new owners who purchase conserved lands.



APPENDIX B: ASA'S ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA FOR DONATION AND PURCHASE OF DEVELOPMENT RIGHTS

ASA has adopted eligibility criteria to determine the suitability of a given parcel for its easement acquisition programs. Staff applies criteria to potential projects prior to presentation to the ASA Board of Directors. The Board is ultimately responsible for selecting which projects are pursued.

Donation of Development Rights Eligibility Criteria

In general, parcels will be considered eligible for the donation or purchase of development rights programs if they contain resources which contribute to agricultural viability. The eligibility criteria ensure that conservation activities are directed toward properties that demonstrate a public benefit (in this case, the production of food, fiber, or forest products), which is a requirement of the state and federal tax law. The extent of the public benefit will be determined by a review, which includes the application of the criteria described below. ASA will consider donations of development rights on land with at least three of the following features and that come with, at a minimum, stewardship/easement defense funding:

- The land is in agricultural production or is capable of producing an economic return from agricultural use. Agricultural production is broadly defined as production of food, fiber, or forest products.
- The land is adjacent to or buffers active agricultural land or important natural resources.
- The property has high quality agricultural soils.
- The land is being used to support a farm operation or agricultural production.
- The property is in close proximity to land that is already conserved or likely to be permanently protected.
- The development of the property would have a negative impact on the viability of active farmland.
- The easement would set an important precedent for protecting land in an area identified as a priority in ASA's Farmland Conservation Plan.

- The property is 50 acres or more in size. Exceptions may be made for properties of strategic significance or when combined with neighboring parcels.

Purchase of Development Rights - Eligibility Criteria for State and Federal Funding

Eligibility of a parcel for the PDR Program is determined according to criteria established by the NYS Department of Agriculture & Markets and/or the United States Department of Agriculture, depending on the public funding source. ASA only pursues funding for projects likely to rank high according to the Agriculture & Markets criteria.

Interested farm owners submit a pre-application to ASA, which is reviewed by a Selection Committee of representatives from the ASA Board of Directors and the Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board. **Priority is given to farms that meet the following NYS Ag & Markets criteria:**

1. *Have a large percentage of prime or statewide important soils in production.*
2. *Viable commercial operations that are well managed.*
3. *Under development pressure.*
4. *Buffering a public natural resource such as the Hudson River, Batten Kill and Eldridge Swamp.*
5. *Contain significant acreage with a high percentage of land in production.*
6. *Near other protected properties or properties likely to participate in the future.*
7. *Have a likelihood of succession as a farm.*

APPENDIX C:

SOIL CLASSIFICATION

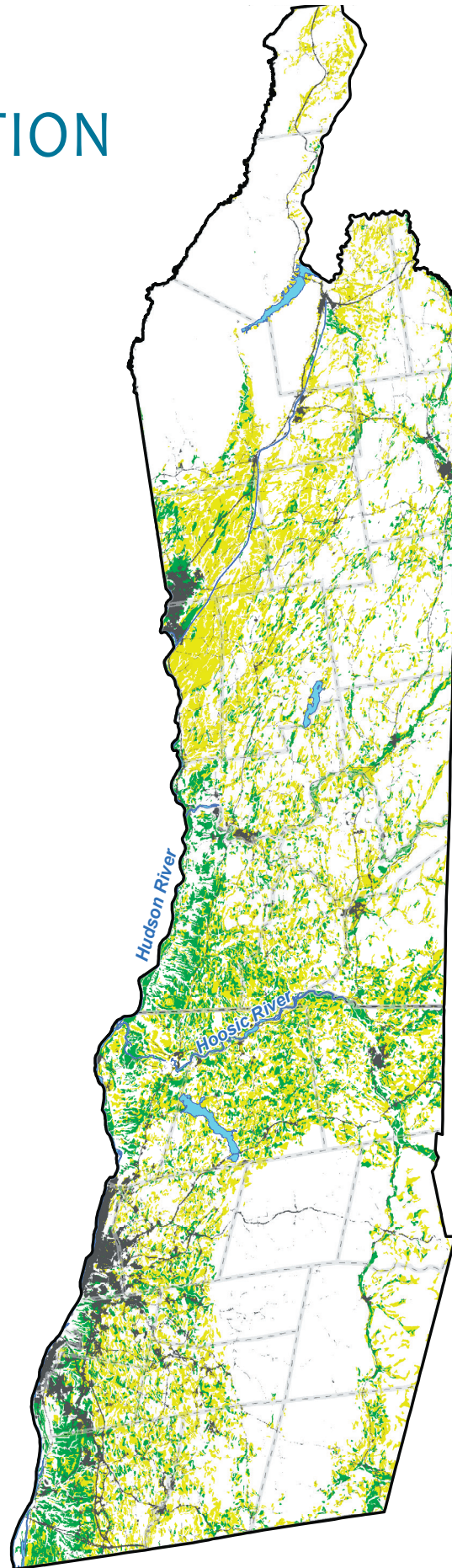
MAP

Soil Classification

- Prime
- Statewide Important

Legend

- Developed Area
- Water Bodies
- Town Boundary



APPENDIX C:

RANKING CRITERIA MAP

Legend

- Priority Area
- Special Area
- ASA Conserved Land

Priority Areas

- 1 - Hudson River Corridor (along Route 40)
- 2 - White Creek Valley (along Route 153)
- 3 - Batten Kill (along Route 313)
- 4 - Hoosic River Watershed
- 5 - Brunswick (along Route 7)
- 6 - Schodack
- 7 - Stephentown

Special Areas

- A - Kingsbury-Fort Ann Flats
- B - Champlain Canal Corridor
- C - Granville / Hebron
- D - Black Creek Valley (along Routes 30 and 31)
- E - Historic Route 22 Corridor
- F - Greenwich-Cambridge Corridor (along Route 372)
- G - West Hoosick Hills

Independent Project Sites

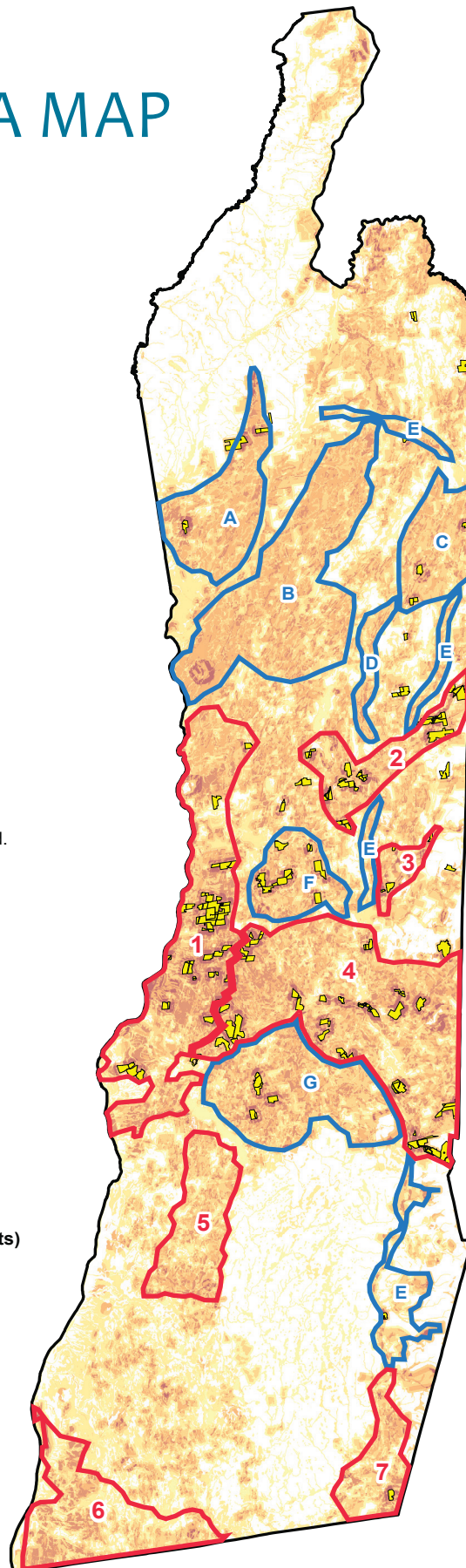
A project not falling into any of the Priority Areas or Special Areas may still be undertaken as a Independent Project Site at the discretion of ASA's Board.

Ranking Criteria Total

- 1 - 2 (Lowest Priority)
- 3 - 4
- 5 - 6
- 7 - 8
- 9 - 10
- 11 - 13 (Highest Priority)

Ranking Criteria

- Parcels in current agricultural production (5 points)
- Prime soils (4 points)
- Statewide Important or Unique soils (3 points)
- Within 1/4 mile of conserved land (3 points)
- Within 1/8 mile of current agricultural parcels (2 points)
- Within 100 feet of water resource (1 point)



APPENDIX C:

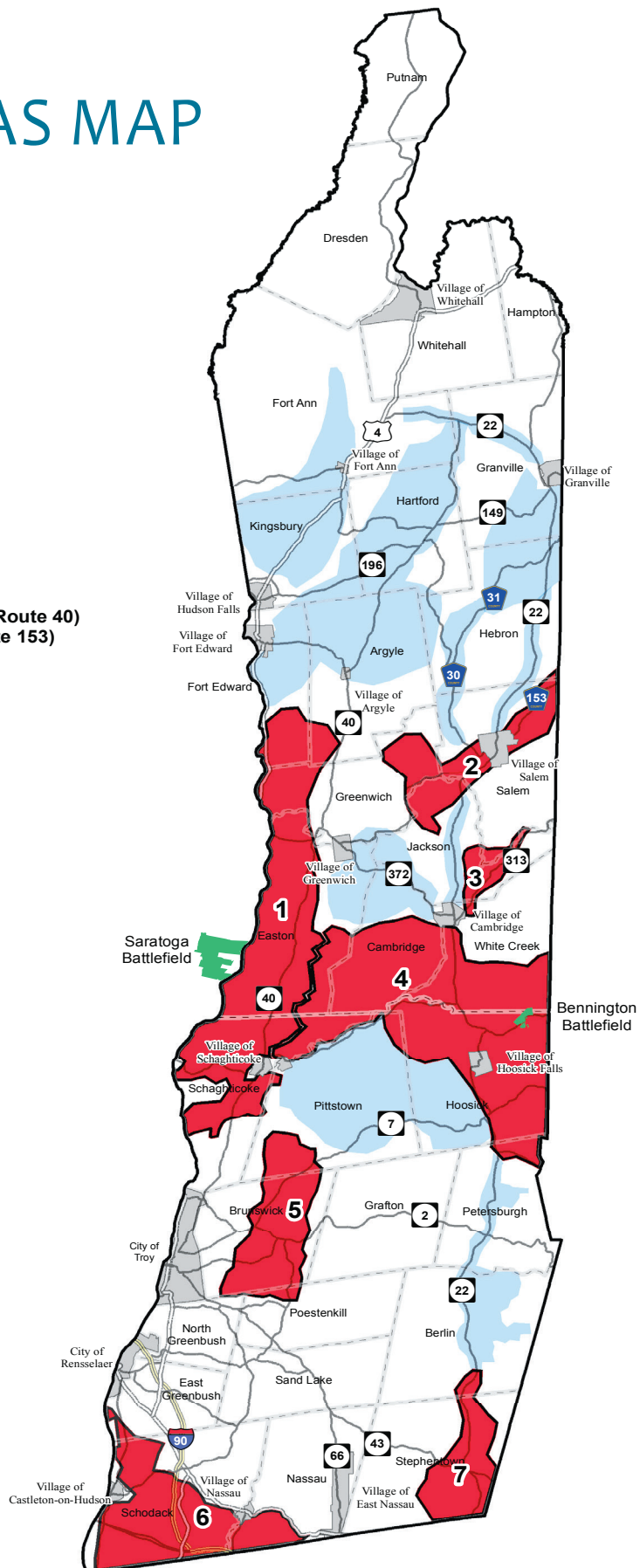
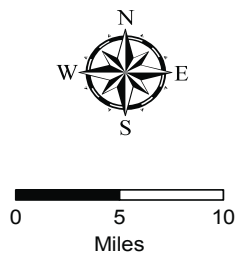
PRIORITY AREAS MAP

Legend

- Priority Area
- Special Area
- City or Village
- Town Boundary
- Interstate
- US Highway
- State Highway

Priority Areas

- 1 - Hudson River Corridor (along Route 40)
- 2 - White Creek Valley (along Route 153)
- 3 - Batten Kill (along Route 313)
- 4 - Hoosic River Watershed
- 5 - Brunswick (along Route 7)
- 6 - Schodack
- 7 - Stephentown



APPENDIX C:

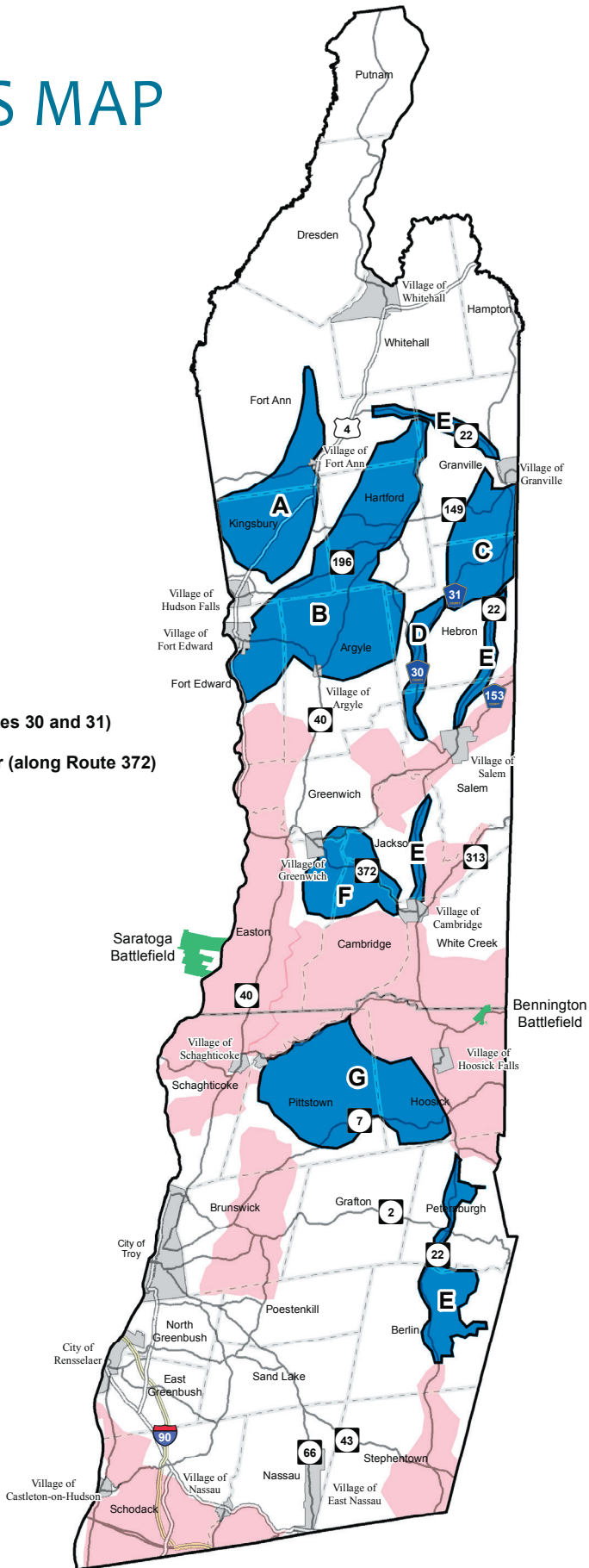
SPECIAL AREAS MAP

Legend

- Special Area
- Priority Area
- City or Village
- Town Boundary
- Interstate
- US Highway
- State Highway

Special Areas

- A - Kingsbury-Fort Ann Flats**
- B - Champlain Canal Corridor**
- C - Granville / Hebron**
- D - Black Creek Valley (along Routes 30 and 31)**
- E - Historic Route 22 Corridor**
- F - Greenwich-Cambridge Corridor (along Route 372)**
- G - West Hoosick Hills**



The Agricultural Stewardship Association (ASA) protects our community's working landscape of farms and forests, connects people to the land, and promotes a vibrant future for agriculture in the region. As of May 2015, we have assisted landowners with the conservation of 15,600 acres of productive farm and forest land in Washington and Rensselaer counties.

ASA receives funding from its members and supporters, which include the Castanea Foundation, the Peter and Carmine Lucia Buck Foundation, and the New York Conservation Partnership Program (funded by New York's Environmental Protection Fund and administered by the Land Trust Alliance, in coordination with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation).



CONSERVING GOOD FARMLAND.
FOR GOOD.
FOREVER.

MAY 2015



AGRICULTURAL STEWARDSHIP ASSOCIATION

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