



Agricultural
Stewardship
Association

SPRING/SUMMER 2022

agstewardship.org

Forever Farmland

IN THIS ISSUE

| Sequestering Carbon **PAGE 3**

| An Artful Legacy **PAGE 9**

Embracing a New Approach to Farming

PAGE 4



OTTER CREEK FARM
Pittstown, NY

Driving Conservation Through Community Outreach



THINK OF ASA and farmland conservation will likely come to mind. Maybe it's the productive fields that you drive by on your way to work or maybe an image appears of a farm from your childhood. Some may think of the Cambridge Community Forest and the connections they are making to that special place. What may not immediately come to mind is ASA's programming. Some may ask with so much farmland to conserve, why focus energy on outreach programs?

Increasing ASA's base of supporters and making meaningful connections between people and the land will ultimately help us conserve more farmland and forests. People only fight for what they care about, but they need a connection before they care. If they can develop that connection, they will more likely support initiatives that will have transformative impacts on farmland protection in Washington and Rensselaer counties.

It is imperative that ASA not only carry out land protection and stewardship work, but also meets the long-term obligations expected of us by farmers, supporters and the communities we serve. The increased demand for conservation services along with the expectation that land trusts will help foster the next generation of conservationists means placing more emphasis on community outreach.

ASA strives to instill a greater understanding and appreciation of the role working landscapes play in terms of food and fiber production as well as wildlife habitat and natural resource protection (such as soil, water and air) not to mention the greater role it can play in climate resiliency and mitigation. When our communities place greater value on working lands, so, too, will our local, state and federal decision-makers. Thus, increasing funding and support for voluntary conservation programs. The conservation of a farm or forest benefits everyone *forever*.

ASA's programming work is tangible, like providing opportunities for children to be actively engaged on farms, some for the first time, or providing rural landowners safety instruction on chainsaw use and tree felling. By hosting an early morning bird walk on a conserved farm or a snowshoe walk through an old hemlock grove, it is not only our joy, but our duty, to help foster a meaningful connection to the land. Our future depends on it. I wish you many wonderful connections to the fields and woods this summer.

Together in conservation,

RENEE J. BOUPLON
Executive Director

Farms and Forests are Part of the Climate Solution

ALTHOUGH OUR northeast region has not seen the devastating fires, number of tornadoes and flooding events as other parts of the U.S., we are feeling the effects of a warming climate with excessive and prolonged rainfalls, periods of drought and temperature extremes. While dealing with the results of these climate disruptions, farmers and foresters play a key role in helping to reduce the impacts of climate change.

Along with reducing emissions of greenhouse gases, sequestering carbon from the atmosphere is a major goal in slowing climate change. Given plants are masters at capturing and storing carbon, and farmers and foresters are experts at growing plants, together they are the ideal partnership for tackling carbon sequestration.

Today, farmers are increasingly adopting agricultural conservation practices including reduced or minimum tillage, use of cover crops and precision nutrient management—practices that make good economic as well as environmental sense. Minimizing tillage reduces the amount of carbon lost to the atmosphere; keeping the ground covered with living plants improves soil biological activity and structure, reducing erosion and loss of nutrients; applying just the

right amount of nutrients that a crop needs reduces loss of nitrogen and phosphorus into our lakes and streams.

Smart management of forests can maximize carbon storage in trees while protecting wildlife habitat and producing the timber and wood products we need. Agroforestry and silvopasturing practices add the benefit of food production.

We can find many examples of protected farms employing these conservation practices—interseeding cover crops on Tiashoke, Landview and Hickory Hill Dairy farms, the establishment of permanent pastures and chestnut trees on the Otter Creek Farm, contouring to reduce water runoff on Hay Berry Farm and the use of a methane digester on Wagner Dairy Farm, to name a few.

We're inspired and encouraged by these practices to limit and reverse the effects of climate change in addition to their food, fiber and timber production. If you'd like to learn more about what you can do to address climate change on your property, reach out to Janet Britt at janet@agstewardship.org.

Our farmers and foresters are experts at growing plants and can play a key role in helping to reduce the impacts of climate change.



Corn with interseeded clover



If you'd like to learn more about what you can do to address climate change on your property, reach out to Janet Britt at janet@agstewardship.org.

OUR EXPANDING LANDSCAPE

For thirty-two years, ASA has worked with local landowners to protect the agricultural landscape of our region. We celebrate and support the foresight of these landowners and donors who recognize that once lands are lost to development, we never get them back. It is with great gratitude and pleasure that we share a few of their stories in the pages that follow.

Conservation Opens the Door for a New Way of Farming

Transition from dairy to regenerative farming allows for new understanding and opportunities



MUCH OF BRAD WILEY'S childhood was spent in the company of his grandfather taking care of the family's 465-acre farm in Pittstown. "Thanks to my father's undeniable talent for running a business and his passion for the herd, my grandfather was able to concentrate on the physical farm and I was encouraged to follow along. He fixed everything, including the land. Looking back on it now, I realize a lot of what he was doing—managing the wood lot, shoring up the creek beds, manicuring the fields—was conservation. He never overfertilized or over-tilled and he regularly rotated crops. He was always looking ahead."

Many years later, it became clear to all that the gift for looking ahead had made its way down the family tree to Wiley. "In 1990, a few years after I graduated college and returned home to help run the dairy operation, I started going to town meetings," recalls Wiley. "It seemed to me the developers in the area were having too

much fun. I knew that if someone didn't make a fuss, those folks wouldn't play fair. 'Fair' being adhering to the planning code established by my father and others. I wanted to do what I could to keep the land from being lost to farming in the future."

Meanwhile, back on the family farm, looking ahead was proving problematic.

When more is less

Working alongside his father, Wiley kept the dairy operation going. "Honestly, it had never been suggested that we ever do anything other than dairy," says Wiley. "This place has been dairy since all the way back to 1882. But things got tough, real tough, in the early 2000s. Not only did my dad step away from the operation, but we were on this hamster wheel of always trying to keep up. We'd add more cows to make more money but that required more buildings, more inputs and so on. I couldn't see a way out. I scaled things back to make it more manageable and started to rent a little bit of the land.

And while I didn't have a lot of debt, even that wasn't enough. In time, I sold off the cows and began renting everything but the buildings."

A new perspective brings new opportunities

Then, around 2018, Wiley connected with Elizabeth Collins, an old family friend. As it turned out, Collins also had a passion for land and farming but took a very different approach to the effort. As she shared her experience and knowledge gained from working on organic, grass-fed beef and mixed-use farms, the self-described 'stubbornly open-minded' Wiley began to look at the family farm through a new lens.

"Elizabeth's holistic approach to farming was eye-opening. It was much bigger picture thinking and it helped me realize I had a lot more choices and opportunities than I thought," says Wiley.

Just as the two began to explore new ways for operating the farm, they learned of a new dairy transition program. Wiley reached out to Renee Bouplon at ASA who was familiar with Otter Creek Farm thanks to previous easement applications that were not awarded. But this time was different. As it turned out, the dairy transition program aimed to help farmers accomplish exactly what Wiley and Collins had set their sights on: transforming Otter Creek Farm from a dairy operation to a diversified farm that worked in harmony with the land.

"The timing was uncanny," recalls Elizabeth. "You had to apply within one year of ceasing dairy operations and Brad had done that eleven months earlier. As a result, our application got accepted within 30 days. That was a huge weight off our shoulders and allowed us to think even bigger about what we could do."

Transforming the farm for the betterment of all

The walls of the Otter Creek Farm office are covered with lists and both short- and long-range plans. But the most important information is contained in their mission statement: *Otter Creek Farm is committed to the stewardship and use of our resources to produce income to regenerate and maintain the opportunities the farm provides for the family, customers and community.*

Today, Wiley and Collins are using their resources to manage a herd of 40 grass-fed beef cows and their calves, grow 100 acres of hay to feed the herd and sell to other farmers, and operate a Farmstay featuring three fully outfitted platform tent sites that provide guests with a chance to connect to the natural world and be introduced to the workings of a farm.

"The easement really made it possible to transform the farm and my approach to farming," says Wiley. "Now when I look ahead, all I see are opportunities."



OTTER CREEK FARM
Pittstown, NY



Brad Wiley and Elizabeth Collins

"The easement really made it possible to transform the farm and my approach to farming. Now when I look ahead, all I see are opportunities."

—BRAD WILEY

To see a map of all of ASA's conserved properties, visit our website www.agstewardship.org/landconservation.

Funding for this project was provided by the New York State Environmental Protection Fund administered by the Department of Agriculture and Markets.



Planning for the Future



Providing land security for generations to come

FOR THE LIDDLE FAMILY, dairy farming is more than their profession; it's their passion.

Established in 2000 by the recently wed Adam and Nicole Liddle, Liddleholme Farm was originally comprised of a 39-acre property in Argyle that still includes their home, milking parlor, milking herd, pastureland and cropland. Over the years, the Liddle family grew to include three children while the herd size also grew to its present size of 150 registered Holsteins.

Looking to secure more control over their feed volume and quality, as well as the future of their herd and family, the Liddles purchased additional properties—first, a 165-acre farm in Greenwich followed by an 80-acre parcel in Argyle. These acquisitions reduced their dependence on rental lands and outside feed suppliers which had previously served as the source of 20% of their feed. Presently, the Greenwich property also provides a place to house their heifers and dry cows while the remaining cows graze at the original Argyle property.

World-class stock and genetics

For as long as he can remember, Adam has always had passion and a knack for Holstein

genetics. As his son Anthony matured into a young adult, he demonstrated the same passion and gift. Their combined talent and efforts has earned the farm some of the highest breeding averages in the country. “Lu” (short for Liddleholme Resur Lu-RED-ET), a Liddleholme-bred cow received an “Excellent 97” ranking, the highest possible ranking for points, making it one of only 38 cows in the nation to ever receive a score that high. Thanks to their pedigree, health and overall quality, Liddle stock is sought after by farms all over the world. The sale of live animals and frozen embryos accounts for a significant portion of the farm income.

Project contributes to stability and opportunity

With their children now grown and Anthony working full-time in the family business, the Liddles recognized they need to secure their land to make the farm viable for years to come. Working with ASA, they opted to conserve the 165-acre Greenwich property. The financial stability the easement provides will allow them to give more time and energy to their breeding efforts and increase the farm income from breeding sales. The family anticipates income from embryo and animal sales becoming a bigger part of the farm business and the future, thus allowing the Liddles to diversify and sustain the dairy farm during fluctuations in milk pricing.

To anyone looking to make a living with cattle, Adam offers time-honored advice: “Do it because you have the passion for it. Learn from every situation to get better. Sometimes you learn what ‘not’ to do, and many times you learn little things that make you better, too. Don’t be afraid to ask questions.”

Funding for this project was provided by the New York State Environmental Protection Fund administered by the Department of Agriculture and Markets.

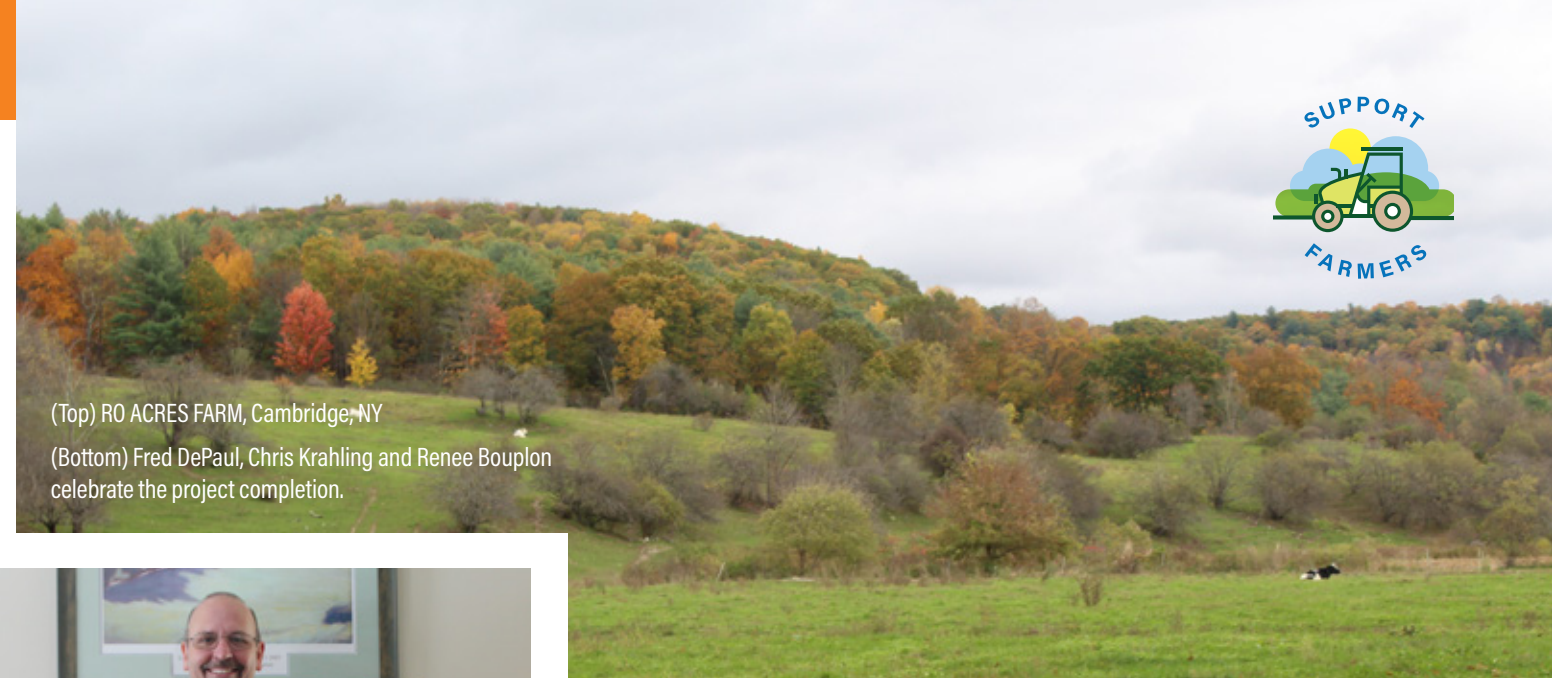
“Learn from every situation to get better ... Don’t be afraid to ask questions.”

—ADAM LIDDLE



(Top) Adam Liddle displays his passion for good cattle
Photo courtesy of Liddleholme Farm

(Bottom) LIDDLEHOLME FARM, Argyle, NY



(Top) RO ACRES FARM, Cambridge, NY

(Bottom) Fred DePaul, Chris Krahling and Renee Bouplon celebrate the project completion.



“It makes good sense for me financially and it will make the property more affordable for any new farmer ...”

—FRED DEPAUL

WHAT IS A CONSERVATION EASEMENT?

A conservation easement is a legal agreement between a landowner and a qualified organization (ASA) that restricts future activities on the land to protect its conservation values.

Conserving the Landscape, Creating Opportunity for Others



WHILE FRED DEPAUL no longer lives in the Village of Cambridge, he remains very interested and invested in its future.

As a young man working on a 117-acre family dairy operation, DePaul plowed and hayed fields all over the village to feed his herd. As time marched on, he watched as that farmland was slowly turned over to development. “Seems like all the best land to farm is the best land to build on,” he says. “I just hate to see that happen in a farming community.” Determined not to see his family farm fall to the same fate, he recently conserved the property through ASA.

DePaul, who now lives in Vermont and rents the property to other farmers, first learned of the opportunity with ASA from other landowners who had previously conserved. “They all shared their reasons for conserving and every one of them had a good experience,” he says. “It makes good sense for me financially and it will make the property more affordable for any new farmer looking to launch a dairy operation when I’m ready to sell. With the house, milking parlor, farmer’s residence, cow pasture and additional cropland, it’s ready to go.”

“Plus,” he adds, “I know if I drive by the farm in 10 years, it won’t have 50 houses on it.”

Funding for this project was provided by the New York State Environmental Protection Fund administered by the Department of Agriculture and Markets.



ALLENWAITE FARMS
Easton, NY



Partnering to Protect Land and Water

8,760 feet of Hudson River Frontage Conserved

ALONG THE HUDSON in Easton, NY sits an 879-acre expanse that's had many champions over the years.

The land first garnered attention in the 1960s when its owner Niagara Mohawk Power Corporation proposed building a nuclear power plant on the site. Public outcry led to the plans being abandoned. In 1997, with the help of the Open Space Institute (OSI) and American Farmland Trust, local farmer George Allen purchased the property as support land for his dairy farm, Allenwaite. As part of the transaction, Allen worked with OSI to protect the land with a conservation easement. That easement was transferred to ASA in 2019.

In December 2021, OSI sold the adjacent 89-acre riparian property to Allenwaite on the condition that it, too, would be protected. When the property was transferred, the original easement was amended to add the 89-acre riverfront property.

OSI President and CEO Kim Elliman says, "Uniquely situated along the Hudson River corridor, the land provides a critical natural buffer between the farm operation and waterway. As we moved to diversify our holdings, it was only natural that we looked to transfer the easement to ASA who will ensure its protection in perpetuity."

"The land provides a critical natural buffer between the farm operation and waterway."

—KIM ELLIMAN, OSI PRESIDENT AND CEO



ASA's Impact in Buskirk Grows

THE BEGIN FARM, a rolling 101-acre property in Buskirk is the most recent addition to a conservation puzzle along Buskirk West Hoosick Road.

A combination of fertile farmland and a forest made up of hardwoods, pine and hemlock trees with vernal pools, the property is at a valuable agricultural resource and a habitat for a variety of wildlife.

The property adjoins the Cornell Farm, which was conserved in 2005, and is close to four other conserved properties, creating a large block of conserved land. Recognizing that rental lands are vital to local dairy farms, property owner Connie Kheel leases the land to Tiashoke Farm.

Thank you to Connie Kheel for donating the easement on this property. The Forever Farmland Fund provided support for the transaction costs.



THE BEGIN FARM
Buskirk, NY



MEADOWPOND FARM
Brunswick, NY



Farmland Protection Brings Peace of Mind

OVER THE 31 YEARS that Melissa Charest has lived on Meadowpond Farm in Brunswick, her appreciation for the beauty of the 176 acres she calls home has only deepened. However, over that same stretch of time, she's become increasingly concerned about the encroaching development.

"Where there used to be just fields and forest, my view now contains rows of houses," says Charest. "I can't undo the development that's happened, but I sure can do something to protect at least a piece of the area's natural beauty for the future."

Towards that end, Charest recently donated a conservation easement to ASA on her entire farm. Charest will continue to work the farm, raising livestock including beef cattle, breeding ewes, lambs, goats and chickens, as well as producing hay for her own use and sale to other local dairies and horse farms.

"This farm has been in continual agricultural production since 1810," says Charest. "It gives me peace of mind to know that I was able to do something to ensure it will continue to be a working farm even after I've moved on."

Thank you to Melissa Charest for donating this conservation easement. The transaction related costs were funded in part through ASA's Forever Farmland Fund.

A Landscape and Labor of Love Lives On



Donald and Virginia McNeice met while studying at The Pratt Institute of Art in Brooklyn. After graduation, they settled on Long Island. Don was an architect and Jini was beginning her painting career. But it wasn't long before their shared vision of living on a farm brought them and their four children to Washington County in the mid-1960's. They settled in quickly.

While Don was responsible for many of the prominent structures in Glens Falls, Jini became a prolific and celebrated artist who participated in the very first Landscapes for Landscape and every one that followed until her passing. However, the couple's favorite project was the McNeice Family Farmstead. They poured their hearts and souls into creating a beautiful and productive farm featuring flower and vegetable gardens, gathering spaces and studios to pursue their artistic endeavors. Don worked the land in his free time while Jini captured its beauty in her paintings.

In honor of Don and Jini's love of the land and support of ASA's conservation work, their children—Brian, Kathy, Annie and Maggie—have generously decided to protect their parents' land by donating a conservation easement on the 82 acres located in the Town of Cambridge. This donation will not only honor their parents' legacy but will ensure that the mixture of agricultural and forested lands will be protected forever.

"My sisters and I are incredibly happy to protect this land for the future. We loved growing up on the land and exploring every inch of it. We saw the transition from barren land when we first came, to a rich mixture of productive fields and reforested steep areas, seeing a single ermine or one groundhog, to the diversity of wildlife found there today." — BRIAN MCNEICE

The land is expected to be conserved in the Spring of 2022. ASA is extremely grateful for the McNeice siblings' donation and their commitment to local farmland and forest conservation.



Jini McNeice

"We loved growing up on the land and exploring every inch of it."

—BRIAN MCNEICE

Funding for this project was made possible by the ASA Forever Farmland Fund.

Updates from The Board

THANK YOU, DIANE!

We want to thank Diane Quick for her years of service on our Board of Directors. We are grateful for the time, talent and energy she shared with ASA over the years and for her guidance with events and fundraising, finance and investments and auditing. Diane served on several committees during her time on the Board and has always been one to jump in and lend a hand when needed. Thank you for your service, Diane!

MEET MARK!

We are delighted to welcome Mark Anderson to ASA's Board of Directors. Mark is a partner at the conserved Landview Farms in White Creek where he is the crop manager.



Q+A
LAURA KIPPER
ASA Project Manager



Q How has your previous work experience prepared you for the role of Project Manager?

Prior to joining ASA, I was project manager with Saratoga PLAN, another non-profit conservation organization based in Saratoga County. There I really learned the ins and outs of conservation and grew more passionate about the importance of conservation.

That experience confirmed that this was the right path for me and helped me realize that I want to work with landowners closer to home. Plus, my husband and I recently purchased 60 acres of mostly forested land in Rensselaer County that we plan to build on and turn into a working forest and hobby farm. I'm excited to be living and learning from the land we're working to conserve.

Q What about your new role excites you most?

One of the best parts of my job is getting out and seeing the land we're conserving. It really brings home why this work is so important to those who work the land now and those who might want to work it in the future. If I have kids and they want to one day be farmers, what I'm doing is helping to ensure that quality, affordable land will be there for them to pursue their dreams.

Plus, I enjoy connecting with the agricultural community. Everyone has an amazing story and history. Every day I learn something new.

Q What's the most rewarding part of the work you do?

Helping landowners understand what an easement can mean for them and their families is really satisfying.

There's a lot of misunderstanding about the land conservation process. People often think that they'll lose ownership of their land if they get an easement.

I spend a lot of time explaining how conservation easements work and exploring what different conservation strategies can mean for a landowner. My job isn't to sell them on an easement: it's to work WITH them to find ways to protect their beautiful land.

Leave a Legacy: Envision a Gift with Forever Impact

BEQUESTS THROUGH YOUR WILL, retirement plan, investments or insurance policy are a powerful way to ensure that the region you love will be protected for future generations.

When you commit to including ASA in your will or estate plans, ASA receives an immediate \$500 — up to a total of \$15,000 — from philanthropist Bob Ross of New York City. Bob issued his Bequest Challenge to provide matching funds that immediately go to ASA and at the same time provide for the future of the organization and the protection of our local working landscapes.

Anyone can create this type of legacy. With as little as one sentence, you can make a gift in your will or estate plans that significantly impacts the efforts of ASA. It's a meaningful gift that costs nothing when you make it.

Currently, 23 supporters have stepped forward, shared that they have made a bequest to ASA and joined ASA's Legacy Society. Only 7 more commitments are needed to reach the \$15,000 maximum Bequest Challenge goal.

To learn more, please contact Donna Dodd-Thomas at donna@agstewardship.org or 518-692-7285. You may also complete a Bequest Challenge Commitment Form found on ASA's website agstewardship.org on the "Ways to Give" page.

INTERESTED IN PROTECTING YOUR LAND?

For any landowners interested in being considered for a state PDR (purchase of development rights) grant application, ASA will be accepting pre-applications beginning in April. We are unsure exactly when the next state grant opportunity will open, but the pre-application process allows us to review all potential projects and be better prepared when it does. Applicants must be an active commercial farm operation to apply. ASA will be holding public workshops later this summer to discuss the program. Please be sure to check back on the dates and locations of these events. The pre-applications will be available on ASA's website.

Visit www.agstewardship.org/resources/ or call 518-692-7285 for more information.



INSPIRED GIVING

Phyllis Miyauchi,
Legacy Society Member

When asked what inspired Phyllis Miyauchi to include ASA in her estate plans, she shared:

"I was brought up on a farm and have a love for the great outdoors. I'm saddened when I see once beautiful farmland and woodlands give way to housing developments. What could I do about it?"

Last year I had to come up with a new estate plan. Here was a wonderful opportunity to do my part in saving these properties. ASA was the perfect organization to become a beneficiary of my investments and my will. I am also making donations each year as long as I live. My decisions will result in some small way in protecting what's left of our natural environment."

Thank you, Phyllis, for naming ASA as one of your estate beneficiaries. Your gift will have a forever impact and leave your legacy of conservation. We're so grateful.



27,564

ACRES OF FARM AND FOREST LAND CONSERVED!

The Agricultural Stewardship Association (ASA) protects our community's working farms and forests, connects people to the land, and promotes a vibrant future for agriculture and forestry in the region. To date we have assisted with the conservation of 27,564 acres of productive land in Washington and Rensselaer counties.

ASA receives funding from its members and supporters, which include the New York State Environmental Protection Fund and PCLB Foundation, among others.



**Agricultural
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We Conserve Good Farmland
For Good. **Forever.**



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PHOTOGRAPHY: Kathryn Brodie, Lawrence White
DESIGN: Kate Hocker Design



Save the Date

The Forever Farmland Supper

Thursday, August 4, 6:00 p.m. (tentatively)
Hand Melon Farm, Greenwich

Join us for a fun evening celebrating our farming community and conservation leaders for their commitment to protecting our area's irreplaceable agricultural resources.

Landscapes for Landsake

21ST ANNUAL ART SALE AND EXHIBITION

October 8-10, 2022

Maple Ridge, Cambridge

ASA's Landscapes for Landsake celebrates both the agricultural heritage and stunning landscapes of the Upper Hudson Valley. The show draws thousands of visitors from all over the Northeast, from professionals (gallery owners and museum curators) to art lovers of all ages. This year's show features both an in-person event as well as an online shopping experience.



SPONSORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUR BUSINESS

Business sponsorships and grants make our programs possible. For more information about sponsorship benefits and opportunities, contact Katie Jilek at (518) 692-7285 or katie@agstewardship.org.

