

Forever Farmland

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Historic
family farm
prepares for
the future

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Growing Roots: Empowering Farmers and Creating Lasting Bonds to the Land



As a land trust that focuses on protecting land in perpetuity (a very, very long time), you can probably understand why we devote a considerable amount of effort to thinking about time. Not to the extent that a geologist ponders millions and billions of years of activity; but we certainly consider the well-being of our communities far beyond our lifetimes.

We constantly ask ourselves important questions. Are the agreements that we place on these lands worded appropriately so they will endure in perpetuity? Have we set aside sufficient funding today to ensure that we will be able to steward, enforce, and defend these agreements in the distant future? Are we creating opportunities today to connect children to nature and working lands? Have we empowered the next generation of conservationists to value land protection?

Our work intrinsically makes us focus on future generations. It's always amazing to hear the history of the farm families that we partner with in conserving their lands. In this edition of Forever Farmland, you'll meet the Sheffers. Their ties to their farmland go back to pre-revolutionary times. This longevity creates a generational bond with the land. When they decided to protect their land with ASA in perpetuity, they were surely thinking about future generations.

We recognize that not all landowners have been able to maintain and steward their land. We know that history has not been equitable. For some, ties to the land were severed. This leads us to ask ourselves more questions. What role can we as an organization play to help reunite what was lost? Perhaps, more poignantly, how can we help people heal? As we look to the future, we want to strive to empower all farmers to have access to productive land to grow food, fiber, and forest products.

In essence, we want to be one step closer to ensuring everyone has that generational bond to the land.

Forever in conservation,

RENEE J. BOUPLON
Executive Director

MAKE A CONNECTION WITH THE LAND

Community Conservation



UNTIL RECENTLY, ASA has primarily used conservation easements as our strategy for protecting land, with almost all our land conserved through this method.

However, we recognize that innovation is crucial for effective conservation efforts, and we are actively exploring different land protection models. While we believe that easements will continue to be at the core of our conservation work, we have begun diversifying our strategy; most notably, through the acquisition of the Cambridge Community Forest (CCF).

A key part of the ASA mission is to connect people to the land. We believe this connection is essential to fostering a greater understanding and appreciation of the working lands that families conserve. While people who live or work on farms have a natural connection to the land, many others who live in rural communities do not.

In fact, a study by the *Nature of Americans*, an initiative to understand and connect Americans to nature, revealed that as reliance on the natural world for livelihoods has declined, people have become increasingly distracted and disconnected from nature. The same study found that while disconnected, people long for a connection to nature but cite a lack of convenient and welcoming natural areas to explore and engage. This is where community conservation comes in.

ASA believes that community lands—working lands that are accessible to the public and meet the needs of the community—can help inspire more appreciation for and support of conservation work. By connecting people to the land, we hope to promote the benefits of nature to society and foster a greater understanding of the importance of conserving working lands.

Be sure to follow ASA on social media and visit our website for updates on new program offerings throughout the spring and summer!

Join Us

**Make a Connection
with the Land**

MAY 23
**Early Morning
Birding Walk**
with Steve Sanford

MAY-JULY
Bioblitz at the CCF

JUNE 4
**Volunteer Trail
Workday at the CCF**

JUNE 11
**Foraging and Farming
in the Forest:
A Guided Walk and
Workshop**

OCTOBER 21
**Game of Logging,
Level 3**

OCTOBER 22
**Game of Logging,
Level 4**



SCAN FOR
MORE EVENT
INFO



Winter at the Cambridge Community Forest.

OUR EXPANDING LANDSCAPE

For thirty-three 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.



Building Resiliency Through Adaptation



Conservation helps a sixth-generation farm a new path and future

It's not every family farm that can trace its history back to pre-revolutionary times, but Sheffer's Grassland Dairy can.

Tucked in the rolling hills of West Hoosick, the initial 140-acre property was purchased in 1774 and paid for in British pounds. Two years and one Revolutionary War later, an additional 20 acres were purchased and paid for in U.S. dollars.

Since then, six generations of Sheffers have worked the land, weathered countless economic up- and down-turns, and consistently kept their eyes on the horizon, looking for the next market shift and opportunity.

One of the most significant shifts in the family farm's history began in 2014 when owner Eric Sheffer began transitioning the traditional dairy operation to organic. "We could see where the conventional market was going," he recalls, "and it wasn't good. We weren't interested in getting bought out

and we had just upped our acreage to over 400 which made organic grazing a very viable option. In a lot of ways, the timing of the Dairy Transition Program couldn't have been better."

Today, the Sheffers graze more than 200 cows on a mixture of grass and clover. Eric, along with a team of four full-timers and one part-timer, handle the milking, shipping 2.5 million pounds of milk per year to Stonyfield Organic. "The opportunity to contract with Stonyfield in 2016 was another well-timed bit of good fortune," says Sheffer. "When we got our organic certification in 2017, all the pieces were already in place for us to make a successful go at a new approach to dairy farming and maximizing our assets."

Another opportunity that the Sheffers kept an eye on for years was conserving the land with ASA. "Honestly," he says, "my father Wally and I discussed it many

times over the years. Our plan has always been to keep the land agricultural, so it made sense, but we didn't have a need that it addressed."

But now, with organic prices at their lowest since 2015 and costs steadily on the rise, Sheffer appreciates how an easement can bring some stability to the farm at what may be a pivotal time for the industry overall.

"Our operation is actually in a decent spot, but I think there's trouble ahead for organic dairy. An easement affords us flexibility with land debt and expansion. We're able to pick our heads up and really consider different opportunities. Maybe we'll take on different enterprises or maybe we'll do something else. The important thing is we're more resilient and in a better position to change directions if the market gets flooded or other factors impact our ability to be profitable. Protecting the land makes all that possible and ensures it will be available for yet another generation of Sheffers."



"Conserving the land affords us flexibility with debt and expansion. We're able to pick our heads up and really consider different opportunities."

— ERIC SHEFFER

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 through the Dairy Transitions Farmland Protection Initiative administered by the Department of Agriculture and Markets.



Conserving Land and a Legacy While Securing the Future



“Most importantly, this land will be farmland. Forever.”

— MIKE SWEZEY

From the comfort of his front porch, Mike Swezey can cast his gaze across a large swath of some of the fields that make up the 345-acre Swezey View Farm. From this vantage, Swezey can readily recall significant moments from the farm’s past—like when they consolidated two sizable herds of dairy cows into one barn. Thanks to this project with ASA, he has a pretty good fix on what the future will look like.

“Most importantly,” declares Swezey, “this land will be farmland. Forever.”

Swezey, who first stepped onto the property in 1975 as a hired hand while still a junior in high school, says all he ever wanted to be was a farmer and “this land is what made that possible.”

In 1979, Swezey purchased the farm outright and launched a successful and wholly self-sufficient dairy operation. “First it was just me and some help,” he says, “Then, my eldest son, David, and I oversaw the herd which numbered around 170 at its largest, plus the growing of all the feed we needed to keep them healthy and producing.”

Then, in 2013, after a major back surgery, the elder Swezey sold half the farm to his son. David largely ran the operation on his own

for six years before the dairy crisis took its toll. After selling off the herd in 2019, David transitioned the bulk of the property to hay production for retail sale, began leasing 50 acres to a local farm for support corn, all while continuing to manage his own growing herd of 45-or-so beef cattle.

While Mike had come to terms with the fact that things are bound to change in a span of 40+ years, he was clear on what he didn’t want to ever change. “You can’t grow farmland,” he says, “I’m not interested in solar panels, and I don’t want houses popping up on the land I tended for so much of my life. I had heard about other local farms conserving their land through ASA, so we reached out. While it took a while to get all the pieces into place, the process was easy.”

In addition to ensuring the farm will always remain in agricultural use, conserving the land helped secure Mike’s retirement and pay off David’s mortgage, which is providing them both with a peace of mind rarely found in farming. “Who knows,” says Mike, “Maybe one day I’ll sit on this porch and watch one of my grandchildren work the fields. Thanks to ASA, that’s a real possibility now.”



SWEZEY VIEW FARM
Hartford, NY

Double the Impact

Two Families Each Donate Their Development Rights



GRIFFING FARM

GRIFFING FARM
Eagle Bridge, NY

SUSAN AND STEPHEN GRIFFING purchased their 132-acre Hoosick property in 1968. Historically it was pastureland, but since their purchase, it has been rented to an adjacent dairy farm for crop production. “The land was a source of great joy to my late husband, Stephen, and me over the years as we raised our family and a myriad of animals. More recently, I grew concerned about the increasing amount of development taking place in the area. I was familiar with ASA and decided to reach out to learn how I could conserve the property. Thanks to ASA, our farm has joined a growing number of what I call perpetual farms in the area. While I won’t stay on the land forever, it will remain forever farmland and an important part of my legacy.”



MOSELEY PROPERTY

MOSELEY PROPERTY
Pittstown, NY

THE 124-ACRE Moseley property in the Town of Pittstown has been protected. The land is rented to a local dairy farm for corn and hay production and is adjacent to the conserved White Oak Farm and within one mile of three other conserved farms. Owner, Connie Kheel, said, “The easement not only ensures a future for farming on the land but also creates invaluable greenways that protect important habitat, provide corridors for people and wildlife and improve air and water quality.”

Funding for the Hosley project was provided by the New York State Environmental Protection Fund through the Dairy Transitions Farmland Protection Initiative administered by the Department of Agriculture and Markets. Funding for the Griffing Farm Project was through ASA’s Forever Farmland Fund with a contribution from the landowner. Funding for the Moseley Farm Project was through ASA’s Forever Farmland Fund with a contribution from the landowner.

Preserving the Past, Protecting the Future



Lucy Burch owns the 281-acre Hosley Farm property, located in the Town of Kingsbury. The property serves as support crop land for the livestock operation owned by Lucy and her husband, Richard, who have been farming their entire lives. Lucy and Richard conserved the home farm late in 2022. The Hosley property is comprised of multiple lots separated by roads, a railroad, and the Old Champlain Canal, and has frontage on the Champlain Canal.

“The Hosley Farm is the second property we’ve conserved with ASA. With the help of the ASA, the third and fourth generations of our family are continuing what my parents started so many decades ago. It’s hard to express the depth of our gratitude for ASA for enabling us to conserve the land and make it available for future farmers.”

— LUCY BURCH



STAKEHOLDER NOTIFICATION AND PUBLIC NOTICE

ASA Applying for Accreditation Renewal



THE LAND TRUST ACCREDITATION COMMISSION recognizes land conservation organizations that meet national quality standards for protecting important natural places and working lands forever. ASA is pleased to announce it is applying for renewal of accreditation. A public comment period is now open.

An independent program of the Land Trust Alliance, the Land Trust Accreditation Commission conducts an extensive review of each applicant's policies and programs. "Accreditation is more than compliance and paperwork," explains Renee Bouplon, ASA Executive Director. "It is ASA's commitment to the communities we serve that we will be here for the long haul. We adhere to best practices and commit to long-term stewardship of the conservation easements and community lands we hold for the benefit of the public."

The Commission invites public input and accepts signed, written comments on pending applications. Comments must relate to how ASA complies with national quality standards. These standards address the ethical and technical operation of a land trust.

Currently, 467 land trusts are accredited and there are more than 1,280 land trusts in the nation. For the full list of standards visit www.landtrustaccreditation.org/help-and-resources/indicator-practices.

To learn more about the accreditation program and to submit a comment visit www.landtrustaccreditation.org or email your comment to info@landtrustaccreditation.org. Comments may also be mailed to:
Land Trust Accreditation Commission

Attn: Public Comments

36 Phila Street, Suite 2

Saratoga Springs, NY 12866

Comments on ASA's application will be most useful by August 20, 2023.



SCAN TO SUBMIT A COMMENT
www.landtrustaccreditation.org

Conserving Essential Lands for Future Generations

A PLAN FOR CONSERVING LAND FROM 2022-2030



Today, farmland and forests continue to disappear. New farmers cannot afford land. We face compounding crises of climate change and social injustice. Our fragmented communities are less connected to land and nature. And, our children need hope for the future. ASA is responding to these challenges through its land protection efforts.

ASA's Strategic Land Conservation Plan is a roadmap for protecting land in Washington and Rensselaer counties. The plan focuses on protecting farmland, forests, and community lands that are essential for maintaining vibrant agricultural communities. The plan sets clear priorities for conservation efforts, emphasizing the importance of farmland, while also including criteria for conserving forests and woodlands.

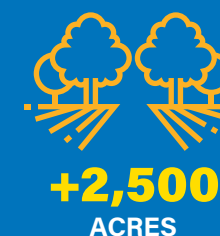
The plan also places focus on the importance of connecting people to the land and protecting working lands that meet community needs. Climate resilience is now a key consideration for all land conservation projects. ASA is committed to conserving an additional 15,000 acres of land by the end of 2030.



GOAL 1

Conserve Farmland

Protect the land base that is the foundation of a vibrant farm economy by conserving an additional 12,000 acres of diverse, resilient, and viable agricultural land.



GOAL 2

Conserve Working Forests

Protect the land base that is part of a viable rural economy by conserving 2,500 acres of working forest and woodland that can produce a variety of forest products as well as ecosystem services like carbon storage.



GOAL 3

Grow Community

Invest in deeper and more diverse relationships between people and the land by facilitating the conservation of 500 acres of land in partnership with communities throughout Washington and Rensselaer counties.

Volunteer Spotlight:

BRIDEY NOLAN

Back in 2011, ten-year old Bridey Nolan participated in Farm Photography for Kids (FPFK) led by Cliff Oliver. It sparked a passion in her. Today, she is a registered nurse in the pediatric ICU at Albany Medical Center. In her free time, she is taking the skills she learned from Cliff during FPFK and volunteers to photograph farms for ASA. She's honed her skills over the years and we are incredibly grateful to her. Thank you, Bridey!



Top: Ten year old Bridey at Farm Photography for Kids
Bottom: Bridey with one of her show cows



From the Board

Tricia participated in the Game of Logging in 2020 and was the winner of the chainsaw safety competition.



WELCOME TRICIA!

We are delighted to welcome Tricia Lockwood to ASA's Board of Directors. Tricia is the VP of Credit Underwriting at Farm Credit East.

"Over the years, I've worked with ASA on the Events and Fundraising Committee and witnessed their impact on the community and landowners. ASA's mission is vital in preserving local agriculture and forestland in Rensselaer and Washington counties, ensuring sustainable production of food and fiber." — TRICIA LOCKWOOD



Carole lending a hand at Landscapes for Landsake.

THANK YOU, CAROLE!

We want to thank Carole Lewis for her years of service on our Board of Directors. We are grateful for her leadership over the years and for her guidance with events and fundraising, finance and investments, and succession planning. Carole served as Vice Chair and 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, Carole!

LEGACY SOCIETY MEMBER

Roger Armstrong

Roger Armstrong and his late wife, Judy, longtime ASA supporters, made the thoughtful decision to leave a forever gift to ASA in their estate plans. At a recent visit with Roger, he shared his story and passion for protecting our natural resources.

From Summer Farm Boy to Chemist

Born and raised near Boston, Roger was ten when his parents bought an abandoned Maine farm. The farmstead was in the middle of nowhere and had no power or running water. Over time the farm became the family's retreat. Roger enjoyed being a summer farm boy who fixed fences and chased the neighbor's cows.

After graduating from Tufts and a stint in the Navy, Roger attended Rutgers and received a PhD in Chemistry. Roger spent the next 30 years teaching chemistry at Troy's Russell Sage College.

Land Conservation Advocate

Roger's affinity for environmental conservation grew as he recognized that clean water was a priceless natural resource. Protecting land around the Tomhannock Reservoir and promoting healthy watersheds became his passion.

His land conservation work began in 1987 when he co-founded the Rensselaer Taconic Land Conservancy (RTLTC), now the Rensselaer Land Trust. Roger served this all-volunteer organization for 20 years.

Along Came ASA

Roger recalled a meeting in the early 1990s of the two fledging land trusts. Roger and other RTLTC board members met Teri Ptacek, ASA's first executive director, and board member Dave Horn at a brewpub in Albany to share insights and talk about ASA's success in protecting farmland. Roger smiled and chuckled, "Over a beer, I realized I was becoming part of a conservation movement!"

We thank you, Roger, for making a forever impact on our region and leaving a legacy gift to ASA.

"Over a beer, I realized I was becoming part of a conservation movement!" — ROGER ARMSTRONG



SCAN TO READ
ROGER'S FULL STORY

Roger Armstrong with his Ken Wilson painting he purchased at Landscapes for Landsake in 2022



Legacy Society Seeds the Future

Join Roger Armstrong and make a planned gift to ASA. Your legacy gift will steward and protect our region's irreplaceable farmland and forests for future generations. You'll be seeding the continuation of ASA's forever work.

Legacy gifts may be given through your will, retirement plan assets, life insurance policies, donor-advised funds, bank or brokerage accounts, CD's, charitable remainder trusts or real estate donations.

We're happy to be a resource for you. There is never any pressure or obligation to make a gift. Explore your options by contacting Donna Dodd-Thomas at donna@agstewardship.org or 518-692-7285. You may also visit the "Ways to Give" page on ASA's website.

Let Us Thank You

If you have included ASA in your will or estate plans, please let us know. We'd like to thank you for your generosity and recognize you as a member of our Legacy Society.

30,235

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 30,235 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
Stewardship
Association

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



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PHOTOGRAPHY: Katie Jilek, Janet Britt, Bridey Nolan, Stephen Holbrook
DESIGN: Kate Hocker Design

Save the Date



The Forever Farmland Supper

Thursday, August 3, 6:00 p.m.

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.

NEW FOR 2023:

To ensure a sell-out event, ASA will be offering tickets in waves. The first wave is for donors, volunteers, easement owners and long-time supporters. Those in this category will be given priority until July 7. On July 8 we will open ticket sales to the general public for the very first time. Don't miss out! Please purchase your tickets early.

Landscapes for Landsake

22ND ANNUAL ART SALE AND EXHIBITION

In Person: Maple Ridge, Cambridge

October 7-8, 2023

Online: www.LandscapesforLandsake.com

October 7 at 7:00 pm – October 31, 2023 at 11:59 pm

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.



SCAN FOR EVENT DETAILS
AND REGISTRATION

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.



SCAN TO
LEARN MORE



SHEFFER'S GRASSLAND DAIRY
West Hoosick, NY