



**Agricultural  
Stewardship  
Association**

Strategic Plan

*The Next Five Years: 2020–2025*





# MISSION

To protect our community's working farms and forests, connect people to the land, and promote a vibrant future for agriculture and forestry in our region.



**W**ith the launch of our latest **5-year strategic plan**, ASA is challenging itself to find new ways to strengthen our impact. Counting dollars raised and acres conserved is important, but what truly matters is increasing the momentum and building upon our success. In order to protect working lands and promote the agricultural economy that feeds and sustains us, we are committed to supporting our local farmers and connecting people of all ages and backgrounds to the land. Paramount is the need to develop and sustain ASA as an organization, so that it will be here to carry on the mission for years to come.

We have big tasks ahead. We need to include climate resilience in our work, make land more affordable for farmers, identify and address community needs, and plan for organizational change and succession. We will only be able to meet these challenges with help from you, our supporters, our farmers and landowners, our funders, our volunteers and our local communities. Your participation is essential to keeping meaningful work at the core of what we do and how we do it. The “why” we do it is always the same: to enrich all our lives and the lives of those who follow us.

Please join us in building the momentum by learning more about, and becoming involved in, our efforts to conserve working farms and forests in Rensselaer and Washington counties.

## Why We Do What We Do

ASA's land protection and programmatic work results in a multitude of diverse economic, social, and environmental benefits. Our work:

**Conserves productive soils and natural resources**

**Protects wildlife habitat and scenic views**

**Promotes clean water and air**

**Sustains rural livelihoods and way of life**

**Preserves agricultural heritage**

**Supports local food, forest and fiber production**

**Improves soil health and resilience**

**Lessens the impact of climate change**

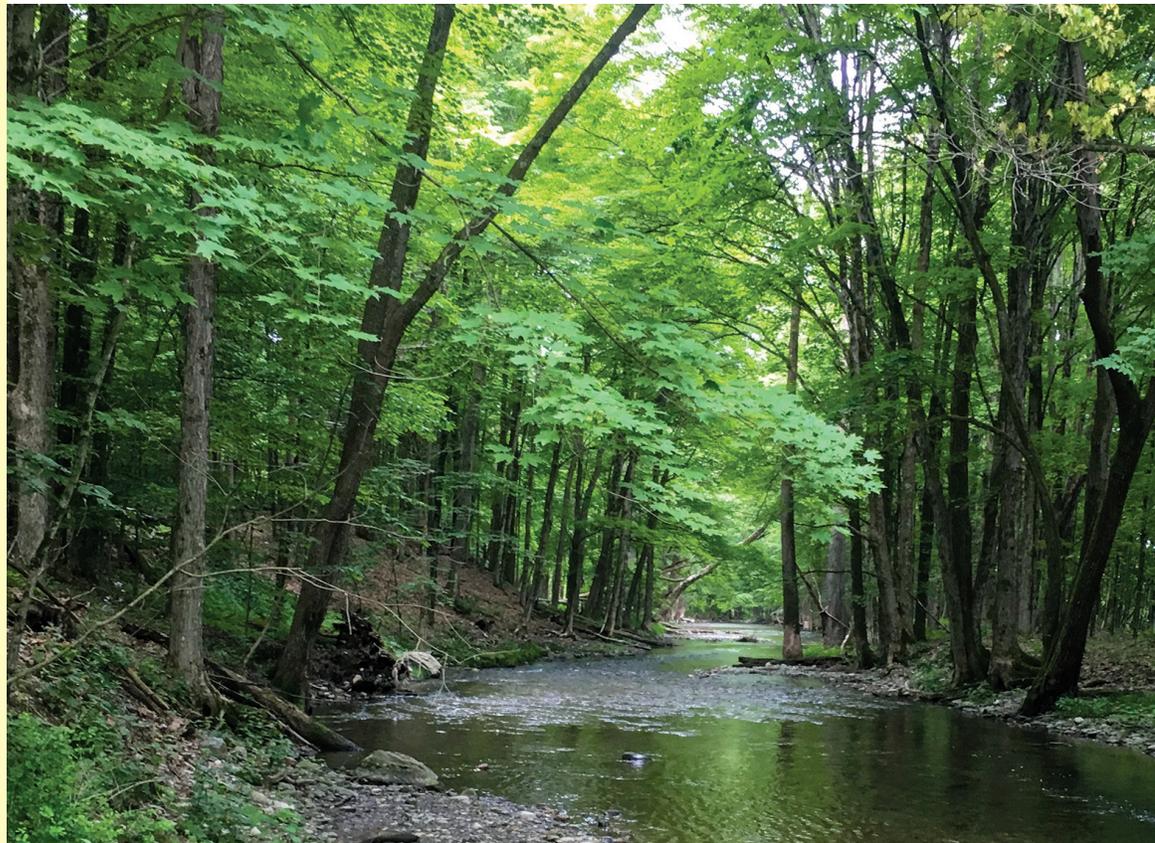
**Supports drought and flood prevention**



Eric Mayer, Copses Farm

*“Conserving the land assures us that the farm will be farmland forever and remain unaffected by sprawl. It also has made the purchase of the farm affordable, something we are extremely grateful for.”*

—Arthur Kraamwinkel, Hepatica Farm



# HIGHLIGHTS

## 23,000

135+ families have worked with ASA to conserve nearly 23,000 acres of farms and woodlands in Washington and Rensselaer counties. Another 24 projects totaling 6,600 acres are currently underway. \$31 million in public and private funding has made this possible.

## \$16.1M

ASA launched a Forever Farmland Campaign in 2015 that has raised \$16.1 million in public and private funding.

## 140

As part of our efforts to connect people to the land, ASA established the 140-acre Cambridge Community Forest for recreational, educational and sustainable forestry demonstration programs.

## 30

ASA has been protecting land in the Upper Hudson River Valley for 30 years

## 17

ASA is part of the Hudson Valley Farmlink Network, a collaboration of 17 organizations, to match beginning farmers seeking land with retiring farmers.

## 6

ASA has been an accredited land trust for 6 years, which has strengthened our long-term organizational resilience.

## Our 50-Year Vision

As a nonprofit, community-based accredited land trust, we make the promise of perpetuity by protecting conserved lands forever and supporting the people who make these lands productive. Therefore, our vision of success must span multiple generations. In fifty years, we know our work will have been successful if:

- Our region has a vibrant agricultural economy producing a variety of products.
- The acreage we have conserved ensures farm viability, providing food for our rural communities and regional urban centers.
- Farms are resilient in the face of changes in the economy, climate, food distribution systems and other systemic changes in our human and natural environments.
- Future generations of farmers are trained, supported and successful.
- People understand and value local agriculture and forestry, and their role in building and sustaining local communities.
- We continue to be effective, proactive, financially stable and well-supported.

## Our Framework for Impact

### Conserve Land

As a conservation land trust, our core function is to protect farm and forest lands using conservation easements as well as land acquisition and affordability tools. With continuing development and ongoing economic challenges faced by farmers, we need to expand our protection efforts. We will follow the criteria defined in ASA's 2015 Farmland Conservation Plan and in a future update to be informed by this strategic plan.

### Support Farmers

It is an essential and expanding part of our mission to support those who work the land to develop successful, sustainable businesses that can be passed along to the next generation.

### Engage People

The value of farms and forests is determined, in part, by how the community values them. To do our work effectively over multiple generations, we need the support of the community. Continued strategic community engagement and policy advocacy are needed to deliver our long-term mission.

### Sustain ASA

To deliver on our perpetuity promise, we must create a resilient organization with diverse funding, an experienced staff, an engaged board, a deep pool of volunteers and a comprehensive succession plan that covers all aspects of leadership.

# ASA's 5-Year Goals

*“What ASA stands for is the bottom line. We can't make any more land, so we need to protect the land we have now.”*

—Dave Mesick, GEM Farms

## Conserve Land

by protecting a significant number of high quality and diverse farms and forests

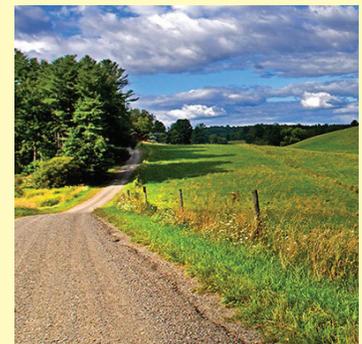
**Conservation Priorities**  
*Conserve viable and diverse agricultural and forest lands*

Update ASA's Land Conservation Plan

Deepen partnerships to support conservation priorities

Reemphasize and internalize forests and woodlands as core to ASA's mission

Seek new funds for forest protection and climate resilience



**Climate Resilience**  
*Address farm viability in a changing climate*

Advance organizational climate resilience strategies

Inventory and publicize climate resilience actions

Communicate the linkage between climate resilience and economic viability of farms and forests

Incorporate climate resilience into easement language where appropriate

## Support Farmers

to help established and emerging farm businesses remain or become economically viable

### Farm Viability

*Facilitate networks and resources to make farms more economically viable*

Strengthen partnerships and connect farmers with farm service organizations

Support implementation of county Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plans

Continue providing programs on farm viability

Provide conservation landowners with greater access to resources and networks



### Land Access and Farm Succession

*Strengthen resources and staff capacity to facilitate land access*

Link farmers to local service providers through referrals, programs, and resource access

Develop land access workshops and programs

Consider and promote land affordability tools, such as ground leases and preemptive purchase rights

## Engage People

to demonstrate the value of agriculture, forestry, and land conservation

### Public Policy Advocacy

*Help shape policy to support working lands and conservation*

Evaluate ASA's existing advocacy strategy

Assess and engage with public policy needs annually

Expand municipal government outreach and education about the benefits of conservation

Train volunteer policy advocates



### Community Engagement

*Create and expand ways to engage diverse communities*

Engage geographically, generationally, and economically diverse communities through innovative outreach

Identify and address needs as defined by the community

Develop partnerships for working lands programming

Pursue opportunities to own land and/or establish a partner farm

## Sustain ASA

by creating a durable, adaptive, well-run organization with broad community support

### Financial Strength

*Grow the budget and diversify income to ensure financial stability*

Create financial projections and set fundraising goals

Increase Board engagement in fundraising

Expand work with foundations

Examine fundraising approaches and expand development programs



### Organizational Planning

*Build organizational capacity through human resources and planning*

Develop and implement the Executive Director succession plan

Create a risk management plan

Evaluate and emphasize recruitment, retention, and leadership activities

Add staff capacity

Invest in staff benefits, compensation, and training

Strengthen the volunteer program

# JOIN US

For the Agricultural Stewardship Association to achieve the vision and goals laid out in this strategic plan and keep our promise of forever, we need your help.

**Make a donation to support our strategic plan**

**Include ASA in your will and estate plan**

**Pledge a monthly gift**

**Conserve your land**

**Volunteer with ASA**

**Purchase products from conserved land**

**Donate stock and real property to ASA**

**Become a business sponsor**

**Attend ASA functions**



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