

You
can
Help
make it
Happen!



Agricultural Stewardship Association

FOREVER FARMLAND

A Campaign to Ensure a Future for Local Farming and Food



if you wanted to make one good acre of farmland out of a more average acre of land, you'd have to pay \$44,000 for topsoil – and that doesn't count the cost of trucking it in and spreading it around. There are 137,000 acres of good, tillable cropland in Washington and Rensselaer counties. It would cost you \$6 billion to “manufacture” that amount of good farmland in a less fertile place.

It would only cost \$205 million to conserve it instead.



Agricultural Stewardship Association

2531 State Route 40
Greenwich, NY 12834
(518) 692-7285
www.agstewardship.org

Here in the Upper Hudson Valley, it is the farms and working landscapes and our robust agricultural economy that make this region so special as a source of fresh local food, as a home for vibrant farming communities, and as a place of unique scenic beauty. For over a quarter century, the Agricultural Stewardship Association (ASA) has worked with farmers and their families to conserve this productive farmland for future generations.

As of December 2016, ASA has successfully protected over 17,160 acres of farmland on over 110 farms in Washington and Rensselaer counties.

But there is much more to be done. There are approximately 1,300 farms containing 137,000 acres of productive cropland in ASA's service area. Many of these farms are dairy operations, complemented by a growing number of vegetable farms, CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) operations, and grass-fed livestock and niche farming enterprises. In the longterm, ASA estimates the need to protect 50,000 to 60,000 acres of farmland in order to ensure a future for a vibrant farming economy in our region.

This campaign represents a major step forward by establishing a short-term goal of conserving an additional 8,400 acres of important farmland. According to ASA's Farmland Conservation Plan, in order to reach this goal ASA will need to raise \$1.9 million from private foundations, conservation organizations and individuals to ensure nearly \$9.4 million in local farmland conservation work.



Why should conserving farmland in Washington and Rensselaer counties matter to me?

These landscapes, located at the heart of the Upper Hudson River Valley, help feed the people of the greater New York City and Boston markets, as well as New York's Capital District region.

A recent study found that nearly 100 percent 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. Indeed, there are 60 million people living within five hours of this service area who need a proximate, secure food source.

But people can't eat locally if the farms aren't there. The study assumes that suitable farmland is being effectively used to produce the food that people need for a healthy diet. In many farming regions across the country, including ours, the best agricultural soils are in danger of being paved over for housing developments, strip malls and parking lots.



The farms in Washington and Rensselaer counties provide sustainable economic development and jobs.

Farms in Washington and Rensselaer counties produced around \$200 million in farm products and livestock in 2013. Each of those dollars generated \$2.5 more dollars in economic activity through related industries and services such as food processing, seed and feed companies, trucking and farm equipment dealerships. This region constitutes a critical agricultural support system for farms not only in our service area, but also throughout the Capital District and mid-Hudson Valley, western Vermont, northwestern Massachusetts and Connecticut.

Thousands of people work in agriculture in Washington and Rensselaer counties. These people don't just work on farms. They also work in tourism, banks and companies that provide services for farmers.

There's no doubt that farms contribute to the unique beauty of the region.

People who visit Washington or Rensselaer counties for the first time always seem surprised by its unusually scenic landscapes. Apparently, they don't expect to find thousands of acres of working farmland tucked between the Adirondack Mountains to the west and Vermont's Green Mountains to the east. It's no wonder that artists, including Grandma Moses, Harry Orlyk and George Van Hook, have been painting these landscapes since the 19th Century.

These farming communities are a part of our heritage that is worthy of being conserved.

People have been farming in this valley for centuries. We have hundreds of years of institutional knowledge. In addition, we hear from new farmers all the time who are looking for land in order to start their own farm operations.

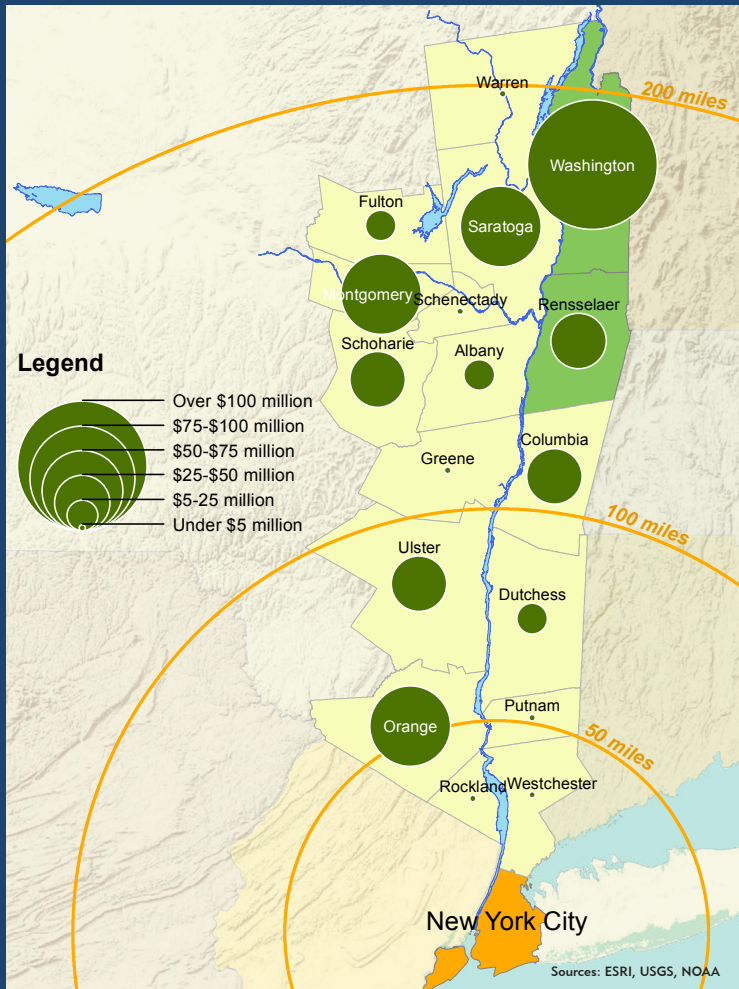
These tight-knit rural communities constitute our living heritage. They also provide a vital resource for urban communities in the Capital District, and especially to children, who may have never seen a cow, a field of corn, or eaten an apple off of a tree. We should not allow one of the most vibrant agricultural regions in the Northeast to be overrun and swallowed up by more shopping malls and housing developments.

Keeping land in farming is also good for our environment.

For all that farms provide in terms of food for people, farms also provide significant environmental benefits. Conserved farms safeguard wildlife habitat and environmentally sensitive areas such as meadows, woodlands, wetlands and streams.



Market Value of Food Production by County



Why Now?

ASA is at a crossroads. Ten years ago the Castanea Foundation, a private conservation foundation, undertook a ten-year giving program totaling nearly \$1.8 million that enabled ASA to conserve nearly 6,000 acres of land. (See page 15 for more about this program.) That ten year program ended in 2016 just as New York State resumed funding farmland conservation after a five-year hiatus. If ASA cannot replace that private funding to match government grants, pay staff and continue outreach with our local farmers, we cannot take full advantage of this State funding.

Meanwhile, New York State loses one farm to development every 3 ½ days. The Capital District has lost 60 percent of its farmland in the past 50 years. There is a growing concern across America about how and where food is produced. More and more people are realizing that fresh, locally grown food is healthier for them and for the environment. *And no one is making new farmland anymore.*

Saratoga County, which borders Washington and Rensselaer counties to the west, is the fastest growing county in New York State. Development pressure continues to rise as the economy improves. We are grateful for the jobs that come with growth, but that growth should not come at the expense of our rural communities and farming culture.

The good news is that, in relative terms, land is still a big bargain in this area. It costs about \$1,500 to conserve an acre of land in

Washington or Rensselaer counties. It takes at least three times that much to conserve an acre of land in the lower Hudson Valley. And if you want to conserve an acre of potatoes in the Hamptons, it can run up to \$378,000.

Right now, numerous farm owners are interested in conserving their land, but ASA needs the resources to make these conservation projects happen. Securing \$1.9 million in private funding will enable ASA to work with approximately 45 owners to ensure their land remains in farming. But we need to act now while we have the opportunity.

Restricting development opportunities on these lands with conservation easements will go a long way to ensure that there will be a sustainable amount of productive farmland and farming communities in the Upper Hudson Valley for generations to come.





Why ASA?

ASA is one of only a small number of land trusts in the nation, and one of only two land trusts in New York State, that works exclusively to conserve productive farm and woodlands. We have over 25 years of experience and are one of only about 350 land trusts, out of a total of 1,800 in the United States, accredited by the national Land Trust Accreditation Commission based on nationally established standards and practices.

ASA has close to \$900,000, as well as a special insurance policy, dedicated to defending and stewarding our easements on an annual basis. This will ensure that the terms of our conservation easements are upheld in perpetuity.

ASA's projects in Washington and Rensselaer counties have been awarded \$16.3 million in New York State funding to date. In 2016, ASA received awards for 10 farms, more than any other land trust in New York State. This funding has leveraged an additional \$1.7 million in federal grants and \$1.7 million in private funding.

ASA has years of experience in creating links between suburban and urban centers in the Capital District and farms in the Capital District's backyard. We introduce hundreds of children and adults to our farming communities through dozens of very popular events and programs every year.

ASA has a small but highly regarded professional staff and a diverse and dedicated board of directors. ASA's operating budget for FY 2016-17 is approximately \$600,000, a budget that has held steady for over five years by virtue of tight financial controls, even while we expanded our operations.



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 signed, any rights not expressly reserved in the easement are extinguished 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.

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.



How ASA Works With Farmers

Conserving Farmland Keeps Neighbors Together

Evergreen Farm (383 acres) and Maple Lane Farm (133 acres), Petersburg

“This project helps both our families and will be good for the whole community going forward.”

– Dave Green, Evergreen Farm



Evergreen Farm has been continuously managed as a dairy farm by the Green family since 1848. As fifth generation farmers Dave and Leslie Green expanded the operation, leasing the 133-acre Maple Lane Farm from their elderly neighbors, the Willbrants, for crop production. The Willbrants were glad to rent their land to their neighbors and hoped that Dave and Leslie might be able to buy their land someday so that they wouldn't have to sell to a developer.

This is where ASA came in. Working with Rensselaer County, ASA secured state farmland protection funding, as well as a match from a private donor, to purchase the development rights on both farms at the same time. The sale of the development rights on Evergreen Farm gave Dave and Leslie the money they needed to purchase Maple Lane from the Willbrants. They now have the security of owning land that provides critical support for their dairy operation. The Willbrants were delighted. Not only were they able to keep their land in farming, but they were also granted a life estate, so these two families could go right on being neighbors.

TOTAL PROJECT COST:

\$668,876

SOURCE OF FUNDING:

NYS ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION FUND \$504,657

PRIVATE DONOR \$100,000

LANDOWNER DONATION \$64,219

It Takes a Village to Protect a Community Treasure

Denison Farm, Schaghticoke (164 acres)

Brian and Justine Denison began their life together farming a commercial, conventional farm in Maine where they owned the house but rented the land. Determined to own land and to farm it using healthy, sustainable practices, the Denisons were overjoyed to find a 164-acre farm in Schaghticoke, New York that had been farmed organically for 17 years. It also happened to be the home of the first CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) operation in the Capital District.

When Brian and Justine bought the farm in 2005, they turned it into a powerhouse of local food production. Today, they grow more than 80 varieties of vegetables and their CSA has expanded to 500 members. They also supply a number of restaurants and sell at the Troy and Saratoga Farmers markets, serving hundreds of local residents. This farm, one of the first to be settled in the upper Hudson Valley after the Revolutionary War, is particularly important as it is located just nine miles east of the new nanotech development in Malta.



While the Denisons had no immediate plans to retire, they knew that in order to pass the baton to the next generation of farmers they must take action to protect it. Their daughter, Maggie, urged them to “do the right thing” and protect this community treasure.

The Denisons turned to ASA for help. After securing the majority of funding from various public and private sources, ASA successfully launched a public campaign to raise the remaining \$29,000 from their CSA members and customers to purchase the easement.

TOTAL PROJECT COST:

\$175,665

SOURCE OF FUNDING:

FEDERAL NRCS \$68,050

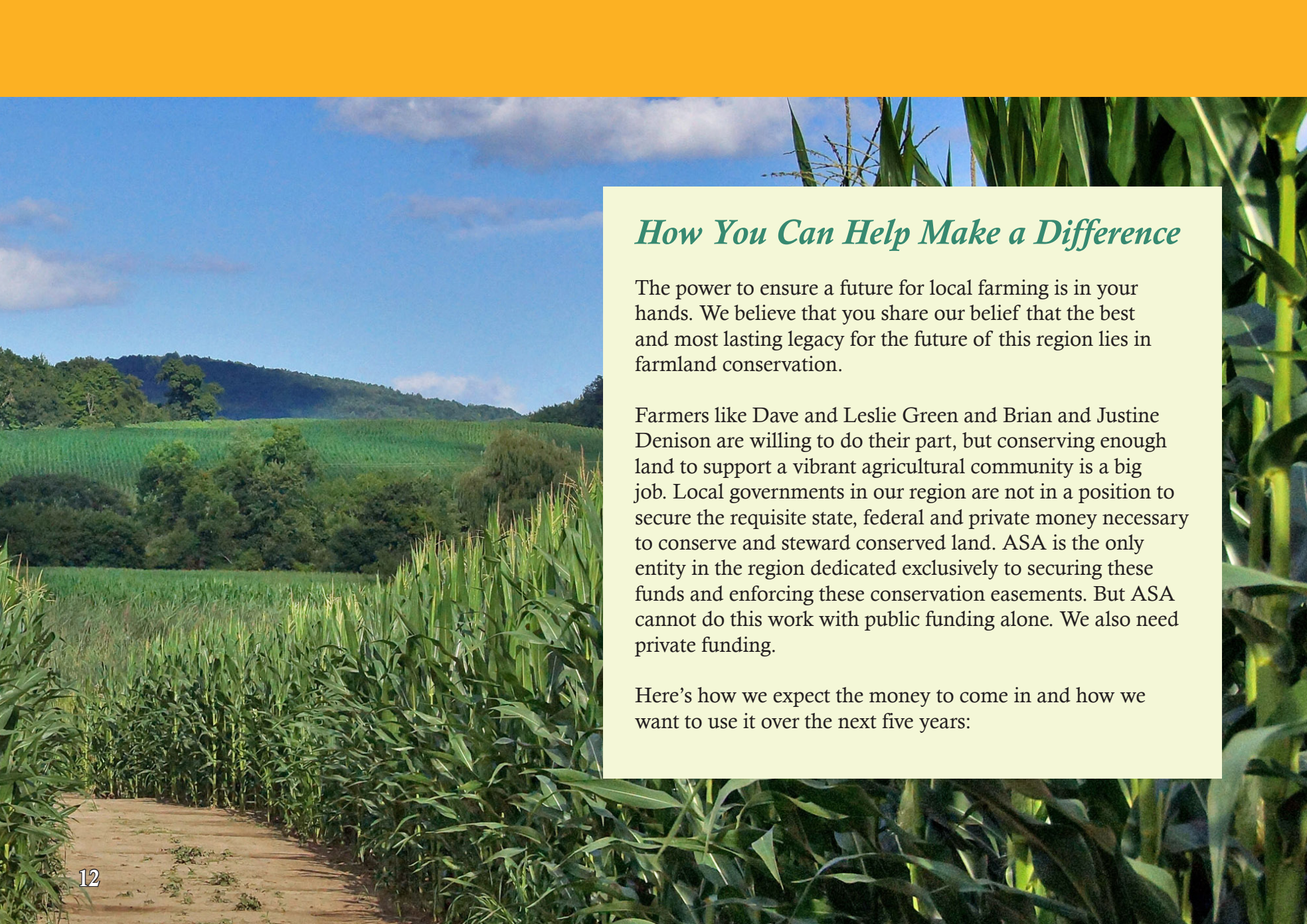
MUNICIPALITY \$15,000

**CASTANEA FOUNDATION
\$35,000**

PEW CHARITABLE TRUST \$7,000

**CAMPAIGN CONTRIBUTIONS
\$28,790**

**LANDOWNER DONATION
\$21,825**



How You Can Help Make a Difference

The power to ensure a future for local farming is in your hands. We believe that you share our belief that the best and most lasting legacy for the future of this region lies in farmland conservation.

Farmers like Dave and Leslie Green and Brian and Justine Denison are willing to do their part, but conserving enough land to support a vibrant agricultural community is a big job. Local governments in our region are not in a position to secure the requisite state, federal and private money necessary to conserve and steward conserved land. ASA is the only entity in the region dedicated exclusively to securing these funds and enforcing these conservation easements. But ASA cannot do this work with public funding alone. We also need private funding.

Here's how we expect the money to come in and how we want to use it over the next five years:

Projected Funding Needs for ASA's Five-Year 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



How You Can Help Make a Difference (continued)

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

A goal has been set to raise \$1.9 million for the Forever Farmland Fund, ensuring more than \$9.4 million in local farm and forest land conservation work. ASA staff and board leadership are reaching out to our close circle of supporters – including you – as an important part of making this vital effort a reality. We are asking you to consider a gift that is both substantial and meaningful for you; a gift fully in alignment with your personal values and priorities.



We are reaching out to you as an important supporter who values our local farms and the food they produce – and who also understands the many additional benefits that farmland provides. Please join ASA in making the Forever Farmland Fund your charitable giving priority....this year, next year, and through the remainder of this decade. Work with us to ensure a future for this region's foodshed – and your personal legacy as a visionary contributor – by taking this positive step to help save farmland today.

We thank you for your thoughtful consideration of how your financial contribution will benefit our region and its future, while it honors you and the people and places you love. ASA thanks you, our region's farmers thank you, and future generations will also have you to thank for a rich and meaningful inheritance.

Thanks to the Castanea Foundation for Helping ASA Add Acres

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 in ASA's farmland protection initiatives since 2006.

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 end of a giving program established ten years ago.



Thanks to Public and Private Partners for Helping ASA Succeed

Over the past twelve years, ASA received a number of important grants to build its organizational capacity and improve its effectiveness from the New York State Conservation Partnership Program (CPP)*, Castanea Foundation and other private funding such as the Peter and Carmen Lucia Buck Foundation.

By all accounts, ASA has been transformed as result. Since 2003 when ASA hired its first professional staff person, ASA has more than tripled the number of conservation easements it holds (from 32 to 110, a 244% increase), quintupled the acres conserved (from 3,400 to 17,160, a 405% increase) and grew its stewardship and legal defense fund from \$20,000 to \$860,000 (a 4,200% increase). ASA also developed and completed a five-year Strategic Plan, a Strategic Farmland Conservation Plan and received accreditation from the national Land Trust Accreditation Commission.

** CPP funding is provided by New York's Environmental Protection Fund and administered by the Land Trust Alliance, in coordination with the state Department of Environmental Conservation.*



We Conserve Good Farmland. For Good. Forever.

“Few of us will be around in 100 years. And very little of what we have done in our lives will survive or be remembered by then. But conserved land is a gift, in perpetuity, to our children, our children’s children and generations to come. How many things can we do in this life that will last forever? Wouldn’t we all want to be a part of something like that?”

-Stephan Deibel,
former ASA board member

2531 State Route 40, Greenwich, NY 12834 www.agstewardship.org (518) 692-7285

For our most recent financial report, please contact ASA.

FIND OUT WHAT YOU CAN DO TO HELP ENSURE A FUTURE FOR LOCAL FARMING