

Connecticut Farmland Trust

Spring 2012 Newsletter



Celebrating Our Tenth Anniversary

Stonewall Dairy, Cornwall

SUCCESS! **Skaats Farm Becomes 26th Farm Saved**

In December, another 32 acres of vital Connecticut farmland were preserved by Connecticut Farmland Trust in conjunction with the Town of Lebanon and the Natural Resource Conservation Service's Farm and Ranchland Protection Program (NRCS-FRPP). There will be no future development at Skaats Farm located in Lebanon and the mix of woodland and fields currently being leased by a local dairy farmer will always be available for agriculture.

Skaats Farm's 32 acres includes land used for growing corn to feed the herd at nearby Cushman Farms, a member of the Farmer's Cow dairy group. Losing a farm like Skaats can be the first domino to fall for an

agricultural cluster. If the dairy loses its silage lot, we may lose the dairy. If we lose a dairy, we may lose a distributor -- and on and on.

While the Skaats Farm is CFT's 26th over all, it is also the fifth family farm you've helped to conserve in Lebanon. That community has taken clear steps to uphold and expand its agricultural sector. In 2005, CFT decided to make it a focus of our work. That decision has paid great dividends. In addition to Skaats Farm, your support has enabled us to preserve Slate Farm, Cyr Farm, Mindel Farm, and Stoney Hedge Farm.

Four of the five Lebanon farms protected by CFT have been in partnership with the Town of Lebanon and NRCS-FRPP.

"The Town of Lebanon is thrilled to have an organization such

as Connecticut Farmland Trust assisting us in preserving our agricultural heritage. **Without the assistance of CFT, we would have been unable to partner with the federal government to preserve these types of farms.** Farming is the best type of economic development – especially for a rural, historical community like Lebanon," said Joyce R. Okonuk, First Selectman, Town of Lebanon.

There are over 10,000 acres of farmland in Lebanon and more than 3,500 acres are permanently protected. That preserved land, including the farms you helped to conserve, has established a permanent cornerstone for agriculture in the region around Lebanon.

Watch for news this summer: right now we're working on a project near New Haven to protect another farm that supports a family dairy.



Dear Friends and Colleagues,

What a great first decade!

Thank you so much for creating Connecticut Farmland Trust, for giving it life and keeping it going. There is no mystery to how we work: you do it.

In December, you saved your 26th Connecticut farm, running your total to over 2,100 acres of farmland preserved. Well done! There is still so much to do, but you've kicked off the first 10 years in style. We begin our second decade with rapid fluctuations in the weather and glacial progress in Congress. The Senate will soon take up debate on a Farm Bill draft. CFT has historically marshalled significant funding from the Farm and Ranchland Protection Program (FRPP) - over a half of our projects used money from

that program. In 2012, FRPP is certain to be cut back.

There's a familiar ring in the debate in this season of slashing budgets; robbing Peter to pay Paul - swiping conservation dollars to underwrite crop insurance premium subsidies; short changing small and specialty crop farmers to support industrial commodities.

Federal agriculture policy has the perverse effect of locking all agriculture in a room to fight over an every-shrinking slice of pie. It has the potential to set conservation in opposition to the very industry we struggle to support here in Connecticut. This is a direct result of our national mania for cheap food, mass produced. Connecticut may be far from the center of the Farm Bill debates - smaller farms, different produce - but we are on the cutting edge of the new food movement.

As you may have seen on our Facebook page or in the *Norwich Bulletin*, "Farming is Sexy Again" and Connecticut farms are a big part of the reason. More people under 35 are entering agriculture as a career choice and some of them are even coming to Connecticut to do that.

That said, for every farmer under 35 there are six over 65. That means that in the next few years, a lot of land is going to come on the market. The price of that land is far greater than the young farmers can afford (over \$11,000 per acre on average in Connecticut).

If a sustainable future awaits, it will be because you have created a CFT that can meet the coming challenge.

We need you more than ever, but there is good news around every corner. This year for the first time ever, CFT received two grants of multi-year duration - one of them a challenge grant. You can read more about that inside this issue, as well as news about our latest farm saved. We also sit down with new Board President Mike Fotos and get to know him a little better. And there's a brief history of everything CFT. Hope you enjoy it all.

Thank you so much for all you've done; I'm looking forward to another great decade with you all.

Yours in the land,

VOLUNTEER: CFT Needs YOU!

Are you interested in representing us at **your local farmers' markets** this summer?

We will provide you with the materials, training, and official CFT gear for your help in providing information and drumming up interest in farmland preservation.

To learn more contact:
Collette Roy 860-247-0202 x223, croy@ctfarmland.org

Introducing CFT's New President of the Board, Mike Fotos

In February, Nick Moore concluded a very successful term as Board President. Nick has been a leader for CFT from our beginning a decade ago. Over the years, he has helped to move CFT forward, pushing toward Accreditation and providing consistent vision and leadership. We won't be losing Nick, however; he will continue to serve on the Board as Chair of the Development Committee.

With the unanimous approval of the Directors, Nick turned the reins over to Mike Fotos. We want to introduce you to Mike, so Executive Director Jim Gooch sat down with him to put him "on the hot seat." Let's meet Mike.



Mike Fotos

Mike, you're originally from West Virginia - what brought you to Connecticut?

Insurance - the industry, I mean. My wife, Claudia Lindsey, is an insurance executive. We live in West Hartford with our daughter, Kate. I really like living in West Hartford. We've lived here for 16 years. Somewhat to my surprise, West Hartford is a lot like my hometown of Huntington, West Virginia was like when I was growing up; it has a diverse population, a mix of industry and colleges, flat and hilly sections, good schools, and a great downtown area. So we are at home here.

What do you do in your day job?

I teach political science at Yale and public policy at Trinity College. Before that, I worked for The Nature Conservancy.

What is your first memory of agriculture or farming?

My great grandfather was a part time farmer. I remember watching him hand milk his three cows. I was sad when he sold them. That's a tough lesson when you're six.

When did you first become aware of CFT; what made you want to work with us?

From the very beginning: Linda Bowers and Margaret McCauley [one of CFT's original directors] were colleagues of mine at The Nature Conservancy when they helped start CFT. They sold me on the need for a statewide approach to conserving agricultural lands. I was an easy sell!

Why CFT and not some other land trust or agricultural interest group?

CFT is my top charity because it works to protect so many of the things that make Connecticut a great place to live: Our legacy of Yankee farming, livable towns, and the charming countryside. CFT is solely focused on the mission of protecting the land that makes it all possible.

What's your personal philosophy on land ownership and protection?

Private conservation is the best because it develops the practice of enlightened self-interest and our capacity to work together as citizens. Yet, public funding and legal support are essential to our success. We need both.

What's one thing you would change about CFT?

We've got to do a better job of engaging the friends we have and reaching out to make more. The more friends we engage, the more we'll be able to do.

You support CFT with your time and money- have you considered CFT in your estate plan?

Yes, I've made arrangements for a portion of my assets to benefit CFT when my wife and I pass. Bequests can transform an organization- I saw that first hand doing land conservation in West Virginia. To me, there is no more enduring gift than the gift that permanently protects land. It's the ultimate legacy.

What do you do when you're not teaching, writing or slaving away as President of the Board?

Fly-fish for trout and root for UConn Women's basketball.

Mike will serve as President for a three-year term. We're thrilled to have him kick off the next 10 years at CFT.

Welcome, Mike!

Celebrating Ten Years of Connecticut Farmland Trust

It is from little things that big things are made. From cups of coffee around kitchen tables a little idea is born in the hope it will bear fruit. What would become the Connecticut Farmland Trust (CFT) began in 2001 when a group of people got together, with the help of the Hartford Food System, to urge legislators to protect Connecticut's farms.

"We found that the state was able to preserve large tracts of land and larger farms, but smaller family farms were not qualifying under the formula," says Gordon Gibson, an original board member of CFT and its first president. Over 60% of Connecticut's farms are 49 acres or smaller. "These smaller farms are just as important and often one of the few remaining working farms in a particular town, but there was no way to find funds to save them. Some of us got the idea that maybe it was time for us to start our own land trust to help target these smaller parcels."



Scaglia Fruit Farm Glastonbury

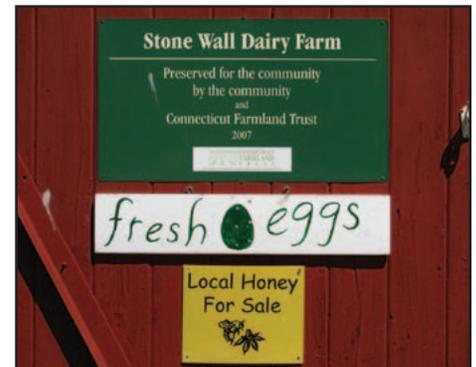
That seed of inspiration led to the incorporation of Connecticut Farmland Trust on March 1, 2002, with a volunteer board, no office and no staff. In name and mission, it was Connecticut's only land trust with the specific goal of saving the smaller working farms that would slip through the cracks of the State program. It was a

mighty tiny sprout with a pretty big name.

"I was chosen to be the first president because of my background working with the State of Connecticut buying land for state parks and forests," says Gibson. "We started raising money any way we could. We started looking for farms to save and took our first chance by preserving the Scaglia Fruit Farm in Glastonbury. This orchard had been active in the town for over 80 years and our 2002 conservation easement on the farm ensures it remains in production and free from development for future generations." With a project under its belt, CFT was off and running.

"Our farm (Humphrey Evergreen Farms in Hamden) was another of the first farms protected by CFT," says owner Dick Jaynes. "We were a smaller parcel of land and didn't qualify for the state farmland preservation program, but we wanted to make sure that the land would stay in agriculture. There were some [in the family] who wanted to turn over the land for the construction of new homes. The rest of us didn't want to see that happen and that's how we came to work with CFT." The family eventually donated their easement to CFT to ensure the farm's protection.

Jaynes says the family found it comforting to know that their land would stay in farming long after current members had passed away. "Anyone who owns farmland is making a mistake if they don't explore



how to preserve it forever," says Jaynes. "There are so many reasons to do it. But to me, the number one reason is **if you don't take steps now, the only thing you're guaranteed to grow in the future is houses.** And once agricultural land is lost, it's lost - you can't get it back and that isn't in any of our long term interests."

By 2006, CFT had nine farms in its portfolio and realized that the time had come to hire a full-time director to manage operations and help raise the organization's visibility. That person was Henry Talmage, whose family had been farming land on Long Island for generations.

"When I came on board, CFT had grown to two full-time staff members. The organization was being recognized for an impressive start as a young land trust, had a highly-functioning board, and knew where it wanted to be. But to get to the next level, more work was needed," says Talmage. "My job was to focus on outreach and improve our name recognition. We wanted to strengthen our relationships with the state government and local towns as well as with farmers who were considering efforts to protect their land."

Farmers are real stewards, and they aren't prepared to let just anyone "protect" their farms. Trust must come first. "Every land trust needs more money to preserve land and fund its operations, so CFT is not alone in that struggle. But good partnerships with farmers and the agricultural community are even harder to come by," says Talmage. "CFT was able to nearly triple the number of farms it saved to 26 by 2011. None of these outcomes could have happened without the staff building relationships with farmers and officials."

"CFT's biggest strength is that they are familiar with the way farms work and know that a working farm will need to evolve to stay viable," says Chris Hopkins, owner of Stone Wall Dairy in Cornwall. He sold his easement to CFT at a steep discount to allow his farm to be preserved and to let him focus on growing his dairy operation.

"Since I preserved the farm in 2007, CFT has been an important partner, working with me to expand operations, yet keep the land open. It was a great decision to work with CFT and I've told other farmers that they

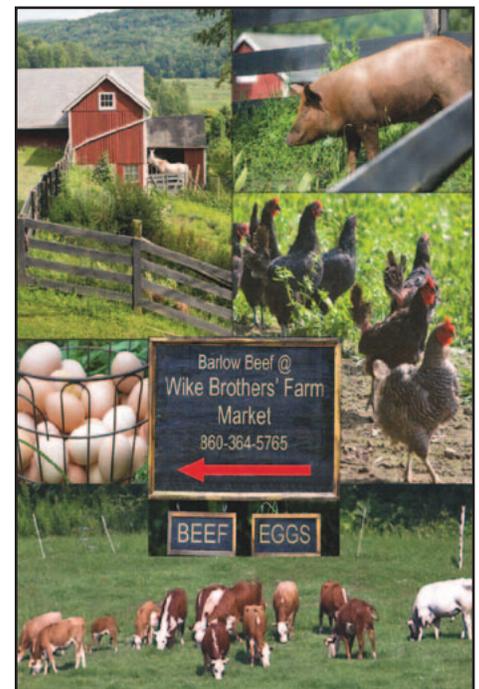
are an organization that really understands how to keep a working farm in business." In the middle of 2011, Talmage left CFT to become the executive director at the Connecticut Farm Bureau Association. Connecticut native Jim Gooch was chosen to take the reins. According to Gooch, the goal now is to pick up the pace: "We do great work, but we need to do it faster. For that to happen, we need to expand our acquisition fund and grow our staff."

As a professional organization with real obligations to the future, CFT is also seeking accreditation from the national Land Trust Accreditation Commission. This independent certification will show donors that CFT meets a high organizational standard. Once certified, CFT will be among the few Accredited land trusts in the country, and that is a competitive advantage.

"Accreditation is a big step and will place us in a whole new class. It's proof we have the integrity for the long haul, to back up the promise of protecting farmland 'forever,'" says Gooch. "It's my hope that accreditation will allow us to raise the funds we need to grow. That

is our biggest challenge."

Gibson, who has been with CFT since the beginning, is excited about the future. "It's been 12 years since a group of us sat down in a room and came up with this crazy idea, 10 years since we incorporated. We're now recognized as a mature, responsible land trust by other groups in Connecticut. In short, the crazy idea worked," he says. "But our work needs to continue because there are so many farms we need to preserve before they disappear."



This year marks the sixth anniversary of bringing people together in the fields of Connecticut's farms for a delicious evening of food, wine, and conviviality.



Tickets and Information @ DinnersAtTheFarm.com

White Gate Farm in East Lyme July 5-8 & 12-15
 Barberry Hill Farm in Madison August 2-5 & 9-12
 Scott's Farm in Essex September 20-23 & 27-30

* A portion of proceeds benefit CFT

BOARD of DIRECTORS

Dawn C. Adiletta
East Woodstock

Robin Chesmer
Graywall Farms, Lebanon

Dr. Michael A. Fotos, III
West Hartford

Gordon F. Gibson
CT State Grange

John C. Haller, CPA
East Granby

Aimee Hoben, Esq.
The Hartford

John J. Kriz, III
New Canaan

Susan E. Lockwood
Redding

Richard Marone, Esq.
Murtha Cullina

James D. Miller
Farm Credit East

Nicholas Moore
Sharon

Tim Slate
Kahn Tractor & Equipment, Inc.

Peter J. Sposito
Bankers' Bank Northeast

Dean Gregory Weidemann
*UConn College of Agriculture
& Natural Resources*

Joshua G. Welch
Stonington

STAFF

James K. Gooch
Executive Director

Elisabeth S. Moore
Director of Conservation

Fumiko Ishikawa Foos
Director of Administration

Collette V. Roy
Conservation Associate

2012 Celebration of Connecticut Farms: DON'T MISS IT!



This year's *Celebration* will be held on September 9th at beautiful **Ashlawn Farm in Lyme, Connecticut**. You can buy your tickets online at www.CelebrationofCTFarms.org.

Celebration of Connecticut Farms combines the talents of

some of the state's finest chefs with a rich sampling of local food and beverages, a fantastic silent auction, art sales by CT Plein Aire Painters Society, and music from Bone Dry. The annual event raises crucial operating funds while increasing public awareness of the importance of Connecticut farms to the state's economic viability and its cultural heritage.

Please join us and our hosts Christine Baranski and Faith Middleton for a delightful afternoon and help us celebrate the bounty of Connecticut.

Good News, Great Opportunity!

Connecticut Farmland Trust is thrilled to announce five major grants to kick off the new year:

The Geoffrey C. Hughes Foundation

Diebold Foundation

The Peter & Carmen Lucia Buck Foundation

The 1772 Foundation

**The Hugh Leander Adams, Mary Trumbull Adams
& Hugh Trumbull Adams Town Memorial Fund**

All of these groups have shown incredible faith and trust in the organization you've created, and the Staff and Board at CFT would like to thank both you and them for this fantastic support.

Two of those grants – the Hughes and Diebold Foundations – are multi-year grants. That we can count on a certain amount of revenue in the years to come is a tremendous aid for purposes of planning our budgets and creating a work strategy.

As an added bonus, the grant from the Diebold Foundation is a "Challenge Grant." In order to receive the grant in years 2 and 3, we need to match their gift with new sources of revenue. This is a great proposition for foundations or individuals who are interested in CFT but haven't yet lent their support. If you know of someone who might be interested in doubling their impact, please be in touch!

A big thank you to our partners. We wouldn't make it without you.

Connecticut Farms Lose Steadfast Ally

Alexander Rotival was always a farmer at heart. Born in Paris in 1931, graduated from Georgetown, and employed as a United Nations Resident Representative in Western Africa and Eastern Europe, Sandy was an internationally respected authority on clean water accessibility, a member of the Confrerie des Chevalier du Tastevin (the Brotherhood of the Knights of the Wine Tasters), and a United States veteran. Yet among his many awards and certificates he cherished the "honorary farmer award" presented to him by a group of Woodstock farmers.

He bragged that he had spent childhood summers raking hay on his grandfather's Woodstock farm, declaring self-deprecatingly that it was the only farming job his grandfather trusted him with.

In the late 1990s, when Sandy retired from the U.N. to settle into an old family house on Woodstock Hill, he and his wife Edith immediately joined multiple civic organizations, often taking leadership positions. The 1990s were the heyday of rapid residential development throughout the state and while many groups championed building moratoriums, the creation of land trusts, or implementing conveyance taxes, Sandy quickly recognized the critical and pivotal role of farmland preservation. He also knew that it wouldn't be enough just to protect farmland. He knew that NO FARMS, NO FOOD has a corollary: **NO FARMERS, NO FARMS**. We must, he repeatedly advised, do all we can to support local farmers.



Sandy Rotival

As a devotee, and family friend, I was lucky enough to watch in amazement and learn from this energetic and committed man. In 2000, as a member of the Woodstock Planning & Zoning Commission, Sandy spearheaded an agricultural symposium that ultimately brought a record number of voters to a town meeting to pass a Right to Farm Ordinance.

Sandy also pushed to form an agriculture sub-committee that gathered farmers, elected officials and "involved citizenry" together. "Involved citizenry" was a favorite Sandy expression. That early committee went on to create Celebrating Agriculture – the free Woodstock fair that celebrates all that Connecticut agriculture has to offer, educates through farm tours and exhibits, and encourages participants to support Connecticut farms and farmers.

Sandy brought his considerable diplomatic skills to bear at the state level, becoming well-known to many legislators, at NRCS and the Department of Agriculture, The Last Green

Valley, and the Working Lands Alliance. Working with staff at the University of Connecticut Sandy helped build a liaison between Connecticut farmers and international agricultural experts to simultaneously promote pride in terroir – what we know as locally grown – and access to world-wide economic opportunities.

From its inception, Sandy and his wife Edith were unstinting and constant supporters of the Connecticut Farmland Trust, hosting a reception to help introduce and promote the Trust in 2006. Sandy knew the importance of wide-spread vocal support of Connecticut farms and farmers and urged Woodstock officials to raise their voices on behalf of farmland preservation. In one case he drove into Hartford to sit silently beside a shy First Selectwoman while she spoke.

Sandy died on April 22nd – Earth Day, as Terry Jones of Jones Family Farms noted when he spoke at Sandy's funeral. In recognition of Sandy's devotion to Connecticut agriculture and his belief in involved citizenry, his children requested that memorial donations be sent to the Connecticut Farmland Trust.

My check is in the mail – in memory of my wonderful friends, in honor of the great work CFT does, and as part of my on-going commitment to Connecticut farmland preservation.

Written by Dawn C. Adiletta



77 Buckingham Street
 Hartford, CT 06106
 ph: 860.247.0202
 fax: 860.247.0236
 email: info@CTFarmland.org
 www.CTFarmland.org

Non-Profit Org
 US Postage
 PAID
 Hartford, CT
 Permit No. 35

This newsletter is printed on recycled paper. When you are finished reading it, please recycle it or pass it on. 

Using your smart phone, scan this code to join our online mailing list and stay up to date on important news concerning CT agriculture!



Just search for 'Connecticut Farmland Trust' to

- Works with Connecticut farmers to protect their land for agricultural use by acquiring agricultural conservation easements and farmland;
- Shares our expertise and technical knowledge to assist landowners, land trusts, town officials, and state agencies in protecting agricultural land; and
- Promotes farmland preservation education through presentations and outreach.

To further this mission, Connecticut Farmland Trust:

OUR MISSION: To permanently protect Connecticut's working farmland.