



PRESERVING WORKING LANDS FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS

Farming on the Farmington River

Brothers Work Together to Preserve Butler Farm

“It’s always been my desire to keep my property as a farm.”

— Michael Butler

“It’s always been my desire to keep my property as a farm,” says farm owner Michael Butler. He and his brother Bud Butler have worked together to make Butler Farm of New Hartford viable as they created a path toward preservation of their family land. The two brothers have long been conservation-minded, with a desire to uphold New Hartford’s agricultural heritage.

Connecticut Farmland Trust (CFT) and its partners, the Connecticut Department of Agriculture and the Town of New Hartford, worked together to preserve 85.5 acres of land that boasts 73 percent prime and important soils.

Before taking the step to protect the land, the brothers worked with the Farmland Restoration Program through the Connecticut Department of Agriculture to clear trees and expand their farming operation, making the farm an excellent candidate for preservation.

The brothers then worked with the Community Farms Preservation Program, a program through the Connecticut Department of Agriculture designed to preserve smaller, food-producing farms.

Before CFT became part of this preservation collaboration, the Butler family worked with New Hartford’s Open Space Preservation Commission and the Board of Selectmen. As part of this effort, the community spoke in favor of protection when local

residents voted overwhelmingly in support of keeping Butler Farm in agricultural use forever.

Butler Farm’s fields are currently leased to Gresczyk Farms, a well-known, family-owned and operated farm that runs a year-round farm store and offers a CSA program. This year’s crop included sweet corn, tomatoes, peppers, cucumbers, squash, eggplants, and cabbage.

Located on a triangular slice of land nestled between the east and west branches of the Farmington River, Butler Farm’s preservation will also protect critical riverfront habitat and water resources.

In addition to its value as a farm, the land’s location on the Farmington River enhances its ecological and recreational value, said Kathleen Doherty, the Conservation Coordinator for CFT.

“The river is a critical resource for the community and a significant part of the farm’s agricultural heritage,” Doherty said. “Protecting the land will



Butler Farm, New Hartford

improve water quality and help sustain a healthy ecosystem.”

In addition to the land CFT has protected, the Town of New Hartford is preserving an 8.1-acre public trail adjacent to Butler Farm, with nearly a mile of frontage along the Farmington River with access for community hiking and fishing. The farm is also located within a Department of Energy and Environmental Protection’s Natural Diversity Data Base Critical Habitat Zone, which will be further protected by the property’s preservation.

Q & A

With Board Member Chris Casiello

Chris Casiello is the plant manager of Arethusa Farm in Litchfield where he has been creating dairy products and farmstead cheeses since 2009.

Q. What brought you to agriculture?

A. I grew up in Redding, Connecticut. I came back to Redding ten years after college to manage a small farm that had a micro-dairy. When I was managing the farm, I had a lot of interns from the Nonnewaug Vocational Ag School in Woodbury. Through Nonnewaug’s programs I met the owners of Arethusa Farm, Tony and George, who were looking to use their farm’s milk to make their own line of dairy products. They brought me on to manage their program to make their products on a larger scale.

Q. How did you come to be part of CFT?

A. Former CFT Board President Susan Lockwood from Redding invited me to join the Board in 2017.

I think the Board’s there for the same purpose. We want to protect farmland in Connecticut. I’ve seen that 100% in all the board members.

Q. What does the preservation of farmland mean to you?

A. I’d hate to see Connecticut lose its agricultural landscape. I grew up in an agricultural community. And I’ve seen, from managing a farm, how the kids

By preserving Butler Farm, the community will have increased access to locally-grown food and natural outdoor areas, which reflects the town’s history as an agricultural community, said Elisabeth Moore, Executive Director of CFT.

“It’s a joy to see a working farm preserved for years to come,” said Moore. “In choosing to protect their land, the Butlers are honoring their community’s heritage of small family farms and ensuring it continues as a legacy for future generations.”



get a huge benefit from having that open space. They are able to see where their food comes from... go see a cow get milked... go see carrots get yanked out of the field. That’s something it would be a shame to lose.

Q. What are your favorite Connecticut foods?

A. I’m partial to dairy products. I think the pinnacle of what Arethusa Farm makes is hard-aged cheeses. It is such a difficult process and it’s a slow learning curve to take a cheese from raw milk all the way through to a two-year-old cheese that can compete on an international level.

Q. What changes do you see ahead for dairy farms?

A. Most dairies are huge now and they tend to focus on one product like milk or cheese and that’s all they make — hundreds or thousands of pounds of it a month or year. It’s very difficult for small dairy farms to compete on the commodity market anymore, so it’s essential to diversify through products like cheese or ice cream. It’s also important to diversify the operation, whether it’s ag-tourism in any form like picking pumpkins, or educational outreach, hosting events, or whatever farmers can do to keep that agricultural space active and producing.



PHOTO: BLAISE POPE

Chris Casiello, plant manager of Arethusa Farm in Litchfield and Board Member

Welcome New CFT Staff!

Sandy Allen — A graduate of the University of New Hampshire and Fordham University, Sandy has joined CFT as our Accountant. She has varied finance experience with banks and non-profits.

Kip Kolesinskas — In partnership with the CT Department of Agriculture, the former USDA-NRCS

state soil scientist for CT and RI joins us for one year as a Consulting Conservation Scientist.

Lily Orr — The recent graduate of UConn will serve as our Conservation Associate for the next year. She grew up on a CT dairy farm and has worked for the USDA-NRCS.

We Challenge You!

Acquisition Fund Match Opportunity

CFT has been offered a \$50,000 matching-gift challenge from one of our partner foundations. The challenge will match 100 % of donations up to \$50,000 until December 1, 2018. With your help, CFT will raise \$100,000 toward protecting Connecticut's family farms.

Here's where YOU come in.

Your donation in any amount will be doubled by this generous challenge and so will your impact. That means your \$100 donation will become \$200, your \$500 will double to \$1,000, or your \$1,000 gift will become \$2,000!



Please consider the Acquisition Fund Challenge as an additional gift this year, in any amount that is right for you. For example; if you are planning on donating \$100 to our General Fund this year, please consider donating an extra \$50 towards this Acquisition Fund challenge match for a total of \$150.

Every gift has a deep and lasting impact. The Acquisition Fund serves two key purposes: to purchase development rights, and to pay transaction costs related to the protection of farmland.

Thank you for your donation before December 1, 2018. Your gift will empower CFT to save and protect even more Connecticut farmland in 2019.

Please be sure to write Acquisition Fund Match in your check's memo line.

Thank you! Please call (860) 247-0202 x223 with questions.



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Welcome Advisory Council

We would like to welcome the "inaugural class" of CFT's Advisory Council.

The Council members serve as goodwill ambassadors to farmers, local non-profit organizations, town officials, philanthropists, and businesses.

Please reach out to CFT or a Council member to learn more about how you can help CFT and farmland preservation.

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without your voice being heard.*

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