



Afoot in the Field: A Resource for Conservation Landowners in the Finger Lakes Region

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Solitude. Having a place to be alone and at peace in the outdoors is one of the many benefits of owning land. But it's not always good to feel alone, especially when you are trying to consider your options and make decisions about how to manage your land. Fortunately, there are a lot of resources out there for landowners – agencies and organizations with information and programs, and people ready to help.

Not all properties are created equal, and not all conservation easements are the same, but many easements allow for some flexibility and options when it comes to conducting agriculture, managing forests, and creating or improving wildlife habitat on a rural property. Chances are that for just about anything you might want to do on your land – whether it's creating a pond or wetland, establishing grassland bird habitat, pruning fruit trees, improving the quality of a woodlot, planting a riparian buffer along a stream, transitioning to organic agriculture, selling timber, enhancing a grazing operation, or installing measures to reduce runoff from a farm – there is a publication, program, or person who can help you. This issue of Afoot in the Field offers a basic summary of some of the agencies, non-profit organizations, and programs that landowners might look to for finding assistance in assessing options and realizing land management goals.

Before making decisions about what management activities you might want to engage in on your land, however, it's always important to fully understand any guidelines and limitations that the conservation easement places on certain activities. Don't forget to read your easement before spending resources, making changes on the property, or committing to a program. Land Trust staff can help answer questions about what is compatible with an easement, and what might not be.

Chris Olney
Director of Stewardship

Conservation Landowner Profile: Donald A. Green

Your farm, in the Town of Bristol, Ontario County, has been in your family for many generations. Please tell us how long your family has owned and farmed this land, and some of the interesting family history.

Robert B. Abbey, my maternal great grandfather, purchased the farm in 1890. He sold it to my grandfather, Isaac M. Green and his wife, Fannie (daughter of Robert B. Abbey), around 1913. It was then sold to my parents Donald I. and Virginia Green in 1952, who then sold it to me in 1974. Isaac and his sons worked the farm with 8 Belgian horses, each weighing over 2,000 lbs. There was serious horsepower in those days, and they loved the horses.



Don & Nancy Green

Have you been working on this farm your whole life? What kind of crops or animals do you raise on the farm today? How has your farming operation evolved over time, if at all?

Yes, except during college at Geneseo (BA Biology, 1 year post graduate). During that time, I would return to the farm to work weekends and summers. I now raise hay and native grasses. The hay is seeded with a legume and a grass. The legumes I use are red clover, white clover, trefoil, alfalfa. The grasses are timothy, smooth broome grass, reed canary grass. Since 2000, I've been selling about 100-150 acres of hay to area horse farms. I milked 25 Holstein cows for 25 years, then raised dairy heifers for sale until 1998.

How did your personal connection to family farmland influence your decision to donate a conservation easement to the Finger Lakes Land Trust in 2005?

It was a family supported decision to donate the easement versus a more uncertain future of housing development, commercial use, mining, gas wells and ultimately, a loss of farm identity.

As someone who makes a living from your land, do you find that the conservation easement and your association with the Land Trust impedes or facilitates your ability to operate your business in any way?

The Land Trust is a partner and must be consulted at various times. My knowledge of woodlot management has been enhanced by working with foresters and examining government programs. This partnership is definitely a win-win situation for which Nancy and I are very grateful.

Please describe any governmental cost-share or assistance programs that you have participated in, previously or currently, and how such programs impacted the use and management of your land or the changed the attributes of your land.

I participated in the Conservation Reserve Program to provide nesting habitat for migrating waterfowl. I signed on in 1998 for ten years with a five year extension. After a couple years, I stopped rotating the hay, corn, wheat, and oats, and switched to all hay in 2000. That was my choice since I had sold my cows in 1998. I did learn how subsurface drainage tiling increases productivity and reduces runoff to nearby waterways.

What do you think will be taking place on your farm in 50 years?

My two daughters live on the property and one of my grandchildren has shown a lot of interest in the farm, but he's only five. Our hope and prayer is that whoever lives on this beautiful land will be appreciative, respectful and resourceful in keeping the "Green" heritage alive forever. May they never take all the hard work and thoughtful decisions of past generations lightly.



Green Easement Property

Bob Growe

Governmental and Non-Profit Resources for Landowners in the Finger Lakes

Federal

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)

“Working with others to conserve, protect, and enhance fish, wildlife, and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people.”

- Partners for Fish & Wildlife Program

New York Ecological Services Field Office

3817 Luker Road

Cortland, NY

(607)753-9334 - e-mail: northeast@fws.gov

website: <http://www.fws.gov/northeast/nyfo/>



US Dept. of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)

“NRCS works with landowners through conservation planning and assistance designed to benefit the soil, water, air, plants, and animals that result in productive lands and healthy ecosystems.”



- Administers several financial and technical assistance programs (including both cost-share and easement programs) related to agriculture and forestry.
- Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (purchases of permanent conservation easements on agricultural land).

County Offices Directory: <http://offices.sc.egov.usda.gov/locator/app?state=NY>

State

New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC)

“Conserving, improving, and protecting New York’s natural resources and environment.”

- Fish and Wildlife Management
- Forest Management
- Environmental Permits
- Environmental Law Enforcement

Region 7 (Serving Broome, Cayuga, Chenango, Cortland, Madison, Onondaga, Oswego, Tioga and Tompkins Counties)

Main Office
615 Erie Blvd. West
Syracuse, NY 13204
(607)426-7400

Sub-Office
1285 Fisher Avenue
Cortland, NY 13045
(607)753-3095



e-mail: Reg7info@gw.dec.state.ny.us - website: <http://www.dec.ny.gov/about/615.html>

Region 8 (Serving Chemung, Genesee, Livingston, Monroe, Ontario, Orleans, Schuyler, Seneca, Steuben, Wayne and Yates Counties)

Main Office

6274 Avon-Lima Rd. (Rtes. 5 and 20)

Avon, NY 14414-9516

(585)226-2466

Sub-Office

7291 Coon Road

Bath, NY 14810

(607)776-2165

e-mail: region8@gw.dec.state.ny.us - website: <http://www.dec.ny.gov/about/617.html>

Counties

Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE)

“CCE educates communities about water resources; agricultural environmental management, including waste management, and land use management; forestry; wildlife habitat and human interactions; fisheries; lawns and turf; and invasive species.”

Programs and informational material in 5 main areas:

- Agriculture and Food Systems
- Community and Economic Vitality
- Environment and Natural Resources
- Nutrition and Healthy Families
- Youth Development



Cornell University
Cooperative Extension

County Offices Directory: http://www.cce.cornell.edu/learnAbout/Pages/Local_Offices.aspx

New York State Soil and Water Conservation Committee & Districts (SWCDs)

“The mission of the New York State Soil and Water Conservation Committee is to promote a comprehensive natural resource program for New York State by supporting local Soil and Water Conservation Districts to develop and implement projects and programs that will preserve, protect, and enhance the wise use of the state’s soil, water, and all related resources.” “The New York Association of Conservation Districts provides leadership in the wise use of soil, water, and related natural resources. This direction is provided through programs that support member Soil and Water Conservation Districts’ scientific and marketing/outreach programs and that encourage networking and building alliances with outside groups that have related interests.”

- Soil and Water Quality Protection
- Food and Forest Protection
- Habitat Protection



Websites: <http://www.nyacd.org/> -- <http://www.nys-soilandwater.org/index.html>

County Offices Directory: <http://www.nyacd.org/districts.html>

Non-Profit

American Forest Foundation (AFF)

“AFF works on behalf of family forest owners around the country who want to ensure their woods stay healthy for all the reasons why we love woods – wildlife, recreation, solitude, a place to enjoy with family and friends.”



- My Land Plan: Map the boundaries of your land; add features and special sites like trails, special trees and other favorite spots; set goals and plan actions to protect and care for your land; receive information specially tailored for what you want to do on your land.
- Administers the American Tree Farm System; the largest and oldest sustainable family woodland system in America, internationally recognized, meeting strict third-party certification standards.

1111 Nineteenth Street, NW Suite 780

Washington, D.C. 20036

(202)463-2462

e-mail: info@forestfoundation.org

website: <http://www.forestfoundation.org/> and <http://mylandplan.org/>

Center for Northern Woodlands Education (CNWE)

“The mission of the Center for Northern Woodlands Education is to advance a culture of forest stewardship in the Northeast and to increase understanding of and appreciation for the natural wonders, economic productivity and ecological integrity of the region’s forests.”



- Northern Woodlands Magazine, and information resources for forest landowners.

1776 Center Road P.O. Box 471

Corinth, Vermont

(800)290-5232

e-mail: mail@northernwoodlands.org

website: www.northernwoodlands.org

New York Forest Owners Association (NYFOA)

“The mission of the New York Forest Owners Association (NYFOA) is to promote sustainable forestry practices and improved stewardship on privately owned woodlands in New York State.”

- Forest land ownership and management information and advocacy for private, non-industrial forest landowners
- Master Forest Owner Program



PO Box 541

Lima, NY 14485

(800)836-3566 or (585)624-3385

e-mail: lgooding@nyfoa.org (Liana Gooding, Office Administrator)

website: www.nyfoa.org/

National Woodlands Owners Association (NWOA)

“The National Woodland Owners Association understands, assists, and joins together people who are stewards of wooded lands and care deeply about the future of forests, forestry and land use.”

- Magazine with topics of interest to forest landowners.
- Liability Insurance Program.

374 Maple Ave. E., Suite 310

Vienna, VA 22180

(703)255-2700

website: <http://www.woodlandowners.org/>



NATIONAL WOODLAND OWNERS ASSOCIATION

Upper Susquehanna Coalition (USC)

“The mission of the USC is to protect and improve water quality and natural resources in the Upper Susquehanna River Basin with the involvement of citizens and agencies through education, partnerships, planning, implementation and advocating for our water resources.”

- Wetland Restoration; Vernal Pool Creation
- Stream Corridor Rehabilitation
- Agricultural Best Management Practices

183 Corporate Drive

Owego, NY 13827

(607)687-3553

e-mail: jac3@htva.net (Jim Curatolo, USC Watershed Coordinator)

website: <http://www.u-s-c.org>



Landowner Assistance Programs

AEM Agricultural Environmental Management

- A voluntary, incentive-based program of the NYSSWCD that helps farmers make common-sense, cost-effective, and science-based decisions to help meet business objectives while protecting and conserving natural resources.
- The goal of AEM is to assist farmers to identify, implement and maintain Best Management Practices suited to their individual farm, enhancing farm profitability and environmental quality.

More info: <http://www.nys-soilandwater.org/aem/index.html> and <http://www.ontswcd.com/AGRICULTURAL%20ENVIRONMENTAL%20MANAGEMENT.html#>

AMA Agricultural Management Assistance Program

- Program of NRCS to provide financial and technical assistance to agricultural producers to voluntarily address issues such as water management, water quality, and erosion control by incorporating conservation into their farming operations.
- Producers may construct or improve water management structures or irrigation structures; plant trees for windbreaks or to improve water quality; and mitigate risk through production diversification or resource conservation practices, including soil erosion control, integrated pest management, or transition to organic farming.

More info: <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/financial/ama/>

CRP Conservation Reserve Program

- The CRP is a land conservation program administered by the Farm Service Agency. In exchange for a yearly rental payment, farmers enrolled in the program agree to remove environmentally sensitive land from agricultural production and plant species that will improve environmental health and quality.
- Contracts for land enrolled in CRP are 10-15 years in length.



Steve Knapp



Jason Gorman

Before and after photos of FLLT land in Yates County, a project in partnership with US Fish and Wildlife Services to restore bird habitat by planting native grasses and wildflowers.

CSP Conservation Stewardship Program

- CSP participants receive an annual land use payment for operation-level environmental benefits they produce, and are paid for conservation performance: the higher the operational performance, the higher their payment.
- CSP encourages land stewards to improve their conservation performance by installing and adopting additional activities, and improving, maintaining, and managing existing activities on agricultural land and nonindustrial private forest land. Through CSP, NRCS will provide financial and technical assistance to eligible producers to conserve and enhance soil, water, air, and related natural resources on their land.

More info: <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/financial/csp>

CREP Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program

- This program of the NYSSWCD and NRCS aims to reduce pollution in streams by helping agricultural landowners voluntarily plant trees, shrubs, and grasses on streambanks to trap sediment, pesticides, and fertilizers in runoff.
- Agricultural landowners within both the Susquehanna or St. Lawrence River watersheds (all of the Finger Lakes region) may be eligible for this program.
- Landowners are compensated for the loss of productive agricultural land through annual rental payments and upfront incentive payments based on the total acreage dedicated to forested buffers or vegetated filter strips. Contracts can either be 10 or 15 years, during which the buffers must be maintained by the contracted individual. Cost-share funding up to 50% with an additional 40% in incentive payments is available for planting materials, fencing, watering facilities, and stream crossings.

More info: <http://www.nys-soilandwater.org/crep/index.html>

EQIP Environmental Quality Incentives Program

- Administered by the NYSDEC and NRCS, this program provides financial and technical assistance to agricultural producers through contracts that provide financial assistance to help plan and implement conservation practices that address natural resource concerns and for opportunities to improve soil, water, plant, animal, air and related resources on agricultural land and private forestland.
- Certain national initiatives within EQIP include assistance for organic farming, energy conservation, air and water quality improvement, and others. The forest component this program, under the New England/New York Forestry Initiative, is committed to improving forest stewardship and wildlife habitat, and conserving the value of the region's forest landscape for future generations. The Forestry Initiative provides a combination of technical and financial assistance to private landowners and land managers for practices such as: forest stand improvement, forest health thinning, brush management, erosion control on forest

trails and landings, and wildlife tree pruning.

- Each eligible conservation practice has a Practice Payment Rate (PPR) which is a fixed amount based on a percentage of the state average cost of a typical installation of that practice.
- EQIP agricultural contracts are limited to a maximum term of ten years; forest management contracts are limited to a maximum of three years; and forest wildlife contracts are limited to a maximum of six years.

More info: <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/ny/programs/financial/eqip/>
and <http://www.dec.ny.gov/lands/53625.html>

GRP Grasslands Reserve Program

- The GRP is a voluntary conservation program that emphasizes support for working grazing operations, enhancement of plant and animal biodiversity, and protection of grassland under threat of conversion to other uses.
- Participants voluntarily limit future development and cropping uses of the land while retaining the right to conduct common grazing practices and operations related to the production of forage and seeding, subject to certain restrictions during nesting seasons of bird species that are in significant decline or are protected under Federal or State law.
- A grazing management plan is required for participants.

More info: <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/easements/grassland/>

LIP Landowner Incentive Program

- A partnership between NYSDEC and private landowners to protect habitat for at-risk species on private land, using funding from USDOJ.
- Portions of the Finger Lakes and Southern Tier are included in the Grassland Bird Focus Area. The minimum acreage that will be considered is 25 acres of grassland that will be enhanced or maintained (shrubland that the landowner is willing to convert to grassland is also eligible).
- Landowners will be paid either \$110 or \$113/acre (depending on location) to conduct prescribed site management and enhancement.
- Applicants selected to receive grant funding will be required to sign a state assistance contract that will carry a term of five years.

More info: <http://www.dec.ny.gov/pubs/32891.html>

PFW Partners for Fish and Wildlife

- The Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program is the most popular and effective program of the USFWS, aimed at promoting voluntary, citizen and community-based fish and wildlife habitat restoration activities. The Partners Program serves

as a bridge to owners and managers of private lands to develop partnerships for the benefit of federal trust species. The approach is simple: engage willing partner through non-regulatory incentives, to conserve, restore and protect fish and wildlife habitat on their property.

- There have been many projects completed in New York, through USFWS's office in Cortland; including habitat enhancement projects on lands owned by the Finger Lakes Land Trust.

More info: <http://www.fws.gov/northeast/EcologicalServices/partners.html>

WHIP Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program

- WHIP is a voluntary program for conservation-minded landowners who want to develop and improve wildlife habitat on agricultural land and nonindustrial private forest land.
- NRCS administers WHIP to provide both technical assistance and up to 75 percent cost-share assistance to establish and improve fish and wildlife habitat. WHIP cost-share agreements generally last from one year after the last conservation practice is implemented but not more than 10 years from the date the agreement is signed.

More info: <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/financial/whip/>

WRP Wetlands Reserve Program

- The WRP is a voluntary program offering landowners the opportunity to protect, restore, and enhance wetlands on their property. This program offers landowners an opportunity to establish long-term conservation and wildlife practices and protection.



Woodcock nest/Betsy Darlington

- NRCS provides technical and financial support to help landowners with their wetland restoration efforts, with the goal of achieving the greatest wetland functions and values, along with optimum wildlife habitat, on every acre enrolled in the program.
- Enrollment options include a cost-share agreement, a 30 year conservation easement, and a permanent conservation easement.

More info: <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/easements/wetlands/>



The Finger Lakes Land Trust is a membership-supported, not-for-profit land conservation organization dedicated to protecting the lands that define the character of the Finger Lakes region. Since its founding in 1989, the Land Trust has protected over 15,000 acres of the area's forests, farms, lakeshore, and gorges.

Afoot in the Field is a newsletter provided by the Land Trust for landowners in the Finger Lakes who own properties that are permanently protected with a conservation easement, or who are otherwise committed to, or interested in, land conservation and wildlife habitat protection and improvement. For more information about the Finger Lakes Land Trust and its conservation programs visit www.fllt.org or call our Ithaca office at 607-275-9487.

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