

Brick Farm in Skowhegan Permanently Protected

PHOTO COURTESY OF FRANK MILES



An agricultural easement recently executed on the Brick Farm in Skowhegan, owned by Jim and Corrilla Hastings, will protect the land from development.

Owners donate conservation easement to ensure farmland use

This past June, Maine Farmland Trust Executive Director LouAnna Perkins and President Frank Miles met with Jim and Corrilla Hastings to execute an agricultural conservation easement on the Hastings' 130 acre farm in Skowhegan. The place is known as Brick Farm, named after the 1800's vintage brick farmhouse which the Hastings have lovingly restored. The farm looks out over the valley of the Wasserunserett Stream, several miles above its confluence with the Kennebec River. With its prime soils, carefully tended woodlots, and proximity to other working farms, this easement is an important start in protecting the working landscape of the area. The Hastings most recently used the farm as a landscape nursery. There is a greenhouse, working

barn, and several plots of perennials and shrubs which tell the story of the Hastings' enterprise. Having put so many years of work into the farm, Jim and Corrilla decided that they wanted to protect the land from development. The easement allows for farming and forestry to continue, but prohibits subdivision or commercial development of the land. We welcome Brick Farm as the latest addition to the growing number of protected farms in Maine.

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- Meet our Executive Director
- Farms for the Future – initial projects under way
- Farmland Protection Forum: Transfer of the Farm featured

Maine FarmLink,

a program to connect farmers looking for land with landowners who have farmland for sale or lease, has established an office and hired a program coordinator. Maine Farmland Trust provides funding for the staff and some of the expenses for this exciting program. Contact Suzy O'Keefe at (207) 469-6465 for more information.

NOTICE

Annual Meeting April 30, 2002

The annual meeting for members of Maine Farmland Trust will be held on April 30, 2002, at 12:30 pm at the conference room of the Natural Resources Council of Maine. Guest speaker will be Stephanie Gilbert, who will talk about monitoring and stewardship of protected farmland. Ms. Gilbert, former Land Protection Stewardship Manager for American Farmland Trust, was recently hired as the Farmland Protection staff person at the Department of Agriculture. A short business meeting to elect board members and address other issues that may come before the membership will follow Ms. Gilbert's remarks.



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From the President's Desk:

Building on Our First Two Years

As the cover story describes, Maine Farmland Trust accepted its first donated easement on 130 acres in June 2001. That wonderful donated easement is only the beginning. The box below details how we are busy protecting another 6,000+ acres.

All in all, work with 31 farms totaling more than six thousand acres is an excellent start from modest beginnings. How did we get here?

In March of 1999, Maine Farmland Trust was merely an idea of several of our founding directors. After one meeting, we knew that it was also a vision shared by others. Our current directors and executive director emerged from this group, and our membership now numbers 130 strong and is growing steadily. With generous assistance of several foundations and steady member support, we have established a presence in Maine's agricultural and land trust communities.

Our efforts to protect Maine's quality farmland will ensure that this land can produce high quality food in the future. To that end, we are collaborating with MOFGA, the

State, and the University's Cooperative Extension and Experiment Station to create Maine FarmLink. MFT received a grant which helps finance FarmLink. This



Actions	Acreage
Donated easements (1) accepted	130
Donated easements (5) underway	530
Projects pending with LMF	2560
Farms working on protection	2130
Farms consulting on protection	871
Total	6221

program will connect farmers selling land with farmers who need to buy land. It's a different way of protecting land than an easement.

Finally, all of us are working in various ways as individuals to help Maine's farmers keep farming. We will never have enough money to buy easements on all the critical farmland. The best way to protect farms and insure high quality locally produced food is to support local farms. Simply put: **No Farms, No Food**. Thanks for your support in this crucial work.

Frank Miles, President

What Will Happen To Your Farm?

The statistics are alarming: landowners' failure to adequately plan for farm transfer at retirement or death is a major factor in loss of farmland. Have you taken the time to face the difficult questions surrounding the future of your land? Maine Farmland Trust has available some excellent resources to get started:

Your Land is Your Legacy, written by Jerry Cosgrove, Esq. of American Farmland Trust, is a handy guide to thinking through the process of estate planning and farm transfer. \$10.50 including tax.

Farmland Transfer, written by Kathy Ruhf of the New England Small Farm Institute, gives guidance and explores options for both landowners and those wishing to enter farming. \$12, including tax.

Shipping and handling: \$3.00 for one book, \$5.00 for two. Discounts for bulk orders. Call or write for details or to place orders. Maine Farmland Trust, PO Box 1597, Bucksport, Maine 04416 (207) 469-6465.

Supporting Farm Viability—FARMS FOR THE FUTURE

We at Maine Farmland Trust recognize that merely protecting farmland from development is not enough. Farms must ultimately be economically viable in order to survive. Hence, we're very excited that a new grant opportunity for farmers, approved two years ago by the legislature, is now up and running.

Known as Farms for the Future, this program provides farmers with technical assistance to create a business plan, in exchange for their signing a 5 year agreement not to develop their land. A second phase of the grant, 25% of the amount needed to implement the business plan (up to a cap of \$25,000) will be awarded in

exchange for an additional 5-year non-development agreement.

Thirty-two farmers in 13 counties applied for Phase-grants. The Review Panel awarded 15 grants to farms in 10 counties from York to

vidual farm. Current teams include experts in dairy, blueberries, marketing, business planning, crop storage, processing, infrastructure, computer programming, organic practices, and compost. In this "first round" some 1,735 acres of farmland will be protected for at least five years.

Because the Farms for the Future program is dependent in part on funds yet to be appropriated by the Maine legislature, the funding level for the next round of projects is as yet uncertain. To find out about the next application period, or for more information about the program, contact Mort Mather at (207) 772-5356 Ext. 114 or by email at mkm@ceimaine.org.



Fifteen farms to receive assistance.

PHOTO COURTESY OF DOUG ALBERT

Aroostook County. To these farms, technical assistance will be provided by teams of people assembled specifically for the needs of the indi-

MFT Sponsors 4th Annual Farmland Forum

Maine Farmland Trust hosted the Fourth Annual Maine Farmland Forum at Kennebec Valley Technical College in Fairfield on December 1, 2001. The theme of the all-day conference for farmers and farmland owners was "Maine Farms in Transition." Gus Schumacher, former Undersecretary of the US Department of Agriculture, gave the keynote address, entertaining the attendees with slides and vignettes of successful programs for farming support. Schumacher cited Maine Ag commissioner Bob Spear's successful implementation of the Maine Senior FarmShare program as a fine example of a "win/win" program: good for the elderly consumer, and good for the Maine farmer.

The Forum featured a three-part workshop on Transfer of the Farm. Part I dealt with Legal and Technical Issues, Part II focused on Financial and Tax Issues, and Part III was devoted to Practical Issues and Negotiating with Family. Feedback

from these workshops was enthusiastic. One farmer commented, "I went to all three workshops, and found them all interesting, with plenty of new information to take home and think about."

Also presented at the Forum were workshops on Transitioning from Commodity to Diversified Farm, Maine's Farms for the Future Program, Overview of Farmland Protection Tools in Maine, and Agricultural Conservation Easements. These work-



Discussion continues with Gus Schumacher (second from right) during a break.

shops, too, were well received. The Forum was co-sponsored by the Maine Dept. of Agriculture, the State Planning Office, and Maine Coast Heritage Trust.

**Generous
Donors
Make
Our Work
Possible**

Maine Farmland Trust welcomes gifts from those who share our mission to protect farmland before it is lost to development. These gifts enable us to move forward with land protection projects and to provide assistance to farmland owners striving to keep their land available for farming. To find out more about supporting our mission through contributions, annual gifts or a bequest in your will, call LouAnna Perkins at 207-469-6465.

Established in 1999, the purpose of the Maine Farmland Trust is to permanently preserve and protect Maine's agricultural lands; to assist landowners, land trusts, and municipal and state agencies in identifying and protecting agricultural lands; and to make those lands available to farmers.

Land for Maine's Future Projects Approved

The Land For Maine's Future [LMF] \$50 million bond issue, approved by Maine voters in 1999, included \$5 million specifically dedicated to the purchase of development rights on farmland. The LMF Board is allocating these funds at a rate of about 1 million each year, for five years. Matching federal funds increase the amount of money available for the program. In many cases, additional match is provided by the landowners' "donation" of a portion of the value of the development rights.

In January 2000, in the first round of funding under this bond, the LMF Board selected three farmland projects. On January 24, 2001, the second round, the Board selected eight more projects (including 11 farms) as finalists. This sharp increase in farmland protection projects demonstrates growing concern about loss of Maine's farmland. The selected projects represent a wide range of farm types in seven Maine counties, and are located near rapidly growing areas of the state.

Appraisal and easement negotiations will likely begin in late April. When the process is complete, the farmland owners will be paid by the state and federal programs to protect their land's agricultural uses and purposes,

and to permanently restrict it from future development.

Maine Farmland Trust is playing an increasingly active role in the state's effort to protect farmland through many tools including the LMF purchase of development rights program. In 2000, Maine Farmland Trust partnered on two of the three farmland applications to LMF. As the interest in the program broadened in 2001, Maine Farmland Trust pro-

The sharp increase in farmland protection projects shows there is growing concern about the loss of Maine's farmland.

vided assistance to six of the eight LMF project finalists selected. We will continue to be available to LMF and Department of Agriculture staff for technical assistance on all projects selected as finalists by the LMF Board. In addition, we are already partnering on some projects to be submitted under Round Three.

Landowners wishing to have more information may contact LouAnna Perkins at Maine Farmland Trust, 469-6465; Stephanie Gilbert at the Department of Agriculture, 287-7520; or R. Colin Therrien of the State Planning Office LMF staff, 287-5619.

Meet Our Executive Director



A year after it was founded, Maine Farmland Trust took an important step in growth by hiring its first staff — a half-time executive director. LouAnna Perkins of Penobscot was selected to fill this role. An attorney specializing in real estate and land conservation law, LouAnna balances her work for MFT with a half-time law practice, working out of her offices in Bucksport.

"I am thrilled to be working for MFT," says LouAnna. "From the time I entered law school, my goal has been to work in land conservation, and protecting farmland is an issue close to my heart. This is challenging, important work, and I'm very happy to have a part in it."

LouAnna spent her childhood in Manassas, Virginia, an area where family farms have since been replaced almost entirely with residential housing and commercial development. The mother of five children, now grown, she has been an elementary school teacher, commercial salmon fisherman, and recycling center manager. She served as legal intern for Maine Coast Heritage Trust in 1993, and opened her solo law practice in Bucksport in 1995. A storyteller and musician, LouAnna also gardens and assists with her daughter's small dairy goat herd.