



# The Opportunity is in *Your Hands:*



HOW YOU CAN HELP PROTECT WORKING LANDS IN THE UPPER HUDSON VALLEY





## MISSION

**Protecting** our community's working landscape of farms and forests, **connecting** people to the land, and **promoting** a vibrant future for agriculture and forestry in the region.

Our 2015 Farmland Conservation Plan set an ambitious goal of conserving an additional 8,400 acres in Washington and Rensselaer counties.

With the help of the community, we exceeded our goal by **3,066 acres.**

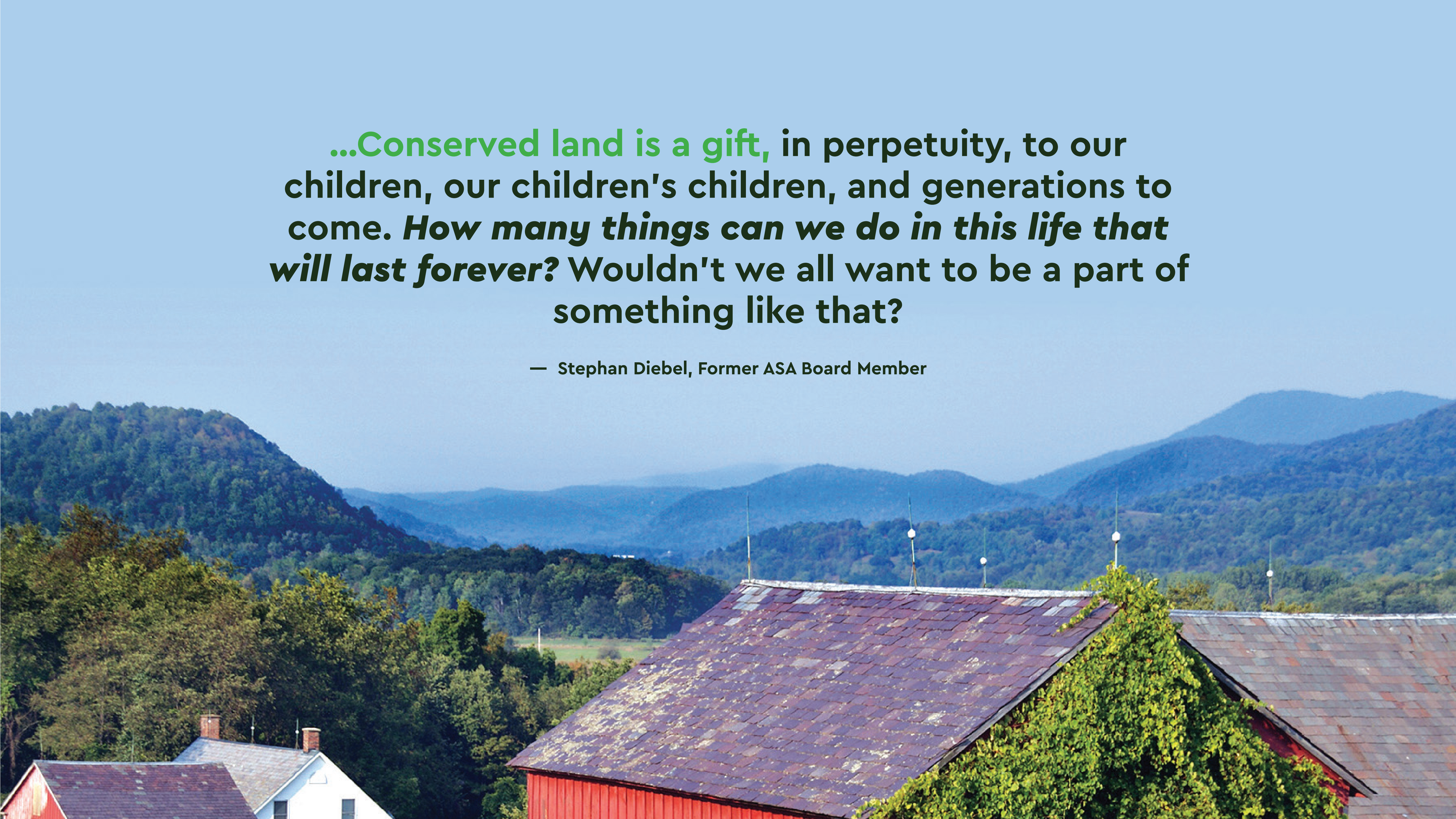


Agricultural Stewardship Association



## CONTACT US

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A scenic view of a mountain range with a red barn and a white house in the foreground. The mountains are covered in dense green forest, and the sky is a clear, light blue. The text is overlaid on the upper portion of the image.

**...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 Diebel, Former ASA Board Member

## AS OF THE START OF 2022

**ASA has conserved  
26,909 acres of  
productive lands,  
forever.**

We are committing to conserving another 15,000 acres of farms, forest, and community lands by the end of 2030.

**With your help, we can do it.**

## GOALS FOR 2022-2030



**+12,000 ACRES** of diverse, resilient, and viable agricultural land.



**+2,500 ACRES** of working forest and woodland.



**+500 ACRES** of land in partnership with communities throughout Washington and Rensselaer counties.





A RECENT STUDY FOUND THAT

**100% of Americans**

could get all the food they need from within a **200-mile radius**.

In ASA's service area, that equates to about **60 million people**, including major population centers like New York City, Montreal, Boston and NY's Capital District region.

Eating locally grown and produced food results in improved food quality and nutritional value, increases shelf life, reduces the environmental toll of shipping, and supports the economy in a concentrated way.

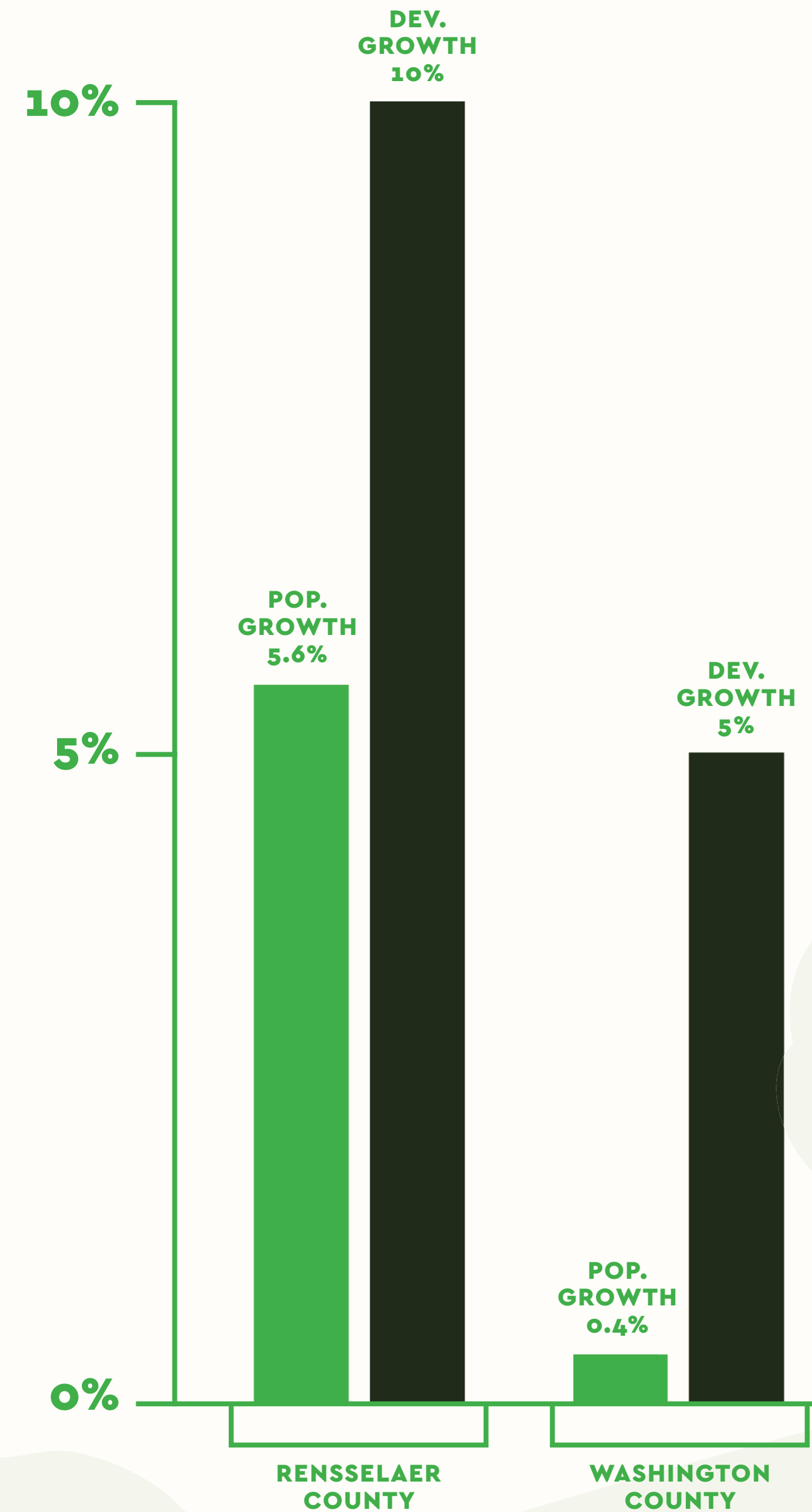
**But people can't eat locally if the farms aren't there.**

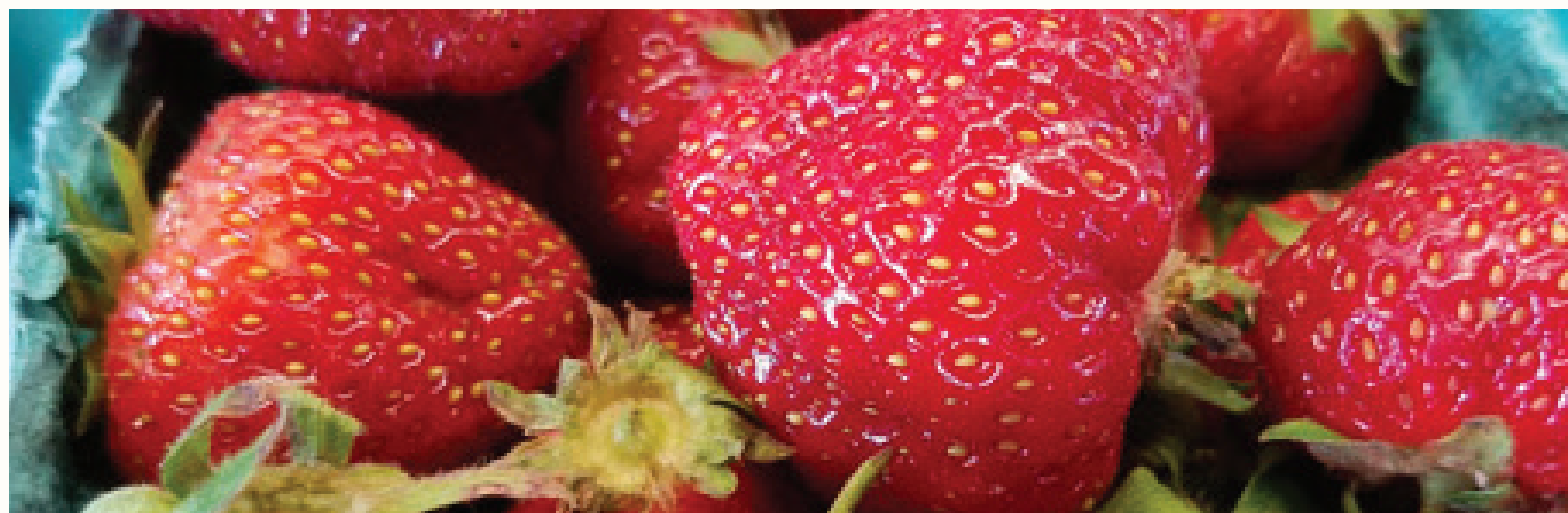
## OVER THE PAST 20 YEARS

**the development of Rensselaer & Washington counties has outpaced population growth.**

This development pattern indicates rural sprawl which can lead to fragmented access to farm fields, degradation of the environment, increased property values, and increased taxes.

Development in surrounding areas, including Saratoga County, which is one of the fastest growing counties in the Northeastern U.S., means our agricultural counties face more pressure to offset those losses. It also means that working lands in Washington and Rensselaer counties are even more important for producing foods, fiber and forest products.





Our affordable farm and forest lands are great for agricultural production, but also attract incompatible development, further disconnecting us from our food production and each other.

Through annual fundraising, planned giving, grants, special events and other generous gifts from donors like you, ASA can help keep our region's working forests and farms in the hands of farmers. **Forever.**



From 2012–2017, Washington and Rensselaer counties **lost 10,097 acres of farmland.**



From 2001–2019, Washington and Rensselaer counties **lost 15,270 acres of forest.**

CONSERVATION STORY

# Wagner Farms

Troy, NY





## FAMILY FARMS MAKE GREAT NEIGHBORS

**"Our neighbors moved here because it was country living near the city. They love to see the cows out on pasture and appreciate the benefits our land provides,"**

says Pete Wagner of his family's farm.



Some of those more obvious benefits include open space, privacy, plentiful parking and peace and quiet that can be hard to find in the rapidly developing Capital District.

Just 20 minutes from downtown Troy, Wagner Farms is the smallest dairy farm in New York State to build and maintain an anaerobic digester.



The digester breaks down manure and utilizes the methane to generate electricity to power the farm and supply the grid. It also reduces odors associated with stored manure, which is appreciated by the nearly one hundred families who live within a mile of the Farm.

Farming in the suburbs isn't easy, and the Wagners go the extra mile to be good neighbors, hosting community events and tours for school groups.

**"Conserving the farm is our opportunity to give back to the community,"** Keith Wagner says. "Our neighbors are really cooperative with us and we want to continue to be good stewards of the land."

Good farmland on the edges of cities is at high risk of becoming a housing development, but in 2018, ASA worked with the Wagner family to ensure that didn't happen, protecting this 300-acre, 3rd-generation dairy farm. **Forever.**

Funding for this project was provided by the New York State Environmental Protection Fund administered by the Department of Agriculture and Markets.

## WHY CONSERVE?

**In New York, if the annual loss of farmland were reduced by 80 percent, that could reduce emissions equal to removing one million cars from the road.**

**Farmers and forest landowners are at a crossroads:**

Extreme weather has major implications, even in the northeast, but working lands are part of a nature-based solution.



Managed and unmanaged forests offer protection of water quality, regulation of water flows, conservation of soil, and carbon sequestration.



Farmland provides essential wildlife habitats, supports soil health, and can offset greenhouse gas emissions.



Conserving existing working lands in Rensselaer and Washington counties also falls into the federal and state 30 x 30 initiatives, the goal to conserve 30% of land and water by 2030.

CONSERVATION STORY

# Hidley Farm & Forest

Wynantskill, NY



## RETURNING TO HIDLEY, ONE PARCEL AT A TIME

**“In a deed dated 1787,” says Shari, “Johannes Hidley leased the farm from the Dutch Patroon Stephen Van Rensselaer. The original property was well over 100 acres, but over the years, the land got parceled out —**

a few acres to this person, a few to another — and before you knew it, it was all in pieces.”



In 1972, Dick and Shari Gibbs purchased the historic Hidley House in Wynantskill, which came with a little land (just 3 acres) and a long history.

Raised on family farms in Minnesota, the Gibbses had land in their blood and a desire to put the farm back together and protect it.



**"We're uniquely situated on a dividing line between rural and urban communities, and that makes the land increasingly vulnerable to development,"** says Dick Gibbs. "So over the years, whenever we had the opportunity to purchase any of the original land back, we did so."

By 2021, when ASA worked with the Gibbses to protect their land, they had re-assembled 155 acres. Thanks to their donated easement, ASA can ensure the land remains undeveloped as forever farmland and forest.

The actively managed fields and forests support many uses—with a little help from friends, neighbors, and experts. Working with foresters, they developed a forest management plan to implement their vision for the land, and now use wood from timber stand improvement cuts to feed their clean-burning wood gasification boiler. A local young farmer harvests hay from the fields. A friend taps about 200 maple trees, collects and boils sap, then markets the finished syrup.

**"Land is truly a treasure. We're happy to work with ASA and do our part to protect and conserve Hidley Farm and Forest for generations to come." Shari Gibbs**

## WHY CONSERVE?

The fields and forests of the Upper Hudson Valley offer a unique combination of geology, climate, and geography worth protecting.



### HIGH QUALITY SOILS

thanks to decades of crop growth and rotation.



### ABUNDANT CLEAN WATER

from the Hudson River, Batten Kill, Tomhannock Reservoir, and many tributaries and lakes.



### LARGE FORESTED AREAS

including the Adirondacks, the Rensselaer Plateau, and northern Taconics.



### DIVERSITY OF FOREST USES

such as maple sugaring, animal grazing, logging, and carbon storage.



### ABUNDANT FARM & FOREST LAND

that is still relatively affordable.



### A CRITICAL MASS OF FARMS

that supports agricultural services locally and regionally.



### A LONG HISTORY OF AGRICULTURE

spanning over 2 centuries of farming heritage and innovation.



### EXISTING SAWMILLS

and the last two pulp mills in the Northeast.

# We deeply believe that the best and most lasting legacy for the future of this region lies in conservation.

There are 137,000 acres of high quality, tillable cropland in Washington and Rensselaer counties.



It would cost you **\$6 billion** to create\* that amount of good farmland.



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

Using landowner agreements called conservation easements, ASA is able to protect the resources of the land while also limiting future development. **We're also able to keep the land in the hands of the landowner.**

\*the dollar amount refers to the price of purchasing topsoil and soil amendments





## WHY ASA?

# Good Farmland. For Good. Forever.

Since 1990, ASA has helped landowners conserve working farm and forest land in the upper Hudson River Valley.

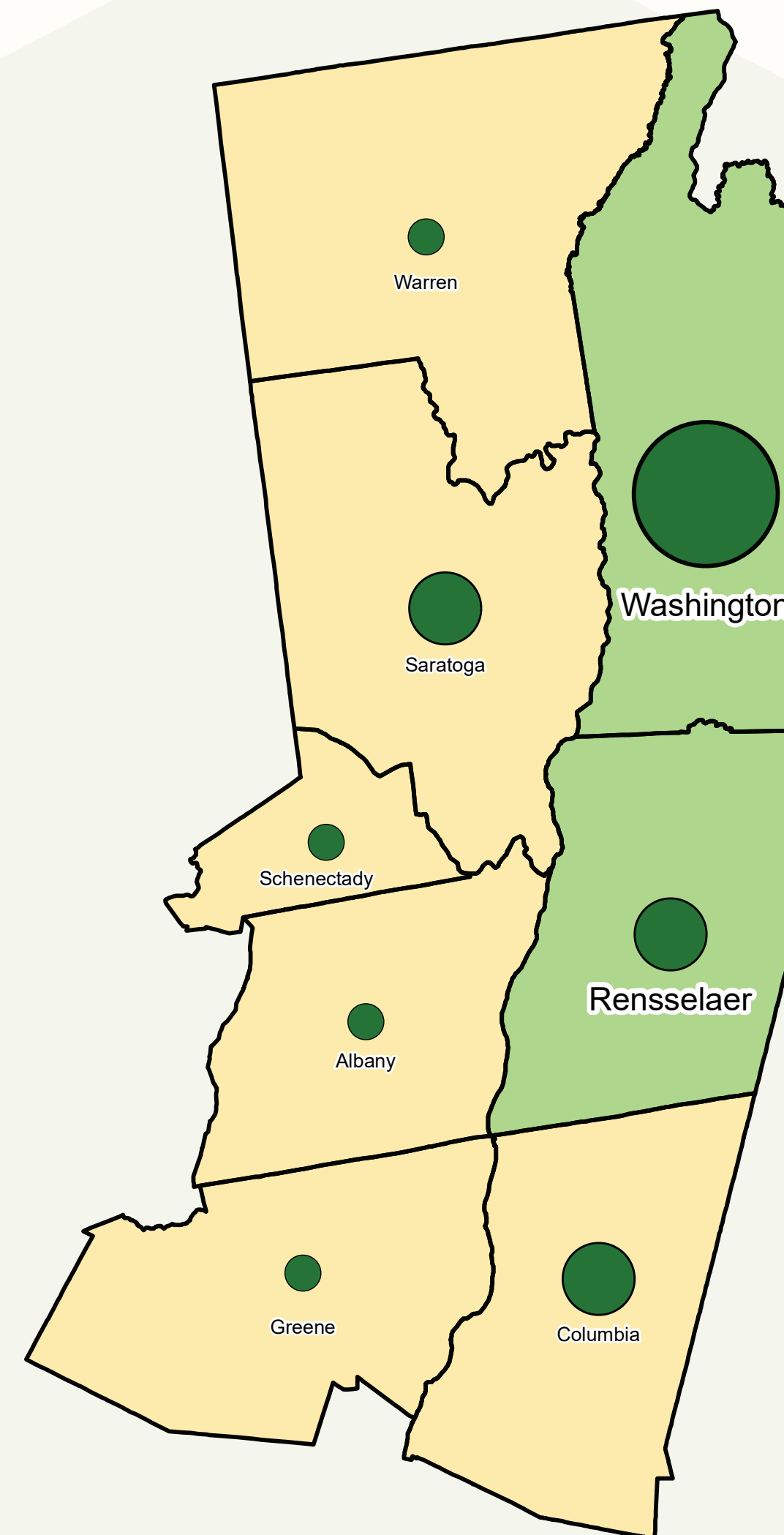
Our service area is an important economic driver in the Capital Region.

Washington and Rensselaer counties have **41%** of the region's farms, **48%** of the farm acreage, and **42%** of farm sales.

Both counties are also more than **50%** forested.



## ACRES OF FARMLAND BY COUNTY



COUNTY	ACRES OF FARMLAND
Washington	185,291
Columbia	99,179
Rensselaer	82,766
Saratoga	71,604
Albany	59,564
Greene	34,979
Schenectady	17,360
Warren	10,086

Data from 2017 USDA Ag Census

## We have a strong history of conservation,

and easement agreements make up a significant percentage of that history. But continuing our work successfully requires innovation, too, and we're uniquely positioned for the future.

Much more goes into our work than simply helping farmers to protect their land. Public outreach, rural landowner programming, soil health workshops and establishing community lands: our work has changed tremendously since we started in 1990.

For "forever" to really mean forever, our team must also prepare for that amorphous "someday," ensuring that the agreements we create will **endure the test of time.**



**Setting aside sufficient funding** to steward, enforce, and defend these agreements.



**Supporting the resilience of the farmland** so it will continue to feed our communities.



**Imagining what the next generations will need** from the forests, community lands, and farms we're conserving today.



We aim to best support the needs of today's landowners, while protecting affordability and creating pathways to land ownership for future farmers.

## **Conserve Land**

by protecting a significant number of high quality and diverse farms and forests.

## **Support Farmers**

to help established and emerging farm businesses remain or become economically viable.

## **Engage People**

to demonstrate the value of agriculture, forestry, and land conservation.

## **Sustain ASA**

by creating a durable, adaptive, well-run organization with broad community support.



CONSERVATION STORY

# Cambridge Community Forest

Cambridge, NY



## GROWING COMMUNITY, CONSERVING FORESTS

**Rural communities where ASA works appear to have so much open space, yet many of those places aren't open to the public, and lands that are open to the public tend to be far away.**



We purchased the Cambridge Community Forest in 2019 and officially opened to the public in 2021. It was the first of what we hope will be many projects to address public access (or lack thereof) to the outdoors.

It offers many more people access to nature and trails close to home, connects youth with nature, and provides fishing access to the White Creek.



When community members from the Village of Cambridge and Towns of White Creek and Cambridge in Washington County approached ASA to advocate for the public use of land near Cambridge Central School, we discovered that the 140-acre property would provide an opportunity for people to experience working forest land.

Acquiring the land was possible because of the dedicated citizens of Cambridge, and funding from the Open Space Institute, Fields Pond Foundation, Community Foundation for the Greater Capital Region and leadership gifts from enthusiastic community members.

The community envisions the Forest to be a place for all generations to enjoy and to learn. We are thrilled to be working with the Cambridge community to help meet their needs.

## WHY DONATE?

To accomplish the goals in our new land conservation plan, we need more capacity and resources to ensure we can assist as many farm families and landowners as possible. We anticipate increased federal and state funds to help with with land projects, but we need the capacity to meet the demand. Can you help make a long lasting impact in our communities?

The power to ensure a future for local farming is in ***your hands***. We need the support of people like you, who value our local farms and food they produce – and who also understand the many additional benefits that farmland and forestry provide.

## WAYS TO SUPPORT



Gifts to Annual Fund



Conserving Your Land



Planned Giving



Gifts of Stock and Real Estate



Monthly Donations



Business Sponsorships & Event Underwriting Support

# Your support helps ensure a strong future for the region's foodshed.

Philanthropic supporters have an important, direct, and lasting impact on our conservation work. ASA staff and board leadership are reaching out to our close circle of supporters – including you – to help us meet our 15,000 acre challenge and support our ag communities.

Together, we will make a difference!



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For a copy of ASA's full Land Conservation Plan, please visit the ASA website.

