

Forever Farmland

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Cultivating a Better Future Through Patience and Adaptation



IT WAS AN UNUSUALLY WARM DAY in late October as the group began to gather by the dairy barns. There were farmers of all ages and agricultural sectors chatting. I was fortunate to leave my emails and Zoom meetings behind and arrive in time to attend an ASA workshop on soil health. Dr. Allen Williams of Understanding Ag, a regenerative agricultural consulting company, was there to discuss the results of a three-year grant project conducted in partnership with ASA. The project engaged three farms to test the impact of interseeding cover crops—the practice of planting a secondary crop amongst a cash/main crop in the vegetative growth stage—rather than waiting to plant cover crops after the cash crop is harvested. The goal was to measure improvement in the biological activity in the soil which could serve to reduce the need for fertilizer inputs, minimize soil erosion, and improve water filtration and carbon storage, and more. Ultimately, we all wanted to know whether this regenerative agricultural practice could decrease a farmer's expenses while improving or maintaining crop yields and whether it could help with farm viability and climate resiliency. The short answer is Yes.

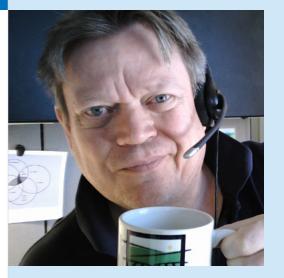
As Allen and the participating farmers began to talk about the project and observations, I realized how much we as a land trust have in common with all the farmers attending that day. Allen, a farmer himself, mentioned the need for flexibility and the patience to see the benefits from interseeding that will accrue year after year. The need to experiment and adjust along the way. The farmers in the grant project were eager to learn, share information, and be transparent when things didn't go as planned (like overseeding or getting the cover crop in a little later than they had hoped).

ASA also is always adapting and fine-tuning our approach. We value learning and transparency and seek to accelerate the pace and impact of our conservation efforts. We also had another clear connection with those farmers that day – hope for the future. Together, we are trying to make changes today that will have long-lasting benefits, not just for our farm or organization, but for all.

Toward that end, ASA is finalizing a new strategic land conservation plan. We're aiming high with an ambitious goal of conserving another 15,000 acres by the end of 2030, and ensuring our projects have positive, long-lasting impacts on farmers, our communities, and our climate. I hope you will be there with us every step, even if we need to make a tweak along the way.

Together in conservation,

RENEE J. BOUPLON Executive Director



The Man Behind the Numbers

As ASA's Annual Fund Associate, Jimmy Cypher spends a lot of time looking at spreadsheets. But unlike most of us who only see numbers in spreadsheets, Jimmy sees goodwill. "ASA is so fortunate to have an incredibly loyal member and donor base," he says. "Some organizations strive to keep donors for three or five years, whereas ASA has supporters that date as far back as 20 and even 30 years. It's kind of unheard of and a powerful testament to the belief and trust that the community places on us to conserve the land they love so much."

ASA members looking to update their contact info can send updates to Jimmy at jim@agstewardship.org.

ASA WELCOMES FIRST-EVER **Director of Operations**

THIS SUMMER, ASA was pleased to welcome Reuben Todd to the organization as the Director of Operations.

With over 20 years of experience working in the world of non-profits, he's more than familiar with the systems and operations essential to keep an organization running smoothly and efficiently.

Speaking of his few months on board, Reuben says, "I'm eager to bring my experience to ASA's leadership team and run the daily operations of the office while providing strategic financial and organizational support."

Executive Director Renee Bouplon notes, "With me transitioning to the Executive Director role last year, I knew I didn't need someone with my expertise in land conservation to fill my previous role. What I needed was someone to help the organization function efficiently. Reuben was the perfect candidate to assist with strengthening internal systems and adding capacity to the organization. We are all so excited to have him join our team."

Originally from Ontario, Canada, Reuben and his wife and three children have called Washington County home since 2017. They all share a deep appreciation for the agrarian-nature of the community. "Viable land is so important to the local community here and, really, to communities around the world. I see protecting that land as an important and admirable mission and I'm incredibly grateful for the

> opportunity to lend my talents and energy to an organization committed to that aim. I'm equally grateful to my co-workers who have been so welcoming and patient as I learn the ropes."



Reuben was the perfect candidate to assist with strengthening internal systems."

—RENEE J. BOUPLON

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WASHINGTON COUNTY RENSSELAER COUNTY Forever Farmland

OUR EXPANDING LANDSCAPE

For thirty-two years, ASA has worked with local landowners to protect the agricultural landscape of our region. We celebrate and support the foresight of these landowners and donors who recognize that once lands are lost to development, we never get them back. It is with great gratitude and pleasure that we share a few of their stories in the pages that follow.





A First-Generation Farm Breathes New Life into the Land

Regenerative agriculture proves key to building a family's future

alking the sprawling fields of the Gibson Family Farm in Pittstown, Dustin Gibson's focus isn't on the stunning pastoral vistas but rather, it's on the ground beneath his boots.

That's because for Gibson, his family and the nearly 900 sheep, goats, cows, and hogs that call the 600+ acre property home, the soil and forage are the key to their collective health and future.

The big impact of a low-impact approach to farming

When Dustin and his wife Kassie established the farm in 2009, the first-generation farmers made a commitment to embrace the principles of permaculture. That means no tilling or chemical additives.

Dustin explains, "All of our livestock is 100% grass-fed on native vegetation. By methodically moving the animals around the property, in some cases daily, we're able to ensure they're feeding on the most nutritious portions of the grasses and plants.

At the same time, we're preventing them from overgrazing and minimizing compaction to preserve soil structure."

GIBSON

In addition, the Gibsons are incorporating the principles of silvopasturing and mob grazing into their operation. "We regularly rotate hogs and goats through the 80 acres of forested pastures," he says. "This brings some diversity to their diet, puts some nutrients back into the soil and helps control the vegetation."

The cycle of graze and replenish is a year-round process at the farm. Gibson says, "The animals are naturally equipped to handle low temperatures, wind, and snow. As long as they're in good health and have access to fresh water and food, they're fine. With the exception of some winter feeding from round bales, the animals fend for themselves year-round. And, he notes, "because we don't grow hay, meaning I have to shell out cash for it, I'm very mindful of not throwing hay at them when there is natural vegetation readily available."

Responsible and responsive

As Kassie recalls, "The initial decision to grass feed was driven by the desire to practice farming in a manner that was efficient and harmonious with the earth. As it turns out, the timing was also good as there was a growing demand for grass-fed beef. Then came a demand for pasture-raised pork. Our small size allows us to be nimble and adjust to whatever the market wants."

She adds, "We could never compete with the large-scale operations, and we don't want to. This model works for us on a personal and professional level and, frankly, gives us more control of our destiny. Our goal isn't to have so many acres or dollars in sales in X-number of years. It's really about providing a quality of life for our family and our animals and feeling good about the impact we are—and aren't—making through our methods."

Securing land and a future with ASA

Turning back to the soil beneath their feet, the Gibsons are keenly aware of the importance and value of land.

"Anyone in agriculture knows how hard it is to acquire land," says Dustin, "And with all the development taking place, it's not going to get any easier. Which is why an easement with ASA was appealing to us. Our intent is to acquire more land so that we can expand our pasturing efforts. Maybe we'll stick with the animals we have, or, if the markets call for something else, we'll add them to the fold. But that can only be done with more land."

Thinking longer term, Kassie adds, "I also appreciate the assurance that the easement provides. Right now, we have two young daughters who love the farm. If they choose to take that path, the easement will make sure that the land needed for grazing will always be available. And if they choose to do something else, the land will provide for another farming family looking to shape their own destiny the way we have."

Conserved Farm

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The easement will make sure that the land needed for grazing will always be available."

— KASSIE GIBSON

To see a map of all of ASA's conserved properties, visit our website www.agstewardship.org/landconservation.

Funding for this conservation project was provided by a grant through the State Farmland Implementation Program administered by the NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets.







BATTLE ACRES FARM Walloomsac, NY

A Historic Farm Enters its Next Evolution

erhaps the only thing more impressive than the sweeping vistas of New York and Vermont, is the history of the land that is called Battle Acres Farm in Walloomsac.

As the farm's name suggests, a literal war once was fought there; specifically, the Battle of Bennington in August of 1777. Nearly 100 years later, the land that abuts the Bennington Battlefield State Historic Site was partially cleared for use as an expanded family farm.

A transformational transition takes place

Situated along the border of Vermont in northern Rensselaer County, with extensive frontage along the Walloomsac River, the 373-acre property was home to generations of the Cottrell family who ran a successful dairy operation for years. However, when the family patriarch passed in 2005 with no apparent successor to the business, the family chose to lease the land to Landview Farms based in nearby White Creek, NY. Landview Farms was eager to utilize the productive farmland

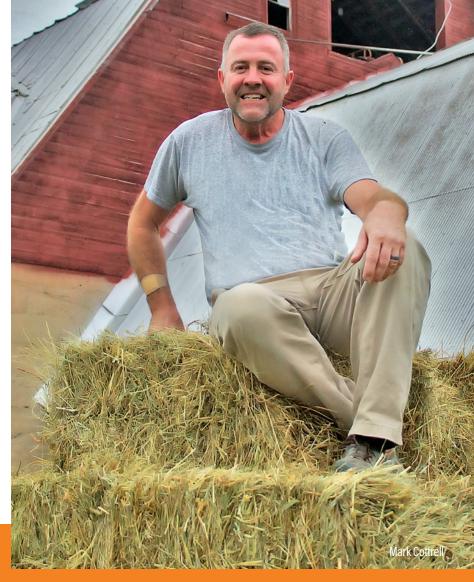
to help support their local dairy operation and were familiar with ASA's program since they have conserved several of their own farm properties.

Protecting the land, preserving a way of life

While he may not have chosen agriculture as his way of life, Mark Cottrell has a deep and abiding respect for farmers and, perhaps, a deeper attachment to the land so many of his family members worked. Which is why he and his wife, Wendy, also decided to conserve some of their land in conjunction with protecting the family farm.

"The land is steeped in so much personal and revolutionary history," he says. "Working with ASA allowed us to protect the land from development; support a local farm operation that needed additional acreage; and, in time, make it affordable for another farm family—be it Landview or another operation—to build their own legacy."





The land is steeped in so much personal and revolutionary history.

—MARK COTTRELL

Funding for this conservation project was provided by a grant through the State Farmland Implementation Program administered by the NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets.

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Caring for the Land and Providing for the Next Generation of Farmers

ichard and Lucy Burch are amongst the older generation of farmers taking proactive steps to conserve farmland for the benefit of future generations. Their Fort Ann farm, Burch Family Farm, is 365 acres of quality grazing land, woodland habitat and pristine waters that rise from artesian wells and a pond.

Richard and Lucy both come from a long line of farmers. Richard's family emigrated to Washington County about 250 years ago and Lucy's family followed a similar path coming to Vermont. In 1984, Lucy moved to Washington County when good farmland in Vermont was both too expensive and unavailable to her as a young farmer.

For Richard and Lucy, the family business has always been farming; just not on the same land as their Burch, Hosley or Smith ancestors. The next generation of Burches has their own ideas of how to run the family business, including regenerative agriculture, seedstock, dairy, beef or sheep, horses and bees. What is evident is that sustainability will be a focus for the future. Whether a Burch descendant or another family operates here, this farm provides productive land from which to start.

Richard and Lucy are partnering with ASA to create opportunities for future generations to farm. The Burches say, "Conservation is in our hearts. It is with great joy that we are able to conserve our farm ensuring a good land base for agriculture going forward."



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—THE BURCHES

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Funding for the Burch Family Farm project was provided by a grant through the State Farmland Implementation Program administered by the NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets.

Funding for the Simply Grazin' project was provided through the Dairy Transitions Farmland Protection Initiative administered by the NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets.

Funding for Valley View project was through ASA's Forever Farmland Fund with a contribution from the landowner.



Protecting a Property in Perpetuity

VIEW

A 120-acre donated farm provides for the future today

or over 50 years Mary Lou and Robert Strode have called the Valley View Farm in Argyle home. They speak fondly of the years spent raising their four children and tending a rotating menagerie of chickens, sheep, peacocks, geese and horses. While the Strodes never actively farmed the property, they've always been happy to put the land to good use, leasing acreage to local farmers for hayfields and crops.

Speaking of the 120-acre property, Robert notes that just 75 acres are woodland. "The rest," he says, "is available for vegetable and hay production. Part of it is currently leased for growing organic vegetables and a considerable portion is used by a neighbor for hay. The Moses Kill runs through the property and is a convenient natural source for irrigation. When we first moved in, it was just one farmer using a few acres." He adds with a bit of pride, "Today, all but the woodland is being used for agricultural production."

Another thing that's changed over the years is the amount of development taking place in the region. The Strodes don't want to see a repeat of the land grab and development that's taken place in the Hudson Valley occurring in Washington County. "That's really what's behind our decision to donate a conservation easement to ASA," says Mary Lou.

"By donating our development rights," adds Robert, "we're protecting it for future generations to make a living from it and to enjoy it just as we have. It's the right thing to do."

Five Projects and Counting

hen you run an organic farm with operations and land spanning 2,100 owned and 5,900 rented acres across three states, you're always on the lookout for ways to increase efficiency while preserving the integrity of the land.

For Mark Faille of Simply Grazin', partnering with ASA to conserve farmland is clearing a path to do just that in Washington County.

The premier producer of grass-fed and grass-finished beef on the East Coast, Simply Grazin' operates farms in New Jersey, Virginia and New York and has a conservation history with ASA dating back to 2018.

"This is our fifth conservation project with ASA," says Faille. "Like the first four, the priority is protecting the land from future development. But, unlike those where the conserved acreage is used for grazing, this one will house a new feeding facility. We're currently in the process of disassembling a few old buildings on the site and reclaiming the wood. When finished, the new structure will expand our feeding capacity and allow for feeding to happen closer to the grazing area. This will streamline our operation and cut our fuel and operating costs."

He adds, "As always, ASA has been ready with solutions and made it easy for me to do right by our farm, community and the land we all value."

Simply Grazin's latest project will expand and streamline feeding of cattle



What Stewardship Means to ASA

Once land is protected, we strive to serve as a resource for farmers and landowners.

A BASIC DEFINITION of stewardship is taking care of something. For ASA the most obvious way we steward land is by partnering with farmers and landowners to protect working farmland and forests from incompatible development over the long term. Our staff assists landowners in crafting agreements that will meet their goals, and we visit the properties regularly to ensure the terms of the agreements are being upheld in perpetuity.

But, we also take a broader view of our stewardship responsibilities. Once land is protected, we strive to serve as a resource for farmers and landowners. We also want to provide opportunities for others to develop a connection to the land. Here are some of the ways we extend our stewardship ethic:

PARTICIPATION IN THE REGIONAL **NAVIGATOR PROGRAM**

For several years ASA has participated in the Regional Navigator program which is administered by the American Farmland Trust and funded by NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets. We are one of many navigators working across NYS to help new farmers access farmland and connect to resources needed to build a successful farm business. The program also assists older generations of farmers who may

the next generation of farmers to their farm operation. On the New York Farmland Finder website, farm seekers can post their profile of what kind of farm they are looking for, and landowners can post information on land that is available for sale, lease or management. Check it out at www.nyfarmlandfinder.org.

OUTREACH PROGRAMS

ASA offers programming with different audiences in mind. Some aim to help bring new information to farmers and non-farming landowners, while others connect children and families with farms and forests to foster an appreciation for these working lands. Partnering with community youth programs, ASA can assist in bringing children to farms so they can see first-hand where and how their food is produced.

ASA administered a grant which allowed three local farmers to experiment with interseeding cover crops into silage corn and measure the benefits in terms of soil health. For ten years ASA has organized four levels of chainsaw safety training known as the Game of Logging which has benefitted over 100 participants.

All these efforts support our stewardship ethic which aims to protect farm and forest lands while supporting farm operations and building a connection to the land by the next generation of stewards.





CONSERVED LAND FOR SALE

Town of Hampton, NY and Town of Poultney, VT





Eighty-five acres of conserved and vacant land spans two states

AS THE SAYING GOES, "they're not making more land." However, thanks to a generous donation to ASA, there is a piece of conserved land available for sale.

Donated to ASA as part of our Gifts of Real Estate program, the property is comprised of two tax parcels containing approximately 85 acres with 63.2 acres in New York and 22 acres in Poultney, Vermont. The property abuts the Delaware & Hudson Rail Trail and features open fields with some wet areas. There are no existing structures or utilities on the property, and the fields are currently being used for hay production by a local farmer.

ASA owns the property outright. The conservation easement prohibits the two tax parcels from being sold separately or subdivided and no residences are allowed. Currently listed for sale at \$100,000, ASA will continue to hold a conservation easement after closing as a condition of the sale. Proceeds from the sale will serve to further ASA's farmland protection initiatives.

If you are interested in learning more about this opportunity, please contact Chris Krahling at chris@agstewardship.org or (518) 692-7285.

Our 5-Year

CONSERVE LAND

strategies

SUPPORT FARMERS

by helping established

and emerging farm

businesses remain or become

economically viable

2021-2022 DONOR APPRECIATION ANNUAL REPORT

Changing Tomorrow Through Your Gifts Today

Dear ASA Supporters,

AS WE CELEBRATE our accomplishments and ambitiously plan for our future, we are reminded of the integral role that you play in our success. It is your engagement that buoys and sustains us as we take on the critical task of conserving working lands in our region. We are thankful for all that you do to endorse us, from your sponsorships to your donations, to your volunteer hours.

Though we often measure our success by the acres we conserve, it's equally important to consider the farm families and businesses we support and the community we build. While ASA remains resolutely committed to conserving farmland and supporting farmers, we are also excited to pursue opportunities in forest easements, community conservation, climate resilience, land access and farm viability. These strategic plan priorities help us fulfill our threefold mission of conserving working farms and forests, connecting people to the land, and promoting a vibrant future for agriculture and forestry in our region.

I am deeply appreciative of the hard work and commitment of the ASA staff and board and grateful for the galvanizing gifts of our supporters. Thank you for joining our efforts!

In stewardship.

Tarah Rowse, Board Chair



Strategic Goals in Action

Conserving Viable Land

The farms conserved in FY2021-22 represent a range of the diverse agriculture in our two counties including dairy, dairy support lands, organic blueberries and shitake mushrooms, beef, and sheep. The diversity in the size and production of the farms strengthens the agricultural economy and maintains our beautiful landscape of fields, pasture and forest.

Several of the conservation projects support the transfer of the farm operation to the next generation which is increasingly important as the majority of those currently farming approach retirement.

Rensselaer County

Luskin Farm

144.89 acres in the Town of Pittstown **Hay Berry Farm**

166.61 acres in the Town of Hoosick Nelson B. Betts, Jr. & Sons Farm

336.1 acres in the Town of Schaghticoke **Hoacre Farm**

382.11 acres in the Town of Hoosick **Begin Farm**

101.46 acres in the Town of Hoosick

Meadowpond Farm

175.72 acres in the Town of Brunswick Otter Creek Farm

465.01 acres in the Town of Pittstown

Washington County

Chapin Family Farm

320.42 acres in the Town of Hartford Liddleholme Farm

164.15 acres in the Town of Greenwich **Ro-Acres Farm**

117.64 acres in the Town of White Creek Allenwaite Farms/

Omega Productions 89 acres in the Town of Easton

> 2,463,11 **ACRES PROTECTED**





addressing community needs through engagement and outreach



SUSTAIN ASA

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



Making a Connection with the Land in 2021-2022

Early Morning Birding Walk at Pencil Brook Farm

Wildlife ecologist and artist Steve Sanford conducted a birding walk in South Cambridge for expert and beginner birders.

Fungi in Your Garden - A Virtual Workshop

Regional mycologist Sue Van Hook led a virtual workshop on mycorrhizal fungi benefitting garden, field and forest plants. She explained the roles different groups of fungi play in balancing the carbon cycle and creating a resilient soil sponge.

Fostering Farms and Farmers

Financial and Business Planning Resources for New Farmers — A Virtual Training

This virtual meeting provided an introduction to the resources and programs designed for new farmers by the USDA's Farm Service Agency, Farm Credit East, the Hudson Valley AgriBusiness Development Corporation and Iroquois Valley Farms. The presenters gave an overview of their programs for new farmers, and what to expect when contacting them



Tarah Rowse

Strategic Goals in Action

Addressing Farm Viability in a Changing Climate



Farm-Scale Permaculture Design Tour

Landowners saw how contours, holding ponds and perennial plantings have transformed the sloping hayfields of the protected Hay Berry Farm in Rensselaer County.

Interseeded Cover Crop and Soil Health Field Talk

Dr. Allen Williams of Understanding Ag. led a field talk at the conserved Otter Creek Farm in Johnsonville to discuss the use of cover crops, including interseeding, to improve soil health. Participants viewed a demonstration plot where multi-species cover crops had been interseeded into silage corn and discussed the potential for grazing the cover after corn harvest.

Juggling Cover Crops, Manure and Reduced Tillage

At this day-long forum, participants heard from a panel of farmers and researchers in our region about the techniques used to increase their use of cover crops and reduce tillage. Kirsten Workman spoke about her work with farmers in Vermont on manure management. Aaron Ristow from American Farmland Trust's Genesee River Demonstration Farm Network spoke about the results the network farmers have seen from incorporating innovative conservation practices on their farms.

Engaging Our Community

ASA receives a grant from the **Charles R. Wood Foundation to** design and create a Sensory Trail in the forest



Forest officially opens to the public in November 2021



Four Wild Art programs are conducted at the forest for community members of all ages

Sustaining ASA

Landscapes for Landsake Art Show and Exhibition One for the Record Books

\$62,980 in record-breaking proceeds generated to protect the working landscapes of Washington and Rensselaer counties



Our community gathers together at a sold-out Forever Farmland Supper to celebrate Teri's accomplishments and wish her well in retirement. ASA launches the Next Chapter Campaign to honor Teri Ptacek's legacy and position ASA for future growth and sustainability.



New Executive Director is named by ASA Board 14-year ASA veteran, Renee Bouplon, takes the leadership role



ASA starts 2022 by hiring **Project** Laura Kipper with Chloe



Your Land Trust BY THE NUMBERS

April 1, 2021 - March 31, 2022



27,492 total acres of conserved farmland and forests in **Washington and Rensselaer** counties as of 3/31/22.

> 157 permanently protected properties

774

donors support ASA

143 new community members included ASA in their charitable giving

19 CONSERVATION **PROJECTS**

in ASA pipeline amounting to 5,284 acres of Forever farmland

11 PROPERTIES **CONSERVED**

Forever farmland in FY2021-22

75 VOLUNTEERS

offered programs, built trails and created signage at the Cambridge **Community Forest**

20 WORKSHOPS

were conducted at the Cambridge Community Forest for residents of all ages

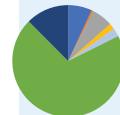


125 FARMERS. **LANDOWNERS OR INTERESTED SUPPORTERS**

attended programs ranging from permaculture design and juggling manure, cover crops and tillage to bird and winter tree identification workshops

FY2021-22 Financials

TOTAL



INCOME

Individual & business donations \$274,239 Other government grants \$20,301 Private foundations \$242,030 \$68,594 Special events Earned income \$96,600 ■ Easement acquisition grants \$2,780,830 ■Other \$495,680



EXPENSE

Stewardship & easement enforcement \$54,690 Education & outreach \$170,209 ■ Fundraising \$94,904 \$277,169

Management & general Land protection & management \$253,084 ■ Easement acquisition \$2,730,531

■ Other \$4,217 TOTAL \$3,580,586

ASA's financial records have been audited by CUSACK & COMPANY, CPA's, LLC. A complete copy of the financial statements for this period may be obtained by contacting ASA or New York Department of State, Office of Attorney General's Charities Bureau, The Capitol, Albany, NY 12231.

\$3,978,270



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28,872

ACRES OF FARM AND FOREST LAND CONSERVED!

The Agricultural Stewardship Association (ASA) protects our community's working farms and forests, connects people to the land, and promotes a vibrant future for agriculture and forestry in the region. To date we have assisted with the conservation of 28,872 acres of productive land in Washington and Rensselaer counties.

ASA receives funding from its members and supporters, which include the New York State Environmental Protection Fund and



BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Carole Lewis Vice Chair, Manchester, VT

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Renee J. Bouplon Executive Director Renee@agstewardship.org

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Katie lilek Communications and Outreach Manage

Laura Kipper Project Manager

Chris Krahling Senior Project Manager

Reuben Todd Director of Operations

We Conserve Good Farmland For Good, Forever,



follow us: 10000







agstewardship.org

PHOTOGRAPHY: Katie lilek, Janet Britt, Lawrence White **DESIGN:** Kate Hocker Design

'Tis the Season for Giving

Make a difference with your year-end gift

Thank you for your generosity and continued financial support of ASA. We hope the stories in this newsletter continue to inspire you to protect local farmland and forests and support our agricultural economy. As a 501(c)3, donations are tax-deductible.

If you have already made provisions for ASA in your will or estate plan, please let us know so that may thank you for your generosity during your lifetime. Contact Donna Dodd-Thomas at donna@agstewardship.org or (518) 692-7285 for more information.

