



CONNECTICUT FARMLAND T R U S T

PRESERVING WORKING LANDS FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS

Volume 9 Issue 2

Fall 2011 Newsletter

Meet the New Executive Director



In late August after a five-month search, Connecticut Farmland Trust (CFT) was pleased to welcome Jim Gooch as its new Executive Director. Jim comes to CFT from the Portland, Maine office of The Trust for Public Land; as Program Director, he was instrumental in funding new conservation projects and building diverse partnerships. A Connecticut native, he holds a degree from Yale Law School and now lives in Meriden with his partner Jamie, a Nurse Practitioner, and their dog, Phil.

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

I am so pleased and proud to be given this fantastic opportunity. Protecting the land that produces the food we eat has never been more important and will only become more critical in the years to come. **Because of you**, CFT has led the way in Connecticut -- but there is still so much to do.

Every Connecticut farm is within 200 miles of over 90 million people. As the cost of producing food and getting it to market goes up, our ability to feed those people will need to grow, too. We've all heard the phrase, "No farms, no food." At CFT we know, "No land, no farms."

You can't be neutral on a moving train (as someone once said). In joining CFT I've leapt from the platform onto a train that is racing ahead. Inside, you'll read about the 2011 Celebration of Connecticut Farms that brought out over 600 people; you'll hear from Conservation Director Elisabeth Moore, working on several projects that could close before year-end; and you'll learn about Land Trust Alliance Accreditation – our office is fully engaged in attaining that standard.

In the last ten years, **you have protected 26 farms** – over 2,000 acres of the best growing soil in the country. Unfortunately, that's only a tiny fraction of our working land.

We need your help to continue our work and I'll be counting on you personally to build on CFT's success.

No question, this is a difficult moment – for our farmers, for our country, for our families. But it is also an exciting moment of great opportunity: in the coming years we will be forced to change the way we live and the way we think about land, food, and all of the pieces of our lives.

With your help, CFT will continue to lead that change in Connecticut.

Visit www.CTFarmland.org today to give your support, to learn more about what we are up to, to see what we have done and to learn where we are going.

Thank you,

Look for links to these important resources on our website:

- *Economic Impacts of Connecticut's Agricultural Industry* - published by University of Connecticut's College of Agriculture and Natural Resources
- *Connecticut's Land Use Value Assessment Law, Public Act 490: A Practical Guide and Overview for Landowners, Assessors, and Government Officials* - published by Connecticut Farm Bureau.

Land Trust Alliance - Accreditation

What Does It All Mean?

The Connecticut Farmland Trust (CFT) has spent the past year working toward “Accredited Status” from the Land Trust Accreditation Commission. It is a big project that is taking up a lot of staff time and financial resources, but all this work won’t result in any more protected land or magical growth in our operating revenue. You might wonder, “Why bother?”

Simply put, Accreditation represents peace of mind for our funders and our partners, for our farmers — and for you.



Scaglia Fruit Farm, Glastonbury (now part of Belltown Hill Orchards)

A land trust is a non-profit organization with a specific mission, just like a university, a hospital, or a museum. All are required to meet a set of nationally-recognized standards and just like those organizations, we depend upon your trust for our success. Unlike those organizations, however, the “land trust” is a young idea.

The first conservation land trust was begun in 1891, but the majority are no older than rock ‘n’ roll. CFT itself is only ten years old. In spite of our youth, we join in the bold claim of all land trusts to protect land “in perpetuity.” The shared belief that Connecticut’s farm soils need that protection is the reason we exist. When you work with us, **we’re asking for your faith in our ability to keep that promise, permanently.**

The Land Trust Alliance has created a set of Standards and Practices to guide land trusts in their work and help them to remain, or become, the robust, healthy organizations needed to keep their promises. Overseen by the independent Land Trust Accreditation Commission, attaining the distinction of Accreditation gives you the assurance that we can uphold our mission.

Happily, CFT is already following almost all of the Standards and Practices. Most of the application work has been simply documenting that fact with evidence. In a few cases, we will be instituting new practices with your help. For example, in support of our obligation to steward the land and protect our easements, we will be mounting a fundraising effort in the coming year to bring our funds-on-hand for stewardship costs into line with LTA recommendations.

Our application will be submitted by November 17th after nine months of work, including an in-depth organizational evaluation, a pre-application to the Commission, and many hours of self-research and documentation. When we are through, we will be one of a tiny handful of land trusts in Connecticut and across the nation who can proudly display the “Accredited” seal.

The seal displays the “infinity” sign. That sign is a signal to you and all our future partners that our conservation easements, held “in perpetuity,” will stand the test of time.

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PUBLIC COMMENT: The Land Trust Accreditation Commission invites the public to submit signed, written comment on how CFT complies with national quality standards. For the full list of standards, see www.LandTrustAccreditation.org/getting-accredited/indicator-practices. For more information about Accreditation and a full list of standards and practices, please visit the Land Trust Accreditation Commission at www.LandTrustAccreditation.org. Comments may be submitted via that website, faxed, or mailed to the Land Trust Accreditation Commission, Attn: Public Comments: (fax) 518-587-3183; (mail) 112 Spring St., Ste. 204, Saratoga Springs, NY 12866. Comments must be received by January 2, 2012.

New Connecticut Farmers

“I think there is huge potential for us to farm in Connecticut, but it is a matter of finding land that we could live on while farming—which seems rare for leases, and utterly, hopelessly expensive for purchase.”

-a young CT farmer to Bill Duesing of NOFA

At Connecticut Farmland Trust, our mission to preserve working lands for future generations guides all that we do. In the midst of the largest economic recession in 80 years, it is critical to address the economic realities faced by young or beginner farmers in the Northeast, especially as it pertains to Connecticut. The rising demand for locally grown or raised food products and the escalating cost of energy have created an expanding landscape for young people dreaming of becoming farmers.

Ironically, getting a piece of that landscape to farm has never been further from reach.

Starting a successful farm business has never been easy; there are equipment costs, the time and effort needed to bring abandoned land or old hay fields into proper conditions for high production, and the wherewithal to weather the seasons to build a relationship with the community marketplace. However, the largest cost has always been the land itself.

In 2011, the average value of farm real estate (including the value of all land and buildings on farms) in the northeast is \$4,690 per acre; in Connecticut, it's as much as \$11,500 per acre. This “cost of entry” is an overwhelming barrier for incoming farmers. In fact, with land prices this high, 38% of all farmers in Connecticut must rely entirely or in part on leased farmland. Young farmers are finding it especially difficult to purchase farmland due to their lack of capital and assets, with the majority relying on leased land or a precarious Community Supported Agriculture arrangement to sustain themselves.

Our mission to support working lands for future generations goes beyond permanent soil conservation. Land trusts like CFT represent an important source of land for farmers both young and old through both direct and indirect means. By protecting land in a conservation easement, the average price per acre decreases as the land is now valued for agricultural use only — sometimes by as much as 80%. Efficient, cost-effective conservation is often the only bridge that can connect our legacy of agricultural land to the young farmer of today, bringing us the food we will need tomorrow.

To learn more: American Farmland Trust, www.Farmland.org
University of Connecticut- College of Agriculture and Natural Resources, www.CAG.UConn.edu
CT NOFA- Connecticut chapter of the Northeast Organic Farming Association, www.CTNOFA.org

Collaborating for Conservation

Over the past year, partnership and collaboration have become increasingly central to the work of Connecticut Farmland Trust. We play a key role in these partnerships, contributing both needed funding from our Acquisition Fund for conservation easement purchases and technical expertise on farmland preservation.

Right now, CFT is working with the CT Department of Agriculture to protect three family farms, totaling 319 acres. Actively farmed for generations, the land on each of the farms is more than 70% made up by the highest quality agricultural soils in the state. Two of the farms, located in **Columbia** and **Lebanon**, are part of large, growing blocks of active farmland that are permanently protected by different combinations of the state, the two respective towns, and CFT.

CFT is partnered with the Town of Lebanon on their 4th joint project, the preservation of a 32-acre farm. Leased to a local dairy farmer, the farm has 91% prime- and statewide important farmland soils. Though small, the farm is a key cog in the largest farming community in the state. We expect to complete preservation of this farm by the end of this year.



A barn on Wisneske Farm, one of our collaborations

To date, 12 of the 26 farms protected by CFT have been in collaboration with the state, municipalities, and/or local land trusts. We expect that the number and variety of partnerships in which we participate will only continue to grow as the state's land values remain some of the highest in the nation and preservation of family farms becomes more complex. **We could not continue to do this work without your support of our Acquisition Fund** – thank you.

Eleventh Annual *Celebration of Connecticut Farms*



Four generations of the Jones Family Farm, with Faith Middleton, Christine Baranski and Jaques Pépin and their families.
Photo courtesy of John Columbus.

The beautiful blue skies and perfect weather on Sunday, September 11 provided the canopy for a day filled with celebration, reflection, and thankfulness.

The *Celebration of Connecticut Farms* is held on the second Sunday of every September; this year also marked the tenth anniversary of the attacks of September 11th. In 2001, that second Sunday arrived just days after those attacks. When thought was given to postponement, or cancellation, it was a farmer who gave voice to our conscience: Terry Jones, our host and the sixth generation owner of Jones Family Farms and Winery in Shelton, said, “We should not stop our way of life; we are stronger than them.” And the Celebration went on.

So it was this year as well – and it was magnificent.

Joining us were 28 chefs and their staff, 31 farms with samples of food raw and refined, 11 wineries and breweries, 3 cheese-makers, as well as other vendors including bakers, and local milk and juice providers – all from Connecticut, all dedicated to producing the best food from local farms.

Thanks to the masterful organization of John Turrene of Sustainable Food Systems, fresh local food of all kinds arrived on-the-day from all corners of our state and was turned by the chefs into a dizzying and satisfying array of incredible cuisine. Over 600 people were in attendance, all of whom were entertained throughout by musical guests “Bone Dry.”

At 1:30, our honored co-chair Faith Middleton of Connecticut Public Radio took the stage to introduce her fellow celebrity sponsors: Actress Christine Baranski urged us all to live well and to support that living by supporting the farms that make it possible. She gave way to Chef Jacques Pépin who spoke movingly about the day and concluded by reminding us all that everything begins in the soil, that the farmer is the steward of that soil and that no food, nor life, is possible without that stewardship. Terry Jones, newly appointed by Governor Malloy to the State’s Board of Education, spoke. His message was a “call to farms,” urging “fierce cooperation” in service of the future, depending on the unique and re-awakening American institution of the local farm. To close the program Fran Scarpa performed “America the Beautiful,” whose gentle lyrics, a loving tribute to the land we inherit and bequeath, were the perfect recognition.

We look forward to seeing you all next year! For many more photos, please visit our website at www.CTFarmland.org.

Congratulations to Mark Bisset of Woodbridge, CT; he was winner of a drawing for 2 tickets to the 2012 Celebration!

Thank you!

Many people work tirelessly to help make the *Celebration of Connecticut Farms* so successful. We would like to give special recognition to the following for their generous gifts of time, resources, and talent for the 2011 *Celebration* and for their work over the past eleven years

- Fern Berman
- Christine Baranski
- Bone Dry
- Christine Ciccone, Graphic Design
- Tim Cipriano, The Local Food Dude
- John Columbus
- Comstock Ferre & Co.
- Connecticut Farm Bureau
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- Connecticut Plein Air Painters Society
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- Linda Halligan, Lebon Press
- Litchfield Hills Nursery
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- Carolyn Monaco
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- Jacques Pépin
- Chris Prospero
- Ruwet Sibley
- Jean Saliter, Lakeville
- Southern CT Ice
- John Turrene
- WNPR
- The Woodbury FFA members from the Ellis Clark Regional Agriscience and Technology Program at Nonnewaug High School in Woodbury
- Allen Zeiner
- Regina Madigan
- Participating chefs, farmers, and other producers
- Connecticut Farmland Trust’s Board Members
- Our generous sponsors
- ***Everyone who volunteered their time to make the day a success***

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The Connecticut Farmland Trust gratefully acknowledges the following individuals and organizations for their financial support of our work to preserve farmland, and for contributions to the Farmland Acquisition Fund. *Thank you one and all.*

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77 Buckingham Street
 Hartford, CT 06106
 ph: 860.247.0202
 fax: 860.247.0236
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OUR MISSION: To permanently protect Connecticut's working farmland.

To further this mission, the Connecticut Farmland Trust:

- Works with Connecticut farmers to protect their land for agricultural use by acquiring agricultural conservation easements and farmland;
- Share our expertise and technical knowledge to assist landowners, land trusts, town officials, and state agencies in protecting agricultural land; and
- Promotes farmland preservation education through presentations and outreach.

In This Issue:

- A message from our new Executive Director, Jim Gooch
- Remembering the 2011 *Celebration of Connecticut Farms*
- New Connecticut Farmers Collaborating for Conservation

Connecticut Farmland Trust wishes you a healthy and happy holiday season!