



Land Trust, Town, and Feds Work Together to Protect Lebanon Farms

Hartford, April 6, 2011 – The Connecticut Farmland Trust (CFT) is proud to announce the successful preservation of two farms in Lebanon – 33-acre Slate Farm and 30-acre Mindel Farm. The protection of these two farms, along with Cyr Farm – preserved by CFT in 2010 – completes a two-year preservation project with the Town of Lebanon and the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).

“The Town of Lebanon is grateful to Connecticut Farmland Trust for their assistance in preserving agriculture in our town. Without this assistance, the town would not have been able to secure the development rights on these farms,” said Joyce R. Okonuk, First Selectman of Lebanon.

Lebanon is now Connecticut’s largest farming community with over 10,000 acres of active farmland. More than 35% of this acreage is permanently protected – the largest amount of any town in the state. In a 2005 study by the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies, Lebanon was identified as the highest priority for Connecticut Farmland Trust’s farmland preservation work.

“Mindel and Slate Farms are a great example of properties that would not be protected without CFT’s help. We can protect properties that do not meet all of the requirements for the state’s preservation program,” said Henry Talmage, Executive Director of Connecticut Farmland Trust. “We can also access important funding sources that make this preservation possible.”

“It is vital to preserve small farms like these. They provide important support acreage to nearby farms, and are ideal for new farm operations. NRCS was proud to provide financial support,” said Kip Kolesinskas, CT NRCS Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program Manager.

Slate Farm has been owned by the same family for 10 generations and includes the original 1730 farmhouse. It is also buffers the Lebanon Town Green. The current owners, Jon and Donna Slate, use the land for hay production and as a home for their cows, Josephine and Daisy. Of the preservation of his family's land, Mr. Slate said, "I don't want to see any more houses or development on this land. I want to keep it in the family and keep it farming."

Mindel Farm was purchased by the Mindel family in 1956, but had been continuously farmed for over 100 years. The Mindel family produced hay and had a small dairy and subsistence farm on the property. Farmer Saul Mindel also worked at the CT Department of Transportation and only took vacations when it was time to bring in the hay. He milked his cows by hand and he and his wife won numerous awards at the Lebanon Town Fair for her canning and other specialties grown in the family's large garden.

Saul Mindel passed away in 2010. His daughter Maxine Mindel worked with CFT to ensure that her family's land will be permanently protected. Right before preservation, Maxine said, "It has been a long journey, but with the support of my siblings, and [CFT's Director of Conservation] Elisabeth Moore's encouragement and ongoing phone contact, we are seeing this to fruition. I know that future stewards of the property will build their own memories from the richness of this farmland."

About The Connecticut Farmland Trust

Connecticut Farmland Trust is the only private statewide conservation organization solely dedicated to permanently protecting Connecticut's farmland. Established in 2002, CFT holds agricultural conservation easements that protect 2,096 acres of farmland on 26 farms around the state, has assisted partners in the preservation of 602 additional acres, and serves as a leading resource conserving Connecticut's working farmland.



Figure 1. Apple trees surround an iconic red barn on Mindel Farm in Lebanon.



Figure 2. Daisy, a Scottish Highland, is a resident of Slate Farm in Lebanon.

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