

## Saving Farmland, Saving Farms

Maine Farmland Trust and its many farmland protection partners are finding ways to save farmers, farms *and* farmland. Traditionally, land trusts have relied on conservation easements and outright ownership of land to prevent development on important properties. In recent years, however, Maine Farmland Trust's board and staff have also worked to build personal and organizational connections with other land trusts, Soil and Water Conservation Districts, the Maine Department of Agriculture, and other state and federal funding partners.

Though important, it's not enough simply to protect large tracts of working farmland from development. We must at the same time be a part of the bigger picture, gathering the "people power" needed to keep agricultural

lands working and to support the future of farming. In short, achieving our mission requires that we strive to strengthen the complex web of relationships that connect farmers to people in every aspect of life in Maine.



PHOTO COURTESY OF MAINE DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

**ANDROSCOGGIN COUNTY** – Host, Minot farmer John Hemond (center), shown with his uncle and aunt Roland and Noella Hemond, and Stephanie Gilbert, (far left), farmland protection specialist with the Maine Dept. of Agriculture, at a recent "kitchen meeting."



**CUMBERLAND COUNTY** – Lettuce & other crops thrive on 47 acres of the Jordan Farm in Cape Elizabeth. The now permanently protected field is seen here against a backdrop of a neighboring residential development that was once operated as Wainwright Farm, now named Wainwright Drive.

Over the past few months, Maine Farmland Trust has criss-crossed the state to join with local community and conservation partners to assist landowners and present educational workshops on estate and farm transfer planning, business planning, current-use tax programs and grassroots advocacy for agriculture.

*Continued on page 2*

### In this issue:

- Annual Meeting held May 25 at Crane Bros. Farm, Exeter
- A new coalition to promote Maine foods
- Another Maine FarmLink success – Thorndike
- Farmer Incubator study underway
- Meet Adrian Wadsworth, founding MFT member

# Saving Farms

Continued from page 2

## In Androscoggin County, "kitchen meetings" help out

The Town revaluation hit Minot's farmers hard this past fall. After presenting a slide show on "How Farmers Can Protect Farmland" at the Androscoggin Valley Soil and Water Conservation District's Annual Meeting last fall, Maine Farmland Trust and the Department of Agriculture were invited back to an informational kitchen meeting at John and Irene Hemond's farm in Minot in February.

Fourteen people representing seven farm families recounted how they "got into farming," helping MFT and the Dept. to target technical assistance with the "nuts & bolts" of estate planning, transferring the farm and enrolling Maine's Farm Tax Program. The District is planning to host additional kitchen meetings this fall and winter in Turner and in Sagadahoc and Hancock Counties.

## Careful planning leads to the protection of a Cumberland County farm

After several years of planning within the family, the Jordan children approached the Cape Elizabeth Land Trust (CELT) about protecting a por-



PHOTO COURTESY OF MAINE DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

**CUMBERLAND COUNTY** – The Jordan family children, Penny, Bill Jr., Carol Ann, and Pam, joined by Commissioner of Agriculture, Robert W. Spear (center) and Stephanie Gilbert (far left), at a press conference on their Cape Elizabeth Farm last November. The family placed a protective easement on 47 acres of their working farm.

tion of their farm. CELT worked with Maine Farmland Trust to obtain sponsorship from the Department of Agriculture to access funds through the Land for Maine's Future Program and the USDA Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program.

Last month Ruth and Bill Jordan, Sr. completed the sale of development rights and granted an Agricultural Conservation Easement on 47 acres of their family farm. The settlement will enable the family to manage health-care costs for family members who

have retired, expand the business run by all four siblings of the present generation and bring a third generation into the family business.

## In Kennebec County, a successful orchard is a group effort

In May, 2002, Steve and Marilyn Meyerhans purchased Lakeside Orchards in Manchester, Winthrop and Readfield. They had leased Lakeside since 1999, but couldn't afford to buy the farm until the former owners, Reed and Penny Markley, worked with Maine Farmland Trust and the

*Continued on page 3*

PHOTO COURTESY OF KENNEBEC COUNTY SWCD



**KENNEBEC COUNTY** – Marilyn and Steve Meyerhans, Lakeside Orchards, receive Cooperator of the Year Award from Rob Mohlar (far left), Chair of the Kennebec Soil and Water Conservation District. The Meyerhans also own and operate The Apple Farm in Fairfield.

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# Penobscot County Farmers Discuss Farming Challenges at Annual Meeting

“The best way to protect farmland is to keep farming profitable.” That was the primary message of the featured speakers at Maine Farmland Trust’s annual meeting held May 25. Dairy owners Bob Fogler, Mary Thomas Wilson and Arthur Libby joined MFT Board member and potato farmer Neil Crane to speak about farmland protection issues in southwestern Penobscot County. The farmers described economic challenges—shifting market conditions, ambivalent governmental policy and increasing employer costs, and observed that while many family businesses face these issues, farmers have the additional challenge of ensuring an economical land base for their operations. Crane noted, for instance, that his farm requires some 1000 acres for cultivation. Most farmers in this area utilize a combination of owned and rented land, and it is rented land that is at risk. Presently, much

of the rented ground is owned by people who formerly farmed or lived on it, and have a strong interest in seeing that it remain available for agriculture. The question is, what will happen when this land is transferred to the next generation? How can we ensure the land will remain available and affordable for farming? The discussion concluded with no concrete answers, but with an enthusiasm to coordinate efforts to address the land protection challenges in this region of the state.

The annual meeting convened at Crane Brothers Farm in Exeter, for a tour of the state-of-the-art potato storage facility. The business and program portion of the meeting was held in East Corinth. Frank Miles, Neil Crane, Art Thompson and Dan Tibbetts were elected to 3-year terms on the Board of Directors, and Rachel Collin Therrien, Adrian Wadsworth and Susan Welch were elected to the Advisory Council.

## Art Thompson of Limestone Joins MFT Board

Maine Farmland Trust welcomes new board member Arthur H. Thompson of Thompson Associates. A former potato farmer, Art has worked for many years as a financial planning advisor in northern Aroostook County.

He has also been very active over the years in agricultural and community service organizations both in Aroostook County and statewide. We are grateful that Art has offered his time and talents to our board.

## Saving Farms *Continued from page 2*

Department of Agriculture to access state and federal funding to sell development rights.

This past year Steve and Marilyn have further distinguished themselves as leaders in Maine’s agricultural community. They are working closely with the Kennebec Soil and Water Conservation District and have received USDA cost-share funds to construct a pesticide mixing facility (the first in the county). They’ve also participated in the Farms for the Future business

planning program and have been awarded additional grants from both the Land for Maine’s Future and Farms for the Future programs to expand their fields, diversify their crops and redesign their farm store on Route 17 in Manchester.



# New Organization Celebrates and Promotes Maine Foods

## *The bounty of local Maine foods is truly amazing*

*Farmers often remind us that no matter how much land we protect, "it's not farmland without farmers." As part of our mission, Maine Farmland Trust collaborates with other organizations that seek to enhance farm viability in Maine. The Eat Local Foods Coalition of Maine is one such organization.*

Picture a warm bowl of fish chowder, a hunk of crusty bread, and a crispy spring salad on the side. It's easy to do, especially on an empty stomach. For something more challenging, imagine now that all the key ingredients of the meal – fish, potatoes, onions, milk, salt pork, flour, salad greens – came from Maine. According to a new organization called the Eat Local Foods Coalition of Maine [ELFC], it's easier than most people might think.

"The bounty of local foods available in Maine is truly amazing," says ELFC coordinator Roger Doiron. "Maine is at the forefront of a budding renaissance in local food production that is bringing tangible benefits to family farms, consumers, and local economies."

The most recent agricultural census statistics for Maine appear to support this claim. Although there was an overall decline in the number of Maine farms between 1997 and 2002, the number of small farms (i.e., under 10 acres) was up by over 20%. It is these farms that tend to market their products directly to local consumers. The number of farms of 10-50 acres was also up by an encouraging 8%.

These are trends that we are trying to nurture. As Russell Libby, MFT board member and Director of MOFGA, points out, "if families were to purchase as little as \$10 worth of Maine foods each week, that would

add up to \$200 million staying in the Maine economy."

ELFC's mission is to promote and increase in-state consumption of Maine farm products through a combination of networking, media activities, and occasional projects. A website, [www.eatlocalfoods.org](http://www.eatlocalfoods.org), has been launched to help people in Maine to "eat local" by connecting them with their local farmer, farmer's market, and CSA (community supported

*If families were to purchase \$10 worth of Maine foods each week, that would add \$200 million to the Maine economy.*

agriculture) farms. Media activities are designed to raise public awareness about the multiple benefits – social, environmental, economic, health, gastronomic – of eating local foods.

In addition to singing the praises of Maine foods, ELFC also looks at the barriers separating producers and consumers. These include institutional obstacles, transportation and distribution systems, and marketing, among other things.

Originally an informal network of like-minded Maine-based food and agriculture organizations (including Maine Farmland Trust), ELFC has recently taken the step of formalizing its organizational structure. Membership is open to any individual or organization that ascribes to its mission and purposes. For more information, contact Roger Doiron, [roger@kitchengardeners.org](mailto:roger@kitchengardeners.org) or call (207) 883-6773.



PHOTOS BY MARY GREENE



# Farmland Is for Farming

## Thorndike Farm Back in Production

Notes from Susie O’Keeffe, Coordinator  
Maine FarmLink, a Maine Farmland Trust Program

It was a brisk Sunday morning in April when I grabbed my camera and headed to one of our latest “links,” Eric Healy and Libby Lyman’s new farm in Thorndike. Until recently, this 191-acre farm was owned by the late Mrs. Nola Higgins.

After her death, the Higgins family decided to sell the farm, and John Ingraham, son-in-law and executor of the will, took up the task of finding a buyer. Listing the farm with FarmLink made sense to John. “You know,” he said, “people are telling us we could get a lot more money if we divided the land for house lots. But I say: farmland is for farming!”

Eric and Libby, who had signed up with Maine FarmLink almost two

years ago, immediately came to mind as a good match for this farm. They had experience. They knew what they wanted. They needed a location that



*Looking for a farm close to markets and organic dairies, Eric Healy and Libby Lyman were very happy to be able to purchase this farm in Thorndike. The Higgins family was committed to selling for farming rather than for house lots.*

was close to markets and organic dairies. Now that they have bought the farm, Eric is creating an organic cheese making business, and Libby plans to raise winter vegetables and annuals. While they build the cheese plant and get the greenhouses established, they are starting a beef herd.

“The Ingrahams have been incredibly helpful,” Libby told me with a smile. “They are like family.” Eric added, “When we first moved in I worked during the day and tried to mow at night. John saw that wasn’t working and sent over a helper. Now

they are helping us build our fences, and we’re going to take some of their heifers for the summer.” Neighbors, too, are pitching in. A farmer across the road saw Eric digging postholes by hand, and came over with his mechanical digger. The support is terrific, says Libby.

Looking back, a lot of things came together to make it work. One crucial element was the

Higgins family’s commitment to keeping the farm active. Fortunately, they could afford to sell at “farm” rather than “development” value. On the buyers’ side, Eric and Libby’s previous farming experience, good planning and clarity on what they wanted were also essential.

### FARMLINK MOVES TO BUCKSPORT

FarmLink, Maine Farmland Trust’s program to connect farmland owners with incoming farmers, has a new location. As of June 1, program coordinator Susie O’Keeffe will work out of her new office space at Maine Farmland Trust headquarters, 60 Main Street in Bucksport. New address and phone:  
Maine FarmLink  
P.O. Box 1597  
Bucksport, Maine 04416  
(207) 469-6465  
The e-mail address will remain susie@mainefarmlink.org .

### What FarmLink Farmers Need...

FarmLink is in full fundraising mode these days! In the recent interview with Eric Healy and Libby Lyman, (see above article) we asked what else FarmLink could have done to help. They recommended providing farmers with a resource guide to the kinds of business and financial information and contacts needed to purchase or lease a farm. Other farmers have made similar requests.

Creating this guide, along with a similar one for existing farmers, will cost approximately \$5,500. So, in addition to raising \$30,000 to supplement our general operating grant, we’re looking for assistance to produce these guides. Contributions, in-kind services and other assistance are all heartily welcomed!

**...Your Support for a Farmer’s Resource Guide**

# Farmer Incubator Program: Harvest Fund Grant Awarded for Feasibility Study

*Low-cost leases would allow beginning farmers to start out without the burden of high debt.*

Thanks to a \$2000 grant from Maine Initiatives' Harvest Fund, Maine Farmland Trust is conducting a feasibility study for a Farmer Incubator Program. Last year, a visionary farmer approached Maine Farmland Trust, seeking to establish a program to assist beginner farmers. This farmer owns nearly 1000 acres in the agriculturally rich lower Kennebec valley. He wants his land to remain in production after his retirement, to serve as training grounds for entering farmers.

Currently the land supports several operations – beef cattle, sheep, dairy and a certified organic vegetable market garden. Five or six small farms could be created, so that low-cost leases on housing, farmland and equipment might be offered to entering farmers. This would allow them to learn over a period of five to seven years how to farm successfully without the burden of high overhead from debt, enabling them potentially to build up capital. At the end of the lease period, these farmers would be



PHOTO BY FRANK MILES

*Rich farmland could remain in production as training grounds for new farmers, allowing them to gain experience over a period of five to seven years.*

referred to our FarmLink program to find a farm of their own, and openings would be available to more beginning farmers.

The feasibility study will assess how much the program might cost, what type of entity or organizational structure would be required to operate it, and whether funding (project-generated, donated or both) would likely be available to successfully carry it out over the long term.

## Endowment Fund Established

Thanks to the generosity of its supporters, Maine Farmland Trust has established an endowment fund at the Maine Community Foundation. This fund will attract gifts and bequests from donors to secure the future of our work over the long term. Income from the fund will be used for opera-

tions and land protection projects. Those interested in contributing to the Maine Farmland Trust Endowment Fund can contact LouAnna Perkins at MFT's offices, 207-469-6465, or the Maine Community Foundation at 877-700-6800.

## Planned Giving: Include MFT in your will.

*A bequest to support farmland protection is a great way to leave an important legacy.*

For more information, contact  
LouAnna Perkins,  
MFT Executive Director  
at 207-469-6465.

## WE NEED FARM PHOTOS

Maine Farmland Trust is preparing new outreach materials, and we need farm photos—farm animals, farmland scenes, farm buildings, farmers. Share your photographic talent with us. Call LouAnna (207) 469-6465.

# MAINE FARMLAND TRUST

*We're the only statewide land trust devoted exclusively to farmland protection. Our budget is primarily funded by individual donors/members. Please join us. With your help, we can meet the challenge.*



### Membership Categories:

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  - I would like more information. Please contact me.**
  - Please contact me about protection options for my farm property.**
- Additional donation \$ \_\_\_\_\_ .

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

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**Please mail with your check to:  
Maine Farmland Trust, P.O. Box 1597, Bucksport, ME 04416.**

Maine Farmland Trust is a non-profit organization, and membership dues and donations are tax-deductible.



**Frank Miles**

## From the President's Desk: Land for Maine's Future: Let the Voters Speak

**2004** brings the end of the five-year funding for the Land for Maine's Future [LMF] program that was overwhelmingly supported by voters in 1999. I had hoped to take the opportunity in this column to urge our readers to become active supporters of a campaign for a new "land bond," that would renew funding for the popular LMF program. Alas, despite the efforts of many dedicated folks, the Maine Legislature adjourned early April 30, without passing a land bond (or any other bond, for that matter.)

Funding for the LMF program is particularly crucial for farmland, because it provides dollars to match available

federal funding for the purchase of development rights on farmland. Since 1999, ten percent of LMF funds have been set aside to conserve productive farmlands throughout Maine. As you've seen reported in our newsletters (see, for example, the Jordan Farm on page 2 in this issue), farms in places as diverse as Sanford, Manchester, Blue Hill, Cape Elizabeth and Scarborough are being protected. Dairy products, apples, blueberries, and many other farm commodities are still being produced, even in areas facing development pressure, thanks to a combination of LMF, federal and local funds used to purchase development rights

in exchange for conservation easements that permanently protect the land. The benefits to the state's economy, local communities, and way of life cannot be emphasized enough.

So, with no land bond authorized at this point, what can each of us do? Well, as one supporter puts it, we can maintain hope. The Land For Maine's Future program is very popular amongst the citizenry. And Maine's people care passionately about protecting farms and the rural economy. The bond proposal *WILL* resurface next year, because it makes good sense for Maine. The legislature will likely be called back into session some time during the summer. But we can begin "sounding the horn" now, by calling, e-mailing and writing our legislators, urging that the state renew its commitment to LMF *this year* by sending a substantial land bond to the voters in November.

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.

PHOTO COURTESY OF PAUL BIRDSALL



The big picture:

**Save farmland  
Support farmers  
Strengthen farming**

**Read all about it inside!**



**Meet Adrian Wadsworth:  
Dairy Farmer, Founding Board Member,  
and Spokesman for Maine Agriculture**

*"No one group has a lock on the correct vision for Maine agriculture. We should work to understand all of the options."*

When you hear of an organization associated with agriculture in Maine, from AgriMark Cooperative to Maine Farm Bureau, Agricultural Council of Maine, Maine Sustainable Agriculture Society, or Maine Farmland Trust, you can be sure Adrian Wadsworth has been involved with it. A dairy farmer in North Turner since 1976, Adrian says, "No one group has a lock on the correct vision for Maine agriculture. We should work to understand all of the options."

In 1972, Adrian's family in Farm-

ington, Connecticut was forced into selling the family farm, which had been passed from father to son for ten generations. It wasn't long before Adrian was looking for a farm to rent. He ran an ad in farm publications and answered a response from a farmer in North Turner, Maine. It was an enormous financial challenge, because the farmer was looking to sell his farm and retire. After two years of working at the farm, through an arrangement with the farm owner and a loan from Farm Credit, Adrian was able to buy the

cows and some of the equipment, while renting the barn and contracting to buy feed from the farm owner. Eventually, Adrian was able to buy the entire farm. Over the years, the farm has expanded to 350 cows and 500 acres of cropland.

Adrian's vision has not been limited to this one farm. He has always been aware of the issues facing family farms and has been constantly involved in the exchange of ideas taking place in various agricultural organizations. By working with Maine Farmland Trust and Maine FarmLink, Adrian hopes to make more people aware of the precious cultural and economic inheritance Maine farms represent.

Having served two terms on MFT's Board of Directors, Adrian is now moving on to other ventures. He will continue to share his enthusiasm and determination with us as a member of our Advisory Council.