

## Collyer Brook Farm Now Permanently Protected

### Conservation-minded Landowners Assure Future of Dairy Farmland

This February, Holmes and Didi Stockly protected 376-acre Collyer Brook Farm, located in Gray and New Gloucester, with an agricultural conservation easement donated to Maine Farmland Trust. Though not farmers themselves, the Stocklys originally purchased the farm some thirty years ago, just to keep it operating as a farm. "We stepped in when it came up for sale, because it was very likely to become house lots. We just couldn't see that happen," says Holmes.

Dating back to the Latham family in 1754, Collyer Brook Farm had been a dairy farm in the Megguire family for six generations when the Stocklys purchased it. Soon thereafter, they leased the farm to Hanson and Penny Ray, who, in Holmes' words, "have been wonderful stewards of the farm." Under the direction of the Rays, the farm has been gradually transitioned to an organic operation, and became fully certified about five years ago.

Late last fall, the Stocklys contracted to sell the farm to October Corporation, a real estate holding company for the Libra Foundation,



*By granting an agricultural easement to Maine Farmland Trust, Holmes and Didi Stockly have ensured that Collyer Brook Farm will be available for farming in the future.*

which was seeking abutting farmland for its agricultural programs. Although continued farming was anticipated,

*The easement will permit educational and low-impact recreational uses.*

the parties agreed that permanently protecting the land with a conservation easement would ensure its future as farmland, irrespective of what changes might come along in the years ahead.

Maine Farmland Trust worked with the parties to craft a comprehensive agricultural easement that will preserve the prime soils and agricultural values of the fields and woodland, while still permitting the type of educational and low-impact recreational uses that the Libra Foundation is interested in supporting. The

easement also allows for creation of three residential lots in a wooded area of the property where farming will not be affected.

Though title to the land has now changed hands, Collyer Brook Farm will continue to be operated as an organic dairy by Hanson and Penny Ray for the next two years. Thereafter, the

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*Dairy barn at Collyer Brook Farm*

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- Ben Brook: Farmland Protection Linked to Other Conservation Goals
- Meet George Maendel, From Farmer to Farm Preservation Activist

## Combining Farmland Protection with Conservation

Maine Farmland Trust has recently accepted the first of several easements in Lincoln County, which are part of a larger land protection effort known as the Ben Brook Project. Project manager Bambi Jones provides an overview of that collaborative project:

There are many reasons to protect land from excessive residential development: conserving endangered species, maintaining public access, helping farmers keep their land in production, holding onto treasured views. The midcoast area has few threatened or endangered species, residents enjoy an abundance of beautiful views, and there are growing efforts to protect farmland and public access. However, the new resettlement of



### The Ben Brook Project

**Eventually 300 acres of farmland and working forest will be permanently protected, with wetlands, wading bird habitat, deer wintering areas, as well as other natural ecosystems.**

rural Maine along and near the coast has fragmented the landscape to such a degree that large roadless areas have become some of the rarest landscape features in our area. Such blocks of land provide many benefits. They can support or buffer fully functioning ecosystems, provide ground-water fil-

tration and purification, offer habitat to a wide range of species, buffer rare natural communities, allow for forest management on an economically viable scale, and provide truly natural areas for research.

The Ben Brook Project in Alna, Whitefield and Jefferson involves one of these rare large blocks of land remaining in midcoast Maine. It includes several working farms with 200 acres of productive crop- and hayland. The working forest contains wetlands, wading bird habitat, substantial acreage of deer wintering areas, and numerous forested and wetland natural community types. This land buffers Ben Brook, a tributary of the Sheepscot River, and encompasses more than 5000 acres of contiguous forested area. There are remarkably few landowners and holdings are relatively large. Close to half the acreage is part of a state designated Wildlife Sanctuary.

Maine Farmland Trust and Sheepscot Valley Conservation Association have teamed up to work on this unique land conservation opportunity. Four landowners, owning a total of more than 1400 acres, are committed to the goal of protecting this entire area. Two easements have already been donated and another three will be completed in 2003, totaling over 300 acres of permanently protected land, a great start toward meeting this ambitious objective.

## *You are invited!* Maine Farmland Trust Annual Meeting

**May 27, 2003 at 1:30 pm**

**Brick Farm, 538 Malbons Mills Road, Skowhegan**

**Easement donors James and Corrilla Hastings** have graciously offered to host this year's Annual Meeting at Brick Farm. We hope you'll take this opportunity to meet our Board and other members, hear what we've been up to, review our financial report, and get a preview of our FarmLink program expansion. We'll also present a panel of easement donors speaking about their decisions to permanently protect their farmland. To top it all off, we'll enjoy Brick Farm's scenic nature trail (weather permitting).

*Please join us—and bring a friend or two.*

**To RSVP and get directions, please call MFT office assistant Kristin at 207-469-6465 or e-mail: [mft@midmaine.com](mailto:mft@midmaine.com).**

*See you there!*

# MAINE FARMLAND TRUST

We're the only statewide land trust devoted exclusively to farmland protection. Please join us. With your help, we can meet the challenge.



## Membership Categories:

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

From the President's Desk:

## Collaborative Action

Maine Farmland Trust's most visible work is that of directly assisting farmland owners in protecting their land with conservation easements. Our staff and board members are also "out and about" working on the various projects featured in our newsletters. But Maine Farmland Trust is also active in a number of less visible ways, such as collaborating to develop state and municipal

policy and practices that support farm viability and long-term land protection. Indeed, we have played an integral role on a steering committee established by the Maine Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Resources for the purpose of developing a state strategic plan for farmland protection.



Frank Miles

After two years of information gathering and discussion, that plan has now been made public. While the plan is a blueprint for priority-setting and action by the Department, the help of participating partners will be critically important in meeting many of the objectives. Upcoming issues of our newsletter will detail our roles, but I want to share with you an excerpt from the plan's Mission Statement, which does an excellent job setting the context for collaborating on farmland protection in Maine:

**Maine's agricultural future is inextricably linked to its ability to continue to build strong, long-lasting connections between farmers and the communities they serve.**

Farming is more than a business proposition; it provides society with numerous priced and non-priced goods and services; it is a way of life and a source of identity and strength for many of Maine's rural communi-

ties. Farmers utilize nutrients and energy efficiently and effectively to grow healthy food and fiber, to protect air and water quality and to provide wildlife habitat. Their livelihood forms a landscape that is the "fabric" of many Maine villages and towns. Maine's farms contribute to rural character, quality of life and many local resource-based economies. Even in those communities where farming is not the predominant livelihood, citizens are often reaping the benefits of Maine's agricultural legacy when they enjoy aesthetically appealing scenic views, open undeveloped

space and outdoor recreation.

Maine's agricultural future is inextricably linked to its ability to continue to build strong, long-lasting connections between farmers and the communities they serve. Generations of Maine's citizens will need to work together to find ways to keep farmland in the hands of farmers committed to sustaining Maine's agriculture.

*Excerpt from Saving Maine's Farmland: A Collaborative Action Plan, March 31, 2003. Available on request from Maine Dept. of Agriculture, Food and Rural Resources. Call Jeanne Mathews at 207-287-3491 or go to [www.maine.gov/agriculture](http://www.maine.gov/agriculture).*

## Wish List

**Upgrading? Want to pass on your used but still-very-serviceable equipment? Consider donating to Maine Farmland Trust. Our wish list includes:**

- digital camera
- 35mm camera
- hand-held GPS
- power point projector

**Contributions to MFT are tax deductible. Call 207-469-6465.**

## Collyer Brook Farm

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farm will be leased to and managed by Pineland Farms, a non-profit entity supported by grants from Libra Foundation for the purpose of providing research, educational and recreational opportunities connected with agriculture and rural living.

Holmes and Didi Stockly are no strangers to land protection, having placed conservation easements on land in Vinalhaven in the 1970's and on a small farm in Falmouth about five years ago. We at Maine Farmland Trust take our hats off to the Stocklys for their personal long-range involvement with and commitment to preserving Collyer Brook Farm in particular, as well as to land conservation and farming in general.

## 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**

## Transferring the Farm — A Shared Responsibility

*Notes from Susie O'Keefe, Maine FarmLink Program Coordinator*

**“H**ow do we retire comfortably and help the next generation afford the farm?” In the past, this question was less common. Today, as pressure to develop farmland rises and current economics make it increasingly difficult for farmers to prosper, finding creative ways to answer this question has become imperative.

In March, Maine FarmLink hosted a workshop in Unity entitled “Transferring the Farm.” Funded by a grant from the Northeast Center for Risk Management Education, the workshop was co-hosted by Vermont Land Link, the University of New

***Astute farmers see that preserving their own farms into the future is also preserving farming.***

Hampshire Cooperative Extension and New York Farm Link. 60 people attended, over half of whom were farmers hoping to see their farms continue, as they themselves retire or move on to other ventures. Some are hoping to pass the farm to a family member; others are seeking to transfer to someone from outside the family.

The workshop underscored the need for careful planning in the transfer process, begun as early as possible, in consultation with both family members and outside legal and financial consultants. Communication styles of the family members must be considered as the issues are tackled, as well as clarification of goals, identifying needs of both the retiring and the incoming farmers, understanding available legal tools for transferring farm management as well as farm assets, estate planning and tax issues, and determining the roles that FarmLink and land trusts might play in transfer of the farm.



The day culminated with real life stories. A panel of three farm owners, Adrian Wadsworth of River Rise Farm in North Turner, Steve Morrision from Clovercrest Farm in Charleston, and Marilyn and Steve Meyerhans of Lakeside Orchards in Manchester, talked about how they acquired their farms using diverse transfer strategies.

Lively discussions throughout the day made it very clear that a great deal of work remains to be done by everyone who is working to save Maine's farms and help the next generation of farmers prosper. Tom Roberts, a vegetable farmer from Pittsfield, summed up, “Astute farmers see that preserving their own farms into the future is also preserving farming.” I would add that they can't do it alone; we must all help make this a viable option for farmers.



PHOTO BY DOUGLAS ALBERT

# Maine's Current Dairy Crisis: Farmland at Risk

by Russell Libby

It's no secret that the dairy industry in Maine is under tremendous stress. Amidst all the unknowns, one certainty is that we will see dramatic changes in the system in the years ahead. All the forces that have led towards concentration and consolidation in other sectors of the agricultural economy are now dominant in dairy as well. Low-cost producers around the country, and the world, are putting downward price pressure on Maine's dairy farmers.

Maine has 400 remaining dairy farmers. Many of these are now making decisions about their future operations. Some are trying to lower production costs enough to survive and be competitive in a world of low price milk. Others are looking at niche markets, including organic and on-farm milk processing. All dairy farmers are assessing their future.

As they make their choices, over 150,000 acres of cropland and pasture land, concentrated in central Maine, are at risk. That is, farmers who perceive the problems they are facing as short-term ones, will be tempted to improve cash flow by selling one or two house lots in fields that aren't



PHOTO BY DOUGLAS ALBERT

central to their operation. Those who sense that the price problem is long-term, particularly if the farm isn't doing well now, may simply decide to sell out altogether.

Either way, we stand to lose the availability of that land for farming. Of our 400 dairy farms, only a handful have permanent restrictions on their land use. Most of those are institutional farms—the University of Maine, Hinckley School, Morris Farm, Pineland Farms; only two privately owned dairy farms presently have farmland easements.

We don't have the resources to protect the remaining land base with easements now or in the near term. The decisions Governor Baldacci, Commissioner Spear, and the Legislature make over the coming months about milk pricing and sup-

port for the dairy industry will shape the future of farming in central Maine for decades to come. We need to make sure individual farmers are supported as they make their decisions, and we must find ways to maintain the twenty five percent of Maine's cropland that is under threat of development if we lose our dairy sector.

*Russell Libby, Executive Director of MOFGA, (Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association), serves on Maine Farmland Trust's Board of Directors.*



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## News shorts

### Outreach and Development Grant:

In support of Maine Farmland Trust's outreach work in land protection as well as our organizational development needs, **Norcross Wildlife Foundation** awarded a grant for the purchase of a high quality digital copy machine. We now have the capability to produce technical bulletins, informational materials and membership solicitations "in-house," saving us both time and money. Thank you, Norcross Wildlife Foundation!



**Stewardship Grant received:** The **John Sage Foundation** recently made a generous contribution to Maine Farmland Trust to assist with transaction costs and stewardship associated with protecting a farm in Waldo County. Without their help, this project could not have been completed. Thank you, John Sage Foundation!



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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.

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**Read all about it inside!**



### Meet George Maendel— From Farmer to Farm Protection Activist

*Agricultural and forest lands not only provide  
for us, they also help to define who we are.*

George Maendel, coordinator of Maine Farmland Trust's Western Waldo County Initiative was born on a Hutterite communal farm in Manitoba and raised on farming as a way of life. George has maintained his ties to and passion for agriculture in every endeavor in which he's been involved. He managed a 500 acre farm in Georgia for 3 years prior to coming to Maine in 1986, when he settled in Montville. He has served on the Montville's Planning Board and Board of

Selectmen. Currently he is a board member of Sheepscot Wellspring Land Alliance (SWLA).

Of his background in farmland protection, George says, "I was a member of American Farmland Trust, but they were doing nothing in Maine. Looking for an organization I could get involved with, I joined the local land trust, SWLA. Then I found Maine Farmland Trust's ad for a project coordinator in Western Waldo County, and I knew it was the just the type of

work I was looking for. I enjoy meeting farmers, hearing their concerns and helping them inventory their farm's assets, history and possibilities. It's gratifying to ensure that farm and forest lands will be available to sustain future generations." But, notes George, permanent farmland protection goes beyond this. "It is also a public statement of and commitment to our values. Agricultural and forest lands not only provide for us, they also help to define who we are. Agricultural conservation easements recognize and seek to protect that relationship."

When not thinking about land protection, George engages in his other interests: sharing stories, listening to music, and reading. He also enjoys gardening, bird watching and spending time outdoors.