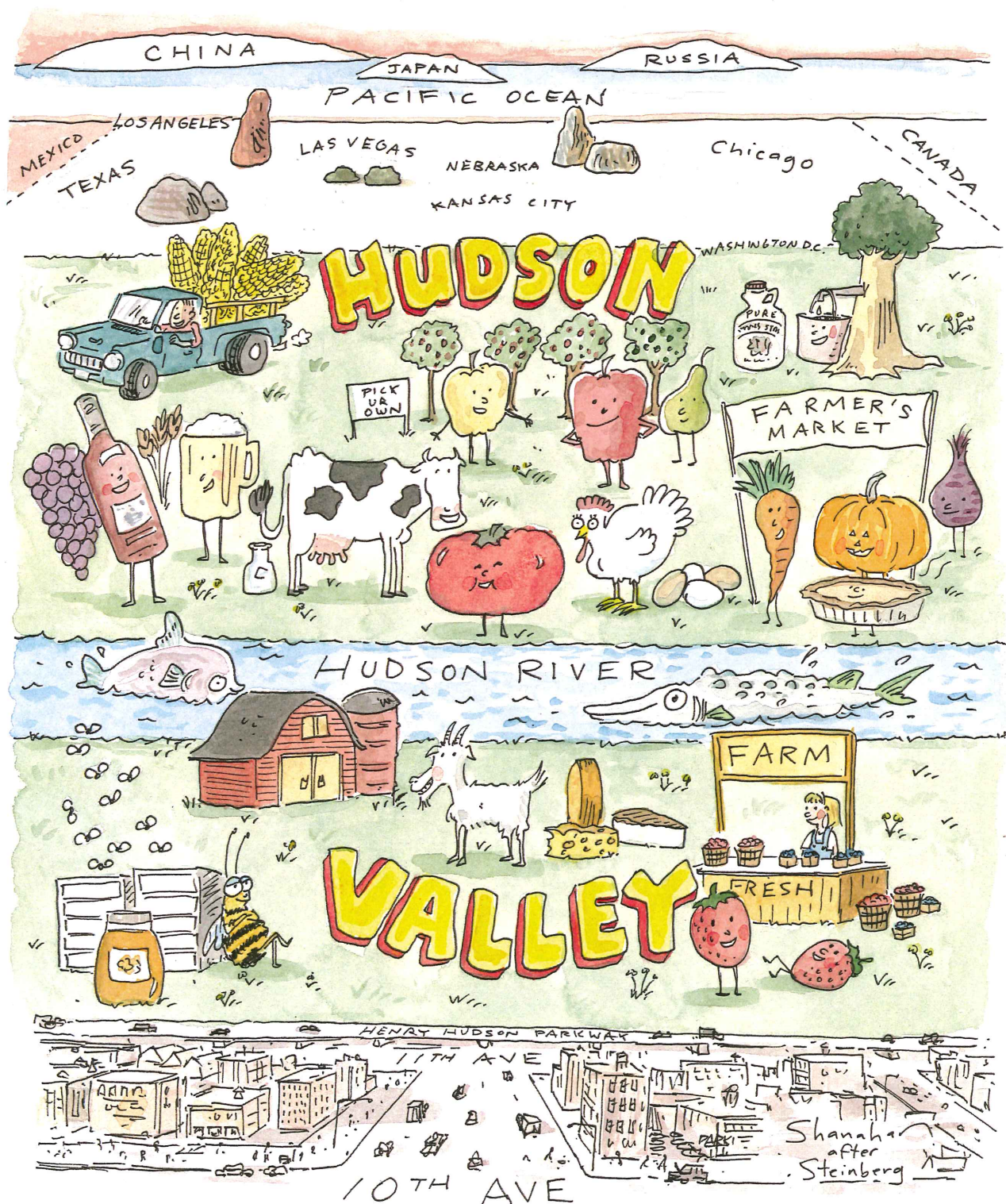
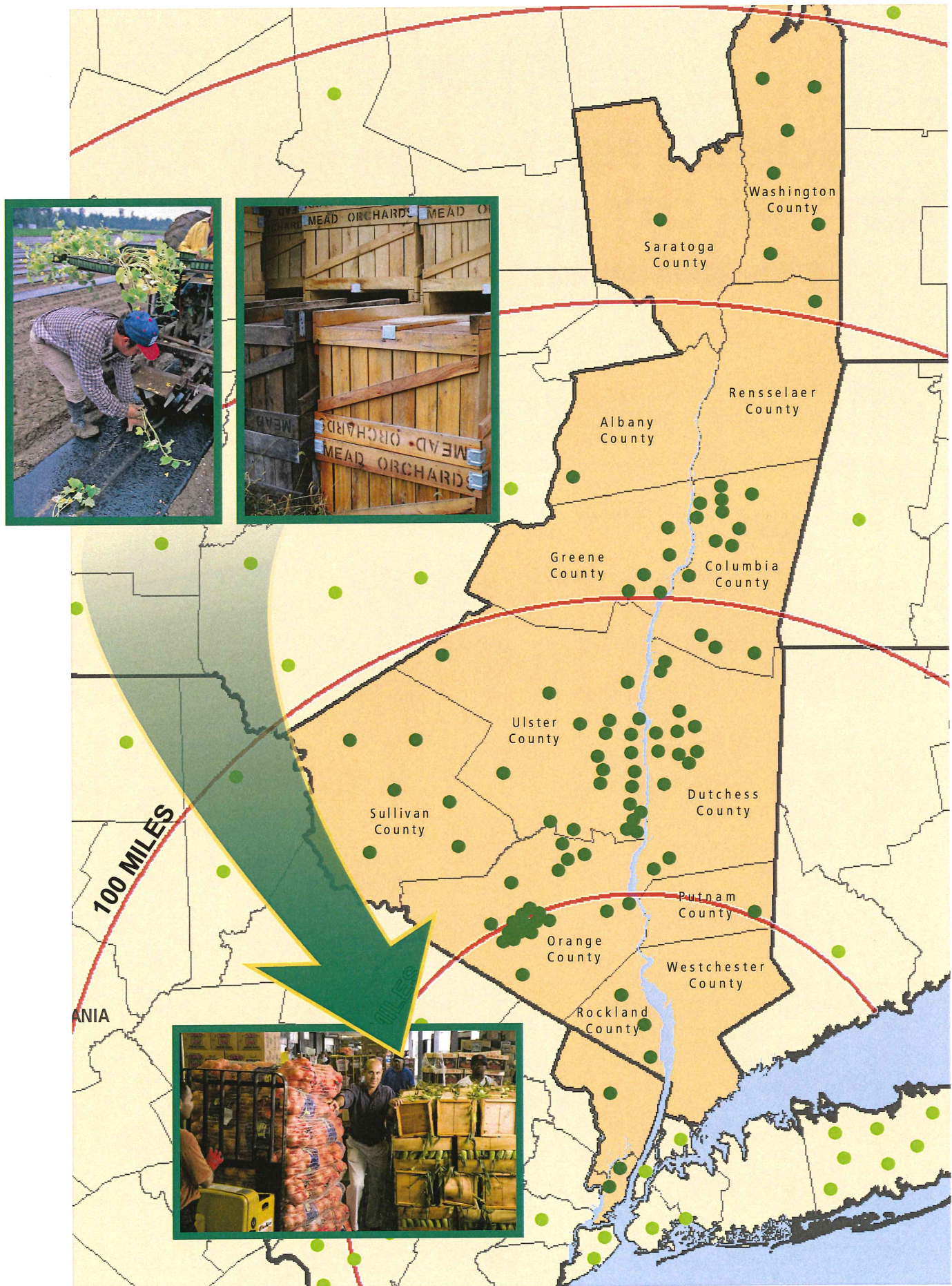


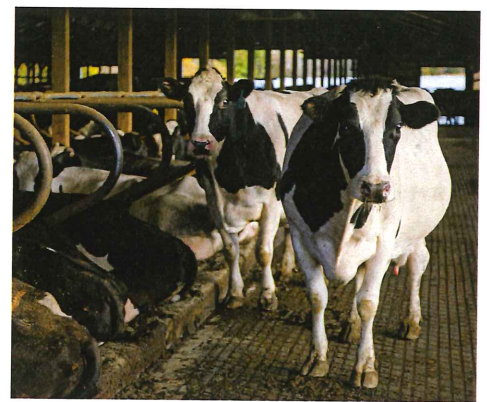
SECURING FRESH, LOCAL FOOD FOR NEW YORK CITY AND THE HUDSON VALLEY

A Foodshed Conservation Plan for the Region





● Hudson Valley Farms serving GrowNYC Greenmarkets



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This plan presents a strategic approach to conserve the agricultural land that can supply fresh, local food to the people of New York City and the Hudson Valley. It answers several fundamental questions:

- How much land is there to be conserved?
- How many farms are in the region's foodshed?
- Which farmland is most critical to save?
- What will it cost to conserve the highest priority farmland?
- And perhaps most importantly, what must be done to save it?

The plan focuses on farmland in 11 Hudson Valley counties where it is most possible to reinforce the growing economic sustainability of regional agriculture. The farms in this study are predominantly within 150 miles of New York City, making the distance between farm and table relatively short. Studies have been made of how the region's "food system" works, and important initiatives are underway to create opportunities to grow food within New York City itself. But until now, no one has created a strategic plan to conserve the agricultural lands in the city's foodshed before they are lost.

New York City has an estimated \$866 million or more of unmet demand annually for regionally produced food, with substantial demand coming from underserved communities. The Hudson Valley has the agricultural land to help meet these needs. Nearly 18 percent of the region's land is farmland. More farms from the Hudson Valley provide food to GrowNYC Greenmarkets than from any other area near the city. Hudson Valley farms serve 90 percent of these farmers' markets and also are significant suppliers to restaurants, groceries and other food outlets.

Hudson Valley farms also maintain our scenic working landscapes, rural heritage and quality of life, all of which help drive a multi-billion-dollar tourism industry and fuel greener economic growth. Conserved farms safeguard wildlife habitat and environmentally sensitive areas such as meadows, woodlands, wetlands and streams. They also protect local aquifers and other drinking-water supplies—and keep a lid on local property taxes by requiring just 37 cents in municipal services for each \$1 of taxes they pay.¹

Yet according to the American Farmland Trust, New York State has been losing farmland at an alarming rate—the equivalent of one farm every 3½ days. Over the last 25 years, the state has lost almost half a million acres of farmland to subdivisions, strip malls and scattered development, threatening food security and local economies.

While a patchwork of federal, state, county, municipal and not-for-profit land trust programs already helps to conserve individual Hudson Valley farms—with 81,430 acres saved to date, including 11,500 acres alone by Scenic Hudson—a new, strategic initiative to conserve a critical mass of the region's farmland is needed if we want to expand, let alone maintain, the land base that ensures access to fresh, local food.

KEY FINDINGS

This plan provides a crucial first step in achieving this goal. It was created through a process of stakeholder outreach, data gathering and geographic information system (GIS) analysis. The analysis, which is described more fully below, indicates that:

- There are 5,387 farms comprising 730,389 acres of significant farmland in the 11-county regional foodshed.
- Only 11 percent—81,430 acres—has been conserved to date.
- Hence, 648,959 acres of important farmland, on 4,969 farms, remains at risk.

Of this, the analysis identifies:

- 815 farms totaling 212,047 acres as “highest priority” for conservation.
- 1,970 farms totaling 263,333 acres as “high priority” for conservation.
- 2,184 farms totaling 173,578 acres as “medium priority” for conservation.
- Nine priority conservation areas have the greatest density of priority farmland. These clusters, which together contain 614 “highest priority” farms totaling 163,673 acres, are where resources should be directed first as part of a strategic approach to conserving the region’s farmland.
- It will cost an estimated \$720 million to conserve all 163,673 acres. (This reflects an average cost of \$4,400 per acre. Cost estimates are based on interviews with qualified real estate appraisers familiar with farmland and conservation easement values in the region and Scenic Hudson’s direct experience. The range of values considered reflects geographic differences, farm size, environmental constraints, amount of road frontage and other factors.)
- The average farm in the 11-county region contains 136 acres. Due to their size, proximity to urban centers, ownership structure and level of capitalization, Hudson Valley farms are well-suited to provide sustainably produced foods and to support family farming in a way that is impossible in other areas of the country where so-called “factory farms” are more prevalent.

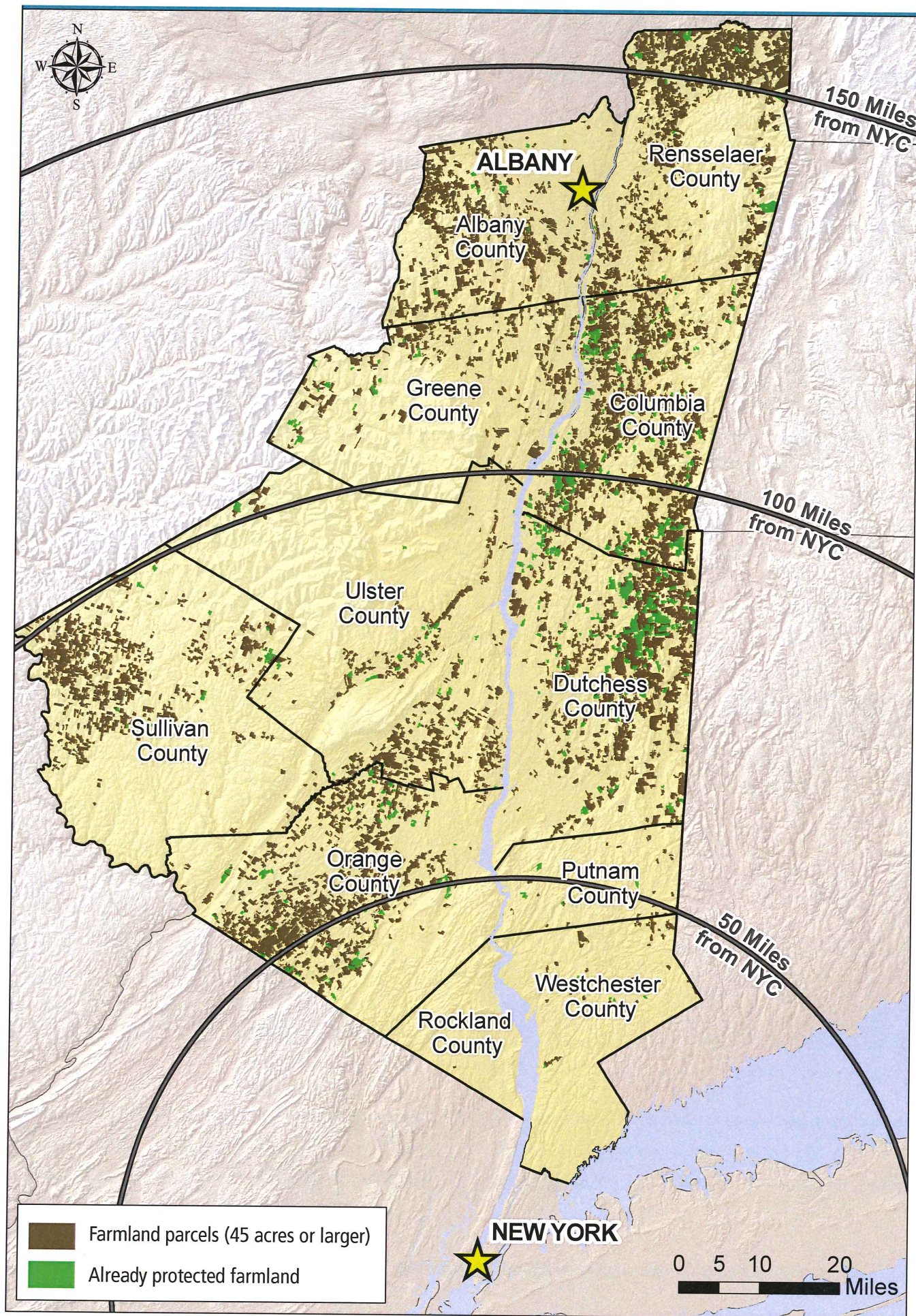
Armed with this plan, policymakers, philanthropic funders, farmers and land trusts will be able to embark on a clear path to permanently conserve the region’s farmland while complementary initiatives are being advanced to strengthen the food distribution system and increase access to fresh, local food.

The New York region is not unlike other metropolitan areas in its growing interest in access to fresh, local food. But the convergence of interests and resources makes it possible for this region to lead the nation by creating a replicable model for conserving its foodshed as an essential part of a truly sustainable regional food system.

This plan also can be a jumping-off point to examine other important questions. For example, as the region’s food production, processing and distribution systems become more efficient and as the agricultural land base becomes increasingly secure, what kinds of food—and how much food—can the public expect these lands to produce?

HUDSON VALLEY FOODSHED Farms by County		
County	Farms*	Acreage
Albany	525	64,075
Rensselaer	775	104,520
Greene	250	37,400
Columbia	846	117,151
Sullivan	642	68,679
Ulster	424	50,667
Dutchess	627	106,113
Orange	808	92,636
Putnam	30	2,817
Rockland	3	215
Westchester	39	4,687
TOTAL:	4969	648,959

*includes only unprotected farms



HOW FARMLAND IS CONSERVED

For almost 20 years more than a dozen not-for-profit land trusts have been working with Hudson Valley farm families to conserve the region's farmland. The primary mechanism that is used to conserve farmland is a conservation easement, which permanently restricts the property to agricultural and associated uses by preventing subdivision and incompatible development. A conservation easement transaction involving a farm may also be referred to as the purchase of development rights (PDR). In addition to agricultural land, conservation easements on farms often protect important natural resources such as streams, steep slopes and wetlands from potentially damaging land uses and activities. PDRs usually are purchased, although many have been donated or sold at a price below market value.

The fair market value of a conservation easement is determined by comparing the value of the property as restricted by the easement to its unrestricted market value. Typically, a conservation easement on a Hudson Valley farm has a value equal to 50 to 60 percent of the unrestricted value of the land.

Proceeds from the sale of conservation easements on Hudson Valley farms have enabled farmers to invest in equipment and infrastructure and increase productive capacity—making farming in the region more viable and adding to agriculture's already substantial economic punch. Scenic Hudson's transactions alone have delivered more than \$30 million to local farm families.

PDR benefits current and future generations of farmers. Once a conservation easement is placed on a property, its resale value typically is reduced. Thus, while the sale of a conservation easement has made it possible for some older farm families to monetize a substantial amount of the equity in their farms, it also has enabled younger farm families to purchase the land due to its reduced cost. Yet long-term affordability is not always guaranteed. In response to growing interest in assuring that conserved farmland remains affordable to farmers (as opposed to purchasers who may convert farms to residential estate use), innovative tools such as the "option to purchase at agricultural value" are gaining in usage as part of farmland conservation transactions.



Farmers are investing conservation easement proceeds to enhance efficiency and productive capacity.

"More than 70 percent of our farms are going to change hands in the next 20 years. If we want to continue to have productive farms in the foodshed, it's critical that we keep the land affordable for the next generation of farmers."

— Lindsey Lusher Shute, Director and Co-Founder,
National Young Farmers Coalition

A THRIVING “FOODHIVE”

In recent years, there has been a tidal wave of interest in fresh, local food—for public health and food security, and to meet evolving culinary trends. Public policy is reflecting this in different ways, such as in New York City Mayor de Blasio’s call to reduce the city’s “foodprint,” First Lady Michelle Obama’s “Healthy Food” campaign and Governor Andrew Cuomo’s support for five regional “food hubs” around New York State.

The Hudson Valley has become an economically vibrant “foodhive” supporting new and diverse businesses and social activities. Groups such as the Hudson Valley Agribusiness Development Corporation (HVADC) and the Hudson Valley Food and Beverage Alliance work with farmers, wholesalers and retailers to develop infrastructure and market local products. HVADC also educates the public about local food production through its Hudson Valley Bounty program. In Kingston (Ulster County) Farm2Table Co-packers and Hudson Valley Harvest are helping farmers process and add value to their products and to distribute them to New York City and other markets. The number of farmers’ markets in the region has grown significantly. The Local Economies Project’s Hudson Valley Farm Hub will offer training and research leading to more innovative farm practices. Groups like Glynwood and the Stone Barns Center for Food & Agriculture are educating a new generation of farmers about what it takes to be successful and sustainable. And the American Farmland Trust is helping to make it easier for institutions to source and serve locally produced food and linking farmers to suitable land for farming.

Other important work is being done to create a better-functioning regional food system, including the potential for public and private investment in “food hubs” where produce can be aggregated, processed and distributed. A recent Local Economies Project report demonstrates that there is great potential in the region to capitalize on growing consumer demand to scale up the distribution of local food, benefiting Hudson Valley farms and communities. New York City and New York State are investing in wholesale- and retail-level food distribution infrastructure at Hunts Point and other locations. GrowNYC’s Wholesale Greenmarket Co. is making fresh local food available to New Yorkers who do not have adequate access.

All of these mutually supportive initiatives are needed to build a more economically sustainable and equitable regional food system.

However, due to multiple pressures—including land fragmentation and conversion, high property taxes, aging infrastructure, national trends toward larger-scale farms and international competition—the Hudson Valley has experienced long-term erosion in the amount of its productive farmland. *If demand for food was the only factor influencing whether farmland should be in production, then the Bronx and Westchester still would be growing food instead of shopping centers and tracts of housing.*

The only way to truly ensure that the capacity exists to provide the region with fresh local food is to ensure that the most fundamental piece of the region’s food system—the farmland itself—remains intact.

“The Hudson Valley is blessed with some of the world’s most productive farmland. We need to keep this land available for the upcoming generation of farmers who are willing and eager to produce delicious, healthy local food.”

— Mark Adams, President, NY Farm Bureau
of Dutchess and Westchester Counties

Elements of a Sustainable Regional Food System



PLAN METHODOLOGY

This plan offers a strategic blueprint to halt the loss of the region's farmland. Scenic Hudson's GIS foodshed model:

- identifies those farms that are important to consider for conservation;
- prioritizes farms based on their agricultural values; and
- shows where the most important clusters of farms are located within the region.

Identifying Individual Farms. The model identifies farmland parcel-by-parcel. Local farmland data exists at various levels of completeness and accuracy, so the model uses three different data sources to identify parcels that may be farmland and then takes further steps to verify that data to maximize accuracy. Data sources for farmland include agricultural districts,² agricultural land use designations³ and agricultural tax exemptions.⁴

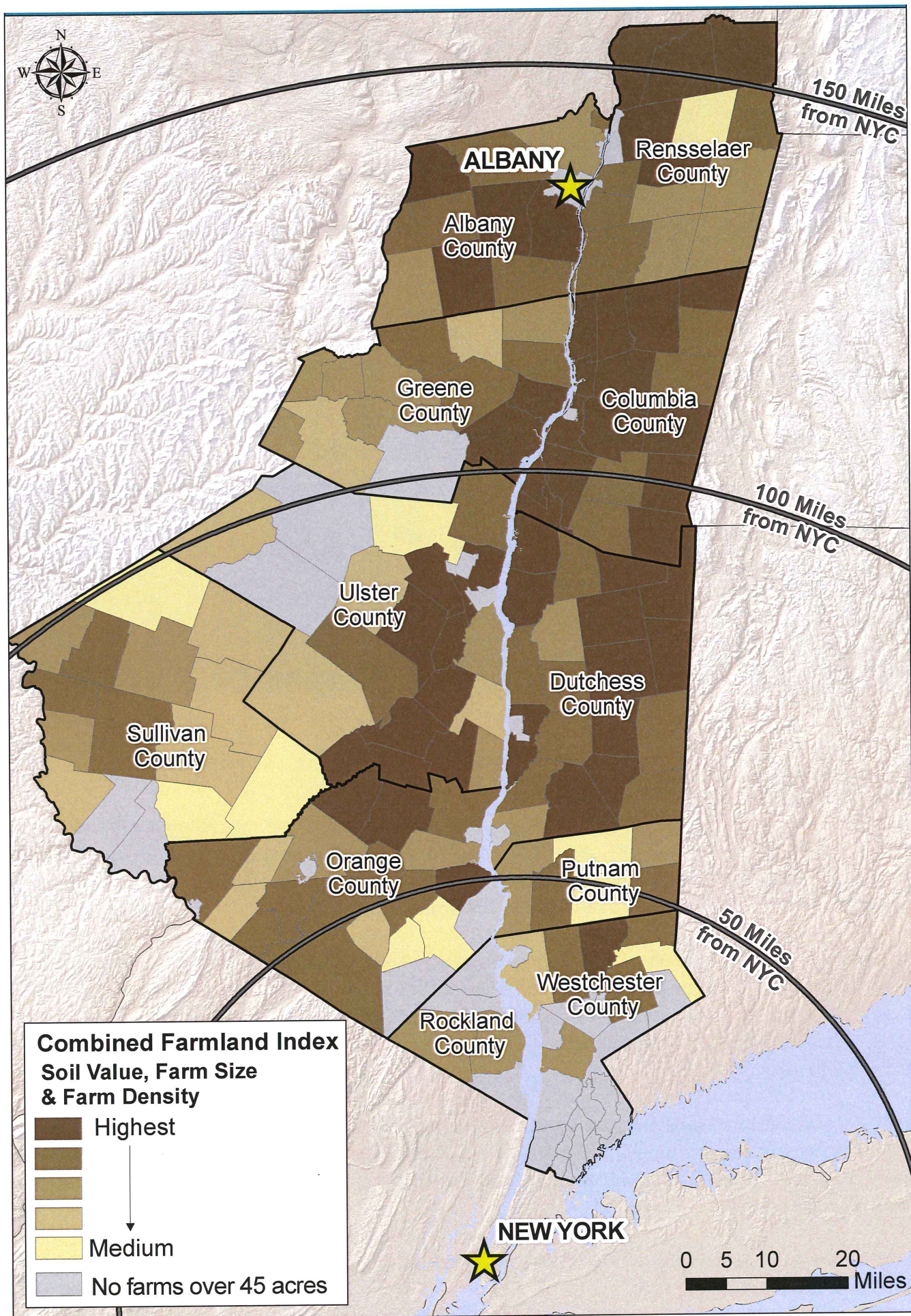
The model combines these data sets to yield those parcels that are "possible farms." Possible farms are further verified by aerial photography. Obvious non-farmland parcels such as forest lands and golf courses are removed. Remaining farmland parcels are queried by owner name, and contiguous parcels of similar ownership are combined together as individual farms.⁵ The resulting farmland includes 5,387 individual farms of 45 acres or larger, comprising a total of 730,389 acres.⁶ (Farms that are smaller than 45 acres contribute in important ways to the region's food system by serving farmers' markets, niche food outlets and CSA's, and by stimulating local economies. However, they are not included in the total acreage identified in this report because these farms make up a small share of the total agricultural land base. In addition, from a strategic conservation perspective it is far less efficient and more costly to conserve them.)

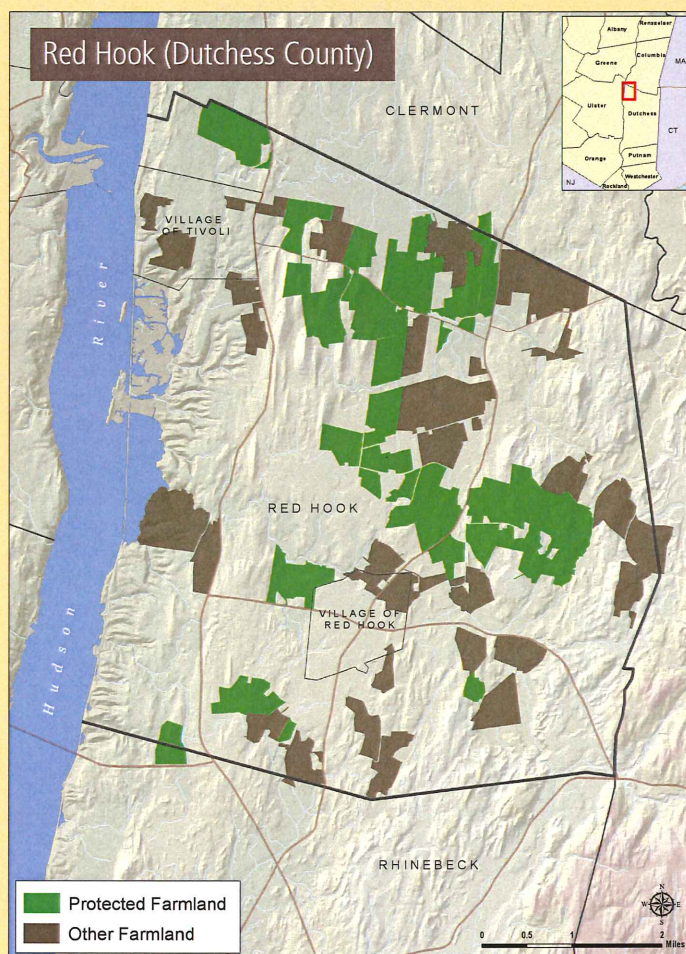
Prioritizing Individual Farms. The model prioritizes each farm based on productive capacity of soils and farm size. For soil values, every soil is assigned a numerical value based on "soil group" data from the NYS Department of Agriculture & Markets. These soil groups quantify the productive capacity of each soil type for cropland production.⁷ Soil polygons are overlaid with the parcel outlines of individual farms and the mean value for all soils within each farm is calculated. This yields a numerical ranking of soil productive capacity for each farm.

Additionally, each farm is ranked by farm size: 45-100 acres, 100-200 acres and more than 200 acres. Finally, the soil value ranking (weighted 2/3) and the farm size ranking (weighted 1/3) are combined to assign one final numerical value for each farm in the study area.⁸

Identifying Regional Areas of Importance. After identifying the location and relative value of each farm, the model spatially identifies regional areas of importance. First, each town is queried to identify the mean soil productive capacity value throughout the town. Second, the density of farmland by town is calculated. Finally, the average size of farms within each town is calculated.⁹ These three metrics are then combined to yield a cumulative farmland index for each town.¹⁰ Collectively, based on all of the information analyzed at both local and regional scales, the model identifies nine priority conservation clusters with the highest density of high-value farmland.¹¹







A MODEL OF STRATEGIC CONSERVATION

Scenic Hudson is leading an effort to create a “critical mass” of conserved farms in communities that prioritize agriculture as key to their economic future. Over 15 years, more than 10,000 acres have been protected and over \$30 million delivered to almost 70 farm families. This approach is creating a more secure environment for farming, making land more affordable to the next generation of farmers and providing a sound basis for the commitment of public and private funds. In the town of Red Hook (Dutchess County), below, more than 53 percent of the town’s active farmland now has been conserved. This strategy is fully scalable, and should be utilized as part of a campaign to conserve the region’s highest priority farmland.



ORGANIZING FOR SUCCESS

Conserving the region’s foodshed will require a new public-private partnership of farmers, land trusts and government working together in a coordinated way. Furthermore, while conserving individual farms can be done by individual land trusts using project-specific funding, conserving the region’s foodshed will require engaging a broader range of groups working in New York City and the Hudson Valley to advance the multiple components of a sustainable regional food system.

To date, farmland conservation in the Hudson Valley has been carried out primarily on a local basis, and not in furtherance of a larger, strategic plan. These efforts by land trusts working with farmers and government have been funded by a mix of private and public sources, systematically directing resources to the most highly rated individual farms applying for support at any moment in time. While positive results have been achieved, as a strategic initiative this falls far short of what is needed to protect the most valuable agricultural land across the region.

In response to the rampant loss of farmland to sprawling development and other economic challenges, federal, state and local farmland conservation programs were created in the 1990s and early 2000s. These programs generally were small in scale and not organized to conserve the foodshed as a regional asset. The 2008 financial crisis predictably resulted in cutbacks, severely impacting the amount of funding available.

This Foodshed Conservation Plan provides a framework for each of the following essential stakeholders to realign and strengthen their support for protecting farmland in the region.

Public Programs:

The **US Department of Agriculture's** Natural Resources Conservation Service administers the Agricultural Land Easement Program (ALE), formerly known as the Farm and Ranch Land Protection Program (FRPP). ALE awards cover 50 percent of the cost to purchase a conservation easement. Prior to 2011, very little Hudson Valley farmland was conserved using FRPP funds. However, in the last three years Scenic Hudson alone was awarded \$6.13 million to complete 27 projects in the Hudson Valley.

***What's needed?** It is crucial that the amount of ALE funding directed to New York State continues to be increased and extra consideration be given to land in the foodshed where the need is greatest and pressure on the land most acute. ALE program regulations need to be consistent with New York State's program to maximize financial leverage.*

The **federal income tax deduction** has enabled some owners of farmland (though typically not working farm families) to donate or sell their development rights at a reduced price. In fact, approximately 10 percent of the 81,430 acres already conserved in the study area was protected this way. The tax deduction associated with donated conservation easements is a critical, low-cost incentive to landowners that must be made permanent. The deduction was enhanced to make it more feasible for land-rich but cash-poor farmers and ranchers to reap its benefits.

***What's needed?** Congress extended and enhanced the conservation easement tax deduction through 2014, but it is crucial that the deduction be made permanent, including the enhanced benefits available to farmers and ranchers.*

New York State's Department of Agriculture & Markets administers a farmland protection program (FPP), which is funded from the state's Environmental Protection Fund. The program proved to be extremely popular with farmers, generating more than 400 applications during its first 10 years of operation. From 1996 to 2008, NYS spent \$130 million to conserve over 53,000 acres on 211 farms. The 2008 financial crisis predictably resulted in cutbacks severely impacting the amount of funding available. On a very positive note, in May 2014 Governor Cuomo reinstated the FPP with \$20.5 million for new projects.

The FPP covers up to 87.5 percent of the cost to acquire farmland easements, but strong demand for the program across the state may reduce capital available to individual projects. The state also provides funds to help counties create farmland protection plans, which are used to qualify and rank individual project proposals.

In addition there is potential for other state agencies, such as the Environmental Facilities Corporation, to provide low-cost financing to conserve farmland that protects public drinking-water supplies.

***What's needed:** Governor Cuomo has reinstated the FPP program, and it is critical now that the state prioritize the completion of transactions and increase funding over time if it is to play a leading role in saving our most important farmland. Program regulations need to be made consistent with the federal ALE program to maximize leverage with federal and local programs. New York also can strive to make the FPP more efficient by shortening the time from award to closing.*

Several **counties** in the foodshed have provided funds to help save farms, but the economic crisis caused cutbacks. Dutchess County's Partnership for Manageable Growth has been funded through the issuance of serial bonds. The program can pay up to 50 percent of a project's cost and has provided \$6.6 million to farmland protection and open space projects over 12 years. Similarly, Orange County's Open Space Fund Program offers up to 50 percent in matching funds for the protection of open space and farmland, but it, too, has not been active since 1993. Ulster County has adopted a farmland protection plan but has provided no funding for agricultural easements. Columbia County does not currently have a farmland preservation program but it is nearing adoption of its first Farmland Protection Plan, an important precursor to accessing state FPP funds.

While the creditworthiness of counties and political will across jurisdictions may vary, county government programs typically contribute between 10 to 50 percent of project cost.

***What's needed?** Counties generally have capacity to fund larger PDR programs than towns and can leverage local government commitment to farmland protection by providing financial incentives. County programs must be reinvigorated and structured to be "plug and play" with state, federal and local programs.*

Towns and villages have the authority to issue bonds and, if specific state-enabling legislation has been passed, to enact a local Community Preservation Act (CPA) to fund farmland and open space protection projects via a transfer fee on real estate transactions. Warwick (Orange County) and Red Hook (Dutchess County) have pioneered such efforts. Red Hook passed a \$3.5 million bond for open space and farmland protection in 2003 and a CPA in 2007. Warwick passed a \$9.5 million bond to support its Agricultural and Open Space Preservation Program in 2000. Several Westchester County towns also created funding mechanisms, but all have gone dormant since the financial crisis.

***What's needed?** As the real estate market heats up again, now is the time for municipalities to consider creating local bonds and enacting a CPA to leverage investments by county, state and federal agencies. But there is no general authority for municipalities to adopt CPAs, and this affront to home rule must be changed.*

New York City has invested hundreds of millions of dollars to conserve the watershed lands around its upstate reservoirs since 1997, including approximately 24,000 acres of farmland. Yet it does not have a program designed to conserve the lands in the region on which its residents depend for a significant amount of their fresh, local food. A commitment from the city to protect its Hudson Valley foodshed would be a “game changer” in making the long-term supply of fresh food to urban food deserts more robust, reliable and secure. It would support Mayor de Blasio’s goals to increase the city’s access to locally grown food and reduce the city’s “foodprint;” leverage substantial additional support from other public and private sources; and create good jobs.

***What's needed?** With public support stronger than ever, now is the time for the city to invest in the conservation of its foodshed. The city's commitment should be structured to take advantage of financial contributions from state and federal governments, and to maximize the involvement of the region's land trusts.*



[We need to be] “weaned off the culture that gets its food from 3,000 miles away.”

— NYC Mayor Bill de Blasio

Private Support

Private philanthropic funds have not been significant investors in the conservation of farmland in the foodshed. In other states, such as Vermont, there is a tradition of private philanthropic support for farmland conservation. Filling this missing piece of the puzzle is essential for a successful effort to conserve the foodshed.

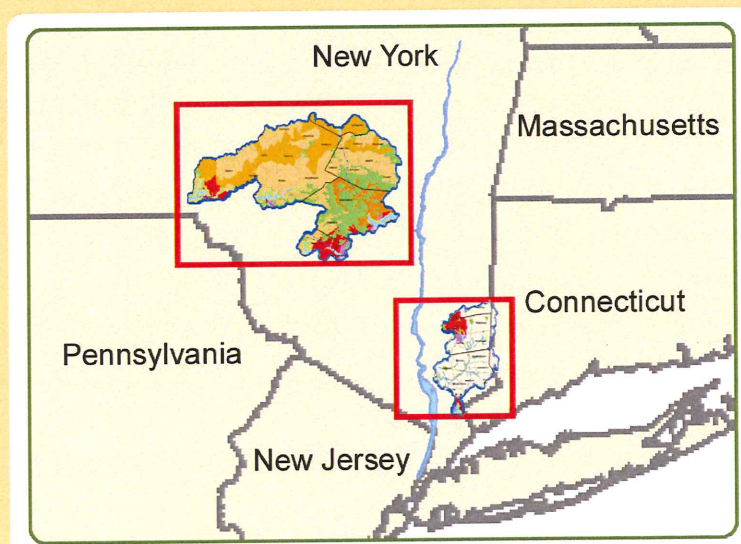
***What's needed?** It's all about ensuring broader public access to fresh, local food—and the big foundations need to be at the table. The results will be tangible, direct and permanent. There is no better opportunity for the philanthropic community to provide strategic leadership than to create a pooled fund to match public investments in protecting the foodshed.*

Impact investors, driven by the desire to achieve “triple bottom line” —social, environmental and economic objectives—have been exploring opportunities to acquire farms in the foodshed. However, with few exceptions, actual conservation transactions have been slow to materialize.

***What's needed?** The purchase of conservation easements on farms can increase the potential economic return for these investors. In exchange, investors can agree to convey easements at a reduced price in order to make projects feasible. Standardized project types and financing structures need to be created. A clearinghouse of potential funders also could help link funders with farmers and conservation organizations.*

NYC WATERSHED ANALOG

New York City's 16-year-old program to conserve lands within its 1-million-acre watershed area has protected more than 96,000 acres through the purchase of conservation easements and fee acquisitions. In that time, the program has increased the percentage of protected land area in the watershed basin from 24 percent to more than 34 percent. This has been achieved through a partnership between New York City (which contributes roughly \$6 million for PDR transactions to the not-for-profit Watershed Agricultural Council each year), the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation and the Watershed Agricultural Council.



Data Sources: Mapped Features: NYC DEP GIS, 1999-2009. Produced by DLP, 9/1/09

Not-for-profit **land trusts** play a leadership role in securing farmland protection easements by convening farmers, local and county governments, and state and federal agencies; negotiating transactions; and in some cases contributing financially. Until now, private fundraising to conserve farms in the foodshed has occurred almost entirely on a farm-by-farm basis.

***What's needed?** With the broader context this Foodshed Conservation Plan provides, it now is possible for land trusts and foundations to collaborate to conserve the region's foodshed and to provide private matching funds for local, state and federal grants.*

Farmers, of course, are the most important conservers of farmland. Their dedication to farming as a way of life in the face of multiple challenges cannot be overstated. Deciding to permanently conserve a farm is a significant commitment that many farm families are making. And while selling a conservation easement may not be the right option for all farm families at any given time, the response by farmers to PDR programs has been overwhelmingly positive.

***What's needed:** Any program must have the confidence of the farming community. Maintaining trust among government agencies, land trusts and farmers is critical to the success of efforts to conserve the foodshed. Easement transactions need to take into consideration farmers' interests and concerns, including long-term affordability of the land to young farmers who do not already own their farms.*

"I've placed conservation easements on my own farmland, and I always encourage other farm families to do the same. It's the only way we can protect the precious prime soils in our farming communities from development, and it helps to hold together the foundations of our local farm economy."

— Ken Migliorelli, owner-operator Migliorelli Farm, Red Hook, and NYC Greenmarkets vendor and board member



NEXT STEPS

This Foodshed Conservation Plan provides the data needed to take action to permanently protect the region's agricultural land so it will continue to be available to produce food. It is neither necessary nor realistic to expect this to happen all at once. The next step is for stakeholders to use this plan as a starting point to coordinate their efforts, build public support and set an achievable goal that is aggressive enough to make a meaningful difference over time. Several building blocks need to be put in place:

- The many stakeholders across the sustainable food system network—from groups working for food justice and agricultural producers to farmland conservation organizations—must come together in support of each other's efforts as part of a shared regional vision.
- The region's land trusts need to organize their efforts strategically around the highest priority clusters of farms.
- Public and private funding programs need to be structured to incentivize leveraging of available resources to create momentum and build confidence in the process:
 - federal, state, county and local governments—including New York City—all must be reliable contributors;
 - the private philanthropic community must be converted from being a funding "prospect" into a leading funding "partner;" and
 - the potential of impact investors to achieve conservation outcomes must be demonstrated.
- Metrics need to be established against which to measure success.

We have a unique and exciting opportunity to harness growing demand for fresh, local food to ensure that the agricultural lands in the region's foodshed remain available for farming. With the exception of a reliable and adequate stream of funding, the key elements are in place: strong public interest; this Foodshed Conservation Plan; local, state and federal conservation programs; not-for-profit land trusts with the expertise to carry out projects; reasonable land values; and a supportive agricultural community. Now is the time to act.



Endnotes

¹ American Farmland Trust, "Assessing the Cost of Community Services" (www.farmland.org/documents/Cost-of-Community-Services-Studies-American-Farmland-Trust.pdf)

² Agricultural District data from NYS Department of Agriculture & Markets (various dates by county 2005-2012).

³ Agricultural land use data from NYS Office of Real Property (2011). Farmland defined as agricultural use (codes 100-190), residential agricultural (code 241) and abandoned agriculture (code 321).

⁴ Exemption data from NYS Office of Real Property (2011) and joined to tax parcels provided by local tax agencies (2011). Exemptions include 4172 (Agricultural District formed by county or New York State) and 173 (Agricultural Land outside of agriculture districts) only.

⁵ Combination of parcels by owner name will not comprehensively identify all individual farms. Some farms may have multiple parcels under different names but still operate as one farm. It is expected that the total number of farms in the foodshed region is less than 5,387.

⁶ Total numbers include some farmland that already has been protected. Of the total numbers, approximately 418 farms comprising 81,430 acres are currently protected.

⁷ Soil group values (www.agriculture.ny.gov/AP/agsservices/SOILCOUNTY.htm) are provided in tabular form by NYS Department of Agriculture & Markets. Tabular data is joined to the Soil Survey Geographic (SSURGO) Database to identify spatial values. Note that soil group valuations are for cropland only and may not reflect accurate valuations for other agricultural activities.

⁸ The final prioritized ranking for each farm is calculated as 66.7 percent soil group value + 33.3 percent farm size value.

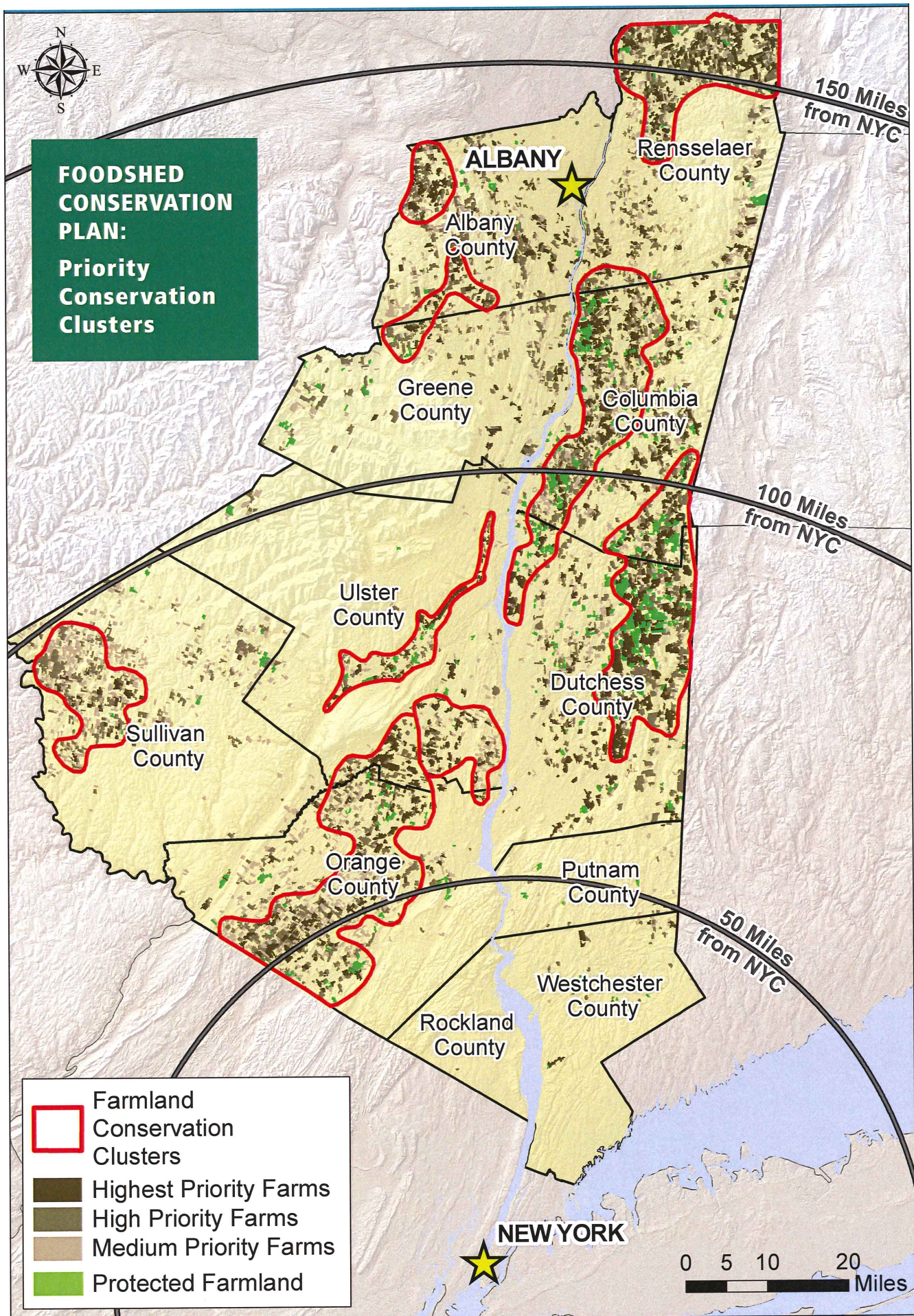
⁹ Towns with fewer than five farms are given correspondingly lower collective values for farmland size so as not to skew this valuation in towns with only a few farms.

¹⁰ The foodshed model "farmland index" for towns is calculated as 50 percent productive capacity value + 25 percent farmland density value + 25 percent farm size value.

¹¹ Note that the productive capacity value is for cropland only. Scenic Hudson also conducted a query to identify dense areas of non-cropland farms. Southern Ulster County includes a statistically significant density of orchards. One of the nine foodshed conservation clusters is in this area.

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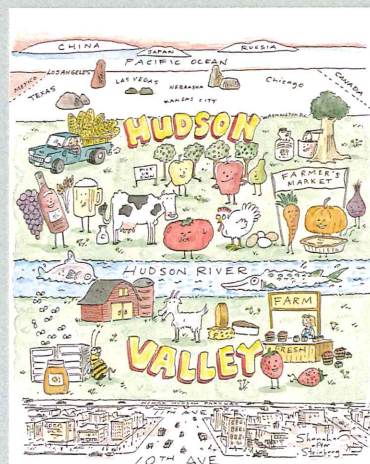
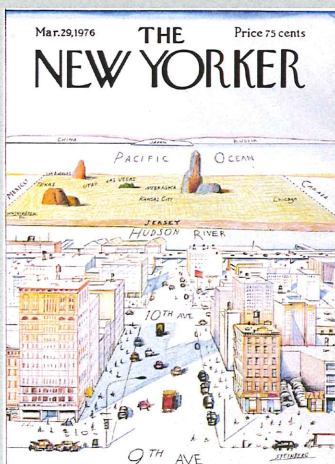


"This [plan] is a model of how it should be done. The concept of a foodshed offers opportunities for both urban and rural communities to recognize what connects them and how they can work together to build vibrant local economies. But we need to move swiftly to assess the state of our foodsheds and then move to conserve them—few steps could do more to improve the health of people in cities and the health of the rural landscape."

—BEST-SELLING AUTHOR AND PROFESSOR MICHAEL POLLAN



www.scenichudson.org



Cover illustration by Danny Shanahan.

"View of the World from 9th Avenue" was created in 1976 by *New Yorker* illustrator Saul Steinberg (1914-1999). With respect for Mr. Steinberg, *New Yorker* cartoonist Danny Shanahan created this parody to focus public attention on the Hudson Valley's rich agricultural bounty right outside New York City's back door.

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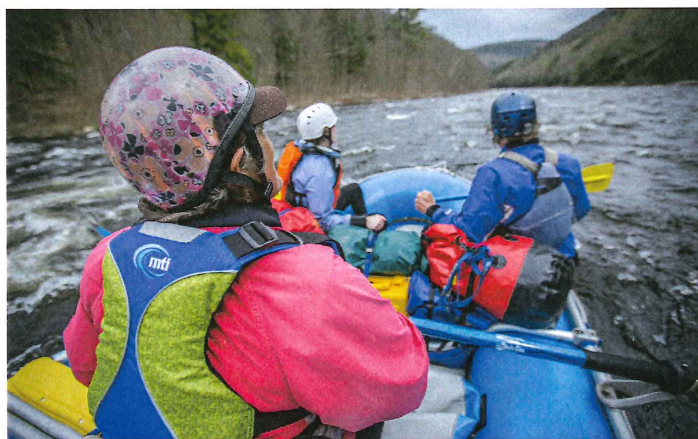




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LAND STORIES:

Creating Jobs, Building Healthier
and More Resilient Communities

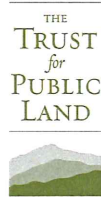


Digital files of this and the previous edition of *Land Stories* are available online at: www.scenichudson.org/ourwork/publicpolicy/resourcecenter



Prepared by Scenic Hudson with photographs and projects contributed by:

Adirondack Land Trust • Agricultural Stewardship Association • Brooklyn Queens Land Trust • Columbia Land Conservancy • Dutchess Land Conservancy • Finger Lakes Land Trust • Grassroots Gardens of Buffalo • Land Trust Alliance • Mohonk Preserve • North Shore Land Alliance • The Nature Conservancy • Open Space Institute • Scenic Hudson • Ronnybrook Farm • The Trust for Public Land • Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust



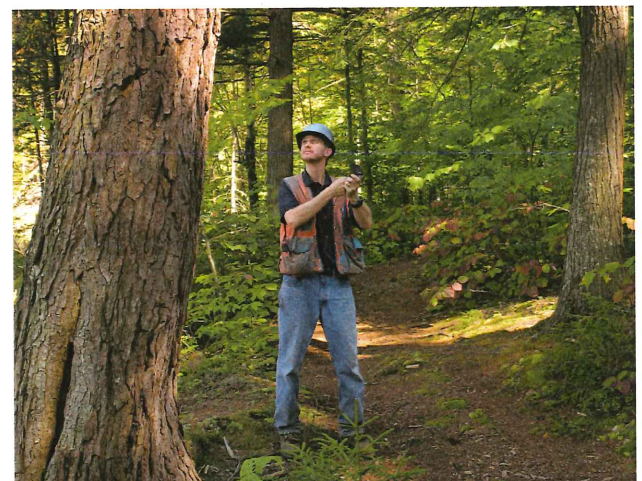
Community gardens, parks, working farmland, world-renowned natural areas... In an increasingly urbanized state, parks and open space are vitally important to our quality of life and, by extension, our economic competitiveness. Tourism, outdoor recreation, agriculture and forestry are economic mainstays in many cities and towns. The state's most effective tool for preserving lands vital to sustaining these benefits—as well as providing fresh food and clean water to millions every day—is a combination of four Environmental Protection Fund (EPF) programs invested in our parks, farms, open space and conservation partnerships.

Devastation wrought by Superstorm Sandy and Tropical Storm Irene to our coastal and riparian areas—among the state's most densely populated and desirable landscapes—highlighted another critical benefit of conserved open space: safeguarding a natural buffer that can vastly reduce the risks to people and infrastructure from storm impacts. Many local governments and land trusts already have identified opportunities and positioned resources to protect natural areas that mitigate threats to essential services such as transportation, food supply and water treatment.

By restoring the EPF's open space/land acquisition, municipal parks and farmland protection lines to historic budget levels, New York State will continue its tradition of making smart investments in local and regional initiatives that create jobs; protect our air, water and natural resources; and expand recreational opportunities that attract tens of millions of visitors each year, in turn promoting economic development.



New York City gardeners show their recent harvest



Forester assesses the variety and health of trees in a New York park
(photo: Mark Godfrey, The Nature Conservancy)



Students spell "WATER" on a field trip to Esopus Meadows Preserve

CONSERVATION VICTORIES

"New York is utilizing the Environmental Protection Fund to provide critical support for many environmental and open space programs, generating revenue, creating jobs, and ensuring a cleaner and healthier New York."

—Gov. Andrew Cuomo
April, 2014

10. Fort Drum ACUB

POLICY GOALS    

11. Carpenter Falls

POLICY GOALS   

12. Hemlock & Canadice Lakes

POLICY GOALS   

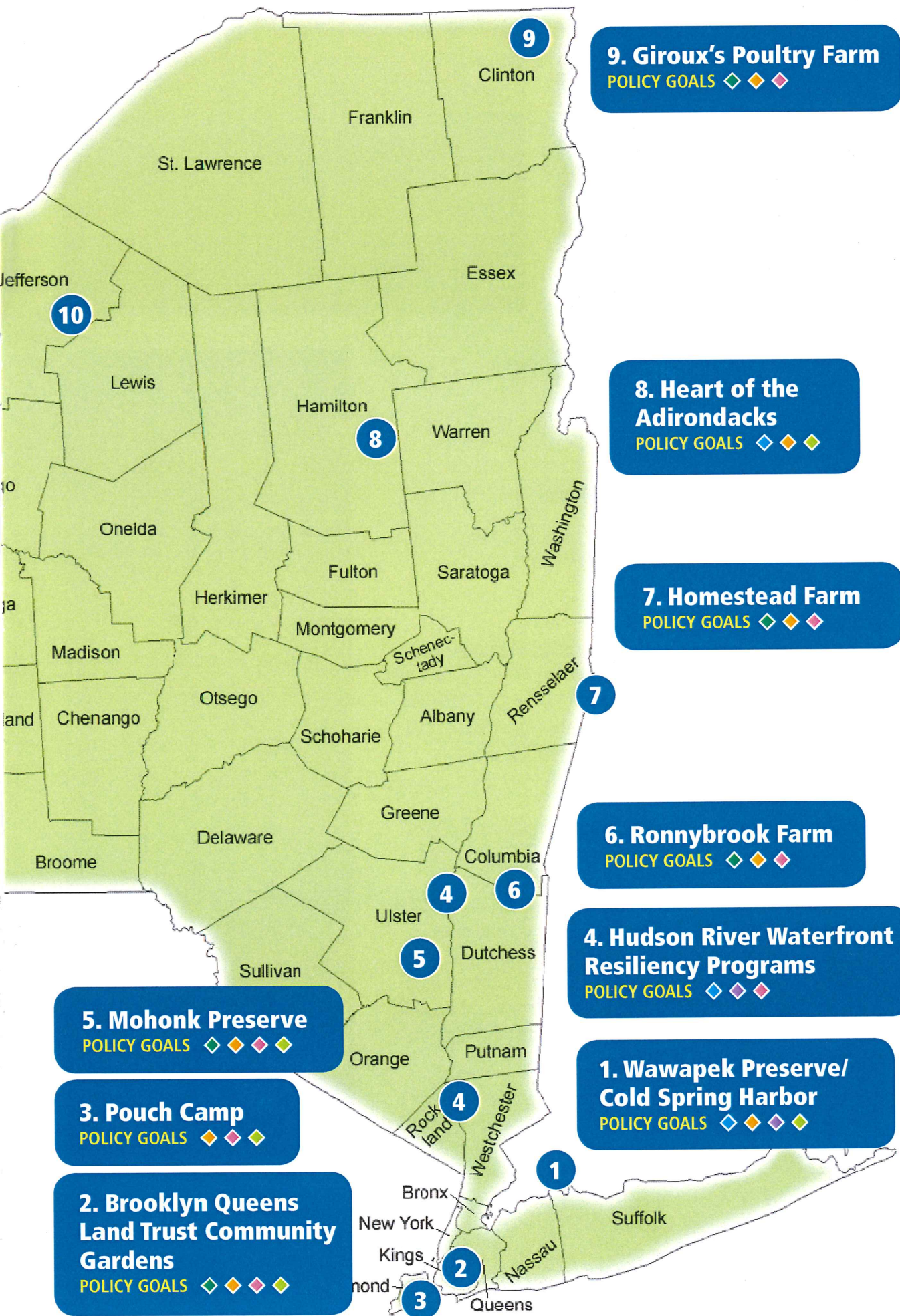
13. Grassroots Gardens of Buffalo

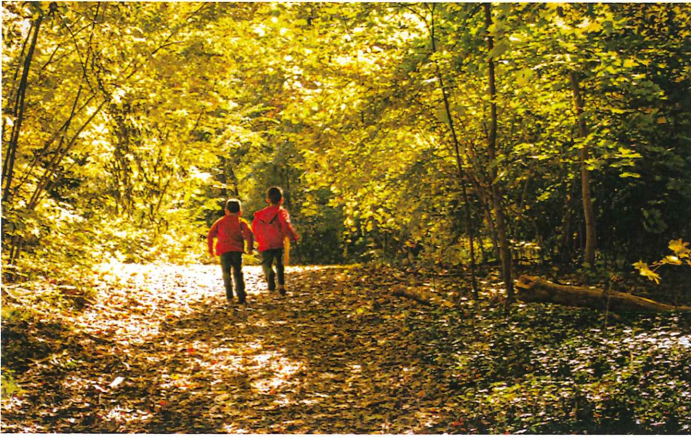
POLICY GOALS    



POLICY GOALS KEY

-  Conserving farmland/sustaining supplies of fresh, local food
-  Protecting water quality
-  Enhancing economies through agriculture, tourism & outdoor recreation
-  Creating resilient waterfronts & infrastructure
-  Building community assets & promoting environmental justice
-  Increasing public access to natural resources





Wawapek Preserve, Cold Spring Harbor (Suffolk County)

Conservation partners

Suffolk County, Town of Huntington, North Shore Land Alliance

Amount of EPF support

\$500,000

Use

An EPF matching grant supported acquisition of the historic DeForest Williams estate, preventing proposed subdivision of 32 acres on the environmentally sensitive coastline above Cold Spring Harbor and enabling creation of Wawapek Preserve. Co-owned by Suffolk County, the Town of Huntington and the North Shore Land Alliance, the preserve offers passive recreation and stunning harbor views.

How does it benefit the community/region/state?

In addition to contributing to scenic vistas and extraordinary recreational opportunities that attract tourists to Long Island at a rate of more than 5 million per year—generating millions of dollars for local economies—Wawapek Preserve protects drinking water supplies and critical coastal habitats that sustain a vibrant fishing industry, while providing a natural buffer from storm surges and other extreme weather events. Preventing the land's proposed development precludes septic leakage, pesticide pollution or run-off into the harbor, and man-made erosion. Stewardship of the land involves collaboration between villages, towns, the county and private stakeholders, including schoolchildren—making this a place that truly brings the community together.

"Thanks to the collaborative efforts of Suffolk County, North Shore Land Alliance, the Town of Huntington, private investors, foundations and organizations, the 32-acre Williams property was preserved. This treasured land is the jewel in the crown of our coastline and its location is critical to the Cold Spring Harbor and Lloyd Harbor communities. As a sensitive nature preserve and recharge area for our aquifer, preserving this open space will have positive implications for our environment and water supply for generations to come."

— Suffolk County Legislator
William Spencer, M.D.



Community Gardens in Brooklyn & Queens

Conservation partner

Brooklyn Queens Land Trust, Land Trust Alliance

Amount of EPF Support

\$124,000

Use

The EPF has enabled the Brooklyn Queens Land Trust (BQLT) to build on three key elements of its work, including development of a new three-year strategic plan and activities supporting implementation of Land Trust Alliance standards and practices as BQLT prepares to add new properties and work toward LTA accreditation.

How does it benefit community/region/state?

Via the 33 member gardens it owns, operates and manages, BQLT secures much-needed green space in 16 diverse neighborhoods throughout Brooklyn and Queens. Each community has a different vision and use for its own garden, and this broad range reflects the varied needs in an urban environment. With development pressures increasing in Brooklyn and Queens, protecting these gardens becomes ever more critical, not only to provide space to grow fresh fruits and vegetables—essential for residents' health and well-being—but to offer a shared place for community programs and services. The gardens also support native plants, birds, bees and other wildlife that enhance biodiversity and environmental health.

“The community gardens are beyond valuable to the culture and quality of life in New York City. In such a crowded and busy place, it is even more essential to have green spaces to stimulate a sense of local community and a connection to nature and each other. The gardens provide a place to slow down, to feel safe and nurtured, to meet and connect with neighbors, and remember the joys of doing our part to make the community thrive and grow. In these gardens, urban youth can learn about the joys of gardening, and understand that food not only comes from a factory or a supermarket, but also grows from the earth.”

—Charlotte Lily Gaspard, New York City native and community gardens supporter



Pouch Camp (Staten Island)

Conservation partners

Trust for Public Land; NYS Department of Environmental Conservation; Port Authority of NY & NJ; Boy Scouts of America; NYS Assembly; Staten Island Borough President's Office; NYC Council; Protectors of Pine Oak Woods; Committee to Save Pouch Camp; Land Trust Alliance.

Amount of EPF support

\$6 million

Use

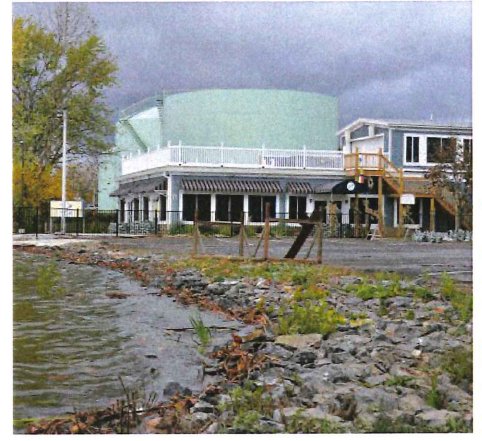
In 2011, Trust for Public Land executed an option with the Boy Scouts of America to preserve the 100-acre camp—the group's only outdoor facility located within New York City and one of the largest unprotected open spaces remaining in the city. The property's protection was completed in two phases through the purchase of a conservation easement now managed by NYS Department of Environmental Conservation. Located within the 3,000-acre, ecologically diverse Staten Island Greenbelt, the land ensures a permanent place for boys and girls to camp, hike, and swim in the heart of the city.

How does it benefit the community/region/state?

Pouch Camp offers outdoor recreation annually to more than 25,000 young people from the New York Metropolitan Area, many from the region's most underserved households. In addition to being an important resource for the Boy Scouts, it plays host to Girl Scouts, YMCA groups and youth from the nearby Kaufmann Camp. The Boy Scouts also host co-ed learning programs at the camp, introducing youth to life skills, wilderness survival, fishing, boating and camping—many for the first time. Nearby delis and outdoor recreation shops also benefit from the influx of regional visitors attracted to Pouch Camp for hiking and fishing.

"The William H. Pouch Scout Camp is an irreplaceable property in the heart of the Greenbelt, Staten Island's premier park. For generations, scouts and their families have enjoyed Pouch's trails and campgrounds—something you can't experience anywhere else in New York City. With the protection of Pouch Camp, countless more young people and the public at large will be able to enjoy these beautiful grounds. The Committee to Save Pouch Camp and its supporters are grateful to the State of New York and our elected officials for committing to preserve this wonderful place, making it available to the public for years to come."

—Alex Zablocki,
Eagle Scout and co-founder
of the Committee to
Save Pouch Camp



John Carl D'Annibale, Times Union

Creating Resilient Hudson Riverfronts (Rockland, Ulster & Greene counties)

Conservation partners

Village of Piermont, City of Kingston, Village of Catskill, Scenic Hudson, NYS Department of Environmental Conservation, The Nature Conservancy, Consensus Building Institute

Amount of EPF support

Open Space and Park and Recreational program funds would leverage new investments and complement monies already secured from state and federal grants.

Use

When Tropical Storms Irene and Lee and Superstorm Sandy hit Hudson Riverfront communities in 2011 and 2012, they experienced unprecedented flooding that damaged homes, businesses and municipal infrastructure. State/federal funding supported the convening of task forces in Catskill, Kingston and Piermont to prepare for sea-level rise and future catastrophic weather events. Additional EPF funding would allow these communities to achieve more flood-resilient coastlines through the protection of coastal tidal wetlands and other open space along their shores. These critical buffer zones will reduce flooding impacts and sustain river-based economic development.

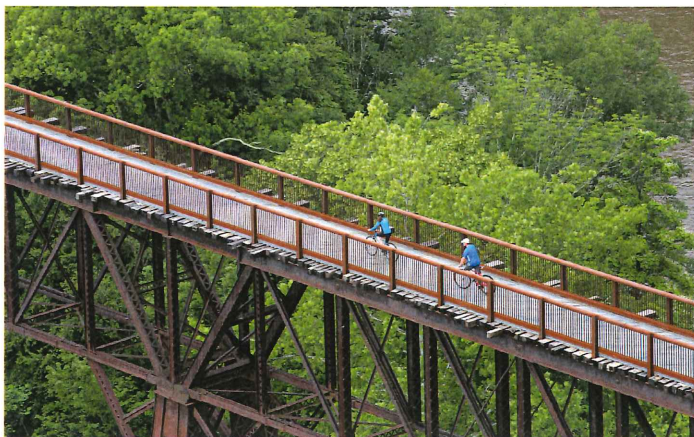
With EPF funding, *Partners Restoring the Hudson* is developing a federally recognized Hudson River Comprehensive Restoration Plan to improve the function and health of the estuary's natural systems, enhance regional economic potential and increase community resiliency. Additional EPF funds are enabling Scenic Hudson to replace an environmental center destroyed by Superstorm Sandy with a specially designed pavilion that can withstand storm surges.

How does it benefit the community/region/state?

Sea levels in the Hudson River estuary could rise up to six feet by 2100, putting shoreline communities and critical infrastructure (including train tracks, power plants and water treatment facilities) at grave risk. EPF and other state/federal funding support local efforts to confront this challenge. Additional funding for land acquisition would enable communities to make their waterfronts more resilient. Protection priorities include the estuary's freshwater wetlands; to date only about half of the total 15,000 acres of these natural flood buffers have been conserved.

"In actuality, Piermont is a seaside village, directly connected to the Atlantic Ocean and at the mercy of its slowly rising waters. Sea level rise is not an abstract notion for our village, but an intimate encroachment that is growing more evident on a yearly basis."

—Piermont Mayor
Chris Sanders



Mohonk Preserve Foothills Connectivity Project, New Paltz (Ulster)

Conservation partners

Mohonk Preserve; Open Space Institute; Glynwood; Land Trust Alliance; NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation; Palisades Interstate Park Commission; Wallkill Valley Land Trust

Amount of EPF support

\$1.2 million

Use

This multi-year initiative includes acquiring and making park improvements on 857 acres of open space between the Village of New Paltz and Mohonk Preserve, permanently protecting iconic views of Sky Top and Bonticou Crag while facilitating public access by car or bicycle via new, off-road trailheads. In addition, the initiative will connect the preserve's multi-use recreational carriage roads to the Wallkill Valley Rail Trail—whose length was recently doubled through a separate acquisition by the Open Space Institute and the Wallkill Valley Land Trust (an independent transaction also supported by EPF funds). Further, the project will provide an important link in the strategic plan to establish a “river-to-ridge” trail network with Walkway Over the Hudson, the Hudson Valley Rail Trail, and the envisioned Kingston Greenline and Ashokan Rail Trail.

How does it benefit the community/region/state?

The state's largest nonprofit nature preserve, Mohonk Preserve employs over 50 people and hosts more than 165,000 visitors annually who enjoy nature study, hiking, running, biking, horseback riding, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing and world-renowned rock climbing. The Foothills Project will accommodate 10,000 to 15,000 area visitors, resulting in additional job creation and supporting continued growth in the outdoor recreation and artisanal crafts and farm-to-table industries currently thriving in the region. In addition, Mohonk Preserve's partnership with Glynwood, whose Hudson Valley Farm Business Incubator project is located on a Foothills parcel, will enhance agribusiness enterprise within the Hudson Valley/New York City foodshed and expose visitors to cutting-edge green farming practices.

“This project brings Mohonk Preserve closer to populated areas and increases opportunities for people to discover and explore our region. Obviously there are economic and health benefits... It's good for visitors and businesses, but also great for the people who can go for a hike on their lunch breaks.”

—Rich Gottlieb,
owner of Rock & Snow,
a New Paltz store specializing in
hiking, cross-country skiing,
and rock and ice climbing

“This project will help expand tourism and ensure better protection of an important environmental asset.”

—Senator John Bonacic,
2012



Ronnybrook Farm, Ancram (Columbia County)

Conservation partners

Scenic Hudson, Columbia Land Conservancy, Dutchess Land Conservancy, Osofsky family

Amount of EPF support

\$2.3 million

Use

This grant will enable the acquisition of conservation easements on 394 agricultural acres owned by the Osofsky family, whose Ronnybrook Farm Dairy provides milk, yogurt, ice cream and other products to markets in the Hudson Valley, New York City and the tri-state region. More than 160 acres of these protected lands feature USDA Prime farmland or Farmland of Statewide Importance, making them a “high priority” for protection under Scenic Hudson’s Foodshed Conservation Plan—a blueprint for preserving those lands critical for supplying fresh, local food to consumers in the Hudson Valley and New York City.

How does it benefit the community/region/state?

A model of on-farm processing and value added production for dairy operations in the region, Ronnybrook Farm plays an integral role in sustaining the Hudson Valley’s \$800-million agricultural economy. Funding from these conservation easements will ensure a smooth transition of the operation to the third generation of the Osofsky family, owners of Ronnybrook Farm since 1941.

“Support from the EPF for the conservation easements means the third generation of my family has the opportunity to take over the farms we’ve been running since 1941.”

—Rick Osofsky, farmer,
Ronnybrook Farms



Homestead Farms, Brunswick (Rensselaer County)

Conservation partners

Agricultural Stewardship Association, Scenic Hudson, Rich and Linda Bulson

Amount of EPF support

\$340,651

Use

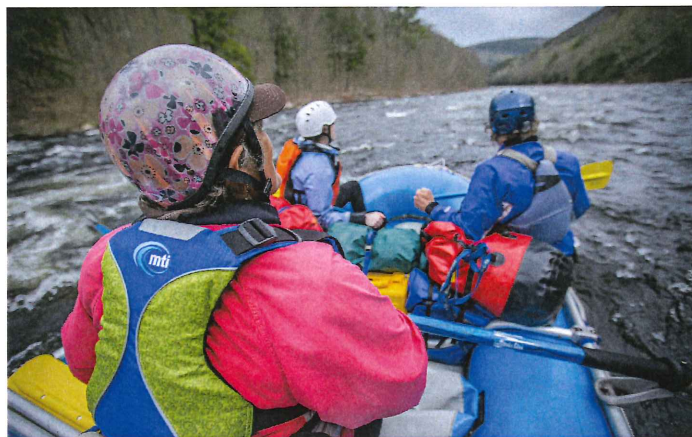
EPF funding is supporting the acquisition of a conservation easement on this 165-acre farm located five miles from the City of Troy. Current farmers Rich and Linda Bulson—just the third family to own this land, continuously farmed since the late 1700s—are ready to retire and transfer the operations. The easement will enable Zack and Ann Metzger, young farmers who have transitioned from being the Bulsons' employees to leasing portions of the land, to acquire the property at an affordable price, fulfilling the Bulsons' long-held commitment to secure its permanent use as a farm. Homestead Farms offers more than 150 varieties of vegetables and flowers, as well as chickens, beef, pork and turkey, through a Community Supported Agriculture operation and at the Troy Waterfront Farmers' Market.

How does it benefit the community/region/state?

Farms are the heart and soul of a healthy, prosperous community. In addition to supplying residents with nutritious, locally grown food, New York's farms have a tremendous economic impact. One of the largest sectors of the state economy, they produce \$4.7 billion in products annually, not to mention the billions of dollars and thousands of jobs created by related industries and services such as food processing, trucking and tourism. Farms also provide open space, scenic views, wildlife habitat and other critical environmental resources.

"The state Farmland Protection grant will make it possible to meet our goals of conserving the farm and providing for our retirement while enabling the transfer of Homestead Farms to the next generation of young farmers."

—Rich and Linda Bulson



©Erika Edgley/TNC

Heart of the Adirondacks/Finch Lands (Essex, Fulton, Hamilton & Warren counties)

Conservation partner

The Nature Conservancy, NYS Department of Environmental Conservation

Amount of EPF support

\$6.7 million

Use

In April 2013, New York State acquired 9,885 acres from The Nature Conservancy in the Adirondacks. These properties, once owned by paper manufacturer Finch, Pruyn & Co., include the Indian River and OK Slip Falls-Blue Ledge tracts. One phase of a larger, multi-year EPF-funded conservation project, the transaction ensures the permanent protection of a combined four-plus miles of undeveloped shoreline along the Hudson River and the state's most popular whitewater paddling route.

How does it benefit the community/region/state?

Along with preserving extraordinary lands and waters, this multi-year conservation effort will create economic opportunities for nearby communities as the tracts become available to the public for outdoor recreation for the first time in more than a century. Outdoor guides and inns already are advertising these gems as local attractions. In addition to providing clean air and natural filters for run-off, the forests provide habitat for black bear, moose, songbirds and other wildlife, while the waters sustain brown trout and other fish.

"The acquisition has provided access for a broader group of people to explore a beautiful and undeveloped stretch of the Hudson River with almost no obvious human impacts on it. With the new land available, we are able to offer more rafting and kayak trips for beginners, children and older generations—more business and more opportunities for people to connect with the river."

—Nate Pelton, owner, North Creek Rafting Company



Giroux's Poultry Farm, Chazy (Clinton County)

Conservation partners

Adirondack Land Trust; Clinton County; Craig, Willie and Roger Giroux

Amount of EPF support

\$495,989

Use

Funding supported acquisition of an easement protecting 471 acres of cropland essential to the Giroux family's third-generation chicken operation—New York State's largest egg-producing company. The easement provides capital for the Giroux family to reinvest in their operations, including recently purchased apple orchards.

How does it benefit the community/region/state?

The Giroux family runs an integrated farm—growing and processing feed, raising birds, distributing and marketing eggs, composting and selling manure. The diversity of their operations helps to ensure that conservation dollars invested in their farm bolster the local community through job creation and value-added products. The Giroux family has been recognized by the Lake Champlain Basin Program for their "green" farming practices. The farm's products, including eggs with a "Certified Humane" stamp of approval, can be found in stores across New York and New England, including Hannaford and Price Chopper.

"We are doing apples now, too. As a family business, a little diversity will be good. You don't want to keep all your eggs in one basket, as they say."

—Craig Giroux,
third-generation poultry
farmer



Fort Drum Buffer and Working Farms (Jefferson & Lewis counties)

Conservation partners

Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust, Fort Drum, Ducks Unlimited

Amount of EPF support

\$1 million

Use

The EPF grants supported acquisition of conservation easements on the 566-acre Schuler Farm and 46-acre Kerry deer farm. Additional funding will aid the purchase of development rights on the 1,265-acre Murray Farm and 129-acre Brotherton Property; both transactions will close in January 2015. All of these initiatives are part of the Army Compatible Use Buffer (ACUB) Program.

How does it benefit the community/region/state?

Since 2009 the ACUB Program has been establishing buffer areas of farmland and natural lands around Fort Drum to limit encroachment and maximize areas inside the installation that can be used to support its mission to train soldiers. A \$1.4-billion annual economic driver in the North Country, Fort Drum is a significant presence in the community, and its closure or loss of training capacity would be devastating. Further supporting the regional economy, EPF grants have provided leverage to secure millions of dollars in federal funding for the ACUB Program, bolstering its success.

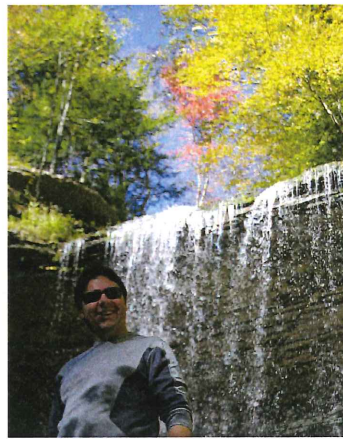
In addition to supporting Fort Drum's work, the easements are providing proceeds to enable farmers of these four working farms to invest in their operations or make the land affordable for the next generation of farmers. (Agriculture remains the primary industry in Jefferson and Lewis counties.) The transactions also ensure the permanent protection of critical wildlife habitat, offering places for local schoolchildren to connect with nature.

"Fort Drum and its ACUB partners are working together to keep Fort Drum un-encroached so we can continue our important mission of training troops and landowners can preserve their current way of life. I call that a win-win"

—Col. Gary A. Rosenberg,
Garrison Commander,
Fort Drum

"Kids need something in this area where they don't have to travel so far to learn about nature and the environment. We think our sugar shanty in the woods is the perfect place for them to be."

—Kristy Sullivan,
who has used a portion of funds received from the ACUB Program to fulfill her dream of creating a place to experience nature firsthand on her family's 204-acre farm



Carpenter Falls, Niles (Cayuga County)

Conservation partner

Finger Lakes Land Trust, NYS Department of Environmental Conservation

Amount of EPF Support

\$152,800

Use

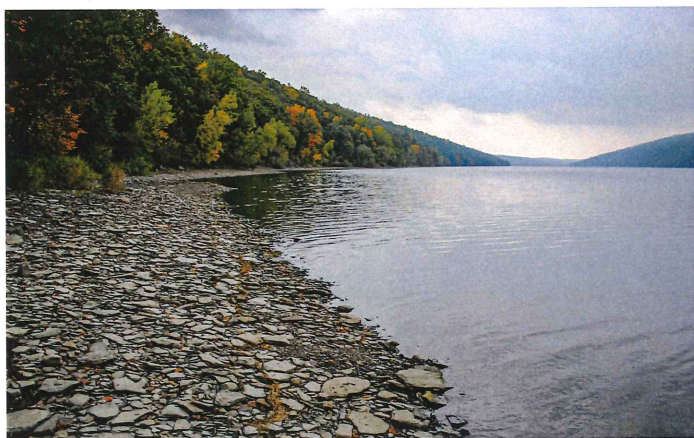
Though it was privately owned, people traditionally used a 35-acre forested parcel to reach Carpenter Falls, an iconic cascade on Bear Swamp Creek, which feeds into nearby Skaneateles Lake. When the land came on the market in 2005, the Finger Lakes Land Trust (FLLT) moved quickly to purchase it. (The property was conveyed to the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation in 2008.) Today local residents and visitors enjoy access to the falls and mature forest, as well as a mile-long hiking trail leading to the lake through adjacent lands owned and managed by the FLLT.

How does it benefit the community/region/state?

Tourism is a major segment of the Finger Lakes Region's economy, and Carpenter Falls Unique Area is one of an increasing number of destinations attracting visitors from around the world. Protection of the property's steep slopes and sensitive streamside areas also help maintain the water quality of Skaneateles Lake, the drinking water supply for the City of Syracuse.

"Personally, I have enjoyed taking trips to Carpenter Falls for years, and I think it is a worthy step to take measures in making sure this area is preserved for future generations. I know there are many users of this area who visit due to its natural features and ease of access. In my opinion, taking steps to ensure that the balance between recreational use of unique areas such as this and the preservation of safe drinking water for the region is an important part of ensuring a sustainable future not only for the aesthetic beauty of the area, but also for the utility of critical water resources."

—Scott Catucci,
associate director of
Outdoor Education and
Student Development,
Syracuse University



Hemlock and Canadice Lakes (Livingston & Ontario counties)

Conservation partners

The Nature Conservancy, NYS Department of Environmental Conservation, City of Rochester

Amount of EPF support

\$13.7 million

Use

In 2010, the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation used EPF acquisition funds to purchase land around Hemlock and Canadice lakes from the City of Rochester in a transaction facilitated by The Nature Conservancy. The goal was to protect the only remaining undeveloped Finger Lakes and the source of Rochester's water supply.

How does it benefit the community/region/state?

Success in protecting the forests around Hemlock and Canadice lakes means Rochester has a secure supply of some of the highest-quality water in the country. In addition, the undeveloped state of the lakes makes them premier recreational destinations, providing the only place in the Finger Lakes to venture back in time and ponder what the region looked like long ago. Adding to these opportunities, The Nature Conservancy is completing several trail projects around the lakes, including a lake-to-lake interpretive trail that will showcase the area's natural communities, geologic features, history and importance to people.

"It's rare that we are able to simultaneously protect the environment, reduce property taxes and maintain an important resource for public use. This sale accomplishes all of these goals."

—Assemblyman
Joseph D. Morelle
Majority Leader



Community Gardens, Buffalo (Erie County)

Conservation partner

Grassroots Gardens of Buffalo, Land Trust Alliance

Amount of EPF support

\$98,000

Use

Grassroots Gardens of Buffalo (GGB) has facilitated the creation of—and provided stewardship for—73 community and school gardens throughout the City of Buffalo. GGB also offers supplemental programming that further engages community members and stakeholders.

How does it benefit the community/region/state?

GGB leverages its assets—located on more than 110 previously vacant and blighted city lots—by offering hands-on programming that engages the community, improves access to healthy food and increases environmental awareness. With the recent addition of a full-time Program Manager, GGB also makes meaningful connections between Buffalo residents and their land, influencing lifelong behaviors. To date, GGB's Workshop Series has provided critical technical assistance and materials to more than 1,000 gardeners, most of them beginners. Thanks in part to EPF funding, GGB can continue growing: in 2014 it created four new gardens and is on target to add more—including nine school gardens—in 2015. All of the gardens capture and retain stormwater that otherwise would overburden the city's wastewater system, posing health threats to local waterways.

*In a food desert, we found
ourselves no more.*

*But then, the garden had
something else in store.*

*Somebody's brother was
murdered. Their heart was
filled with grief.*

*...found working in the
garden was their only
relief.*

—excerpt from "The Garden"

by Gerldine Wilson,
lead gardener in garden tended
by students of PS 18 Dr. Antonia
Pantoja Community School of
Academic Excellence

*"Our garden has brought
students, neighbors,
teachers and volunteers
together. It has taught us
we can grow healthy food.
It has inspired us to work
together for the betterment
of the community. Most of
all, smiles are seen by
eager and enthusiastic
young people."*

—PS 18 teacher and school
garden leader Maggie Henry

Money in the Environmental Protection Fund is divided into three accounts: open space; solid waste; and parks, recreation and historic preservation. Most of the funds are administered by the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation; Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation; Empire State Development Corporation; Department of Agriculture & Markets; and Department of State.

Projects profiled in this year's *Land Stories* received funding through the following EPF-related programs and grants:

1. **Municipal Parks** offers grants for the acquisition, planning, development and improvement of parks, historic properties and heritage areas.
2. **Open Space/Land Acquisition** provides for the conservation, preservation and enhancement of open space; natural, historic and cultural resources; and recreational opportunities.
3. **Agricultural and Farmland Protection Program** helps counties and municipalities plan for the future of agriculture in their communities by funding programs that keep farmland in production.
4. **The New York State Conservation Partnerships Program** offers competitive matching grants, land trust assistance and other support for conservation land trusts throughout the state.

Additional funding came from NYS Department of Environmental Conservation Office of Environmental Justice and Hudson River Estuary Program; NYS Department of State Brownfield Opportunity Areas Program; and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

LAND CONSERVATION:

Protecting Resources and Promoting our Economy

- A 2012 analysis found that for every \$1 the Environmental Protection Fund invests in land and water protection, \$7 in economic benefits is returned to the state through natural goods and services like removal of air pollution, water quality protection and stormwater management.
- Investing in farmland conservation means investing in New York's economy: its farm-food system contributes over 10 percent of the state's \$1.3 trillion total gross output.
- Tourism is New York's fifth largest employment sector, supporting 714,000 jobs and generating \$29 billion annually in wages; majestic scenery, parks and historic sites are among the principal attractions.

About New York's Land Trusts

New York is home to more than 90 nonprofit land trust organizations. From Long Island to Erie County, these community-supported land trusts work with local, state and federal partners to facilitate conservation projects. New York's local land trusts own 167,000-plus acres on more than 1,060 properties—most open at no cost to the public. Land trusts in New York work in rural agricultural regions and urban areas, from Harlem and Brooklyn to Kingston, Troy and Buffalo. These hardworking organizations help to steward more than 2,200 conservation easements on over 282,000 acres of privately owned and managed lands statewide. They employ approximately 300 full and part-time staff, and have nearly 80,000 supporters and community volunteers.
