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Saratoga PLAN receives state awards to permanently protect two Saratoga County farms

SARATOGA COUNTY – Saratoga PLAN is the recipient of grant awards from the state Farmland Protection Implementation Program for the conservation of two Saratoga County farms located in the towns of Stillwater and Ballston. The awards, announced earlier this week by Governor Andrew Cuomo, are part of a \$17.6 million program to protect 6,440 acres of farmland across 12 counties in New York State. This was the first round of state agricultural protection grants awarded in six years. The grants will be used to purchase and permanently retire development rights on the two farms, ensuring that their fertile fields will be available for farming for future generations.

Town of Stillwater Supervisor Ed Kinowski is grateful to Saratoga PLAN’s work to secure the farmland PDR grant in their town. “The grant for the Cocozzo Farm will help to complete a large portion of our internal trail system and contribute significantly to the Champlain Canalway Trail System,” said Supervisor Kinowski, “I can’t thank Saratoga PLAN enough for all the time and work the organization has dedicated to accomplishing these important grants. I can easily say Stillwater’s Open Space and trail system progress is mostly due to PLAN’s commitment to a brighter future for Saratoga County and our neighbors.”

“The state funding is instrumental to our ability to undertake these farmland conservation projects, which provide many long-term benefits to the community,” said Maria Trabka, Saratoga PLAN Executive Director. “The conservation of the Wm. H. Buckley Farm and Cocozzo Farm not only protects vital natural resources, but enhances the region’s economic strength. NYS farms can only feed 30% of its population now, and we’re losing farms at a rate of two per week. Protecting these two farms will ensure a secure source of locally produced food for the future, in the fastest growing county in NYS.”

In the Town of Stillwater, \$844,613 was awarded to protect 265 acres of land that borders the Saratoga National Historic Park and a portion of the Old Champlain Canal. The conservation of the Cocozzo family’s property will ensure the continued agricultural production of the land that is currently leased for crops by Welcome Stock Farm and Koval Dairy. This award will also provide a critical trail connection to the Champlain Canalway Trail system that will eventually extend from Waterford to Whitehall.

“Conserving the farmland has always been important to us, especially for family and the kids,” said Joe Cocozzo, who believes in the importance of Stillwater conserving the agricultural scenery that surrounds the Saratoga Battlefield, maintaining its historic landscape context.

Additional funding partners for the conservation of this farm are the Open Space Institute, contributing \$260,000 and the Town of Stillwater, contributing an additional \$22,000 towards this project.

In the Town of Ballston, \$968,471 was awarded to permanently protect the 260 acre Wm. H. Buckley Farm. Purchased in 2013 by Mark and Elizabeth Sacco, the former Capiello Dairy and Lake Ridge farm have a long standing agricultural history for the community of Ballston. This award will guarantee that the farm’s livestock operation, onsite farm store, café, butcher shop and agri-tourism efforts remain an active part of the community.

The Sacco family is thrilled to be recipients of this award, ensuring that the Wm. H. Buckley Farm’s future as a farm forever. “The farm is incredibly important to us, and the community. By reinvesting in the farm, we’re able to preserve it and continue farming, and give back to the community by keeping this farm a farm for future generations,” said Mark Sacco.

Saratoga PLAN is pleased that the State of New York, the Towns of Ballston and Stillwater, the landowners, and Open Space Institute have made a substantial commitment to these projects. They are hopeful that other individuals and businesses will help generate funds needed by Saratoga PLAN to expand the organization’s comprehensive land conservation and community planning services for the protection of the agricultural and natural resources of the Saratoga County region.

Saratoga PLAN, which stands for preserving land and nature, is a nonprofit land trust that works to preserve the rural character, natural habitats and scenic beauty of Saratoga County so that these irreplaceable assets are accessible to all and survive for future generations. For more information, visit www.saratogaplan.org or call 518-587-5554.

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