



Media Contact:
Maria Trabka, Executive Director
maria@SaratogaPLAN.org
518-587-5554

Saratoga PLAN receives seven state awards of \$3.1M to permanently protect six Saratoga County farms

SARATOGA COUNTY – Saratoga PLAN is the recipient of \$3.1M in grant awards from the state Farmland Protection Implementation Program for the conservation of seven farm operations on six properties encompassing 961 acres of prime farmland in Saratoga County. The awards, announced today by Governor Andrew Cuomo, will be used to purchase and permanently retire development rights on the six farms, ensuring that their fertile fields will be available for farming for future generations.

“The state funding provides the means necessary to conserve valuable farmland, which provides the community with many long-term benefits,” said Maria Trabka, Saratoga PLAN Executive Director. “We’re very pleased to be able to undertake these farmland conservation projects. Protecting these six farms, 961 acres, will ensure a secure source of locally produced food for the future, in the fastest growing county in NYS.”

In the Town of Malta, \$488,293 was awarded to protect 132 acres of land owned and operated by Dave Bowman of Malta Ridge Orchard and Gardens. This farm has a long standing agricultural history for the community. This award will guarantee its thriving future and that the farm’s u-pick, and farm store filled with naturally grown vegetables and fruits remain an active part of the community.

In the Town of Charlton, \$1,310,675 was awarded to protect 405 acres of land owned by the Dorothy Szurek and John Szurek Trust, and the Vanderhorst Trust. The conservation of these properties will ensure the continued agricultural production of the land that is currently leased for crops by Anderson Acres, Eildon Tweed Farm, and Arnold’s Farm Fresh Produce. An additional \$185,936 was awarded to protect 59 acres of land owned by Local Farm Fund – NY Foodshed, LLC, farmed by Saratoga Draft Power Farm.

“Conserving our farm has always been important to our family for many reasons. It leaves a lasting legacy, honoring and preserving the accomplished lives of two generations of Szurek farmers,” said Dawn Szurek. “We believe strongly that preserving and conserving quality soils is essential for opportunities for future generations of farmers. Saratoga County is fortunate to have some remaining areas of prime agricultural lands that are best preserved for the opportunity to continue to provide future farm families and their neighboring communities with quality, local dairy, meats and produce.

Simply, we love our farm and can't thank the knowledgeable team at Saratoga PLAN, and Jamie O'Neill and Troy Hilts of Saratoga County, enough for all the time and work they dedicated to helping to accomplish this for us."

"The state funding for farmland conservation is instrumental to protect prime soil lands for the future of farming in Saratoga County," said Dave Wood of Eildon Tweed Farm. "As a farmer that operates primarily on leased farmland, the conservation of the Szurek family's property safe guards the availability of quality soils close to home, and ensures that these lands will be available to farm into the future."

"An agricultural conservation easement is a door opener for me, like it is for so many other beginning farmers," said Tim Biello of Saratoga Draft Power Farm. "It's a critical tool for making farmland more affordable. It also addresses my interests in my farm's future and keeps it available for farmers yet to come. The farmland protection funding is such an important resource for farmers like myself. I'm so grateful and excited that my application was awarded!"

In the Town of Northumberland, an award of \$481,657 will protect 145 acres owned by Cathy and Neil Roberts. The conservation of the Robert's Fiddle-i-Fee Farm will ensure that its quality soils remain available for farming in perpetuity, providing for the continued agricultural production on the land that is currently operated by Welcome Stock Farm, a sixth generation dairy operation.

In the Towns of Northumberland and Saratoga, \$670,945 was awarded to conserve 220 acres owned and operated by Wayne Wood of Wildwood Farms, whose family is grateful to see the land become forever farmland. The award to conserve this land is critical to its continuation as an active farm.

"We're thrilled to receive this grant, which will help our farm progress and thrive in the future, in ways it otherwise wouldn't," said Wayne Wood. "This award makes it possible for our family to keep this farm active for many generations."

Essential funding partners for the conservation of Malta Ridge Orchard and Gardens, Saratoga Draft Power Farm, and the Robert's Fiddle-i-Fee Farm are the Town of Malta, and Saratoga County, contributing an additional \$200,000 towards these projects.

Saratoga PLAN is pleased that the State of New York, the Town of Malta, Saratoga County, and the landowners 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.

In March NYS announced that \$26 million is available through the Farmland Protection Implementation Grant program to help farmers across New York State protect valuable

and at-risk farmland for 2016-2017. Saratoga PLAN is expected to submit five (5) applications in this next cycle, for the future conservation of Saratoga County farmland.

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.

##