



New York Agricultural Land Trust
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 www.NYALT.org

**Conserving Your Farm for Future Generations
 in partnership with the
 New York Agricultural Farmland Trust**

Who is the New York Agricultural Land Trust?

The New York Agricultural Land Trust (NYALT) was created by farmers, for farmers, municipalities and community members to conserve farmland, in 2006 with the assistance of American Farmland Trust. In 2007 we received our nonprofit status allowing us to work directly with farmers and interested landowners to conserve their farmland.

As the first state-wide agricultural land trust in New York State, we receive inquiries from farmers about conserving their land on an average of once a week. Our primary focus is to support farm families and communities in their efforts to conserve those lands important to each community's agricultural industry, rural character and farming legacy.

Why do people want to conserve their land?

Each farm family has a variety of reasons they wish to conserve their land—but all of them believe that it is important to conserve high-quality farmland for the future.

Many of the farm families we work with believe that our food security is based on quality land, and the need for good land to be available for future generations. Others want to pass their land on to the next generation of farmers in their family or purchase additional farmland. Some farmers are planning on utilizing the farmland protection funding (see below) to diversify their farming operation while others are interested in using farmland protection as part of their estate planning or the transfer of the land to other family members.

- The farmland protection program does not require the land to be farmed—rather, it ensures that good land will be available for future generations. The farmer continues to own his/her land and it stays on the tax rolls.
- The farmland protection program does not tell farmers how or what to farm. This allows agriculture to change over time and enables farmers to make timely decisions to adapt to changing markets and demands.

How does New York Agricultural Land Trust help conserve farmland?

We currently partner with local municipalities and landowners who apply for farmland protection grant funding for the New York State Department of Agriculture. This program is called the Purchase of Development Rights (PDR). If a farm is selected for protection with the NYS farmland protection program it will pay for up to 75% of the non-agricultural development rights value. The municipality, as is the case with Montgomery and Rensselaer Counties, may contribute funding towards the transaction costs. Other counties provide in-kind services, such as computerized mapping.

NYALT works with the sponsoring municipality and landowners and who have been selected for a NYS farmland protection grant (PDR) to help them with the conservation land planning, related documents, and materials necessary to meet state and federal guidelines for farmland conservation projects. As part of this process, NYALT agrees to uphold the conservation agreement (called a conservation easement) into the future.

In the future, once we have added a dedicated land protection staff person, we expect to be able to conserve farmland and related woodlands by landowners donating the development rights to their property and therefore taking advantage of federal and state income tax deductions.

How does the NYS Farmland Protection Program Work with NYALT?

In New York State, a municipality (county or town) is able to endorse and submit up to three farmland protection grant applications to the State. The State receives dedicated funding each year to conserve farmland which is then divided equally between five regions of the state (Long Island, Hudson Valley, Eastern New York, Central New York, and Western New York).

Please see the NYALT website for greater detail.

- Each county and/or municipality in New York State may have slightly different project criteria from which they “rank” applications from farmers as well as somewhat different farmland protection grant application process. Please contact your County Farmland Protection Committee, or your local municipality for information on their process and ranking criteria.
- In the past, the NYS farmland grant application is released in the summer and is due back three-four months later. Counties tend to select their top applicants prior to June.
- Before you decide to apply for New York State farmland protection funds in partnership with NYALT, we recommend that you contact us to go over the process, costs, timeline and the example documents used to conserve their farm.
- NYALT has established a simple application process for farmers interested in working with us to conserve their land. It is important to go over this application process as part each landowner’s decision to apply for farmland protection funding. NYALT will need you to fill out our application form at least one month prior to the NYS grant application deadline to allow us time to review the application and answer any questions.

Determining the value of your non-agricultural development rights.

Each farm is unique, and will have different non-farm development right values. It is advisable if you, as a farmland protection applicant to NYS, obtain a realistic figure for your development rights prior to applying. We suggest you talk to an appraiser familiar with farmland protection programs to get an estimate of your development rights.

- It will also be important to talk to NYALT about how the land planning and the conservation agreement (conservation easement) will affect your development rights value. New York State will pay for up to 75% of the development rights value as determined by a NYS certified appraiser. This appraisal is undertaken once the final land planning and farmland protection agreement (conservation easement) is completed. *See the NYALT handout on the website.*

Questions? Call Maureen Knapp [607-591-9607] or Nancy Hourigan, NYALT Board Member, Hourigan Farm of Elbridge [315-689-6844] or email nhouriga@dreamscape.com.