



2021
ANNUAL REPORT

HEALTHY LAND, FARMS, AND FOOD

**The mission of American Farmland Trust
is to save the land that sustains us
by protecting farmland, promoting
sound farming practices, and keeping
farmers on the land.**



Harvesting lettuce in Maine

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ON THE COVER:
*Kiyokawa Family Orchards in
Mount Hood, Oregon*

SHAWN LINEHAN



American Farmland Trust’s focus on farmland, farming practices, and farmers is essential. At stake is no less than our food and water security in the face of dramatic, potentially catastrophic weather patterns. We can and must rise to the occasion—as agriculture and its transformation must be central to America’s future. As it has for 40-plus years now, American Farmland Trust has an outsized role to play in driving this transformation.

—WILLIAM K. REILLY

FORMER U.S. EPA ADMINISTRATOR AND
AMERICAN FARMLAND TRUST BOARD CHAIR

SHAWN LINEHAN

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from the leadership

America's farmers and ranchers are vastly resilient.

In the past year, they faced an escalating array of challenges, from the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic to skyrocketing costs of equipment and farmland. At the same time, vast swaths of the West experienced a historic and unrelenting drought—the region's worst in at least 20 years.

Yet throughout the year, we witnessed the incredible strength and flexibility of our farmers and ranchers.

Many transitioned their businesses to meet rapidly changing markets, and consumers found they could rely on their local farms when supply chain disruptions impacted grocery store shelves. The ability of U.S. farmers and ranchers to adapt to ongoing change is impressive, and American Farmland Trust wants to make sure they get the support they need.

In the past year, we also saw a renewed awareness that agriculture is the world's most essential and powerful tool in the fight against climate change. As philanthropist Bill Gates has noted, if there is more carbon in the soil than in the atmosphere and all plant life combined, why not give agriculture the resources and study it deserves?

The year was one of ongoing change for American agriculture, and it was no different at American Farmland Trust. We grew significantly, adding new staff and programs. We also worked hard nationwide to strategically expand our



partnerships to boost regenerative agriculture, support farmers and ranchers, and advance farmland protection policies and programs.

We are now at a pivotal moment for agriculture and the planet. A bright future with livable communities, fresh food and air, and clean water depends on what happens next.

As American Farmland Trust's leadership, we are hopeful about the times ahead. Our efforts over 40 years to fight for America's agricultural land, advance better farming practices, and support farmers and ranchers on the ground are paying off. Public awareness about these issues has expanded exponentially. And government officials are responding.

We owe all of our success to your ongoing support—without which none of the achievements described in this report would be possible. Together, we can achieve a lasting, long-term legacy for the nation's farmland and ranchland. Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John Piotti". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the left.

John Piotti
PRESIDENT AND CEO

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Grant Winthrop". The signature is more formal and blocky than Piotti's, with clear lettering.

Grant Winthrop
BOARD CHAIR



the land

In 1980, a group of farmers and conservationists saw an urgent need for a national organization that could stem the rapid loss of U.S. farmland and rangeland—and American Farmland Trust was born.

Many of the ideas we pioneered back then were novel at the time, such as the use of agricultural conservation easements to protect farmland permanently. State by state, we fought for policies to protect agricultural land, and we launched a national No Farms No Food™ movement.

American Farmland Trust's actions supported a national effort that has since protected over 6.9 million acres of farmland while advancing better farming practices on millions of acres more—in service to more than 500,000 farmers and ranchers.

Whether with states, communities, or burgeoning local land trusts and agricultural groups, partnerships have always been critical to our success.

Many of the states where American Farmland Trust partnered on early initiatives now have flourishing programs to protect farmland and support farmers—places like Pennsylvania, Delaware, New York, Kentucky, Ohio, Vermont, Connecticut, California, Texas, Colorado, and Virginia.

And local and regional agricultural land trusts that we helped launch or guide at critical times—groups like the Colorado Cattlemen's Agricultural Land Trust, Connecticut Farmland Trust, and Texas Agricultural Land Trust—now play a significant role in protecting farmland and rangeland from coast to coast.

Yet despite these impressive accomplishments, American Farmland Trust and our partners cannot rest. Every day, 2,000 acres of agricultural land are paved over, fragmented, or otherwise taken out of production. Our work to save the land that feeds America—and the world—continues.

“

There's more that unites us than divides us when it comes to producing healthy food and trying to feed the world. Whether you're a one-acre farm, 600 acres like us, or 10,000 acres, we all have the same goals. The land provides for us—and for those we're trying to feed—so we want to care for that land. We're all stewards of the land, and I think every farmer takes that seriously.



”

— SARAH MCCLURE

WALLA WALLA ORGANIC
WALLA WALLA, WASHINGTON

2021 highlights

In January, the Biden Administration released an executive order to tackle the **CLIMATE CRISIS** that established a national goal to conserve at least 30 percent of U.S. lands by 2030. American Farmland Trust was a leading voice calling for the importance of protecting private working lands through the initiative, commonly known as 30x30. We released *Agriculture's Role in 30x30: Partnering with Farmers and Ranchers to Protect Land, Biodiversity, and the Climate*. The policy proposal included four sets of recommendations emphasizing the urgent need to permanently protect vulnerable working lands from development and support conservation practices in biodiversity hotspots, key connectivity corridors, and areas with high carbon sequestration potential.



BRANDON O'CONNOR/USDA NRCS

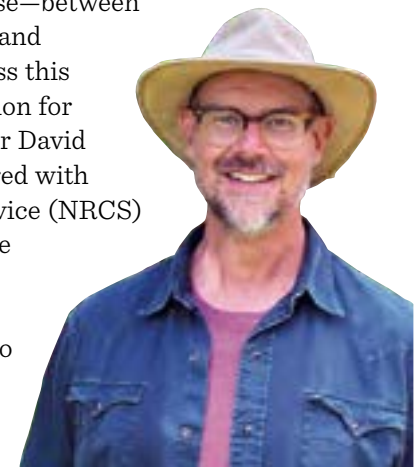
American Farmland Trust's **NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL LAND NETWORK**, or the NALN, elevates agricultural land protection across America. The network grew this year to 667 members from 47 states. In addition to land



BEKLAUS/ISTOCKPHOTO

trusts and conservation-minded individuals, the NALN includes representatives from state and local Purchase of Agricultural Conservation Easement (PACE) programs, which compensate willing property owners who commit to keeping productive land in agriculture. The NALN is a place where staff from such programs can connect and share knowledge. The NALN's *Soil Health Stewards Program*, funded by NRCS, launched in 2021 with its first round of grants and virtual training. The ambitious national effort promotes soil health practices on protected agricultural land.

IDAHO is one of the fastest growing states, losing nearly 70,000 acres of farmland—an area larger than the city of Boise—between 2001 and 2016, according to American Farmland Trust's *Farms Under Threat* report. To address this threat on the ground, we created a new position for an Idaho Program Manager and hired rancher David Anderson. American Farmland Trust partnered with USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) on the new role. Anderson will also encourage regenerative farming practices on Idaho farms and support next-generation farmers. American Farmland Trust launched the Idaho Agricultural Land Protection Roundtable this year to help protect the state's high priority farmland and ranchland.





American Farmland Trust's **FARMLAND INFORMATION CENTER** (FIC) is the nation's largest online collection of resources dedicated to farmland protection and stewardship (farmlandinfo.org). This past year, the FIC expanded its comprehensive collection of resources and tools to help landowners, agricultural land trusts, and farmland protection programs access the Agricultural Land Easement component of the federal Agricultural Conservation Easement Program. The FIC, along with a research team from Purdue University, also began a multi-year project to survey landowners who participated in the federal Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRPP). Results from the survey will assess FRPP results and identify how to deliver additional public conservation benefits in the future.

“It’s very difficult to find land. You either are born into it or you marry into it, unless you make a relationship with a landowner like I was able to do. I was able to farm in the Willamette Valley because the previous landowners protected the land. There’s a family legacy here that I now can continue. And I hope some of my children end up wanting to farm too.”



— **JAY THOMPSON**, HAZELNUT FARMER, PRATUM, OREGON,
WHO ACQUIRED PROTECTED FARMLAND WITH HELP FROM AFT

Despite strong land-use planning, **WASHINGTON STATE** continues to lose farmland to development—nearly 100,000 acres

between 2001 and 2016. Over 50% of the land lost was the state’s best quality farmland, according to American Farmland Trust’s

Farms Under Threat report. For several years, American Farmland Trust and partners worked to build a fund to help land trusts protect Washington farmland. In a huge win for agricultural communities, the new program—Farmland Protection Affordability and Investment (FarmPAI)—offers low-interest loans for land trusts to purchase farm properties at high risk of development, protect them with easements, and sell them to beginning farmers and ranchers. The program will prioritize projects that facilitate land access for historically underserved farmers and ranchers.



Osprey Hill Farm in Acme, Washington



the practices

U.S. farmers and ranchers feed their communities and the world.

A thriving food system is not only about the quantity of food produced, but also about the practices used to grow the food. Regenerative agricultural practices promoted by American Farmland Trust strive to leave the land and natural resources in better condition.

The future of food security depends on helping farmers adopt sound farming practices that conserve water, nourish the soil, and provide low-cost, science-backed ways to provide environmental benefits. Such practices build soil health, sequester carbon, and help farmers grow more food with fewer inputs.

Beneficial soil health practices—from cover crops to rotational grazing—on farmland and rangeland are good for the planet, good for farm communities, and good for a farmer's bottom line.

These practices go by different names, including regenerative agriculture, climate-smart practices, and carbon farming, due to their ability to help capture carbon, reduce our carbon footprints, and increase the soil's capacity to hold water, reducing the need for irrigation and protecting against drought.

Soils have been a natural carbon sink since the dawn of time, but over decades, soil carbon stores have declined. We can replenish that sink and accelerate the drawdown of carbon dioxide into our soils—a scalable and immediate system for combatting climate change.

Farmers sometimes need more proof that investments in environmentally sound practices pay off, especially on leased lands. Through farmer training programs, demonstration projects, and cutting-edge research—in the Pacific Northwest, California, the Midwest, the Southeast, New York, and New England—American Farmland Trust is working to scale-up regenerative practices. In addition, our specialized training for women farmers, non-operating landowners, and underserved communities gives them the knowledge, tools, and resources they need to rapidly adopt regenerative practices that facilitate carbon capture.

“

Working with American Farmland Trust is a godsend for me. It gives legitimacy to what



we're doing. It gives us people to talk to and call up. American Farmland Trust helps us address questions about all kinds of practices and challenges, which is helping to change the way we farm.

”

—LAURA FREEMAN, MT. FOLLY FARM
WINCHESTER, KENTUCKY

2021 highlights



In 2021, more women rose to leadership roles in agriculture than ever before. At the same time, women on farms and ranches faced immense challenges: mounting climate impacts, a pandemic, and economic disruptions added to already intense family and business demands. Our **WOMEN FOR THE LAND** initiative helped women embrace conservation by hosting peer-to-peer learning circles—in-person and online—to share resources on practices and programs that support their success. We reached over 900 women farmers and landowners through learning circles and field days in 17 states. We also trained 42 conservation resource professionals on how to conduct outreach with women in their communities.



When farmers plant **COVER CROPS**, they protect bare ground and build soil health. Cover crops offer a myriad of benefits—from preventing erosion and protecting waterways to improving the ability of soil to absorb water. In Illinois, American Farmland Trust led a coalition of partners to offer a Fall Covers for Spring Savings Cover Crop Premium Discount program through the Illinois Department of Agriculture. In 2021, the program doubled in size, expanding from 50,000 to 100,000 acres. By offering a simple \$5 discount on crop insurance premiums for every acre planted in cover crops, Illinois provides a meaningful reward for farmers' work to protect healthy soils and improve water quality.



ALEXIS PASCARIS/AGROSOLAR CLEARINGHOUSE

As many as 90 percent of future solar panel installations nationwide will be in rural areas. Among solar developers, flat farmland is in high demand. In the future, such pressures will only increase. The Biden administration's plan for decarbonizing the electric grid would require 10.3 million acres of photovoltaics. American Farmland Trust's **SMART SOLAR** initiative helps farmers coexist with, and even benefit from, the next phase of solar development—without compromising their land. In 2021, we developed a “smart solar siting” strategy, hired new staff with solar expertise, submitted federal comments on solar siting, penned op-eds, and held webinars to educate people on dual-use solar, which allows agriculture and energy production to occur on the same piece of land.

“
We utilize our water as best we can by monitoring our applications. We continue to nurture the soil. By utilizing regenerative practices, our farm will be able to withstand the fluctuations of weather, especially the heat spells that last for weeks.
”

— BENINA BURROUGHS MONTES, BURROUGHS FAMILY FARMS, DENAIR, CALIFORNIA



SHAWN LINEHAN

Farms are a critical part of **CLIMATE SOLUTIONS**. In New York, American Farmland Trust and partners celebrated the passage of the Soil Health and Climate Resiliency Act, which creates a soil health and climate initiative at the New York Department of Agriculture and Markets and launches a process to establish voluntary, science-based soil

health standards that farmers can work to meet. The law provides important support for farmers in adopting soil health practices that improve water quality, promote resilience to extreme weather events, and increase carbon sequestered in soils to help the state meet its climate goals while creating a more viable future for agriculture.



REBECCA DROBIS



Commercial quality rye was once widely cultivated in Kentucky, but production nearly ceased in recent decades. This year, American Farmland Trust launched the **KENTUCKY COMMERCIAL RYE COVER CROP PROJECT** to benefit the land and expand the development, production, and sale of Kentucky rye. Bringing rye back to Kentucky helps the state’s farmers, raises awareness of the benefits of cover crops, and improves regional soil and water quality. Farmers in the project adopt a host of regenerative agricultural practices. In the fall, managers plant cereal rye to reduce erosion, improve soil structure, and increase soil organic matter. They harvest the rye grain in summer to use in local products, like bread flour or rye for one of Kentucky’s most famous spirits: bourbon.



MIRANDA TOBY



the people

The resiliency of our food system hinges upon thriving farmers and healthy farmland. How we work together now to support a new generation of farmers and ranchers will have lasting impacts for the future of food—and for all of us.

We are at a pivotal point. The ownership of 40 percent of America’s agricultural land will be up for grabs within the next 15 years, putting farmers, ranchers, and the land they steward at risk. This generational shift requires a diverse group of young, beginning, and underserved farmers, who often can’t afford the land they need to start businesses of their own.

With nearly 40 percent of farmers over the age 65, it has never been more urgent that we support senior farmers through the process of transitioning their land—while helping the next generation launch agricultural businesses and find land to farm.

American Farmland Trust programs help to protect farms and ranches, making them more affordable for incoming farmers. We train and support professionals from across the nation who help farmers and ranchers to secure land. We advocate for programs that support farmland access and farm viability. And we provide grants that allow a diverse array of farmers to make much needed transitions and upgrades.

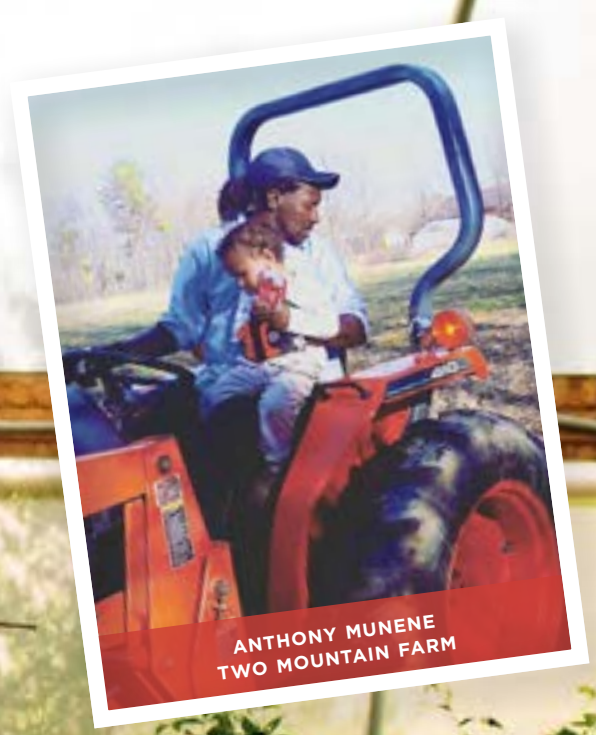
Farmers bear witness to the resiliency of life every day. They have the enormous responsibility of growing and raising the plants and animals that keep us all living. As American Farmland Trust’s iconic bumper sticker says, “No Farms No Food.”

“

As a beginning farmer of color in New England, it is encouraging to have the financial support. Startup costs are high, and 2021 was especially challenging due to COVID. It was a relief to have the ability to invest in infrastructure without the hardship. With the support we received from the New England Farmer Microgrants Program, we were able to install new fencing. Now, I am ready to buy the first batch of goats this spring. Without the funding it would have taken years to save the amount.

”

—ANTHONY MUNENE
TWO MOUNTAIN FARM,
ANDOVER, NEW HAMPSHIRE



ANTHONY MUNENE
TWO MOUNTAIN FARM

Vickie Crabtree (right) and her mother; Crabtree 1880 Farm in Beattyville, Kentucky

2021 highlights

Farming is hard work and risky. In partnership with farmer-owned co-op Tillamook Creamery, we distributed the second round of grants from our **BRIGHTER FUTURE FUND**, which addresses inequalities in our agricultural system by providing grants of up to \$5,000 to BIPOC, LGBTQ+, and/or women farmers nationwide. In 2021, 100% of all funds raised went directly to farmers to strengthen farm resilience, enhance farm viability, and improve access to land. Since 2020, AFT has provided approximately \$2.5 million in grants directly to more than 2,000 farmers across the nation, providing help when it was needed most.



Sweet Jones Farm LLC

PRESTON KERES/USDA



American Farmland Trust addressed key barriers facing farmers by offering special microgrants in **NEW ENGLAND**. Over the last two years, we provided 69 New England farmers with direct financial support, which was instrumental in helping a diverse range of farmers get the equipment and services they need to adapt to changing climatic conditions and supply chain issues. We helped farmers expand their operations, gain access to new land, and plan for their farm's future. In the midst of the ongoing challenges faced by farmers, our goal was to make access to critical funds as simple and streamlined as possible.

American Farmland Trust announced a new partnership with **MANRRS** (Minorities in Agriculture, Natural Resources and Related Sciences). MANRRS is a national society that helps ensure ethnic minorities are involved in the agricultural sciences and related fields. There are roughly 2,000 MANRRS members and 65 chapters within 38 colleges and universities nationally. The new partnership will motivate, support, and prepare young people of all backgrounds in pursuing careers in agriculture, land protection, natural resources conservation, public policy, and related fields.



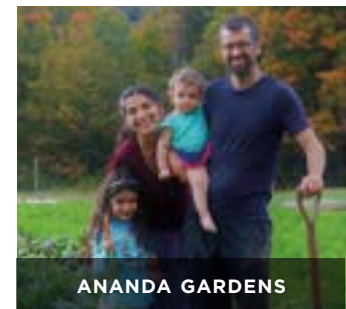
TWO FARMERS FARM



CALABASH GARDENS



ASHAWAUG FARM



ANANDA GARDENS



CRECE Urban Farming Cooperative

During an ongoing drought, climate crisis, and pandemic recovery, American Farmland Trust's team in **CALIFORNIA** supported underserved and marginalized farming communities to fuel their economic viability, land access, and climate

resilience. We expanded our Farms for a New Generation program with Spanish-language educational radio broadcasts, microgrants, and technical training. In one such training, we partnered with the Asian Business Institute and Resource Center (ABIRC) to provide technical assistance and training on irrigation practices with Latino and Hmong farmers growing diverse specialty crops in Fresno. Public grants and corporate partners will contribute to our expanded outreach to Southeast Asian, Latino, and other socially disadvantaged farmers in 2022.



— **HAMEED BELLO**, AGRIC ORGANICS, WILBRAHAM, MASSACHUSETTS

“We want the farm to be the hub where people can come and not only learn about agriculture but engage with one another. There's no other reason we're doing this other than our love for our neighbor.”

Keeping land in farming—and out of the path of development—is a critical issue for the future of U.S. food production. The acquisition of affordable land with appropriate housing

and infrastructure is one of the biggest hurdles facing new farmers and ranchers due to farm consolidation, rising land values, and development, which leads to a tight supply of land to purchase

or rent. Through our **TRANSITIONING LAND TO A NEW GENERATION** initiative, American Farmland Trust launched our training of a new national group of 48 leading experts in land transfer. The project builds an adaptable, skills-based curriculum to help a new generation of farmers and ranchers navigate the legal, financial, and interpersonal issues in accessing and transferring land.



CARLOS L. VALERY, JR.

Orinoco Cattle Products and Farms, East Meredith, New York

AMERICAN FARMLAND TRUST

brighter future fund

POWERED BY *Tillamook*

2021-2022



WE GROW URBAN FARM



BAM FARMS LLC

20
corporate donors
were engaged.

669
applications arrived
from 49 states and
3 U.S. territories.



AMONG THE OAKS
HERB FARM



OVER THE MOON
FARM & FLOWERS



WEST HAVEN FARM

The fund issued
awards to
121
farms
in 44 states and
1 U.S. territory.

Approximately
8,000
acres
were impacted on
farms ranging in size
from 0.1 acres to over
500 acres.

100%
of awards were given
to women, BIPOC,
LGBTQ, veteran, &
underserved farmers.



GARDEN VARIETY
HARVESTS

Awards were granted
to **22** livestock;
70 fruit, veg, and
produce; and **29**
unique product
farms (honey, hay,
herbs, heritage seeds
and more).

program impacts 2021

more than
900
women
producers and/
or landowners
trained and
supported in
17 states.

more than
6.9 million
acres of
farmland and
ranchland
permanently protected
across the nation
since 1980.

575
historically
underserved
producers
trained and
supported
on topics like land
protection, adopting
regenerative
farming practices,
and finding a place
to farm.

more than
15,000
farmers, producers,
and professionals
trained or offered
direct support.

nearly
400
actions taken
including meetings,
events, testimony,
publications,
and academic
conferences to
advance the
policy work and
research of American
Farmland Trust.

667
members
have joined our
National Agricultural
Land Network to
elevate efforts
to protect
agricultural land.

summary of activities

for the fiscal year ending
September 30, 2021

SUPPORT AND REVENUE

2021

Individual Contributions	\$11,567,779
Foundation Grants	4,725,095
Government Grants	7,010,307
Operating Investment Return	821,937
Non-Operating Investment Gain & Other	5,365,486
Donated Farm Property Equipment & Other Contributions on Land Projects	12,381,280
Other Income	122,863
Total Revenue and Support	\$41,994,747

EXPENSES

2021

National and Regional Programming	\$13,358,205
Public Education	2,662,394
Outreach and Communications	958,829
Other Programs	1,408,235
Total Program Services	\$18,387,663
Management and General	893,345
Fundraising	2,996,462
Total Expenses	\$22,277,470

NET ASSETS

Beginning of Year	\$37,618,723
End of Year	57,336,000
Change in Net Assets	\$19,717,277

Complete financial statements are available upon request.



SHAWN LINEHAN

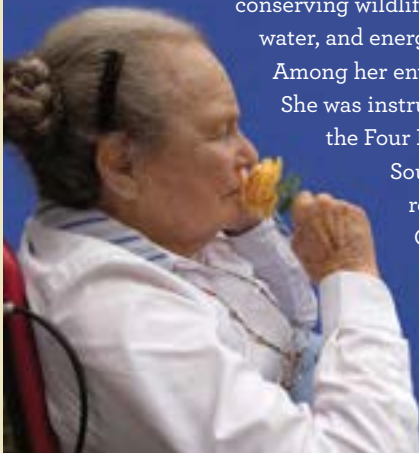
IN MEMORIAM
Dorette Louise “Dielle” Fleischmann
 1931–2021

Dorette Louise (Dielle) Fleischmann was an environmental pioneer, accomplished farmer, and member of American Farmland Trust’s President’s Council. She became interested in environmental issues early in her life and provided invaluable support and guidance to many conservation groups, including American Farmland Trust.

At her Over The Grass farm, a working farm in The Plains, Virginia, which she protected, Dielle established a natural-based farming practice. The farm produced and marketed grass-fed beef and lamb, eggs, honey, vegetables, fruits, jams and jellies, and shares in dairy cattle. The coolers and freezers were powered by solar panels and the gardens watered by captured rainfall.

Dielle travelled extensively throughout the world. Most of her trips were to explore areas with issues related to conserving wildlife, the environment, clean air, water, and energy—issues she championed.

Among her environmental achievements: She was instrumental in helping to protect the Four Holes Swamp, near Charleston South Carolina, the largest remaining stand of virgin Bald Cypress and Tupelo Gum forest in the world, and in orchestrating the donation of over 44,000 acres to form the Santee Coastal Reserve.



IN MEMORIAM
Anne Springs Close, 1925–2021

Anne Springs Close was a longtime American Farmland Trust supporter and member of our President’s Council. A noted conservationist and philanthropist with an enduring spirit, sense of humor, and love for adventure, Anne created the Anne Springs Close Greenway, a 2,100-acre nature conservancy in Fort Mill, South Carolina.

In the 1980s, Anne became concerned about encroaching urban sprawl and wanted to save as much land as possible in Fort Mill, her lifelong hometown. “I originally wanted to save the farmland. There was a lot of farmland being gobbled up in the area. I got in touch with an organization called American Farmland Trust, who had been very successful in saving land,” Anne once told *My Carolina Town*.

Anne reached out to Patrick Noonan, former president of The Nature Conservancy and a founder of American Farmland Trust. They worked with experts to develop a far-sighted land-use plan that protected 2,100 acres of family-owned land in the Steele Creek watershed. Anne’s eight children generously agreed to the plan. Anne Springs Close Greenway opened to the public in 1995. The land is protected in perpetuity as a place for people to celebrate and experience nature for generations to come.



ROCK HILL HERALD

IN MEMORIAM

Thomas Lyon, 1940–2021

Raised on an Iowa dairy farm, Tom was an agribusiness leader who built his Wisconsin dairy cattle breeding cooperative into an international success. He was a visionary who saw the urgent need to protect working lands and understood they were a critical natural resource, fundamental to farming in the Midwest and the nation. He gave his time and talents to many efforts to benefit the dairy industry and rural Wisconsin.

Tom served on the board and President’s Council of American Farmland Trust and was a trusted advisor to the organization for many years. Through his efforts, American Farmland Trust established a presence in Wisconsin and



raised hundreds of thousands of dollars to support that effort.

After retiring as the CEO of Cooperative Resources International, Tom consulted for the secretary of the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, the late Rod Nilsestuen, advocating to protect Wisconsin working lands and advance farmland preservation. They put together a task force and spent a year

developing a plan to create a new farmland protection program along with agricultural enterprise areas where farmers would agree to not develop their land in exchange for tax incentives. Their work established the Working Lands Initiative and Purchase of Agricultural Conservation Easements (PACE) program to reduce the trend of farmland loss throughout the state.



FOR THE PLANET
—NONPROFIT PARTNER—

Member of
EarthShare

Combined Federal Campaign
Number 10631

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Jamie Mierau	Mid-Atlantic Regional Director	jmierau@farmland.org
Kris Reynolds	Midwest Regional Director	kreynolds@farmland.org
Tom Stein	California Regional Director	tstein@farmland.org
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American Farmland Trust
SAVING THE LAND THAT SUSTAINS US

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