

STATE FARMLAND PRESERVATION PROGRAM 15 FARM CLOSINGS!

Since October 1, 2009, the Farmland Preservation Program has completed and disbursed funds on a record 16 farms comprised of 1,815 acres at a cost of \$10.6 million. Two more farms are scheduled to be completed in September bringing the total to 18.

Program highlights over the past two years include continued lump sum Bond Commission funding approval of \$15 million. The Legislature has also committed another \$10,000,000 of funds in the budget approved for Fiscal Year 2011. The Connecticut Department of Agriculture has supplemented state funds through partnerships with the United States Department of Agriculture, Natural Resource Conservation Service, Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (NRCS), municipalities and state-wide agricultural land trust, Connecticut Farmland Trust.

Recent farms completed in 2010 included the 70-acre Bushy Hill Orchard, a fruit and vegetable farm in Granby. The partnership included the State, NRCS, Town of Granby and Granby Land Trust. A similarly noted acquisition included the 144-acre Wike Brothers Farm in Sharon where our partners included the Sharon Land Trust, Connecticut Farmland Trust and the NRCS.

Other acquisitions were 117 acres on the former Silverherz Farm in Ellington, a partnership of the State, Town of Ellington and NRCS. Additionally completed were the 143-acre Dimmock Farm in Salem, 102-acre Major Farm and the 65-acre Chesmer Farm both in Lebanon, the 167-acre Weigold Farm in Torrington, 62-acre Bomba Brothers Farm in Seymour, 55-acre Freund Farm in North Canaan and 125-acre Christensen farm in Canterbury.

Presently the Program has 20 farms, comprised of 2,205 acres that are pending, most expecting closing later this year or early next. These farms are located in the towns of Eastford, Pomfret, Brooklyn, Woodbury, New Milford, Sharon, Ashford, Suffield, and Somers. Another 12 farms on 1,500 acres in 10 towns are under negotiation. Combined, these 33 farms equate to over 3,830 acres of farmlands comprised of prime and statewide important farmland soils, forest and wetlands buffers that will be preserved in perpetuity for future generations of farmers and the well being of the people of Connecticut.

Acre by acre, the Program works towards the goal of protecting 85,000 acres of cropland on 130,000 acres of farmland in Connecticut. To date, since the Program's inception in 1978, about 28% of this goal has been realized through approval of the State's purchase of development rights on 279 farms comprised of 36,450 acres. Preserved farmland helps give farmers the opportunity at sustaining that business or putting it in the hands of future generations of farmers. Good farms and farmers are vital to Connecticut and help feed our communities. We can all help them by buying local and direct at food outlets including the many farmers' markets throughout the state. It supports the farmers, our agricultural businesses, the environment and state economy.

For an application or more information on the CT Department of Agriculture's Farmland Preservation Program, please call 806.713.2511 or visit www.ct.gov/doag/site.

Submitted by Joseph Dippel, Farmland Preservation Program Director.