

2015

ANNUAL REPORT

AMERICAN FARMLAND TRUST'S MISSION

Saving the land that sustains us by protecting farmland, promoting sound farming practices and keeping farmers on the land.



New Jersey

From the Leadership

Dear Friends,

Thirty-five years ago, a small group of farmers and conservationists came together to do something about a serious problem that hadn't yet been addressed in America.



Buzz Thompson

As new highways cut through swaths of the country in the 1960s and '70s, many of the nation's most fertile farms and ranches were swallowed up by shopping centers, parking lots and housing developments.

Philanthropist and farmer Peggy McGrath Rockefeller saw this happening, but couldn't get conservation groups to take notice. So she and a handful of other concerned citizens formed American Farmland Trust (AFT) in 1980 under the guiding belief that farm and ranch land is one of the nation's most important natural resources—and we must protect it.

From the start, AFT focused on establishing state and community-level programs that use the powerful tool of conservation easements to keep the nation's best farmland out of the hands of developers. AFT also became a strong advocate for conservation practices and programs that preserve the natural resources that all of society depends on: healthy soil, clean water, thriving wildlife.

We also should never forget that people—our family farmers and ranchers—feed us. They need our support, and so we work to find innovative and effective ways to keep them on the land and growing food for America.

In the 35 years since AFT's start, we've led a national movement that has protected well over five million acres of farm and ranch land

nationwide. We are an organization built and sustained by our many members and donors. Over the years, your support has allowed us to:

- Sound the alarm about farmland loss with our ground-breaking reports
- Establish our nationwide Farmland Information Center, a free resource for farmers and communities who need help saving the land and supporting farming
- Help 28 states and numerous communities authorize programs that permanently protect farm and ranch land from development
- Guide passage of a federal Farmland Protection Program in the 1996 Farm Bill, which continues today
- Develop plans to help communities strategically protect critically endangered farmland
- Help thousands of farmers reduce their use of fertilizer and highly toxic pesticides
- Spread our No Farms No Food® message nationwide

Thank you for standing with us over the past 35 years. With your continued support, many more successes await—for farms, food and for all of us.

Sincerely,

Barton (Buzz) Thompson, Jr.
BOARD CHAIR





California

Saving Farm and Ranch Land

“Land—they ain’t making any more of it,” is a quote often attributed both to folk humorist Will Rogers and to author Mark Twain.

America has some of the most productive farmland in the world—from the “salad bowl” of California’s Central Valley to the “breadbasket” of the Midwest. But only a percentage of our land contains the high-quality soils that are ideal for growing food.

That’s why we must not take any of our farmland resources for granted. As the early founders of AFT recognized, the loss of farm and ranch land to poorly planned development and sprawl is one of the biggest threats that our nation faces.

Despite all of our hard work, we continue to lose nearly 50 acres of farmland every hour, as farms go out of business or fall prey to the bulldozers of developers. This loss becomes even more of a danger as new threats to our food supply emerge. Drought and other extreme weather events related to climate change make it even more important that we protect the nation’s most resilient and productive farm and ranch land—today.

Over the past 35 years, AFT has made great strides in stopping the loss of the nation’s farm and ranch land—***with your support***. As the nation’s leading advocate for family farmers and ranchers, AFT:

- Builds coalitions to advocate for programs and policies that permanently protect farm and ranch land
- Supports the family farmers and ranchers who steward the land
- Develops innovative policies and programs to protect the land on an immense scale
- Educates the national public about the need to save farmland and support family farmers—No Farms, No Food



2015 Successes

Although threats remain, including the continued development of our nation's best farm and ranch land, we achieved significant progress in 2015 in conserving America's family farms and farmland.

National Victories for Farms and Natural Lands

AFT and other groups urged the reauthorization of the **LAND AND WATER CONSERVATION FUND (LWCF)**—an important program that protects farmland and natural lands. Congress acted, reauthorizing the program. AFT and our supporters also successfully urged Congress to make permanent the **enhanced tax incentive for conservation easement donations**—a major benefit for land conservation that the president signed into law on December 18.

Protected Farms Help in the Fight Against Global Warming

AFT advocated for and helped to secure \$40 million in funding for **CALIFORNIA's Sustainable Ag Lands Conservation Program**—the first program in the country that links the protection of agricultural lands to climate change mitigation. This landmark commitment secures the most funding dedicated for farmland protection in California in more than a decade.

Unprecedented Investments in New York Farmland

Thanks to actions by AFT, the New York state budget included \$15 million in funding for **NEW YORK'S FARMLAND PROTECTION PROGRAM** and \$20 million in a special allocation to protect Hudson Valley farmland. This record level of funding places New York among the top five states in the nation in annual farmland protection funding.

A Banner Year for Farmland in the Pacific Northwest

Working with local partners, AFT secured \$14 million in **STATE FUNDING FOR FARMLAND PROTECTION**—nearly double the previous year's amount. In **OREGON**, we led a listening tour to learn more about the state's barriers to saving farmland and supporting family farms.

Successes for Farms in New England

In Connecticut, our Working Lands Alliance project restored over \$35 million in critical funding for the state's **COMMUNITY INVESTMENT ACT**, which pays for farmland protection and other top conservation priorities. In Maine, AFT's coalition achieved the release of \$5 million in voter-approved funds for the **LAND FOR MAINE'S FUTURE PROGRAM**, allowing stalled farmland protection projects to move forward.



As we search for strategies and funding to preserve our nation's most productive farm and forest lands, the LWCF offers a critical opportunity to increase voluntary conservation easements that help keep private working lands in production and benefit both wildlife and the environment.

— **JOHN LARSON**, AFT's Executive Director of Programs in an op-ed that appeared in *Agri-Pulse* and *The Hill*. Congress reauthorized the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) in December, 2015.



A FARM PRESERVED

Brooks Farms, a 160-year-old dairy and grain farm in Waupaca County, became one of the first farms in Wisconsin to be protected through the state's purchase of agricultural easement (PACE) program.

For farmer Ron Brooks, protecting his family's land was something he had been thinking about for years. It fit into the conservation ethic handed down to him from his father and earlier generations, starting with his great-great grandfather Luther West, who founded the farm in 1855 on a 160-acre parcel he received under the Homestead Act.

"Conservation has been instilled into every generation here since Luther. PACE fits into what we do on an everyday basis," Ron says, mentioning some of the farm's efforts to conserve soil and water. "With PACE, we thought here's this opportunity to protect it all—the



land, the soil and the whole farm."

Ron counts at least two ways that the PACE program has helped his farm since he used it to protect 1,200 acres of his land. It allowed him to transfer the land to his four daughters, including 23-year-old Zoey, the farm's new chief operating officer. And it allowed him to buy a relative's farmland that otherwise might have been developed.

Farmers like Ron Brooks and his family are why AFT fights for programs that save working farm and ranch land. Wisconsin has taken steps to protect more than one million acres of farmland since updating and enhancing its farmland protection laws—changes championed by AFT and supporters like you.



Four generations of Brooks Farms family members. Left to right: Dodge Brooks, Ron Brooks, Sydney Brooks, Dr. Alyssa Brooks McPeak, Zoey Brooks and Kelsey Brooks Link. On the peddle tractor: Ron's first granddaughter Rory.



New York

Keeping Farmers on the Land

Farmers and ranchers are the nation's unsung heroes. They work every single day, good weather and bad, to grow the food and crops that feed America. To be a farmer takes an incredible amount of hard

work, along with the ingenuity to adapt to Mother Nature's unpredictability and to economic conditions that can be just as hard to forecast.

AFT has led the fight to save farm and ranch land for 35 years. During that time, we've never forgotten that it's not enough to save the land—we also need to support the dedicated people who farm it.

In the farm community, AFT is a trusted advocate for programs and policies that help farmers and ranchers stay viable and keep their land in farming. We are the national leader in crafting innovative programs that can help keep family farmers on the land—and allow new farmers to access it.

AFT:

- Gives farmers and ranchers the support they need to protect their land from development
- Is the national advocate for family farmers and ranchers
- Empowers women landowners—harnessing their full measure of energy, innovation and commitment to conservation in order to expand and improve the bounty of the nation's farmland
- Helps retiring farmers pass on their land and supports new farmers entering farming



Maine



2015 Successes

In 2015, we achieved great success in our expanding programs to help the next generation of farmers and ranchers, and the farmers who grow healthy food for their communities.

Resources for Next Generation Farmers

Without a new generation of farmers prepared to take over for those retiring, there will be no future for farming in America. Beginning farmers and ranchers received access to critically needed new resources on our **FARMLAND INFORMATION CENTER** website.

In New York, our **HUDSON VALLEY FARMLINK NETWORK** helped more than 50 farmers secure farmland in the Hudson Valley and educated 350 farmers and farmland owners.

CIRCLES OF LEARNING

Jen Filipiak, AFT's Associate Midwest director, has witnessed the power of AFT's Conservation Learning Circles program, which brings together women agricultural landowners in small groups where they can talk with female agricultural professionals.



AFT's Jen Filipiak

"Women who own farmland but don't farm themselves don't always know that there are conservation programs available to them," Jen says. "They get very excited."

In morning sessions, the women talk about conservation and agriculture—especially soil health—and then in the afternoon they visit farms where they can see conservation practices firsthand. For many of the participants, the sessions

give them "a comfortable atmosphere to ask what they thought were rudimentary questions. It's almost a relief," Jen says.

Jen recalls one female landowner, an owner of her family's century-old farm, who attended one of the learning circles and was excited to learn about cover crops—an important

conservation practice for protecting the land from erosion and drought. The landowner was able to convince the farmer who leased her land that it was worth giving the practice a shot.

Now the woman's farm is the site of a cover crop research project. "Like so many of the women we have engaged in Learning Circles, once she knew the resources were available, she took advantage of them," Jen says.



Maryland



And a new grant awarded to AFT from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program will jumpstart a nationwide **FARMLAND FOR THE NEXT GENERATION** initiative to help beginning farmers and ranchers secure land and succeed in agriculture.

In New England, our **GAINING INSIGHTS** research project uncovered just how dire the problem is of farmers retiring without a successor: 92 percent of Maine's senior farmers, for instance, do not have a young farm operator currently working with them.

Stronger Local Food Systems

Our landmark **GROWING FOOD CONNECTIONS** initiative worked with eight carefully selected "Communities of Opportunity" around the country,



helping them strengthen their local food systems by supporting family farmers and underserved community residents through partnerships, planning, policy and public investment.

An important part of supporting family farmers is finding new ways they can sell their products locally and directly to consumers. In Maine, AFT and our partners successfully persuaded the **UNIVERSITY OF MAINE** to source

at least 20 percent of its foodservice from local farms. And in New York, more than 6,000 students at 20 colleges and universities joined our **NEW YORK CAMPUS CRUNCH** to promote local food in schools.

Critical Support for Women Landowners

More than 300 million acres of U.S. land—about a third of the nation's land in farms—are now owned or co-owned by women. These women landowners will decide the future of some of our nation's most productive farm and ranch land. In Maryland, Virginia, Illinois and Indiana, our **CONSERVATION LEARNING CIRCLES** program helped over 500 women landowners learn about conservation on their land this year.





Montana

Promoting Sound Farming Practices

From the fragile ecosystems of the Pacific Northwest to the waterways of the Chesapeake Bay, AFT helps farmers protect soil health, adapt to a changing climate and remain a source of environmental solutions.



The nation's family farmers and ranchers are stewards of much of our natural landscape. They know that keeping the land healthy and whole is in their own best interests. But sometimes farmers and ranchers need advice and assistance finding the best conservation practices—whether that means planting cover crops to protect against soil erosion or fencing cattle out of streams to keep water clean.

For 35 years, AFT has worked hand-in-hand with family farmers and ranchers safeguarding the environment. Our experienced staff helps family farmers adopt smarter farming practices that improve the health of the nation's working landscapes.

AFT:

- Helps farmers and ranchers adopt proven, science-based agricultural conservation practices
- Is the leading voice for sound federal farm conservation policies, including those in the Farm Bill
- Creates new, innovative tools, models and programs to support conservation
- Pioneers water quality trading markets that help farmers adopt conservation practices with large-scale improvements for the environment

Continued on page 9



A Note from Ralph Grossi

Thirty-five years ago, when AFT was just getting started, my family's ranch in the hills of Marin County, California, was on the front lines of a battle between urban development and historic family farms. Our ranch is only 25 miles from San Francisco's Golden Gate Bridge, and urban pressure threatened farmland all around us.

But the problem wasn't only limited to California's Bay Area. The National Agricultural Lands Study, a first-of-its-kind survey, was underway, finding that millions of acres of farm and

ranch land were lost each year in the United States. It was a wake-up call.

In Washington, D.C., a small group of family farmers and conservationists saw an urgent need for a national organization that could address this loss. They invited me to join them in the effort. In 1980, we officially formed AFT. After serving as a board member for the first five years, I moved to Washington, D.C. and became AFT's president for the next 23 years.

Many of the ideas we pioneered back then—like the use of conservation easements to permanently protect farmland—were relatively new at the time.

But AFT's actions launched a national movement that has since protected over five million acres of farm and ranch land across the country.

I take pride in the number of states and communities that have used AFT's work to protect their farms, whether through policies we fought for or our educational efforts to convince people that farmland is well worth protecting.

Upon returning to California in 2008, I experienced the ripple effect of AFT's work first-hand when the ranch across the road from ours was protected by the local land trust with federal farmland

protection funding that AFT championed in the 1996 Farm Bill.

I didn't need a reminder that the work we do at AFT to save farm and ranch land is critically important. But to see it help save a farm so close to ours brought it all home to me, and now our neighbors of the past 98 years can be there for the next 98!

Each of us can make a difference every day in saving the land that sustains us. Thank you for all of your support over the last 35 years—and in the years to come.

Ralph Grossi
FORMER PRESIDENT, AFT



American Farmland Trust has really come to the forefront and recognized where the impact can be made.

— **KEN MERRICK**
farmer, Ohio



We support AFT because we need to preserve the farms ... because they feed us and also protect wildlife and the environment.

— **KATHY AND DOUG COCHRANE**
AFT Founders Society and
Farmland Forever Society
members



If not for the foresight of the founders of American Farmland Trust 35 years ago and the organization's continued leadership, state farmland protection programs would not have achieved what they have today.

— **DENNIS WOLFF**
former Secretary of Agriculture
(PA) and AFT board member



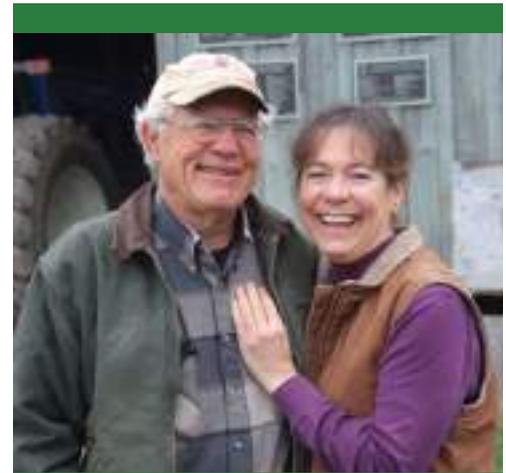
American Farmland Trust has done a marvelous job of helping to save farmland. Saving farmland ought to be viewed as a national security measure.

— **VANCE KENNEDY**
AFT Barnraiser
California citrus grower



Saving America's farmland is one of the most honorable jobs I can imagine and there is no single organization that is as effective in securing farmland for future generations as American Farmland Trust.

— **FRED WINTHROP**
Former AFT Board Chair and
Founders Society member



In our region, we are watching some of the best farmland growing its last crop ... pavement and lawns. We are so grateful to AFT for their efforts to not only preserve farmland, but to raise the awareness that before you can farm and have a local food system, you have to have farmland!

— **NASH AND PATTY HUBER**
Washington farmer

How Far We've Come in 35 Years ...



Number of state and local
farmland protection programs
in 1980

5

In 2015

119



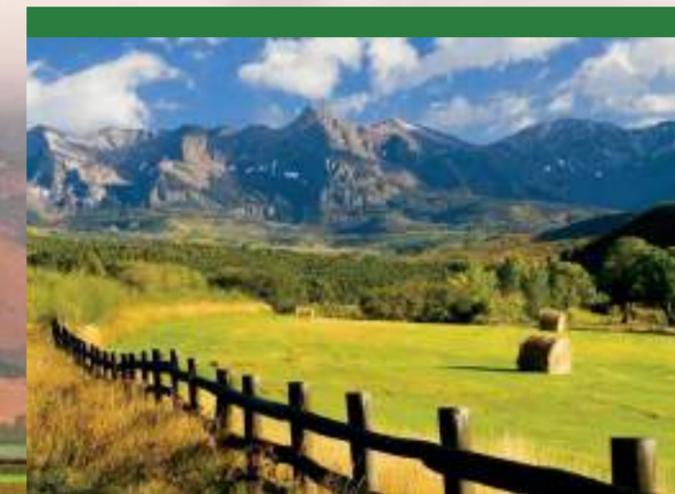
Farmland protected by private
land trusts for agriculture
in 1980

0

As of 2011

MORE THAN 2.2 million

* not counting land protected with
assistance from state and local easement
acquisition programs



Acres of farm and ranch land
protected by state programs
as of January 1989

129,000

As of January 2015

ABOUT 2.6 million



Federal funds invested in permanent farmland protection in 1980

\$0

By 2015

ABOUT \$1.4 billion



Funding for federal conservation programs before 1985

\$0

Conservation funding in the 2014 Farm Bill

\$28.2 billion*

* Over five years. Does not include discretionary funding for NRCS technical assistance to landowners or earlier cost-share programs.



Farmers markets in 1994 (first year captured by USDA AMS)

1,755

Farmers markets in 2015

8,476



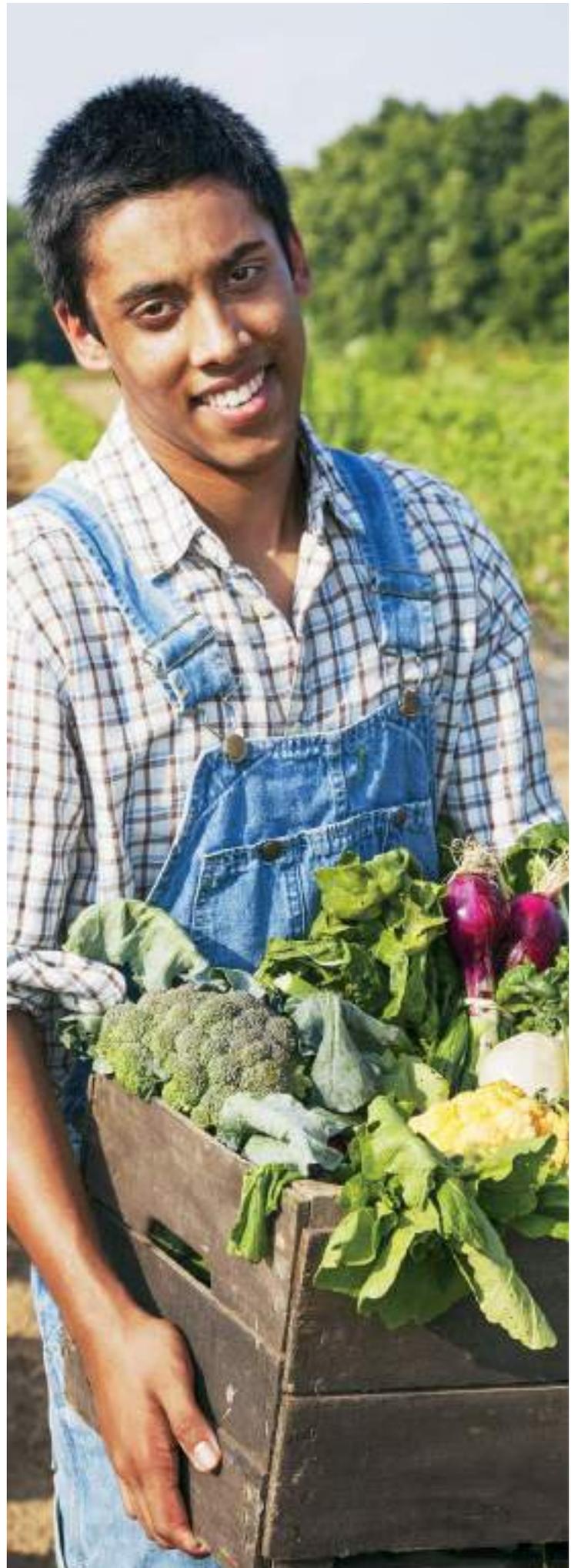
A Catalyst for Change

Over 35 years, AFT led efforts to get farmland protection off the ground in a host of states that now have flourishing public and private initiatives to conserve agricultural land—places like Pennsylvania, Delaware, New York, Kentucky, Ohio, Vermont, Maine, California, Texas, Colorado and Virginia.

By focusing on the bigger picture to achieve major policy gains at the federal level and in

states around the country, AFT ultimately made a bigger impact over the last 35 years than it would have by going it alone to protect land piece-by-piece, says Senior Policy and Program Advisor Bob Wagner.

“In the end, AFT has led countless successful partnerships to protect more than five million acres of farm and ranch land and secure our path to achieving a long-term legacy,” Bob says.



2015 Successes

An Award-Winning Project for Water Quality

Working with the Electric Power Research Institute, AFT is helping to launch the nation's **FIRST INTERSTATE WATER QUALITY TRADING MARKET**.

The innovative project, which enlists farmers in the effort to reduce pollution and improve the health of the Ohio River basin, received the 2015 United States Water Prize from the U.S. Water Alliance.

Protected Soil in the Midwest

In the breadbasket of America, clean water and healthy soil are precious commodities. Our programs to save precious topsoil got a boost with a new project to **TRAIN "SOIL AMBASSADORS" IN ILLINOIS**, and **TWO NEW WATERSHED**

PROGRAMS IN UPPER MACOUPIN CREEK AND VERMILION HEADWATERS in Illinois will help keep the mighty Mississippi River basin clean.

Farms for the Environment

Well-managed farms can be a source of environmental solutions, a fact that is often forgotten. In a letter to the **NEW YORK TIMES**, AFT made the compelling case for how farms offer an innovative solution to the problem of water pollution in the Ohio River. In the **BALTIMORE SUN**, we called into question the prevailing and dangerous notion that housing developments are a better land use than farms when it comes to protecting the treasured waters of the Chesapeake Bay.



Saving the Bees

One in every three bites of food that we eat comes from crops pollinated by bees. But bees and other insect pollinators are in severe decline, facing threats like climate change, pesticides, disease and habitat loss. An innovative new AFT project launched in 2015 supports Michigan farmers who provide critically needed **POLLINATOR HABITAT ON PROTECTED LAND**. The program helps farmers pay for the cost of bee-benefitting conservation practices by awarding "pollinator credits" that can be sold to businesses in Michigan.



In addition to maintaining 20 percent of the state's forests, farms provide the benefits of water filtration, ground water protection and recharge, flood control and carbon sequestration.

—**JIM BAIRD**, AFT's Mid-Atlantic director, in the *Baltimore Sun*



A NEW SOLUTION FOR FARMS AND WATER

Elton Lowmiller knew there was a problem on his family's Ohio dairy farm. When it rained hard, water flowed through the farm's barnyard, washing manure into a nearby stream. But it was tough to find the money to improve the barnyard and redirect the flow of water.



The Lowmillers found the help they needed through an award-winning pilot program underway in the Ohio River Basin. AFT, the Electric Power Research Institute (EPRI), and other partners established the nation's first interstate water quality trading market, which allows industries to purchase water quality "credits" from farmers in the watershed. In turn, farmers use the funds to pay for conservation practices that reduce the amount of fertilizer running off their farms.

In the pilot program's first year, 29 farms in Ohio, Kentucky and Indiana made improvements that kept an estimated 12,000 pounds of nitrogen and 3,800 pounds of phosphorus out of the Ohio River, which flows into the Mississippi and eventually into the Gulf of Mexico, where nutrient runoff from agriculture and other human activities is a major problem.

"AFT and our partners have identified a ground-breaking approach to improving water quality in the Ohio River Basin. At full scale, this project could have a significant positive impact on the water quality and health of the watershed," says Brian Brandt, AFT's Director of Agricultural Conservation Innovations.

Leading water quality experts agree. In 2015, the U.S. Water Alliance recognized this project with the nation's highest honor—the U.S. Water Prize. For the Lowmillers, we helped them improve their operation and fulfill their desire to be good environmental stewards. "You've got to take care of the ground," says Bret Lowmiller. "That's what feeds us. If you take care of the land, it will take care of you."



Colorado



New York



Utah

Summary of Activities

For the fiscal year ending September 30, 2015:

SUPPORT AND REVENUE	FY 2015	EXPENSES	FY 2015
Contributions from		State, Local and Federal Programs	\$5,851,235
Members and Donors	\$3,016,752	Public Education	1,581,883
Foundations	2,074,059	Communication and Media Outreach	470,664
Governments	1,141,781	Other Programs	319,488
Bequests	295,193	<hr/>	<hr/>
Rental Income	59,489	Total Programs	8,223,270
Operating Investment Return	792,744	Management & General	349,799
Other Operating Income, Gains and Losses	\$389,859	Fundraising	2,845,796
Non-operating Investment Loss and Other	(\$1,290,204)	Total Expenses	\$11,418,865
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Total Revenue and Support	\$6,479,673		
		NET ASSETS	
		Beginning of Year	\$24,759,422
		End of Year	19,820,230
		<hr/>	<hr/>
		Change in Net Assets	(\$4,939,192)

Additional financial statements are available upon request.



New Mexico



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