



Contact: Janelle Castro, 315.779.2239 - tughilloutreach@nynmail.com

Keeping it in the Family – Family Farm Passed Down Generations

(FORT DRUM, NY) – Forty-seven years ago, Carl Horton and his wife Cheryl, set about to make their dream a reality. They purchased a dairy farm in Philadelphia, New York – becoming only the third owners of the farm in the last 200 years. They have raised their kids on the farm and expanded it to support both their family and that of their son, Randy.

Their farm, a 412-acre dairy farm in the Town of Philadelphia, New York, was conserved this week as part of their continued desire to keep the farm in the family.

“There are very few farm families left in our area compared to years ago ... it’s a way of life that is disappearing, and we’re trying to preserve this important and vital way of life here in our community,” explained landowner, Cheryl Horton.

“Conserving this farm is important to our family. We have worked so hard to make this farm what it is today, and now that it’s protected we know that farmers in the future will have access to this great land.” The land remains on the tax rolls and in private ownership. The Horton Family will be keeping their dairy farm in the family, and passing it down to their son, Randy.

The Horton’s family farm is the fourth property to be protected through the Army Compatible Use Buffer (ACUB) program. The ACUB program is a unique partnership between Fort Drum, Ducks Unlimited and Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust. Four other farms, totaling over 1,100 total acres, have been conserved with agricultural agreements through the ACUB conservation partnership program.

Col. Noel T. Nicolle, Garrison Commander, emphasized the importance of community in the North Country and also noted that agriculture was an important part of the area’s economy, as well as a neighbor for Fort Drum. “This is a program that we are proud of,” remarked Col. Nicolle, “it ensures that Fort Drum will retain its integrity over time by keeping the surrounding landscape around the post in agriculture and forestry.”

Fort Drum Deputy Garrison Commander, Judy Genter, agreed, “These farms are critical to our country’s heritage and food security,” she remarked, “Fort Drum is proactively working to conserve the agricultural and forestry landscapes around the installation as it ensures that we will be able to continue our military training on the post with compatible land uses.”

The purpose of the ACUB program is to limit use or development of property near the Fort Drum installation to agricultural and forestry uses. This minimizes encroachment while protecting conservation values and open space. Encroachment is defined here as urban development surrounding military installations that affect the ability of the military to train realistically.

The ACUB program benefits the Army, as well as the land trust and the landowner. The Army maintains or enhances training capabilities, Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust protects open space, and the landowner is paid not to develop their land.

“We have been working our farm for 47 years – not only do we want to keep our land for agricultural use and pass it down to our son and his family, but just like the Army, we want to limit encroachment and development – keeping our land and farm available for agriculture for generations to come,” stated Carl Horton.

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When participating with the ACUB program, farm families work with Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust and Ducks Unlimited to create a conservation plan for the property. The plan addresses immediate and long-term goals, as well as ensuring flexibility for future operations. Farm families are then paid through the ACUB program for the appraised value of their non-farm development rights, as determined by a state-qualified appraiser.

“The ACUB program strengthens our local farming community by providing financial resources to these farm families,” explained Linda Garrett, Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust Executive Director, “by either investing back into the farm or transferring the farm to the next generation, the farm family is able to keep their farm and the land continues to be used for agricultural use.”

Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust and the Army have worked in partnership with Ducks Unlimited as part of the ACUB program when a farm or property contains bird habitat that the farmer is interested in conserving. This piece of land will now be able to provide wildlife habitat, cleaner water, and a more intact ecosystem.

To learn more about the ACUB program or the Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust please visit the website: http://www.sustainability.army.mil/tools/programtools_acub.cfm, or call Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust Executive Director, Linda Garrett at 315.779.8240 or visit www.TugHillTomorrowLandTrust.org.

Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust is a nonprofit regional organization that works with local landowners to protect and foster responsible stewardship practices of working forests and farms. The organization also hosts educational and recreational programs free to the community to help connect children and families to the land within the Tug Hill region.

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