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Brothers farm, protect land together with Army buffer program



Bill Gleisner will be able to continue farming along with his brother Chuck, (not pictured) in the town of Philadelphia since they have protected their land, ensuring it will remain available for agricultural purposes and compatible uses, by partnering with Fort Drum, Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust and Ducks Unlimited through the Army Compatible Use Buffer program. (Courtesy photo)

PHILADELPHIA – “When it’s time for me to leave this earth, I know I will be leaving my land better than how I found it,” said William (Bill) Gleisner, fifth-generation dairy farmer. “I value the tranquility and peacefulness of the land – and I want to keep it that way.”

Bill Gleisner and his brother, Charles (Chuck), moved to the North Country in the late 1970s from Ohio, looking for good farmland and somewhere they could call home. At the time, farmers in Ohio were being pushed out of their land due to development. The brothers knew they wanted to continue farming, or as Bill Gleisner put it, “Once you get the manure under your fingernails, it is always there.”

Since then, the Gleisners have been farming together in the town of Philadelphia. But now, they have done something more – they have protected their land, ensuring it will remain available for agricultural purposes, and compatible uses, forever. Fort Drum, Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust and Ducks Unlimited have partnered with the Gleisner brothers to preserve the land through the Army Compatible Use Buffer program.

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 negatively affect the ability of the military to train realistically.

“The North Country is a special place, and it is partnerships like these that make Fort Drum so unique,” said Michael H. McKinnon, deputy to the garrison commander. “From the early days when the 10th Mountain Division (LI) was activated, the North Country community embraced the military as one of its own.

“Today, the ACUB program continues in that same tradition and is a great example of neighbors working together to protect family farms, while preserving Fort Drum’s training capability well into the future,” he said.

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 to not develop their land, and in this case, the landowners will continue to farm.

After 30 years of working the land together, the Gleisner brothers are still at it.

“We work together; we bail hay together – we do everything together, and that’s something special that not many families have,” Bill Gleisner explained.

With six children and three grandchildren, he hopes to keep the land in his family.

“Hopefully, one day my kids will take over the farm and keep it going, but even if they don’t, I can rest in peace knowing that it will not be developed. Someone will be able to farm it, and that’s the most important thing to me.”

Totalling 274 acres, Bill and Chuck Gleisner’s farms are the fifth and sixth properties to be protected by Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust through the ACUB program. With the addition of these properties, more than 1,300 acres have been conserved with agricultural agreements through the ACUB conservation partnership program.

“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. “The Gleisner brothers are leaders in our community; they have a great connection to their land and share a passion for the long-term importance of farming.

“Through this program, they will be able to either invest the funds they receive back into the farm or pass it on to the next generation – and most importantly, the land will continue to be available for agriculture,” she added.

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, while 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 familiar with this type of conservation project. The properties remain in private ownership and stay on the tax rolls. The farmers are not told how to farm or manage their land in the agreement, as Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust believes farmers are important stewards of the land.

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 and Ducks Unlimited are interested in conserving. This productive land and its associated wetlands will now be able to provide important wildlife habitat.

To learn more about the ACUB program, visit the web site at www.sustainability.army.mil. For more information, contact Garrett at 779-8240 / e-mail thtomorr@northnet.org or visit www.TugHillTomorrowLand-Trust.org.

Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust is a nonprofit regional community-based 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. o

Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust



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