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### Army conservation partnership protects local family farm

PHILADELPHIA – “Our dream is to have our land be our own wildlife sanctuary and pass the farm down to the next generation,” explained Jefferson County farmer David Lambright. “Now, through this partnership program, we’re going to be able to do just that.”

Lambright, his wife Velda, and their 11 children moved to northern New York more than 10 years ago. As the Lambrights continued dairy farming, they saw the rapid development beginning to surround their farm located on busy U.S. Route 11 in Philadelphia.

“I remember when we first moved here ... the cars going by were probably less than half of what they are now,” David Lambright pointed out, “and of course with that comes all the development.” The Lambright family chose to protect their property through the conservation partnership program with Fort Drum, Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust and Ducks Unlimited.

Through the Army Compatible Use Buffer program, the Lambright family will be able to keep their farm in the family and pass it down to future generations.

“It didn't have to happen this way,” Velda Lambright said. “We could have sold it for development at some point. But, it didn't happen that way and we're glad.”

“This land, our farm and the community are important to me and my family,” she continued. “We realize and appreciate how special our farm is – not only to keep farming around as part of our local economy, but also for the wildlife and the habitat needed by the animals.”

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 nonfarm 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.

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 affects the ability to train realistically.

“Each farm family we partner with is an example of just how dedicated the North Country community is,” said Michael H. McKinnon, deputy to the garrison commander. “It's a great program – important to securing the Fort Drum mission, and important to the local economy and its heritage and quality of life.”

“The local communities embrace the military as one of their own, and the ACUB program is a great example of neighbors working together to protect family farms and important wildlife habitat, while preserving Fort Drum's training capability well into the future,” McKinnon continued.

Totalling 100 acres, the Lambright farm is the seventh property to be protected by Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust through the ACUB program. With the addition of this farm, more than 1,400 acres have been conserved with agricultural agreements through the ACUB conservation partnership program.

“Mr. Lambright and his family are leaders in our community. They see the importance of local farmland and long-term farming,” explained Linda Garrett, Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust executive director.

“Through the ACUB program they're able to reinvest back into the farm – keeping it in the family, while also fulfilling their dream of creating a place for wildlife.”

The family plans to reinvest the funds it receives to conserve their land and expand the farm to include beef cattle in one section of the 100 acres.

Their vision for the remaining part of the property includes wetland enhancement where a wildlife sanctuary will be in the future.

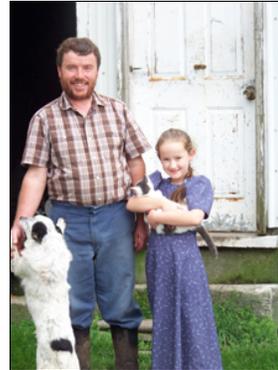
Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust and the Army have worked in partnership with Ducks Unlimited as part of the ACUB program when a farm or property contains bird habitat that the farmer and Ducks Unlimited are interested in conserving.

To learn more about the ACUB program, contact Garrett at 779-8240 / email [thtomorr@northnet.org](mailto:thtomorr@northnet.org) or visit [www.TugHillTomorrowLandTrust.org](http://www.TugHillTomorrowLandTrust.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 their families to the land.

*Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust*



David Lambright and his 9-year-old daughter, Bethany, enjoy a moment with their pets on the family farm in nearby Philadelphia. Thanks to the Army Compatible Use Buffer program, the Lambright family will be able to keep their farm and pass it down to future generations through a conservation partnership program with Fort Drum, Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust and Ducks Unlimited. (Courtesy photo)



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