



Farm Legacy

Honoring the Past, Securing the Future of American Agriculture

▲ Jennifer McComas

Jenny McComas (above) donated her 536-acre farm in Kentucky to American Farmland Trust because she wanted it to stay as a farm—permanently. As she said at the time, “I know I’ve done what’s right—to give the farm a chance to continue being a working farm.” She was also able to offset a significant capital gain with the donation, creating a win/win for everyone.

Many farm and ranch owners face retirement with concerns about the future of their land. Who will farm their land? How will it be farmed? These questions pose a very real threat to the future of American agriculture. More than 35 percent of American farmland—approximately 300 million acres—will change hands over the next 10 to 20 years. This massive transfer of farm real estate from one generation to the next could present a grave challenge—if these farms are sold to real estate developers—or could potentially be one of the best opportunities to secure land for agriculture and future generations of farmers.

For over 46 years, American Farmland Trust and partners have helped to protect more than eight million acres of farmland and ranchland while promoting sound

farming practices and keeping farmers on the land. Through a network of regional and state offices, American Farmland Trust’s expert staff works side-by-side with



▲ *The decision by Ellen Love (above) and her husband Owen to donate their Michigan farm to AFT in the 1990s has inspired others—including Beverly Braden—to create their own farmland legacy.*

communities to plan for agriculture, advance effective state and federal policies, and address the most critical issues facing family farms today—including initiatives to assist next-generation farmers and women owners of agricultural land.

American Farmland Trust's Farm Legacy initiative works to ensure that land remains in farming and is farmed with sound agricultural practices by the next generation of farmers—honoring the nation's farming and ranching legacy and securing its future. The Farm Legacy initiative leverages American Farmland Trust's unique position as the only national organization that focuses on farmland and ranchland and the people who steward it.

The Challenge

The story is all too familiar. A farm or ranch owner facing retirement has concerns about the future of their land. Who will farm it? How will it be farmed? Will it simply go the highest

bidder for cash? What about the large capital gains taxes if it is sold?

The Solution

It doesn't have to be that way. A gift of a farm or ranch to American Farmland Trust will ensure its protection and availability for farming while supporting American Farmland Trust's work long into the future. American Farmland Trust will ensure the land is protected and farmed with sound farming practices, and we will make it available to next-generation farmers whenever possible. American Farmland Trust also will use the farm or ranch to further our work. We will analyze and assess each farm to determine how it can best advance our mission, whether by demonstrating innovative farming practices or generating income by lease or re-sale to another farmer.

How Would This Work?

A gift of farm real estate to American Farmland Trust can be made outright during a person's lifetime, by will or trust at death, as a retained life estate, or through various annuity or trust arrangements. American Farmland Trust's Farm Legacy team is available to work with landowners and their advisors to craft the best approach for all involved and for the land. We have decades of experience working with farm and ranch owners and their advisors.

Examples of Farm Legacy Projects

Shirley Johnson

For Shirley Johnson, protecting her family's 176-acre Illinois farm was an extension of the stewardship she

◀ *Shirley Johnson included her Illinois farm in her estate plans as a gift to American Farmland Trust.*





▲ *The Farm Legacy Program helped Gretchen and Dick Regnery protect their Whitefish Bay Farm in Door County, Wisconsin.*

had already put into practice through soil health work, erosion control, and pollinator habitat. By including the farm in her estate plans as a gift to American Farmland Trust, Shirley is ensuring the land will remain in farming and be permanently protected by an agricultural conservation easement.

Beverly Braden

Inspired by Owen and Ellen Love's decision to give their farm to American Farmland Trust in the 1990s, Beverly Braden is creating her own farmland legacy in southwest Michigan. She is in the process of donating several farms to American Farmland Trust and also supports American Farmland Trust's Michigan work through retirement account distributions. Over time,

her generosity may help establish a dedicated Michigan farmland protection fund.

Gretchen and Dick Regnery

After more than four decades caring for Whitefish Bay Farm in Door County, Wisconsin, Gretchen and Dick Regnery turned to the Farm Legacy Program to protect the land they had shaped through sheep farming, fiber arts, and careful stewardship. Their gift of the farm to American Farmland Trust will keep it from being lost to development and help make it available to future farmers and land stewards.



Gary and Pam Kleppel

Gary and Pam Kleppel's relationship with American Farmland Trust grew out of a shared commitment to sustainable agriculture, conservation-based grazing, and farmland protection.

▲ *Gary and Pam Kleppel of Longfield Farm in upstate New York*

Through the Farm Legacy Program, they developed a plan to donate Longfield Farm with an agricultural easement that will permanently protect the land. Their gift will allow the farm's teaching, stewardship, and working-land legacy to continue.

Helen Powell

Artist and farmland owner Helen Powell turned to the Farm Legacy Program while navigating a difficult partitioning process involving her family's Kentucky horse farm. Working closely with Farm Legacy Director Jerry Cosgrove, Helen



▲ *Helen Powell of Clear Creek Farm outside Lexington, Kentucky*

▼ *Tom Hutson of River Haven Farm in DeLancey, New York*



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fought to secure and protect her portion of the land from development. Her vision is to keep the farm in agricultural use and potentially sell to the long-term operator, a local beef farmer and breeder so he can continue good stewardship of the farm into the future.

Tom Hutson

Tom Hutson's transition plan for 288-acre River Haven Farm offers a creative model for helping farmers retire while opening doors for beginning farmers. Working with Farm Legacy Director Jerry Cosgrove, Tom sold his Catskills farm to American Farmland Trust in exchange for cash and a charitable gift annuity. American Farmland Trust is leasing the land locally while supporting a longer-term plan for affordable farmland access.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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