

AMERICAN FARMLAND

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GRAND TRAVERSE REGIONAL LAND CONSERVANCY

Old Mission Peninsula erupts in cherry blossoms in spring.

Farmer Rob Manigold and his wife Lois worked with AFT to plant habitat for the bees needed to pollinate the cherries.

Staying in Bloom

Farmers like Rob Manigold are working with AFT to plant pollinator habitat on protected farmland to help bees, farms, and the community.

During springtime on Old Mission Peninsula in northern Michigan, millions of cherry trees explode in white fragrant blossoms. The pastoral views draw tourists to the narrow peninsula, where farms and wineries look over the bright-blue waters of Grand Traverse Bay.

Fruit trees thrive in the microclimate of the Old Mission and neighboring Leelanau peninsulas, which produce three-quarters of the world's tart cherries.

Tourists who drive by cherry farmer Rob Manigold's farm enjoy an extra bit of scenery these days, or "ambience" as he calls it. Manigold worked with American Farmland

Trust to plant several acres of wildflowers in the pasture below his orchards to attract the bees that pollinate the cherry blossoms.

Manigold planted the wildflowers through AFT's Farmland Pollinator Protection Project, which establishes high-quality pollinator habitat on protected farms.

There's only one drawback so far to the program, Manigold says. The fields of colorful wildflowers are so beautiful, they prove irresistible to people driving by who want to pick the flowers.

"As birds start to eat the seed, the flowers start showing up everywhere. The flowers look so good, people will stop on the road to look at

them. They would go out and pick them, so I had to put a sign up to explain it's habitat for the bees," he says.

Although Manigold also uses local beekeepers who bring hives of managed honey bees to pollinate his black sweet cherries and red tart cherries, he benefits from having wild bees around the farm as well. "The more pollinators we get, the better the cherry crop and yield," he says.

But wild bees and other pollinator species are in trouble—with their populations significantly declining over the past two decades, attributed to various factors including pesticides, parasites, viruses, loss of foraging habitat and a changing climate.

"Providing high-quality habitat on well-managed farmland is a promising way to attract and increase both managed and wild pollinator populations," says AFT's Brian Brandt, who manages the project. "This same high-quality habitat can also be used by other beneficial insects like beetles and wasps."

A key part of the project involves connecting willing landowners with sustainably minded corporations, individuals, and foundations that want to make a difference by supporting the creation of high-quality pollinator habitat on protected farms.

"I see this program as a benefit for everyone," Manigold says. "It's nice aesthetics for people driving by. It's good for tourism and for the farming community. Farming is our business. We're all about being good stewards. This fits in perfectly."

SAVING BEES AND SAVING THE LAND

Old Mission Peninsula is one of the nation's premier fruit-growing areas. Of the peninsula's 18,000 acres, nearly two-thirds are in agriculture. But the peninsula's beautiful scenery once brought a level of real estate development that threatened the existence of farming.

In the late 1980s, AFT rescued 507 acres of valuable cherry orchard land on the peninsula, which was slated to be bulldozed for vacation homes. The project turned the tide on development, leading to the creation of a local program that has since preserved thousands of acres of orchards and farm fields.

"With the PDR program that AFT helped us initiate, we have so many acres under conservation easement now," says Manigold, who also serves as the township's supervisor and is one of the pioneers who started the program.

Lately he's seen a mood take over the peninsula, with farmers fixing up their old barns. "They wouldn't be doing that if they didn't feel confident about the future," he says. "We're staying in business, so we can keep that barn up."

In 2017, Manigold worked with Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy and AFT to protect his own farm, with a grant from AFT's Owen and Ellen Love Family Farmland Protection Fund, which helps Michigan communities and land trusts permanently protect farmland.

"I'm sitting on my porch right now. As I look around, everything I see is all protected. It's a good feeling," Manigold says.

For information about the Love Fund, contact Ben Kurtzman, Director of Land Protection Projects, (413) 586-9330 ext. 12 or bkurtzman@farmland.org.

For more information about the Farmland Pollinator Protection Project, visit www.farmland.org/pollinator or contact Brian Brandt at bbrandt@farmland.org or (614) 430-8130.

FROM THE PRESIDENT

This spring, I traveled to Knox, New York, to a farm in the Helderberg Mountains, a rural escarpment overlooking the Hudson Valley and the city of Albany. There at West Wind Acres I met Josh Rockwood, a hardworking livestock farmer, who told me about how he found the land for his farm through AFT's Hudson Valley Farmlink Network, which connects young farmers with older farmers who want to see their land stay in farming.

Josh and I were interviewed that day by a film crew for BBC World News, which is producing an eight-part series called Follow the Food about the future of agricultural innovations and strategies. The series aims to address the big questions that arise in a world where the population keeps growing, by meeting some of the leading minds working on innovative solutions to feed the planet.

The show featuring West Wind Acres and AFT will air sometime in June, in an episode called "Generation Farmer" about the challenges facing new farmers. I'm glad this issue is now getting more attention, because it's one of the most important affecting agriculture. We have to make sure that talented farmers like Josh and his family—including nine-year-old Hunter, who delighted in showing me his chickens—are able to access the land they need to get established in farming.

Fortunately, Josh was able to work with AFT to connect with a retiring farmer, Sandy Gordon. Determined to find the right farmer to continue the legacy of his family farm, Sandy was one of the first landowners to list his property on the Hudson Valley Farmland Finder website when AFT

launched it in 2014. To hear the rest of this compelling story, keep an eye on listings for this special broadcast from the BBC.

While stories like that of Josh and his family give me hope about the future of farming—and what AFT can do to make it stronger and more resilient—I was saddened this spring to hear about the devastation affecting farmers in the Midwest, caused by record flooding that washed away entire fields of corn, soy, and other crops.

Such weather extremes and catastrophic natural disasters will undoubtedly become more common in the future as the impacts of climate change intensify. But, as you may have heard me say by now, there are groundbreaking solutions from agriculture that can help sustain life on Earth, such as climate-smart farming practices that store more carbon in the soil, keeping it out of the atmosphere.

Agricultural innovation is one of the keys to a healthy planet, now and into the future. And AFT is at the leading edge of this work.



John Piotti (right) with Josh and Hunter Rockwood of West Wind Acres.

OLIVIA FULLER

When you support AFT, you help AFT make a difference—whether it's getting a new farm family on the land or giving farmers the tools they need to be the best possible stewards of the planet.

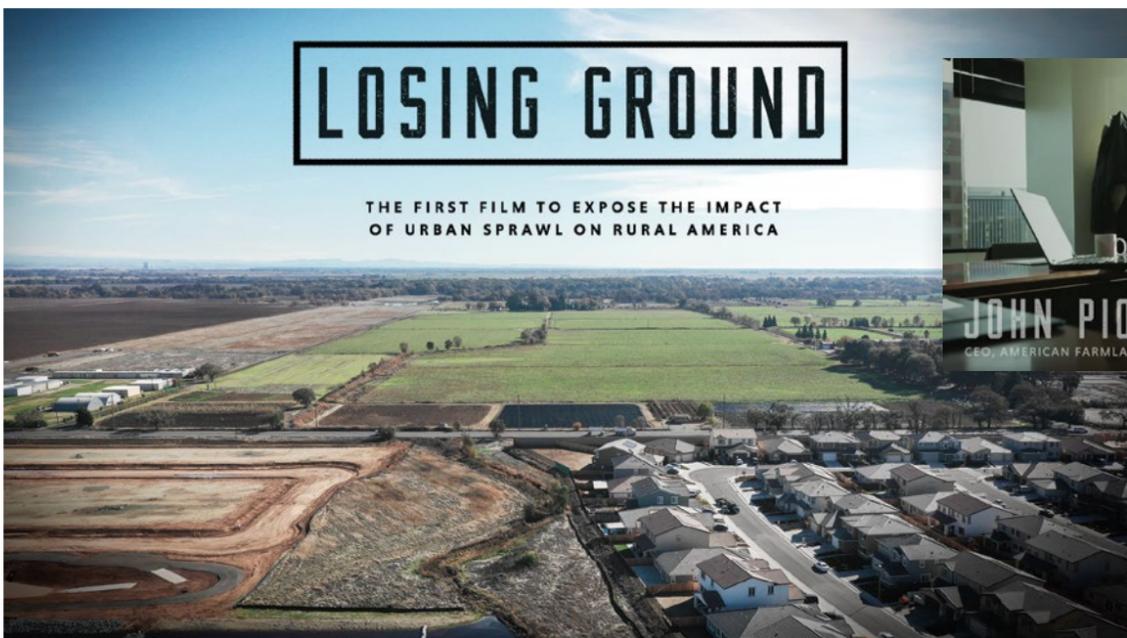
John Piotti
President & CEO
American Farmland Trust



Farms on Screen

Two new films bring farms and farm issues to the big screen this spring.

The Biggest Little Farm follows John and Mary Chester and their dog on a personal journey that transforms the couple into regenerative farmers and stewards of the land. With years of work, they build Apricot Lane Farms, bringing harmony to their lives by reaching a profound understanding of the intricacies and wisdom of nature. The film features stunning farmland imagery highlighted with time-lapse photography of plants and animals. AFT hosted educational screenings of the film in April. In theaters this spring.



Losing Ground is one of the first films to expose the full impact of urban sprawl on American agriculture. The one-hour film, which features research from AFT and an interview with AFT president John Piotti, tells the stories of five diverse farming operations. The farms are located in four

very different parts of the country, yet all face the daily struggle of farming near a growing urban area. The film premieres May 27 at 7 p.m. Central Time on RFD-TV, Agriculture and Rural Lifestyle cable channel, and will be released on the Angus TV YouTube channel after the broadcast.

Around the Country

The signing of the 2018 Farm Bill secured another \$2 billion for AFT's highest priority, the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program, which compensates landowners for keeping their land in agriculture and will help save some of the **NATION'S** most productive land.



DAVID TRAIFOROS/DEMINSKY PHOTOS/ALAMY

AFT accepted an invitation from the U.S. Climate Alliance to be one of the coalition's first **NATIONAL** "impact partners." The alliance of states is committed to taking on-the-ground action that urgently addresses climate change. AFT will bring decades of experience in farmland protection and farming practices to support states as they build climate plans.



In the Mid-Atlantic, a new grant will allow AFT to expand our work with women landowners to the James River Watershed of **VIRGINIA**, providing funding for Women for the Land learning circles that include African-American landowners among the participants. In **MARYLAND**, AFT provided testimony that led to an allocation of \$750,000 for farmland preservation in Queen Anne's County by the county commissioners.



DIETRICH GEHRING

In partnership with **NEW YORK** state, AFT announced the selection of 20 "regional navigator" organizations that will help new farmers find land and assist retiring farmers and landowners who want to see their land stay in farming.

Dr. Beth Sauerhaft joined AFT as vice president of programs to lead **NATIONAL** initiatives. Before joining AFT, Beth worked as a sustainability strategist for PepsiCo, piloting programs to make company processes and agricultural supply chains more sustainable. Her agricultural background is extensive, having previously worked for the Environmental Protection Agency and Natural Resources Conservation Service.



EDWIN REMSBERG/USDA-SARE

AFT celebrated the inclusion of our goal to reduce the development of agricultural lands by 50 to 75 percent in the **CALIFORNIA** 2030 Natural and Working Lands Climate Change Implementation Plan, a multi-agency effort to protect natural resources and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.



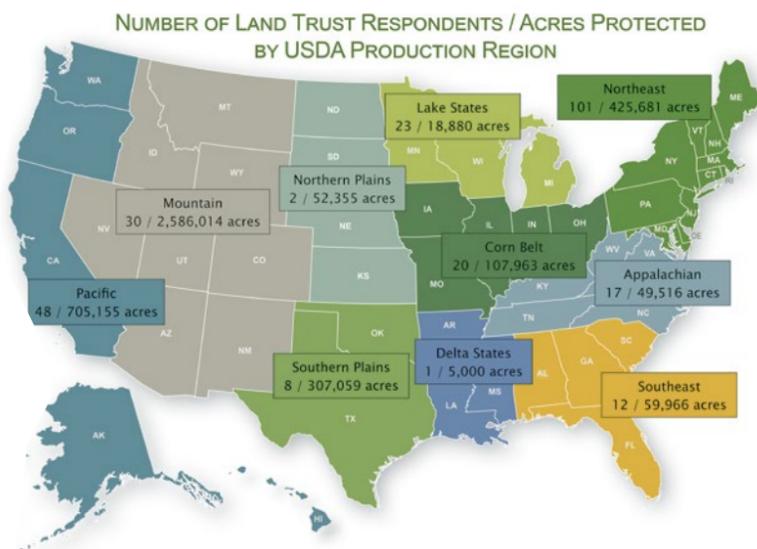
ED CALLAERT/ALAMY



AFT and our partners, shown here with Illinois lieutenant governor Juliana Stratton (center), rallied at the Illinois state capital to show support for soil-health measures.

AFT and partners in **ILLINOIS** sponsored, for the sixth consecutive year, a series of seminars to give farmers the latest information about soil and water conservation practices. Good news came in March, when the Illinois Senate Environment and Conservation committee passed a resolution supporting the state's Nutrient Loss Reduction Strategy, which works with farmers to adopt conservation practices that reduce runoff from farm fields into rivers and streams.

AFT's Farmland Information Center released a second **NATIONWIDE** survey looking at the significant role that private land trusts play in protecting farmland and ranchland. "Saving American Farmland: 2017 Nationwide Survey of Land Trusts That Protect Farm and Ranch Land" found that 216 land trusts have protected 4.4 million acres, a 45 percent increase from 2012.



Map excludes land trust respondents that work nationwide.



H. MARK WEIDMAN PHOTOGRAPHY/ALAMY



Have you **PLANNED** for the **FUTURE** of your farm or ranch?

You've made a lifetime investment in your land. It's been hard work—sometimes even blood, sweat, and tears. It's probably the most important asset you own—so what will happen to it when you are gone? Now is the best time to think about the future of your land, and you can get started today.

A critical place to start is identifying your goals so you can develop strategies to accomplish them.

Some initial steps in the process are to inventory your assets, identify issues based on your values and goals, and build

your team of advisors. Contact AFT to learn more and obtain a complimentary copy of *Your Land Is Your Legacy, Estate Planning for Farmers and Ranchers*.

So what are you waiting for? Get started—the sooner the better!

Contact **Jerry Cosgrove**, AFT's Farm Legacy Director, at (518) 281-5074 or jcosgrove@farmland.org; or **Don Buckloh**, AFT's Farmland Information Specialist, at (413) 586-9330, ext. 16 or dbuckloh@farmland.org.

Remembering Stephen Stranahan

Stephen Stranahan, a lifelong conservationist and former board member of AFT, died in January. Steve leaves a far-reaching legacy of community service and business achievement in his hometown of Perrysburg, Ohio. But one of Steve's greatest legacies is The Home Ranch, a ranch and resort in the Elk River Valley, north of Steamboat Springs, Colorado, that he and his wife Ann built in 1980.



of acres being preserved in the Elk River Valley and beyond. He understood that land conservation has to be done as a community,

because no one individual can do it alone. Steve's legacy on the landscape will be felt for generations."

In partnership with neighboring ranchers and AFT, Steve placed thousands of acres of land into conservation easements, to preserve the great landscapes and ranching tradition of the American West. Steve and his ranching neighbors worked with AFT to develop a vision for how ranching and carefully planned development could fit together, calling for housing where it would not harm agricultural operations or valley views.

"We commend Steve for his many contributions to AFT and for his foresight in recognizing how crucial it is that we protect our agricultural land," says John Piotti, AFT president. "His efforts led to many thousands



The Home Ranch, in the Elk River Valley of Colorado, where Stephen Stranahan and his ranching neighbors preserved thousands of acres of ranchland.

The most powerful tool for protecting farmland is your fork.

Our Farmers Market Celebration, now in its 11th year, embodies the importance of saving the land that sustains us.



This June, join us and support farmers around the country who benefit their communities and feed the nation. When you shop directly from local farmers, you help keep them in business.

The celebration starts June 21st. Visit markets.farmland.org

#OnMyFork

American Farmland Trust



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BARBARA RIES/LAMY