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# NEWS RELEASE

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## **USDA announces \$2,365,000 to protect New Hampshire farmland through the Federal Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program . . .**

### **and is still accepting applications for a second round of funding with an application due date of August 7, 2009**

Sign-up is still underway for the following conservation programs under the 2008 Farm Bill. Apply on or before August 7, 2009 to be considered for funding in 2009 for the following programs:

- [Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program \(FRPP\)](#) for conservation easements -- round 2 for ranking
- [Wetlands Reserve Program \(WRP\)](#) for conservation easements -- round 2 for ranking
- [Grassland Reserve Program \(GRP\)](#) for conservation easements -- the new date is an extension from the previously announced June 1 cut-off.

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has, to date, accepted five applications that will result in the USDA/NRCS contributing \$2.365 million in federal funds for the preservation of New Hampshire farmland in 2009. This funding, provided through USDA/NRCS's Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRPP), will protect an estimated 780 acres of prime Granite State farmland. NRCS works together with communities, local land trusts and other organizations who work with landowners, to preserve farmland across the state.

The FRPP provides up to 50 percent matching funding for the purchase of development rights to farmland, preserving productive farmland for agricultural use. The conservation entity administers the conservation easement, but the landowner still owns the land and retains the right to sell it, lease it, or will it to his or her heirs. The farm must forever remain in agriculture, even if sold or passed on to someone else. Landowners may not apply directly to NRCS for this program. NRCS only accepts FRPP applications through eligible entities that have a farmland protection program that purchases agricultural conservation easements for the purpose of protecting agricultural use and related natural resource conservation benefits. These easements protect agricultural land and important farmland soils by prohibiting conversion to non-agricultural uses.

**The following are the FRPP conservation easement purchases funded this year through the USDA/NRCS program:**

**The Hillman Farm, Pembroke, NH**

In cooperation with the Pembroke Conservation Commission, the USDA/NRCS is contributing \$300,000 for the protection of 45 acres of the Hillman Farm on the Suncook River. The site's rich soils and proximity to the Suncook River first brought settlers to the region in 1755. Damming of the Suncook River provided for grist and lumber mills, an axe handle factory, and tannery in close proximity to what is now the Hillman Farm. It remains the single most agriculturally productive area in Pembroke today. The site is considered historically significant by the NH Division of Historical Resources, is located adjacent to, and is used by, the Grimes Farm, a multigenerational dairy farm currently milking about 100 cows.

**The Roger Hersey Farm, Andover, NH**

In cooperation with the Ausbon Sargent Land Preservation Trust and the Town of Andover Conservation Commission, the USDA/NRCS is contributing \$57,500 for the protection of 55 acres of the Roger Hersey Farm. The farm is located in the Hersey Farms Historic District, listed on the National Historic Register and includes two historic farmsteads totaling about 327 acres with 133 acres actively managed for sustainable agriculture, producing Hereford cattle and high quality hay for local customers. The land directly abuts the Hersey Family Farm, conserved in 2007, and has 90 percent prime, state-wide or locally important agricultural soils. Both farms are operated by Jerry Hersey. In April, 2009, the Andover Conservation Commission voted to approve \$28,750 in funds to help conserve the Roger Hersey Farm.

**The Sullivan Farm, Nashua, NH**

In cooperation with the Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests (SPNHF) and the City of Nashua/Conservation Commission, the USDA/NRCS is contributing \$400,000 for the protection of 46 acres of the Williams family's farm. The orchard, greenhouse and farm stand, known as the Sullivan Farm, have been in operation by this family for over 100 years and is the last remaining orchard/farm stand in Nashua. It abuts other protected land and is in close proximity to other parcels with agricultural operations.

**The Scamman Farm, Stratham, NH**

In cooperation with the Town of Stratham, who overwhelmingly supported a 2002 warrant article authorizing a five million dollar bond for land protection, and the Southeast Land Trust of New Hampshire, the USDA/NRCS is contributing \$1,190,000 for the protection of 217.7 acres of the Scamman family's farm. The Scamman Farm includes more than 160 acres of highly productive farm soils, of which

approximately 40 acres is used for crop and hay production. It has been a landmark for Stratham residents and passers by for generations, and in 1998, was found eligible for the National Register of Historic Places because of its over 300-year agricultural history.

### **The Bohanan Farm, Hopkinton, NH**

In cooperation with the Five Rivers Conservation Trust and the Town of Hopkinton, the USDA/NRCS is contributing \$417,500 for the protection of 413 acres of the Bohanan Farm dairy operation. Heather and Jamie Robertson own the farm in partnership with Heather's parents, Glenn and Adelmari Bohanan. The farm has been in the family for four generations, currently milks about 230 cows, and produces the equivalent of 37,000 eight ounce servings of milk a day. A stone marker and plaque mark the spot on the Bohanan Farm along the Contoocook River where the town's first public bridge crossing, built in 1779, once stood. The farm has over 300 acres of prime, state-wide, or locally important agricultural soils, along with more than four miles of frontage along the Contoocook, Blackwater & Warner Rivers, and is also in close proximity to other protected land and parcels with agricultural operations.

"Requests for FRPP assistance far exceeded the available funding. We received applications totaling \$3,950,750. The five sites selected rose to the top during our careful ranking process", according to NRCS State Conservationist, George Cleek. The application deadline for the first round of 2009 FRPP ranking was June 12, 2009. The second round cut-off date is August 7, 2009. Funding was awarded based on advertised criteria including, but not limited to: resource features, development pressure, cultural resources, infrastructure, and other factors such as proximity of parcel to other protected lands.

As of the 2007 census, New Hampshire had a total of 4,150 farms and 470,000 acres of farmland, according to the USDA New England Agricultural Statistics Service. The average rate of agricultural land lost to developed uses in New Hampshire is 1,460 acres per year, according to the National Resources Inventory reported by the American Farmland Trust.

Since the Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program came into existence in 1996, NRCS in New Hampshire has provided over 15 million dollars to support the purchase of, and provide permanent protection for, over 7,000 acres of agricultural land on more than 85 farms across the State. The 15 million dollars in Federal funds leveraged 22.4 million dollars in local funds and 3.6 million dollars in landowner contributions for a total easement value of 41 million dollars.