

LCHIP grants boost local protection efforts

Funding to conserve working farms

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The Monahan Farm, with its familiar fields and farm stand at the busy intersection of routes 107 and 108, has long been a destination for area residents and their families. Courtesy photo

According to the Southeast Land Trust of New Hampshire, two of its projects to conserve working farmland have been awarded grants from the highly competitive New Hampshire Land and Community Heritage Investment Program.

LCHIP awarded \$100,000 to help conserve 110 acres of the Bodwell dairy farm in Kensington and an additional \$85,000 to help protect the 28 acre Monahan Farm in East Kingston.

“These projects are part of our larger strategic vision to conserve working farmland growing food for people,” explains Brian Hart, executive director of SELT, an Exeter-based nonprofit that works with communities and landowners to conserve land for the benefit of people and nature. “The desire for fresh, local foods relies on consumer demand, entrepreneurial farmers, and productive farmland. Conservation ensures that those lands best suited to growing crops remain available for current and future farmers.”

At the awards ceremony announcing the grants, Gov. Maggie Hassan praised the work of this year’s LCHIP grant award recipients for their effective efforts at conserving important land and preserving significant historic buildings. The governor reiterated the importance of land conservation and historic preservation to the state’s economy, environment, and quality of life.

Both the Monahan Farm and Bodwell Farm are economic engines within the agricultural economy, scenic landscapes within their communities, and beloved by residents and visitors.

The Bodwell Farm has provided Kensington and beyond with a steady source of milk and other dairy products for six generations, thanks in large part to the lush pastures and productive farmland soils surrounding the farm.

One of only six commercial dairies remaining in Rockingham County, a drive down Stumpfield Road offers a window into New Hampshire’s agrarian past. With the Bodwell family currently managing over 600 acres throughout the community, this one dairy farm is responsible for maintaining a considerable share of open space and wildlife habitat across the landscape. In fact, New Hampshire Fish & Game’s

2015 Wildlife Action Plan ranks the farm among its top three tiers of wildlife habitat. A favorite destination for bird enthusiasts, cross country skiers and more, this farm delivers a wealth of environmental benefits to the surrounding community while still contributing a valuable and increasingly rare resource into the local food system.

The Monahan Farm, with its familiar fields and farm stand at the busy intersection of routes 107 and 108, has long been a destination for area residents and their families.

An active farm since the 1700s, three generations now share in this family tradition by growing a variety of fruits and vegetables including strawberries, blueberries, raspberries, blackberries, peaches, apples, tomatoes, melons, squashes, and pumpkins. Over a typical growing season, the farm welcomes nearly 10,000 visitors of all ages, many of whom come specifically to enjoy the pick-your-own experience. A haven for pollinator species and other wildlife, this farm packs a diversity of habitats and productivity into a relatively small area, and the residents of East Kingston and beyond often give thanks for the opportunity to enjoy such a bountiful harvest at the local level.

SELT has just \$80,000 remaining to be raised to complete the projects. LCHIP's funding, along with funding committed by the US Natural Resources Conservation Service's Agricultural Land Easement program, the N.H. Moose Plate Program, the Town of East Kingston, and private contributions, will be used to acquire conservation easements on both farms. Conservation easements ensure the lands will not be developed but rather remain as open space and available for farming, forestry, and outdoor recreation.

"We are hopeful that residents will now step up and make contributions to conserve these special farms," Hart commented. Contributions can be made [atwww.seltnh.org](http://www.seltnh.org), or by mail to SELT at PO Box 675, Exeter, NH 03833.