

Tourism News



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County Collaborates with Dutchess Land Conservancy, Scenic Hudson and State to Save North East Farm

Dutchess County Executive Marcus J. Molinaro has announced Dutchess County has finalized the conservation easement to protect the 158.2-acre Duncandale Farm in the Town of North East owned by Donald and Sharon Duncan, in partnership with the Dutchess Land Conservancy (DLC), Scenic Hudson and New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets (NYSDAM). The County contributed \$133,200 toward the purchase of the development rights, ensuring the land remains open and available for farming for current and future generations. The Dutchess County Legislature approved funding from the Partnership for Manageable Growth (PMG) Program in March 2016, based on recommendation from the Dutchess County Planning Board.

Total purchase price of the conservation easement was \$1,152,823, with the NYSDAM contributing \$862,750 and Scenic Hudson providing the balance of the purchase price. DLC was the grant applicant on behalf of the landowners, served as project manager, provided a portion of the closing costs and important in-kind services, and will hold and manage the conservation easement on the farm.

County Executive Molinaro said, "The PMG allows us to work with the state and local partners to preserve a critical active farmland providing a vital, diverse and growing economic engine throughout the County. Farms operating in Dutchess improve quality of life in many ways - from our economy and environment, to health and community character - and we are committed to promoting a vibrant future for agriculture. Duncandale Farm is a prime example of what makes Dutchess County such a special place for all who live and visit here, and this easement will preserve its majesty for generations to come."

The property has been owned by the Duncan family since the 1700s and currently produces hay for beef and dairy cattle replacement. On average, about 7,000 square bales of hay are produced each year and sold to a range of horse, goat and sheep farms in the area. Duncandale Farm is located in the Coleman

Station Historic District, registered in large part for its agricultural heritage. The farm is a distinctive and prominent feature of the viewshed traveling north on New York State Route 22, and almost the entire property is highly visible from the Harlem Valley Rail Trail. The farmhouse on the property has a carved foundation stone, indicating it was first constructed in 1771. The farm lies in the western area of a chain of mostly connected, active farms totaling almost 2,000 acres, extending south of Millerton through the Harlem Valley within the Town of North East.

County Executive Molinaro reprioritized farmland protection when he included PMG funding as part of the 2015 budget, for the first fund allocation since 2008. In March 2016, the County Executive announced awards of \$935,855 to permanently protect six farms, one of which is the Duncandale Farm, bringing the total amount of open space and farmland properties preserved through the PMG program to approximately 3,530 acres. In 2017, County Executive Molinaro announced \$651,781 in PMG funding to protect two additional farms – one in Dover, the other in Amenia.

County Legislator Gregg Pulver, who represents the towns of North East, Stanford, Pine Plains and Milan, and is chair of the Dutchess County Legislature's Public Works and Capital Projects Committee, and a member of the Dutchess County Agricultural Advisory Committee said, “County Executive Molinaro and the Dutchess County Legislature have made protecting farmland a priority, and the preservation of the Duncandale Farm is the latest example of that pledge. I thank County Executive Molinaro, my fellow legislators and our partners in the community for their devotion to preserving our farms, which will continue to be key players in our county’s centuries-old agricultural tradition.”

Selling development rights encourages property owners to permanently preserve their land for agriculture, providing important funds to reinvest in farm operations or to transition a farm to the next generation.

Donald and Sharon Duncan said, “Our family has owned and loved this farm for over 200 years. Living on a farm is a wonderful way to raise a family. Our three sons all helped with the farm work, learning where food comes from and developed a connection to the land and the animals it supports. This project has come to fruition because of the hard work and commitment of the Dutchess Land Conservancy, Scenic Hudson, Dutchess County and New York State to preserve agricultural land from increasing pressure to develop. We encourage anyone who enjoys open land to explore how they can protect their property from development.”

The protection of the Duncans’ property also has advantages for local residents beyond access to fresh and healthy foods. Even after development rights are

sold, agricultural lands stay on the tax rolls, ensuring towns can continue to provide critical services. Studies indicate that agricultural lands cost communities significantly less to provide services to than residential lands.

Becky Thornton, President of the Dutchess Land Conservancy, said, "We are so lucky to have people in our area who truly love and care about the future of their land. Our heartfelt thanks go to the Duncans who have ensured that their family farm will remain open and viable for farming today and in the future. We are also tremendously grateful that our wonderful partners, Dutchess County, the Scenic Hudson Land Trust, and the NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets (NYSDAM), recognize the importance of protecting our local farms, not only as a primary industry in Dutchess County, but as a major component of our scenic and rural landscape."

Created in 1999, the County's Partnership for Manageable Growth grant program has helped to protect more than 3,500 acres of farmland and open space in Dutchess County. Awards are made after thorough review and ranking by the County's Planning Board. The PMG is designed to assist the County and its municipalities in implementing the recommendations of adopted planning documents, including Directions: The Plan for Dutchess County, the Dutchess County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan, Greenway Connections, and the Dutchess County Water and Wastewater Plan. The Duncandale farm is contained within the County's "Agricultural Priority Areas" as delineated in the 2015 County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan.

Steve Rosenberg, Scenic Hudson Senior Vice President and Executive Director of the Scenic Hudson Land Trust, said, "Scenic Hudson thanks the Duncan family for ensuring the fields they've farmed for nearly 250 years will remain available for agriculture for generations to come. These productive acres were a high priority of our Foodshed Conservation Plan, a blueprint for ramping up collaborative farmland-protection efforts to create a secure source of fresh, local food for the Hudson Valley and New York City. In addition, their conservation helps to preserve Dutchess County's agricultural heritage and scenic beauty, critical for sustaining its vibrant tourism economy. We're grateful to Dutchess County, Dutchess Land Conservancy and New York State for partnering with us to guarantee the land will continue providing these benefits."

State Agriculture Commissioner Richard A. Ball said, "Keeping viable farmland in agricultural use is critical to the future of the industry and the next generation of farmers in New York. It also ensures the sustainability of our food supply and strength of our economy. I thank the Duncan family and all of our partners - Dutchess County, Dutchess Land Conservancy, and Scenic Hudson - for taking this important step to permanently protect one of our State's most vital assets."