



County of Onondaga
Office of the County Executive

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Media Release

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County Executive Ryan McMahon, The New York Agriculture Land Trust & The Onondaga County Agriculture Council Announce the Protection of 83-acres of Farmland

Gary & Sharon Slate receive permanent conservation easement for their Clover Hill Farm

SYRACUSE, N.Y. – County Executive Ryan McMahon, The New York Agricultural Land Trust (NYALT) and the Onondaga County Agriculture Council announce the protection of the 83-acre Clover Hill Farm in the Town of Van Buren. The Land Trust and the Agriculture Council formed a unique partnership to safeguard the agricultural use of this property for future generations with a permanent conservation easement.

The Agriculture Council, created by the County Executive in 2012 to help promote and preserve agriculture within Onondaga County, provided \$37,500 in funding for the project and the Land Trust will hold the easement and ensure the agreement is upheld in perpetuity. This program fills a void in the current process for people looking to obtain a permanent conservation easement. Previously, small and mid-size farms were passed over due to the focus being on larger, hundred plus acre farms. Onondaga County recognized that void and worked to fill it with the help and partnership of NYALT. Landowners do not receive any financial compensation for giving up their development rights.

Clover Hill farm, located in the Town of Van Buren, originally began as a 17-acre parcel that Gary and Sharon Slate purchased in 1983. Over the next 30 years the Slates continued to grow their farm to its current 83 acres by purchasing several adjoining parcels that were poised to be sold as large building lots.

County Executive Ryan McMahon said, “The Agriculture Industry is a critically important part of our local economy representing over \$300 million dollars in economic activity every year. Protecting and

preserving our farmland is important to my administration and exactly the type of thing our local Agriculture Council should be supporting.” McMahon continued, “Thank you to our County Planning team, Chairman Knapp, the Onondaga County Agriculture Council and most importantly Gary and Sharon Slate for making this a reality.”

Recognizing the importance of their prime soils for agricultural production, the Slates were instrumental in advocating for the protection of their property. “We’ve worked over the years to save, use and protect this contiguous property for agriculture,” stated the Slates.

“The Onondaga County Agriculture Council is thrilled to partner with NYALT to help landowners realize their dream of protecting their land to ensure that it remains undeveloped and ideally in agricultural production forever,” said David Knapp, Onondaga County Legislator and Agriculture Council Co-Chair. “We are very fortunate to have landowners like Gary and Sharon Slate that are so dedicated to keeping their land in agriculture that they are willing to donate their development rights, which provides a tremendous opportunity to conserve valuable farmland at a fraction of the cost that would be required to purchase those development rights. And having a land trust like NYALT, that is committed to preserving farmland and willing to work with landowners and hold and steward their donated easements, helps to protect the long term viability of our very strong agricultural economy.”

The protection of Clover Hill Farm with a conservation easement is an amazing gift to the community and the Land Trust is honored to work with both the Slates and the Ag Council on this project. The Land Trust and Onondaga County celebrated this success at the Clover Hill Farm in Baldwinsville.

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