

# Connecticut River Joint Commissions

Giving voice to New England's great river

New Hampshire - Connecticut River Valley Resource Commission

Vermont - Connecticut River Watershed Advisory Commission



## Bi-state Meeting

### The Farm Bill and the Connecticut River Watershed of VT & NH

Monday April 15, 2024

#### **View Recording of Speakers**

<https://www.katv.org/vod/forums/2024/newmontfarm20240415>

#### **Meeting Summary**

##### **Welcome:**

Connecticut River Joint Commissions (CRJC) is a bi-state organization dedicated to helping preserve the visual, ecological, and working landscape of the Connecticut River Valley while encouraging and maintaining economic viability throughout. The purpose of this meeting is to bring together leadership from the two states (Vermont and New Hampshire) and farmers to discuss the state of agriculture in the valley and what we can do to strengthen the future of farming.

##### **Senator Peter Welch:**

The Farm Bill is hard to get passed because there is so much that goes into it.

- Recognizes that there is a tug of war with funds and which commodities they should go to.
- Big push to increase the reference price of commodities because dairy farmers face high costs and low payments.
- Mentioned that farmers are the custodians of the land, so they need to be paid better to help continue. Improvements in the Farm Bill need to make it affordable and beneficial to farmers to help reduce emissions and improve soil quality in the environment.
- There must be a change to crop insurance for vegetable farmers. Crops were wiped out by flooding, impossible to tell how many crops.
- Threat to farm bill, difficulty from freedom caucus to cut spending.

##### **Secretary Anson Tebbetts:**

Started by touching upon new census data, all of the New England states have lost farmland since 2017. Some priorities in the farm bill are regional conservation partnership programs. Meat regulations are complicated between the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the state. Need to support block grants for processing facilities. The Northeast Dairy Innovation Center is important to New England, it returned 30 million to the state through it.

##### **Vermont and New Hampshire Representatives of respective Farm Service Agency (FSA) and Natural Resources Conservation Districts (NRCS):**

Lots of importance is placed on conserving prime agricultural lands and wetlands. Partnerships with regional conservation groups upstream can have a great impact on water quality downstream.

Crop loss has been a big topic for the past few years – still working on in 2022. Expect to see 2023 soon. Lots of farms are either uninsured or underinsured. Last year was very difficult in NH. Congress severely underfunded crop loss programs. In VT, there are significant opportunities through all our NRCS programs – one thing the agency is focusing on is equity and opportunity. Also, the Inflation Reduction Act includes funds that address climate-smart agriculture/forestry opportunities, normally it's \$300 million but this year it's \$1.5 billion. Crop insurance is vital to our vegetable and specialty crop industry and fruit growers.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **Nitrogen in the CT River:**

Agriculture from VT and NH contributes 2-3% annually of Nitrogen input. Other nitrogen comes from grass runoff, urban development, dog waste, and other sources. Also, discussion about Long Island Sound and wastewater treatment facility plants contributing to nitrogen in the river. There is funding that can help both.

### **Dam Relicensing:**

Currently going through the process of re-licensing of the three dams on the lower Connecticut River in VT and NH (i.e., Wilder, Bellows Falls, Vernon). Things going into the licensing determine how the company will manage the dam for the next 40 years. They will be peaking less but running the river more.

### **Climate Impacts:**

Climate change has caused more extreme events. Questions about reploughing fields that had silt on them. The answer involved contacting local conservation districts. More comments about how crop insurance needs to be re-worked to be more beneficial for farmers in general. Other comments mentioned the unpredictability of weather having a large impact on fruit farming, in response discussion of need for a base amount of insurance coverage.

### **Conservation of Agricultural Lands:**

Not just easements, but also conservation practices. There is a small grant program in NH – we've done two through Grafton County – small amounts, \$10,000 – for conservation projects on a small scale. Upper Valley Land Trust is a big player in putting conservation easements on land in the region. Several grant opportunities there as well. Smartly reclaiming farmland.

### **Future meetings:**

- Erosion concerns from hydro and boat wakes
- How can agriculture respond to climate change – what do they do?
- How can we regionalize competition, aggregate products for larger markets?
- There are growth opportunities for ag – sheep / goats / veggies.
- Employment – immigration issues are a BIG problem for keeping farms viable.
- Crop insurance is inadequate – need to look at payment for ecosystem services.

This was very beneficial – people would like this to be a yearly meeting and see how we've progressed.

## **Full Meeting Minutes**

### **Marie Caduto and Jeff Miller, Welcome and introductions:**

Connecticut River Joint Commissions (CRJC) is a bi-state organization dedicated to helping preserve the visual, ecological, and working landscape of the Connecticut River Valley while encouraging and maintaining economic viability throughout. The purpose of this meeting is to bring together leadership from the two states and farmers to discuss the state of agriculture in the valley and what we can do to strengthen the future of farming.

- Made points about Valley incorporating 4 states and Canada draining into the Connecticut River Within 200 miles of 11 million people.
- Many products are being grown and lots of agriculture. Important to both states.

### **Beth Kennet:**

Agriculture doesn't divide NH and VT, it unites them. The impact that the river has on our lives is incredible.

### **Senator Peter Welch:**

First started on the agriculture committee in the 80s. The Farm Bill has always been hard to get passed. There is so much that is in it. The farmer programs have regional interests with tug of war with what the interests are like dairy, commodity (corn, soybeans, etc.). Dairy farmers face high costs and low payments. Recognition that farming that is done in the region is important for economy, way of life, and cultural values. Big push to increase reference price for commodities which is a significant expense. Nutrition program cost is significant. Dealing with inflation. Farmers help feed America. Improvements in farm bill need to make it affordable and beneficial to farmers to help reduce emissions and improve quality of soil in the environment. Managing to get conservation money to help increase conservation benefits. Farmers are the custodians of the landscape. We need to have public policies that help farmers continue to do that. Have to change crop insurance for vegetable farmers. Crops wiped out by flooding. Impossible to tell how many crops, use last year as a base to see how much you should be compensated. Threat to farm bill, difficulty from freedom caucus to cut spending. Won't support anything that doesn't include significant cuts. Also want to cut provisions in the inflation reduction act that benefits farms. Enormous amount of benefit to getting the Farm Bill. Hope is that there is a unity of interests between republicans and democrats among the farm bill for all types of farming. Usual tug of war with respect to farm bill. Added impediment of extreme minority wing on republican side. Hope of consensus overall. No prediction of when or how, but they're working on it very hard. Finish with gratitude for the work for farmers. Most of us are not aware of what you do and how hard you work. Family farms, love of the land, appreciation of work.

### **Open to questions:**

*What about continued funding for the dairy business Innovation center?*

Will keep this, they are doing really good work. Innovation center is helpful and is confident they will be able to keep it. Covers 11 states.

*What if we took money from the student loan forgiveness and put it into the farm bill?*

You're not alone, but far from the majority. Taking money from one and putting it in another will start a big fight. A fair question but need a majority for it to happen.

*When does the current farm bill expire?*

September 30<sup>th</sup>, much better if we get the stability of a five-year farm bill.

*H2A heavily penalized for trying to get legal workers for their farms. Getting fined for little things. Efforts of immigration reforms were pointed at illegal aliens. One worker will never have a chance at getting a green card.*

Paying more for H2A does not fix the problem. The issue on immigration has gotten very politicized. Each party uses it to get an advantage at the voting booth. We need to have a system that does not have huge hassles on people that need the workers.

Pains me that our political process is not deliberate for farmers. Workers are like family, very close with each other. Value in being close with workers, the heart that needs to be part of the policies.

*Crop insurance for apple growers is broken. Categories need to be eliminated.*

Early frost made people lose 70% of their crop. Reporting requirements made it impossible for them to complete it. Needs to be based on past year's crop yield to make it easier and streamlined.

**Steve Taylor:**

Introductions of many people involved in local politics.

**Secretary Anson Tebbetts:**

Started by thanking Senator Welch. Touched upon new census data. Since 2017, All New England states have lost farmland. Dairy is number one 65% related to dairy. Priorities in farm bill are regional conservation partnership programs. Mill orders are important engaged with Cabot. Meat inspection, supporting personal inspection. Meat regulations are complicated between USDA and the state. Support block grants for processing facilities. Northeast dairy Innovation Center is important to New England, returned 30 million to the state through it. Need for goat's and sheep's milk. On the national level, Ag research is really important, animal disease is really important, Conservation and climate is important, and quality is important.

**Open to Questions:**

*Unfortunate that they didn't mention the vegetable sector. Vegetable farms don't fill out the surveys, so they aren't accounted for. The economics of veggie farmers are a lot different from other ag sectors. Spend most of their income locally.*

About to launch a program for the produce sector. Infrastructure includes this.

Produce grant, working on it to grow this sector.

*Question about where is maple headed? What are the trends/sustainability for growth?*

Attended a listening session in Hardwick this winter. Similar to dairy – there was confusion how price was set, depends on season, Canada, etc. Frustration on pricing to packer's vs retail. Technology (reverse osmosis) has advanced tremendously in the last few years and some people are down to only having to boil a few hours a day. 50% of national maple crops are from Vermont. Value added – maple sugar is being added more and more as an alternative natural source of sugar. How was the crop this year? One person in the crowd said it was the best ever. Encouraging news, particularly up north. Final maple figures come out in June.

*The 2022 Agency of Ag water quality report does not mention the CT River at all – can they include in the 2023 report?*

We will look into this.

### **Vermont and New Hampshire Representatives of respective Farm Service Agency (FSA) and Natural Resources Conservation Districts (NRCS)**

Focus is on water quality. Lots of importance is placed on conserving prime ag lands and wetlands. Partnerships with regional conservation groups upstream can have a great impact on water quality downstream. NRCS offers opportunities for our producers of maple to look at their efficiencies and systems for possible improvements. Extends into other areas like small, diversified farms and what those smaller landowners are producing. Focus on water quality and soil health – great to see cover crops on the rise up.

Crop loss has been a big topic for the past few years – still working on 2022. Expect to see 2023 soon. Lots of farms are either uninsured or underinsured. Last year was very difficult in NH. Congress severely underfunded crop loss programs then. Going forward, hopeful for the 2024 season, but long term it is unsustainable. Let's hope for a great, normal year.

Vermont – significant opportunities through all our NRCS programs – one thing the agency is focusing on is equity and opportunity. Doing a lot to make sure the technical assistance, etc. fit large and small operations. Important that regardless of size, all producers have the same opportunities. Also, the IRA funds that address climate-smart ag/forestry opportunities, one program, normally it's \$300m but this year it's \$1.5 billion. Conservation partnership programs – take additional funds and keep the projects moving forward. Farmers.gov is the website – find out more there.

Crop insurance is absolutely vital to our vegetable and specialty crop industry and our fruit growers. There are other processes outside of the Farm Bill that is looking at that program. Right now, it looks at calamities rather than disasters on a regular basis.

### **Open to Questions:**

*There are funds coming to CT River Valley from NRCS, what about the CSP program, does that have more popularity elsewhere? Not sure if it's here much?*

In NH, yes. It's popular here. For the past 18 months across New England, we have worked to increase awareness among our producers to know more about that program so it's looking at diversity of cover crops and other ways to increase this coverage.

In VT, we've returned this allocation in the past because the demand wasn't there. Over the past few years, we built CSP Assist which recognized at the time that the minimum CSP payment was \$1,500. That's been updated now to \$4,000 which encourages smaller operators to come in. What it also did was provide incentives to producers to get a CSP application but also gets them into the system to apply for more programs. Last year was the first year we were oversubscribed, this year we are already oversubscribed. More opportunities here for NRCS programs, but they need to fit in to our states.

*In regard to crop insurance programs, it's been pretty abysmal for fruit/veg growers. We have an apple orchard. We got 10 cents on the dollar for loss for 2022. For people to not be insured? That's poor administration of the program, how do we get more farmers to get crop insurance?*

Risk management agency handles main crops. On NH side, we had hoped to make changes for 2025 but yes, it is a work in progress. FSA is undergoing changes as well. We recognize it's not working the way it should and there are efforts in place to improve the program. VT side, yes, it hasn't been established what the improvements will be, so we aren't sure what direction they are going in.

*Did you talk about the local working groups? I was at a national meeting (National Council of Farmers Cooperatives) in March and inspired to hear a staffer talk about equipment and wanting to do more grassroots and local working groups rather than a top-down approach. We had input on different ideas that we need money at the local level and what I see in the UV here, for water quality – I think we are going to need more infrastructure in regard to lagoons and having more capacity and can multiple farmers share a lagoon. Over in NY state, they needed more waste facilities too.*

NRCS was founded during the Great Depression. Locally led conservation initiatives come from the Farm Bill to direct the work of conservation work at the local level. In VT there are Natural Resource Conservation Districts (NRCDs) to guide and affect conservation at the local level. Farm Bill directs money to NRCS, and we try, but NRCS has a shotgun approach to getting the word out. We could do a better job of prioritizing the work we do. We are going through a process right now called Locally Led Conservation Delivery. Each year we get \$8-10m in VT to do merit-based projects for ag. We are working on doing better for prioritizing how those funds can be targeted via the locally led conservation groups.

On the NH Side, we haven't been oversubscribed like in VT, in many years we have had to go out and find people to apply. This year it's changed; we've seen more producers come in the door. Lots of info sessions. We just wrapped up our local workgroup meetings led by our local conservation districts – focus is dictated by what they hear from these meetings. In the coming year, each of these local workgroups will talk to the state level to share what

they see as the biggest concerns – water quality, soil health, protection of crop land, etc. We are not yet oversubscribed but it's catching up quickly.

*Back to the additional funding from the IRA – lots of programs require matching funds but the match pools are not increasing to cover all of these programs.*

That is correct – the regional project programs do require that, but some people are partnering together to work on certain opportunities, and they can bring in funds from other federal agencies. They are also allowing more in-kind matches and opened it up to new groups to apply. Historically you needed a match, but now more people are being more creative for ways to meet that match.

*In NRCS programs, we get siloed. You're one farm applying for one need, but there's opportunity for overlap and partnerships – ag industry, food processing, etc. I get there's bureaucratic oversight and limitations, but what opportunities or ideas do you see that would fill a hole that would be insurmountable for a farm to improve on their own?*

This locally led conservation effort is not the end-all be-all. It's a lot of partnerships – the beauty of locally led conservation delivery is to have these districts be able to look outside the box and find how each of these areas can fit the gaps.

*This has been a good conversation – check in with your local conservation districts.*

### **Cory Ross, Windham County NRCD, Agriculture and Nitrogen Loading Project:**

Agriculture from VT and NH contribute 2-3% of all nitrogen in the CT river. Questions about where the rest of the nitrogen is coming from – all sorts of things from grass runoff, urban development, and dog waste.

The benefit of this is that the Long Island Sound is directing money far upstream to help us – this is the match funding that can be used for other programs. Yes – we contribute a small amount of the overall nitrogen, but we can take advantage of the funding opportunity to fix this.

Wastewater treatment plants make up a majority of the nitrogen, there is different funding for this.

Question – on your farms you have nitrogen sources that you already have that you can take advantage of, as well as nitrogen sources you already have that will not add to the watershed. I'm in the WRJ Conservation District and offering to help others out with that.

### **Discussion, Nitrogen Loading:**

(Rick) Maximum Daily Load, Long Island Sound – you gotta think about what's going on downstream and how we can be a positive impact to counter the negative impact. Best management practices can solve this.

One thing we need is to hold onto sediment and water storage on site – keep that nitrogen here in the existing landscape, not in the river.

Comment: cover crops are important to reduce nitrogen and when funding for cover crops, but the NRCS runs out of funds for cover crops. This should be addressed.

Comment: we are now allowing water to divert earlier so it can soak into the land, create a small reservoir, but these kinds of things can only do so much – cover crops, buffering, etc. If the water is already coming down at a higher rate than it has in the past, and it can be abated higher and further up the headwaters we can't expect the farmland management to manage all of that with increased weather events.

Comment: Judy Aron (NH Rep, Chair of NH Ag Committee) while I can appreciate letting water accumulate, but our problem was that big rain events broke people's bogs and we had no real stream management practices. They accumulated lots of woody debris and then extreme flooding happens. I'm not sure I'm convinced that letting woody debris build up in our streams is a good idea. There needs to be a balance to how it's managed.

Comment: Farmers aren't going to be putting debris into streams, but the storms are going to pull that debris into culverts, clog it up, etc. This is why we are putting in huge box culverts. What do you recommend to prevent shear on steep banks on streams? Should we put cutting trees that get too big? Lots of debris into a stream when a shear comes down and dams the stream. It will slowly work that debris out and move it down stream. How do you manage steep banks on streams to prevent sheers?

### **Discussion, Dam Relicensing:**

Changing gears, let's talk about dam relicensing. Currently going through the process for relicensing. Things going into the licensing determine how the company will manage the dam for the next 40 years. It might be rec access, enhancing other things in the area, but also for farmers – how the dams contribute to erosion along the river and the serious loss of land. In the course of this relicensing, we negotiate a change in operations. They will be peaking less but running the river more. How water moves through the CT river is going to be different in the next 40 years – it will be moving over the turbines 24/7 now rather than at peak times. Once the river starts moving the tributaries will move more and the sediment will look different. Higher peak silt coming from falls upstream, we don't know what is going to happen north of the Wilder Dam. Anecdotally, there is more erosion farther upstream. We feel the company should be held responsible for this and work to mitigate these changes. Some way to get money out of this for-profit company into landowners' hands to protect this farmland. However more of a bigger pain in the ass we can all be, we communicate to the for-profit company that there are a lot of people in the valley who are paying attention. If we get a shitty license, we are ready to throw down on behalf of the communities and the people who are actually on the river. This gets the company to the table, and we can advocate, but none of that happens if the people along the rivers are not communicating. This is where it is important for people to share their stories – share what has happened on your land since 1979. During that period of relicensing, they were concerned about erosion, and they got a US Army CoE study to show that the dams were major sources of erosion along the river. The dam companies ignored this, and they did nothing to prevent erosion. In 1986, Congress passed a law to bring environmental issues on a more level playing field and we could require them to assess erosion and

provide mitigation over this next licensing period. My wish would be that they are monitoring erosion annually over the next 40 years and it can identify the rate of erosion and for landowners along river where erosion is, there are mitigation funds from the company to compensate that landowner/buy it outright or to pay for bank stabilization.

Question: how would that work? Reassessment after so many years? Answer: it depends on what we can FIRC to agree to. But you have to stay after them and stay on them otherwise these companies will try to ignore their responsibilities. FIRC has an enforcement arm that we would be able to call to hold them to these things. I.e., develop an erosion control plan within 3 years that includes blah blah blah to be completed annually, etc. etc. etc. Depends on the plan. Follow-up: So, we should be advocating for a monitoring program as part of the licensing? Answer: it's scaffolded – use local landowner story about erosion, towns comment on another level, and CRJC/states/others comment at a higher level. Share your story, your experience, and what you want the company to do about it.

The most complicated place is above Wilder because of what comes in at 15 Mile Falls – lots of sediment coming from there. Vernon is better from what Wilder is doing, but Wilder has larger peaks that are harder to predict because of 15 Mile Falls. They have not had to provide any analysis for this change, but they need to be held responsible for what it means to the river and mitigating the impact.

Question: any value to farms who are not right on the river to comment and weigh in? Is there standing? Answer: no, there is no standing unless you are intervening. You can comment and tell your story, but interveners gain third-party status. The project area comes up into the mouths of a tributary – if you are on a tributary please comment, but erosion coming up tributaries is not key for these dams.

Question: where would you find a map of this? Answer: in Cory's survey there's a map. Also, on [ctriver.org/hydro](http://ctriver.org/hydro) there is a map.

Question: when does 15 Mile Falls get relicensed (last licensed in 2002)? Who has control over the NH Charitable Fund mitigation fund? Answer: 15 Mile expires in 2042, so they will start 2037. Mitigation Enhancement Fund via the NH Charitable Foundation; they were required to put in \$18 million and almost all of that has been allocated and we are halfway through that license.

Question: how much money needs to be spent/made available? How is there a way to know how much? There needs to be a dollar amount. Answer: we aren't quite at the end, so we have to make the argument of the need and then have the conversation about how to meet that need and that's where we have to do that math. FIRC is not going to volunteer up money, so people need to negotiate with them. CRJC said it should be a % of their profits over a 4-year average which is a better idea than a flat \$ amount. Between these 3 projects, profit is between \$4-12million a year. The language we include is very important because if it's too broad, we won't get a comprehensive result.

Question: I irrigate directly from the river, and what about recreational wakes? People talk about erosion from the dam, but on a hot summer day they hold the water back and then when there's

lots of rec boats, they create wakes, and many are creating 8” high waves and I watch the shore become eroded and the riverbank vibrates. Then at the end of the day, the water is opened up and I watch the sediment go down the river. I’ve seen entire truck loads move down the river. Haven’t heard much discussion but it’s serious. Answer: rivers naturally erode, but in the aforementioned ACOE study, boat wakes were near the top of the list. We can’t hold them responsible for everything, but we can hold them responsible for what they do that relates to it. Follow-up: is there some way to address this? It’s NH’s river, so what can be done about it? Answer: the CRJC tries to coordinate the two states to work together. This is a perfect conversation for both states to have and we’ll add it to our list of concerns because it will take both states to work together on this. Great future conversation. There are some NH laws about wakes, so it depends. But I don’t see a lot of enforcement. (BUT! Great River Hydro could provide more funding to fund enforcement).

Question: Any talking points you want people to hit when they add comments? Towns understand problems, but they might now know how to make these points. Answer: we have river stewards on both sides of the river, and we have asked them to draft comments for review. We are working with them but for individuals, just telling your story goes a long way. Ideas, recommendations, etc. – put those in.

CTRiver.org CRJC.org

### **Discussion, Climate impacts:**

Climate change has caused more extreme events more often.

Question: what do we do? Do I re-plow 45 acres that had 4 feet of silt on it? Is that a good risk? Should I turn it to pasture? Answer: engage with your local conservation districts, they are there to help you.

Question: we are converting crops, but crop insurance is based on tracts – it should be based on the field, not the tract. Answer: We as a community are looking at farmers as part of our ecosystem for solutions (to protect the rest of us) which is great, but we need to be compensated for that service. What if, as we have these funding programs and insurance that does not work, we compensate farmers on years they flood – when we want them to flood their fields to protect downstream – how do we compensate farmers for doing that? I am throwing this idea out there, because that’s a partial fix for crop insurance. Does that make any sense to anyone?

Comment: the unpredictability of weather has hurt as a small fruit grower, but the unpredictability of funding is just as bad. Growing season might be longer, but not all usable. If government agencies could create something easier, more clear-cut. River flooding, sure, but streams flood even more extremely – not covered. We had a crop die with 8hrs of extreme cold. Hard to predict. Maybe a basic universal percentage – hard to quantify, but something!

Comment: had to deal with crop insurance, had a payout but discovered that the right hand doesn’t always know what the left hand is doing – hard to manage your funds if you don’t know what’s available. What insurance program can be put into place?

Question: is there a cap on funding for crop insurance? (no one thought so, but someone said that specialty crops have a cap of \$300k)

Comment: on a policy maker's side, how do people incentivize small businesses and sales of local products on a regional level? Better to buy NH apples than California apples, for example.

30 by 30 – should be calling it 50 by 50 – Get local production of 30% of the New England's food by 2030. But in order to feed 30% of us in New England, we need more farmland than we are currently using. How do you balance the needs we have of feeding people but also protecting them from flooding? Response: the ag land is so important, but the community cannot expect you to bear all the cost of that.

Comment about competition: I work with the Hanover Co-Op on lots of things – they are holistic in their approach – housing, farming, jobs. etc. This farm here transports a lot of milk, but they aggregate. How do we aggregate other crops/farm products? Independent grocers provide food for 1/3 of the country – how do we get them at a fair price for everyone?

### **Discussion, Conservation of Agricultural Lands.**

Not just easements, but also conservation practices. There is a small grant program in NH – we've done two through Grafton County – small amounts, \$10k – for conservation projects on a small scale. UVLT is a big player in putting conservation easements on land in the region. Number of grant opportunities there as well. Reclaiming farmland in a smart way.

Comment from UVLT: back to the dam opportunity and the mitigation fund. Some of that money did go towards land conservation, a great opportunity to match funds for more conservation, especially in NH. LCHIP helps, but there are requirements associated that do not meet farmer's needs (public access, etc.). When you are commenting, it would be helpful to mention land conservation and what % of funds we used to conserve land. Bellows Farms Dam also owns the great meadows, so I would say to preserve that land. Get to know us in your communities – we work with farmers on both sides of the river, in 45 towns.

The most permanent thing we can do is to put it into an easement. What about a deed restriction? Sure. But 2 generations later it won't matter, and no one will remember. With a conservation easement, when you sell, the easement makes the land more available for the next purchaser. It lowers the value, but it's a way to sell the equity in the farm forever.

Comment: there are three of us here who have conserved their land through UVLT, and we can answer some questions

Question: what motivated you to do it? A: So, we could continue as a farm! We have conserved 3 different parcels. People are afraid it will restrict your operations, that is not the case for us at all.

There are restrictions – the big ones – no subdivision, no buildings except in a defined area, and follow best land use management practices.

UVLT again: another farmer in the UV (veggie farm) conserved his farm, and his comment was, well, it's forever how can you think about that? Well, I drove to 12A and saw that those developments are

also permanent. So, I wanted to make a permanent decision too. Some are selling it to protect the land. Some protect it to purchase more land and subdivide/flip. Others sell conservation easements to buy down debt. Everyone's reason to put land into conservation is different, but everyone believes in the farming they are doing and conserving the resources and providing ecological benefits to their communities.

Comment: I agree with everything she just said. But I thought of one more: if you have children, and some are interested in the farm and some aren't, you can settle a huge argument in the future because it'll have to be a farm and they can't sell it off.

### **Discussion, Future Meetings:**

Bigger picture things for future meetings:

- Erosion concerns from hydro and boat wakes
- How can agriculture respond to climate change – what do they do?
- How can we regionalize competition, aggregate products for larger markets
- There are growth opportunities for ag – sheep / goats / veggies
- Employment – immigration issues are a BIG problem for keeping farms viable
- Crop insurance is inadequate – need to look at payment for ecosystem services

This was a very beneficial – people would like this to be a yearly meeting and see how we've progressed.