FARMLAND

Kestrel Land Trust conserves, cares for and connects people to the forests, farms, and riverways that make the Pioneer Valley a great place to live. Our strategic goal for the Valley’s farmland is to conserve locally and regionally important farmland to secure the foundation of a healthy and sustainable regional food system. Kestrel also coordinates The Forever Farmland Initiative, a regional partnership of land trusts and farming organizations working to ensure that farmland and farming endures as part of our region’s heritage.

As a landowner, you can help by learning about options for managing or conserving your own farmland. Your land may be valuable to you because:

- You own and operate farmland and are looking for funds to invest into your farm or your retirement.
- You want to know that your farmland will continue to be farmed, even if the land passes from your family.
- You love the Valley’s farmland because it grows local fresh food and is part of the area’s rural beauty.

Farmland at Risk!

Some of the best farmland in the world is right here in the Valley. A growing enthusiasm for eating locally has fueled a renewed appreciation for local farmland. At the same time, open farmland is the most vulnerable of all land types to housing and commercial development. As farms transfer from one generation to the next, the risk increases. Development pressures on farmland in the Pioneer Valley are nearly as great as in the Boston-Metro area. Once farmland is paved, it’s gone forever. Meanwhile, more than 220,000 Valley residents lack adequate access to food.

“Good farmers, who take seriously their duties as stewards … contribute to the welfare of society in more ways than society … even knows. These farmers produce valuable goods, of course; but they also conserve soil, water, and wildlife, and they conserve open space and scenery.”

— WENDELL BERRY

WHAT CAN I DO? >>
The New England Food Vision

At Kestrel Land Trust, we are inspired by The New England Food Vision, which calls for our region to build the capacity to produce at least 50% of our own food by 2060 while supporting healthy food for all, sustainable farming and fishing, and thriving communities. In its Wildlands and Woodlands, Farmlands and Communities report, Harvard Forest says this would require all current New England farmland (currently around 7% of the landscape) to be conserved for active agriculture, and considers an expansion of farmland though clearing woodlands that have grown on former farmland.

One Acre of Prime Farmland Can Produce:

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<th>Produce</th>
<th>Amount</th>
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<td>or</td>
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Agricultural Preservation Restriction

The Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR) Program is a voluntary program administered by the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources (MDAR), which permanently protects farmland with fertile soils (a finite resource) from development. The program offers to pay farmland owners the difference between the "development value" and the "agricultural value" of their farmland in exchange for a permanent deed restriction that ensures that the land remains in agricultural use forever. Kestrel Land Trust works with landowners to facilitate the APR process in partnership with MDAR and local municipalities.

How You Can Help

LANDOWNERS: Farmland owners can choose to conserve their land under an Agricultural Preservation Restriction or a Conservation Restriction; through a donation of the land or a restriction on the land, through a bequest or life estate on the land in your will, or a sale or bargain sale of the land to a conservation organization. Each option may provide various tax benefits. Kestrel can help you determine which option is right for your land, your goals, and your situation.

EVERYONE: If you don’t own a farm but love farmland and local food, become a member of Kestrel Land Trust or make a financial contribution to the Forever Farmland Initiative which supports farmland conservation. You can also support local farmland by buying locally grown produce, especially food grown on conserved farmland. Look for the Preserved Farmland sign!

Are You Ready to Learn More?
Landowners, visit kestreltrust.org/conserve/process/ or call (413) 549-1097.
Donors, visit kestreltrust.org/give/donate