



SOUTH HERO LAND TRUST

Newsletter

Autumn 2012

Conserving Historic Sawyer Bay Farm



A view of the Sawyer Bay Farm barns from the north side of the property

South Hero Land Trust is incredibly excited to announce that we are working to conserve the historic Sawyer Bay Farm on the west shore of South Hero! This amazing farm property is comprised of a total of 183 acres bordered by Sunset View Road to the north, West Shore Road to the west and Station Road to the south.

The property has 1,100 feet of frontage on Lake Champlain, and extensive barns and other infrastructure. With approximately 140 acres of tillable land, 35 acres of pasture land, and 90% of the soils classified as prime and statewide agricultural soils, SHLT and conservation partner the Vermont Land Trust (VLT) believe that this farm has enormous potential as an agricultural resource in the Champlain Islands.

Sawyer Bay Farm has been on the open market for the last few years. South Hero Land Trust and the Vermont Land Trust have been in active dialogue with the owner since late 2009. The conservation organizations now have an agreement to purchase the property and hope to complete the transaction this year!



Broad, flat fields could support a myriad of crops

Because the property is so large, and has a lot of great infrastructure including barns, fencing, and water lines, there is the potential for one or more great farms to operate on the premises. See page 3 for more details about the potential disposition of Sawyer Bay Farm.

SOUTH HERO



LAND TRUST

a non-profit organization dedicated to protecting the farmland, woodland, natural and recreational areas, and open spaces which give South Hero its distinctive quality of life.

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Inspiration, Reflection, and Relationships

A Note from our Executive Director



Photo credit: Bill Tipper

SHLT Annual Meeting speaker Peter Forbes & Steve Robinson embrace

There was a lot of hugging going on after Peter Forbes spoke at SHLT's Annual Meeting on a beautiful Sunday afternoon in late July. Please don't think I am being cute or sentimental. I, and I think others, felt a palpable need to embrace and feel part of a community in that moment after his speech. I wish we could put every picture taken that day in this newsletter, so you could see the range of emotions on peoples' faces as they listened to Peter speak. There was concentration, concern, knowing, enthusiasm, and joy.

"Conserving land here in South Hero is truly about conserving relationships between people and place."

~Peter Forbes

Peter reminded us that "*our relationship to land is the place where we start to build a healthy culture.*" I feel so fortunate that this man spoke to us in such a passionate yet grounded way, at such a critical time for South Hero Land Trust. Just as the first guests began to arrive that day, SHLT's Board was finishing a vote that would enable the possibility of conserving Sawyer Bay Farm. Peter could not have spoken more clearly to me that day. I heard him tell me that we must think big, we must not be scared, and we must create and nurture opportunities to prosper as a community that believes in the value of utilizing the land for agriculture in the present and for the future.

As we carefully move forward with the Sawyer Bay Farm Project in the next few months, we'll be coming to you with much more information about the project. We'll be asking for your much needed help to acquire and conserve this property. We won't be able to do it without you, so please stay tuned!

Whether it's feeling inspired by the likes of Peter Forbes, or getting out on the land at the myriad summer events that took place this year, or dreaming of a brighter agricultural future on the Sawyer Bay Farm, South Hero Land Trust has had a lot of reasons for hugging this summer! Thanks to you.

Minner Hobbs



SHLT Gathers VT Leaders in Agriculture to Envision the Potential of the Sawyer Bay Farm

When South Hero Land Trust and Vermont Land Trust first realized that our dream of conserving Sawyer Bay Farm might become possible, we quickly realized that this project had the potential to open doors to the wider agricultural community. Vermont is at the leading edge of food and agriculture innovation, and the demand for local food is still growing. A large parcel like Sawyer Bay Farm, with excellent infrastructure, ready to be transferred to new ownership, has the potential to become a very special place.

“South Hero is a community that embraces and supports its farmers... and is within easy reach of markets in the greater Burlington area.”

~Jon Ramsay, Vermont Land Trust

The Vermont Land Trust (VLT) quickly identified this property as an excellent candidate for their “Farmland Access Program,” designed to assist new and expanding farm enterprises in gaining affordable access to farmland. Jon

Ramsay, Director of the Farmland Access Program states, “South Hero is a community that embraces and supports its farmers, so this is a desirable area for farm seekers... The farm has excellent soils, broad flat fields, solid farm infrastructure, and is within easy reach of markets in the greater Burlington area.”

SHLT and VLT staff, and approximately ten Vermont leaders in agriculture, ranging from local farmers to representatives from UVM Extension, the VT Agency of Agriculture, and the Intervale Center, visited the property. The consistent sentiment expressed by the group was that the farmland and infrastructure was of very high quality and that there was endless potential.

The Sawyer Bay Farm provides the opportunity for a mixed use, diversified agricultural outcome. Providing a single farmer or multiple farmers access to this land are both options VLT and SHLT are carefully examining. Affordable access to farmland was described by the Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund, Farm to Plate stakeholders, as a serious barrier for new farmers or those seeking to grow and expand. The strategic plan of the Sustainable Jobs Fund states that “productive farmland, especially in relatively close proximity to market areas, is often too expensive for a farmer to purchase...”

If SHLT and VLT are able to acquire the farmland, VLT will lead a Request for Proposal process to match a qualified farmer or farmers with this agricultural resource. We’ll be in communication with you all over the next few months as this project continues to evolve.



Open fields give way to a rise at the back of the property, with views of Lake Champlain and the Adirondak Mtns

Value-Added Dairy Processing

A Feasibility Study for Grand Isle County

Dairy farms are an essential part of the agricultural landscape of Vermont and the Champlain Islands. While dairy farmers are rarely found selling their products directly to customers at farmers' markets and local stores, they keep the rolling hillsides and gentle valleys open and in agricultural use. They also support a host of agricultural businesses, from seed companies to milk processors.

South Hero Land Trust is embarking on an exciting investigation of the potential for value-added dairy processing in Grand Isle County. This study will be a first small step toward opportunities for farmers in our community to pasteurize and bottle milk. The information provided by the study may also lead to opportunities for making cheese or yogurt, and for retailing products directly to consumers.



Raising hay, corn, and other crops for dairy cows keeps thousands of South Hero's open acres in agriculture

After receiving a generous grant to fund a feasibility study, we have hired Rosalie Wilson Business Development Services, a Vermont consulting company, to research the potential for individual farms or a collective group of farms to open a milk bottling facility in Grand Isle County. Over the next several months the consultants, with assistance from South Hero Land Trust, will review the resources of our region, do market research, and create financial estimates for building and running a facility. We'll be sharing the results of the study in future newsletters.

Farmers' Market Feasts

Local Chefs offer Tips and Recipes



Chef Jackie Major prepares dishes with fresh tomatoes at our August cooking demonstration

Local chefs and bakers joined SHLT in hosting three amazing cooking demonstrations at the South Hero Farmers' Market this summer. They showcased techniques and recipes featuring local vegetables, fruits, and meats found at the farmers' market. Many thanks to Matt Bartle, Chrissie Mack, and Jackie Major for being our guest chefs. Thanks also to Blue Heron Farm, Crescent Bay Farm, MR Harvest, Pomykala Farm, and Savage Gardens for donating all of our fresh ingredients! Here's one great recipe that Jackie and Matt prepared.

Candied Tomato and Sweet Chili Jam

ingredients:

1 pint cherry tomatoes
1/2 cup sugar
1/4 cup water
1 1/2 cups finely diced peppers (1-2 bell and 1-2 smaller spicier peppers)
1/8 cup white vinegar or rice vinegar

instructions:

Add tomatoes, sugar, and water to a small saucepan. Cook at medium high heat until most of the tomatoes have released their liquid. Add the peppers and vinegar. Cook until reduced to a jammy consistency (about 25-35 min). Great served over soft goat or cream cheese with crackers or crostini.

For more recipes from our August cooking demonstration, visit our website!

Butterfly Chases at Round Pond

Finding Wonder in the Natural World

Think about butterflies landing on a flower, frogs hopping, and hollow logs. Close your eyes and picture mist rising over a field on a summer morning. Is your sense of magic engaged? Katherine Paterson, award winning children's author, recently visited South Hero. She spoke about children's inborn sense of wonder, and the importance of encouraging and celebrating curiosity.

Paterson's talk was inspiring for SHLT. We were planning a series of children's walks at Round Pond State Park. We hoped these "Butterfly Chases" would encourage families to go outdoors and explore the natural world. Beyond exercise and exploration, we wanted children to experience wonder outdoors.

Another author, conservationist Rachel Carson, wrote that "a child's world is fresh and new and beautiful, full of wonder and excitement." Like many parents and teachers today, she was concerned that this way of seeing the world is dimmed or lost by adulthood. Carson suggests that by exploring the natural world together, children and adults will discover and rediscover the "joy, excitement and mystery of the world we live in."

South Hero has abundant natural beauty and resources for experiencing excitement and curiosity outdoors. At SHLT, we hope that opportunities for play and child-led explorations of nature will increase the physical, mental, and emotional well-being of children and adults in our community.



Kids and parents gather on the beach at the end of a great exploration of the shore of Lake Champlain

"A child's world is fresh and new and beautiful, full of wonder and excitement."

~Rachel Carson



We caught small carp in our nets, as well as crayfish and insects

Exploring the natural world together encourages a positive sense of place and connection to the landscape for families. Our events at Round Pond and elsewhere in South Hero are designed to help families connect to the special places in South Hero, and encourage them to explore and learn.

At summer's end, we are reflecting on our children's events. Over 20 children attended our three Butterfly Chases. We explored Round Pond's public walking trails, wandering through forests and meadows on the way to a beautiful shale beach on the shore of Lake Champlain.

We walked, ran, and jumped our way on the trails. We caught fish and bugs in the shallows of the lake. We identified Giant Swallowtail and Monarch butterflies in the fields. We looked at mushrooms, mosses, and lichens growing on fallen logs in the forest.

We encouraged the kids to explore independently, and share their discoveries with their friends and families. We hope that this will help instill a sense of wonder in each child that will last a lifetime.



We learned about how milkweed seeds spread by riding the wind

Savoring Summertime in South Hero: Photographs of SHLT Summer Events

**Butterfly Chases & Nature Explorations
at Round Pond State Park are fun for
the whole family!**



The trails at Round Pond State Park take families on an easy hike through a great natural area



Looking for fish and water bugs along the shore of Lake Champlain

**Cooking demonstrations and
educational events highlight
local agriculture & foods at the
farmers' market**



Matt Bartle of Wally's place grills pizzas made with local vegetables



Chef Jackie Major talks with customers about her favorite techniques for preparing summer vegetables



Children practice using a spinning wheel for making yarn at a celebration of local fiber and fiber animals.

Peter Forbes provided insight and inspiration at our 15th Annual Community Celebration



The tractor brought for haywagon rides and a farm tour was popular with kids all day long



Our annual potluck picnic featured local meats, vegetables, and fruits

Stunning sunflower fields throughout Grand Isle County are part of UVM Extension's "Farm Fresh Fuel" Project, a multi-year research study on growing biofuel crops.



Sunflowers grew along the roadside at Crescent Bay Farm and Buermann Hill in South Hero



Taking a break during Green-Up Day to build a sand castle at White's Beach



Enjoying local beef burgers in the playground at Folsom School

South Hero Land Trust and friends cleaned up White's Beach on Green-Up Day, and then co-hosted our Annual 'Thank You BBQ' at Folsom School for all of the volunteers who participated in cleaning up our streets and shorelines!



Address Service Requested

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Champlain Islands Farmers' Market 2012-13 Winter Market Calendar

Stock up on fall vegetables, find unique handcrafted gifts for the holidays, and enjoy fresh baked breads and treats!

The 2012- 13 Winter Farmers' Market will be held on the following Saturdays:

November 3rd

November 17th

December 1st

December 15th

10:00 AM - 2:00 PM
South Hero Congregational Church
South Street, South Hero

