



SOUTH HERO LAND TRUST

Newsletter

Autumn 2013

Sawyer Bay Farm Conservation Update: Health Hero Island Farm's First Season



Health Hero Island Farm has a Busy First Season in South Hero

We welcomed Hannah, Eric, Madeleine, and Calvin Noël to South Hero this spring, when they moved onto the Sawyer Bay Farm. While we have a lot of hard work left to complete this conservation project, the Noëls and their farm partners Bob Fireovid and Joan Falcão are leasing the property this year.

Health Hero Island Farm has worked hard to make their first season a success. They are custom grazing a herd of 95 beef cattle and working to increase the soil and forage health of their pastures. With their full-time intern Jesse, they have built a high tensile fence line, installed a pipeline to bring water to the cattle, and a built low-stress cattle handling and sorting system in the hoop barn. They hired two local staff to help grow ½ an acres of vegetables for their aggregated Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) program.

Growing Plans for the Future

Health Hero Island Farm plans to buy the beginning of their own beef herd this fall. They will also be building a larger hoop house and planting overwintering crops. Next year will bring more growth, including expanding their vegetable field for a larger multi-farm CSA program, and building an animal walk-way and stream crossing for the cattle, part of their plan to protect the water quality of Sawyer Bay.

The two families will also be building houses at the south end of the property. This is an important part of making the farm successful, and the ground breaking for the first house may begin as early as this fall.

Next Steps for the Conservation Project

We are excited about all the progress that Health Hero Island Farm has made this year, but we are not finished with this project yet! *We still need to raise \$340,000 by the end of the year to conserve the farm and sell it to our new farmers.* Read more about the next steps for this project and the urgent need for your support on the following pages.



Our new farmers, clockwise from left: Bob, Joan, Eric, Hannah, Calvin, and Madeleine

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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Look to the Ground A Note from our Executive Director



A glorious fall is upon us in South Hero and we are catching our breath after a great season of fun events and activities on farms! I have been taking advantage of a little extra time to really delve into some of the exciting new innovations Health Hero Island Farm is implementing on the Sawyer Bay Farm. I've increasingly realized that this project is all

about the ground beneath our feet: it's all about the soil!

The ground, the soil, beneath us is really at the heart of our work at South Hero Land Trust. With soil in mind, I wanted to take this opportunity to take a step back. I realize that because the Sawyer Bay Farm Project has progressed so quickly, with farmers leasing the land this summer, cows grazing the fields, and lots of new activity on the farm, it feels as though this project is already complete. But it is not! We are still in the thick of it and we still need your help!

Last fall, just about a year ago, we took a risk and decided to take out a loan to enable us to purchase the Sawyer Bay Farm before it was sold on the open market. We couldn't be more pleased that we were able to buy the farm. As we created a plan for the farm, we looked to the ground, or more specifically, the soils, to guide us on this journey. The goals of the farm that was chosen through the RFP process matched the soils resources of the land extremely well. The story of the soil at Sawyer Bay Farm became even more important as Health Hero Island Farm unfolded their plans to utilize the land by building the soils on the farm and retaining nutrients and water in their fields. And while the work of Health Hero Island Farm is well underway, much work remains ahead of us at SHLT to complete this project. We must raise all of the necessary funds to enable us to pay off the loan and keep our organization strong into the future.

So far we have raised over \$1,160,000!!! This is an amazing accomplishment and one that we are incredibly proud of. Thank you to everyone that has supported this fantastic effort so far. We now have \$340,000 left to raise. We continue to look to the ground as we try to finish up our campaign. You, our grassroots supporters are the ground that holds this organization up. You are our foundation and we need your participation to achieve our goal. Together, I know we can do this!

Help us protect and build the soil at Sawyer Bay Farm, and grow our organization's foundation. Please consider supporting this project as generously as you can. Thank you!

With thanks,



Local Farms Become Gathering Places: Summer Events Open Farms to the Community

Farms as Community Gathering Places

Local farms in the Champlain Islands have always been a vital food source for Islanders. But in the last few years farms in the Islands they have also become important gathering places and educational resources for our community. From running community supported agriculture programs and stocking stands at their farms and local farmers' markets, to hosting school field trips and summertime farm dinners, our farms are vital to our community's sense of place South Hero.



A long row of tents in the field at Blue Heron Farm shade tables at the 3rd Savor the Islands Farm Dinner of the summer

Local Farms and Organizations Host Great Events All Summer

South Hero Land Trust has been hosting our Annual Celebration and other great community events at farms for many years. This year was no exception, with cooking classes, family farm tours, and other great farm based events all spring and summer.

The Lake Champlain Islands Agriculture Network joined in this year with three "Savor the Islands" Farm Dinners, and the 2nd Local Fruit Desserts Tasting. Savage Gardens, Pomykala Farm, and Blue Heron Farm each hosted a dinner, while Hackett's Orchard hosted the dessert tasting. Between the three dinners, the network and farmers served over 430 farm fresh meals and made over \$2,000 in profits- which was donated to Food for Thought to provide meals to children at risk of hunger in Grand Isle County.

Health Hero Island Farm Becomes Another Vital Community Resource

Health Hero Island Farm has also quickly become an important and energized new gathering place for our community. They organized and hosted the Champlain Islands Farm & Food Festival in August. 350 people visited to explore demos and booths set up by local farmers, taste local flat bread and popcorn, and enjoy a day on the farm. They also participated in the "Heart of the Islands" Farm & Studio Tour and hosted SHLT's Annual Celebration in July. They will be teaching a series of food preservation workshops this autumn, on canning, drying, freezing, and fermenting. We have been excited to watch them invite the community onto the farm, and share their passion for high quality, local food.



Enjoying roasted chicken and vegetables at Savage Gardens



Guests took home bouquets of sunflowers from Pomykala Farm

Locals and Visitors Build Special Relationships with Islands Farms

All of these events and programs are creating opportunities for the community to build a special and enduring relationship with agricultural land in the Islands.

Through our Farm Initiative and community outreach programs, South Hero Land Trust has been an important part of this exciting and growing connection, and will continue to work with farmers to host events, educate the community, and build local markets for local farm products into the future.

Innovation and Resiliency : Addressing the Need for Both on VT Farms

2013 Brings More Challenging Weather and Economics for VT Farmers

As the growing season winds down we have been thinking about how farms are central to more than the pastoral landscape of our state, and it is clearer than ever that Vermont's local farms are essential to our local communities. They feed our families, provide jobs, and create a special sense of place for Vermonters. It is an exciting time in VT, with value-added food businesses becoming an increasingly important part of our economy. But farmers are facing challenges now that put all of this at risk.

We are increasingly impacted in the Champlain Islands by outside events, from the global economy to climate change. This June was the second wettest on record in the Champlain Valley. With a rainfall amount of 9.86 inches, we were just shy of the 1922 record of 9.93 inches. As a result of saturated fields, many dairy farms will be harvesting little or no feed corn, and the sweet corn season has been disappointing for the rest of us. Apple orchards in South Hero are reported historically low pollination.

Land Conservation Keeps Land in Agriculture

Uncertain weather patterns, along with continued economic challenges, make keeping land available for agriculture and in active use by skilled and innovative farmers an essential part of ensuring food security for VT. Having diverse and abundant farms supports the resiliency of our food system.



The cattle at Health Hero Island Farm move to fresh pasture every day, allowing the fields to be renewed.

Land conservation is an effective tool for making farmland affordable and accessible to new, expanding, and transitioning farms. Conserved lands in VT are home to farms of diverse size, location, and business plans. Those conserved farms in turn are part of a larger vital food system in our state that needs innovation to thrive.

Farmers Adapt in Partnership

VT farmers are finding ways to adapt to challenges of environment, weather, and economy. Many have come together to address innovation, including regional grain growing techniques, water quality improvements

in Lake Champlain, hosting visitors, and better ways to meet the demands of both wholesale markets and local consumers. Champlain Island farms are participating in these discussions, and finding new ways to be successful. From high tunnels that extend the season and intensive succession planting, to diversification of crops and income streams, our farmers work hard to be flexible and resilient.

Addressing the Need for Innovation & Resiliency at Sawyer Bay Farm

Sawyer Bay Farm and the farmers of Health Hero Island Farm are an example of this trend. They are committed to innovative techniques, and to building a resilient farm business. This summer they have been working to build soil nutrients in their pastures. They are using a technique called subsoiling that will allow crop roots to penetrate deeply into the soil to reach moisture and nutrients in dry seasons. It will also improve water uptake during wet summers, reducing runoff of nutrients into Lake Champlain. By feeding their beef herds on perennial forage crops, and moving them to new pasture daily, they are able to feed the cows high quality grass and manage soil nutrients in a sustainable way.

Health Hero Island Farm will use these and other organic growing techniques to build a resilient farm that will be able to adapt and grow in response to the changing environment and markets. We are excited to be a part of this process through the conservation of Sawyer Bay Farm., and are eager to learn and grow with Health Hero Island Farm.

Exploring Sawyer Bay Farm Together: SHLT's 16th Annual Celebration & Picnic

A Beautiful Day to Explore a New Farm

South Hero Land Trust staff and board members were very pleased to invite the community to explore the Sawyer Bay Farm and meet the new farmers of Health Hero Island Farm this summer. During SHLT's Annual Celebration in August we had a beautiful day to enjoy a great picnic and tour the farm on foot and by hay wagon.

Sharing a Great Local Meal

Over 140 members and neighbors came to the celebration. We enjoyed a hearty repast of local lamb, chicken, and vegetables cooked by Cook Sisters Catering, along with a delicious array of salads, side dishes and desserts shared by attendees. As always, it was a perfect way to enjoy the harvest of local farms in the Champlain Islands, and celebrate our love and respect for the working landscape of South Hero.



The wagon ride around the farm was a popular field trip.

Updates from South Hero Land Trust and an Introduction for Health Hero Island Farm

There were updates from Minner Hobbs and Bob Chutter on the Sawyer Bay Farm Conservation Project, along with other activities at South Hero Land Trust during the last year. Minner then introduced the new farmers and invited Eric Noël to take the stage. Eric spoke of the need for innovation in farming and the ways that Health Hero Island Farm will be addressing soil and water quality through their farming practices at Sawyer Bay Farm.

The day wrapped up with two tours of the farm. Eric Noël and Charlie Tipper (board member) led a wagon ride around the farm, expertly driven by Steve Robinson (board member). Hannah Noël, Joan Falcão, and Minner led another tour of the farm on foot.

All in all it was a fun day for South Hero Land Trust and friends, and we were thrilled to be introducing the new farmers to our community. We are excited by the great events and happenings of the last year, and will be continuing to work hard on the conservation project through the year.



Over 150 neighbors and members joined us for a delicious picnic meal under the big white tent at Sawyer Bay Farm.

What happens in South Hero...

A Summer of Great SHLT Events



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Photographs:

1. Cleaning up White's Beach on Green- Up Day
2. Enjoying Strawberry Ice Cream donated by Island Homemade Ice Cream at the Green- Up Day BBQ
3. Looking for wildlife at our Wildflower Hunt at Round Pond State Park, co- hosted with Lake Champlain Land Trust
4. Meeting the calves at Islandacres Farm during Dairy Day
5. Cooking Class at Hackett's Orchard with Chrissie of Cook Sisters Catering
6. A lamb at Paradise Bay Farm
7. Petting a lamb at Paradise Bay Farm during our Meet the Lambs event
8. Enjoying time with old and new friends at SHLT's Annual Celebration
9. The kids had fun at our Annual Celebration too!

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Address Service Requested

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Conserve the Sawyer Bay Farm and Support a New Family Farm in South Hero



Please Donate Today!
