

South Hero Land Trust

Newsletter

Winter 2010

SHLT Embarks on Exciting Renewable Energy Study with Five Local Farms

One of the many challenges that farmers in South Hero face today is meeting energy costs. Fuel for trucks and tractors, heating buildings and water, preparing feed, processing food, and other farm activities all require a great deal of oil, gas, and electricity. South Hero Land Trust is excited to be embarking on a new Farm Initiative project over the next year that may help farmers to meet those energy demands more efficiently and cost effectively in the future. This summer South Hero Land Trust and a group of five local farms received a Renewable Energy for Agriculture Program (REAP) Grant from the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food, and Markets.

In the coming year the five farms will each be participating in feasibility studies assessing the types of renewable energy that are available on their farms. Timstead Farm, Lakeside Jersey Farm, Islandacres Farm, Paradise Bay Farm, and Hackett's Orchard are joining us to examine many possible forms of renewable energy as potential sources of power, in order to judge which are the best for their farming operations.

Spring Hill Solutions, a renewable energy and carbon management consulting firm based in Burlington, was hired this fall to conduct the feasibility study for this project. Spring Hill Solutions and their team of experts will be carefully examining each farm. Over the course of a year, they will collect data about the farm operations and specific environmental resources on each farm. Greg Strong of Spring Hill Solutions says, "We're very excited to be involved in this unique, multi-faceted, and collaborative renewable energy feasibility study. The farmers we've met with have been eager to learn about their renewable energy opportunities -- and they've also offered us a wealth of knowledge. We're thrilled to be working with the farmers and the SHLT staff to help the farms reach their renewable energy goals."

South Hero Land Trust staff will be assisting the consultants from Spring Hill Solutions through the next year and we look forward to sharing our experiences and our growing knowledge of farm based renewable energy in later newsletters.



Letter from the Executive Director

January 13, 2010



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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Dear Supporters and Neighbors,

The snow is piled high around the South Hero Land Trust office and 2010 has arrived! It is with great hope and enthusiasm that we look to a new year in the Champlain Islands and reflect on the activities of the past year.

As I look back on the accomplishments of 2009 and over our 12 year history, I instantly feel pride in the 1,560 acres we have conserved on 12 properties, the millions of dollars we have raised to see those projects to their completion, and the over 600 members who have made it all possible. I am however reminded of something I read recently in Greg Mortenson's book Stones into Schools. More than the amount of money raised or the number of schools they have built in Afghanistan and Pakistan, or the popularity of his first book Three Cups of Tea, he measures success one student and one story at a time. This line of thinking translates to our organization and to this community. SHLT's success can easily be measured in numerical terms, but I think our true successes lie in the health of our community and individual farms: our community's ability to purchase food that has been grown from the soil of a South Hero farm, local farmers who have personal connections with the community they nourish, and a community that invests in its future by choosing to protect its most valuable resources, the land and the people. We are truly fortunate in South Hero and should be proud of our collective work to date, but our work is not finished - we must push forward. The difficult work of reinvigorating our agricultural roots and growing our local economy is still ahead of us.

2009 presented our agricultural community with many challenges. Dairy prices are extremely low and energy prices for all farms are creeping back up. Though the difficulties seem overwhelming at times, we at SHLT are remaining positive and want to support our farms as best we can. As you know, these efforts fall under our Farm Initiative Program work. We continue to meet regularly with our Farm Initiative Steering committee to work on new ideas for partnering with farmers and with the community to increase the long-term financial sustainability of our farms. Over the course of this coming year, we hope to expand this work. Your input is critical. We would love to hear from you, please contact us if you would like to be involved with our Farm Initiative Programs or if you have any ideas to share (802-372-3786).

With each year comes a renewed sense of the shared responsibility we all have to our community and to our land. It gives me strength to think of our community's collective desire to care for and steward the land that is part of our town's past and present, and must be part of a positive and sustainable future.

As we move into 2010, please know how much your support and energy means to South Hero Land Trust and to this community!

*With warm thanks,
Minner Hobbs*

12th Annual Meeting a Great Success!

It was a beautiful July day in the midst of a rainy summer. We had good food, great company, and a wonderful spot for a picnic at Islandacres Farm! During our potluck lunch under the big white tent, keynote speaker Andrew Meyer of Hardwick inspired our members with a discussion of revitalizing our agricultural economy. Andrew Meyer is the founder of the Center for an Agricultural Economy and owner of Vermont Soy and Vermont Natural Coatings. By collaborating and growing the agriculture related businesses in the Hardwick area they have successfully created many new jobs in their community.



A few guests linger after the potluck and discuss Andrew Meyer's ideas before joining the rest of the crowd for tours of the farm.

Island Homemade Ice Cream provided delicious ice cream cones which, along with Kelly Robinson's famous homemade cookies, finished off the meal on a delightful sweet note. The Robinson family and farm crew, as well as Jim Bellinghiri, provided great after lunch activities, including hay rides, barn tours, and a wildlife walk by the crick. Many thanks to Steve and Kelly Robinson for their endless work in preparing the farm and hosting us. Thanks to Andrew Meyer for sharing his inspiration and experience with the South Hero Land Trust community. And thanks to all of the community members who joined us to make our 2009 annual celebration really special!



Steve Robinson finishes an ice cream cone while guests load up for a wagon ride.



Guests at Annual Meeting listen to keynote speaker Andrew Meyer after a delicious potluck picnic.



Jocelyn Smith and Susan Robistow scoop ice cream while Bob Chutter enjoys a cone.

Work Continues on the Landon Community Trail

Volunteers joined Josh Ryan from Timber & Stone, LLC, the South Hero Land Trust staff, and the Lake Champlain Land Trust staff in continuing to build the Landon Community Trail this fall. While the trail is not yet open to the public, and will not be opened until a parking area is constructed at its base, the trail itself is very near completion. Beautiful cedar fencing and gravel surfacing have been installed. Students from Folsom Community School worked hard one day on removing invasive species like buckthorn, honeysuckle, and garlic mustard. Many thanks to all of the volunteers who worked hard this fall to make the trail safe and beautiful for our community. We will be keeping you informed as we move to constructing the parking area and opening the trail.



A UVM student cuts a fence post to size.



A volunteer crew from UVM assists Josh Ryan and the staff of South Hero Land Trust and Lake Champlain Land Trust in erecting a long stretch of fencing at the future entrance to the trail.



Josh Ryan of Timber & Stone LLC places a cedar fence post solidly in the rocky soil.



The completed fence frames the trail entrance beautifully.

Interested in helping South Hero Land Trust build and maintain the Landon Community Trail and the Round Pond State Park Trail? Join Friends of Round Pond and we'll keep you updated when we have work days. Contact Emily at 372-3786 or emily@shlt.org.

South Hero Farmers' Market Settles into a Beautiful New Summer Location

The South Hero Farmers' Market moved to the green behind the St. Rose of Lima Church on Route 2 this summer. This new location, with plenty of parking and a much larger lawn, allowed the market to spread its wings a little and expand to fill the space. South Hero Land Trust sponsored six educational theme days at the market. These included returning favorites like the Youth Farmers' Market, our annual Fiber Day, and the tasty "Flavor of the Islands," where customers had a chance to try new dishes made with local produce! We also partnered with South Hero's Islanders Caring for the Environment (ICE) to sponsor "Everything Energy," a local energy fair. Members of the Committee with expertise in solar energy, energy efficiency, and green lawn care presented booths, as did the Northwest Solid Waste District and a Vermont building and consulting firm called Building Energy. The second year of the Winter Market began in November and will continue through April, check page 8 for dates and times.



Emily explains the creation of one of the dishes served at the "Flavor of the Islands" event.



Vendors tents fill the green behind St. Rose of Lima Church during the farmers' market.



Sophie Decker sells homemade lemonade and popcorn at the Youth Farmers' Market.

Don't Forget! Renew Your Support in 2010

It is a brand new year for South Hero Land Trust. Support our work by renewing your membership today! Over the past twelve years SHLT has worked to protect unique natural resources in South Hero through land conservation and community programs designed to connect people with the surrounding landscape. We depend on membership support and your contributions will help us to continue programs like the *SHLT Farm Initiative*, "The Land, the Farms, and Me" at Folsom School, *Friends of Round Pond*, and special events throughout the year. Support South Hero Land Trust by renewing your membership today with the form found on page seven of this newsletter. Thank you!

What a Busy Year!

Despite rainy weather through June and July, South Hero Land Trust had a busy and exciting summer and fall. We hosted and co-sponsored several special events, continued work on the new Landon Community Trail, began work on our new renewable energy study, and have lots more planned for the new year. Check out these pictures from some of our favorite moments!



Annual Meeting celebrates the transfer of Islandacres Farm from one generation of the Robinson family to the next. Hank and Patsy Robinson (on left) with son and daughter-in-law Steve and Kelly Robinson (on right).



Elizabeth Bock, and Reina and Silva Warren finish off their ice cream cones while waiting for a hay ride.



Minner successfully completed her goal of riding her bike to work once a week from the end of May thru mid September (give or take a couple of weeks!). The Challenge continues for next summer!



Hikers at Round Pond State Park enjoy a sunny morning with Lake Champlain Land Trust and South Hero Land Trust.



Christine Bourque of Blue Heron Farm sells fresh vegetables at the Farmers' Market.



Steve Robinson and his mother Patsy stop by SHLT office on their birthday!

In 2009 we welcomed Steve Robinson onto our Board of Directors. It has been a sincere pleasure to have his participation and guidance. Steve adds a key perspective as a recent participant in a land conservation project and owner of an active dairy farm in South Hero. Steve and Kelly have a strong community ethic, witnessed firsthand when they invited the community onto Islandacres Farm this summer for our Annual Meeting (see page 3 for more information). Many thanks to Steve and Kelly!

YES! I support South Hero Land Trust.

Community Support is one of the most important aspects of our organization. In order to keep membership affordable, our membership dues are only \$10.00 per person annually, and \$25.00 for a family. If you are able to contribute more than the basic membership, your additional contribution is greatly appreciated. Thank you!

For more information on gifts of stock or contributions to conservation projects, contact Minner at (802) 372-3786.

\$10 contribution, basic annual membership for one person.

\$25 contribution for annual business membership.

\$25 contribution, basic annual family membership.
There are ____ people in my family.

Here is an additional contribution of _____.

Gift Membership in the amount of _____.

Member Name: _____

Address: _____

Summer Address: _____

E-mail: _____

Total Enclosed: _____ If **Gift Membership**, name of Giver: _____

Please return to South Hero Land Trust, PO Box 455, South Hero, VT 04586 (802) 372-5912

WINTER 2010 NEWSLETTER

Address Service Requested

South Hero Land Trust
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Champlain Islands Winter Farmers' Market *Shop locally for produce, prepared food, and artisan crafts though the winter*



The Farmers' Market will be held on the
following Saturdays:

February 6th

March 6th

April 3rd

10:00 am-2:00 pm

Congregational Church of South Hero,
South Street