



# SOUTH HERO LAND TRUST

Newsletter

Spring 2013

## Conservation Update: Finding Farmers for Sawyer Bay Farm



Last fall South Hero Land Trust shared the exciting news that we had begun work to conserve Sawyer Bay Farm, 183 acres of high quality agricultural land on the west shore of South Hero. Because the farm was on the open market for several years, South Hero Land Trust and conservation partner Vermont Land Trust bought the farm, with the intention of conserving the land and selling it to a farm buyer. Over the last 6 months SHLT has been busy fundraising and working to match a qualified farm operation with the land and infrastructure resources of the farm.

We still have a lot of work to do before the land is conserved and the project is complete. But we are pleased to announce that one farm rose to the top of our selection process this winter.

We are excited to introduce Maplewood Organics to the community, and outline their plans for the farm.

*"This is a real opportunity for South Hero to conserve an important farm that can be utilized to help advance agriculture in the region and the state. I commend SHLT and VLT for their important efforts to ensure affordable access and a rich agricultural future for the Sawyer Bay Farm"*  
~Chuck Ross, VT Secretary of Agriculture

Maplewood Organics plans to utilize the majority of the acreage to create a model farm for raising organic grass-fed beef, in a way that protects water quality and builds soil through sustainable practices. In addition to the beef operation, they will create a year round, omnivore Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) business. They plan to utilize the amazing infrastructure of Sawyer Bay Farm for aggregating products from other organic Island farms into a larger CSA offering. Approximately 5 acres of the land base will be used for vegetable production to support their CSA and provide food for events and markets.

# 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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## Board of Directors

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*Emily Alger*  
Programs Director

# Spring and Hope at Sawyer Bay Farm

## A Note from our Executive Director



As signs of spring appear in South Hero we begin to think about new life, growth, and the greening of the landscape. I want to take some time to talk more about the rebirth that is taking place at Sawyer Bay Farm. As you will read within the pages of this newsletter, we have been busy since last fall fundraising, planning, and finding a farmer for the land.

I was on the property a few days ago with half of the team of our new farmers: Hannah, Eric, Madeleine, and Calvin Noël. While speaking with Hannah and hearing her enthusiasm, I felt butterflies in my belly at the deep bond to the

land and commitment to community this family will bring to Sawyer Bay and South Hero. Both the Noël and the Firevoid Falcão families so clearly see the potential that exists not only in the land and the infrastructure of the farm, but also in our Island community.

*"We look across these fields and are in awe that we are so fortunate to be part of bringing this farm back into vibrant agricultural use."*

*~Hannah Noël*

As they begin to move onto the farm they have a clear sense of their place in this project. Hannah recounted talking with her kids about their new home and their dream of having their family on this land for generations. "We look across these fields and are in awe that we are so fortunate to be part of bringing this farm back into vibrant agricultural use, and that our kids may choose to be a part of this, and it is only the beginning for generations of farmers to come."

As you may imagine, those dreams and this project won't be possible without an extraordinary amount of community support. To date we have raised just over \$1,140,000!!! We have about \$360,000 left to raise to make this project a reality. We will be coming to you in the next few months to ask you to support this tremendous project and community effort.

In the meantime we are so pleased to be introducing the Noël and Firevoid Falcão families to you, and can't wait for you to meet them in person this summer.

*Minner Hobbs*



# Introducing Maplewood Organics

## A Unique Partnership

Maplewood Organics is a four person team. Two of the team are husband and wife, Eric and Hannah Noël, who have been farming in Highgate, VT for the past nine years. The other two are husband and wife, Bob Firevoid and Joan Falcão. Bob and Joan are new to farming, but have experience in gardening and beekeeping.

Bob and Joan have long dreamed of starting a farm. When they met Eric and Hannah a couple of years ago they found like-minded partners for embarking on a new farm enterprise. They have been looking for land with the Noëls ever since. This is a unique pairing and one that we feel is a great match for Sawyer Bay Farm.

The team is committed to organic farming. They have a strong mix of technology and agricultural expertise, which gives them many skills that will be an asset to the farm and the South Hero community. Together, the team members have the resources to invest in Sawyer Bay Farm and create a thriving agricultural operation.



*Hannah Noël prepares CSA shares*

## A Breadth of Experience and Knowledge

**The Noël Family:** Eric and Hannah have two school aged children, Madeleine and Calvin. As President of the Vermont Grass Farmers Association and 8-year holistic manager of planned grazing, Eric Noël is an experienced, well-connected expert on Holistic Management, Planned Grazing and raising organic grass-fed beef. Eric sells beef on the farm, as well as distributing it to a number of businesses. Hannah Noël's expertise is organic vegetable production for her CSA, which grew in the last three years from serving 10 to 100 families (from June- January each year). Hannah aggregates products from other farms to sell through the CSA. She is also a board member of the Vermont Farm Viability Enhancement Program. Maplewood Organics in Highgate, VT has been a showcase for best agricultural practices.

**The Firevoid Falcão Family:** Joan and Bob have six children in total, ranging from high school aged to grown adults. They have years of gardening experience. Joan's love of travel has brought her around the world, but she dreams of establishing deep roots in South Hero. She has interned at the Noël's farm in Highgate. Bob comes from a dairy farming family and has an in-depth understanding of agriculture through his responsibilities as a manager in the US Department of Agriculture's Agricultural Research Service. Bob and Joan will be fully involved in providing labor and administrative/planning support for the farm's operations.



*Bob Firevoid and Joan Falcão*

## Next Steps for Maplewood and Sawyer Bay Farm

Eric, Hannah, Bob, and Joan have signed a lease with VLT for use of the land over the summer as we move forward with fundraising, Vermont Housing and Conservation Board funding, and further planning for the farm transfer. They are also working on a new name for the farm as they start fresh in South Hero. We are committed to a fantastic outcome on Sawyer Bay Farm, one that meets the multiple goals of this project: protection of the extraordinary resource, use of and revitalization of the land for agriculture, long-term affordability for farmers, and an operation that adds value and depth to our community.

# Clean Water Farming Practices: Protecting Sawyer Bay & Lake Champlain



*Eric Noël is an expert in managing grass fed beef*

## Creating a Model for Watershed Farming

One of the most exciting aspects of Maplewood Organics' farm proposal is their deliberate attention to clean-water-farming. They are committed to creating a model of watershed farming. They did this at their farm in Highgate and plan to bring what they have learned to South Hero!

*"We expect the soil fertility to increase in measurable ways during our stewardship."  
~Eric Noël*

They believe this property will be great for demonstrating sustainable production farming in close proximity to the lake. They intend to bring people to their farm to educate them

on how this can be done, through workshops and other opportunities to interact with the farm. This will be a wonderful opportunity to protect water quality in Sawyer Bay, and spread new and innovative skills for clean-water-farming to other farms in the Lake Champlain region.

## Managing Soil Fertility and Storm Water Runoff

They plan to ensure that nutrients will be retained for soil improvement, and for forage and crops for the livestock, rather than escaping into Lake Champlain. Eric says "we expect the soil fertility to increase in measurable ways during our stewardship. Over the nine years we farmed [in Highgate], the topsoil depth increased substantially. In just one year, with the use of the subsoiler and managed grazing, the topsoil increased from 8 to 15 inches. There are more earthworms, and dung beetles have returned."

Maplewood Organics believes that in environmentally sensitive areas, raising grass-fed beef rather than row crops is one solution for protecting the Lake Champlain water basin. They intend to measure and document fertility characteristics of the land and surface water over time, to demonstrate the benefits of their practices.



*Madeleine Noël holds a bunch of beets*



*Calvin Noël collects eggs*

# Wally's Place Partners with South Hero Land Trust to Support Land Conservation

## Wally's Place Celebrates with SHLT Fundraiser

Matt Bartle and the crew at Wally's Place celebrated their 5<sup>th</sup> year in business by giving back to the community. They donated 25% of their proceeds from sales on their birthday, March 22<sup>nd</sup>, to South Hero Land Trust. Like many businesses in South Hero and Grand Isle County, Wally's Place has been a consistent and generous partner for South Hero Land Trust events, from donating bread and bagels for our Food for Thought film nights, to being a guest chef for our Farmers' Table cooking demonstration at the South Hero Farmers' Market.

We'd like to thank Matt for thinking of us on Wally's birthday. Congratulations on five years of partnering with Islands farms to serve up sandwiches and soups using local produce and products. Thanks Wally's Place!



## Update: Value-Added Dairy Study Complete

For the last six months South Hero Land Trust has been assisting agricultural business planning consultants, Rose Wilson and Charlene Andersen, to connect with dairy farmers, processors, and retailers in Grand Isle County. As part of our Value-Added Dairy Processing Feasibility Study, Rose and Charlene have been investigating milk production, market potential, and the financial feasibility of bottling local milk in the Champlain Islands and creating value-added products like butter and yogurt.

In March they presented their findings to South Hero Land Trust and local farmers. While the numbers reveal that making a success of a large collaborative milk bottling facility would be a daunting task, there was a lively discussion about micro-dairies and small scale on-farm processing/retailing of milk. The group talked about the explosion of farmstead cheese making in Vermont in the last 10 years, and how the Vermont brand image of wholesome food, hardworking farmers, and clean environment could benefit sales of milk and cheese products from the Champlain Islands.

The feasibility study is now available on our website. Visit [www.shlt.org/farmsustainability](http://www.shlt.org/farmsustainability) to read the full report.

## Update: LCIAN Moves Forward in 2013

In January farmers and food processors from around the county celebrated the first birthday of the Lake Champlain Islands Agriculture Network. There was pride and excitement from members and supporters as the network reviewed the accomplishments and successes of their first year as an official organization. In addition to discussing updates on accomplishments, the network elected three new directors to the board: Christine Bourque (Blue Heron Farm), Gloria Ruvalcaba (Grand Isle Pasta), and Ben Pomykala (Pomykala Farm). The network is excited to welcome these community leaders to the board!

The network is working hard to plan several educational workshops for members, as well as community events, including the 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Savor the Islands Summer Dessert Tasting! Learn more about the network, and upcoming events and announcements at [www.savortheislands.com](http://www.savortheislands.com).

# Connecting to our Farms & Landscape

## New and Updated Events for 2013

Winter is a time of rest after the busy growing season, but South Hero Land Trust is still finding ways to engage the community with our farms and landscape! We are planning a series of three open farm days this year. The first, a “Maple Sugaring Party” at Crescent Bay Farm, took place in March. We took a snowy hike through the sugar bush, and then enjoyed a tour of the sugar house and a sweet treat of sugar on snow! The next open farm day will be “Meet the Lambs” at Paradise Bay Farm in May, followed by “Celebrate Dairy” at Islandacres Farm in June.

Building on the success of our children’s events at Round Pond State Park, we are introducing a series of seasonal events called the “Seasons of South Hero.” These family events exploring the landscape of South Hero will start off with a wildflower hunt at Round Pond State Park in April.

## Farmers’ Table Classes off to a Tasty Start

We had the first of two spring cooking classes in March. Similar to our demos at the South Hero Farmers’ Market, these classes are taught in partnership with local chefs and will highlight local, seasonal ingredients. During our first class, at Islandacres Farm, chef Jackie Major focused on dairy products-



*A sweet treat on the woodpile after a walk in the Crescent Bay sugar bush*

goat cheese, ricotta, feta, and more.

We had students with all levels of experience. It was a lot of fun to learn new skills from Jackie, and to share ideas and tips with each other. We spent the afternoon cooking bread, pasta, and other dishes. We ended the day with a wonderful celebratory meal together, topped off by a lemon ricotta tart!

Our second class will be held on April 21<sup>st</sup> at Hackett’s Orchard, with Chrissie Mack of Cook Sisters Catering. We’ll be making a variety of comfort foods with a spring twist! In addition to other seasonal produce and meats, we will use apples and cider from local orchards. If you’d like to join us please call 372- 3786 or e- mail [emily@shlt.org](mailto:emily@shlt.org). Space is limited and RSVPs are required.



*Rachel and Jeannette knead pasta dough for paperdelle*



*Minner, Janine, & Cindy get tips on tortellini from Jackie*

# Spring & Summer Calendar of Events

**April 9<sup>th</sup> Attracting Birds to Your Garden: a Presentation by Bridget Butler**  
Learn about attracting birds to your garden from Bridget Butler, the “Bird Diva,” who has been a teacher and naturalist in New England for more than 15 years. Co-sponsored by the Island Gardeners.  
*Free. Tuesday, April 9<sup>th</sup>, 7:00 pm, Folsom School.*

**April 21<sup>st</sup> Farmers’ Table Cooking Class at Hackett’s Orchard**  
Get creative with seasonal comfort foods with local chef and caterer Chrissie Mack of Cook Sisters Catering. Learn to prepare a variety of dishes with local ingredients, and enjoy a celebratory meal!  
*Cost: \$25 per person. Sunday, April 21<sup>st</sup>, 2:30-7:00 pm, Hackett’s Orchard. Space is limited, RSVP required by April 15<sup>h</sup>.*

*New Date!*

**April 27<sup>th</sup> “Seasons of South Hero” Wildflower Hunt at Round Pond State Park**  
Bring the whole family to Round Pond State Park to hunt for the first signs of spring in South Hero. We’ll take a gentle hike through the woods, searching for wildflowers. Co-sponsored by Lake Champlain Land Trust.  
*Free. Saturday, April 27<sup>th</sup>, 10:00-11:30 am, Round Pond State Park. RSVP appreciated.*

**May 4<sup>th</sup> Green Up Day Clean-Up and BBQ Celebration**  
Help clean up the streets and shorelines of South Hero, and then celebrate with our annual BBQ at the Folsom School playground. SHLT is organizing the town-wide clean-up this year, call to sign up to clean your street.  
*Free. Saturday, May 4<sup>th</sup>, clean-up in the morning followed by BBQ from 11:00-12:30 pm at Folsom School.*

**May 19<sup>th</sup> Meet the Lambs at Paradise Bay Farm**  
Celebrate spring with the new lambs at Paradise Bay Farm. We’ll meet the lambs and their mamas, and learn about raising sheep and spinning wool. Please call for details on where to meet.  
*Free. Sunday, May 19<sup>th</sup>, 1:00-2:30 pm, Paradise Bay Farm. RSVP appreciated.*

**June 23<sup>rd</sup> Celebrate Dairy at Islandacres Farm**  
Tour the barns and meet the cows and calves of Islandacres Farm. Learn about where milk comes from and the different Vermont products that have South Hero milk in them. Enjoy a sweet treat of local ice cream!  
*Free. Sunday, June 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1:00-2:30 pm, Islandacres Farm. RSVP appreciated.*

**June 26<sup>th</sup> Farmers’ Table Cooking Demo**  
Get ideas for cooking with early produce with a cooking demonstration by Matt Bartle of Wally’s Place: Bagel & Deli and special guest Chef Jackie Major.  
*Free. Wednesday, June 26<sup>th</sup>, 3:00-6:00 pm, St. Rose of Lima Church.*

**July 17<sup>th</sup> Farmers’ Table Cooking Demo**  
Learn to be creative with fresh produce found at the farmers’ market, with a cooking demonstration by Chrissie Mack of Cook Sisters Catering.  
*Free. Wednesday, July 10<sup>th</sup>, 3:00-6:00 pm, St. Rose of Lima Church.*

**July 20<sup>th</sup> Seasons of South Hero Shoreline Exploration**  
Join us a fun outside morning at Round Pond State Park. Young children and families are invited to come for a nature walk and explore the plants and animals living in or near the wetland and shale beach.  
*Free. Saturday, July 21<sup>st</sup>, 10:00-11:30 am, Round Pond State Park. RSVP appreciated.*

**August 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Meeting- Save the Date!**  
Save the date for our celebration of land conservation and community. We have exciting projects to share, along with a potluck picnic. More information and invitation to follow!

**August 14<sup>th</sup> Farmers’ Table Cooking Demo**  
Sample dishes that celebrate summer’s bounty with a cooking demonstration by Zach Melendy of Zack’s Café at Grand Isle Artworks  
*Free. Wednesday, August 14<sup>th</sup>, 3:00-6:00 pm, St. Rose of Lima Church.*

**August 21<sup>st</sup> Apple Day**  
The islands are a great place for growing fruits, from apples to blueberries. Meet Deb Plumley from Hackett’s Orchard, and learn about eating and cooking with local fruits.  
*Free. Wednesday, August 21<sup>st</sup>, 3:00-6:00 pm, St. Rose of Lima Church.*



Address Service Requested

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# Sawyer Bay Farm Open House

April 18, 2013  
2:00-4:00 pm  
Sawyer Bay Farm  
350 West Shore Road

Meet the Maplewood Organics  
Farmers, and Tour the Farm

*Please RSVP, call 372-3786 or  
e-mail [minner@shlt.org](mailto:minner@shlt.org)*

