American Farmland Trust

Saving the land that sustains us by:

- Protecting farm and ranch land
- Promoting sound farming practices
- Keeping farmers on the land
American Farmland Trust and the Conservation Agriculture Movement

- Farmland Protection Policy Act
- First Conservation Title
- EQIP, CRP, ACEP
- State & Local Programs (100+)
- Agricultural Land Trusts (40+)
- Current Use Taxation Programs
Today the U.S. is home to >10% of the world’s most arable soils

By 2040:
- 9 billion people in the world
- 380 million in the U.S.

Will we have enough farmland to meet our basic needs?

American Farmland Trust
American farmland is threatened by chronic trends

- Urbanization and fragmentation
- Aging farmers/landowners plus a decline of beginning farmers
- Climate change: droughts, fires, floods …
- Weakened farm viability/consolidation
Farms Under Threat

AFT’s multi year, multi-faceted initiative to:

• Analyze the conversion of farm and ranch lands
• Link findings to policies and solutions
• Predict impacts of future threats
Land Cover and Use across the U.S.
Quality matters as well as **Quantity**

- What makes farmland ideally suited for food and crop production?
  - **Productivity**: Supports high yields, few limitations
  - **Versatility**: Supports a wide range of crops
  - **Resiliency**: Supports production over time
Productive, Versatile and Resilient Land Continuum
PVR continuum in Illinois

So... so what?

Farm the best preserve the rest?
A more holistic approach...

- Conservation cropping systems
- Wetlands as filters
- Buffer to natural areas
A more holistic approach...

- Natural areas provide pollinator habitat and predators for crops
- Farmers combatting climate change
What's Up Next for Farms Under Threat?

- State of the States: within state analyses, reports, and state policy scorecards
- Projective analyses: housing density and climate change models
- Enhanced protected farmland layer
- Demographic and infrastructure analyses
What can we do in Illinois?

Maine Farmland Trust
PCC Farmland Trust (Washington)
Gathering Waters (Wisconsin)
Vermont Land Trust

Permanent protection
• Natural areas
• Farmland Ag viability
  • Sustainability
• New farmers Community
  • People/land
  • Land/farmers
Saving the Land that Sustains Us

Contact me! Jen Filipiak
515-868-1331 jfilipiak@farmland.org
Farmland Protection through Agricultural Land Easements as a Tool for Land Trusts

Emy Brawley, Associate Midwest Director
The Conservation Fund
The Conservation Fund:
Creative solutions that make environmental and economic sense.

- National non-profit, 180 staff
- Over 8 million acres protected
- 700+ working lands easements transactions; 1.2 million acres of agricultural lands protected
Why work to permanently protect farmland in Illinois?

- Cost-effective buffers and habitat connectors
- We are leaving federal money on the table
- Permanency as Opportunity
  - Succession to next generation of farmers
  - Food production close to urban core – food security
  - Habitat – future restoration if agriculture is not viable
Protected Farmland in Illinois

Red = 0
Orange = 1 - 250 acres
Yellow = 250 - 1,000 acres
Light Green = 1,000 - 2,500 acres
Dark Green = 3,500 - 5,500 acres

TOTAL: 25,000 acres +
Agricultural Land Easements (ALE) vs Natural Area Conservation Easements

- Ag Easements more flexible
- Farmland is a business asset
- Works where land is under threat
Federal Funding

“No one wants the federal money, it is too complicated”

Yes it is complicated, but it is a lot of money:
$450M/year FY2019-2023 is $2.25B for ACEP over five years

ACEP-ALE
Agricultural Conservation Easement Program
Agricultural Land Easements
ACEP-ALE In a Nutshell:

- NRCS grants 50% of the fair market value of the agricultural land easement (75% for grasslands) to land trusts to buy ALEs.

- **Need an Eligible Parcel**
  - Contain at least 50% prime, unique, statewide, or locally important farmland (or other qualifying terms)

- **Need an Eligible Landowner**
  - includes land trusts if land is sold to a farmer within 3 years

- **Annual call for applications, usually due February**
  - Need a landowner statement of interest
  - Need to know enough about values to make a $$ request – no appraisal needed
  - Need to know where the remaining $$ is coming from*
  - Bunch of federal forms – of course

*more later
Making ACEP-ALE Easier:
Regional Conservation Partnership Program
FINDING THE ALE MATCH

- Private: Landowner
- Private: Philanthropic
- Public: Local/County/State
The Value of a Publicly-Funded ALE Match

- Certainty of funds
- Predictability of criteria
- Form a deal pipeline
- Work at landscape scale
- Create farmland blocks to support farming over the long term
Number of funded Farmland Protection programs in Illinois: One

Kane County Farmland Protection Program
- Established 2001
- $32.6 million dollars expended
  - $19.9M in Riverboat Gambling funds
  - $12.6M USDA farmland protection
- Over 30 family-owned and operated farms (6,000 acres) protected
- Current wait list of farms
Yes, Illinois is BROKE!

Ways other states fund farmland protection:

Tobacco settlement funds; Landfill fees; Bottle bill; Mitigation fees; Recording Fees; Lottery proceeds; Settlement funds; License plate revenue . . .
Posing the Question:
Thank you!

Emy Brawley
ebrawley@conservationfund.org
303-669-0390
Farmland Conservation in McHenry County

How one land trust is working to preserve farmland and farming
The Land Conservancy of McHenry County

- Founded in 1991
  - 6 full-time and 3 part-time staff
- 2,500 acres preserved
  - Fee-owned = 460 acres
  - Easements = 90 easements
    - 6 farms = 899 acres (629 farmland)
Agricultural conservation easements... protecting the land for agricultural use in perpetuity
Land to farm...

80 acres cropland
Land for nature

70 acres
~ oak woods
Land for nature

70 acres

~ oak woods

~ wetlands
Land for nature

70 acres
~ oak woods
~ wetlands
~ creek
working land + natural land = a whole farm
The ACE Program

- Agricultural Conservation Easement Program through U.S. Department of Agriculture
- Provides matching dollars to pay the landowner for the easement
- Partnered with Openlands to secure matching funds
- TLC was the first land trust in Illinois to use ACE
It can be done!
Beyond Agricultural Easements...

other ways to preserve farmland and farming
Learning Circles for women farmland owners
Farmer-Landowner Match
Networking Events

Bringing together farmers, landowners, consumers and businesses to build a strong, vibrant local food system
Wendell Berry film ~ meet-your-local-farmer

Look and See – A Portrait of Wendell Berry
Transitioning to Organic Grains Seminar
Working with partners is key

- American Farmland Trust
- Liberty Prairie Foundation
- McHenry County Soil & Water Conservation District
- Women, Food & Agriculture Network
- The Conservation Fund
- Openlands
- Natural Resource Conservation Service/US Dept of Agriculture
- U of I Extension
- IDEA Farm Network
- McHenry County Conservation District
- McHenry County College – Dept of Urban Agriculture
- Farmers and landowners