

*20*  
Years of  
Farmland Protection

by Jill Schwartz



Fifty-five years ago, Norm Berg began his crusade to save the nation's farmland. His strategy was to talk about farmland protection to as many people as possible: world leaders at conferences in Paris, co-workers at USDA meetings in Washington, D.C., and farmers and ranchers at informal gatherings in his neighborhood coffee shop.

It was a lonely and, at times, difficult crusade. With few exceptions, he was the only voice for farmland protection, his ideas considered radical.

Berg is still on the crusade, but he's not alone anymore. Since 1980, when American Farmland Trust was created and the farmland protection movement began picking up speed, Berg and the few other pioneers have been joined by thousands of farmland protection activists.

"I knew there had to be sensible policies at some point and I believed that we could get to that point," says Berg, AFT's senior advisor since 1982 and a charter AFT board member. "AFT is what led us to that point."

Since its incorporation on August 15, 1980, AFT has played a leadership role in the farmland protection community. Through research, public education, land projects and policy development, AFT helps set the framework for farmland protection. The organization works with all levels of government, all over the country.

Farmland protection activism is responsible for creating 19 state-level purchase of agricultural conservation easement (PACE) programs, dozens of local PACE and transfer of development rights programs, tax credit and right-to-farm laws in every state, agricultural conservation zoning ordinances, agricultural land trusts and a growing number of creative programs to make farming economically viable.

The result? Landowners have more options than they did 20 years ago when it comes to making decisions about their farm, forest or ranch lands.

Connecticut farmer Terry Jones is one person who is taking full advantage of his options. He and his family have sold (at a bargain sale) an agricultural conservation easement to the state of Connecticut, donated several easements to the city of Shelton (where they live), and completed a like-kind exchange that enabled them to purchase 60 acres of farmland adjacent to their farm that were being eyed for development. They are members of AFT and supporters of their local land trust. As believers in fresh, local produce, all of the food they grow is sold directly to consumers, who pick the food themselves.

"We are doing this because we think we are preserving opportunities for young people," says Jones, who farms his land with his son and grandfather. "And we are being as creative as possible with our options. On the urban fringe, where we are, more happens to land in a year than in my grandpa's entire lifetime, so you have to act quickly and be creative."

The success of AFT, and the farmland protection movement in general, is due largely to a broader understanding of

the multiple benefits of farmland. During the 1980s, AFT's main motivation for saving farmland was to ensure that the nation had an adequate food supply. In the 1990s, AFT began giving more attention to the other assets of farmland, such as protecting water quality, providing habitat for wildlife, adding beauty to the landscape and balancing local budgets.

Several years ago, AFT began promoting the value of protected farmland in restoring urban communities. AFT and the U.S. Conference of Mayors are working in partnership to make more people aware of the farm-city connection. "It seems so obvious now that restoring cities takes the pressure off of farmland, but we missed that connection in the early days," says AFT President Ralph Grossi.

Maryland made this connection in 1997 when it created its Smart Growth Program. A model for the nation, the program targets infrastructure dollars to urban areas and provides funding for protecting land in rural communities.

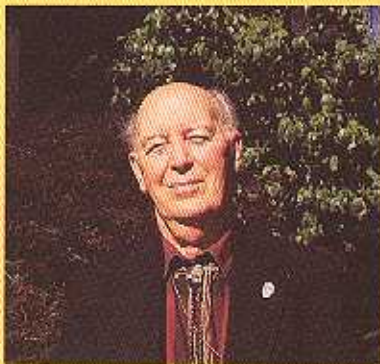
With more people realizing why they should care about farmland, the farmland protection constituency is growing. That means more partners, both in terms of number and diversity. AFT is working in partnership with the Izaak Walton League of America, Texas Wildlife Association, Western Massachusetts Food Bank and the Cleveland Diocese's Church in the City program, to name a few. AFT also is partnering more with farm organizations, which were once wary of AFT's mission, particularly the idea of perpetual agricultural conservation easements.

"Farm organizations really started to change when they realized that easements are an estate planning tool," says Robert Wagner, AFT assistant vice president for regional programs, and a 15-year employee.

The Pennsylvania and California farm bureaus were among the first to speak out for farmland protection, mainly by lobbying for farmland protection programs in their states. The Colorado Cattlemen's Association created an agricultural land trust. The Michigan Farm Bureau is following in Colorado's footsteps, and also hosts an annual bus trip to the mid-Atlantic to provide farmers and policymakers with real-life examples of how farmland protection works.

"One of the biggest differences between now and the early days of farmland protection is that it was difficult to build partnerships early on," Grossi says. "We were not considered to be credible and our issue was not considered to be legitimate. As people got to know us—and as sprawl became more visible—that changed, and more people were intrigued by what we were doing."

Another difference is the change in public support for farmland protection, which has showed up most significantly at the polls. Records are being broken for the amount of money communities are investing in farmland protection programs. In the November 1998 election, voters in 10 states, 22 counties and 93 localities added an additional \$7 billion to the pot for farm-



NORM BERG: PHOTO BY JEFFREY PETERSON

FRED FASBENDER: GRANT FARLAND PHOTOGRAPHY, INC.



land and open space protection by approving funding initiatives. This includes \$1 billion in New Jersey, half of which is for farmland protection.

Partnerships and public support inspire Grossi and Berg, whose efforts have been bolstered by the growing strength of the movement. Grossi, a beef cattle farmer from Marin County, California, whose plan was to work as AFT's president for three years, is 15 years into the job and excited about the opportunities that lie ahead. Berg, who celebrated his 81st birthday this year, continues to work on the issue he has come to know so well.

Although AFT's mission has remained the same over the last 20 years, its mode of operation has changed. When founded, AFT's focus was at the federal level. Work done by AFT contributed to the passage of the federal Farmland Protection Policy Act in the 1981 Farm Bill. The act requires federal agencies to better estimate the impact of their actions upon prime farmland and curtail unnecessary conversion. In 1985, an AFT report called "Soil Conservation in America: What Do We Have to Lose?" structured the debate that led to the creation of the federal Conservation Reserve Program. Five years later, AFT fought for a variety of agricultural conservation programs in the 1990 Farm Bill. And in 1996, the Farm Bill included the landmark federal Farmland Protection Program, \$35 million of which funds the acquisition of agricultural conservation easements. An increase to \$65 million is now being considered by Congress, as is a landmark proposal (the Conservation and Reinvestment Act) that would earmark up to \$80 million per year for agricultural conservation easements.

AFT's focus now has shifted to the local and state levels, where most of the action happens. Success at the local level will create demand for more support from

the federal government. Through its 12 regional and field offices, six of which were opened in the last year, AFT works with states and localities in the nation's most threatened agricultural areas, identified in its 1997 report, "Farming on the Edge."

Herein is a summary of the watershed farmland protection events that have occurred around the country over the last 20 years, with a broader timeline beginning at the bottom of this page.

## West Coast

A band of highly productive farmland runs almost continuously from the northern tip of Washington to southern California. The top ranking agricultural area in the country—California's Central Valley—is in this region. But the same band of land also is one of the nation's fastest growing areas. The three-state region holds the record for the greatest number of threatened agricultural areas (five) in the country.

Oregon was the first West Coast state to make a major effort to protect its base of threatened agricultural land. In 1973, Oregon was the first state in the country to adopt a growth management act, relying on a regulatory approach to farmland protection. As a result, more than 16 million acres of farmland are zoned for agricultural use and all 240 cities in the state have created urban growth boundaries. The act is successfully controlling sprawling development and protecting farmland, making Oregon the "poster child" for regulatory approaches to farmland protection.

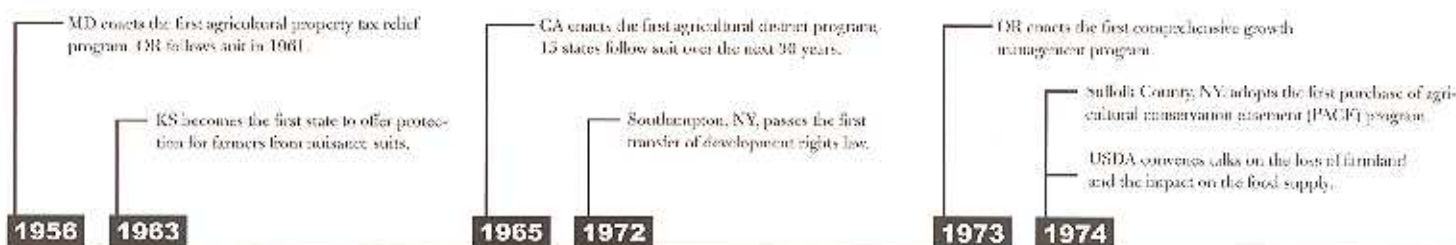
Washington followed suit, but not until 1990, with the adoption of its own growth management act, but the state has not made as much progress as Oregon, partly because of the timing. The growth of the private property rights movement has made it harder to build political sup-

port for regulatory land use policies. Washington's shining moment came in 1979 when King County, home to Seattle, created the first PACE program in the state. For approximately \$50 million, the county protected more than 12,000 acres of farmland in just a few years. Skagit County created its own PACE program in 1998 and several Puget Sound counties are considering doing the same.

Over the past 20 years, California has had numerous success stories. In terms of regulatory approaches to farmland protection, 57 of the 58 counties in the state have implemented agricultural zoning since the mid-1970s. Napa, Marin and Solano



## Farmland Protection Timeline







counties have zoning ordinances that require densities of one dwelling per 160 acres, 60 acres and 40 acres, respectively. On the incentive-based side, Marin County became a national leader in 1980 when it created the country's first agricultural land trust, the Marin Agricultural Land Trust.

California has done a good job building consensus around the issue of farmland protection. The state made a major breakthrough in this arena in 1995, with the release of an AFT report called "Alternatives for Future Urban Growth in California's Central

Valley." The report includes maps that illustrate what the Valley will likely look



like in 2040 under two different development scenarios—sprawl and compact development—and statistics on the cost to provide infrastructure under the two scenarios.

"American Farmland Trust's Central Valley study was a catalyst for a group of agricultural leaders to recommend strategies for conserving the nation's most productive agricultural region," says Jack Pandol, a grape grower in Kern and Tulare counties, California, and chairman of the Agricultural Task Force for the Central Valley. "AFT is a respected voice among farmers and is recognized as the leading organization proposing farmer-friendly solutions to the farmland conversion dilemma."

One of the most significant local outcomes of the report is the creation of the Growth Alternatives Alliance in Fresno County. Created in 1998, the unusual alliance is made up of farmers and business leaders, including the Building Industry Association of the San Joaquin Valley, the Fresno Chamber of Commerce and AFT. A year after its formation, the alliance released a report, "A Landscape of Choice: Strategies for Improving Patterns of Community Growth," that contains 27 recommendations on how to redevelop and improve urban areas. The mayor recently proposed all the recommendations be incorporated into Fresno County's draft general plan.

## Rocky Mountain States

Building support for farm and ranch land protection has never come easy in the Rocky Mountain states. There is too much open land in the region to convince communities that land should be protected. The politics are conservative. So much land is already publicly owned that communities don't want restrictions placed on the little remaining private land.

And, given the size of the region, there are not nearly enough conservation organizations to build a strong voice for land conservation.

The large influx of newcomers to the region is helping the existing conservation organizations make their cases. From 1990 to 1997, five of the fastest growing states in the nation were in the Rockies: Idaho, Arizona, Colorado, Utah and New Mexico. Twenty-one of the 50 fastest growing counties in the nation are in the region. Acres upon acres of working land are being carved up for new housing subdivisions.

In terms of land protection, Colorado is the most forward-thinking state in the Rockies. The Greater Outdoors Colorado Trust Fund (GOCO), created in 1992, sets the tone for land preservation. Using revenue from the state's lottery, the organization awards grants at the state and local levels for acquiring land and easements, among other things. GOCO funds the state PACE program, which was the only PACE program in the region until Montana created one last year.

"GOCO is really what put farmland protection on the map," says Will Shafroth, GOCO executive director and former AFT western regional director. "It's what you need in a place like Colorado, where there is a strong frontier attitude."

One of GOCO's and AFT's biggest achievements was assisting the Colorado Cattlemen's Association in creating an agricultural land trust in 1995. It is the first land trust in the nation formed by a mainstream agricultural organization and the first in Colorado to focus exclusively on agricultural lands. The land trust has protected approximately 21,000 acres and sponsored numerous workshops throughout the state.

AFT also is helping to shape the land protection movement in Colorado. AFT

MA and MD establish the first state-level PACE programs; several state and county-level programs are adopted over the next 21 years.

American Farmland Trust is founded.  
Marin (CA) Agricultural Land Trust is formed (first ag land trust).

AFT's first agricultural conservation easement is transacted in PA.

PA passes the Agricultural Area Security Act.

The VT Legislature declares a state policy encouraging the protection of agricultural land.

AFT publishes a newsletter; the precursor to its present-day magazine.

USDA releases the National Ag Lands Study; AFT co-sponsors a conference to address the concerns raised.

Congress enacts the Farmland Protection Policy Act, requiring federal agencies to avoid unnecessary conversion of farmland.

AFT opens its first field office in CA.

Iowa's new ag district law includes the strongest right-to-farm protections in the country.

1977 1980

1981

1982





CHERRY MAPLE, M3 NATURE INC.

was involved in early model land projects. The opening of a Rocky Mountain regional office in 1997 allows AFT to be active in policy, education and research. It now holds easements on 13,100 acres in Colorado. This includes 3,200 acres in Routt County's Upper Elk River Valley, where sheep and cattle ranches dominate the landscape. The Valley is located 10 miles away from Steamboat Springs, a popular tourist destination.

The other Rocky Mountain states are making slower, yet significant, progress. In Montana, the Montana Land Reliance, a land trust founded in 1976 by farmers and ranchers, holds easements on 278,000 acres. But there are few government programs to support farm and ranch land protection.

The smart growth movement holds promise. In Montana, a smart growth coalition has been formed. In Utah, a state growth commission has been created to recommend incentives for developers to try new, more compact development styles. Arizona created a program in 1998 called Growing Smarter that, beginning this year, will provide \$220 million over 20 years to lease or buy development

rights from state trust lands for open space.

## Midwest

Farmers in the Midwest have had to face a problem occurring in other areas as well: the temptation to sell their land because of low commodity prices for the region's leading cash crops, making it harder for them to make a living.

It's no coincidence, then, that discussions about how to save farmland are taking off in the Midwest. Michigan was ahead of its time when its governor created a farmland protection task force, staffed by AFT, in 1994. The task force recommended creating agricultural districts, adopting enabling legislation for PACE, and strengthening the state's right-to-farm law and use value assessment programs.

The Michigan task force set an example for the region. In Indiana, Ohio, Illinois, Wisconsin and Iowa, state-level commissions and task forces were created in the late 1990s to discuss farmland protection alone or in the context of smart growth. AFT staffed the Ohio task force and provided input to the others.

Michigan also set an example for the region in 1994, when Peninsula Township created the Midwest's first PACE program. AFT assisted the township in generating support for the program by obtaining options from the owners of three farms to purchase their development rights. This was done several weeks before Election Day, when voters were asked to vote on a property tax millage to fund the PACE program. The transactions provided tangible examples of how PACE works, and demonstrated a high level of farmer commitment to the community. Four years later, the township has protected 3,000 acres of farmland—farmland that is known worldwide for its production of cherries.

"AFT's work with the Peninsula Township project, its 'Farming on the Edge' research and its willingness to dedicate staff time out here for technical assistance has helped make farmland protection an important issue in the state and region," says Glenn Chown, executive director of the Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy in northern Michigan. "As a result, things are moving along well out here. PACE was not even in peoples' vocabulary 10 years ago, so AFT has brought us a long way."

A number of Midwest communities have begun the process of protecting their farmland through PACE, better agricultural conservation zoning and other techniques. The Town of Dunn, Wisconsin's PACE program, created in 1996, is such a success that it received a Renew America award during a ceremony at the White House this year. But farmland protection methods have brought challenges as well. Iowa's right-to-farm law was struck down by the courts in 1998 when a judge ruled that a large-scale hog operation was lowering the economic value of a neighboring property.

For AFT, the Midwest has provided excellent opportunities for groundbreak-





ing research. AFT's research center—the Center for Agriculture in the Environment—is located in the middle of the region. One of the most notable research projects done by AFT in the region is a 1998 study, "Living on the Edge: The Costs and Risks of Scatter Development," that was conducted in Chicago's "collar" counties. The report concluded that emergency response times in places with scattered development are considerably longer than in areas of compact development.

On-farm demonstration projects have been a priority for AFT in the region. From 1989 to 1991, more than 150 farmers in Illinois, Indiana and Missouri conducted sustainable agriculture demonstration projects on their land. AFT worked in partnership with a variety of sustainable agriculture organizations and state agencies to coordinate and fund these projects. The program branched out into Michigan and Pennsylvania in 1992, when 57 demonstration projects were done in the five states.

## South

Almost two-thirds of the South is red or green on AFT's 1997 "Farming on the Edge" map. The colors indicate that the land is exceptionally fertile and the pressure to develop the land is above average. This is born out in numbers included in the report that accompanies the map: between 1982 and 1992, North Carolina, Georgia, Louisiana, Florida and Tennessee ranked among the Top 10 states for the amount of high quality farmland converted to urban uses.

Despite this scenario, most communities in the South are only just beginning to explore options for protecting their threatened farm and forest land. They are motivated by the increasing number of people who are relocating to the South



and driving up land prices, drastic reductions in tobacco quotas that are forcing many farmers to consider getting out of farming, and the desire to protect wildlife habitat on farmland.

North Carolina is taking the most aggressive approach to farmland protection in the South. Governor Jim Hunt unveiled a plan this past spring to protect 1 million acres of land in the Tarheel state; the North Carolina Farm Bureau has set a goal of creating agricultural district ordinances in every county in the state, and the land trust community is travelling to every corner of the state to educate communities about farmland protection.

Kentucky also is making progress. The state created a PACE program in 1994 on recommendation of a task force that included AFT staff. The program has been funded since 1998—almost half of the funding is from the federal Farmland Protection Program—and has protected more than 1,300 acres of farmland. At the local level, Fayette-Lexington County is

working diligently to create a PACE program to protect its world-renowned horse farms and other farmland.

"It is the most gratifying feeling to be able to drive down the road and see farms that we have protected," says AFT President's Council member Libby Jones, Jones, a farmer in the Bluegrass area of Kentucky, helped create the state PACE program when her husband was the state's governor. "Since they can see results, people are getting excited about the concept of saving farmland. These are people who used to look at us with skepticism and confusion because they couldn't grasp the concepts."

Skepticism is something Texas is slowly overcoming. With the help of the Texas Land Trust Council and a new AFT regional field office in Texas, both of which were created in 1999, Texas landowners are learning about farmland protection techniques so they can make informed decisions about their land. In Texas, one of the main motivating factors

AFT's newsletter transforms into the magazine, *American Farmland*.

Congress enacts the 1990 Farm Bill, improving upon the conservation gains made in 1985.

AFT releases a first-of-its-kind guide to local and state farmland protection tools.

AFT receives the first President's Environmental and Conservation Challenge Award for its sustainable agriculture programs.

The National Agricultural Library designates AFT as the first Farmland Information Center to provide the public with farmland conservation information.

AFT releases "Farming on the Edge," a study including a second map showing the threat to urban edge agriculture.

UT includes right-to-farm protections in its agricultural district law, becoming the 50th state to offer farmers and ranchers protection from nuisance suits.

AFT completes an agricultural conservation easement on the country's oldest farm (VA).

1990

1991

1993

1994



for protecting land is to protect wildlife habitat as well.

## Mid-Atlantic

The mid-Atlantic states face the same dilemma as West Coast states: intense competition for land. This competition motivated numerous communities to adopt farmland protection programs as early as the 1970s, making the mid-Atlantic home to some of the oldest and best farmland protection programs in the country.

Maryland took the lead in the region and the country when it created the first statewide PACE program in 1977. The program was the brainchild of Jim Clark, a farmer from Howard County, Maryland, and a former senator. Remarkably, the program was approved by the General Assembly several months later. Today, state PACE programs can take several years to be approved, and then, usually only after many months or years of building support with key legislators.

"It really didn't seem like such a big deal at the time," says Clark, 81, in an interview during one of his brief breaks from cutting hay. "I had already helped to create the state's open space program, which was doing well, and I knew it was more important to have a program for saving farms than open space because I knew we all had to eat. It just seemed so logical."

More than 166,000 acres of farmland are permanently protected as a result of the program. Approximately 350 acres of that is Clark's farm. "I am not as rich as I could be if I had developed the land, but at least I'm happy," Clark says.

It wasn't until 10 years later that Pennsylvania followed in Maryland's footsteps. But in just 13 years, the Pennsylvania PACE program has almost caught up with Maryland. Widespread political support for funding the program has allowed Pennsylvania to protect more than 147,000 acres of farmland. Support for PACE also is high in other mid-Atlantic states. With \$647 million in ease-

ment sales, the mid-Atlantic region has spent more money on farmland protection than any other region in the country. The next closest region is the Northeast, which has spent half as much as the mid-Atlantic.

Virginia is the only state in the region that does not have a PACE program. But in March 2000, through the efforts of AFT and the Virginia Farm Bureau, the General Assembly made a major move toward creating a program by earmarking funding that will allow the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services to develop regulations for local PACE programs and establish a Farm Link program.

Maryland and Delaware set examples for the country in the late 1990s when they developed computer generated maps that identified their most strategic farmland. These maps help the states focus their protection efforts on their most productive agricultural land.

The mid-Atlantic states also provide models at the county level. The country's

most successful transfer of development rights program (a program that allows landowners to transfer the right to develop from one place to another) is in Montgomery County, Maryland. Neighboring Howard County is the first county in the country to pay landowners with installment purchase agreements rather than cash—an option that helps the landowners lower their tax bills and the county maximize the amount of land it can protect in the immediate future. Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, is a leader in using a wide range of techniques to save farmland,



ROBERT WALCHER

AFT releases "Alternatives for Future Urban Growth in California's Central Valley," inspiring unusual coalitions of leaders to support more compact growth.

AFT's work pays off: the 1996 Farm Bill creates the first federal Farmland Protection Program, authorizing \$35 million to match state and local PACE funds.

AFT establishes the \$10,000 Steward of the Land Award in memory of Peggy McGrath Ruckefeller.

AFT releases the third "Farming on the Edge" map and report.

AFT releases a comprehensive guidebook, *Saving American Farmland: What Works*.

AFT opens a producer-only farmers' market in Washington, D.C.

In a setback to farmland protection, Iowa's state Supreme Court rules the right to farm provision contained in the state's ag district law is an unconstitutional taking of private property.

In an amazing triumph for farmland protection, NJ voters approve a \$1 billion initiative to protect open space and farmland. Voters in other states pass similar measures tallying \$7 billion.

1995 1996

1997

1998



including PACE, donated easements, zoning, urban growth boundaries and agricultural districts.

For AFT, the mid-Atlantic is home to some of its most monumental land projects. The first landowner to donate an easement to AFT was a landowner from Pennsylvania. Pennsylvania also is the site of AFT's 330-acre farm in Franklin County, donated to AFT in 1996 and used to demonstrate the viability and environmental benefits of grass-based dairy farming.

## Northeast

The Northeast is a testing ground for farmland protection. For starters, Suffolk County, New York, created the nation's first PACE program (referred to in the state as purchase of development rights, or PDR). It was 1974, a time when the county's farmers were beginning to feel the effects of sprawling development and concern about a limited supply of local food was developing.

Massachusetts created a statewide PACE program three years later and the five other Northeastern states eventually followed suit. This includes New York, which created its Agricultural and Farmland Protection Program in 1992. The program, established as part of the 1992 Agricultural Protection Act, enabled counties to create farmland protection strategies. The same 1992 act, which is heralded as one of the most sweeping pieces of farmland protection legislation in the state, strengthened the state's agricultural districts law and farmers' right to farm. In 1996, New York established a statewide PDR program with funding from its environmental protection fund.

The farmland protection programs are a success. Two studies conducted by AFT in the late 1990s in Vermont and Massachusetts concluded that the majority of landowners who have sold their

easements to the states are satisfied with their decision. Most of them are using funding from the easement sale to make environmental and economic improvements to their farming operations.

New York City set an example for the nation when it recognized the value of farmland in protecting water quality. In the late 1990s, the city faced the choice of either building a new \$5 billion filtration plant to satisfy requirements of the federal Safe Drinking Water Act, or finding another way to improve water quality. The city chose farmland protection as the way to safeguard its drinking water supply. It earmarked \$35 million to fund the efforts of the Watershed Agricultural Council to assist farmers in implementing best management practices, and \$20 million to acquire agricultural conservation easements in the watershed. AFT is working with the Council to develop its easement program.

The economic value of farmland was recognized in Connecticut in 1986, when AFT conducted its first Cost of Community Services study in the town of Hebron. COCS studies, which have been duplicated in more than 60 communities by AFT and other organizations, analyze the demands on public services by assessing the financial contribution made by all land uses, including farmland. The studies show that farmland more than pays its way in tax revenue because farmland's demand for services is low.

"I knew when we did the first COCS study we had something good to hang our hat on in terms of farmland protection paying its way," says Wagner. "It quickly became apparent that you

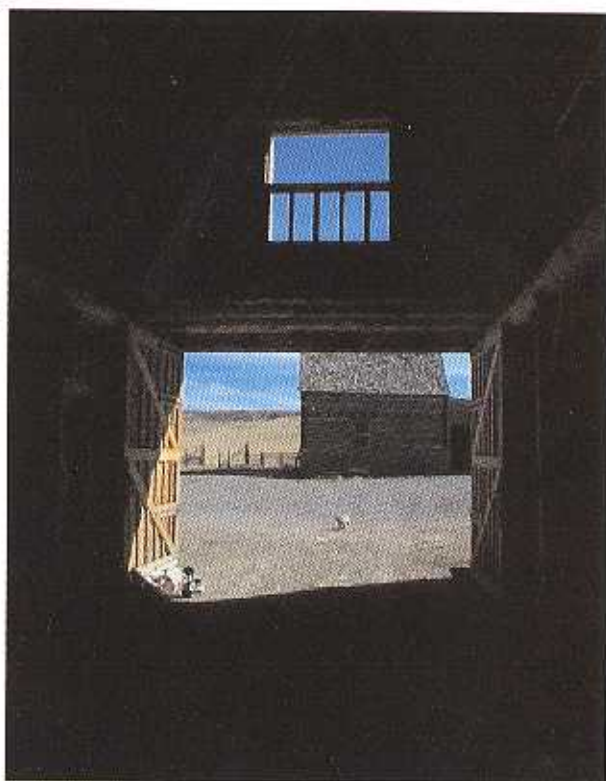
could use these studies in a lot of places."

COCS studies are particularly useful in the Northeast because property tax rates are higher than in most other regions of the country. COCS studies help defend the need for use value assessment programs, which assess farmland at its agricultural value instead of its value for development.

WHERE WILL FARMLAND conservation head in the next 20 years? "AFT, through its work with farmers, environmentalists, policymakers and other partners, has protected more than a million acres of farm and ranch land," says Grossi, "and this sets the stage for the tremendous challenge ahead."

Turn the page to read AFT's vision for the future of farmland protection in the 21st century.

*Jill Schwartz is marketing director for AFT's Farmland Advisory Services.*



JENNIFER HARRIS

AFT launches LandWorks, a professional subscription service for farmland protection activists.

AFT begins operation of Cove Mountain Farm, its grass-based dairy demonstration farm in PA.

AFT issues a series of groundbreaking studies and reports, garnering news coverage and fueling the fight against sprawl in communities.

USDA releases preliminary data from the 1997 National Resources Inventory, reporting that between 1992-97, farmland loss has more than doubled over the previous decade.

The U.S. Conference of Mayors and AFT announce a partnership to save farmland and rejuvenate cities.

AFT cosponsors a conference with federal agencies on balancing ag lands and development.

1999

AFT and the VA Farm Bureau triumph when VA adopts an Agricultural Viability Program.

AFT hosts its 14th annual conference for PACE program managers.

AFT membership tops 50,000.

CA voters pass a \$2.1 billion initiative to protect various types of land, including farmland.

2000