



The Monis Farm Ashippun, WI FARMLAND PROTECTION PROFILE

DECEMBER 2024



Roots as Tall as They Are Deep: Protecting Farmland for the Past and Future

“We were married 59 years ago, and we started planting trees pretty soon after that.”

George and Elaine Monis sit atop Hickory Hill, gazing over the landscape stewarded by the family for the past 175 years. The farm, purchased by George’s great-grandfather in 1876, spans 209 acres of forest and no-till corn and soy in the township of Ashippun, Wisconsin, in Dodge County.

Dodge County reflects the diversity of Wisconsin agriculture: farmers produce everything from dairy to vegetables to



Peder and Scooby Monis atop Hickory Hill

ALL PHOTOS BY PIERO TAICO

FARM AT A GLANCE

COUNTY: Dodge County, WI

YEAR ESTABLISHED: 1876

CROPS: No-till corn and soy

FARM SIZE: 209 acres

MOTIVE FOR PROTECTION:
Keeping the land in farming for the next generation

AGRICULTURAL CONSERVATION EASEMENT:
Held by Tall Pines Conservancy, funded in part by the Wisconsin Farmland Protection Partnership (supported by USDA-NRCS’s Regional Conservation Partnership)



FARMS UNDER THREAT METER® WISCONSIN

* American Farmland Trust (AFT). 2020. Farms Under Threat: The State of The States.



I trust, and am filled with hope, that other generations will have the opportunity to fall in love with [the land] too.... What a legacy, what a gift!

—KIM MONIS



George and Elaine Monis

Christmas trees. It ranks fourth in the state for overall crop production, and according to the 2022 Census of Agriculture, 96% of farms in the area are family farms.

The Monis’ story of their land is firmly rooted in time: both past and future. George, who spent his high school summers baling hay for local farmers, started farming a 10-acre plot on the family property after graduating college. In 1965, George and Elaine moved onto the farm and raised their four children—Peder, Karl, Kim, and Jill—alongside pine and northern red oak saplings. Twelve years ago, their eldest son, Peder, stepped into his father’s boots to manage the farm operations.

Today, the Monises proudly host Tall Pines Conservancy’s annual Ride to the Barns event, where cyclists raise money for farmland protection while pedaling across the rolling hills between local farms. Reliably, George proudly displays a handful of tractors from his impressive International Harvester collection for hundreds of bikers.

Despite an unyielding commitment to the farm and the community they have belonged to for





George and Scooby Monis in the family farmhouse.

generations, the Monis family is witnessing a landscape that is changing. Their farm is only miles from Oconomowoc, Wisconsin, where farmland is suddenly sprouting new housing developments instead of alfalfa.

“We’re ten miles from Oconomowoc, but eight miles from here are two new subdivisions being built overnight,” George remarks.

Protecting the Family Farm

Spurred by the changing landscape, the Monis family began searching for ways to protect and preserve their legacy and home. An agricultural conservation easement offered a lasting solution to protect their farm for future generations..

The easement, held by local land trust Tall Pines Conservancy and partially funded through the Wisconsin Farmland Protection Partnership, perpetually restricts development on the land and stipulates the land remain in agriculture. Through the Partnership—supported in part by USDA-NRCS’s Regional Conservation Partnership Program—landowners receive compensation for the value of their easement.

While the agricultural conservation easement is a legal mechanism to preserve the family farm, it represents so much more. It embodies their family’s values, hopes, and dreams for the land’s legacy and future.

“I want families and my kids to live life together with their cousins, their kids, and their grandkids. And if this [easement] can help facilitate that, that would be a great thing to look back on as a legacy,” Karl shares.

Kim adds, “I trust, and am filled with hope, that other generations will have the opportunity to fall in love with [the land] too What a legacy, what a gift!”

In addition to protecting their legacy, the easement brings practical benefits for the future of the farm. The easement protects the land’s agricultural use and provides financial security for future generations. In an industry where cash flow is often tight, this brings significant relief to the Monis family.

“With the easement [proceeds], we will be able to get this set up so that with future generations, there’s less pressure for them

to sell because they actually have the dollars in the bank to support and maintain the property,” Peder shares.

Ensuring a Lasting Legacy

Protecting Wisconsin’s farmland is critical to preserving farm legacy, keeping farmland in production, providing opportunities for future farmers and land stewards, and maintaining our connection to the land that sustains us. As change accelerates, the family is relieved to know that the farm will always be a farm:

“Over time, agriculture changes. Maybe it’ll be an apple orchard or maybe it’ll be something else, but it won’t be houses,” Peder explains.

Among the trees planted long before he was born, Karl Monis shares a message for future generations of Monises, for whom the farm will endure:

“When I think about grandkids that I hope to have someday, they have a family that settled and toiled here and scraped together to live. And that they succeeded. The family thought about them.”



George Monis’ antique farm implement collection

For more information about this project or to discuss farmland protection, please contact

- Angie Doucette, American Farmland Trust Midwest Farmland Protection Manager, adoucette@farmland.org, (414) 285-3623
- Floreal Crubaugh, American Farmland Trust Midwest Farmland Coordinator, fcrubaugh@farmland.org, (608) 390-2756

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