

MESSER FARM



The Messer Farm Fields: A Farmer's Perspective

By Greg Berger

The world is a bit topsy-turvy right now. We are all experiencing physical distancing, uncertainty and the “new normal.” In the farming world, we are faced with those same challenges. Our job and our passion is to grow crops using the natural resources of the land and the sun. The pandemic flipped many things around for us, but the arrival of spring and the stability of the land remain constant.

We at Spring Ledge Farm are fortunate to be able to lease and grow on one of the last remaining agricultural fields in New London. This field, historically known as the Messer Farm field, is adjacent to Spring Ledge Farm. The 22 acres of open fields are designated as “prime” farmland of statewide importance. But these fields, which have been cultivated for centuries, are now up for sale.

The fields are part of a 144-acre piece of land that ASLPT has a unique opportunity to acquire and conserve: 22 acres of fields plus 122 acres of beautiful woodland that sustains natural wildlife habitat (we saw a moose walk out of the woods and across the fields a few weeks ago!), offers a vast network of recreational footpaths and holds the headwaters of White Brook, which feeds into Pleasant Lake. The footpaths connect with other recreational trails in town and will offer all of us the ability to walk, snowshoe, and cross-country ski. These are activities we can all enjoy throughout the year, no matter what topsy-turvy events grip the world.

The property is a high-priority conservation piece listed in New London's Master Plan. It sits adjacent to the protected 53 acres at Spring Ledge Farm. Productive farmland in this area of New Hampshire is scarce to begin with (we are the granite state!). Add the intense pressure of development in our towns and those flat, open fields with few rocks make for easy-to-build house foundations.

These great soils were created over the millennia, with characteristics you just can't replace. From a food crop growing standpoint, an acre in this field is quite different from an acre somewhere else in town. Protecting prime farmland is a critical part of the local food system and is critical to our resiliency as a community.



Photo by Jim Perkins

And that view! As you drive into town on Little Sunapee Road and see Mt. Kearsarge rising above the “skyline” of New London, the view is framed by the old barn on your right and the edge of the woods on your left. It's easy, as well as distressing, to envision four or five houses popping up in the field.

Whether you're driving by the fields or hiking through the woods, the land anchors us and provides stability. We now have an opportunity to protect a vital part of our rural landscape; an active landscape that supports local foods, employment, tourism, outdoor recreation and the environment. Let's protect this land as a constant presence in our community, one that will be here for generations to come. Please join us!

Greg Berger grew up in New London, started working at Spring Ledge Farm in 1985 and purchased the farm from John and Sue Clough in 2005. He and his wife Astrid, and their kids Erin and Calvin, live on the farm. Greg was on the board of ASLPT for eight years, serving as Chariman for two years.