

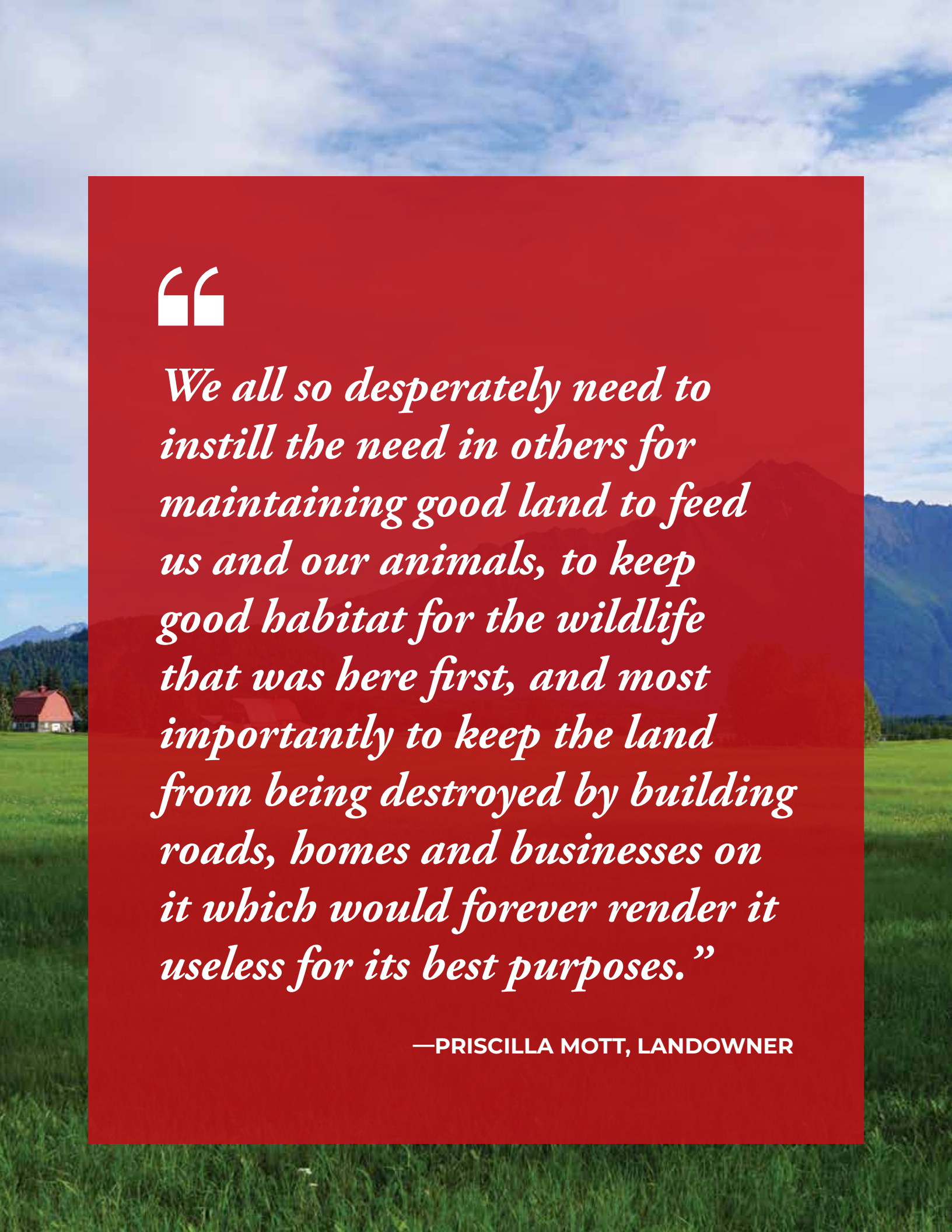


20 Years of Protecting Alaska's Farmland

A Retrospective of the Alaska Farmland Trust, 2005–2025

Special thanks to ConocoPhillips for
sponsoring our 20th anniversary celebration

 **ConocoPhillips**



“

We all so desperately need to instill the need in others for maintaining good land to feed us and our animals, to keep good habitat for the wildlife that was here first, and most importantly to keep the land from being destroyed by building roads, homes and businesses on it which would forever render it useless for its best purposes.”

—PRISCILLA MOTT, LANDOWNER



Celebrating Two Decades Of Keeping Alaska's Farmland In Farming

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LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Friends,

Gratitude. Community. Healthy, local food.

Those are the 3 things on our minds here at the Alaska Farmland Trust as we close out our 20th Anniversary year. From the very beginning, when a handful of Matanuska Valley farmers realized that if we didn't do something to protect our agricultural land it would soon be gone, through our first two decades, our incredible community has shown up through thick and thin to help us protect the land that we all cherish.

This work has always been powered by people who care. Those people are landowners who chose to protect their family farms, donors and funders who believed that conserving farmland is as vital as any other form of conservation, and community members who showed up, volunteered, and spread the word. And of course, our staff and board members—past and present—who have worked tirelessly to make every acre count. To each of you: thank you. Your trust and support have made this work possible.

Although 20 years may seem like a substantial amount of time, in the world of land conservation it is merely a blip in the continuum of land stewardship. The conservation easements that we use to protect farmland are designed to ensure that the land remains productive in perpetuity. Forever. It is our charge, and our community's mandate, to ensure that not only your grandchildren, but your great-great-grandchildren, and theirs as well, have access to healthy, locally grown food. Generations literally depend on ensuring that this land can and will be farmed. That is a heavy commitment, and one that we are honored and deeply grateful to carry in partnership with our community.

It is only fitting that we were able to complete the easement on the Grover farm, our 4th multi-generational historic property, in our 20th year. With 595 acres protected to date and over 450 more in progress across the state, our community of deeply committed landowners and funders are steadily working toward our goal of securing enough land to feed Alaskans forever.



This community that we are so blessed to enjoy also includes the hardworking and hopeful group of folks who are seeking access to workable land so that they can build the farms we need to feed us. Our growing Farmlink program is working to connect them with landowners who are currently unable to work their land so that it stays in production while forming a mentoring relationship to pass along lessons learned through years of experience. Connections through Farmlink are just as critical as conservation easements when it comes to supporting a robust local food system for Alaska and we look forward to watching the momentum build.

We hope then that you – our fellow Alaskans, our landowners, farmers, and funders, will share in our sense of pride as we reflect on the accomplishments of the past 20 years and ready ourselves for the next several decades of thriving local agriculture!

With sincere thanks,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Leslie Senden".

Leslie Senden
Board President



OUR MISSION & WHY IT MATTERS

What is the Alaska Farmland Trust?

The Alaska Farmland Trust (AFT) is a private, non-profit land trust with the mission to protect Alaska's farmlands for future generations through land conservation. AFT envisions a future with thriving local food markets that will give Alaskans access to fresh, healthy food and keep our farmers farming. One of the most effective ways to achieve that vision is through agricultural conservation easements, a tool that allows landowners to protect their farmland permanently.

What is an agricultural conservation easement?

It's a voluntary legal agreement between a landowner and a land trust that permanently limits the use of the land to protect its agricultural value. The land stays in private ownership, but the development rights are removed—ensuring it can always be farmed.



Why is protecting agricultural land important?

Over 95% of the food consumed by Alaskans is imported from outside and one in five Alaskans is considered food insecure. Access to affordable, healthy foods is a challenge for many. Thankfully, farms still exist to provide reasonably priced, nutritious and fresh vegetables. By protecting farms, we strengthen the health of our community.

Farms have community value, agricultural value, and future food production value. Farms, particularly in the Mat-Su Valley, have high quality agricultural soils, are centrally located, have demonstrated the ability to produce food, and are well-known and revered by community members. However, in the Mat-Su Valley alone, over 3000 acres of farmland has been lost in the last decade.

Farmland in Alaska is shrinking, but a 2014 report commissioned by the Alaska Food Policy Council found that the acreage needed for Alaskans to feed themselves is not unattainable. It's not too late to protect the precious soils that could feed our state.

*"It's more than just beauty and community, it's also food security."
—Erin Kittredge, former AFT Board Member*

What makes the Alaska Farmland Trust unique?

The creation of an agricultural conservation easement is expensive, surveys, appraisals, and legal work often exceed \$50,000 per property. While some landowners have generously donated their easements, others are not in a position to pay and are actually hoping for some financial relief from the easement creation. The Alaska Farmland Trust is one of the only land trusts in the nation that will not turn a landowner away that cannot afford the process. If the land has quality soils vital to Alaska's agricultural future, we find the funding to make it happen. The vast majority of our budget goes directly to paying the costs associated with creating conservation easements and we consider it our duty to make the most of every dollar contributed by the community and our funding partners.

*"One particular point of pride (for me) is that our all-volunteer Board of Directors has not allowed the mission to collapse under the weight of the organization. We have purposely kept our overhead as lean as possible with donated, shared office space, and part-time staff. Our small but mighty team is incredibly efficient with every one of our donated dollars and less than 10% of this year's budget was allocated to administration."
—Leslie Senden, AFT Board President*



Why are agricultural conservation easements good for landowners?

The federal government supports farmland conservation and incentivizes landowners to participate with tax incentives or cash payments through “bargain sales” of development rights. These funds can help farmers build infrastructure, reduce debt, or even avoid selling their property to developers.

Without the bargain sale, eventually we would have to sell some property to a developer, to somebody for housing or whatever. Eventually that's where we would have to go. I don't think we'd have any other choice. The legacy of this farm, we would love to keep it as the Moffitt farm... We have done everything we can to not develop the property. We recognize that when you do, it's gone forever. Working with the Alaska Farmland Trust... (will) allow us to build some infrastructure for the farm for the future.”

—Kathy and Tracy Moffitt, farmers and owners of protected farmland





Why are agricultural conservation easements good for the next generation of farmers?

Farmland protected by an easement remains in agricultural use and typically sells for less than developable land, making it more affordable for new farmers.

“The reason that I care so much about protecting agricultural land is because ultimately it is a non-renewable resource. I struggled as a farmer to find available and affordable land. I know my story is the same as many young, first-generation farmers. Watching amazing farm ground all around Palmer be converted to subdivisions or parking lots is heartbreaking and so that is why I wanted to work for Alaska Farmland Trust. Also, if we lose our agricultural land, we are not only losing the ability to grow food locally, but we are losing a piece of our community.”
—Phoebe Autry, Farmer and former AFT staff

Why are agricultural conservation easements good for all Alaskans?

At its core, an easement prevents non-agriculture development of the farmland and ensures that it remains available to be farmed by future generations. Despite all of the development pressure on our premium farmlands, this means all Alaskans will continue to have access to locally farmed food and that the protected soil can contribute to a food secure state.

“There has never been a more important time to preserve and protect these food producing pieces of land.”
—Arthur Keyes, former AFT Board Member and current FSA Director

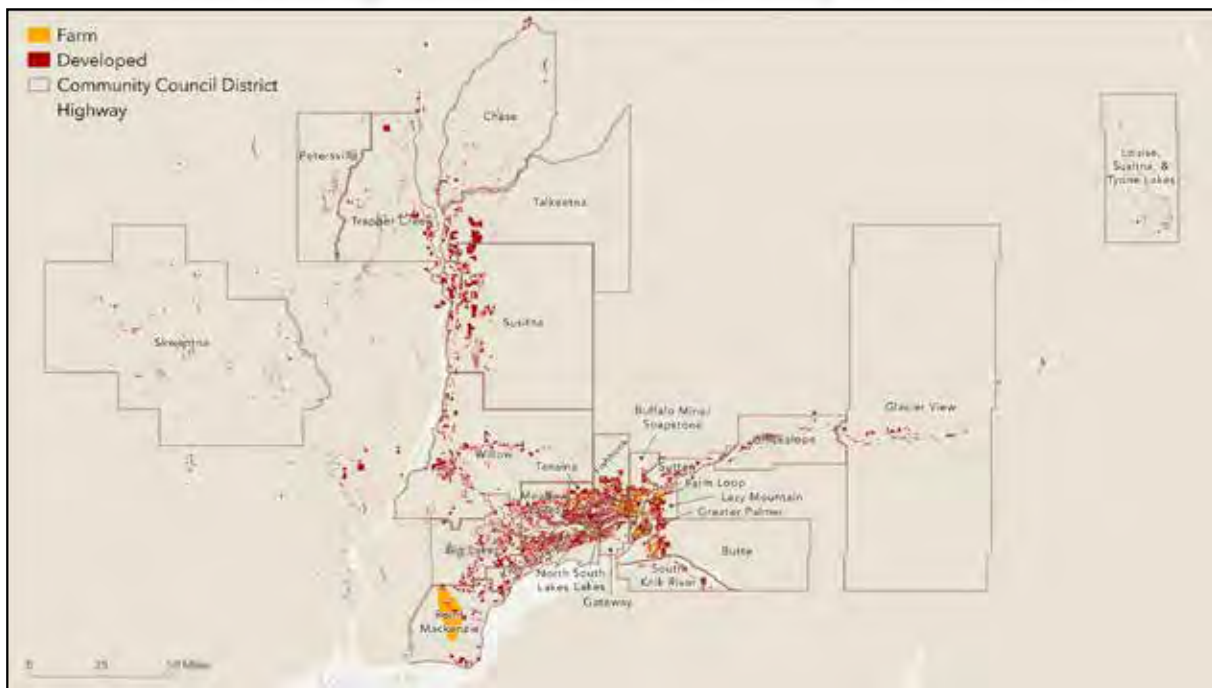
Protecting Alaska's farmland has been our mission for the last 20 years—and it will remain our mission for the next 20 and beyond. Alaska's farmland is finite, and the choices we make today determine whether future generations will have access to fresh, healthy, locally grown food. Protecting agricultural land safeguards our food security, strengthens communities, and preserves a legacy that benefits all Alaskans.

A DECADE OF LAND CHANGE IN THE MAT-SU BOROUGH

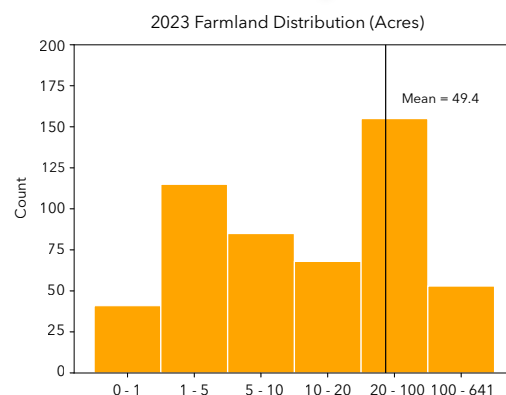
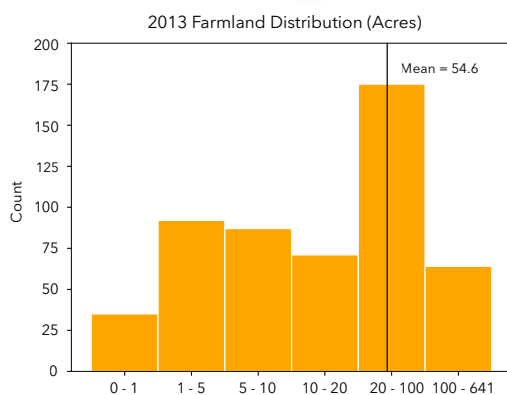
Farmland Loss Impacts Alaskan Food Security

Over half of Alaska's population lives in Anchorage and the Mat-Su. The Mat-Su Borough is land-rich with prime soils for agriculture. When farms are close to the population center, fresh and nutritious foods are more affordable. Unfortunately, the Mat-Su has been losing farmland to development at an alarming rate. Preserving existing farms now prevents the problem from getting worse and allows Mat-Su to continue feeding Alaskans.

What does agriculture look like currently in the Mat-Su?



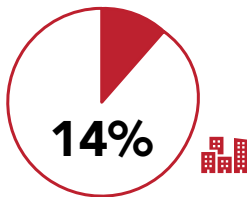
How has agriculture changed over the last 10 years?



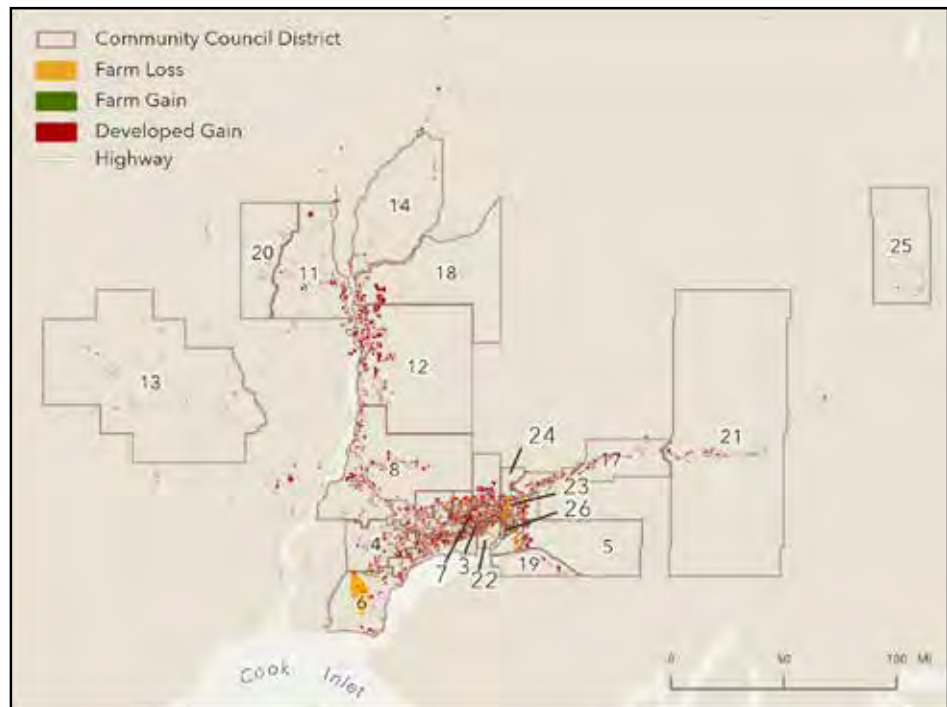
The Mat-Su Borough lost



of its farmland,
and **gained**



of developed areas.



ID *	Community	Change in Farmland (acres)	Change in Developed (acres)
6	Point Mackenzie	-784	835
8	Willow	-418	1,948
26	Greater Palmer	-386	376
7	North Lakes	-386	757
16	Knik-Fairview	-299	2,820
10	Fishhook	-182	845
11	Trapper Creek	-178	1,469
15	Lazy Mountain	-174	167
21	Glacier View	-160	195
23	Farm Loop	-127	405
22	Gateway	-118	635
19	South Knik River	-97	328
24	Buffalo Mine/Soapstone	-94	250
4	Big Lake	-60	737
9	Tanaina	-24	701
18	Talkeetna	-6	1,836
2	Sutton	-4	121
3	South Lakes	42	96
5	Butte	45	581
12	Susitna	107	2,824
1	Meadow Lakes	234	1,048
13	Skwentna		197
14	Chase		540
17	Chickaloon		266
20	Petersville		557
	Louise, Susitna, & Tyone		
25	Lakes		157
Mat-Su Total Acre Change		-3,076	23,164

* ID values as listed in map





OUR ROOTS: 20 YEARS OF PROTECTING ALASKA'S FARMLAND

The Alaska Farmland Trust was born from a simple question: *How can we keep Alaska's best farmland growing food for future generations?*

In the early 2000s, the Board of the Alaska Rural Rehabilitation Corporation (ARRC), a nonprofit agricultural lending bank founded in 1935, became alarmed by the rapid development of farmland around Palmer. Wanting to provide landowners with another option besides selling for development, the Board created the Alaska Farmland Trust (AFT).

Under the leadership of Steve Gallagher, ARRC's director at the time, AFT was established as a 501(c)3 in 2005. While managing both organizations, Steve helped secure early funding, state and local support, and protected the first two farm properties.

"During my time with the Trust, I learned of 'food deserts' and 'food security,' new terms for Alaskans to know and understand. I am not one that likes government to spend my money on frivolous things, but I learned farmland protection is a must for Alaska to survive generations down the road."

— Steve Gallagher, Founding Director

By 2010, AFT had its own Director and was gaining momentum. Partnerships with USDA, the State of Alaska, the Mat-Su Farm Bureau, local Soil and Water Conservation Districts, and the Mat-Su Borough strengthened its reach.



"Every time you sit down with a family, you're helping them shape their legacy. Every piece of land holds a story—a story of care, stewardship, and hope for the future. When you talk with these families, it's not just about the land as it is today, but about what it has been and what it can become."

— Margaret Adsit, Director 2010–2012

In 2014, the conservation of 40 acres at the Alaska State Fairgrounds brought new visibility to the program and to the now-iconic Farmland Forever signage. In 2015, a director with a gift for community engagement joined the team, leveraging events and outreach to inspire a wave of public support that continues today. Landmark projects at the Musk Ox Farm and Spring Creek Farm soon followed, building credibility and community pride.

"Some of my most meaningful moments as director came from connecting with our community at outreach events and seeing how much people care about Alaska's farmland. And I'll never forget the deep pride I felt watching those Farmland Forever signs go up around the Valley."

— Amy Pettit, Director 2015–2022

Today, AFT has a tried-and-true process for protecting farmland and has since completed four more conservation easements. Now our work extends beyond land protection through offering educational programs for farmers, launching Alaska Farmlink, a land-access matchmaking service, and hosting some of Alaska's most beloved agricultural outreach events.

Over two decades, AFT has grown from an idea into a trusted, nimble organization safeguarding Alaska's farmland. Through conservation easements, partnerships, and community engagement, we've turned early vision into lasting impact and we're just getting started.



“

“Local food is part of our identity. Losing a farm is something I don’t even want to think about... The reality is we need to help farmers not just by me purchasing (local food) but with other support so we can look out for generations to come.”

- DAVID MCCARTHY, CHEF & CO-FOUNDER
OF 49TH STATE BREWING COMPANY

PAST PROJECTS

9 properties are now Farmland Forever, protecting 595 acres

Heaven's Hay Field Conservation Easement

Acreage:
40 acres

Current Use:
Hay Production

Historical Use:
Vegetable and Hay Production

Date Established:
2008

Margaret and LeRoi Heaven are part of the reason Alaska Farmland Trust exists. They worked tirelessly for years to get their 40 acre parcel, lovingly called Heaven's Hay Field, put in a conservation easement. Margaret and LeRoi were historical conservationists who adopted and restored old homestead cabins, which they moved to their farm. They loved their parcel and shared it with their community, letting community groups use the property when not in production as a hay and potato field. LeRoi and Margaret passed away in 2010 and 2013, respectively, but their agricultural legacy lives on in their property, which continues forward under the new ownership of Tom and Ann DeSalvo, who are currently increasing the farm's vegetable production.



McCormick Farm Conservation Easement

Acreage:

80 acres

Current Use:

Hay Production

Historical Use:

Hay Production

Date Established:

2010

James and Debra McCormick raised their four children on their farm since purchasing the property in 1986 from the Moffitt family. "I love this farm and this state. It has been very good to me and my family," said James McCormick, "It has been so great to have my children involved in the farm and I work hard every day to keep the farm going." McCormick hays the property, providing food for his own ranch operation and livestock farmers in the community. "I'm a little fish in a big pond, but I'm one contributor to help folks have the option to raise livestock in the State of Alaska."



Alaska State Fair Conservation Easement

Acreage:

40 acres

Current Use:

Hay Production

Historical Use:

Hay Production for Adjacent Dairy Farm

Date Established:

2014

Part of the original Hamilton Dairy Farm, this 40-acre parcel located across from the Alaska State Fair is one of the most striking examples of the threat of encroaching development on agricultural parcels. When standing in the fields, houses dominate the horizon. Alaska State Fair Board of Director Danny Consenstein was instrumental in helping put the conservation easement in place. He, along with the rest of the board, felt it was an important part of the Alaska State Fair's mission. "We have this strong educational mission to educate fairgoers about agriculture. Farmland protection seemed so important for us because we are such a high profile organization and this region of the state has such strong agricultural roots," said Consenstein. "When we, the Alaska State Fair, do things, they have a bigger sounding board for the rest of the state. If we, as the Fair, were to make a statement about the importance of protecting farmland, then we could fulfill our educational role."



Musk Ox Farm Conservation Easement

Acreage:
68 acres

Current Use:
Musk Ox Grazing Lands
& Hay Production

Date Established:
2016

William and Viola Lentz were colonists from Wisconsin who came to Palmer in 1935. They drew a parcel of property just north of Palmer that would become an internationally known farm. They cleared the property and stuck it out, keeping it in dairy production through the mid-60s. They sold the property in 1970 and it changed hands a few times until it was purchased by the Musk Ox Development Corporation (MODC), known today as the Musk Ox Farm. Each year, thousands of people from around the world visit the Musk Ox Farm to learn about the domestication process of the world's warmest wool. When the MODC's board of directors decided to go ahead with the conservation easement, they began on a six year journey that culminated in the permanent protection of 68 acres of the farm. Mark Austin, the current executive director, is proud of what he and the board have accomplished. "This is our legacy as the nonprofit, no matter what our great success and failures are with the musk ox, the land will be preserved," he declared.



Spring Creek Farm Conservation Easement

Acreage:

77 acres

Current Use:

Hay Production

Historical Use:

Dairy Farm and Hay Production

Date Established:

2017

Louise Kellogg was a young woman in 1947 when she came to Alaska to start her farm. The cards were stacked against her, but she persevered to run Spring Creek Farm, one of the most successful dairies in the state. She loved the land, and made it her mission to keep as much land intact as possible. By the time of her death she had acquired 900 acres just north of Palmer. Today, Spring Creek Farm is used for multiple educational purposes: classes are held in the farmhouse most evenings. The trails, established by Louise, are open to the public for use throughout the year. During the school year, Alaska Pacific University students studying for their Masters of Science and Environment use the learning center to host an educational enrichment program for local homeschooling families. In the summer, the learning center is used for educational programs and camps.

"There is an abundance of many things in our state, but agricultural land is not one of them. Taking care of our lands now is taking care of future generations of Alaskans. Helping ensure a food secure future is one of the best legacies we could leave behind."

—Leah Corbin, Manager of Spring Creek Farm and AFT Board Member



Mountain Field Farm Conservation Easement

Acreage:

16 acres

Current Use:

Hay, Flower Farm and Event Venue

Historical Use:

Hay and Mixed Vegetable Production

Date Established:

2018

Former AFT Board Member Sarah Phipps' dream of saving the farm she grew up on was realized in 2018. After extensive renovations, removing decades of debris and scrap metal, the restored Colony Barn, peony fields and prolific soil are providing joy to the community again.

Sarah & her husband Taylor were interested in donating the easement on their property and worked with the Trust to realize the tax incentives available to them for their generous and lasting legacy. New owners purchased the property in 2025 and have since added infrastructure to expand both its floral production and agritourism offerings. Mountain Field Farm is truly thriving!



Lewis Farm Conservation Easement

Acreage:

63 acres

Current Use:

Hay Production

Historical Use:

Potato Production

Date Established:

2020

In 2008, Pam and Brad Lewis were named Alaska State Fair's Farm Family of the Year. Third generation Alaskan farmer, Brad Lewis, has been farming since the 1980s in Palmer with his wife Pam and two sons. With forty years of farming and feeding Alaskans under their belt, Pam and Brad were ready to retire and spend time with growing grandchildren. The Lewises leave a lasting legacy to the greater Palmer area with the permanent protection of 63 acres of their farm.



Moffitt Farm Conservation Easement

Acreage:

96 acres

Current Use:

Hay Production and Beef Cattle

Historical Use:

Hay, Beef Cattle and Dairy

Date Established:

2023

The Moffitt Farm, located just north of Palmer, has been a working farm for the last 8 decades. Originally the farm was established as a part of the Matanuska Colony project in the 1930s. Since 1945, three generations of Moffitts have stewarded the land. Once nearly 1,000 acres, the farm was an active dairy run by Tracy's father and uncle. Met with challenges that face farmers across the nation, the family has had to sell off portions of the property to help pay for farming as well as the retirement and healthcare for aging parents. Today, the farm raises a herd of beef cattle, featured at 49th State Brewing Company in Anchorage, and hay for its animals.



Grover Farm Conservation Easement

Acreage:

115 acres

Current Use:

Hay Production

Historical Use:

Dairy Farm

Date Established:

2025

RG Farm, better known as ‘The Grover Farm’, owned by Wesley and Bonnie Grover, consists of over 100 acres of nutrient-dense soil and is situated alongside the Matanuska River out on the Springer System in Palmer.

In 1948, Wesley’s parents, Clifton and Vera Grover, purchased the farmland. The property came with a handful of cows, horses, a tractor, and other equipment to hit the ground running. Originally, the Grover family operated the farm as a dairy. Over time, they shifted to running cattle and began to lease portions of the property to other local farmers.

By securing this property for agricultural use, rather than being developed into a housing subdivision, the Grover family’s legacy will continue and have a lasting impact on future generations of Alaskans and farmers.

“Family, community, and future generations will be able to enjoy the Grover Farm’s beauty and rich soil. It’s important to protect good farmland, because they are not making any more of it. My dad bought this farm in 1948, and he would be very happy it is being protected forever.”

—Wes Grover, Landowner



LOOKING AHEAD

475 Acres In Progress Over The Next 3-5 Years, Effectively Doubling Protected Acres

As we celebrate 20 years of protecting Alaska's farmland, we're building on real momentum. More acres are now in process than ever before with over 475 acres expected to be conserved in the next three to five years and new applications coming in every day.

New Milestone: Protected Properties Now Expanding Outside Mat-Su Valley

For the first time, our reach extends beyond the Mat-Su Borough, with projects underway in Soldotna and Fairbanks, and opportunities developing in Homer. To meet growing demand, we're expanding our toolkit through new partnerships and conservation programs, and pursuing an aspirational revolving farmland fund—a resource that would allow us to quickly purchase at-risk farmland, protect it, and resell it to working farmers. This approach not only ensures that land remains protected but also that it continues to produce food for Alaskans.

We also know that protecting soil is only part of our mission. To truly keep Alaska's farmland growing, we must help ensure that it stays viable and productive for generations to come. After all, land in active production is far less likely to be lost to development. A central part of that vision is the continued growth of Alaska Farmlink, our land access matchmaking service. By connecting more farmers and landowners, we can help new producers find affordable farmland and help retiring farmers keep their land in production. Alongside this effort, we aim to educate landowners on business and succession planning, ensuring they have the tools to plan for the future and preserve their legacy.

Beyond land protection, we're exploring new ways to support farmers and strengthen Alaska's food system from affordable land access to financing, shared equipment, processing, storage, and market development. We're connecting with partners already doing great work in these areas and collaborating directly with producers to identify where AFT can best fit in to help.

In the years ahead, we aim to protect more farmland, empower more farmers, and help build a thriving, resilient future for Alaska's farmland and the people who care for it.

"I was very close to my parents. I saw them do without to save the land they loved. I will feel forever blessed to have been raised on this land. Now that the land is mine and my husband's and will be willed to my daughter and then to her son, we want to be able to care for the land and honor my father's wishes to keep it undeveloped."

—Priscilla Mott, Landowner



Top left & above: The Mott Family is hoping to invest in infrastructure and prepare to transfer the farm to the next generation. Their multi-generational family hay farm in Soldotna feeds local horses and cattle.

Bottom left & below: 40+ acre property in the Mat Su Valley currently in process of being protected



THANK YOU

Thank You to Our Partners and Volunteers

For twenty years, the Alaska Farmland Trust has thrived because of the people and organizations that believe in protecting the land that feeds us. From volunteers who lend their time in the field to partners who invest in lasting change —every acre conserved, every project completed, and every new farmer supported has been made possible by your generosity, expertise, and hands-on help.









ALASKA RURAL REHABILITATION CORPORATION

Our deepest appreciation to our founding organization, ARRC, for their vision for Alaskan agriculture and their unwavering support over the last 20 years.

Farmland Forever Partners



Thank you to our donors & volunteers

All About Herbs	Brian Fay	Edward Kern	Lisa Sadleir-Hart
Kathy Allely	Andrea Fergus	Arthur Keyes	Justin Saunders
Terri Anderson	Jonathan Ferri	Justin Kinney	Fran Seager-Boss
Melissa Behnke	Kevin Foley	Erin Kittredge	Amy Seitz
Nancy & Mark Bertels	Dean Forkner	Zachary Korsmo	Ty & Leslie Senden
Jennifer Bird	Rachel Greenberg	Thomas Lance	Rachel Shedd
Nancy Blake	Lillie Grimes	Barbara Landi	Ken & Elizabeth Sherwood
Claudia Blydenburgh	Justin Harris	Michael Lane	Beverly Short
Clinton Boyer	Erica Harris	Sarah Laske	Kimberly Sollien
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Jacqueline Endsley	Julia Kentch	Sarah Robicheaux	Kendra Zamzow
		David Rudolph	
		Diane Russo	

HOW YOU CAN SUPPORT ALASKA'S FARMLAND



Become a Farmland Superhero!

- **One-Time Donations** — Make an immediate impact and help protect farmland today.
- **Sustaining Memberships** — Give a little every month to power long-term conservation and enjoy awesome member benefits
- **Legacy Giving** — Leave a lasting legacy for Alaska's farms and future farmers.

Visit akfarmland.com/donate or scan this code to learn more



Community Support

- **Volunteering** — Lend your time and skills—every action counts!
- **Spread Awareness** — Share the mission and inspire your community to join in.
- **Buy Alaska Grown** — Support local farmers by choosing Alaska-grown food and help our farms thrive.



Landowner Actions

- **Leasing Your Land** — Put your land to work for local farmers and our food system.
- **Donate Development Rights** — Protect your land permanently and keep it as farmland for generations.

Every choice you make helps you become a farmland superhero!

**Together, we're ensuring
Alaska has Farmland Forever.**

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