



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**72 Acres of Prime New York Farm Land on NYC's Doorstep  
is Saved from Being Paved Over  
Coalition of Agricultural Groups Create Innovative  
Farm Business Model on Protected land**

**New York, NY** –Long-established Greenmarket farmer Morse Pitts, working with GrowNYC's FARMroots Program, Equity Trust, Scenic Hudson, and the Orange County Land Trust (OCLT), has preserved a 72-acre farm from being paved over, blocking a proposed industrial development and placing the land under perpetual conservation easement. The 72 acres are contiguous to Mr. Pitts' 142-acre Windfall Farms, which was previously conserved by OCLT, Scenic Hudson and New York State in 2016. This success creates a protected corridor of 214 acres of productive farmland, woods, sensitive wetlands, and viewsheds in an area facing intense pressure from development.

The conservation transaction will enable GrowNYC and Equity Trust to provide affordable access to the land to help budding farmers establish new farm businesses on the combined protected farm properties under the experienced mentorship of Mr. Pitts.

The newly conserved land, located in Hamptonburgh, was acquired by Orange County government via foreclosure in October 2014. The county then entertained a proposal for a 130,000-square-foot refrigerated warehouse and packing facility, which would process fruit and vegetables brought via freight train from the West Coast for sale in New York City. Learning of this proposal, the Pitts family, fellow farmers, residential neighbors, and other community members organized themselves and voiced their strong opposition. The Hamptonburgh Town Board members listened, and soon after the warehouse project was scrapped.

Meanwhile, GrowNYC, Equity Trust, Scenic Hudson, and OCLT, working with the Pitts family, organized to purchase the land from Orange County and place it under a conservation easement. This means the land can never be developed and will always be available to grow food.

“Thanks to a Town Council that responded to the wishes of its residents and the support of so many wonderful organizations, not only will the farm I have access to, but a neighboring farm as well, be saved from destruction and available to generations of new farmers!” said Morse Pitts.

Furthermore, to ensure the land will always be affordable to farmers, Equity Trust is making the land available through long-term ground leases. These leases provide security and the opportunity to build equity without the need for farmers to make a major cash outlay to get on the land. Mr. Pitts has committed to working with Equity Trust and GrowNYC to take the same

approach with his land to keep it affordable and to facilitate his eventual retirement and transfer of the land to younger farmers.

“We are very pleased to have this opportunity to work with this committed and resourceful group of partners to support Morse Pitts’ vision for a different type of farm: one where it doesn’t cost a fortune to get on the land, and where farmers’ hard work and dedication to caring for the land and providing food for the community can be rewarded with secure tenure and the opportunity to build successful businesses,” said Jim Oldham, Executive Director of Equity Trust.

Equity Trust purchased the property from Orange County, and Scenic Hudson purchased the conservation easement ensuring the land’s permanent availability for farming. OCLT will monitor and enforce the conservation easement over time.

“Saving this farmland from development has major implications beyond the boundaries of the farm,” said Jim Delaune, Executive Director of the Orange County Land Trust. “Expanding industrialization, in what has historically been an agricultural region in the Town of Hamptonburgh, has adversely impacted farmers. The protection of the Nemeth Farm will help ease some of the pressures facing neighboring farms from development, making it easier for farmers to keep their lands in agriculture, while staying productive, and ensuring long term viability.”

“We lose a farm to development every three days in NY State. This incredible effort in Hamptonburgh demonstrates how family farmers, city nonprofits, land trusts, and rural communities can come together to protect our region’s farmland for future generations, which is imperative to a viable and healthy food system in the Northeast,” said Marcel Van Ooyen, President and CEO of GrowNYC. “We are grateful for our partners’ shared vision and tenacity to see this project through, and most of all to the courage and vision of Windfall Farms that led us down this path.”

“Scenic Hudson is delighted to partner with Morse Pitts, Orange County Land Trust, Equity Trust, and GrowNYC to ensure this productive land will always be available and affordable for farming. This is a great example of how New York City and the Hudson Valley both have a critical stake in meeting the ever-growing demand for fresh, healthy food in the city and across the region. Special thanks to Morse Pitts for sharing his expertise with the new farmers who will establish their operations on the land,” said Steve Rosenberg, Executive Director of The Scenic Hudson Land Trust.

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**GrowNYC** is a 501c(3) nonprofit organization that helps residents make ours the most sustainable city in the world. Reaching millions every year, GrowNYC operates Greenmarket farmers markets, engages New Yorkers in recycling education, and builds and maintains green spaces and engages young people in hands-on education. Through its FARMroots program, GrowNYC offers business development technical assistance to Greenmarket farmers to ensure their long-term viability. Learn more at [www.grownyc.org](http://www.grownyc.org).

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**Equity Trust, Inc.** is a nonprofit organization working nationally in support of equitable and sustainable land use. For over 20 years it has been promoting the protection of affordable “farms for farmers” through creative partnerships, model projects, and innovative ownership structures and financing. Equity Trust’s Hudson Valley Farm Affordability Program complements and enhances the farmland protection efforts of the many conservation groups working in the Hudson Valley by supporting the use of critical tools for keeping farmers on the land. The Program provides technical assistance to farm protection projects along with funding in the form of grants and bridge loans. [www.equitytrust.org](http://www.equitytrust.org)

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**Scenic Hudson** helps citizens and communities preserve land and farms and create parks where people experience the outdoors and enjoy the Hudson River. We also bring together people, businesses and government to protect the river and natural resources that are the engines of the valley’s local economies. Started in 1963 by a handful of citizens who cherished the simple pleasures of the outdoors along the Hudson, Scenic Hudson is credited with launching the modern grass-roots environmental movement. Today, in the face of new challenges and the effects of climate change, we are dedicated to making the Hudson Valley a great place to live, work and play. Our focus is on strengthening and maximizing benefits all can enjoy from the region’s great assets—beautiful open spaces, working farms, and vibrant cities and town centers. [www.scenichudson.org](http://www.scenichudson.org)

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**Orange County Land Trust** was formed in 1993 by a group of conservation-minded visionaries led by Louis Van Orden Mills, OCLT’s founder and first president, and Orange County’s first County Executive. From the beginning, the group had a clear set of goals: to protect and preserve scenic and environmentally sensitive areas of the county for future generations before they were lost to anticipated growth and development

