



The Sangamon Conservancy Trust

Trust Matters

Winter 2011

Board of Trustees

- Bob Komnick, Chair
- Steve Frank, Vice Chair
- Walter Lynn, Sec/Treas
- Paul Briney
- Peggy Kaye Fish
- Eldon Greenwood
- John Hawkins
- Carol Herndon
- Randall Leka

Inside this issue:

Schirding Trust Heirs Donate Easement	1
Become an SCT Member	1
Centennial Farms	2
Prairie Creek Habitat Grant Renewal	2
Chairman's Comments	3
Conservation Enhanced Incentives Update	3
Continued	4

Schirding Trust Heirs Donate Historic and Diverse Agricultural Conservation Easement

In Menard County sits an historic farmstead with a landmark sign noting the passing of Abraham Lincoln's first love, Ann Rutledge, daughter of James Rutledge, a co-founder of New Salem, Illinois. This farm has been owned by the Schirding family since 1849.

For over 160 years the Schirding family members have raised agricultural commodities on this farm. In addition to the historic significance of this farm, it also has considerable agricultural diversity about it. There is productive farmland, pasture for their livestock operations and woodlands. They have some of their environmentally sensitive land in the USDA Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) and conscientiously follow the conservation plan on their highly erodible land.

By donating an agricultural conservation easement to The Sangamon Conservancy Trust, they have protected their farming rights and privileges as defined under the US Farmland Protection Policy Act, the State of Illinois Farmland Preservation Act and other related State statutes.

With future urban expansion on the horizon, the Schirdings have the peace of mind knowing that their farming operations will not be in jeopardy.

"On this very spot stood the log cabin in which Ann Rutledge died August 25, 1835. On the hillside to the west stood a large oak tree under which Abe Lincoln bitterly wept after leaving the sick room of Ann Rutledge where their last communion was held."



The Sangamon Conservancy Trust

*Join The Sangamon Conservancy Trust
Be a Partner in Conservation
and Farmland Preservation*

We encourage you to become a partner in our efforts to preserve farmland and conserve the natural resources of Illinois. The enclosed pre-printed envelope provides membership opportunities for you.

The Sangamon Conservancy Trust is a charitable trust under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. Membership dues to this organization are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law.

Looking for Protection of Your Centennial Farm?

The Sangamon Conservancy Trust will be reaching out to the Centennial Farm landowners in central Illinois in the near future to share information with them on how they can protect their farming operations for their families' future generations.

The Centennial Farms Program honors generations of farmers who maintain family farms in Illinois. To qualify for the Centennial Farms status, the farm must have been owned by members of the same family for at least 100 years.

The Centennial Farms Program was started in 1972 under Governor Richard Olgiwie by the Illinois Director of Agriculture Gordon Ropp of Normal, Illinois. According to Ropp, the program was started for several reasons:

- ◆ To preserve the ancestry of the family farm for generations to come.
- ◆ To promote agriculture to the non-agriculture community.
- ◆ To give recognition to those farmers who own the Centennial Farms.

In 1972, the Illinois Department of Agriculture partnered with Production Credit Association (PCA) at their annual banquets around the state to honor the farm families who owned Centennial Farms. Each family received a certificate and a sign to display on their farm. Forty-four hundred certificates were given out that first year to those who filled out the application and proved the continual lineage of ownership. Ropp said "the Governor's signature was done with a stamp, but I signed all 4,400 of them by hand with green ink!" Ropp also attended the banquets so he could make the presentations in person.

More than 8,300 Illinois farms have been designated Centennial Farms since the beginning. There is at least one in each of Illinois' 102 counties. For more information on the Centennial Farms Program contact the Illinois Department of Agriculture at (217) 782-6675, or on the web <http://www.agr.state.il.us/marketing/centfarms/>



Prairie Creek Habitat Grant Renewed

We are pleased to announce that the grant for Prairie Creek Habitat (PCH) has been renewed for another three years and will continue to provide the Pleasant Plains School District 8 (School District) with funds to maintain the 17-acre outdoor, environmental classroom on their Farmingdale campus. This private foundation grant provides \$5,000 annually for PCH and is matched by the School District.

Every year many school children, as well as the public, enjoy their time at PCH, whether learning valuable lessons about nature or just enjoying its serenity and beauty.





Chairman's Comments

By Bob Komnick

“By donating an agricultural conservation easement to the Trust, you promote controlled development, which reduces threats to prime farmland and natural areas . . .”

As a landowner have you ever wondered what would happen to the farmland you own after you are gone? Will it remain the same as you have it now, or will it be subdivided in the future? If you wish to you preserve your land for agricultural purposes, you can donate part or all of your land as an agricultural conservation easement to The Sangamon Conservancy Trust. By donating this conservation easement to the Trust, you promote controlled development, which reduces threats to prime farmland and natural areas, while still maintaining eligibility to farm the land and to participate in the federal, state and local conservation programs that are available. Another benefit of donating an agricultural conservation easement includes the potential for reduced estate, capital gains, property and income taxes. The Trust is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit charitable organization, formed to protect, preserve and enhance farmland and natural areas for the benefit of landowners, their property and the common good of the public. The primary coverage area for the Trust includes Sangamon, Christian, Cass, Logan, Macon, Macoupin, Menard and Montgomery counties. However, other counties will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

To find out more, contact The Sangamon Conservancy Trust through Barb Mendenhall at the Sangamon County Soil & Water Conservation District at (217) 241-6635 ext. 3.

Congress Extends Conservation Incentives

America is losing land to development at the rate of 1.5 million acres per year.

After a year-long lapse that left many important conservation donations in limbo, Congress renewed an enhanced tax incentive for conservation easements that increased private land conservation by a third—to over a million acres a year. The renewed incentive will be in effect through December 31, 2011 and retroactive to January 1, 2010. There is strong bipartisan support in Congress for making this incentive permanent.

Land Trust Alliance President Rand Wentworth gave special credit to the sponsors of legislation to make this incentive permanent, Senators Max Baucus (D-MT) and Charles Grassley (R-IA), and Representatives Mike Thompson (D-CA) and Eric Cantor (R-VA). “These leaders have worked hard to make sure we can continue the success this incentive has already had, protecting special places and productive working lands in hundreds of communities across the country,” Wentworth said. “The land this incentive helps protect is an investment in clean water, fresh, local food, wildlife habitat, and scenic beauty.”

“The land this incentive helps protect is an investment in clean water, fresh, local food, wildlife habitat, and scenic beauty”, according to Land Trust Alliance President Rand Wentworth.

By helping modest income landowners deduct the full value of their contributions, this enhanced easement incentive has increased the pace of private, voluntary land conservation by about 250,000 acres a year nationwide, and is especially important now that the latest reports show that America is losing land to development at the rate of 1.5 million acres per year.

The enhanced incentive, which applies to a landowner's federal income tax:

- Raises the deduction a donor can take for donating a voluntary conservation agreement from 30% of their income in any year to 50%;
- Allows farmers and ranchers to deduct up to 100% of their income; and
- Increases the number of years over which a donor can take deductions from 6 to 16 years.

The Sangamon Conservancy Trust
2623 Sunrise Drive—Suite 1
Springfield, IL 62703-7302

Return Service Requested

Phone: 217-241-6635 ext. 3
Fax: 217-241-6638
E-mail: barb.mendenhall@il.nacdnet.net

PRESORTED
STANDARD
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
SPRINGFIELD, IL
PERMIT NO. 275

We're on the Web!
www.sangamonconservancytrust.com

Our Mission
"To foster exceptional conservation
activities for the benefit of all persons"

Member of
Land Trust Alliance
www.lta.org

Congress Extends Conservation Incentives

(continued from page 3)

Example of enhanced conservation easement incentive:

Without the enhanced easement incentive, a landowner earning \$50,000 a year who donated a \$1 million conservation easement could take a \$15,000 deduction for the year of the donation and for an additional 5 years—a total of \$90,000 in tax deductions.

With the enhanced incentive deduction, this same landowner can deduct \$25,000 a year for the year of the donation and that same amount for an additional 15 years. That's \$400,000 in deductions. If the landowner qualifies as a farmer or rancher, they can zero out their taxes. In that case, they could take a maximum of \$800,000 in deductions for their million dollar gift.

Qualifying farmers and ranchers can deduct up to 100% of their adjusted gross income. The enhanced easement incentive defines a farmer or rancher as someone who receives more than 50% of their income from "the trade or business of farming". The law references an estate tax provision (Internal Revenue Code (IRC) 2032A(e)(5) to define activities that count as farming. The qualified farmer or rancher provision also applies to farmers who are organized as C corporations. For an easement to qualify for the special treatment, it must contain a restriction requiring that the land remain "available for agriculture". This incentive has made it economically feasible for thousands of farmers and ranchers of modest means to be able to conserve their land and keep it in agricultural production. Read more at: www.lta.org/easementincentive.

Landowners interested in conserving their land under this provision should contact The Sangamon Conservancy Trust at (217) 241-6635 ext. 3.