

Young Charlotte farmer bolstered by land conservation

Dorothy Pellett, Free Press correspondent 6:00 a.m. ET Feb. 25, 2017



(Photo: RYAN MERCER/FREE PRESS)

CHARLOTTE - Plans to conserve a 101-acre parcel will make the land affordable to a young farmer while enhancing the town's goal of keeping prime agricultural soils in use.

Dylan Preston, 25, will purchase farmland at the intersection of Guinea and One Mile roads thanks to a Vermont Land Trust conservation easement and the help of another local farmer. The purchase will include funding by the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board, the Charlotte Conservation Fund and the Charlotte Land Trust.

Clark Hinsdale III has offered to sell the land at an amount discounted 20 percent from the total price of \$599,400. The 61-year-old said he has been helping young farmers buy and conserve land for 30 years.

"My personal goal is to have conserved 80 percent of any property that I am associated with," Hinsdale said.

RELATED: [Dairy farmers offset beleaguered workforce with robots \(/story/news/2016/08/28/down-farm-robots-take-over-milking-parlor/89258634/\)](#)

The land in Charlotte that he has conserved includes properties formerly owned by his mother, Nancy Hinsdale, and by his late father, Clark Hinsdale, Jr. In 2008, he inherited the parcel that Preston will buy.

Buy Photo



Dylan Preston, 25, has been in the hay and beef business since he was old enough to drive. (Photo: RYAN MERCER/FREE PRESS)

"This is a great outcome for this property," wrote Allen Karnatz, Champlain Valley Farm Director for the Vermont Land Trust. "Clark Hinsdale is really helping young farmers in Charlotte like Dylan by conserving land and selling it at an affordable price."

The Town of Charlotte has an existing open-space agreement on 31.6 acres of the property. The municipality will give up its agreement rights to the parcel to enable it to be part of the conservation easement, according to Selectboard chairman Lane Morrison.

Preston started working on horse farms in Charlotte, Hinesburg and Ferrisburgh when he was in the sixth grade and began his own trucking business while still in high school. About five or six years ago, he bought beef cattle and started buying equipment to make round and square hay bales.

Last year, Preston leased about 300 acres on neighboring farms for hay and pasture. After the land purchase is finalized in March, he expects to farm 425 acres this year.

"I'll have land close to where I store hay and a centralized place for equipment," Preston said. "I intend to take care of the land that I own and put nutrients back into the soil."

Buy Photo



Dylan Preston loads hay with farm hand Greg Armell bound for a nearby horse farm. A proposed conservation of 100 acres surrounding the farm with sale of land to Dylan and his father will them to continue and expand his farming in one location instead of on leased land, and it will help the land to stay in agricultural use. (Photo: RYAN MERCER/FREE PRESS)

Preston said there is no such thing as a typical day. One February day he picked up a truckload of cattle in Ferrisburgh, hauled them to Springfield and then stopped to buy parts and do other errands. After the Feb. 12 and 13 snowstorm, he spent two days plowing snow and trucking it from University of Vermont grounds. However, each day includes feeding cows and often hauling hay bales to other farmers.

Preston and his father Ward Preston will both sign the land purchase agreement, but they agree that "it's Dylan's deal".

Dylan Preston emphasized that he gives his family a lot of credit for his success, as well as the generous support from other members of the farming community in Charlotte.

Through the Vermont Farm and Forest Viability Program, the Intervale Center's Sam Smith worked with Dylan Preston to develop a business plan.

"Dylan is a very hard-working, motivated young farmer, and having security in owning his land and infrastructure will be important to the continued success of his farm business," Smith said.

A signing of the conservation easement agreement and sale is planned for March 20. It will include an easement for public trails on the property.

Read or Share this story: <http://bfone.ws/2lGrMnr>

BRING ON THE
SPRING SKIING

BOOK NOW

ASPEN SNOWMASS.