

NEWS RELEASE/November 5, 2014

**FOR IMMEDIATE USE**

Contact: Angela Twitchell, Executive Director, Brunswick-Topsham Land Trust; 207-729-7694 or [angela@btlit.org](mailto:angela@btlit.org)

**INNOVATIVE LEASE ENSURES FUTURE OF FARMING AT CRYSTAL SPRING FARM**

An innovative lease at Crystal Spring Farm will ensure the future of farming at the Brunswick Topsham Land Trust's signature property. The lease may well be a model for other farm property owned by land trusts across New England.

The far reaching lease will join the Land Trust, on the one hand, and farmers Seth Kroeck and Maura Bannon in a 50-year agreement covering 115 of the 321 acres of the Farm located on the Pleasant Hill Road in Brunswick. It provides for agricultural use of most of the property; it assures public use of other land at Crystal Spring for trails, a Farmer's Market, Community Garden, and other events; and it provides proper maintenance of the farm and its buildings. The new lease, the longest anywhere in the U.S. between a land trust and a farm family, intentionally runs longer than the likely tenancy of the current lease holders. The focus is on the long-term.

Kroeck and Bannon have been farming at Crystal Spring Farm for the past 11 years. In that time they have built a very successful Community Supported Agriculture program and sheep farm. But over these years, the relationship between the farmers and the land trust has been based on short-term lease agreements. Both the Land Trust and Seth and Maura wanted to solidify the successful partnership by entering into a long-term lease agreement that will allow the farmers and the land trust to make long range plans for their respective interests in the farm.

The new lease is transferable to a future farmer to ensure that vibrant local agriculture at Crystal Spring Farm will remain an integral part of the Brunswick landscape long into the future.

"For Maura and me this lease is a great culmination of our relationship with the Brunswick-Topsham Land Trust and this Farm," Kroeck said in a recent interview. "The lease ensures that the Farm will be both protected and productive for generations."

"Crystal Spring Farm is a tangible symbol of the multiple values that comprises the Land Trust's mission," said executive director Angela Twitchell. "Local agricultural, land conservation, recreation, community: all these are important to us. This lease will assure that Crystal Spring remains a farm, and it also illustrates how the Land Trust's approach to land conservation truly strengthens our communities."

The lease was a product of the Land Trust's desire to implement long term goals for the farm and the farmers desire to have long term protection and build equity. The lease was based on a Management Plan for Crystal Spring Farm created by the Land Trust Board in 2011. Land Trust President Brad Babson played an important role in translating the complex plan into a mutually acceptable lease agreement. "These arrangements will provide a solid foundation for a

sustainable farming operation and responsible stewardship of an important protected property in our community in keeping with the Land Trust's mission," Babson said. "The result is good for Seth and Maura, good for the Land Trust and good for the many people in our community who enjoy the farm in diverse ways."

Apart from securing the long-term productive and well managed agricultural use of this Land Trust property, the agreement addresses a number of challenging issues in agricultural leases in innovative ways that are already attracting attention beyond Brunswick.

The lease is grounded in a mutual desire for a long-term relationship that allows Seth and Maura to continue a successful agriculture business. At the same time, it provides significant benefit to the public and stewardship of valuable land. The lease is over a long term, and transferable, so that Seth and Maura can sell or pass on a successful business and plan for their retirement, while the Land Trust will be assured that there are incentives to maintain and enhance the productivity of the soils.

The Land Trust makes demands on the farmer beyond those of normal landlord relations, including having public access trails that will remain open to the public, sponsoring public events such as the New Lambs Day, and allowing for the Land Trust's Farmers' Market at Crystal Spring Farm to continue on non-leased land abutting the farmer's residence and farmstead.

Long-term maintenance is an important consideration. The Land Trust will continue to own the farmhouse and buildings. The lease establishes a Farm Maintenance Fund that will be jointly managed by the farmer and Land Trust. A portion of the rent payment will be applied to the fund so that resources will accumulate to finance maintenance expenses.

"We couldn't be happier to be entering into this agreement with Seth and Maura. It has been years in the making, and just shows how fantastic the relationship has been between this incredible farm family and the Land Trust," said Tom Settlemire, Land Trust Board Member

BTLT was formed in 1985 around the preservation of a small coastal meadow and since has preserved some 2,300 acres of precious natural areas. The Land Trust is in the final phase of a historic \$7 million capital campaign to further its goals in land conservation and stewardship. The organization is seeking new support in our communities to raise the vital, last \$1 million. To learn how you can contribute to the Campaign for Brunswick-Topsham and find out more about the Brunswick-Topsham Land Trust, please visit [www.btl.org](http://www.btl.org) or call 729-7694.

###