



# Southern Madison Heritage Trust

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Serving the six towns of Brookfield, Eaton,  
Georgetown, Hamilton, Lebanon, and Madison

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December 3, 2021

Greetings from  
the Board of  
Southern Madison  
Heritage Trust



## Interesting Development at the Schapiro Reserve:

Sam Larson contacted SMHT about doing an Eagle Scout project last summer. SMHT offered several construction projects and Sam chose to build two sets of stairs with handrails leading down the steep berm of the canal that traverses the Schapiro Reserve. The stairs allow people to easily complete two trail loops without back-tracking.



## Farmland Preservation Grant:

As noted last June, SMHT was successful in receiving a NY State Farmland Preservation Incentive Grant – “Dairy Transitions” of \$825,628 for a farm in Brookfield. The grant focused on the transition of farm ownership from one generation to the next, with funding to support the future stability of the 500+ acre farm. SMHT will hold a conservation



easement to ensure the opportunity to practice agriculture on the farm forever. The PCD provided assistance in getting the award, which took about a year to work through the process with Albany. The aerial photo shows the farm area of 518 acres with four specific zones called out for the farmstead, a residence, an enterprise zone and a rental cabin.

The first task of the grant project is to secure the title on the farm with the first grant installment. Unlike most NYS grants, this is a prepayment grant, so SMHT does not have to cover the cost of the various requirements: securing the title with title insurance; preparing a baseline study defining the existing conditions on the farm at the time the conservation easement is recorded; a survey, including specifically designated areas for future farm activities; and a qualified appraisal. When these requirements are satisfied and accepted by the state, the easement will be recorded with the deeds and final payment made to the farm.

**Public Access:** There has been heavy use of all our trails, which continued this fall, with the exception of Leland Reserve which is closed during hunting season. We maintain trails at Leland Reserve on Preston Hill Road, Schapiro Reserve on Randallsville Road, and Gateway Reserve on Johnny Cake Hill Road. Trails are open dawn to dusk, except as noted for Leland.

**Grant Applications:** SMHT is also discussing options with one farm in Hamilton and one in Brookfield on a new state funding program for conservation easements. This new round of funding has \$5 million available for CNY. This 2021 NYS program is similar to the Dairy Transition grant SMHT received earlier this year.

**Leland Reserve:** Now beginning its 14<sup>th</sup> year SMHT has provided the Hamilton Central School 5th grade environmental studies program with field trips in the winter, spring, and fall. We were able to hold a fall visit at the Leland Reserve following guidelines provided by HCS. Greg Owens led the field school and will do so again in mid-winter and spring.



**Ongoing Projects:** We will be monitoring all of the SMHT properties and easements in January as required in our long term goal to achieve accreditation. Meadows at all Reserves were brush hogged to preserve them and prevent takeover by brush, especially invasives such as honeysuckle.

**Volunteer Support:** In normal years, SMHT is fortunate to have the labor of student groups from Colgate and Morrisville State. This year Morrisville continued to remove invasive species expanding the area of meadow. Colgate COVE worked on cutting back brush opening up trails.

**Our goals for 2021/22 include:** Providing access to the 25.6 acre Brackett Woods and Scott Waterfall for a fourth public trail and a different set of habitats for public visits & 5th grade ecology field trips. SMHT plans to extend the trail along the Madison Feeder from the Gateway Reserve to connect with the Hamilton Airport trails and farther to the Village of Hamilton.

**Trail Projects:** SMHT will be seeking primary funding from several grant opportunities to finance the bridge and trail extension, planned for construction next year. We expect the total costs to be in excess of \$25,000 and hope to be successful in acquiring foundation funding.

**No newsletter is complete without a request for support. Please consider a tax-deductible donation to SMHT. Your donation will help enable SMHT to continue its valuable work of conserving open space and agriculture in our six-town area and continuing our popular education program with Hamilton and Madison 5<sup>th</sup> grades.**

**As an all-volunteer nonprofit, 100% of funds are dedicated to SMHT's mission and fully deductible according to IRS regulations.**

A card and envelope are enclosed for your convenience.

**Check out [www.SMHT.org](http://www.SMHT.org) for information about our protected properties and activities.**

Thank you,  President