
2014 Cooperator of the Year

Windy Hill Farm of Marlow NH

Each year the Cheshire County Conservation District honors an individual, business, or organization with the “Cooperator of the Year” award. This is done to celebrate the efforts the recipient has undertaken to steward the natural resources on their land in cooperation with the Conservation District and the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). This year we are happy to announce that John and Sandy Salo of Windy Hill Farm are the 2014 Cooperator of the Year.

Windy Hill Farm is one of only two farms recognized as a Bicentennial Farm in Cheshire County. John’s grandmother, Else Elliott was born on Windy Hill where she lived out her life with her husband John Sargent tending the 83 acres of fields and forest. At this time in history there were 2 sugarhouses and a herd of Durham/ Milking Shorthorn cattle which produced milk for churning into butter. John & Sandy have the original butter churns which Else produced butter with to market in Boston. Imagine travelling to Boston by horse & buggy from Marlow, NH to sell your farm fresh product on a regular basis!

Windy Hill Farm passed to John’s mother and then to John. It is now approximately 300 acres, 25-30 of which are hay land. In 1941 the Marlow fire took the dairy barn and consumed thousands of board feet of Rock Maple all set to go to market. John & Sandy



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moved into the farm house in 1963 with no electricity. John taught as a Jr. High Science teacher in Keene and Sandy taught first grade. Through the years they raised Dorset and Hampshire sheep, at one time having a flock of 150. Their children showed sheep & Hereford cows at all the fairs through the Cooperative Extension 4-H program as members of the Monadnock Woolies. Sandy remembers driving with 3 sheep in the back of her Buick station wagon over the bouncy roads to Fryeburg, ME. During their children's youth they operated a sugarhouse with over 1000 taps and hosted numerous school trips. At the time they had a pig named Brownie which weighed 600lbs and would be remembered by school children across the county for years to come.



Sandy and John have acquired timberland in six towns over the years. They think of the land as a big garden that needs to be weeded; timber needs to be cut and they choose to do it selectively. Windy Hill Farm, with John and Sandy's stewardship has been fostered with help from the conservation programs offered by our partners the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS). Wendy Ward, with NRCS has assisted the Salo's in developing a Conservation Plan starting with a Forest Management Plan. The Salo's used this plan to continue their work with their forester Peter Renzelman and Wendy at NRCS to improve timber health and quality, control erosion and improve access on forest roads and enhance wildlife habitat. The Timberstand improvement released crop trees and removed competing low quality stems in the sugar maple woodland burned in the 41 fire, now nicely regenerating red oak and sugar maples.

John is one of the first clients in Cheshire County to improve instream native trout habitat with funding from NRCS and Trout Unlimited. Wendy said, "John is always willing to try conservation measures

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and practices I propose, usually after in-depth discussions about what benefit to the environment and his land this practice will provide – and how much it is going to cost him out of pocket! He is not afraid to question or challenge anything he thinks is unnecessary and we always end up with a good conservation project in the end. I have learned much about good old Yankee ingenuity, thrift and practicality from John and Sandy. I think we have both benefited from working together over the years.”

Beyond John & Sandy’s dedication to being good stewards of their land they are longtime members of NH Farm Bureau, National Forestry Committee

and NH Timber Owners. They are also a certified tree farm. John has been 2nd Vice-President of NH Farm Bureau and Cheshire County Farm Bureau President. Sandy is an active member of the Women’s Organization of Farm Bureau. In years past they have been the face at the Cheshire County Fair Farm Bureau ice cream booth. The CCCD is honored to recognize Windy Hill Farm as the 2014 Cooperator of the Year.

