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## 2015 Cooperator of the Year

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### *Tracie's Community Farm of Fitzwilliam 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 Tracie's Community Farm, LLC in Fitzwilliam NH as our 2015 Cooperator of the Year.

Tracie Loock (Smith) started farming on her father's land in Sullivan, NH in 1999 while earning her Environmental Horticulture degree from the University of New Hampshire. In the beginning she marketed her farm's produce at the Hancock Farmer's Market. Upon graduating with a degree in Environmental Horticulture from UNH in 2001, Tracie began a CSA where she delivered baskets of produce to homes of members. The farm grew each year. Tracie acquired the present location in Fitzwilliam, NH due to the previous owner's desire to keep the land in agriculture, their willingness to work with the Monadnock Conservancy to acquire an easement and Tracie's desire to find land. In 2007, Tracie signed a purchase and sale agreement for the land and immediately began the moving and building of the present day Tracie's Community Farm, LLC with the help of friends and family.

Tracie's Community Farm is managed organically and grows a variety of vegetables in high tunnel greenhouses and open tilled land with shares sold to over 360 Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) members. A combined effort of two farm managers, Sara and Kristen Wilson, keep the farm and office organized and running smoothly. It is this management, along with dedicated, experienced employees, like James White in his fifth year that Tracie accounts for the farm's present success. Tracie created a work environment that benefits not only the



## Cooperator of the Year continued

customer base but fosters the well-being of all the people involved. The farm presently has 6 full time employees, 3 part time employees, 9 work share positions and 9 delivery drivers. They work smoothly as a team and share a communal lunch together highlighting the bounty of harvest in a family style meal. Tracie has recently relinquished a large portion of her day to day responsibilities to raise a family of her own. The values of good planning, hard work and accommodating the customer are instilled in Tracie's Community Farm dynamic.

Tracie's Community Farm also leases blueberry fields and offers herbs, flowers and raspberries as well as an opportunity to add in local bread, eggs, jam, honey and maple syrup in their share offerings. They have done an incredible job accommodating the needs of their customer base by adding and changing different share options, including delivery. The farm has shares available with options that can meet anyone's

needs.

In addition to shares, the farm has a farm store in the barn where anyone can purchase vegetables, fruits, flowers, or herbs in abundance along with other local goods. They also grow vegetable, herb and flower plants and hanging baskets for those with their own gardens that they sell at their onsite farm stand through the spring and summer.

Tracie's Community Farm has worked with our partner, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, to acquire two high tunnel greenhouses for season extension, to address drainage and roof runoff issues, cover cropping and nutrient management planning. The Becket Fine Sandy Loam found on this farm is prime agricultural soil. The location requires little to no irrigation outside of the High Tunnels. Tracie's Community Farm is also exploring how to establish a pollinator planting in their wet soils through the District's Pollinator project. They are excellent stewards of the land and a great asset to their community.





The farm is protected by a conservation easement which helped with the initial purchase of the property and also protects it from future development.

*“I remember meeting Tracie at a CCCD event years ago and her saying, I just want to be a farmer and grow food for people. That simple heartfelt declaration is reflected today in every part of Tracie’s farm operation that is clearly more than a job, it is her life philosophy.” Wendy Ward, NRCS Soil Conservationist*

Tracie has created an atmosphere within the farm that we could all learn from. She has been gracious about donating her time to help answer difficult farm challenges on panels throughout the years and is an excellent resource when exploring different potential projects. The farm is a member of the Northeast Organic Farming Association (NOFA-NH).

*“It is really fun to see Tracie’s Community Farm featured on national webinars that go out to help other growers. Great to see the operation expand and reach so many fami-*

*lies. Seeing Tracie flourish with her own family and the business too is the best! Cheshire County is fortunate to have Tracie’s Community Farm.” Maryellen Cannon, NRCS Soil Conservationist*

Tracie’s Community Farm represents what is great about our local food system. They are incredible stewards of the land, great community partners and an amazing resource for local organic produce. The CCCD is honored to present Tracie’s Community Farm, LLC as the 2015 Cooperator of the Year .

Please visit [www.traciesfarm.com](http://www.traciesfarm.com) to learn more about the farm, CSA share offerings, the crew and their story.