



Meeting the Moment

*MA Farmland Protection Trends & Pending
Funding Opportunities*

MLTC Land Trust-State Agency Retreat
October 6, 2023

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Agenda

- I. MA Farmland Protection Goals & Trends**
- II. Pending Farm Conservation Funding:
Opportunities & Timelines**
- III. How to seize on these opportunities?**
- IV. Next Steps**

An aerial photograph of a rural landscape. In the foreground, there is a residential development with several houses and a winding road. The middle ground shows a mix of green fields and brown patches, likely farmland. The background features rolling hills and more farmland under a hazy sky. The text "MA Farmland Protection Goals & Trends" is overlaid on the left side of the image.

MA Farmland Protection Goals & Trends

Massachusetts Clean Energy and Climate Plan for 2025 and 2030

June 30, 2022



at least 30% by 2030



MASSACHUSETTS FARMLAND ACTION PLAN 2023-2050

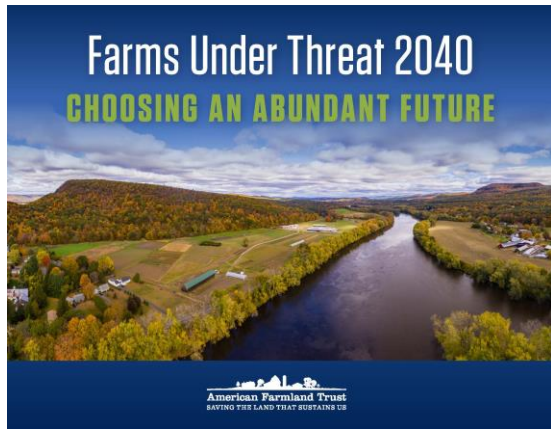
UMassAmherst
Donahue Institute



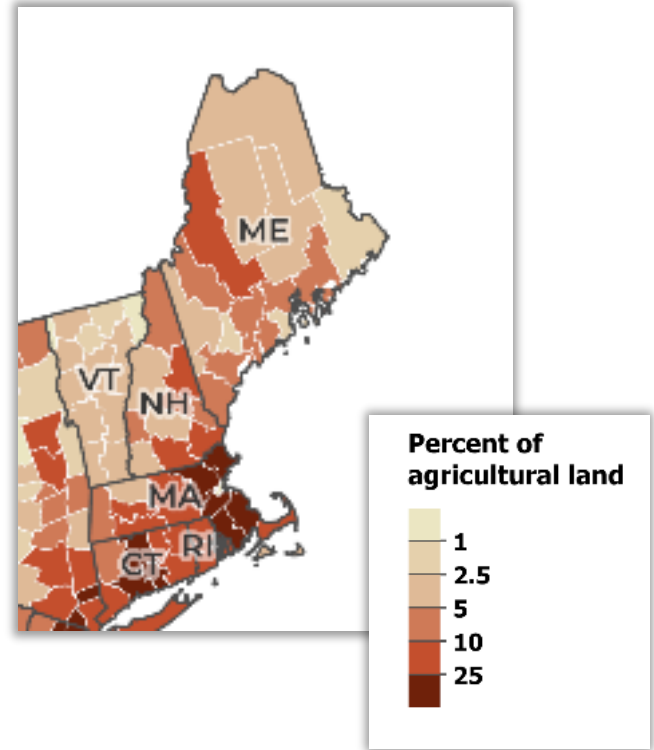
MDAR
Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources

American Farmland Trust
SAVING THE LANDS THAT FEED US

DRAFT 50% of farmland 2050.



% of Agricultural Land Projected to be Converted by 2040



Percentage of Agricultural Land Projected to be Converted by 2040

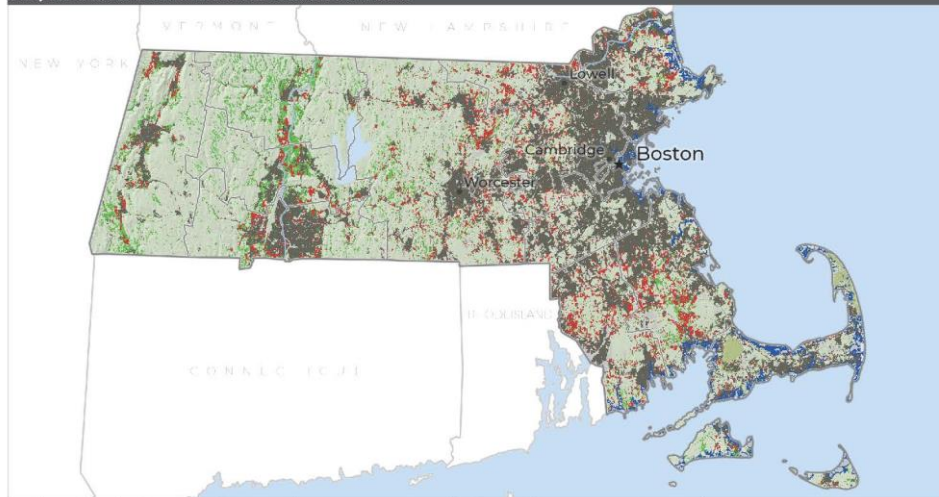
	Business as Usual	Runaway Sprawl	Better Built Cities
New Jersey	16.0	20.1	10.0
Connecticut	15.8	20.9	10.3
Massachusetts	14.8	17.9	10.0
Rhode Island	14.5	17.6	9.8
Delaware	12.5	16.6	8.1
North Carolina	11.6	16.2	6.4
New Hampshire	8.3	10.0	5.2
Tennessee	8.2	11.5	4.6
Maryland	7.8	10.8	4.3
South Carolina	7.5	10.1	4.4
Florida	7.4	9.1	4.9
Virginia	7.3	10.2	4.0
Contiguous U.S.	2.0	2.6	1.1



2040 Future Scenarios Massachusetts

Farms Under Threat 2040: Choosing an Abundant Future mapped three scenarios of development between 2016 and 2040. If recent trends continue, **73,800 acres** of Massachusetts's farmland will be paved over, fragmented, or converted to uses that jeopardize agriculture. **That's 15%**. Bay Staters can slash conversion, save farmland, and safeguard the future of agriculture and the environment by choosing compact development.

PROJECTED AGRICULTURAL LAND CONVERSION 2016-2040



Projected agricultural land conversion from 2016-2040 in the *Business as Usual* scenario.



On recent trends, from 2016 to 2040:

Bay Staters will pave over, fragment, or compromise
73,800 acres
of farmland.

60% of the conversion will occur on Massachusetts's best land.¹

That's the equivalent of losing
1,200 farms,
\$91 million
in farm output, and
4,900 jobs
based on county averages.²

Hardest-hit counties:
▶ **Worcester**
▶ **Plymouth**
▶ **Bristol**

¹ Freedgood et al. 2020
² Census of Agriculture 2017

- If recent trends continue, MA will lose **73,800*** acres of farmland by 2040
- 60% will occur on the state's best ag land
- Equivalent of 1,200 farms, \$91 million in farm output, and 4,900 jobs
- Hardest hit counties will be Worcester, Plymouth, Bristol

*the equivalent of nearly all the farmland that MDAR has protected in the last 43 years.

- Goal 50% (250k acres) by 2050 = 171,00 additional acres = **6,333 acres per year**
- Goal 30% by 2030 (150,000 acres) by 2030 = 71,000 additional acres = **10,142 acres per year**
- Historic APR Avg/year = 1,662 acres
- 5 Year average = ~372 acres
- Most ever in a year = 5,336



50x50 = 3.8 times historic rates
(Acres)

88 projects a year (avg acres)

Most ever = 52

Historic Avg = 22

5 year avg = 8.5/year



30x30 = 7 times historic rates
(Acres)

141 projects a year (avg acres)

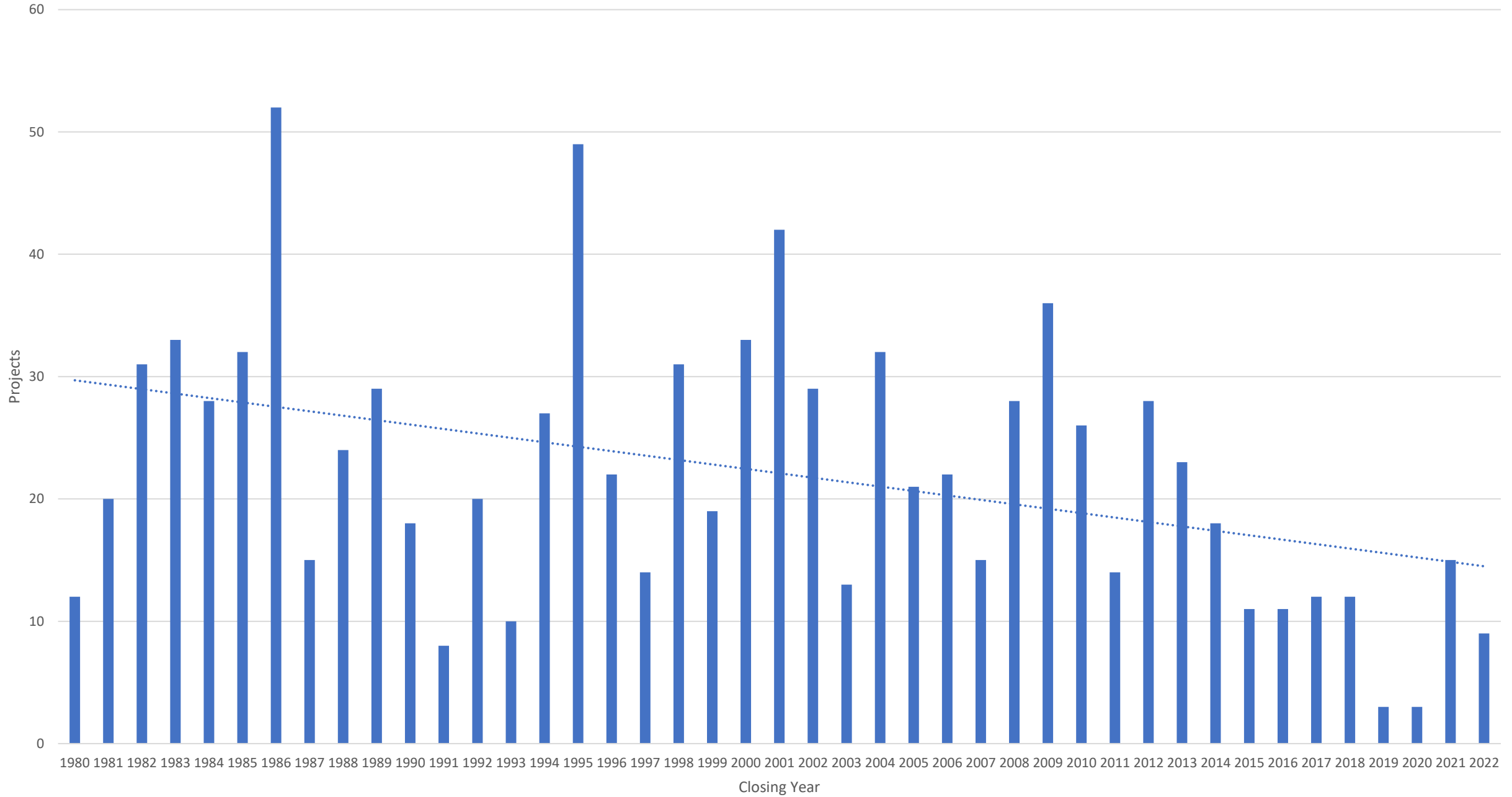
Most ever = 52

Historic Avg = 22

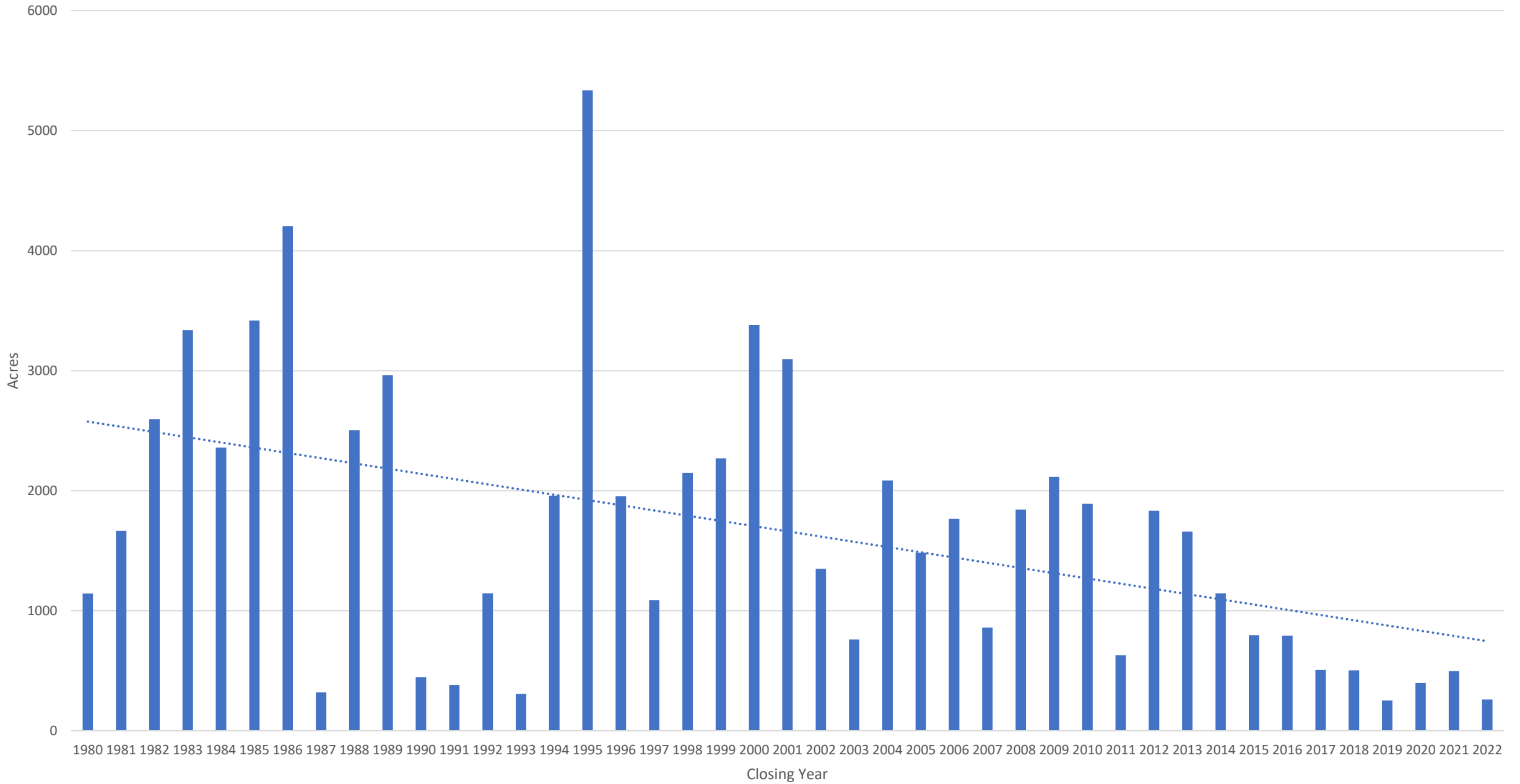
5 year avg = 8.5/year



APR Projects/Year



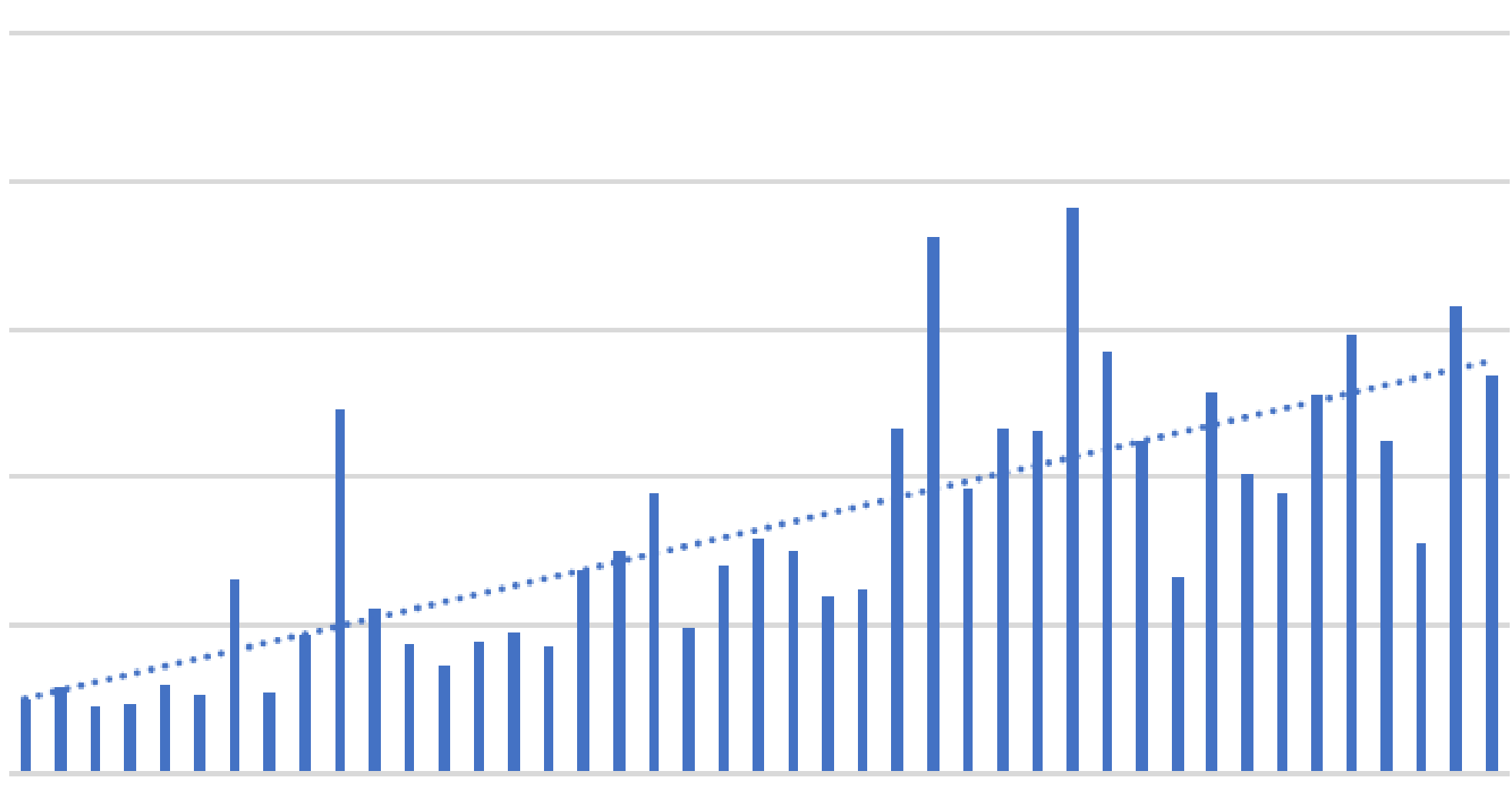
Art97 Acreage



\$/acre average

\$25,000
\$20,000
\$15,000
\$10,000
\$5,000
\$-

1980 1982 1984 1986 1988 1990 1992 1994 1996 1998 2000 2002 2004 2006 2008 2010 2012 2014 2016 2018 2020 2022



30% of Farmers are 65+

64% are 55+



Source: AFT & Farmland Action Plan

Pending Farm Conservation Funding: *Opportunities & Timelines*

2024 Outlook and Beyond



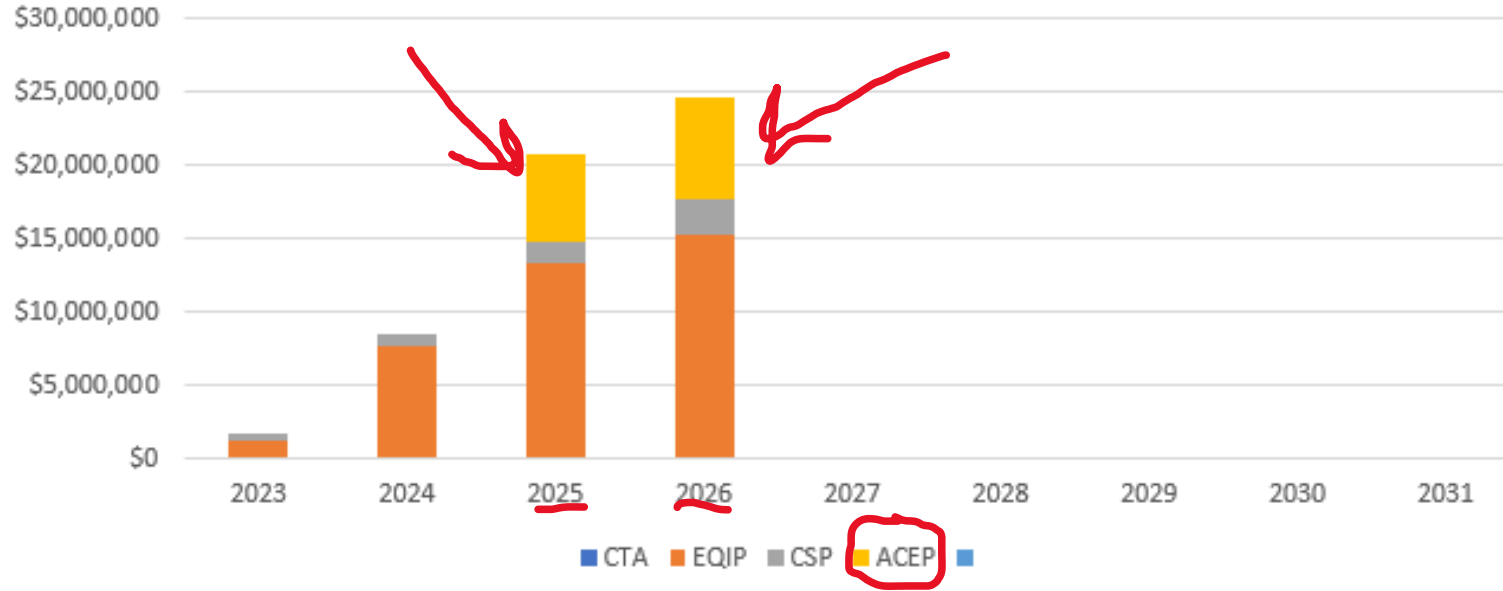
Inflation Reduction Act (IRA)



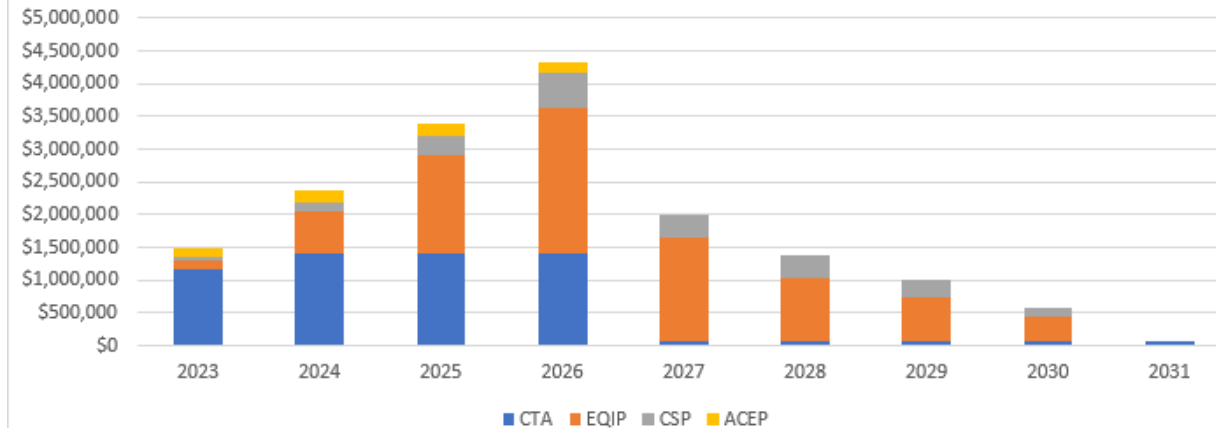
- Signed into law by President Biden in August 2022
- The IRA provides NRCS with \$19.5 billion in **additional** funds for its **existing** conservation programs:
 - \$8.45 billion Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)
 - \$4.95 billion Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)
 - \$3.25 billion Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)
 - \$1.4 billion Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP)
 - \$1 billion Conservation Technical Assistance
- **The IRA does not create any new programs** – it gives NRCS additional funds to **expand its existing climate efforts** and satisfy unmet demand
- IRA funds **begin in fiscal year 2023**; all IRA funds must be spent by **September 30, 2031**



State IRA FA Projection



State IRA TA Projection



Federal Funding Sources

Not specifically allocated to MA, but potential for funding

- **Regional Conservation Partnership Project (RCPP)**
 - \$4.95 billion RCPP funds available nationally over the next 5 years through IRA funding
 - Some RCPPs are already on-going in MA
 - Significant potential for these moving forward

→ Total possible for beyond 2024 → \$TBD

Federal Funding Sources

NRCS Programs:

- Agricultural Land Easement Program (ACEP-ALE)
 - Traditional ALE Funds ~\$2M (TBD)
- Wetlands Reserve Easement (WRE)
 - Traditional WRE Funds ~\$800,000 (TBD)
- New Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) funds → toward ALE or WRE projects ~\$0-\$6M+ (TBD)
 - Will be ramped up over the coming years (will increase significantly each year over the next 5 years)

→ Total possible for 2024 → ~\$2.8M - \$10M+

(Needs to be obligated by September 30, 2024 and spent by 2027 (3 years), plus an optional 1-year extension (2028).)

Federal Funding Sources

State Programs

- **American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA)** → MDAR APR Program
 - \$4.2M for whole farms
 - \$2.67 for regular APRs (or whole farms)
- ~\$6.87M for farmland conservation (APRs or Private APRs). Must be contracted by end of CY 24, spent by CY 26.
- Plus, APR Capital Fund (state funds toward APRs) \$2.295 spent by end of FY24, June 30, 2024.

→ **Total possible for 2024** → ~\$9.165M

Summary of Potential Funding

Bottom Line:

Between ~\$12M and \$19M+ for permanent farm conservation projects must be allocated in 2024 to maximize these funds.

More federal funds expected in '25 & '26

2024 Timeline

Application 2024 Deadlines

	Dec '23	Jan '24	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec '24
ALE	FY'24 Batching Period Deadline	Applications accepted anytime, must be obligated by Sept. 30, 2024											
WRE		Applications accepted anytime, must be obligated by Sept. 30, 2024											
ALE/WRE with IRA Funds		Applications accepted anytime, must be obligated by Sept. 30, 2024											
APR (Batched Quarterly)		Applications accepted anytime, must be spent by June 30, 2024											
APR/Private APR via ARPA Funds		Applications accepted anytime, must be contracted by Dec. 31, 2024											

We have until Sept. 30th to obligate up to **\$10M** worth of funds!

We have until June. 30th to spend \$ up to **\$2.3M** worth of funds!

We have until Dec. 31st to contract up to **\$6.87M** worth of funds!

* This list does not include EEA-funded grants (e.g., Conservation Partnership, LAND, Landscape Partnership, etc., which are often used by land trusts and towns to conserve farms.



Up to **\$19M*** total in 2024



How can we collectively seize on these opportunities?

What's needed?

- A **LOT** more farm conservation applications in the pipeline NOW, and over the next few years.
- Increased Land Trust capacity, increased NRCS staff capacity.
- More Land Trust education & information-sharing.
- Maximize efficiency of funding tracks (better understand how to pair these funding sources together).
- Bringing forward rule changes: e.g., rolling votes, ranking, eligibility criteria, waivers, etc. (Being explored in NRCS State Technical Advisory Easement Subcommittee "ACEP-ALE Program Sub-Committee")
- More coordination and collaborative strategy as a conservation community.
 - Conversations have been started in ACEP-ALE Program Sub-Committee and MLTC Ag Conservation Working Group
- State agencies: what do you need us to be doing to help promote these changes?
- ***OTHER NEEDS?***

Next Steps: Continuing the Conversation

MLTC Ag Conservation Working Group

Monday, Oct. 30, 2023 1-3pm (Zoom and in-person @ Kestrel Land Trust in Amherst)

This meeting will build off of the conversation started at the Land Trust / State Agency Retreat about upcoming state and federal funding opportunities for farmland conservation. We will work together on advancing a broader strategy to maximize use of these funds in Massachusetts.



Who is interested?



Take a deep breath. We got this.

