

## **Earle Family Farm Prospectus - 05/12/2024**

### **Overview**

Earle Family Farm (EFF) is a small organic/ biodynamic\* farm in South Conway, NH. The farm began as a commercial operation in spring 1980. It is owned by Tom and Ruth Earle, and family.

Tom and Ruth would like to retire from the day to day responsibilities of farming.

\*The farm is not currently certified either as organic or biodynamic.

### **Physical Farm Description**

The farm comprises approximately 130 acres of which 110 (+/-) acres are forest, 20 (+/-) is field, and 3 (+/-) are houses, barns, driveways, and roadways.

The farm faces north, northwest, and west, on slope of the first foothill range of mountains south of New Hampshire's White Mountains. Our farm is 25 miles (as the crow flies) from the summit of Mt. Washington, the highest mountain in the northeastern U.S.

Soil types are: Becket, Colton, Hermon, Ridgebury, and Skerry. All very stony, or gravelly, fine sandy loam.

Forest is comprised of White Pine, Northern Hardwoods, Hemlock, and Red Oak.

Buildings include a 4 bedroom farmhouse connected to a 24' x 36' ft. barn, a 3 bedroom rental house, a 10' x 16' cabin, a 24' x 48' barn, a 12' x 20' sugarhouse, a 12' x 24' equipment shed, a 12' x 12' free standing animal stall, and 2, 6' x 12' chicken sheds on trailer frames.

Current gardens include 2, 17' x 48', and 1, 17' x 96' growing tunnels, 1, 8' x 18' seed house (attached to farmhouse), and approximately ½ acre in vegetable gardens. Potential garden area is 3-5 acres, 3 of which is ground that has been previously worked. There is a 30 + tree orchard and 360' of raspberries, blackberries, and currants.

Irrigation and animal water in spring, summer, and fall, is from farm ponds (3).

Pasture for 15-20 ewe sheep flock uses remainder of fields. All fields are fenced with sheep fencing (mostly top grade high tensile) with electric top wire.

Maple syrup production currently utilizing approximately 600 trees and 3/16th natural vacuum tubing (vacuum created by slope). Potential for more production, the majority of production is red maples. Sugar maple comprises about 15% - 20% of sap collected.

### **Current Management**

This is an organic farm since inception in 1980. Since it was not actively farmed for 80-100 years previous to that, it can safely be assumed that there never has been chemical fertilizers or pesticides used here.

Farm help over the years has been primarily younger people (college age) with an interest in learning the basics of food production. The farm has provided housing, food, and a modest stipend. Some of these "interns" have returned for multiple growing seasons, and some have begun farms of their own.

The primary fertilizer we have used is farm made compost. The bedding manure from chickens, cows (until 2021), and sheep, along with garden refuse, some rock powders or minerals (purchased), and biodynamic compost preparations, are the ingredients. We also

compost leaves, chipped hardwood and softwood brush, and other fall and perennial garden wastes, for orchard and berry mulches.

The pastures are managed with moveable electric flexinet sheep fences, each paddock moved every 2-5 days. This farm currently does not have enough fields to provide its own winter hay. Hay has been picked up from fields of nearby farms (10 miles), for 40 years.

The state of New Hampshire provides land tax relief ("Current Use") for landowners with +10 acres. Our forest land is managed by a state licensed forester who has written a Forest Stewardship Plan for the woodlot. The activity in the woodlot is annual firewood removal, especially in woods devoted to maple sap production, logs to saw for farm building maintenance, and maintenance of trails and woods roads.

Education is integral to farm management. As well as an ongoing "farm intern" program, the farm has hosted many school field trips and work days ( elementary - high school, public and Waldorf School), community service for a residential " teens at risk" program, volunteers from the local handicap resource organization, volunteers from the C.S.A. programs, and local church groups.

### **Markets**

Currently the farm is in a basic marketing pattern. Eggs, maple syrup, and some vegetables , are sold directly from the "Farm Store" (in our 24' x 48' barn). The farm hosts a summer Community Supported Garden (managed primarily by the members with guidance from Tom and Ruth), and a " winter" Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) that is a marketing alliance between 4 different organic farms. Our farm provides a few specific crops for this C.S.A. venture. We also have utilized the "giving garden" idea for the past two growing seasons, volunteers exchange weekly work for produce. This produce is also distributed by these volunteers to older people or families in need.

For 35 years we had a successful small business growing seedlings for gardens and other small farms in our community.

There is a rapidly expanding demand for "local" food in our area that has increased considerably over the 40+ years that we have been farming. Currently our county (Carroll) has 2 very successful, and 1 growing, farmers' markets, several successful farmstands, 3 or 4 Community Supported Agriculture programs, and increasing wholesale demand from stores and restaurants. A result of this interest is the "Local Farm Guide" a printed and online source for all food produced locally. The Mt. Washington Valley Eaters and Growers (MWVEG) is a grassroots organization that publishes this guide ( <https://mwveg.com/>).

### **The Farm Idea**

The main ideas for the current farmers at EFF, have been to work closely with the given nature of this place, and to share its bounty, to the extent possible, with our community. We pass on the stewardship of this place with an appreciation for its resilience and generosity.

As a farm individuality EFF is unique in its rugged geography. While soils are challenging for any large commercial undertaking, the various topography and soil profiles, the mixed forest, and the (usual) plentiful rainfall and water table, do combine to offer multiple management opportunities.

On the community front the need is great. A farm provides local nutritious food, wholesome educational experience to all ages and abilities, and an environment for God's creation to thrive.

A successful farm is a constant balancing act !

### **A Next Generation?**

The farm is privately owned land held by the Baird Hill Realty Trust (BHRT). The land is (with the exception of 14 acres) in a conservation easement held by The Upper Saco Valley Land Trust (USVLT). This easement allows for agriculture and forestry while prohibiting sub-division and housing.

The land will be passed along to the named "beneficiaries" of the BHRT. Currently none of this next generation of "beneficiaries" has an interest in managing the farmland, farm buildings, or woodlands.

The current BHRT "Trustees" are interested in keeping the farm active, and are willing to entertain proposals for a farm lease. Tom and Ruth Earle will be the contact for applicants . If interested please fill out and return the questions in the accompanying form. (We don't have the expertise to create an interactive form. Use the form as guide, add your own comments freely, then copy, scan, email, or send via snail mail.) We will arrange a time for a "zoom" interview based on the availability that you designate. A visit to the farm will also be required if we determine that the "match" looks promising. We will also request a "trial" period to test the waters (so to speak) before a negotiated lease is signed.

Tom & Ruth Earle

Earle Family Farm

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603-447-6641

**Earle Family Farm, Farmer Applicant Questionnaire**

**Name (s):** \_\_\_\_\_

**Email:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Phone:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Best time of day for you to be contacted:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

**What is your farming experience?** (Please feel free to use a separate page to answer these Questions.) \_\_\_\_\_

**What about farming leads you to filling out this questionnaire?** \_\_\_\_\_

**What experience(s) give you confidence that you can build a sustainable farming life? Feel free to imagine (and describe) what that looks like for you. Some key ingredients (true to our experience) include the physical, financial, cultural (ie family, community), and spiritual (individual and collective) demands, that this life requires.** \_\_\_\_\_

**What skills (natural or learned) do you feel are your strengths?**

The opportunity described above does not offer farm ownership. A negotiated long term lease (see for example [CHAPTER 7—MODEL GROUND LEASE COMMENTARY | Equity Trust](#) ) is the model we seek. As referenced in the above document, many details would be negotiated. Please read this document and consider if this type of arrangement is what you are looking for.

**What questions do you have for us?**

