

The Gaining Ground in Maine Advisory Committee

The *Gaining Ground in Maine* project is overseen and advised by an eight-member committee. Having this board of skilled collaborators to guide the work in Maine is a very important piece of our project.

Jeannie Demetracopoulos is a working farmer in South Berwick, ME. Her farm, Fox Hill Farm, sells lamb, wool, and composting manure. Jeannie is an active member of South Berwick's Conservation Commission and is also project coordinator for the Great Works Regional Land Trust.

Stephanie Gilbert is Manager of the Farmland Protection Program at the Maine Department of Agriculture.

Hope Hilton, a Maine lawyer in practice for 30 years, represents land trusts, the state, and individuals involved in conservation easements. Hope will help provide legal support for the three to six Maine farm preservation projects.

Ellie Kastanopolous, Executive Director of Equity Trust since 2003, and on the technical assistance staff since 1997, will be the lead organizer for the project. Ellie was formerly the Director of the Maine Homestead Land Trust Alliance for five years, and is a current member and homeowner with Covenant Community Land Trust in Orland, ME.

John Piotti is Executive Director of the Maine Farmland Trust, whose mission is to protect Maine's working farmland. John will provide excellent connections to working Maine farmers, and to land trust staff, in addition to oversight and guidance.

Scott Reed, an Equity Trust Board member, is a recently retired farmer. Riverland Farm in Sunderland, MA is an 11-acre organic farm. In addition to farming, for more than 20 years Scott has worked on land tenure issues as a member (and currently the hard-working chair) of the Valley Community Land Trust, and he also found the Greenfield Area Land Trust.

Kathy Ruhf, also an Equity Trust Board member, is a consultant and project manager working on farm tenure and transfer, food systems and agriculture policy. Kathy served as Co-Director and Director of the New England Small Farm Institute from 1987 to 2004. She is a principal with Land For Good, INC. and a member of the USDA Advisory Committee for Beginning Farmers and Ranchers. She is also Coordinator of the Northeast Sustainable Agriculture Working Group.

Bridget Spann, farmer of Caretaker Farm, brings a wealth of experience with farm protection because she and her husband recently worked with Equity Trust to protect Caretaker Farm, one of the 13 farm preservation projects informing Equity Trust's current work.