

From the Field

EASEMENT STEWARDSHIP NEWSLETTER •
 SPRING 2016

WHAT IS THIS NEWSLETTER?

You might be asking yourself—what exactly am I looking at? As our easement numbers grow, we want a way to reach out to the owners of land we have under easement. We have an ongoing relationship with each of you—and your land—and that deserves some extra attention beyond our annual monitoring visit.

This newsletter will be sent to you each spring as an extra way to share news, reminders, grant opportunities, or anything else we think you may find interesting or helpful.

We value your dedication to farming and land protection, and your continued partnership with MFT. We hope you'll enjoy this newsletter, and we look forward to seeing you at our next visit.

LET US KNOW

MFT is looking to protect an additional 15,000 acres of farmland over the next few years. It's a big effort, and we'll be meeting with farmers and partners throughout the state to identify farms that are good candidates for protection.

Thanks to generous contributions from multiple sources, we have funding available to purchase easements, and in select instances, to purchase farms through our Buy/Protect/Sell program.

If you know of any farmers interested in protecting their land, or if you are aware of farmland that is in need of restoration or protection, please let us know! You can share our contact information or give us a shout with contact information for your fellow farmer. You can reach us at 338-6575 or info@mainefarmlandtrust.org.

IN THIS ISSUE:

- Aerial Monitoring Service
- When to Contact MFT
- Stewardship Team
- Other MFT Services



NEW AERIAL MONITORING SERVICE

Since our very first easement in 2001, MFT has been meeting with easement landowners annually to walk each property and view any changes on the ground. This was traditionally done with volunteers or land protection staff, and for the past two years has been done by our Stewardship Program Manager Lyndsey Marston.

As a way to balance our growing stewardship needs with current staff capacity, MFT has recently contracted with an aerial monitoring service to photograph nearly half of our easements by air. The contractor, Geovantage, operates a manned aircraft with cameras mounted on each wing. MFT provides GPS and boundary information for each property, and the pilot is able to navigate to these locations and automatically capture aerial imagery based on the boundary. These photos are tied to a specific location on the ground (ortho-rectified), so MFT is able to view each image in its exact location once Geovantage has finished their flights and processing.

What does this mean for you? This year, some landowners will have a routine monitoring visit, while others will have only aerial monitoring.

Even if we don't visit your farm, we are always available to answer questions or review requests for approval. And if you'd like to see your aerial photo, let us know so we can send along a copy.

Finally, whether you will be visited this year or not, don't forget to notify us about any major projects you are planning in 2016 so we can keep our records up to date and plan our next visit accordingly.

MFT SERVICES

In addition to protecting farmland, MFT also offers a wide range of programs that support farmers and landowners like you, including:

- **Farm Business Development**
MFT provides individualized and confidential assistance for business plans or succession planning.
- **Shared-use Equipment**
In partnership with MOFGA, MFT has a growing inventory of farm equipment that farmers can borrow.
- **Unity Food Hub**
Through this new venture, MFT can help farmers access new wholesale markets.
- **Farm Disaster Relief Fund:**
MFT provides financial relief to qualified farms when disaster strikes.

For more information, visit us online at mainefarmlandtrust.org.

STEWARDSHIP TEAM

MFT will have additional help with easement monitoring this summer thanks to Brett Sykes, our GIS Specialist and Stewardship Associate. Since he joined MFT in 2015, Brett has been helping project managers collect and compile baseline data, among other activities.

Starting this spring, Brett will work with Lyndsey to help monitor MFT's easements. The new stewardship team will visit some properties together, and others individually, based on the size of the farm. If a farm visit is planned for this year, either Brett or Lyndsey will contact you to schedule that visit at a time of year that works best for you.

WHEN TO CONTACT US

Now that MFT is using aerial monitoring and some properties will no longer be visited in person annually, it is even more important for landowners to stay in contact with MFT. Every easement is unique, but there are some general guidelines that most landowners should keep in mind. Here are a few of the instances when you should contact MFT:

- If you are not sure if an activity is allowed by your easement
- If you are planning major construction or expansion of permanent structures
- If you have a new forest management plan that requires MFT approval
- If you are considering a new activity that requires MFT approval
- If you are planning to sell your property

Please remember that permanent structures must be located within established building envelopes. If your easement allows you to establish a new Farmstead Area or other building envelopes, construction should not occur in these locations until that new building envelope has been mapped and approved. If you are thinking about exercising this right in your easement, please contact us anytime to start the process.