We’d like to express our sincere gratitude for your patience and cooperation over the past year. We are all still learning how to navigate life and work in the midst of a pandemic, and it has not been easy. We miss being able to ride around in farm trucks with you, catch up around kitchen tables, and walk together at distances that don’t generally require shouting.

We’re not certain what this summer will bring, but we’ll continue to be careful and follow State guidance as it is updated. For now, that means staying outdoors when we visit with you, wearing masks when in close proximity, and offering “no contact” visits where we check in with you by phone or email instead of in person.

Many staff members have been vaccinated and we are hopeful that this may allow us to return to “normal” visits as soon as possible. In the meantime, thank you for helping us to safely and respectfully check in with each of you throughout the year. We hope you all continue to be healthy and well.

Best wishes,

Lyndsey Marston
Stewardship Program Director

Soil Health Network
MFT is piloting a new Soil Health Network project in partnership with the Wolfe’s Neck Center and is working with a group of eight farmers whose lands are protected by agricultural easements held by MFT. This initial cohort will participate in a regional study started by the Pennsylvania Association of Sustainable Agriculture (PASA). Farmers will track soil health and management practices, and staff will work with participants to take soil tests in the fall. Participants will then receive a detailed report from PASA showing how they rank against other farms of similar scale and crop types.

We are excited to work with this first cohort and want to welcome the following farms: Balfour Farm, Bumbleroot Farm, Ketch Organics, Songbird Farm, South Paw Farm, The Milkhouse, Two Coves Farm, and Maine Coast Heritage Trust’s Erickson Fields.

We’ll be sure to reach out to all MFT easement landowners as the program expands. In the meantime, if you’d like to have your name added to a list of future applicants, please contact Sarah Simon at ssimon@mainefarmlandtrust.org or 338-6575.

Maine PFAS Emergency Relief Fund
The chemicals known as PFAS or PFOS have recently been identified as potential contaminants on Maine farms and the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry (DACF) has initiated a program to direct emergency relief funds related to this contamination. The Maine PFAS Emergency Relief Fund was created in early 2021 and is being administered by MFT and MOFGA, in partnership with DACF. For more information on which farms are eligible, and for more information on PFAS and testing resources, please visit www.mainefarmlandtrust.org/farm-viability/pfas-in-maine-agriculture. You can also contact Sarah Simon, MFT’s Farmland Access & Farm Viability Program Director, at 338-6575 or ssimon@mainefarmlandtrust.org.
Welcoming a New Land Steward

Since 2014, we have had a dedicated stewardship team that focuses solely on easement stewardship. In that time we have grown from 90 conservation easements with one steward to approximately 250 easements with three stewards.

This year, we’re making the leap to add another full-time steward to our team. Garrett Linck is joining us in our Belfast office and will be covering the northern part of the state. The new territories are shown at right, including Garrett’s territory in blue. Hannah will still be covering western and southern Maine, April will cover the mid-coast, and Lyndsey will cover downeast.

We recognize that it can be hard for landowners to work with different stewards over the years, and we appreciate your patience and understanding. It’s hard on us too! We build relationships with each of you over the years, and we miss you when we hand-off easements to other stewards.

Garrett will be starting in mid-May, and we’ll each be working hard to have as smooth of a transition as possible. In many cases, if you are actively working on a project with a steward, we can hold off on shifting stewards until your project is settled. If this would be helpful for you, please contact Lyndsey at 338-6575 or lmarston@mainefarmlandtrust.org to make accommodations.

FarmLink: Land owners and land seekers can post online profiles to our website, in hopes of making a connection. Visit mainefarmlink.org or contact Sue Lanpher at info@mainefarmlink.org for more information.

Thanks for your support! When MFT protects a farm, we make a commitment to the landowner that we will protect the farmland forever. Just as you, the farmer or landowner, steward the land and soils, the Stewardship team at MFT works to ensure Maine’s farmland retains its conservation values for generations to come. MFT members and supporters are critical partners in maintaining this promise and helping to grow a healthy, vibrant future for Maine farms and communities. If you are interested in supporting our Stewardship team’s active, long-term care of the land, you can donate here: www.mainefarmlandtrust.org/donate.

When to Contact Your Steward

If your easement requires you to seek approval from MFT for an activity you have planned on your property

• If your easement requires you to notify MFT of an activity you have planned for your property (i.e. working with NRCS to plan and install a new irrigation system)

• If you are unsure whether an activity you have planned for your property is allowed by your easement (i.e. if you want to build a concrete manure pad located outside of your Farmstead Area)

• If you are planning construction or expansion of new permanent structures

• If you are planning a timber harvest or clearing new pasture/cropland

• If you are planning to sell your property

Stewardship Fun Facts!

Here’s what our stewards accomplished in 2020:

- We completed 170+ in-person visits
- We walked more than 213 miles
- We reviewed 97 aerial images
- We responded to 173 farmer questions