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Two Erie County Farms Awarded Major State Funding

Governor Kathy Hochul recently announced more than \$5.5 million dollars in farmland protection grants to protect 2,100 acres of farmland across New York State, including 957 acres in Western New York. The Land Conservancy is pleased to work with the owners of Stefan Hay in North Collins and the Vacinek Farm in Sardinia to protect their family legacies as well as the productive agricultural lands on which we all rely.

This announcement marks the beginning of the Land Conservancy's work to permanently protect these two farms with a conservation easement—a legal agreement between the Land Conservancy and the landowners to keep it available for agriculture forever by limiting development.

"We are so grateful to the Stefan and Vacinek families for their commitment to protecting their beautiful farmland," said **the Land Conservancy's Farmland Protection Specialist, Rachel Chrostowski**. "We all owe a great debt of gratitude to our farmers who work hard all year-round to make sure that our community has access to fresh, local food, now and in the future."

These awards are made possible by a Farmland Protection Implementation Grant (FPIG) administered by the New York State Department of Agriculture & Markets, which is funded by the state's Environmental Protection Fund (EPF). Statewide, the FPIG program has helped preserve more than 113,650 acres of New York farmland through completed conservation easement projects totaling more than \$273 million on 385 farms.

In Western New York, the Land Conservancy has protected more than 3,600 acres of farmland with 44 conservation easements. Once the Vacinek Farm and Stefan Hay are permanently protected, nearly a thousand additional acres of highly productive farmland will always be available for farmers to grow food here in our region. Agriculture and agriculture-based business play a vital role in Western New York, where small family farms like these have shaped—and will continue to shape—our communities for generations.

The Western New York Land Conservancy is a regional, non-profit land trust that has protected 7,500 acres of land with significant conservation value in our region. We envision a future in which forests, farms, meadows, and waterways are connected, cherished, and protected in Western New York. We are accredited by the Land Trust Accreditation Commission. To learn more about our mission and vision, and to read our land acknowledgement, visit wnylc.org.

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