

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### Sullivan County Legacy Award Winners: John & Robin Luther, Parnassus Farm

*Honoring sustained commitment to the stewardship of natural resources in Sullivan County  
as part of the NH Conservation Districts' 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration*

**Unity, NH** (July 12, 2021) - In honor of the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of NH Conservation Districts, ten recipients (one in each county) have been selected to receive the Conservation Legacy Award. This award seeks to honor sustained commitment to the stewardship of natural resources across the state. For 75 years the County Conservation Districts have worked tirelessly with landowners and communities to promote the conservation and responsible use of natural and agricultural resources. The Legacy Award endeavors to shine a spotlight on those who embody this mission. The Sullivan County Conservation District's (SCCD) legacy awardees are John and Robin Luther of Parnassus Farm.

John & Robin implement best practices for conservation on their dairy farm, through their partnership with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and John's role as a supervisor for SCCD for the past 24 years. John's love of farming started when he was a small boy on the family farm. John's father, Earl Luther, Jr was one of the first cooperators to sign with SCCD. "Over the years, Mr. Luther has made consistent effort to apply as many conservation practices as possible on his 192 acre farm & continues these efforts in partnership with his son, John" (from 1984 SCCD Annual Report). Earl was named the 1984 Cooperator of the Year. John's partnership with NRCS is still strong, valued, and ongoing. The Luther's were there for the slow pivot from old-school "conservation" to the contemporary vision advocated for today.

Why does John think conservation is important? He does it for the well being of his cows and his family, including his daughter, Karen, who works part-time at the farm. He believes that, "Caring for the animals and caring for the land go hand in hand." Conservation practices are better for the cows. Cows benefit from clean water too. John was encouraged to switch to pasturing his cows by Heidi Konesko of NRCS. He has found that people like to see the cows grazing by the road. John enjoys seeing his cows out on pasture, knowing they are comfortable and doing what they should be doing - grazing. To John, "a farm is a place you can [proudly] say, 'This is where my food comes from.'"

The Luthers have a milk house waste system that was the first of its kind in New England. The one they had previously wasn't as efficient as John would like and he knew there must be

something better. He wanted to make sure that "the milk waste from our barns (the proverbial "spilled milk") was not seeping into the local watershed." John worked with NRCS staff to find a better system and they found one that was being used in Pennsylvania that seemed promising. They constructed a grass filter strip designed by the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service with two settling tanks and a pump that evenly discharges the liquid into a manifold (which is painted green and blends into the shrubbery). The waste now seeps inconspicuously into the sod along the edge of the farmstead. John initiated the search for something better and implemented it. This milk house waste system is still working after 20 years.

Educating others is important to the Luthers. Robin was a youth and family 4-H field specialist in the UNH Coop. Ext. Sullivan County office, teaching the next generation about caring for plants, animals and the natural resources that sustain us all. She retired this June after 36 years! The Luthers have frequent visitors to the farm whether it's friends, neighbors or school groups. They are always willing to stop what they're doing and show folks where their food comes from and how it gets from the farm to their table. The way they manage the farm sets a great example for conservation, and that's visible to people in other walks of life. John and Robin want people, especially young people to know that they "aren't the last generation, someone is coming after [them]. The natural world needs care. Love your cows, love the land, love the water. It sustains us."

Join us in congratulating our first ever Conservation Legacy Award winners at the upcoming virtual Farm & Forest Expo session on July 20<sup>th</sup> at 10-11:30am. To register for this event visit: <https://tinyurl.com/4w9jxt3u>

Awardees will also be honored later this year at the NH Association of Conservation Districts Annual Meeting in November. For further information on 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary activities such as the Legacy Awards visit: <https://nhconservationhistory.com/>

The Sullivan County Conservation District promotes the conservation and responsible use of our natural and agricultural resources for the people of Sullivan County and promotes Place-based Education. Established in 1946, the Conservation District operates out of Unity, NH and connects residents of Sullivan County to resources, experts, and funding opportunities relating to natural resources conservation and place-based education. For more information, contact Lionel Chute at [lchute@sullivancountynh.gov](mailto:lchute@sullivancountynh.gov) or 603.542.4891.

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