



Great Lakes Protection Fund

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### Funded Project

# Targeting Women Absentee Farmland Owners to Test Sustainable Agricultural Leases

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Project No.	1095
Timeline	2015 – 2016
Award Amount	\$88,000
Team Leader	American Farmland Trust

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This was a project design grant that enabled the team to develop a pilot project to identify and reach women non-operating farmland owners and improve how they lease their lands to tenant farmers. The team expects to equip women non-operating landowners with the tools needed to allow increased participation in conservation programs, accelerate adoption of water-friendly management practices, and remove lease terms that might harm waterways. Women are a strategic target because they play an increasingly important role in absentee farmland ownership. Research shows that they take a longer view of the land and place greater value on leaving a legacy of healthy soils and surface waters.

In the design phase the team identified, and explored ways to overcome, obstacles to the use of sustainable agricultural leases by completing a thorough literature review and engaging both owners and their tenants through a series of focus groups in New York and Ohio. After fully evaluating six watersheds to pilot their strategies, the team selected the Portage and Toussaint River Basins in Ohio; and the Black and Oatka Creek subwatersheds of the Genesee River in New York. They expanded the project team and developed a complete plan of work to test their approach.

This planning grant successfully led to an implementation grant. The Fund's Board of Directors awarded a [subsequent grant](#) of up to \$1,087,000 to pilot the strategies they developed in the planning phase.