



For Immediate Release

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Working Together for Land, Water, and Security

Strategic Conservation Partnerships Support Defense, Environment, and Quality of Life in Monmouth County



Spinella Farm. Photo by Fred Yahn.

Monmouth Conservation Foundation (MCF), in partnership with the Department of Defense through the U.S. Navy (Navy), Monmouth County, and Colts Neck Township (Colts Neck), has successfully completed the preservation of the Spinella Family Farm, an 84-acre property nestled between Creamery and Phalanx roads in Colts Neck, New Jersey. This collaborative effort places a deed of easement on the Spinella family's private land, permanently protecting it from future development and ensuring it remains a natural and agricultural asset for generations to come. Additionally, it contributes to national defense by preserving the integrity of Naval Weapons Station Earle (NWS Earle), a critical military installation nearby.

Landowners Jim and Linda Spinella have long held a deep appreciation for the natural world. Drawn to Colts Neck for its agricultural heritage and pastoral beauty, they moved to the area in 1995 and purchased the property that would become Spinella Farm in 2001. "Colts Neck is important to us," Jim shares. "My whole family is out here. I have two brothers here, my dad lives adjacent to the property, and my grandchildren are here. It's a

great place to raise a family, and Spinella Farm is one of the nicest pieces of property in Monmouth County.”



*White-tailed deer, caught on Spinella Farm wildlife camera.
Photo courtesy of the Spinella family.*

Jim and Linda raised two sons in Colts Neck and spent years immersed in the quiet beauty of the land. Together, they hiked, fished, hunted, picnicked, and embraced the peace that natural spaces provide. “We’re right in the middle of town, but you don’t even realize it – you could be in a wilderness area,” Jim says. “It’s a great place to escape.”

Their passion for the land is enhanced by their appreciation of the wildlife that thrives there. “We have five bald eagles on the property – two adults and three juveniles we see all the time – and there are coyotes, deer, foxes, ducks, turkeys, and some of the fields are near nesting sites for snapping turtles,” Jim explains. “They climb up the bank, dig their nests in the field, and head back down into the water. It’s pretty amazing. The property joins the Swimming River reservoir, so it’s just a beautiful area.”



*A blue jay, red tailed hawk, and juvenile bald eagle caught on the Spinella Farm wildlife camera.
Photos courtesy of the Spinella family.*



Over the years, Jim and Linda watched as the open spaces they first appreciated in Colts Neck began to disappear. Witnessing the steady loss of farmland to development, they began to consider placing a conservation easement on Spinella Farm. “Since we moved here 3 decades ago, we’ve seen significant changes in the town,” Jim reflects. “There was a lot more farmland in the past, and there’s been a lot of development. We decided we’d like to see the place preserved and do our part to maintain what was left.” Their dedication to stewardship now extends into perpetuity, thanks to this landmark preservation effort.

Through this unique cost-sharing model, the Navy, Monmouth County, Colts Neck, and MCF worked with the Spinella family to ensure their land will remain undeveloped and ecologically viable. The property lies along Yellow Brook, a Category 1 stream that feeds into the Swimming River and ultimately the Swimming River Reservoir, an important drinking water source for the region. Category 1 waterways are designated for special protection due to their exceptional ecological, recreational, water supply, or fisheries significance, and preserving this watershed helps protect water quality, wildlife habitat, and the broader ecosystem of Monmouth County.



Yellow Brook runs through the Spinella Farm property. Photo by Jena Cosimo.

In addition to its environmental value, the Spinella property holds agricultural importance. Its preservation means the farm can continue supporting New Jersey's agricultural economy and upholding Monmouth County's historically rural character. "The Monmouth County Board of County Commissioners is proud to have partnered with the U.S. Navy, Colts Neck Township, and Monmouth Conservation Foundation on this important preservation project. Together, we're creating lasting solutions for land use, public safety, and conservation," said Commissioner Director Thomas A. Arnone. "This preservation project helps keep Monmouth County connected to its agricultural roots and shows what can be achieved when community partners come together to accomplish a shared goal."



A grove of rare American chestnut trees on the Spinella Farm property. Photo by Hariett Honigfeld.

The project also reflects shared conservation priorities between local and federal entities, demonstrating how environmental protection can align with public safety and national defense. Because of the Department of Defense's Readiness and Environmental

Protection Integration ([REPI](#)) Program, military installations like NWS Earle can form innovative partnerships with conservation organizations and local governments to establish natural buffer zones and protect critical natural resources. “Our partnership with Monmouth County and MCF through the REPI program will help buffer Naval Weapons Station Earle from future encroachment, ensuring the installation can continue its vital mission in the strategic defense of our nation without disruption,” said Nicholas Ginther, Community Planning Liaison Officer for Naval Weapons Station Earle. “At the same time, this collaboration supports our neighbors in Monmouth County by preserving the historic farmland that defines their community’s identity. Together, we are safeguarding both national security and local heritage.”

For the Spinella family, this effort was more than protecting private land; it was about honoring a family legacy. Each partner played a role in helping safeguard that vision. “Working with the [team] was great,” Jim says. “They shepherded the whole process for me. They were so communicative and let me know what was happening and have been a pleasure to work with. They’ve all been enthralled with the wildlife and plants, which are abundant, so they can see that the property is special.”



*Rearing white tail deer, caught on Spinella Farm wildlife camera.
Photo courtesy of the Spinella family.*

Monmouth Conservation Foundation’s Executive Director, Bill Kastning, reflects on the broader significance of Spinella Farm’s preservation. “Projects like this one support the preservation of working farmlands, protect habitat for threatened and endangered species, and offer long-term opportunities for outdoor recreation and conservation education. By

investing in land protection, we help secure open space and a higher quality of life for residents.”



*Red fox in a field, caught on Spinella Farm wildlife camera.
Photo courtesy of the Spinella family.*

With a conservation easement now in place, the history, character, and ecological value of Spinella Farm will be preserved, even as development pressures remain high throughout the region. For Jim Spinella, that permanence brings peace of mind, pride in his family’s legacy, and a lasting sense of fulfillment. “I envision my kids and grandkids continuing to use the property,” he shares. “That ultimately would be my wish, for them to enjoy it the way we’ve enjoyed it.”

Colts Neck Mayor, Tara Torchia Buss, shares, “Strategic land preservation efforts like this are essential to maintaining the character, resilience, and natural beauty of Colts Neck and Monmouth County. The Township Committee is grateful for the partnership with the Spinella Family, Naval Weapons Station Earle, Monmouth County, and Monmouth Conservation Foundation.” The success of this effort is a testament to what can be achieved when landowners, government agencies, and conservation groups work together in a shared sense of purpose. Thanks to the conservation easement now in place, Spinella Farm can never be developed. Its fields, forests, waterways, and wildlife habitat will remain protected forever.



A field at Spinella Farm. Photo by Jena Cosimo.

If the Spinella family's story inspires you, we encourage you to share it with others. If you or someone you know owns land and would like to explore conservation options, please contact us at info@monmouthconservation.org. Anyone can make a lasting impact with a [donation to our dedicated nonprofit](#). Thank you for helping us #KeepMonmouthGreen!

Learn more about [MCF's work with the REPI program](#) and [other MCF-supported REPI projects](#) on [MCF's website](#).