

# Draft News Release



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**Regarding:** Lake Champlain Agricultural Awards

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## **Boomhower's Bittersweet Valley Farm Receives Lake Champlain Award**

*Grand Isle, VT* - The Lake Champlain Basin Program is pleased to announce that the 2008 Lake Champlain Farm Award recipient for Vermont is the Boomhower's Bittersweet Valley Farm in Fairfield. The award will be made today at the Vermont Farm Show Dairy Banquet in Barre.

"We sought farms that voluntarily reduced pollution flowing to Lake Champlain and its tributaries," noted Bill Howland, Lake Champlain Basin Program Manager. "Bittersweet Valley Farm, which was nominated by our agricultural partners, is a model for Vermont. The Boomhowers are first rate farmers and we applaud their efforts to keep the Missisquoi River clean."

Since 1991, the Lake Champlain Basin Program has worked with many partners in New York, Vermont and Quebec to reduce phosphorus levels and other pollutants entering Lake Champlain. In each of the past four years, the LCBP has recognized a farm in Vermont, New York and Quebec for taking extra voluntary measures to manage their farms using environmentally friendly methods. The New York and Quebec recipients will be announced later this spring.

Gordon "Sonny" Boomhower and his wife Carolyn raised their seven children on their farm along the Chester A. Arthur Road in Fairfield, VT which they purchased in 1966. Through Sonny's guidance, diversification and conservation have kept their land in agricultural use for future generations. Now a member of the Organic Valley Cooperative, Bittersweet Valley Farm, is a 265 acre organic dairy farm with 50 acres of meadow and 70 acres of rotationally grazed pasture which provide feed for 60 mature Holsteins and young stock. Though Sonny Boomhower passed away last summer, Carolyn and her two grandsons, Damien Boomhower and Jordan Carpenter enjoy operating their fourth generation dairy farm together.

“We are honored to be recognized for our conservation stewardship by the Lake Champlain Basin Program,” stated Carolyn Boomhower. “We are encouraged that the LCBP understands, as we do, that there is a delicate balance between the health of the waters in the Lake Champlain Basin and the economic health of the farms in this region. I am pleased that my grandsons worked with us these past few years and that our combined initiatives have strengthened Bittersweet Valley Farm which now supports our three families.”

In addition to supportive family and friends, Carolyn Boomhower credits some of their good fortune to partners who have helped them along the way, providing technical and cost-share assistance. The Boomhowers recently installed a lined manure pit and a roof water diversion system through the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service. But their additional voluntary efforts to improve and stabilize their farmland are striking.

Bittersweet Valley Farm is located along Wanzer Brook which drains to the Missisquoi River. Voluntary initiatives included fencing cows away from the brook, creating stream crossings, and adopting an intensive rotational grazing system. Rather than grow their own corn, they purchase grain through a Vermont organic grain distributor. The Boomhowers have also partnered with the Missisquoi River Basin Association, the US Fish and Wildlife Service, the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, and the VT DEC River Management Program. Volunteers and staff from these organizations have helped the Boomhowers stabilize 2000’ feet of streambank, restore floodplains and a forested riparian buffer which will benefit both wildlife and water quality.

Sonny and Carolyn Boomhower were also the first Fairfield family to enroll their land in the Vermont Land Trust. By selling their development rights, their farmstead will not be developed thus preserving the land’s agricultural value and character. Through the Boomhowers’ demonstrated community leadership, the Vermont Land Trust has since assisted with the conservation of 22 farms and 7,000 acres throughout the community.

The LCBP partnered with the Vermont and New York Departments of Agriculture, the Farm Bureau, Soil and Water Conservation Districts, the Quebec Ministry of Sustainable Development, Environment, and Parks, and the Centre de service du MAPAQ during the farm nomination process. For further information, please contact the Lake Champlain Basin Program, 54 West Shore Road, Grand Isle, Vermont, at (802) 372-3213 or email [lcbp@lcbp.org](mailto:lcbp@lcbp.org).