



## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **Bike the Barns Event Draws Cyclists, Locals, Visitors to Champlain Valley Farms**

*Adirondack North Country Association's inaugural event deemed a success by all involved*

Keeseville, NY - A bluebird sky and brilliant sun greeted more than 100 riders, supporters, and community members who turned out for the first annual Bike the Barns, which took place on Saturday, September 24 in and around Keeseville, NY.

"We envisioned a beautiful fall day to celebrate the Champlain Valley's farming culture, and we got just that," said Kate Fish, Executive Director of the Adirondack North Country Association (ANCA), the regional nonprofit that organized the event. "We are thrilled with the turnout and all the positive feedback from the riders and farmers."

The weather on Saturday proved to be ideal for cyclists pedaling through the valley, where early fall colors created a stunning backdrop for visiting farms and spending time with the hardworking people who produce the excellent fruits, vegetables, meats, eggs, and dairy products that make up the Adirondack North Country's local food offerings. The event featured three different routes, allowing riders to visit up to seven different farms, depending on which route they chose.

Debbie Erenstone of Lake Placid rode the 50-mile loop, and was impressed with how well-organized the event was for its first year. "The beautiful course was well marked and took me to many scenic roads that I had never ridden before," she said. Erenstone, a seasoned event cyclist, appreciated the opportunity to visit local farms and interact with farmers and farm staff. "Each farm we visited had a unique character, and the farmers were there to share their stories and answer our questions."

Erenstone especially appreciated the boxes at each farm, where riders could deposit their farm stand purchases. "The boxes were waiting for us at the finish line," said Erenstone. "I am sure this is the first time I have ever participated in a road ride and come home with a pumpkin!"

Likewise, farmers who welcomed riders onto their land enjoyed the opportunity to meet and greet event participants. "Many of the riders told me they had no idea this was all here," said Racey Henderson, owner of Reber Rock Farm, where riders were treated to lunch from Poco Mas Tacos. "This was an amazing opportunity to introduce our farm to a new audience." Henderson also noted how ANCA made it easy for farmers to participate in the event. ANCA staff coordinated nearly all of the planning, which allowed farmers to be involved in the event without taking on the burden of extra work during a busy time of year.

To end the event, Mace Chasm Farm hosted a gathering of riders, their friends and family, and area locals. For those who didn't ride, this provided a chance to hear stories from the road, enjoy a second round of tacos, this time from Mace Chasm Farm's food truck, and beverages from Ausable Brewing Company. Riders and local families danced to the tunes of two area bands, Restless Feet of Saranac Lake and the Russ Bailey Trio of Essex.

ANCA developed the event as a new way to help increase market opportunities for the region's agricultural producers. "We've been working with farmers and promoting our region to cyclists through our Bike the Byways program for years," said ANCA's Josh Bakelaar. "Bike the Barns brings these together by tapping into the growing agritourism movement. It allows farmers to try hosting visitors in a supported way to see whether agritourism works for them."

Bakelaar has also worked with the Hub on the Hill, another stop on Bike the Barns, helping this local food processing center obtain USDA grant funding to purchase equipment and expand its operation, and is also developing farm to school programs across the region.

According to Bakelaar, ANCA's effectiveness lies in its networks and ability to connect people with opportunities or with potential partners to increase economic opportunity for our communities. He noted that many of the farms and food businesses, like the Hub, work cooperatively by sharing information and labor, utilizing ingredients, and creating events like nights at Ausable Brewing featuring Poco Mas Tacos and the Mace Chasm Farm Food Truck. "We were thrilled to welcome new visitors to experience some of the connections within our working landscape."

[ANCA](#) is an independent nonprofit organization working to build dynamic local economies that sustain thriving communities in Northern New York. Since 1955, ANCA has leveraged the investment of hundreds of millions of dollars into the region in sectors that drive sustainable local economic development.

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