



DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION

Managing California's Working Lands

PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE

801 K STREET • MS 24-07 • SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA 95814

PHONE 916 / 323-1886 • FAX 916 / 323-1887 • TDD 916 / 324-2555 • WEB SITE conservation.ca.gov

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
NR#2011-11
August 18, 2011

Contacts: Don Drysdale, Dept. of Conservation, (916) 323-1886
Jamison Watts, N. Calif. Regional Land Trust, (530) 894-7738
Jonathan Groveman, USDA-FRPP, (530) 792-5692

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA REGIONAL LAND TRUST PROTECTS TEHAMA COUNTY FARM WITH STATE, FEDERAL FUNDING

RED BLUFF – The Ohm family has been farming and ranching in the Red Bluff area for more than a century. If that doesn't show enough commitment, the family worked with the Northern California Regional Land Trust to create a permanent agricultural conservation easement on its 520-acre Home Place farm.

“When we started this process, we discussed what we wanted to do as a family – not only my father and mother and wife, but also my kids, who've worked on the ranch,” John Ohm said. “We wanted to protect this land for agriculture. I don't remember one member of our family objecting to this conservation easement, and as we continued along I found many members of our agricultural community supporting us in our endeavor. There are not enough words to show our appreciation for their support.

“This block we've protected is a nice economic unit. A lot of the prime soil around here is being developed for non-agricultural use. All of our income is generated from our agricultural operation. We're on prime ground, and we're going to continue to farm it.”

Funding to permanently shield the property from development was provided by the California Department of Conservation's California Farmland Conservancy Program (CFCP) and the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRPP).

“Some of the best soils in the North Valley occur in central Tehama County and we couldn't be happier about permanently protecting over 500 acres in the Proberta area where ranchette development and speculative buying of prime ag land have begun,” said Jamison Watts, executive director of the Northern California Regional Land Trust.

This farm is located about three miles from the Red Bluff Sphere of Influence off State Route 99 west of the Sacramento River. It is half a mile from a Walmart distribution center and the communities of Proberta, Gerber and Las Flores. The adjacent farmland recently was rezoned to general industrial. A developer recently purchased more than 500 acres of the nearby rezoned farmland and wanted to acquire the Ohm unit.

Home Place Farm Shielded from Development 2-2-2

The Ohms grow alfalfa, grass hay, oats, corn, grain sorghum, and barley oat at Home Place. They run a beef cattle operation and sell their hay directly to local livestock owners. They've implemented an innovative irrigation re-circulation system that substantially increases irrigation efficiency and minimizes waste.

Charles and Virginia Ohm purchased the property in 1934 and subsequently sold it to their son, Charles T. Ohm, and daughter-in-law Barbara. But the family's area farming tradition goes back even further, to John Ohm's great-grandparents, Thomas and Katerina Ohm. The farming tradition continues on today with Thomas and Katerina's great-great grandchildren.

"I understand why people want to live here, but building high-end homes on 20-acre parcels and breaking up large family farms and ranches on prime agricultural soil is a shame," John Ohm said. "Development just keeps coming, and we don't want to be crowded out."

According to the state's Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program, farm and grazing lands decreased by nearly 900 acres between 2006 and 2008 in Tehama County. The total gross value of Tehama County agricultural production in 2010 was \$227,571,200, according to county data.

"We're happy to have been a part of permanently setting this farm aside for agriculture for a couple of reasons," California Department of Conservation (DOC) Acting Director Derek Chernow said. "First, this is a great piece of land belonging to a family clearly dedicated to agriculture. Second, this is our first project in Tehama County, and we hope other local landowners will explore the easement option as well."

Added Ed Burton, NRCS California state conservationist: "This property has significant history in Tehama County and we are proud to help keep it in production for future generations. Its rich soil and wildlife habitat benefits are an agricultural treasure in California."

About the Department of Conservation's California Farmland Conservancy Program: Begun in 1996, the CFCP has provided nearly \$70.5 million in funding to permanently shield more than 49,300 acres of the state's best and most vulnerable agricultural land from development. Landowners and trusts are encouraged to contact the Division of Land Resource Protection for information about the program and potential funding. For details, visit www.conservation.ca.gov/dlrp.

About the Natural Resources Conservation Service's (NRCS) Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRPP): The federal FRPP is a voluntary easement program that protects productive agricultural land by providing funds for the purchase of conservation easements to limit conversion of farm and ranch lands to non-agricultural uses. NRCS partners with state, tribal or local governments, and non-governmental organizations to fund the acquisition of conservation easements or other interests in land from landowners.

More information is available at www.ca.nrcs.usda.gov.

Home Place Farm Shielded from Development 3-3-3

About the Northern California Regional Land Trust (NCRLT): The NCRLT was founded in 1990 to assist Northern California landowners and public agencies in the voluntary protection of land and other natural resources. It currently holds 19 conservation easements protecting more than 14,000 acres in Butte and Tehama counties, including the recently closed Comanche Creek easement in Chico with the same federal and state funding partners. For more information, visit <http://www.landconservation.org/>.

###