

## A Trinity of Agencies Join Parish to Protect 595 Acres of Farmland Near Putah Creek in Winters

Author: Solano Land Trust

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Fairfield, CA—Solano Land Trust and St. Anthony Parish closed escrow last week on three adjacent conservation easements that will protect 595 acres of the St. Anthony Parish Farmland Preserve near Putah Creek in Winters. The California Department of Conservation's Farmland Conservancy Program and USDA's Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program provided grants for the agreement. The parish, which retains full ownership of the land, plans to use the equity to build a new church in Winters.

"It's a great win-win result," says St. Anthony parishioner John Hasbrook. "The easements help fulfill our stewardship responsibilities by protecting a high-quality resource in perpetuity, while the proceeds from the sale of the easements will help the parish build a new church and meditation garden for our congregation and the greater Winters community."

Under the agreement, the parish retains full ownership of the land while farming or leasing it for agricultural purposes. Non-agricultural development will not be allowed except for housing for farm families or workers. Conservation agreements help to protect top-grade soil for local food production, and preserve the economics of agriculture. According to the Solano County Department of Agriculture, the value of agricultural production in 2010 was nearly \$260,000,000, a three percent rise from the previous year.

"We welcome St. Anthony Parish to our land trust community as we partner to preserve essential agricultural lands," says Nicole Byrd, executive director of Solano Land Trust. "It is partnerships like these that ensure the continuity of Solano County's rich agricultural heritage." To date, Solano Land Trust has protected 20,636 acres of land in the county including 8,448 acres of farmland.

"We're pleased to have been a part of this project, which will ensure the continued agricultural viability of this productive and scenic property," says Mark Nechodom, director of the California Department of Conservation. "We congratulate the landowners, Solano Land Trust, and our federal funding partners on the completion of this easement and encourage other landowners in the area to consider the easement option for their properties."

The St. Anthony Farmland Preserve is near Putah Creek on the Dixon Ridge, an alluvial fan of high-quality soils. Solano Land Trust has identified Dixon Ridge as a priority agriculture preservation area along with Vaca, Lagoon, Suisun and Green Valleys.

**Solano Land Trust** has been protecting working farms and natural areas in Solano County since 1986. Their mission is to permanently protect and preserve farmland, rangeland and open space in Solano County through the acquisition of land and agricultural conservation easements, education, and land management. Learn more at [www.solanolandtrust.org](http://www.solanolandtrust.org).

Begun in 1996, the **California Farmland Conservancy Program** has distributed \$79 million to permanently ensure food and fiber production on 54,650 acres of the state's best agricultural land through the use of conservation easements. Landowners and land 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](http://www.conservation.ca.gov/dlrp).

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service's (NRCS) **Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program** 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](http://www.ca.nrcs.usda.gov).