

Area farm donated to the Land Trust Network

JEFFERSON — The Land Trust Network of Jefferson County has received a donated conservation easement on a 118-acre farm located in southwestern Jefferson County.

The landowners, wishing to protect their family farm from future residential, commercial and industrial development, placed a conservation easement on their farm, which in turn, will prohibit these types of development in the future.

The value of the conservation easement was donated to the Land Trust Network, a 501c3 tax exempt land trust, which will monitor the 118-acres to ensure its compliance with the conservation easement.

The conservation easement contract negotiated between the landowners and the Land Trust Network, gives the landowners full ownership of their land, but have prohibited certain uses on it.

Included in the conservation easement is the prohibition of mining, sand and gravel extraction and other types of soil destruction and also prohibits commercial logging on the 20 acres of old growth forest. However, most agricultural uses are permitted to encourage area farming in the future.

When a conservation easement is placed on a parcel of land, the easement is recorded with the register of deeds and this easement follows the entire parcel of land in perpetuity. If the land is split up and sold, the easement follows each parcel of land. This conservation easement however, restricts the subdivision of the

farm and the property will remain a 118-acre farm in perpetuity. Should zoning change in the future and allow more residential, commercial, and industrial development in this area, this farm will

“The conservation easement program offers landowners a way of preserving our history and natural resources, as well as receiving some financial benefit.”

— Martine Koepfel, chairwoman

(Continued on back, col. 3)

Land trust farm —

(Continued from page 1)

be protected from development under this easement agreement.

In return for placing a conservation easement on their farm, the landowners received a small amount of cash, but the majority of the value of the conservation easement has been in the form of a donation to the Land Trust Network of Jefferson County. In order to qualify for a “legal” donation for income tax purposes, the conservation easement must be donated to a 501c3 tax-exempt organization with a charter that incorporates specific language allowing the organization to receive land and conservation easements for the benefit of “the public good.”

The donated value of the conservation easement can be written off as a donation on the landowner’s income tax return which will result in a substantial savings for those who pay income taxes. Selling or donating the “Development Rights” can also lower one’s property taxes.

Donating and/or selling a conservation easement gives the landowners power over what happens to their land after they no longer own it, Land Trust officials said.

“Many landowners do not want to see their prairies, forests and

farm fields, become subdivisions, industrial parks, strip malls, parking lots and driveways,” Martine Koepfel, Land Trust Board Chairwoman, said. “The conservation easement program offers landowners a way of preserving our history and natural resources, as well as receiving some financial benefit.”

Koepfel, a certified public accountant, donated a conservation easement on her farm in 2003. She has been working on these types of land preservation projects since 1998.

Working with the Department of Natural Resources/Stewardship fund, the Jefferson County Parks Department, and private landowners, Koepfel has negotiated the conservation easements and secured the funding on 12 other projects which has resulted in the permanent protection of nearly 1,000 acres of land.

Land Trust Board members include, Koepfel, chairwoman; Sue Lidholm, vice chairwoman; J. Rod Clark, treasurer; and Alexander Brower, secretary.

Persons interested in these types of land preservation programs offered by the Land Trust Network of Jefferson County, can visit www.landtrustnetwork.org or write to them at Land Trust Network, P.O. Box 142, Watertown.