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# State of California Department of Conservation

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## Conservation Easement Preserves Yolo County Farm

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NR2009-02

February 3, 2009

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SACRAMENTO – The amount of permanently protected farmland between Davis and Woodland has grown thanks to a joint federal, state and local effort to shield a family farm from development.

"The Staib Farm includes some of the best farmland in Yolo County, and we're very proud to have been part of setting this land aside for agriculture forever," said Bridgett Luther, Director of the California Department of Conservation (DOC). "I congratulate our partners -- the federal Farm and Ranch Land Protection Program, the City of Davis and the Yolo Land Trust -- as well as the landowners, and hope that other local farmers and ranchers explore this option for their own property."

The Staib Farm – 300 acres on two parcels -- is located in the northwestern urban boundary of Davis. The protected block spans an entire mile, running east-west between Roads 98 and 99. The properties are adjacent to an 80-acre agricultural conservation easement also held by the Yolo Land Trust that was previously established as partial mitigation for the development around the Davis Municipal Golf Course. They are half a mile from the City of Davis' sphere of influence and one mile from city limits.

"The city is proud to have worked with a local farming family, the Yolo Land Trust, and our state and federal partners to protect this important farmland forever," Davis Mayor Ruth Asmundson said. "This project once again shows how strong partnerships can help maintain the viability of agriculture in Yolo County, promote sound stewardship, and help secure a farmer's future on their land. The result is a positive outcome for all parties involved and is a tangible legacy for future generations."

The Staibs were a longtime farming family in Yolo County. The farm was held by a family trust, which recently sold the property to Paul and Laura Barger. Winter wheat and tomatoes are grown on the property now; the Bargers plan to plant almond and walnut orchards. The Bargers last year worked with the City of Davis and the Yolo Land Trust to create an agricultural easement on a nearby piece of farmland.

Funding to purchase agricultural conservation easements on the properties was provided by DOC's California Farmland Conservancy Program and the Farm and Ranch Land Protection Program of the U.S. Department of Agriculture/Natural Resources Conservation Service. The City of Davis and DOC paid transaction costs, and the city will hold the easement along with the Yolo Land Trust.

"The Staib Farm Easement will not only keep prime farmland in production in perpetuity, it will contribute to Yolo County's objectives of groundwater recharge, flood control, and wildlife habitat, including the Swainson's Hawks that roost and nest in nearby trees," said Ed Burton, State Conservationist for USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service.

As of 2006, Yolo County ranked 23rd among California counties in total agricultural production at more than \$370 million. Despite the efforts of local government and organizations to preserve the county's farmland, 2,173 acres of agricultural land were converted to other uses from 2004-06, according to DOC's Farmland Monitoring and Mapping Program. Much of this was attributable to wetland conversions in the Yolo Bypass along with urban development in West Sacramento and Woodland.

"The Staib easement is yet another great result of the continuing partnership with landowners to implement long-

standing farmland-protection policies of the City of Davis, Yolo County, and the Yolo Land Trust,” said Judy Boshoven, Executive Director of the Yolo Land Trust. “There are now more than 2,000 acres of preserved farm and habitat lands between Woodland and Davis, a cluster which has been named the John Williamson Easements.”

About the Department of Conservation’s California [Farmland Conservancy Program](#): Begun in 1996, the CFCP has provided \$63 million in funding to permanently shield 41,000 acres of the state’s best and most vulnerable agricultural land from development. CFCP funds remain for new grant proposals. Landowners and trusts are encouraged to contact the Division of Land Resource Protection for information on the program and potential funding. The state also offers programs -- the Williamson Act and Farmland Security Zones -- that provide financial incentives to keep land in agricultural use for periods of 10 and 20 years.

About the Natural Resources Conservation Service's (NRCS) [Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program](#) (FRPP): The FRPP is a voluntary easement program that protects productive agricultural land by purchasing 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 acquire conservation easements or other interests in land from landowners.

About the [City of Davis Open Space Program](#): The city is celebrating 20 years of active farmland conservation, having accepted its first easement in 1988. With more than 3,000 acres protected to date, the city’s program was the first municipal agricultural protection program in the state and most likely the nation.

About the [Yolo Land Trust](#): The Yolo Land Trust is a private, non-profit corporation founded in 1988 by farmers, community leaders and conservationists dedicated to protecting Yolo County's land resources. To date, Yolo Land Trust has helped landowners place conservation easements on almost 8,500 acres, permanently protecting their land for future generations.

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