

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Photo courtesy of Lewis Family

Lewis Heritage Farm Protected in Larimer County

DENVER — Trust for Public Land, the Colorado Future Farmers of American Foundation (Colorado FFA Foundation) and the Colorado Cattlemen’s Agricultural Land Trust (CCALT) announced the acquisition of a 226-acre farm and its water rights adjacent to the Little Thompson River near Berthoud. The Lewis Heritage Farm will continue operations as a working farm with an added focus on educational opportunities in partnership with agricultural and youth organizations. The conservation easement will be held by the CCALT, with TPL buying and holding the property until the property can be conveyed to the Colorado FFA Foundation for long-term ownership and management.

While the property is owned by TPL, the Colorado FFA Foundation will manage and control the property so they may begin running their educational programs as soon as possible. The Colorado FFA Foundation will operate the site as an immersive agricultural experience for youth and the public along Colorado’s Front Range in collaboration with a variety of youth-serving organizations. These opportunities will illustrate the value of land and water conservation to the public. “Our Foundation is extremely excited to be a part of this project and expand our mission to offer educational opportunities for people to learn hands-on about agriculture,” said Don Thorn, Executive Director of the Colorado FFA Foundation.

Wade Shelton, Senior Project Manager for Trust for Public Land, elaborated on the value of the project: “Protecting spaces like the Lewis Heritage Farm allows not only the continuation of sustainable farming practices, but also underscores the importance of land and water conservation and the educational opportunities they provide our younger generations. It’s critical that all Coloradoans know where our food comes from, and how much our rural and urban communities benefit from working agriculture and water conservation. We’re grateful for the support of our partners the Colorado Cattlemen’s Agricultural Land Trust and the Colorado FFA Foundation who will maintain and continue to grow this unique educational resource.”

It took more than TPL, CCALT, and the Colorado FFA Foundation’s enthusiasm to make this day a reality. “The patience required to complete a conservation easement requires a vision for the future. The Lewis Family’s vision

for the future expands well beyond the boundaries of the farm,” said Molly Fales, CCALT Staff Attorney. “Throughout this transaction, the Lewis Family and all of our partners persistently worked to ensure that the vision of the Lewis Heritage Farm remaining a farm being used to connect local students to agriculture, create a training ground for the next generation of farmers, and link local communities to food production, CCALT is incredibly proud that the Lewis Family chose to partner with CCALT to make this vision for the future of the Lewis Heritage Farm a reality. We look forward to working with the Colorado FFA Foundation to see this project reach its full potential.”

Upon completion of the conservation easement and transfer of the Lewis Heritage Farm to TPL, Scott and Oma Lewis took a moment to reflect on their history with the farm and goals for the future saying:

“Today has been a long time in the making, after starting our quest to find the right successor for our family farm in the spring of 2016. The Lewis Heritage Farm that has been called the jewel of the Little Thompson Valley has been in the care of just two families for nearly a century. This year marks the 50th year of crop production under our family’s guidance, after Scott’s father acquired the farm from the Alvin Stumpf estate. The farm has some of the best soils and native water rights in the region including a majority interest in the most senior decree on the Little Thompson River. We had three major goals at the beginning of this process: to protect the native water rights from being severed from the land, to preserve the farm as a working/educational farm, and to pass the ownership of the farm on to a tremendous, perpetual steward of the land and water.

We believe we found that steward in the Colorado FFA Foundation. Farming methods and irrigation practices have evolved considerably over the last half century that we have owned the farm. We believe the Colorado FFA Foundation will be able to utilize this farm for hands-on education and training of educators and young farmers to keep them at the forefront of their profession. With over six years and countless hours invested in this project, we are very pleased with the outcome and look forward to following the continued evolution of the Lewis Heritage Farm in the years to come.”

The conservation and acquisition of the Lewis Heritage Farm would not have been possible without the support of many partners. CCALT received a grant for \$2.625 million from the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) for the conservation easement. The NRCS funds are matched with a substantial landowner donation partially incentivized by Colorado’s unique state income tax credits for conservation easement donations program. TPL and the Colorado FFA Foundation received a \$1,500,000 [grant](#) from the Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO) board to acquire the farm and its water rights in June 2022. Funds were also matched by \$50,000 from Gates Family Foundation. TPL and the Colorado FFA Foundation are also working to secure additional public funding for the project, in addition to an ongoing private fundraising effort led by the Colorado FFA Foundation in collaboration with TPL and CCALT.

Randy Randall, Acting State Conservationist NRCS, Colorado noted that “NRCS is honored to play a part in the development of Lewis Farm’s easement program just outside of Berthoud, Colorado. Lewis Farms have played an integral role in the production of barley, that is then used by the Coors Brewery in Colorado. This easement will help protect agricultural land in Larimer County by providing benefits to this growing urban landscape. Together we will continue to conserve prime farmland and irrigation water, for generations to come”.

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Trust for Public Land (TPL) is a national nonprofit that works to connect everyone to the benefits and joys of the outdoors. As a leader in equitable access to the outdoors, TPL works with communities to create parks and protect public land where they are needed most. Since 1972, TPL has protected more than 3 million acres of public land, created more than 5,000 parks, trails, schoolyards, and iconic outdoor places, raised \$84 billion in

public funding for parks and public lands, and connected more than 9 million people to the outdoors. To learn more, visit tpl.org.

Colorado Cattlemen's Agricultural Land Trust (CCALT) is a nonprofit land conservation organization whose mission is to conserve Colorado's western heritage and working landscapes for the benefit of future generations.

Colorado Future Farmers of America Foundation (Colorado FFA Foundation) seeks resources – human, financial and in-kind – to support agricultural education in Colorado, including students (Colorado FFA Association, CSU Ag Education), adult agricultural education (CYFEA), agricultural education teachers (CVATA) and alumni (Colorado FFA Alumni).

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service provides technical and financial assistance to help agricultural producers and others care for the land. The Agency prioritizes conservation planning and uses conservation programs in the Farm Bill to implement most of its efforts including the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program, which is designed to protect the agricultural viability, grazing uses and related conservation values of prime agricultural land by limiting nonagricultural uses of that land.