

LOCAL NEWS

Berthoud family farm to become future farmer training ground

By [KEN AMUNDSON](#) | BizWest/Reporter-Herald

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Editor's note: A photo that was originally published with this story depicted the wrong Berthoud-area farm. The Reporter-Herald regrets the error.

A family farm south of Berthoud and its water rights have transitioned to new ownership that will use the land to train the next generations of farmers.

Lewis Family Investments LLLP, which has a Lakewood address, sold the 226-acre property for \$2.2 million to the Trust for Public Land, a California organization with a Denver office, according to records at the Larimer County Clerk and Recorder's Office.

The land at 1001 Larimer County Road 6C, which is south of Berthoud and south of the Little Thompson River, will be operated by the Colorado Future Farmers of America Foundation, which eventually will own it outright.

The Trust for Public Land enabled the purchase along with the Colorado Cattlemen's Agricultural Land Trust, which holds a conservation easement on the property. 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, according to a press statement.

Now called the Lewis Heritage Farm, the arrangement will help the FFA Foundation to start running its educational programs now and eventually take title to the land.

"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," Don Thorn, executive director of the FFA Foundation, said in a written statement.

Wade Shelton, senior project manager for Trust for Public Land, elaborated on the deal.

"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," he said. "It's critical that all Coloradans 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 that will maintain and continue to grow this unique educational resource."

The buyers credited the Lewis family's vision for the future of the land with making the deal work.

"The patience required to complete a conservation easement requires a vision for the future," said Milly Fales, staff attorney for the cattlemen's trust. "Throughout this transaction, the Lewis family and all of our partners persistently worked to ensure that the Lewis Heritage Farm remain 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."

Scott and Oma Lewis, the individuals behind Lewis Family Investments, said they began work in 2016 to find the future operators of the farm.

"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," Oma Lewis said. "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



To make the deal work, the cattlemen’s trust received a grant for \$2.6 million from the Natural Resources Conservation Service for the conservation easement. The conservation service funds were matched with a landowner donation partially incentivized by Colorado’s state income tax credits for conservation easement donations program. The Trust for Public Land and the Colorado FFA Foundation received a \$1.5 million grant from the Great Outdoors Colorado board to acquire the farm and its water rights. Funds were also matched by \$50,000 from Gates Family Foundation.

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