

Dodge County farm donates land conservation easement

By Teresa Stowell
of the Daily Times staff

TOWN OF TRENTON — As farm land began being developed in the town of Trenton, Carl and Bonnie Werner thought it was time to make sure it didn't happen to their farm.

The Werners recently made a donation of a conservation easement to the Land Trust Network of Jefferson County on their 148-acre farm located at N9129 Basswood Road, Beaver Dam.

The Werner farm has been in their family since the early 1850s and is currently an operating dairy farm with 90 head of cattle. The Werners practice rotational grazing methods on their land and also have set aside 12 acres as an oak tree nursery and old growth forest.

"It always bothered me that we were losing so much farm land in the area, especially from our farm to Beaver Dam," Carl said. "I hated to see that happen to our farm because we are the fourth generation. We didn't want to see it destroyed in the future."

For the past two years the couple has thought about doing what they can to preserve their land when they decided on the Land Trust Network of Jefferson County. As part of the conservation easement donation the Werners will also receive an income tax deduction that can be used over a 15-year period.

"Although there are tax incentives that wasn't our main reasoning for doing this," Carl said. "That was more like the frosting on the cake."

As part of the easement donation, the Werners will not be able to build on any of the land included in the agreement. The easement will remain with the deed of the farm and when the Werners decide to sell, the easement will be a part of that.

"As farmland and green spaces become more scarce in Wisconsin our land trust is fortunate to be able to help landowners like the Werners protect their land for future generations," Martine Koeppel, a Certified Public Accountant, and chairwoman of the Land Trust

Network said.

Carl said he believes they are the first in their neighborhood to make the donation of a conservation easement and encourages others to think about doing the same.

"It's created a little interest. I hope that it catches on and more farmers would consider it," Carl said. "They're not making any more farm land."

Carl said he believes it will also make it easier to transfer the farm on to the next generation. The farm will not have the big development potential which would drive up the value.

The Land Trust Network is a tax-exempt organization that can accept the donation of land or conservation easements anywhere in Wisconsin and holds these assets in the public trust. To date land trust members have completed 23 land conservation projects, permanently protecting over 3,000 acres of Wisconsin's natural resources.

For information on the Land Trust Network, visit www.landtrustnetwork.org.



Land trust donation accepted

The Land Trust Network of Jefferson County accepted the donation of a conservation easement on a farm owned by Carl and Bonnie Werner, of the town of Trenton. Pictured in front of their barn on the farm from left, are Martine Koeppel, chairwoman of the Land Trust Network; Bonnie Werner and Carl Werner.