

Land Trust donation includes parking for fairgrounds

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JUNEAU - In December 2011 the Land Trust Network received a 128-acre conservation easement donation in Dodge County.

The easement includes land currently used for agriculture in the towns of Oak Grove and Beaver Dam. A portion of the land is used as the parking area for the Dodge County Fairgrounds.

Edward and Dorothy Stegner, grantors of this easement, contacted Nate Olson of the Dodge County Land Resources and Parks Department about land preservation options available to Dodge County landowners. One option included the opportunity to place a conservation easement on their farm.

Olson facilitated a meeting between the Stegner's and Martine Koeppel of the Land Trust Network. The Land Trust Network is a tax-exempt land trust that can accept conservation easement donations.

The Stegner's wished to donate a conservation easement to ensure their farm, which has been in their family for generations, was protected after they no longer owned it.

In October Edward Stegner died. His wife Dorothy, in keeping with her and Edward's wishes, placed a conservation easement on the farm in December.

The farmland can no longer be developed into residential, commercial and industrial development.

The easement does allow agricultural practices on the land as well as allowing the Dodge County Fair Association to rent the 20 acres for a parking lot for the fair. The rest of the year, the 20 acres are used for cropping hay.

Conservation easements are used in estate planning and lands placed in an easement are protected through perpetuity by a public trust. Placing a conservation easement on ones land allows current landowners to determine what can be done with their land in the future.

The Stegner's conservation easement document is filed with the Dodge County Register of Deeds office and this easement is tied to the land forever.

No matter who owns the land in the future, the conservation easement will be enforced and monitored by the public trust through the Land Trust Network.

The Land Trust Network, originating in Jefferson County, currently holds 21 conservation easements in trust, permanently protecting more than 3,000 acres of land, in seven south-central Wisconsin counties.

Information on programs offered by the Land Trust Network can be found at landtrustnetwork.org or write to LTN, P.O. Box 142, Watertown.