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Cibolo Nature Center & Farm Donates Conservation Easement to TALT

San Antonio, Texas – August 1, 2016 - The Texas Agricultural Land Trust (TALT) is pleased to announce that it has partnered with Friends of Cibolo Wilderness to conserve in perpetuity 60-acres in the heart of Boerne. Known as Herff Farm, the property is adjacent to the Cibolo Nature Center & Farm (CNC&F) and Cibolo Preserve, and will remain open space forever. **To protect the land from future development, Friends of Cibolo Wilderness, Inc., which plans to use the farm for outreach and education, donated a conservation easement to TALT.**

A conservation easement is the legal glue that binds a property owner's stewardship goals to the land in perpetuity. Donors of conservation easements relinquish their development rights but retain title and all other rights to their property. A conservation easement "runs with the land" forever, regardless of changes in ownership.

TALT's chief executive officer Blair Fitzsimons said, "The conservation of Herff Farm will provide opportunities for Texans of all ages to plant seeds and till the soil, and to learn what it means to take care of a piece of land. In the process, they'll see that **land is our greatest resource - and that land conservation benefits us all.**"

Carolyn Chipman Evans, CNC&F's executive director, said, "There is nothing quite like playing in the dirt and sharing space with wild things to help kids and their families make that connection." Evans, a descendant of Dr. Ferdinand Herff who settled the farm in 1854, continued, "Herff Farm was the site of one of the first agriculture operations in Kendall County. **Today, as an education center, it offers an opportunity to help modern Texans reconnect to the land and understand the complex, vital relationship between natural resources and our lives.**"

The protection of Herff Farm will also impact water quantity and quality for the region. Cibolo Creek, which runs along the northeastern side of **the property provides critical recharge to the Edwards and Trinity aquifers.**

“The farm was ripe for development,” said Evans. “We knew a development would irreparably damage the watershed and the overall atmosphere of the Nature Center and adjoining preserve. The staff and board of directors went through hell and brimstone to raise the money and purchase the property.”

As the board was working to acquire the property, a project that began in 1999, **the population of Boerne exploded, increasing by 87 percent between 1997 and 2014. This in turn increased demand on local water supplies and led to more land fragmentation.** According to Texas A&M Institute of Renewable Natural Resources, between 1997 and 2012, **Kendall County experienced a 105 percent increase in the number of parcels less than 100 acres and a 15 percent decrease in acreage of crop and grazing land.**

“The loss of rural land means fewer and fewer Texans are connected to the land,” says Fitzsimons. “Yet our rural lands provide critical benefits, like drinking water, clear air, and good food. As a result, we need places like Herff Farm to help bridge that gap. There is no better way to show people how land impacts their lives than for them to experience it like they will at the Cibolo Nature Center and Farm.”

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(529 words)



Texas Agricultural Land Trust: Concerned that Texas is losing its rural lands faster than any other state in the country, leaders of Texas’ statewide agricultural, wildlife and landowner organizations came together in 2007 to create the Texas Agricultural Land Trust. With a Board of Directors who, as landowners themselves, understand the day-to-day challenges of farming and ranching, TALT promotes the conservation of open space, native wildlife habitats, and natural resources of Texas’ private working lands. TALT, a private non-profit organization, today has partnered with landowners to conserve 227,000 acres. *Created by farmers and ranchers for farmers and ranchers*, TALT is proud to play a role in conserving part of Texas’ legacy of wide open spaces.



The Cibolo Nature Center & Farm (CNC&F) began as a 100-acre green space in the community of Boerne, cared for by the Friends of Cibolo Wilderness. Through the years, the Center has become a leading model of conservation for the Texas Hill Country and the nation. Since opening in 1988, staff and volunteers have remained dedicated to the mission to promote conservation of natural resources through education and stewardship. In 2007, the 60-acre Herff Farm was acquired and is being restored as a demonstration center and landscape for sustainable living. The historic home is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The CNC&F is in steady use each year by tens of thousands of visitors from all over Texas as a site for school field trips, educational and community programs, and quiet recreation.