

## Larimer County pays \$150,000 toward conservation easement for farm near Wellington

Poudre Valley Community Farms' 73 acres will remain in ag production



The Larimer County Department of Natural Resources presented this map to the Board of County Commissioners during a March 2 meeting, showing the 73-acre Dixon Station conservation easement on a cooperative farming property. The easement will allow the property to remain protected as a working farm. (Courtesy of Larimer County)

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A conservation easement will protect a cooperative farm just north of Wellington, allowing it to remain in production for generations to come.

The Larimer County commissioners, by a 3-0 vote on Tuesday, agreed to pay \$150,000 of open space tax money for the conservation agreement for the Dixon Station project just west of Interstate 25 and just north of Wellington.

This covers 25% of the cost of protecting the 73-acre farm, and the owners, Poudre Valley Community Farms, donated the rest of the cost, explained Meegan Flenniken, resource program manager with the Larimer County Department of Natural Resources.

The county's Department of Natural Resources joined Colorado Open Lands, Poudre Valley Community Farms and other partners on the project.

“I think this is a really great example of how we can help to preserve opportunities for working farms and ranches,” said Commissioner John Kefalas.

With a conservation easement, property owners maintain their property but agree to protections against future development, ensuring that the land will remain a farm.

In this case, Colorado Open Lands will hold the conservation easement, and Poudre Valley Community Farms will maintain ownership. The cooperative allows smaller agricultural producers access to land through long-term leases, a way to make the venture affordable for young farmers, according to information provided to the county commissioners on Tuesday.

“This conservation project will help further this innovative model whereby community-owned farmland can provide secure tenure for the next generation of willing and capable farmers who wouldn’t otherwise have access to land,” according to a memo provided to the commissioners.

“In this case, (Poudre Valley Community Farms) is leasing the property to Jodar Farms which raises meat chickens, laying hens and hogs for sale to local restaurants, area farmers markets and through the farm’s own CSA and farm store.”

The land, according to the Department of Natural Resources, has prime soil, is adjacent to other agricultural acreage and protects the view to the west of Interstate 25. Protecting agricultural resources is one of several major goals for the Larimer County Department of Natural Resources in its master plan.

This property joins 11,000 acres of agricultural lands that are protected in the same Buckeye-Wellington priority area and includes North Poudre Irrigation Co. water along with two wells, Flenniken reported.

Commissioner Jody Shadduck-McNally, a Loveland resident, said it is important to protect the area’s agricultural history and heritage but also to “preserve this kind of land for the future for growing food.”