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## **JOHNSON FAMILY FARM PERMANENTLY PROTECTED**

RIVER FALLS, WISCONSIN

Lyle and Roberta Johnson have partnered with The Kinnickinnic River Land Trust (KRLT) to permanently protect a 195 acre family farm through the purchase of a conservation easement. The farm, owned by Lyle and Roberta Johnson, is located in the Town of River Falls and the Town of Clifton, Pierce County, Wisconsin. The conservation easement allows the Johnsons to retain ownership of the farm and continue to farm the agricultural land as their family has for decades. Through the conservation easement the family sold the rights to ever develop the land except for three limited single family building sites. The family retains all other rights of private property ownership including the right to control access across their land.

The KRLT has been working with the Johnson family for over two years on this farmland preservation and natural resource protection project. In addition to raising private funds to purchase the easement, the KRLT received grants from the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program, and from the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program to purchase the development rights.

The Kinnickinnic River flows through the southern part of the farm. In addition to the river, this project protects many other natural resources including prime agricultural soils, river bluffs, coulees, rare and threatened plant species, and diverse plant and animal habitats. The farm is located within one mile of the City of River Falls' Glen Park.

According to both Lyle and Roberta Johnson, "We feel very blessed to have such a beautiful farm and to have been able to raise our kids on a farm income. For 50 years, we have taken good care of this land, and now our son can farm it as long as he wants.

This is a fertile farm and having a river run through it was a bonus. Our children were able to swim, fish, and hunt on our land as they grew up. The more we learned about conservation easements, and talked about it with the KRLT and our family, the more we liked it as a way to protect this wonderful farm. Now this will be a working farm forever.”

“Protecting the Johnson farm is a very important conservation project in the history of the KRLT,” said Nelson French, Executive Director. “In addition to helping the Johnsons continue farming the land as they have for generations, we have gained the protection of a portion of the lower Kinnickinnic River that is filled with valuable natural resources. The KRLT's purchase of development rights on the Johnson farm is in line with its mission of watershed protection, while helping farmers stay in business.”

“The Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program is a good tool to help keep working farms in agriculture,” said Pat Leavenworth, State Conservationist for the USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service. “The land enrolled in this voluntary program will be allowed to remain in agricultural use and must be farmed according to a conservation plan. This is one of the best ways to keep prime farmland soils in agriculture and at the same time, keep farming communities thriving by relieving some of the development pressure.”

Karen Blodgett, Community Service Specialist of the West Central Region for the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, said, “This is a win-win project; the landowners get to keep their land and manage it as a family farm and the citizens of Wisconsin have an amazing river that they will always be able to enjoy in its natural state.”

The Kinnickinnic River Land Trust is a non-profit membership organization that was founded in 1993. The mission of the KRLT is to work with the community to protect the natural resources and scenic beauty of the Kinnickinnic River watershed. The KRLT has permanently protected over 2,000 acres of land through donated and purchased conservation easements and land acquisitions.

For more information about the Kinnickinnic River Land Trust, becoming a member, donating conservation easements, or for volunteer opportunities please contact them at 715/425-5738 or visit their web site at [www.kinniriver.org](http://www.kinniriver.org).