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NEWS RELEASE

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FARMLAND PROTECTED NEAR FORT A.P. HILL SUPPORTS MILITARY READINESS

Preventing development of the working farmland was a top priority for environmental protection and nearby Army installation operations

CAROLINE COUNTY, Va. (October 6, 2021) — Today, [The Conservation Fund](#) announced the protection of the 373-acre Gouldin Farm right outside [U.S. Army Garrison Fort A.P. Hill](#) in Bowling Green, Virginia. This property has been the highest priority conservation effort of Fort A.P. Hill's Army Compatible Use Buffer (ACUB) program for the past several years and is within the Priority 1A ACUB area designated by the installation. Its protection will not only secure environmental and economic benefits of the working farmland but will support the Army's ongoing training operations that are threatened by potential nearby development.

"The Gouldin easement is of strategic importance to Fort A.P. Hill in a high priority area where compatible land use is critical to the sustainment of our military mission," said **Lt. Col. Drew Aswell, garrison commander at Fort A.P. Hill**.

The property lies just a few miles from the new Virginia Railway Express station and expanding residential development from Fredericksburg. Development encroaching near the base can negatively impact the installation's training mission through light pollution and other incompatible uses. By placing a conservation easement on the farm, The Conservation Fund and their partners at the [Virginia Outdoors Foundation](#) (VOF) and Fort A.P. Hill are able to restrict potential development while keeping Gouldin Farm productive and in private ownership.

"Where this farm lays along US-17 makes it immensely appealing for residential development, which not only would uproot the land's agricultural and environmental capabilities but would hinder nearby training at Fort A.P. Hill," said **Heather Richards, Mid-Atlantic regional director at The Conservation Fund**. "This type of partnership between conservation groups and the U.S. Army is truly unique and demonstrates that economic growth and environmental conservation don't need to be mutually exclusive."

"The ACUB Program benefits the environment, landowners, local communities and the Army, all of which are supported by and in turn support one another," said **Col. Alicia Masson, commander of the U.S. Army Environmental Command**. "It is the epitome of striking the balance between being a steward of the environment and a good neighbor, while striving to accomplish the military mission in the most effective ways possible."

This easement, which was facilitated by The Conservation Fund and will be held by VOF, is the latest effort in a larger initiative spanning over two decades by the partners to protect land along the Rappahannock River from Fort A.P. Hill down to the Rappahannock River Valley National Wildlife Refuge.

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“VOF is proud of our long partnership with the U.S. Army and The Conservation Fund to protect thousands of acres around Fort A.P. Hill,” said **VOF Executive Director Brett Glymph**. “Gouldin Farm is a wonderful family farm located in a critical spot and fills in a puzzle piece on Route 17 among seven other VOF easements.”

Funding for this project was provided by the U.S. Department of Defense’s Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration (REPI) program. Authorized and funded annually by Congress, the REPI program supports cost-sharing partnerships between the military services, private conservation groups, and state and local governments to remove or avoid land-use conflicts near installations. REPI funding provides critical support for Fort A.P. Hill’s ACUB program by helping protect lands surrounding the base from development that would affect the Army’s training mission, such as their ability to do night flights in that area. Since its creation in 2006, ACUB at Fort A.P. Hill has helped to protect more than 13,500 acres in the region surrounding the base, including Gouldin Farm and other adjacent protected properties.

“In the Senate, I’ve been proud to lend my support to the REPI program, because I know that military readiness and environmental conservation can go hand in hand. I’m glad to know that these federal REPI dollars will go towards protecting the 373-acre Gouldin Farm—an effort that will serve to conserve this piece of Virginia farmland and ensure that the Army can continue crucial activities that would otherwise be threatened by nearby development,” said **U.S. Senator Mark R. Warner**.

“Farmlands like the Gouldin Farm play a critical role in the Commonwealth’s conservation efforts and agriculture economy,” said **U.S. Senator Tim Kaine**. “I’m thankful for all who’ve worked together to create this plan that will not only have environmental benefits for the region, but also help ensure our Army has the resources it needs for ongoing military operations.”

“Government’s greatest role is to strike the proper balance between competing priorities. But when government is at its best, we find ways to effectively fulfill multiple priorities at once. That’s exactly what happened with the protection of Gouldin Farm. Now, this 373-acre property will be protected from development, and the United States Military will continue to train at Fort A.P. Hill without neighboring encroachment. That is what some would call a ‘win-win,’” said **U.S. Congressman Rob Wittman**. “I was proud to help secure \$236,196 in order to fund this project, and look forward to its completion.”

The property is currently a working farm owned by Cory Garrett and his family. It’s comprised of more than 85 percent prime farming soils and produces hay, corn, and soybeans as part of the Garrett family’s larger farming operation.

“We are very thankful for the opportunity to work with the Army’s ACUB program and the Virginia Land Preservation Tax Credit to preserve this farm forever,” said **Cory Garrett, the Gouldin Farm property owner**. “I grew up farming this land with my father and grandfather and we look forward to sharing more special memories on this land with the generations to come. With the continued pressure from growth and development it is a comfort to have organizations that share our same values in protecting our land.”

“This easement provides additional benefits, including the permanent protection of open space and wetland buffers, which contribute to the Army’s and DOD’s Chesapeake Bay restoration efforts,” **Aswell added**. “It also helps to retain the rural character of the viewshed and keeps working family farms in operation, contributing to the local economy.”

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About The Conservation Fund

At The Conservation Fund, we make conservation work for America. By creating solutions that make environmental and economic sense, we are redefining conservation to demonstrate its essential role in our future prosperity. Top-ranked for efficiency and effectiveness, we have worked in all 50 states since 1985 to protect more than 8.5 million acres of land, including nearly 79,000 acres in Virginia. Learn more at: www.conservationfund.org

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