

**NEWS RELEASE, PRESS CONFERENCE, VIDEO AND INTERVIEW  
OPPORTUNITIES**

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**HAPPY VOTERS. HAPPY COWS.  
ALBERT KOHLER LEGACY FARM IS NOW PROTECTED OPEN SPACE.**

MIDWAY, Utah – The non-profit land trust Utah Open Lands is thrilled to announce that *the Albert Kohler Legacy Farm* . . . 102 acres of scenic farmland and five generations of the same farming family... is now and forever protected open space.

The black and white cows that dot the emerald green pastures define the heart of Midway and the Heber Valley’s rural character. The Kohler Farm is a Utah’s Own business and is as famous for its Heber Valley Artisan Cheese as it is for its Tractor Days. Yearly school tours host over 700 students who get a first-hand look at where their food comes from.

“Self reliance in our communities has always been a Utah value.” Says Senator Mitt Romney. Who responded to a call from Utah Open Lands when the project had stalled-out on a federal level. “Protecting the farm fields that sustain this local business is good for the community, the land, and good for our local food supply.” Says Senator Romney.

Skyrocketing real estate values combined with Covid over the past 20 months, created tremendous strain on the family’s resolve to keep the farm intact. “Farming isn’t for the faint of heart.” Says Grant Kohler. Still the last two years have been tough for the Kohlers. His son Russ, is as committed as his dad to continuing the family operation. “Farming is long days, but we believe in this community, we had a great partner in Utah Open Lands and we think Midway is a better place with our farm as green grass instead of rooftops and asphalt.” Says Russ Kohler. In the face of mounting pressure to sell to developers, the Family relied on Utah Open Lands and agreed to a bargain-sale conservation easement purchase price of \$7 million.

It’s been three years since Utah Open Lands and the Kohlers signed the agreement to proceed with a conservation solution for the land, but Grant had wanted to save the farm and its entry corridor view for the community since the mid 1990s. Back then he remembers there were no open space bonds and Utah’s share of federal farm land protection dollars was far less than the millions it has today.

“The family really relied on Utah Open Lands to get it done” says Kohler. The organization went to work with a fundraising effort that included a request of \$1 million to Midway City and \$2 million from Wasatch County. That left \$4 million to raise outside of the community. The State’s LeRay McAllister Fund contributed \$500,000 of the State’s only open space program. But a key component to securing the land’s

protection was a grant from the Natural Resource Conservation Services Agricultural Land Easement Program. This Federal program contributed 30% of the total value.

A last dollars grant from the George S. and Dolores Doré Eccles Foundation, funding from Watts Enterprises, a gift from a local anonymous donor and grants from AHE/CI Trust, the Walbridge Fund and the Lawrence T and Janet T Dee Foundation, and Utah Open Lands. Today, the *Albert Kohler Legacy Farm* becomes the first project completed with the first open space bond issued in Wasatch County and Midway City.

“A significant part of the story is the contribution made by the landowning family” Wendy Fisher, Executive Director of Utah Open Lands, says. The Family donated over 30% of the conservation easement value, which Fisher says are real dollars that they left on the table to make the preservation happen. In addition, the Albert Kohler Legacy Farm met all of the criteria that the different funding agencies require to consider a project including: community, educational and agricultural benefits. “It is a landscape that checks all boxes”. Says Fisher.

“Along with keeping a local business open, Utahns gain so much with the *Albert Kohler Legacy Farm*,” says Wendy Fisher. “We have a family and community dedicated to the open spaces that defines all of our quality of life. The agriculture operation is a mainstay of the local economy. Plus, generational know-how and sustainable practices will keep this niche dairy flourishing. We have come to see that the Kohler’s have some very happy cows.”

**OFFICIAL ANNOUNCEMENT, PRESS CONFERENCE, CHEESE SAMPLES AND TRACTORS:**

Friday, September 17, 2021 1p.m. Heber Valley Milk & Artisan Cheese  
920 River Road, Midway, UT 84049. Dairy operation tours to follow, ample parking available.

Speakers and/or notables in attendance available for interviews:

Utah Senator Mitt Romney (whose interest and attention helped forward the project)

Wendy Fisher, Executive Director Utah Open Lands

Celeste Johnson, Midway Mayor

Steve Farrell, Wasatch County Councilmember

Grant Kohler & Russell Kohler, Kohler Farm Owners

Formed in 1990, Utah Open Lands is Utah’s oldest statewide land trust—a private, non-profit organization. Utah Open Lands has preserved more than 65,000 acres and counting in Utah. UOL protects a wide variety of lands including: farms, ranches, watersheds, wetlands, forests and meadows. UOL works as an intermediary between landowners, government agencies, citizens and communities. [www.utahopenlands.org](http://www.utahopenlands.org)