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**\$1.4 Million Awarded to Public/Private Partnerships for Land Conservation**  
*47 Land Trust Organizations and Communities Across New York to Benefit*

(Albany, NY) The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) and the Land Trust Alliance (the Alliance) joined members of the state Legislature and land trust representatives today to announce more than \$1.4 million in Conservation Partnership Program grants. The grants, which are included in the dedicated Environmental Protection Fund (EPF), will help enable 47 land trust organizations to dramatically increase the pace, improve the quality, and ensure the permanence of land conservation, resulting in significant environmental and economic benefits in communities across the state.

The Conservation Partnership Program is a public-private initiative funded through the EPF and administered by the Land Trust Alliance, in coordination with DEC. Since 2002, the Conservation Partnership Program has invested in more than 275 projects benefitting 67 different land trust organizations across the state, from Long Island to Buffalo.

A total of \$1,417,500 in grants will be awarded through the Conservation Partnership Program to help local not-for-profits sustain critical programs. The funding will help create land trust jobs, strengthen key partnerships with local and state governments, and support programming that advances farm and watershed protection and other community projects across the state.

Forty-seven land trust organizations across New York will receive funds, including the Peconic Land Trust, North Shore Land Alliance, Manhattan Land Trust, Hudson Highlands Land Trust, Mohonk Preserve, Dutchess Land Conservancy, Mohawk-Hudson Land Conservancy, Agricultural Stewardship Association, New York Agricultural Land Trust, Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust, Genesee Land Trust and Western New York Land Conservancy.

The Conservation Partnership Program, like other EPF programs, creates a powerful economic stimulus that spurs green community investments in every county in the state. According to government data, tourism such as visits to local farms, trails and nature preserves in the Hudson Valley alone annually generates \$4.7 billion in spending and \$300 million in local taxes, and employs 80,000 people. In a report released earlier this year, the Trust for Public Land says that it is widely understood that investments in conservation boost property values, support businesses, save energy and tax payer money, and safeguard natural ecosystems on which economic well being depends. With the grant awards announced today, land trusts will advance significant projects at a critical time for communities and businesses across the state.

**Pete Grannis, Commissioner of the Department of Environmental Conservation**, said: “Today’s funding will help to continue our efforts to build and strengthen this important collaboration across the state by assisting organizations that work with DEC to identify, preserve and protect parcels of varying sizes and ecological importance. We appreciate the work being performed by New York’s land trusts and look forward to continuing to partner with them to achieve our conservation goals.”

Land trust representatives applauded Governor David Paterson, the state Legislature, and state agency leaders for their efforts to secure this public funding for land trust and their community partners.

**Rand Wentworth, President of the Land Trust Alliance**, said: “New York State has demonstrated its support of local land trusts and their vital mission to save the places New Yorkers cherish and depend on for clean air and water, food, and recreation. I commend Governor Paterson, Commissioner Grannis, Senator Antoine Thompson, Assemblyman Robert Sweeney, and other members of the Legislature for ensuring the viability of the Environmental Protection Fund. The EPF and the Conservation Partnership Program are smart investments that will protect the air, water, and open spaces that are so vital to New York’s economy and public health.”

As a result of the grants announced today, the organizations can also leverage nearly \$1.5 million in additional matching funds from community and private sources. To date, the program has leveraged over \$10 million in private and community funds, creating employment and advancement opportunities in the conservation field and conserving more than 11,000 additional acres of land.

Together, the funds awarded and raised for these programs will enable the land trusts to advance goals set in the 2009 New York State Open Space Plan, approved by Governor Paterson in June (<http://www.dec.ny.gov/lands/47990.html>), and New York’s federally mandated Wildlife Action Plan.

**Assemblyman Robert Sweeney (D-Lindenhurst), Chair of the Assembly Environmental Conservation Committee**, said: “This is a challenging time for homeowners, charities, and businesses across New York State. Empowering local communities through the Conservation Partnership Program is one proven way to give New York’s citizens a voice in their future. It is also an effective way for New York State to get the most out of the Environmental Protection Fund. We applaud the work land trusts do on Long Island and across the state and look forward to supporting the program in the coming years.”

**State Senator Antoine Thompson (D-Buffalo), Chair of the Senate Environmental Conservation Committee**, said “By working together and connecting the work of land trusts in communities throughout New York State, from Buffalo to the Capital District, from Harlem to Long Island, we are helping New York be a national leader in conserving and protecting open space and precious natural

resources. I am proud to announce that with the award to the Western New York Land Conservancy, Niagara and Erie counties will have an even stronger, more effective land trust partner and community advocate. This program is helping us get the most out of the Environmental Protection Fund when we most need it. The Alliance's partnership with the State has shown real results in protecting our air, water and land, and we look forward to its continued success."

**Carol Ash, Commissioner of the Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation**, said, "The Conservation Partnership Program is an ideal complement to the goals of and programs administered by State Parks. Responsible stewardship and access to our valuable natural, historic and cultural resources require community partnerships and creative approaches. The greater the capacity of the state's land trust community, the greater the quality of the land protection projects that we see, and the greater the benefit to the public."

**Patrick Hooker, Commissioner of the Department of Agriculture & Markets**, said, "We greatly value land trusts and the work they do in partnership with us to protect valuable and irreplaceable farmland. Beyond protecting the land, the state's farmland protection program injects greatly needed capital into farm businesses and local communities, and also helps strengthen the future of agriculture in New York State. Land trusts play a critical role in making that program happen. In fact, they work closely with farmers and local governments on over three quarters of all our farmland protection projects."

**Erica Packard, Executive Director of the Manhattan and Bronx Land Trusts**, said, "Open space is a quality of life issue for all New Yorkers - but especially for residents in our crowded and congested cities. Our 32 community gardens are in low income areas of Harlem, the Lower East Side and the Bronx - these are some of the communities that are the least served by the existing parks system. For many, our gardens are the community's only accessible open space. The EPF-supported Conservation Partnership Program has been instrumental in assuring that there is environmental justice for all residents of this state."

**Becky Thornton, President of the Dutchess Land Conservancy and Co-Chair of the Alliance's New York Advisory Board**, said, "We are extremely proud of this partnership, and all of the accomplishments that land trusts have made throughout New York. This program is about people working together, making a difference, enhancing quality of life. We and our local communities are dependent upon the land in so many ways. Ensuring that we are careful stewards of our resources is the bottom line of what this program represents."

The Land Trust Alliance is a national conservation group that works on behalf of America's 1,700 land trusts to save the places people love by strengthening conservation throughout America. The Alliance works to increase the pace and quality of conservation by advocating favorable tax policies, training land trusts in best practices and working to ensure the permanence of conservation in the face of continuing threats. New York's 90 land trusts have worked with local communities to save nearly two million acres across the state.

For more information about the New York State Conservation Partnership Program, please go to the Land Trust Alliance website (<https://www.landtrustalliance.org/community/northeast/nyscpp>) or contact the Alliance's Northeast office at (518) 587-0774.

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