



APRIL 23, 2012
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Emily DeSantis
NYS DEC
(518) 402-8000

Ethan Winter
Land Trust Alliance
(518) 587-0774

\$1.4 MILLION IN CONSERVATION GRANTS AWARDED TO LANDS TRUSTS STATEWIDE

Grants Leverage an Additional \$1.2 Million in Private Money

Public-Private Partnerships to Boost Local Land Conservation

Conservation Partnership Program grants totaling \$1.4 million were awarded to 53 nonprofit land trusts across the state, the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation and the Land Trust Alliance announced today at the Saint Paul Pocket Park in the City of Rochester. The grants, funded through New York State's Environmental Protection Fund (EPF), will be matched by \$1.2 million in private and local funding.

The purpose of the grants is to increase the pace, improve the quality and ensure the permanence of voluntary conservation of private lands, which will result in significant environmental and economic benefits for communities throughout New York.

“Through the hard work of New York’s many land trusts, the Conservation Partnership Program continues its important role in improving quality of life by enabling environmental, social and economic improvement projects in urban, rural and suburban settings,” said DEC Commissioner Joe Martens. “Land conservation benefits New York’s residents, visitors, environment and economy.”

The grants announced today will help local land trusts sustain and expand community and landowner outreach, land conservation, stewardship and education programs. The grants will advance regional economic development goals, create land trust jobs and strengthen partnerships with local and state governments while advancing locally supported efforts to preserve farmland, municipal watersheds and green infrastructure around the state. Land trusts will also apply grant funds to prepare for national accreditation, supporting New York land trust commitments to rigorous standards for organizational excellence.

“The Conservation Partnership Program grants of \$1.4 million demonstrate New York State’s continued commitment to the local land trusts who are dedicated to providing clean air, water, food and places of recreation to the communities they serve. Not only will these investments in land conservation boost property values and protect public health but they will also support local businesses thus saving tax dollars,” said Senator Mark Grisanti (R-Buffalo), Chairman of the Senate

Environmental Conservation Committee. “I am especially pleased that today’s announcement that 53 nonprofit organizations will receive funds includes both the Western New York Land Conservancy and the Grassroots Gardens of Buffalo.”

Assemblyman Robert Sweeney (D-Lindenhurst), Chair of the Assembly Environmental Conservation Committee, remarked, “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 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.”

“From Buffalo and Rochester to the Hudson River Valley and Long Island, the State of New York is partnering with strong, local private organizations to protect the natural places New Yorkers cherish and depend on for clean air and water, food, and recreation,” said Rand Wentworth, president of the Land Trust Alliance. “I commend Governor Cuomo, Commissioner Martens, Senator Grisanti, Assemblyman Sweeney and their colleagues in the Legislature for supporting this initiative. At a time when states are watching their budgets carefully, the EPF and the Conservation Partnership Program are proven, cost-effective investments that pay vital dividends for public health and New York’s economy.”

Grant awards ranged from \$5,000 to \$75,000. Land trusts awarded grants include the North Shore Land Alliance, Hudson Highlands Land Trust, Columbia Land Conservancy, Finger Lakes Land Trust, Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust, Genesee Land Trust and Western New York Land Conservancy. Grant funds are intended to assist land trusts in advancing goals set in the New York State’s Open Space Plan and state wildlife action plan.

The EPF-funded grants will also support urban open space programs administered by the Manhattan, Bronx and Brooklyn-Queens Land Trusts, Capital District Community Gardens and Grassroots Gardens of Buffalo.

The \$1.4 million was awarded by region as follows:

Western New York /Finger Lakes/Southern Tier: 10 awards totaling \$232,650

Central New York/Mohawk Valley: 5 awards totaling \$80,300

Northern New York/Adirondacks: 14 awards totaling \$257,200

Capital Region: 14 awards totaling \$246,262

Hudson Valley: 22 awards totaling \$456,088

New York City: 2 awards totaling \$100,000

Long Island: 3 awards totaling \$45,000

For a complete listing of the 2012 grant recipients, please see attached.

Since the program’s inception in 2002, the Conservation Partnership Program has awarded \$6,677,500 in grants for 434 projects benefiting 79 different land trust organizations across the state and leveraged more than \$13 million in additional funding. These funds have helped create employment and

advancement opportunities in the conservation field and helped local communities permanently conserve 15,500 acres of farmland, wildlife habitat, recreation areas and urban open space. The Alliance administers the Conservation Partnership Program in coordination with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation.

Recent research underscores how investments in land conservation and open space boost property values, support local businesses, save taxpayer dollars, and protect public health. A study released in February by the Trust for Public Land found that every dollar of investment from New York's Environmental Protection Fund generates seven dollars in additional economic benefits from tourism, reduced government costs and public health.

A 2010 report on the economic benefits of open space from the New York State Comptroller recommended the Conservation Partnership Program as a model for public-private collaboration because it leverages substantial resources for local efforts to preserve clean air and water resources, agriculture, and outdoor recreational opportunities close to home.

"The Conservation Partnership Program has demonstrated impressive statewide success by supporting land trusts in our local communities," said Becky Thornton, chair of Land Trust Alliance's New York Advisory Board and president of the Dutchess Land Conservancy. "This program is a model for the EPF because it unites the goals of New York's Open Space Plan, the needs and desires of local municipalities, and the energy and enthusiasm of private landowners and land trust partners to protect and care for the land. When we work and invest together, we can make a huge difference for communities across New York State."

"The New York State Conservation Partnership Program has been a singular success in advancing private land conservation across the state, especially in the greater Rochester region," said Gay Mills, Executive Director of the Genesee Land Trust. "Genesee Land Trust's recent projects, including protection of prime farmland and wildlife habitat near Sodus Bay as well as the El Camino Trail and Conkey Corner Park in downtown Rochester, have benefited greatly from the vision and investment of New York State."

"Thanks to New York's Environmental Protection Fund and the Land Trust Alliance-NYS DEC partnership, Rochester residents are enjoying clean drinking water from Hemlock and Canadice Lakes; sustainably grown food from local farms; and outdoor recreational opportunities in the City of Rochester, Lake Ontario and the Finger Lakes," said Jim Howe, Executive Director of the Central & Western NY Chapter of The Nature Conservancy.

"Kodak is delighted to see the Conservation Partnership Program and the Environmental Protection Fund supporting the creation of a new rails-to-trails project along the Genesee River," Charles Ruffing, Director, Health, Safety and Environment, Eastman Kodak Company. "We were early supporters of this effort, and we thank Governor Cuomo and Commissioner Martens for their leadership, and also the Genesee Land Trust, City of Rochester, The Nature Conservancy and the Land Trust Alliance for their hard work in making this happen."

"Thanks to the Environmental Protection Fund and the Conservation Partnership Program, the Genesee Land Trust is working in the local neighborhood, creating a new corner park and the El Camino trail," said Miguel A. Melendez Jr., Project HOPE Coordinator, Ibero-American Development Corporation (IADC). "This investment has helped Project HOPE and neighborhood residents take back public spaces and enhance our opportunities for healthy living."

###

About the Land Trust Alliance

The Land Trust Alliance is the national leader of America's land trust movement, serving 1,700 non-profit land trusts nationwide, including 90 organizations in New York. The Alliance works to accelerate the pace, increase the quality, and ensure the permanence of land conservation in New York and across the country.

The Alliance administers the Conservation Partnership Program in coordination with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation.

For information about the Land Trust Alliance and the Conservation Partnership Program, please visit www.landtrustalliance.org or contact Ethan Winter in the Alliance's Northeast office at (518) 587-0774 (ext. 207) or at ewinter@lta.org.