CONSERVATION TAX INCENTIVE COALITION

November 10, 2010

RE: Enhanced Conservation Easement Incentive Essential to Any Year-End Tax Package

Dear Member of Congress:

On behalf of the undersigned conservation, agriculture, and sporting organizations, we urge you support including a key conservation provision in any year-end tax legislation.

First passed in 2006, the enhanced tax incentive for conservation easement donations helped America's land trusts boost donations of conservation easements by a third, to more than a million acres a year. It has even greater potential – but that potential can only be realized by making the incentive a permanent part of the tax law.

Landowners can retire the development rights on their land by donating a conservation easement – keeping farm, ranch and forest lands in productive use, protecting important fish and wildlife habitat, and conserving our scenic and historic heritage across America. Under previous law, landowners with modest incomes received little or no tax benefit from donating what may be their family's most valuable asset. By allowing such donors to deduct a larger portion of their income over a longer period of time, this incentive enables thousands of landowners to afford conservation.

This incentive lapsed in 2010, leading to the loss of hundreds of potential donations of development rights on lands with important natural, agricultural and historic values. An on-again, off-again incentive makes it very difficult to educate potential donors, and donating a conservation easement is a lengthy and expensive process that many landowners will not begin without knowing this incentive will be in place at the end.

Bills to make the incentive permanent, S. 812 and H.R. 1831, have 268 House and 41 Senate co-sponsors, including majorities of both parties and all 50 states. We urge you to make accomplishing this goal a priority for the lame duck.

For more detailed information, please contact Russell Shay of the Land Trust Alliance at 202-638-4725 x305 or rshay@lta.org.

Sincerely,

Darin Schroeder, VP of Conservation Advocacy
American Bird Conservancy

Tim Richardson, Director, Government Affairs
American Land Conservancy

Jon Scholl, President
American Farmland Trust

Don Treadway, Executive Vice President
American Quarter Horse Association

Gus Rassam, Executive Director
American Fisheries Society

Gordon Robertson, Vice President
American Sportfishing Association

Rita Neznek, Vice President, Public Affairs
American Forest Foundation

Jay McAninch, President/CEO
Archery Trade Association

Conservation Tax Incentive Coalition, c/o Land Trust Alliance, 1660 L Street NW, Suite 1100, Washington, DC 20036-5635

Gary Taylor, Legislative Director
Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies

Jim Martin, Conservation Director
Berkley Conservation Institute

Steve Mealey, Conservation Policy Committee Co-Chairman
Boone & Crockett Club

Jay McAninch, President/CEO
Bowhunting Preservation Alliance

Gregory C. Avioli, President and CEO
Breeders' Cup Limited

John Aguirre, President
California Association of Winegrape Growers

Len Vallender, Chair
Campfire Club of America

Jimmy Bullock, Treasurer and Life Member, CADF Board of Directors
Catch-A-Dream Foundation

Jim Lighthizer, President
Civil War Preservation Trust

Gary Kania, Vice President of Policy
Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation

John J. Jackson, III, President
Conservation Force

Rodger Schlickeisen, President & CEO
Defenders of Wildlife

Joel Brice, Director of Conservation Programs
Delta Waterfowl Foundation

Barton C. James, Director of Public Policy
Ducks Unlimited

Deb Balliet , CEO
Equine Land Conservation Resource

Eric Holst, Managing Director, Center for Conservation Incentives
Environmental Defense Fund

Scott Kovarovics, Conservation Director
Izaak Walton League of America

Rand Wentworth, President
Land Trust Alliance

Dennis Foster, Executive Director
Masters of Foxhounds Association

Rock Ringling, Managing Director
Montana Land Reliance

Karl Anderson, Director of Legislative Affairs
National Association of Conservation Districts

Brian Moore, Legislative Director
National Audubon Society

Kent Bacus, Manager, Legislative Affairs
National Cattlemen's Beef Association

Nancy Schamu, Executive Director
National Conference of State Historic Preservation Officers

Lawrence G. Keane, Senior Vice President, Assistant Secretary & General Counsel
National Shooting Sports Foundation

Jim Curran, Conservation Director
National Trappers Association

Patrick J. Lally, Director, Congressional Affairs
National Trust for Historic Preservation

James Earl Kennamer, Chief Conservation Officer
National Wild Turkey Federation

Jim Lyon, Sr. VP for Conservation Policy
National Wildlife Federation

Keith A. Argow, President
National Woodland Owners Association

Ralph Rogers, Executive Director
North American Grouse Partnership

Joe Martens, President
Open Space Institute

Eric Nuse, Executive Director
Orion-the Hunters' Institute

Garret Johnson, Director of Federal Affairs
Pacific Forest Trust

Darrell E. Wood, Board President
Partnership of Rangeland Trusts

Dave Nomsen, VP of Government Affairs
Pheasants Forever and Quail Forever

Chris Miller, President
Piedmont Environmental Council

Mike Schlegel, Conservation Committee Chair
Pope & Young Club

Hedrick Belin, President
Potomac Conservancy

Henri Bisson, President
Public Lands Foundation

David Howell, Director, Ag/Wildlife Services
Quail Unlimited

Kip Adams, Director of Education & Outreach, Northern Region
Quality Deer Management Association

Blake Henning, VP of Lands & Conservation
Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation

Dan Dessecker, Director of Conservation Policy
Ruffed Grouse Society

Dr. Larry Rudolph, SCI President
Safari Club International

Brent M. Haglund, President
Sand County Foundation

Mary Tracy, President
Scenic America

Dan Sakura, VP for Government Relations
The Conservation Fund

Mark Tercek, President & CEO
The Nature Conservancy

Kathy DeCoster, Vice President and Director of Federal Affairs
The Trust for Public Land

Gary J. Wolfe, Executive Director
The Vital Ground Foundation

Laura M. Bies, Director of Government Affairs
The Wildlife Society

Thomas M. Franklin, Director of Policy and Government Relations
Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership

Steve Moyer, Vice President, Government Affairs
Trout Unlimited

Tom Tuchmann, President
U.S. Forest Capital

John Long, Chief Executive Officer
United States Equestrian Federation

Peter J. Gerl, Executive Director
Whitetails Unlimited

Douglas H. Grann, President & CEO
Wildlife Forever

Steven A. Williams, President
Wildlife Management Institute

John Aguirre, Executive Director
Winegrape Growers of America