



CONSERVATION TAX INCENTIVE COALITION

March 14, 2011

RE: Please Co-sponsor the Conservation Easement Incentive Act

Dear Member of Congress:

On behalf of the undersigned conservation, agriculture, and sporting organizations, we urge you to become an original co-sponsor of the Conservation Easement Incentive Act, to be introduced by Congressmen Jim Gerlach (R-PA) and Mike Thompson (D-CA).

First passed in 2006, and renewed in December's tax package, the enhanced tax deduction for conservation easement donations has helped America's land trusts boost such donations 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.

The lapse of this incentive for most of 2010 led to the loss of hundreds of potential donations of development rights on lands with important natural, agricultural and historic values – and it's set to expire again at the end of 2011. 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.

Identical legislation in the 111th Congress (H.R. 1831/S. 812) had 274 House and 41 Senate co-sponsors from all 50 states. Presidents Bush and Obama have both sought to extend the incentive in their budget requests.

We encourage you to become an original cosponsor of the Conservation Easement Incentive Act by contacting Lori Prater in Congressman Jim Gerlach's Office (5-4315) or Carla McNeill in Congressman Mike Thompson's Office (5-3311). 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

Tom Martin, President & CEO
American Forest Foundation

Jon Scholl, President
American Farmland Trust

Kerry O'Toole, President
American Land Conservancy

Gus Rassam, Executive Director
American Fisheries Society

Don Treadway, Executive Vice President
American Quarter Horse Association

Gary Taylor, Legislative Director
Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies

Jay McAninch, President/CEO
Archery Trade Association

Jim Martin, Conservation Director
Berkley Conservation Institute

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

Jay McAninch, President/CEO
Bowhunting Preservation Alliance

John Aguirre, President
California Association of Winegrape Growers

Len Vallender
Chair, Committee of Forest & Wildlife
Campfire Club of America

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

Jim Lighthizer, President
Civil War Trust

Gary Kania, Vice-President
Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation

John J. Jackson, III, President
Conservation Force

Mary Beth Beetham, Director of Legislative
Affairs
Defenders of Wildlife

Barton C. James, Director of Public Policy
Ducks Unlimited

Eric Holst, CCI Managing Director
Environmental Defense Fund

Deb Balliet, CEO
Equine Land Conservation Resource

Scott Kovarovics, Conservation Director
Izaak Walton League of America

Rand Wentworth, President
Land Trust Alliance

Jean Nelson, President and Executive Director
The Land Trust for Tennessee

Dennis Foster, Executive Director
Masters of Foxhounds Association

Rock Ringling, Jay Erickson & Doug Mitchell
Managing Directors
Montana Land Reliance

Miles Moretti, President/CEO
Mule Deer Foundation

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

Christopher Elliman, CEO
Open Space Institute

Laurie Wayburn, President
Pacific Forest Trust

Darrell E. Wood, Board President
Partnership of Rangeland Trusts (PORT)

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

Mary Tracy, President
Scenic America

Dan Sakura, VP for Government Relations
The Conservation Fund

Robert L. Bendick, Jr.
Director, U.S. Government Relations
The Nature Conservancy

Will Rogers, President
The Trust for Public Land.

Gary J. Wolfe, Executive Director
The Vital Ground Foundation

Tom Ryder, President
The Wildlife Society

Whit Fosburgh, President and CEO
Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership

Steve Moyer, Vice President, Government
Affairs
Trout Unlimited

John Long, Chief Executive Officer
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Tom Tuchmann, President
U.S. Forest Capital

Douglas H. Grann, President & CEO
Wildlife Forever

Steven A. Williams, President
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John Aguirre, Executive Director
Winegrape Growers of America