



*Encouraging excellence in the land trust community through collaboration, education and outreach*

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Dear Member of the Texas Congressional Delegation:

The Texas Land Trust Council represents a community of more than 40 nonprofit conservation organizations, working to protect farms and ranches, clean water, wildlife habitat, parks and open space throughout the state of Texas. The work of these land trusts over the past five years has been greatly augmented by an enhanced tax incentive for conservation easement donations, but unless Congress acts, this incentive will expire at the end of 2011. We urge you to make this important conservation tool a permanent part of the tax code by cosponsoring H.R. 1964.

By donating a conservation easement to a land trust in their community, Texas landowners can retire the development rights on their land, protecting special places and important natural resources for future generations. The tax benefits they receive for these generous donations are critical to our ability to conserve land, but under previous law, landowners with modest incomes received little or no tax benefit.

It often takes years from the initial conversations with a landowner before a conservation easement is executed. Donating development rights to land – often a farm or ranch family's most valuable asset – requires careful planning and consideration. Landowners considering a perpetual commitment for their land should not be pressured by an artificial deadline, and many will never begin the process without the reassurance of a permanent incentive.

Thanks in large part to this incentive, the 2010 National Land Trust Census shows that Texas land trusts have permanently protected 133,773 acres since 2006, a 55 percent increase over the previous total.

We need your support to keep this critical conservation incentive from disappearing on December 31st! Please join 264 of your colleagues as a co-sponsor of the Conservation Easement Incentive Act, H.R. 1964, by contacting Lori Prater in Congressman Jim Gerlach's Office (202-225-4315) or Carla McGarvey in Congressman Mike Thompson's Office (202-225-3311).

The incentives offered under existing law and provided in H.R. 1964 are a critical factor for continued success in conserving Texas open space for future generations of Texans. We hope we can count on your support for making the easement incentive permanent.

Sincerely,

Lori Olson  
Executive Director