



**Department of
Environmental
Conservation**

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DEC ANNOUNCES \$1.8 MILLION IN LAND TRUST GRANTS TO SAFEGUARD WATER QUALITY, BOOST TOURISM, FARMLAND PROTECTION AND PUBLIC ACCESS

Conservation Partnership Grants Awarded to 58 Land Trusts across New York State

Grants to Land Trusts Leverage Additional \$1.5 Million in Community Contributions and Private Support

New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) Commissioner Basil Seggos today announced \$1.8 million in Conservation Partnership Program grants for 58 nonprofit land trusts across the state. The grants, funded through New York's Environmental Protection Fund (EPF), will leverage an additional \$1.5 million in private and local funding to support projects that will protect farmland, wildlife habitat, and water quality, enhance public access for outdoor recreation, and conserve priority open space areas critical for community health, tourism and regional economic development.

"Through partnerships with local land trusts, the Environmental Protection Fund provides critical support for open space programs across the state," **said Commissioner Seggos**. "These grants help local land trusts support our work to protect New York's peerless waters, lands, and habitats and preserve our state's natural resources, while leveraging even more resources communities can put to good use protecting these irreplaceable assets."

In recognition of Earth Week, a weeklong celebration of New York's commitment and accomplishments to protect our environment, DEC and the Land Trust Alliance unveiled the grantees at an event at Winter Hill in Garrison in Putnam County.

The Land Trust Alliance administers the Conservation Partnership Program in coordination with DEC. The 14th round of Conservation Partnership Program grants will help local land trusts sustain and expand community and landowner outreach initiatives and develop an array of land conservation, stewardship, and education programs.

The grants will further regional economic development goals by strengthening partnerships with local and state governments and advancing locally supported efforts to protect working farms, enhance public access and recreation opportunities, and conserve private lands prioritized in New York State's Open Space Conservation Plan and state wildlife action plan. Land trusts will also apply grant funds to prepare for national accreditation, supporting New York land trust commitments to rigorous national standards for nonprofit governance and organizational excellence.

"Coming at a time when every effort makes a difference, this initiative enables land trusts, local communities and private landowners to better protect New York's most important water resources, farmlands, wildlife habitats and urban green spaces," said Andrew Bowman, president of the Land Trust Alliance. "New York's clear commitment to its Environmental

Protection Fund sets a standard that can inspire other states to protect water quality, promote healthy communities and address our changing climate. These are smart investments in our collective future. On behalf of the Land Trust Alliance and our supporters, we thank Governor Cuomo, Commissioner Seggos and the New York State Legislature for supporting these efforts.”

“The Conservation Partnership Program has demonstrated impressive statewide success by supporting land trusts in our local communities,” said Andy Zepp, chair of the Land Trust Alliance’s New York Advisory Board and executive director for Finger Lakes Land Trust. “Together with state funding for land conservation and farmland protection, this program helps to protect and care for New York’s precious water resources, natural heritage and working lands, and to create trails, preserves and community gardens. It directly benefits our economy, from tourism and outdoor recreation to farming and forestry. The program leverages additional resources to advance New York’s Open Space Conservation Plan, enhancing services and support for local municipalities, and enabling private landowners and land trusts to achieve their stewardship goals,” he added.

Grant awards ranged from \$4,700 to \$75,000. Among the 58 different land trusts awarded grants were several local organizations based in the Mid-Hudson Valley Region. In all, 18 grants totaling \$444,700 were awarded to organizations in the Mid-Hudson Valley region.

Michelle Smith, Executive Director of Hudson Highlands Land Trust, said, “We are delighted to be hosting this year’s Conservation Partnership Program awards announcement at our offices at Winter Hill. This program has been critical to the development of our land trust, helping us build capacity and expand our impact. A perfect example is the 350-acre Granite Mountain project for which we are being awarded a Transaction Grant this year. This funding will enable Hudson Highlands Land Trust to create public access and permanently protect lands that provide clean drinking water to the City of Peekskill and Town of Cortlandt.”

The EPF-funded grants also support green infrastructure, urban trails and community garden programs administered by Grassroots Gardens of Western New York, Green Guerrillas and Brooklyn-Queens Land Trust in New York City, and Capital Roots (formerly Capital District Community Gardens) in Albany/Troy.

Additionally, the grants will assist organizations that are committing to the accreditation process over the next three years, contributing to the Alliance’s goal of reaching 40 nationally accredited land trusts in New York by 2020. This year’s grantees include 29 accredited land trusts: Agricultural Stewardship Association, Champlain Area Trails, Columbia Land Conservancy, Delaware Highlands Conservancy, Dutchess Land Conservancy, Finger Lakes Land Trust, Genesee Land Trust, Genesee Valley Conservancy, Hudson Highlands Land Trust and Indian River Lakes Conservancy. Lake George Land Conservancy, Mianus River Gorge, Mohawk Hudson Land Conservancy, Mohonk Preserve, North Shore Land Alliance, Open Space Institute, Orange County Land Trust, Otsego Land Trust, Rensselaer Land Trust, Rondout-Esopus Land Conservancy, Saratoga P.L.A.N., Scenic Hudson, The Nature Conservancy, Thousand Islands Land Trust, Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust, Wallkill Valley Land Trust, Westchester Land Trust, Western New York Land Conservancy, and Winnakee Land Trust.

For a summary of this round of grant awards and awardee directory, please click [here](#).

The \$1.8 million was awarded by region as follows:

- Western New York /Finger Lakes/Southern Tier: 13 awards totaling \$365,900
- Central New York/Mohawk Valley: 6 awards totaling \$145,440
- North Country: 12 awards totaling \$219,950
- Capital District: 14 awards totaling \$448,600

- Mid-Hudson: 18 awards totaling \$444,700
- New York City: 4 awards totaling \$117,300
- Long Island: 2 awards totaling \$68,000

Since the program's inception in 2002, the Conservation Partnership Program has awarded over 750 grants totaling \$14.9 million in EPF funds to 87 different land trust organizations across the state. The state's investment has leveraged over \$17 million in additional funding from local communities and private donors.

The 2017-18 State Budget includes \$300 million for the EPF, sustaining the increase from last year that elevated EPF funding to the highest level ever. The funding will support state land stewardship, agriculture programs, invasive species prevention and eradication, water quality improvement, municipal recycling and an aggressive environmental justice agenda. Further, this funding level will establish new programs to help communities adapt to climate change through resiliency planning and capital projects, and to reduce greenhouse gas emissions outside of the power sector. Additional resources to support land acquisition to safeguard water quality were included in the landmark \$2.5 billion Clean Water Infrastructure Act in the 2017-18 Budget, as well.

Recent research underscores how New York's investment in land conservation and open space boosts property values, supports local businesses, saves taxpayer dollars and protects public health. A study by the Trust for Public Land found that every dollar of investment from New York's Environmental Protection Fund generates \$7 in total economic benefits from tourism, reduced government costs and public health.

The EPF grants announced today will support local efforts that contribute substantially to the Mid-Hudson Valley region's agricultural sector and tourism economy by helping to preserve and expand public access to trails and other popular recreation areas. According to the Outdoor Industry Association, outdoor recreation in New York directly supports 305,000 jobs across the state, generating \$15 billion in wages and tax revenue.

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