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**DEC AND LAND TRUST ALLIANCE ANNOUNCE \$2.3 MILLION LAND TRUST GRANTS TO SAFEGUARD WATER QUALITY, PROTECT FARMS, AND BOOST TOURISM, CLIMATE RESILIENCE, AND PUBLIC ACCESS**

***Conservation Partnership Grants Awarded to 51 Land Trusts across New York Grants Leverage \$2.3 Million in Community Contributions and Additional Private Support***

The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) and the Land Trust Alliance today announced approximately \$2.3 million in Conservation Partnership Program grants for 51 nonprofit land trusts across the state. Following Earth Week, a weeklong celebration of New York's commitment to protecting the environment, the grantees were announced at a statewide land trust gathering in Albany.

"Land conservation is an essential tool that provides immeasurable environmental and economic benefits for New Yorkers and visitors alike," said **DEC Commissioner Basil Seggos**. "Thanks to Governor Cuomo's leadership, financial support from the Environmental Protection Fund, and the hard work of New York's land trusts, the Conservation Partnership Program continues to improve our quality of life while protecting valuable natural resources and state lands."

Seventy grants funded through New York's Environmental Protection Fund (EPF) will leverage an additional \$2.3 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.

"This partnership enables land trusts and local communities to tap the enormous potential of the land to address societal challenges and positions New York as a national leader in demonstrating the relevance of land conservation to all Americans," said **Andrew Bowman, president of the Land Trust Alliance**. "New York's commitment to the Environmental Protection Fund sets a standard that can inspire other states to protect water quality, promote healthy communities and address the growing risks of climate change. These are smart investments in our collective future. On behalf of the Land Trust Alliance and New York's land trust community, we thank Governor Andrew Cuomo, Commissioner Basil Seggos and the New York State Legislature for investing in this effort."

In addition, these investments will further land conservation and proactive stewardship practices to enable protected lands to sequester and store carbon. Recent research underscores the role that natural climate solutions will have in addressing the risks posed by climate change.

The Land Trust Alliance administers the Conservation Partnership Program in coordination with DEC. The 15th 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 and renewal of accreditation, supporting New York land trust commitments to rigorous national standards for nonprofit governance and organizational excellence.

Grant awards ranged from \$2,900 to \$100,000. Among the 51 land trusts awarded grants were several local organizations based in the Capital Region. In all, 24 grants totaling approximately \$651,000 were awarded to organizations in the Capital Region. 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 in Albany/Troy.

**For a detailed summary of this round of grant awards and awardees, visit the DEC website at <http://www.dec.ny.gov/lands/48901.html>.**

**The \$2.3 million was awarded by region:**

Capital District: 24 awards totaling \$651,242

Central New York/Mohawk Valley: five awards totaling \$146,100

Long Island: four awards totaling \$151,000

Mid-Hudson: 17 awards totaling \$481,600

New York City: three awards totaling \$105,500

North Country: eight awards totaling \$454,000

Western New York /Finger Lakes/Southern Tier: nine awards totaling \$305,200

**This year's grantees include 30 accredited land trusts:** Agricultural Stewardship Association, Champlain Area Trails, Columbia Land Conservancy, Dutchess Land Conservancy, Finger Lakes Land Trust, Genesee Land Trust, Genesee Valley Conservancy, Greene Land Trust, Hudson Highlands Land Trust, Huyck Preserve and Biological Research Station, Indian River Lakes Conservancy, Lake Champlain Land Trust, Lake George Land Conservancy, Mianus River Gorge, Mohawk Hudson Land Conservancy, Mohonk Preserve, North Shore Land Alliance, Orange County Land Trust, Otsego Land Trust, Rensselaer Land Trust, Rensselaer Plateau Alliance, Saratoga P.L.A.N. The Nature Conservancy, Thousand Islands Land Trust, Trust for Public Land, Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust, Wallkill Valley Land Trust, Westchester Land Trust, Western New York Land Conservancy, and Woodstock Land Conservancy.

Since the program's inception in 2002, the Conservation Partnership Program has awarded more than 820 grants totaling \$17.2 million in EPF funds to over 80 different land trust

organizations across the state. The state's investment has leveraged over \$19 million in additional funding from local communities and private donors.

The 2018-19 State Budget includes \$300 million for the EPF, sustaining record level support for environmental funding. The EPF supports state land stewardship, agriculture programs, invasive species prevention and eradication, water quality improvement, municipal recycling and an aggressive environmental justice agenda. This sustained funding 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.

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 grants announced today will support local efforts that contribute substantially to the state'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 313,000 jobs across the state, generating \$17.6 billion in wages and tax revenue.

**Senator Tom O'Mara, Chair of the Senate Environmental Conservation Committee,** said, "Environmental Protection Fund investments to assist and enhance the critical work of land trusts across New York State make a critical difference for local conservation, local communities, and local economies."

**Assemblyman Steve Englebright, Chair of the Assembly Environmental Conservation Committee,** said, "Land preservation is one of the most effective ways to protect the environment. The Conservation Partnership Program grants are essential to help land trusts preserve land in perpetuity and ensure that New Yorkers have access to open space, clean drinking water, and local agricultural products."

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