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The Western New York Land Conservancy Awarded a \$50,000 Transaction grant from NYS Environmental Protection Fund (EPF)

The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) and the Land Trust Alliance last week announced approximately \$2.2 million in Conservation Partnership Program grants for 50 nonprofit land trusts across the state. A total of \$268,393 was awarded to land trusts in the Western New York/Finger Lakes/Southern Tier regions, including a \$50,000 Transaction Grant to the Land Conservancy.

The transaction grant was awarded to support the purchase of Mossy Point, a 222-acre headwater forest located in Wales. With this acquisition, Mossy Point now forms part of a 1,100-acre protected area that includes the Kenneglenn Scenic and Nature Preserve and Hunters Creek County Park. Next year, the Land Conservancy will begin installing walking trails.

"When the Mossy Point Nature Preserve opens, it will provide yet another opportunity for Western New Yorkers to explore the great outdoors and all that we have to offer," **said Lieutenant Governor Kathy Hochul.** "By saving the property, we're also helping to ensure clean water for the thousands of families living downstream. This is part of our overall efforts to ensure health and safety, enhance quality of life, and strengthen the local economy in Western New York and across New York State."

"Saving Mossy Point was a tremendous community-wide effort," said **State Senator Patrick Gallivan.** "I applaud the leadership of the Land Conservancy and its mission to help protect vulnerable places like Mossy Point for the benefit of future generations."

A total of 69 grants funded across the state through New York's Environmental Protection Fund will leverage an additional \$2.6 million in private and local funding to support projects that protect water quality and farmland, boost public access for outdoor recreation, and conserve open space to benefit community health, tourism, and economic development. The Land Trust Alliance administers the Conservation Partnership Program in coordination with DEC.

"Over the last year, New Yorkers young and old have been exploring the outdoors in record numbers," said **DEC Commissioner Seggos.** "Land trusts across the state help to preserve and

manage some of the special, natural places that the public has come to love. The grants announced this week support forest management, conservation agriculture, coastal and wetlands restoration, and other activities that are essential to help address climate change and preserve the ecosystems we depend on. We commend the Land Trust Alliance for administering this important program."

"At a time when we increasingly value open spaces and need our economy to rebound, this funding will leverage the strength of New York's land trust community to protect the outdoor places people depend on," said **Andrew Bowman, the Land Trust Alliance's president and CEO**. "On behalf of the Land Trust Alliance, I applaud Gov. Andrew Cuomo, Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins, Assembly Speaker Carl Heastie, Sen. Todd Kaminsky and Assemblyman Steve Englebright for their work toward ensuring the continued availability of clean water, healthy food, outdoor recreation, and economic opportunity."

The Land Trust Alliance administers the Conservation Partnership Program in coordination with DEC. 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.

Since the Conservation Partnership Program's inception in 2002, and including this year's grants, the program has awarded 997 grants totaling \$21.7 million to 91 land trusts. Cumulatively, the State's investment has leveraged \$23.8 million in additional funding from local and private sources. In the 2020-21 State Budget, Governor Cuomo sustained the record high EPF at \$300 million for the fifth year in a row, providing funding for open space conservation, parkland stewardship, and other environmental protection projects.

Nancy Smith, Executive Director of the Western New York Land Conservancy, said, "We are thrilled to be awarded with this significant investment of Environmental Protection Funds. These funds are crucial to protecting Western New York's most vulnerable places. During the pandemic this year, thousands of people have reconnected with nature—demonstrating just how vital it is to our spiritual, emotional, and physical wellbeing. We are incredibly thankful for the governor's ongoing commitment to the EPF."

The Western New York Land Conservancy is a regional, not-for-profit land trust that permanently protects land with significant conservation value in Western New York for future generations. The Land Conservancy envisions a future in which open spaces, working lands, wildlife habitat, and scenic beauty are cherished and protected as part of the landscape and character of Western New York. The Land Conservancy is accredited by the Land Trust Accreditation Commission and is one of 1000+ land trusts nationwide, including 90 in New York State. Land trusts have protected 56 million acres of land. For more information on upcoming events, volunteer opportunities, or the mission of the Western New York Land Conservancy, please call (716) 687-1225 or visit www.wnylc.org.

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