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Westchester Land Trust Receives Capacity-Increasing Grants
From the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation and the Jerome Levy Foundation;
Seeks Full-Time Preserve Manager and Educator

Bedford Hills, NY—The Land Trust Alliance (LTA) and the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) have awarded $1.8 million in Conservation Partnership Program (CPP) grants to 55 land trusts across the State, including Westchester Land Trust (WLT). The 2016 grantees were announced on Tuesday, April 19th—just in time for Earth Day. The grant to WLT, one of five Westchester-based awardees, will enable it to hire a full-time Preserve Manager/Educator. As WLT looks to strengthen community interest in the care of conserved properties, this new position will add capacity for the care and enhancement of the 28-year old organization’s 29 nature preserves, as well as capacity for education and outreach in Westchester’s diverse communities.

"DEC’s work with land trusts is essential in our efforts to conserve and protect New York’s valuable natural resources and this program is a clear example of the partnerships that have made a difference in preserving open space,” said Basil Seggos, Acting DEC Commissioner.” Governor Cuomo’s historic $300 million budget for the Environmental Protection Fund will help support the work of the state’s Land Trusts to be effective stewards of important habitats in the state for generations to come.”

Funded through the Environmental Protection Fund (EPF), CPP grants will leverage an additional $2.25 million in private and local funding to support projects that protect farmland, wildlife habitat and water quality, enhance public access for outdoor recreational opportunities, and conserve priority open space areas important for community health, tourism and regional economic development. The Land Trust Alliance administers the CPP in coordination with DEC. The NYS Budget approved for 2016-17 includes appropriations of $300 million for the EPF, the highest level of funding in the program’s history and an increase of $123 million from FY 2015-16.

"This year’s fully funded Environmental Protection Fund makes great environmental and economic sense. The Governor understands that Land Trusts are indispensable partners in our efforts to preserve our natural heritage lands, working landscapes, urban green spaces, wildlife habitats, recreational spaces and lands that provide priceless ecological services to our state,” said WLT President, Lori J. Ensinger.

Tate Bushell, WLT’s Director of Stewardship, said, “We are looking forward to adding a new member to our team which will amplify WLT’s ability to work more closely with communities across our service area. The announcement of the CPP awards is a great way to celebrate Earth Week!”

Westchester Land Trust is now accepting applications for the new Preserve Manager/ Educator position. To apply please send cover letter and resume to info@westchesterlandtrust.org by Friday, May 20th. A complete job description can be found on WLT’s website.
Additionally, WLT has received a second year of funding from the Jerome Levy Foundation to continue the strategic removal of invasive species in tandem with the restoration of native plants at the 383-acre Leon Levy Preserve, which is owned by the Town of Lewisboro. As the conservation easement holder, WLT works closely with the Town and the Foundation as well as several community partners—including the Lewisboro Land Trust—to both increase access and model sound scalable stewardship. These efforts are part of a proposed five-year plan that will ultimately result in the restoration of dozens of acres of the Preserve’s habitat.

“Westchester Land Trust is focusing on areas of the Preserve that have the most ecological and educational impact,” said Shelby White, Trustee of the Jerome Levy Foundation. “The more we educate the public as to the importance of restoring our forests and meadows, the more commitment we hope to inspire for their ongoing care.”

About Westchester Land Trust

Based in Bedford Hills, the Westchester Land Trust works with public and private partners to preserve land in perpetuity and to enhance the natural resources in Westchester and eastern Putnam counties—a densely populated region under persistent threat from the pressures of development. Through the use of conservation easements and outright acquisition, WLT’s efforts benefit the long-term health of these communities by safeguarding air quality, food supply and community character, as well as critical watershed areas. Since its founding in 1988, WLT has preserved almost 8,000 acres of open space including more than 700 acres of preserves owned by the organization which are free and open to the public year round. For more information about WLT, please visit westchesterlandtrust.org and connect with us on Facebook (http://www.facebook.com/WLandTrust) and Instagram (@WestchesterLandTrust).