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THE CONNECTICUT FARMLAND TRUST SEEKS NATIONAL ACCREDITATION

Hartford, Connecticut November 9, 2011 – The Land Trust Accreditation Commission is now accepting public comment on the Connecticut Farmland Trust’s (CFT) application for Accreditation. With an office in Hartford, CFT is Connecticut’s only statewide land trust and the only land trust dedicated to the protection of agricultural lands.

“Achieving Accreditation will show our partners and potential supporters that we meet national standards for protecting land and will make us one of only five Accredited land trusts in the state – and the only one with a statewide focus,” says Jim Gooch, Executive Director of the Connecticut Farmland Trust. “CFT is a very efficient and effective organization. For every dollar raised, we leverage 34 dollars in conservation and our administrative costs are only 13% of our budget. But having the wherewithal to steward this land and keep our promises forever means more than being good right now - it requires a strong foundation built on best practices.”

Land trusts are non-profit institutions with specific missions – just like a museum, a hospital or a university. Over the years, each of those groups has developed independent, nationally-recognized standards. Meeting those standards helps to encourage public trust and investor confidence. Unlike those kinds of organizations, however, the modern land trust is a young concept; most are less than forty years old. The Connecticut Farmland Trust is only ten.

“CFT’s task is especially challenging,” notes Gooch. “We protect the land to ensure it will always be used for farming. People need to be able to do ‘stuff’ – till, plant, fertilize, harvest, sometimes even build – while at the same time we need to make sure the best soil is always protected. And not just for today’s farmer or tomorrow’s, but for the sake of the food we’ll need 100 years from now.”

The Commission, an independent body created by the Land Trust Alliance, evaluates conservation non-profits according to a list of 12 Standards and 88 Practices representing a consensus on what it takes to operate a professional, ethical and credible land trust. These include financial practices, minimum standards for easement drafting and stewardship, and policies governing conflicts of interest and avoidance of private benefit.

There are over 120 land trusts in Connecticut; only four of them – all with a local focus – have attained accreditation. The Commission is accepting public input until from now until January 2, 2012 on how CFT complies with its national quality standards, which can be seen at www.LandTrustAccreditation.org/getting-accredited/indicator-practices. To learn more about the accreditation program or to submit a comment, you can contact the Land Trust Accreditation Commission, Attn: Public Comments: (fax) 518-587-3183; (mail) 113 Spring Street, Ste. 204, Saratoga Springs, NY 12866.

“We expect a decision on our application by late spring,” said Nick Moore, CFT’s Board President. “Right now our biggest challenge is to increase the amount of money we have on hand for stewardship and easement defense to meet LTA’s recommendations within the next five years. Other than that, the structure and policies of CFT are solid, down-the-line. We’re very optimistic.”

About the Connecticut Farmland Trust

Founded in 2002, The Connecticut Farmland Trust (CFT) is the only private statewide conservation organization that protects Connecticut’s working lands. The non-profit organization protects farmland through the acquisition of farm property and easements. To date CFT holds easements on 28 properties across the state, protecting nearly 1,800 acres. The group works with farmers, landowners, land trusts, town officials and state agencies to protect agricultural land and has become the state’s leading resource on farmland conservation.

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