

## **Legacy Land Conservancy Highlights Regional Benefits in Major New Conservation Legislation**

**Ann Arbor, MI** (Dec. 31, 2015) – Legacy Land Conservancy, Michigan’s first local land trust, praised the recent bipartisan congressional vote that makes permanent a federal tax incentive supporting land conservation.

Farmers, ranchers and the public will directly benefit from the incentive, which encourages landowners to place a conservation easement on their land to protect important natural, scenic and historic resources. Legacy was among the 1,100 land trusts to support the incentive through a collaborative, multi-year campaign.

“Making these tax incentives permanent is not only a huge win for encouraging much needed permanent land conservation in our rapidly growing region, it’s a huge win for individuals and families struggling to balance very real financial constraints with their desire to protect their land for future generations,” said Susan Lackey, Executive Director for Legacy Land Conservancy. Lackey went on to say that “this important legislation opens the door to land owners who might not previously have been able to consider signing a conservation easement.”

Legacy, a member of the Land Trust Alliance, the national land conservation organization that led the campaign for permanence, has led successful campaigns to secure funding for the conservation of more than 6,000 acres of lands in Washtenaw and Jackson Counties.

“The importance of this vote—and this incentive—cannot be overstated,” said Rand Wentworth, the Alliance’s president. “This is the single greatest legislative action in decades to support land conservation. It states, unequivocally, that we as a nation treasure our lands and must conserve their many benefits for all future generations.”

In a strong bipartisan action, the House voted 318-109 and the Senate voted 65-33 to pass the bills that included the tax incentive.

First enacted as a temporary provision in 2006, the incentive is directly responsible for conserving more than 2 million acres of America’s natural outdoor heritage. The incentive grants certain tax benefits to landowners who sign a conservation easement. Such private, voluntary agreements with local land trusts permanently limit uses of the land in order to protect its conservation values. Lands placed into conservation easements can continue to be farmed, hunted or used for other specified purposes. The lands also remain on county tax rolls, strengthening local economies.



Once signed into law, the incentive will be applied retroactively to Jan. 1, 2015. An earlier version of the incentive expired Dec. 31, 2014.

The incentive advanced through Congress as part of the America Gives More Act, a package of tax incentives to encourage charitable giving. It passed the House earlier this year, 279-137. A standalone version of the incentive, the Conservation Easement Incentive Act, earned 52 Senate sponsors this year, including 26 Democrats, 24 Republicans and 2 Independents. The agreement announced this week additionally encourages donations to food banks and facilitates charitable deductions from IRAs.

**About Legacy Land Conservancy:**

Founded in 1971 as Michigan's first local land trust, Legacy is a private 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that works with individuals, landowners, organizations, and local government to protect forests, prairies, farms, wetlands, and waters. Legacy has led successful campaigns to secure funding for the conservation of more than 6,000 acres of lands that enhance our community's quality of life by providing safe drinking water, places to play, and vibrant local farms in Washtenaw and Jackson Counties. One of the first accredited land trusts in the nation, Legacy was re-accredited in 2014 by the Land Trust Accreditation Commission. This accreditation is a testament to nearly 45 years of voluntary conservation, supported by our extended community, and adhering to a set of standards designed to help guarantee that Legacy's work will endure forever. Legacy is based in Ann Arbor, Michigan; find more information at [www.legacylandconservancy.org](http://www.legacylandconservancy.org).

**About the Land Trust Alliance**

Founded in 1982, the Land Trust Alliance is a national land conservation organization that works to save the places people love by strengthening land conservation across America. The Alliance represents more than 1,100 member land trusts supported by more than 100,000 volunteers and 5 million members nationwide. The Alliance is based in Washington, D.C. and operates several regional offices. More information about the Alliance is available at [www.landtrustalliance.org](http://www.landtrustalliance.org).

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