

For Immediate Release  
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## **GOOD NEWS FOR HORSE OWNERS**

Equestrians share a special privilege: the permission to ride over magnificent open spaces on private land. They owe a debt of gratitude to the landowners who have conserved their land for future generations. The good news is that the rate of land conservation has tripled in the last five years.

Even though all over the country, equestrians are faced with the impending loss of their open land, and leading horse organizations have identified loss of open land as the greatest threat to their future, and the need to address this problem is urgent, more good news is that partnerships for preservation are growing. According to David O'Connor, president of the U.S. Equestrian Federation, "With the suburban sprawl that is going on around the country, people who ride horses are losing vital resources. Partnerships ... are needed to guarantee the future of equestrian sports and all types of equestrian access."

### **Pace of land conservation triples from 2000 – 2005**

A new report released by the Land Trust Alliance finds that the pace of private land conservation by local and state land trusts more than tripled between successive five-year periods from 2000 to 2005. America's 1,667 state and local land trusts have doubled their conservation acres from 6 million to 11.9 million acres in the past five years – an area twice the size of the state of New Hampshire. The National Land Trust Census quantifies private, voluntary land conservation efforts in America and is the nation's only such tabulation.

"The success of private land conservation boils down to this: When people appreciate the natural qualities of their environment, they are increasingly taking steps in each of their communities to conserve what makes that land unique," said Rand Wentworth, President of the Land Trust Alliance. "With the federal government reporting that we lose about two million acres to development sprawl each year, private, voluntary conservation gives everyday Americans the tools and resources they need to protect their natural heritage."

### **New Federal Conservation Tax Incentive**

Last August, Congress and the President sent a strong message of support to citizens who work to preserve our natural and rural heritage. The President recently signed into law new land conservation tax benefits for landowners, especially family farmers and ranchers. The new regulations, included in pension reform legislation, combine an adjusted tax incentive for land conservation with common sense reforms to ensure the public benefit of conservation donations.

Voluntary conservation agreements, known as conservation easements, are an important tool for land conservation. When landowners donate voluntary conservation agreements to a land conservation organization or land trust, they protect resources important to the public by permanently giving up future development rights, while retaining ownership and management of the land. A conservation easement is a legal agreement between a landowner and a qualified conservation organization or government agency that runs with the land's title and permanently limits a property's uses in order to protect its conservation values.

This new law will help landowners and land trusts protect important lands and traditional land uses across America. The law extends the carry-forward period for tax deductions for voluntary conservation agreements from 5 to 15 years and raises the cap on those deductions from 30 percent of a donor's adjusted gross income to 50 percent - and to 100 percent for qualifying farmers and ranchers. This allows landowners of all income levels to get a much larger benefit for donating very valuable development rights to their land. ***It is important to note that the incentive only applies to easements donated in 2006 and 2007.*** A strong and diverse coalition of hunters, farmers, ranchers, hikers and land trust supporters led by the Land Trust Alliance are hard at work to make the new incentive permanent.

#### **Next Steps:**

“It is so important for horse owners to create the relationship with their local land trust that will result in them having access to land for riding where appropriate,” states Georgiana Hubbard McCabe, President, Equestrian Land Conservation Resource. “ELCR has worked for years to insure that appropriate language is included in the writing of easements. This is something that horse owners must remember when they work to conserve their land.” ELCR offers assistance to individual land owners and local land trusts to make this happen.

*ELCR has been bringing awareness and literacy in land protection techniques to horse people for years. Thus, informed horse owners will take action themselves in their local communities. ELCR is here to help you! Contact: [info@elcr.org](mailto:info@elcr.org) or 815-858-3501, website: [www.elcr.org](http://www.elcr.org).*

*The Land Trust Alliance was formed in 1982 to advance the mission of land trusts. Since its inception, Land Trust Alliance has trained thousands of conservation leaders, won new federal tax incentives for conservation on private lands, and developed standards and practices to professionalize and safeguard land trust work. Land Trust Alliance connects land trusts, so that every land trust can benefit from the collective wisdom and innovations of the entire community. It is based in Washington, D.C. with field offices in most regions of the country. For more information, please visit [www.lta.org](http://www.lta.org).*