

LAND TRUST CONSERVES MORE THAN 8,000 ACRES BY YEAR-END

(Camden)--Coastal Mountains Land Trust has surpassed an exciting benchmark, having now conserved more than 8,000 acres! The completion of two significant land protection projects at the end of 2009 boosted its conserved land total to 8,071 acres of the farms, forests, wildlife habitats, and scenic places of upper Western Penobscot Bay. These conserved properties also feature more than 22 miles of public trails and protect 33 miles of shorefront along the bay, lakes, and rivers of the region. The two new conservation projects--in Belfast and on Megunticook Lake--bracket the Land Trust's service region.

In late December the Land Trust purchased a 94.7-acre farm along the Passagassawakeag River in Belfast, thanks to the cooperation of former owners Jason and Martha Campbell. Ninety-two acres of this picturesque property have now become the "Head of Tide Preserve," so named because it marks the uppermost reach of the river's tidal waters. During 2010 the Land Trust will complete an ecological inventory and management plan that will guide the siting of a trail on the new preserve. The future trail--which will take advantage of the preserve's spectacular river frontage and scenic woods and fields--will increase by more than 50% the Land Trust's Passagassawakeag Greenway trail system. Although there are currently no maintained trails, the preserve is open for exploration. Parking is available off Doak Road at the adjoining Stover Preserve, but is not allowed at the former Campbell house.

In order to fund the purchase of this keystone Greenway preserve, the Land Trust launched Phase Two of the Passagassawakeag Greenway Campaign. Many people have already donated to this effort, as well as the Savage Family Foundation, Davis Conservation Foundation, William Wharton Trust, and Fields Pond Foundation. These gifts and grants were supplemented by bridge financing from Bangor Savings Bank, which enabled the Land Trust to close on the purchase while providing crucial time to raise additional funds necessary for this new preserve.

Because of the excellent potential of the old farm fields and woodlot, the Land Trust is working with Maine Farmland Trust to find a farmer for the property. The hope is to sell the house, barn, and three acres of land, and enter into a long-term lease of the fields and woodlot. This will greatly reduce the farmer's up-front capital costs. If this plan is realized, Belfast could have a source of fresh, locally raised food within city limits.

One day after the Land Trust closed on the Head of Tide Preserve, a second major year-end project was completed when the Ledwith family donated a 41-acre conservation easement on Megunticook Lake in Lincolnville. The easement permanently limits uses of the land to protect its conservation values--4,950 feet of scenic waterfront, including a secluded cove and two uninhabited islands, and a large wetland with wading bird and waterfowl habitat recognized by the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife. The Land Trust, as holder of the conservation easement, is responsible for ensuring that its terms are

followed. The land is still owned by the Ledwith family, however, and is not open to the public without their permission.

In total, the Land Trust had a banner year, protecting over 200 acres and almost 3 miles of shorefront in 2009. In addition to the two projects described above, other projects included the Camden Riverwalk easement, two conservation easements on Mixer Pond in Morrill, and purchase of a parcel along the Ducktrap River that was transferred to the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife. The Land Trust was also closely involved in the process that ultimately established the 601-acre conservation easement on Sears Island held by Maine Coast Heritage Trust.

"As a new year begins, we celebrate the amazing accomplishments of Coastal Mountains Land Trust, made possible by a community of individuals who believe in the power of land conservation and have led the way in preserving these important pieces of land for the future," said Bland Banwell, President of the Land Trust's Board of Directors. "We look forward to building upon our efforts in the year before us."

Coastal Mountains Land Trust has been working since 1986 to permanently conserve land to benefit the natural and human communities of western Penobscot Bay. For more information on the Land Trust, call (207) 236-7091.