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First National Census of Land Trusts in Five Years:
Big Gains in Voluntary Land Conservation
Despite Recession

Land Trusts Conserve 10 Million U.S. Acres, Outpace Major Government Land Acquisition Program
Land Trusts See Increased Budgets and Endowments, Add Staff and Volunteers in Down Economy

Palos Verdes Peninsula, CA – The first census of land trusts in five years found 10 million new acres conserved nationwide since 2005, including 2,303,442 acres here in California.

The National Land Trust Census, released by the Land Trust Alliance, shows that voluntarily protected land increased 27 percent between 2005 and 2010. In the same time period, the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund, a major federal conservation program, added just over 500,000 acres and saw a 38% funding cut. The census is online at www.lta.org/census.

A total of 47 million acres—an area over twice the size of all the national parks in the contiguous United States—are now protected by land trusts. A greater percentage of the new acreage comes through local and state land trusts like the Palos Verdes Peninsula Land Conservancy. In California, land trusts conserved 2,303,422 acres between 2005 and 2010, a 34% increase in land protected.

“California residents value their land, and we are conserving it at the community level,” said Palos Verdes Peninsula Land Conservancy Executive Director Andrea Vona. “Here in California we are investing in our future with land trusts that ensure clean water, scenic vistas and places to play for our children and for generations to come.”

In the last five years, the Palos Verdes Peninsula Land Conservancy has been able to preserve nearly 600 acres of coastal open space, bringing the total amount of land conserved by the organization to 1,600 acres. During the last five year, volunteers donated nearly 46,000 hours to support this important conservation work.

An enhanced tax deduction for conservation easement donations has helped America’s land trusts work with farmers, ranchers and other modest-income landowners to sustain a remarkable pace of more than one million acres protected by conservation easements each year! But if Congress allows this incentive to expire at the end of 2011, fewer landowners will receive tax benefits from the generous donation of development rights on their land.

Two hundred and sixty two House and 11 Senate members have co-sponsored H.R. 1964/S. 339, bills to make this important conservation tax incentive permanent. That's more co-sponsors than any other tax bill in Congress! We encourage Rep(s) Hahn and Rohrabacher and Senator Wright to join them as co-sponsors of this important legislation.

Other findings of the new National Land Trust Census include:

- California Land trusts saw a **94% increase in volunteers** from the previous 5-year period.
- Since 2005, there are **89% more paid employees and contractors at California land trusts.**
- **Operating budgets for land trusts are up 36% since 2005.** State and local trusts **nearly tripled operating endowments** in five years ensuring that land trust-protected land stays protected.
- **Urban parks, gardens or open spaces is now a priority for 27 % of trusts,** a threefold increase over respondents in 2005.

The Palos Verdes Peninsula Land Conservancy is a *501(c)(3)* nonprofit community based conservation organization that works to preserve open space and restore habitat for the education and enjoyment of all. Since its founding in 1988, the Conservancy has successfully preserved 1,600 acres of open space on the Palos Verdes Peninsula. The Conservancy's vision is the creation and management of large blocks of natural open space where visitors may enjoy peaceful solitude, where children and adults can learn about the natural environment, and where native plants and animals can thrive. The Palos Verdes Peninsula Land Conservancy is based on the Palos Verdes Peninsula, CA.

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