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Conservation Tax Incentives Renewed for 2011 *Hampshire County Groups Anticipate More Land Protection This Year*

Romney (WV) – The Hampshire County Farmland Protection Board and Potomac Conservancy, two land conservation groups active in Hampshire County, applaud the recent federal decision to reinstate previously expired conservation tax incentives for 2011. This year, landowners interested in protecting their lands with a voluntary conservation agreement can benefit from significant tax deductions while protecting their farms, forests, and other valuable natural or historic resources.

Collectively, the Board and the Conservancy have helped Hampshire County landowners protect over 7,000 acres of productive agricultural lands and natural areas, and the groups are hopeful that more landowners will step forward this year. The tax incentives had originally expired at the end of 2009, but will now extend through 2011 to include conservation agreements closed in 2010 and 2011.

The enhanced incentives apply to a landowner's federal income tax and will:

- Allow conservation agreement donors to deduct up to 50% of their adjusted gross incomes (up from 30% previously);
- Allow qualified farmers and ranchers to deduct up to 100% of their incomes; and
- Provide donors with a 16- year window to use the tax deduction (up from 6 years).

Brian Eglinger, Executive Director of the Hampshire County Farmland Protection Board, believes the enhanced incentives will make an impact. "I am glad to see incentives that encourage farmers and other landowners to protect the lands that create Hampshire County's valuable rural setting and help save the farms that feed our communities," said Eglinger, a life resident of Hampshire County whose own farm is protected by the Hampshire County Farmland Protection Program.

"Conservation tax benefits were a major topic with landowners in the last year, and I'm hopeful that these enhanced benefits will encourage more landowners to protect the lands they love," said Emily Warner, who was raised in Hampshire County and is Potomac Conservancy's Conservation Program Associate.

To learn more about the enhanced tax incentives visit, www.lta.org/easementincentive. To learn more about land conservation, contact Brian Eglinger of the Hampshire Board at 304.257.8862, or Emily Warner of Potomac Conservancy at 540.667.3606. Visit Potomac Conservancy online at www.potomac.org/site/land-protection.

About Potomac Conservancy

Since 1993, the Potomac Conservancy (a nationally accredited land trust) has protected the health, beauty, and enjoyment of the Potomac River and its tributaries. Its conservation programs address the goals of improving water quality, protecting rivers' scenic integrity, enhancing recreational resources, and building an informed and engaged constituency, using a range of tools, including restoration, permanent land protection, advocacy, and citizen education and engagement. Visit www.potomac.org for more information.

About Hampshire County Farmland Protection Board

The Hampshire County Farmland Protection Board is one of 18 West Virginia county boards that strive to assist in sustaining the farming community, help provide local agricultural products for local communities, control urban expansion which is consuming agricultural land at an alarming rate, protect agricultural land and woodland, help enhance tourism, and protect the worthwhile community values, institutions, and landscapes associated with farming. Contact Brian Eglinger at 304.257.8862 or via beglinger@frontiernet.net for more information.

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