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## Montgomery County Lands Trust Highlighted in Washington D.C.: Congressman Jim Gerlach Honored for Championing Conservation Incentive

**WASHINGTON, D.C. (February 22, 2011)** – On Tuesday, February 15, a coalition of national conservation groups and local land trusts including **Montgomery County Lands Trust** presented an award to **Pennsylvania Congressman Jim Gerlach (R-PA)** for his leadership in renewing a tax incentive for landowners who protect their land to preserve important natural resources. The incentive boosted donations of conservation easements on farms, ranches, forestlands and natural areas across the country by a third, to over a million acres per year. Thanks to Representative Gerlach’s efforts as Co-chair of the Land Conservation Caucus, the incentive is now available to landowners through 2011.

“Representative Gerlach’s leadership on the land conservation caucus has helped produce an outcome that will deepen the impact of the work done by the Trust,” says Dulcie Flaharty, Executive Director of **Montgomery County Lands Trust**. “For example, we recently completed a conservation project with a Donald Hawthorne, a local farmer whose fruit and tree farm is treasured by the people of Limerick Township. The preservation of the Hawthorne Farm and other landscapes dear to our local communities was made possible due to personal generosity, complemented by the conservation tax incentive.”

Representative Gerlach, newly appointed to the House's tax writing committee, announced that he would take the lead in introducing legislation to make the incentive permanent. "The conservation easement tax credit is a tremendously practical way to provide tax relief to property owners while helping preserve natural resources and open spaces that enhance the quality of life in our communities," Gerlach said.

Representative Gerlach (right/left) receiving an award from Rand Wentworth of the Land Trust Alliance (right/left)

"As co-chair of the House Land Conservation Caucus, I will continue working with Montgomery County Lands Trust and other groups to ensure that the conservation easement tax credit continues to be an option available to family farmers, moderate-income property owners and others."

The Conservation Tax Incentive Coalition, led by the **Land Trust Alliance**, includes farmers, sportsmen, urban open space and historic preservation advocates. Rand Wentworth, President of the Land Trust Alliance, lauded Representative Gerlach for his commitment to saving America's treasured landscapes. "The renewed tax incentive for donations of conservation easements is one of the best things Congress could do this year to help landowners choose conservation over sprawl," said Wentworth. "Representative Gerlach is a true conservation leader who has worked tirelessly to save a conservation measure that has already benefited hundreds of communities across the country."

### **About Montgomery County Lands Trust**

As a non-profit conservancy, Montgomery County Lands Trust works to preserve and connect the natural areas, farmland, and neighborhood green spaces which contribute to our quality of life, to a clean and abundant water supply, and to the health of our region's economy. To learn more about our organization, please visit our website at [www.mclt.org](http://www.mclt.org)

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### **Photo Caption:**

Dulcie Flaharty of Montgomery County Lands Trust (left) and Molly Morrison of Natural Lands Trust (left center) share in honoring Congressman Jim Gerlach (right center) with Rand Wentworth of the Land Trust Alliance (right).