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For immediate release

Protecting nature in Canadian communities: Alliance of Canadian Land Trusts is grateful for renewed investment to continue land conservation in Canada through the Natural Heritage Conservation Program

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During COP15 (Nature COP) in Montreal, the Canadian Government announced the renewal of support for Canadian land trust organizations through the extension of the Natural Heritage Conservation Program (NHCP) to 2026. With this extension of the NHCP comes \$18M in additional funding for the Land Trusts Conservation Fund (LTCF). The Alliance of Canadian Land Trusts (ACLT) is appreciative of this contribution and the Federal Government's further support of community land trusts across Canada.

NHCP partners, the Nature Conservancy of Canada, Ducks Unlimited Canada and Wildlife Habitat Canada, will work to protect an additional 180,000 hectares by 2026. The ACLT is looking forward to working closely with Wildlife Habitat Canada to implement an effective LTCF program. "WHC is pleased that the Government of Canada has decided to extend its support of the NHCP program. WHC and the ACLT will work hard to ensure the success of the NHCP-LTCF program," notes *Jessica Burns, Program Director for Wildlife Habitat Canada*.

"Achieving Canada's 30 percent by 2030 land-conservation target will require the combined efforts of our federal government, provincial and territorial governments, Indigenous communities, business leaders, land trusts, and more. By working with partners we are helping to protect the natural environment across the country. Protecting land plays a vital role in helping to halt and reverse biodiversity loss, and contributes to the recovery of species at risk."

– *The Honourable Steven Guilbeault, Minister of Environment and Climate Change*

FACTS:

Since 2019, the LTCF has provided \$13 million to support 92 projects delivered by 34 community land trusts in 7 different provinces. This investment has protected 9,000 ha of ecologically significant land and raised over \$51 million dollars in match contributions.

What are community land trusts?

Community land trusts are non-governmental charitable organizations that work to conserve and steward the most vital and vulnerable natural landscapes across Canada on private lands through community-based conservation efforts.

Community land trusts have become a critical tool for biodiversity conservation on private land through property acquisitions, conservation easements, servitudes and restrictive covenants. Land trusts often protect at-risk habitats and watersheds that only exist on private land and cannot be protected by other means. In Canada, land trusts grew from approximately 60 in 1998 to over 145 in 2022, working in most landscapes across southern Canada.

“Land trusts and the green spaces they protect in the populated parts of Canada provide refuge for imperiled wildlife and plants and allow people to enjoy these natural places through volunteering, attending educational events, citizen science, or just walking in the nature.” *Said Renata Woodward, Executive Director of ACLT.* “The government’s renewed investment of \$18M will achieve a protection of an additional 15,000 hectares of land and will bring an additional \$ 27 M in matching funds to conservation.” The cost of private land conservation is often funded through partnership between private citizens, different levels of governments and foundations.

“The 145 community land trusts across Canada have thousands of volunteers and supporters working annually to monitor land, raise funds and undertake education projects to engage Canadians in land conservation and stewardship” added *Max Fritz, board member of ACLT.* He added: “The properties protected by land trusts are refuges for both species and in many cases the local people.”

Land trusts in Canada work to:

- Provide significant nature-based climate solutions through protection and restoration of carbon-rich habitats.
- Establish a network of protected spaces with corridors that protect critical habitat for species at risk and broader biodiversity.
- Contribute to the national goals of conserving 30% of land by 2030.
- Grow and gain greater economic importance particularly by contributing to ecological goods and services that would otherwise require infrastructure development.

Who is the Alliance of Canadian Land Trusts (ACLT)?

The Alliance of Canadian Land Trusts has recently been established through the work of the Land Trust Alliance of British Columbia, Ontario Land Trust Alliance, and Réseau de milieux naturels protégés along with the Canadian Land Trust Working Group and other partners, including prairie and maritime land trusts.

ACLT, as a national membership organization and as a new national voice for the land trusts, has a mission to protect nature through the stewardship and conservation of our most vital landscapes in communities across Canada. We are driven by a theory of change that, if ACLT helps land trusts across Canada strengthen through finding a common voice and building capacity, then we will increase our visibility as a community and influence conservation in Canada, because we will be united, visible, and vibrant.

ABOUT

The Government of Canada’s Natural Heritage Conservation Program (NHCP) is a unique partnership that supports the creation of protected and conserved areas through the acquisition of private land

and private interest in land. To date, the Government of Canada has invested more than \$440 million in the Program, which has been matched with more than \$870 million in contributions raised by Nature Conservancy of Canada, Ducks Unlimited Canada, and the country's land trust community, leading to the protection and conservation of more than 700,000 hectares of ecologically sensitive lands.

LEARN MORE:

<https://ltacanada.ca/>

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