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**For more information, contact:**  
Weantinoge Heritage Land Trust  
860-927-1927  
Catherine@weantinoge.org

**Weantinoge Heritage Land Trust Earns National Recognition**  
Accreditation Awarded by the Land Trust Accreditation Commission

Kent, CT – On August 5<sup>th</sup>, Weantinoge Heritage Land Trust, Connecticut’s largest land trust, was awarded land trust accreditation from the Land Trust Accreditation Commission, an independent program of the Land Trust Alliance.

Accreditation is a rigorous, independent review of a land trust’s operating practices. The seal of accreditation is awarded to those organizations that meet or exceed national quality standards in the field of land conservation.

“Land trusts are unique in the nonprofit world because they need to plan for their organizations to exist in perpetuity. Accreditation is the single most important action a land trust can take to help keep their promise of conserving land forever,” said Catherine Rawson, Weantinoge’s Executive Director.

“For an organization of Weantinoge’s size—we are the 18<sup>th</sup> largest land trust in the United States by the number of lands we conserve—the accreditation process takes years to complete and reflects substantial investments in stewardship, staff, and technology. Accreditation also demonstrates our commitment to permanent land conservation that benefits all of Northwest Connecticut,” continued Ms. Rawson.

Weantinoge is a regional land trust with a conservation focus that extends beyond individual town boundaries to encompass an expansive regional, watershed, and ecosystem level perspective. Over Weantinoge’s 50-year history, it has permanently protected more than 9,000 acres in 17 communities throughout Northwest Connecticut, worth an estimated \$30 million. Its protected properties include designated wilderness areas, 15 working farms, streambelts,

viewsheds, critical watershed lands, and 14 nature preserves open to the public with 18 miles of hiking trails.

As a leader in regional land conservation, Weantinoge has received the state's highest land trust award for land preservation, was recognized by the Connecticut Land Conservation Council for its leadership role and collaborative land conservation efforts, and was awarded a 2013 EPA Environmental Merit Award for its outstanding commitment to preserving and protecting the natural environment. In addition to its conservation work, Weantinoge also provides free environmental education and outreach programs to more than 200 children and families.

Weantinoge is one of 317 land trusts from across the country that has been awarded accreditation since the fall of 2008. Accredited land trusts are authorized to display a seal indicating to the public that they meet national standards for excellence, uphold the public trust, and ensure that conservation efforts are permanent. The seal is a mark of distinction in land conservation.

“This round of accreditation decisions represents another significant milestone for the accreditation program; the 317 accredited land trusts account for more than three quarters of the 20,645,165 acres currently owned in fee or protected by a conservation easement held by a land trust,” said Commission Executive Director Tammara Van Ryn. “Accreditation provides the public with an assurance that, at the time of accreditation, land trusts meet high standards for quality, and that the results of their conservation work are permanent.”

Each accredited land trust submitted extensive documentation and underwent a rigorous review. “Through accreditation, land trusts conduct important planning and make their operations more efficient and strategic,” said Ms. Van Ryn. “Accredited organizations have engaged and trained citizen conservation leaders and improved systems for ensuring that their conservation work is permanent.”

According to the Land Trust Alliance, conserving land helps ensure clean air and drinking water; safe, healthy food; scenic landscapes and views; recreational places; and habitat for the diversity of life on earth. In addition to health and food benefits, conserving land increases property values near greenbelts, saves tax dollars by encouraging more efficient development, and reduces the need for expensive water filtration facilities. Community leaders in land trusts throughout the country have worked with willing landowners to save over 47 million acres of farms, forests, parks, and places people care about, including land transferred to public agencies and protected via other means. Strong, well-managed land trusts provide local communities with effective champions and caretakers of their critical land resources, and safeguard the land through the generations.

“After many years of hard work and growth as an organization, we are delighted to join the strong network of accredited land trusts in Connecticut and across the country,” concluded Ms. Rawson.

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### About Weantinoge Heritage Land Trust

Founded in 1965 to benefit the general public through the preservation of natural areas, fish and wildlife, and working farmland, Weantinoge is the largest land trust in the State of Connecticut and the 18<sup>th</sup> largest in the United States by the number of lands we conserve. Over our 50-year history, Weantinoge has permanently protected more than 9,000 acres in 17 communities throughout Northwest Connecticut. The organization's protected lands include designated wilderness areas, 15 working farms, streambelts, viewsheds, critical watershed lands, and 14 nature preserves open to the public with 18 miles of hiking trails.

### About the Land Trust Accreditation Commission

The Land Trust Accreditation Commission, based in Saratoga Springs, N.Y., awards the accreditation seal to community institutions that meet national quality standards for protecting important natural places and working lands forever. The Commission is governed by a volunteer board of diverse land conservation and nonprofit management experts from around the country. See a complete list of all recently accredited land trusts online at <http://www.landtrustaccreditation.org/land-trust-locator>. More information on the accreditation program is available on the Commission's website, [www.landtrustaccreditation.org](http://www.landtrustaccreditation.org).

### About The Land Trust Alliance

Founded in 1982, the Land Trust Alliance is a national land conservation organization that works to save the places people need and love by strengthening land conservation across America. The Alliance represents 1,200 member land trusts supported by more than 5 million members nationwide. The Alliance is based in Washington, D.C., and operates several regional offices. More information about the Alliance is available at [www.landtrustalliance.org](http://www.landtrustalliance.org).