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CONTACT:

Jola Szubielski | Jola.Szubielski@agriculture.ny.gov | 518-457-0752

Kirstan Conley | Kirstan.Conley@agriculture.ny.gov | 518-457-0752

For Immediate Release: March 7, 2019

NYS DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND MARKETS AWARDS FUNDING TO ADVANCE FARMLAND PROTECTION EFFORTS ACROSS NEW YORK STATE

Grants will Help Land Trusts Cover the Costs of Appraisals for Landowners

State Agriculture Commissioner Richard Ball today announced that over \$231,000 has been awarded to help five land trusts further farmland protection efforts across New York State. Round 2 funding provided through the New York Land Trust Grants program aims to enhance regional collaboration on farmland conservation projects by assisting with the cost of land appraisals needed to establish the value of development rights for agricultural conservation easement projects.

Commissioner Ball said, “This funding helps our land trust partners with our collective goal of protecting New York farms and the open space they preserve. It brings dozens of farms, seeking to preserve thousands of acres of farmland in New York State, closer to securing conservation easements as an alternative to development. Investing in the protection of our land sustains our longstanding agricultural traditions and improves quality of life for our communities.”

A total of \$231,162 will cover the costs of appraisals for 43 farm operations to determine the value of their development rights, based on site plans approved by the Department. The grants help landowners who are weighing whether to sell or donate development rights and encourage local governments to plan strategically for farmland protection. The awarded projects also promote objectives outlined in local governments’ Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plans.

Funds have been awarded to:

- **Saratoga P.L.A.N.** - \$50,000 to pay for land and real estate appraisals to determine the value of development rights on 1,060 acres of viable agricultural land on 10 individual farm operations located in Saratoga County.

- **Schoharie Land Trust** - \$50,000 to pay for real estate appraisals to determine the value of development rights on 2,939 acres of viable agricultural land on 10 individual farm operations in Schoharie County.
- **The Genesee Land Trust** - \$41,000 to pay for real estate appraisals to determine the value of development rights on 1,114 acres of viable agricultural land on five individual farms operations in Ontario, Monroe and Wayne counties.
- **Peconic Land Trust** - \$50,000 to pay for real estate appraisals to determine the value of development rights on 189 acres of viable agricultural land on nine individual farm operations in Suffolk County.
- **Agricultural Stewardship Association** - \$40,162 to pay for real estate appraisals to determine the value of development rights on 3,147 acres of viable agricultural land on nine individual farm operations in Washington and Rensselaer counties.

American Farmland Trust New York Policy Manager Samantha Levy said, “We strongly support the State of New York’s efforts to work with local partners to protect farms more quickly. Farmers want to access state funds for protecting farmland to reinvest in their farms. It is critical that all options be looked at to help make this happen more quickly.”

Land Trust Alliance President and CEO Andrew Bowman said, “Protecting the lands that feed New Yorkers is a high priority for New York’s land trusts. These grants are a great example of the unique partnership between farmers, land trusts, municipalities and the State. Their shared commitment is ensuring working lands, and their stewards, have the resources needed to sustain our agricultural and conservation heritage while investing in the future.”

Round 2 of the Land Trust Grants Program is one of several funding opportunities to preserve New York’s farmland through the Farmland Protection Implementation Grants, dairy transition grants and other initiatives to encourage the preservation of agricultural land. Since the Governor took office in 2011, the State has paid more than \$75 million in farmland protection funds to complete 100 projects, totaling nearly 32,000 acres of viable agricultural land, statewide.

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