

For immediate release: May 25, 2012
Contact: Blue Hill Heritage Trust, 207.374.5118

Birdsall wins statewide recognition award for his work in farmland conservation

Photo credit: Billy Helprin, Maine Coast Heritage Trust

Penobscot resident Paul Birdsall has been named the recipient of the prestigious 2012 Espy Land Heritage Award. This award is presented annually by Maine Coast Heritage Trust to an individual, organization, agency or coalition that has made outstanding contributions to land conservation in Maine while inspiring others. The award was made at the recent Maine Land Trust Conference.

Birdsall was recognized for his leadership in both local and statewide farmland conservation efforts spanning more than three decades. His work on farmland conservation issues began in the 1970s, and led to his becoming a founding board member of both Blue Hill Heritage Trust (BHHT) and Maine Farmland Trust, where he started the Farmland Forever and Forever Farms programs, respectively. Through the Farmland Forever program that Birdsall inspired and led, BHHT has conserved over 2,000 acres of farmland, including a conservation easement Birdsall donated on his own 383-acre Horsepower Farm and conservation easements on two local farms that he purchased and resold to young farmers. Maine Farmland Trust's "Buy, Protect, Sell" program, modeled after Birdsall's work, has led to the conservation of 7,700 acres of farmland, and has resulted in farming opportunities for 34 farmers. Birdsall is still actively farming and has mentored many young farmers through a Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association apprenticeship program.

In presenting the award, Maine Coast Heritage Trust President Tim Glidden noted, "There is no other single person in the State of Maine who has done more to advance the conservation of farmland by private non-profit land trusts at the local and state levels."

"For three decades Paul has brought vision, tireless advocacy, hard work, clear thinking, sheer doggedness, and great personal generosity to farmland conservation efforts." said Jim Dow, Executive Director the Blue Hill Heritage Trust, who nominated Birdsall for the award. "If every land trust were blessed with one person like Paul, how lucky we would all be."

The award comes with a \$5,000 grant which the recipient can direct to an organization of his choice. Birdsall directed that it be split between the two organizations that he helped found: Blue Hill Heritage Trust and the Maine Farmland Trust.

Blue Hill Heritage Trust is a community-based, not for profit, land conservation organization founded in 1985 by the citizens of the Blue Hill Peninsula. Its mission is to conserve land and water of special ecological, natural, agricultural, scenic, cultural and recreational significance in Blue Hill, Brooklin, Brooksville, Penobscot, Sedgwick and Surry and to increase public understanding of the importance of land and water conservation. Blue Hill Heritage Trust has conserved more than 5,800 acres of land for future generations. For more information, please call 374-5118 or visit www.bluehillheritagetrust.org.