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### **Blue Hill Heritage Trust Earns National Recognition**

Accreditation Awarded by the Land Trust Accreditation Commission

The Blue Hill Heritage Trust has achieved land trust accreditation from the national Land Trust Accreditation Commission, an independent program of the Land Trust Alliance.

The Trust was awarded accreditation on February 13 and is one of only 201 land trusts from across the country and one of only 9 in Maine that has been awarded accreditation. 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.

“Blue Hill Heritage Trust’s accredited status demonstrates our commitment to high quality and permanent land conservation that benefits the entire community,” says Jim Dow, the Trust’s Executive Director. “Our land trust is a stronger organization today having gone through this very rigorous accreditation program.”

Blue Hill Heritage Trust was founded in 1985 by a group of local residents and works in the six towns on the Blue Hill Peninsula. Over the last 28 years the Trust has worked with landowners to complete over 100 land projects that protect more than 6,200 acres of land with special natural, scenic, recreational, agricultural or cultural significance. It also maintains over 14 miles of public walking trails throughout the Blue Hill Peninsula.

The accreditation process required Blue Hill Heritage Trust to submit extensive documentation and undergo a rigorous review. It submitted its application for accreditation in early 2012 but began preparing for the accreditation process three years earlier. “It was a lot of extra work that we fit in around our everyday land conservation work, but we think it was worth it.”

“Through accreditation, land trusts conduct important planning and make their operations more efficient and strategic,” said Tammara Van Ryn, Executive Director of the Land Trust Accreditation Commission. “Accredited organizations have engaged and trained citizen conservation leaders and improved systems for ensuring that their conservation work is permanent. Accreditation provides the public with an assurance that, at the time of accreditation, land trusts meet high standards for quality.”

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 conserved lands, saves tax dollars by encouraging more efficient development, and reduces

the need for expensive water filtration facilities. Across the country, local citizens and communities have come together to form more than 1,700 land trusts to save the places they love. 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.

“We are pleased to be in the very select company of the other accredited land trusts around the country and will be displaying the accreditation seal with pride,” says Dow.

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#### About Blue Hill Heritage Trust

Blue Hill Heritage Trust is a community-based, nonprofit land trust conservation organization working in the towns of Blue Hill, Brooklin, Brooksville, Penobscot, Sedgwick and Surry. Its offices are located at 258 Mountain Road in Blue Hill. It is governed by a volunteer Board of Directors from the local communities and is managed by an Executive Director with the assistance of two other full-time staff, as well as a large group of volunteers. More information is available on its website at [www.bluehillheritagetrust.org](http://www.bluehillheritagetrust.org).

#### 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, established in 2006 as an independent program of the Land Trust Alliance, is governed by a volunteer board of diverse land conservation and nonprofit management experts from around the country. See a complete list of all 21 recently accredited land trusts online at <http://www.landtrustaccreditation.org/newsroom/press-releases>. 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

The Land Trust Alliance, of which Blue Hill Heritage Trust is a member, is a national conservation group that works to save the places people love by strengthening conservation throughout America. It works to increase the pace and quality of conservation by advocating favorable tax policies, training land trusts in best practices, and working to ensure the permanence of conservation in the face of continuing threats. The Alliance publishes Land Trust Standards and Practices and provides financial and administrative support to the Commission. It has established an endowment to help ensure the success of the accreditation program and keep it affordable for land trusts of all sizes to participate in accreditation. More information can be found at [www.landtrustalliance.org](http://www.landtrustalliance.org).

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