

For Immediate Release:

For Information – Larry Frimerman 513-524-2150

Area Land Trust Finishes 2011 With a Flourish

January 3, 2012. Oxford, OH. Literally days after helping people and communities protect the 100th property through the Three Valley Conservation Trust, the nonprofit signed eight more land conservation agreements protecting 777 more acres of farmland streams, and forest just before the close of 2011. The nine properties protected brought the Trust's total for the entire year to 11, with 1400 acres saved, and includes farms in Butler, Preble and Montgomery Counties in the Four Mile, Seven Mile, Indian, Twin and Little Twin Creek Watersheds.

Two landowners donated their conservation easements to the Three Valley Conservation Trust, while the Trust protected the other six with dollar for dollar pass-through assistance from state and federal agencies to purchase the development rights at far less than market value even in today's markets.

"These easement purchases are extremely cost-effective ways of saving farms and preserving the rural character of our communities," noted Larry Frimerman, the group's Executive Director. Conservation easements also help to celebrate private property rights and keeps land on the property tax rolls for local government.

Three farms, the Becker, Hammel and Ridenour easements, preserve more than a mile of stream frontage on Seven Mile Creek in Butler County, and were a part of the Trust's Four Mile-Seven Mile Confluence Project abutting the City of Hamilton. Two more nearby property owners along the two streams are partnering with the land trust for 2012 action. With just a few more properties, it is not hard to envision protecting nearly the entire corridor from Somerville to Hamilton. The benefit is not just stream protection here- these easements help to protect the aquifer that Oxford, Seven Mile and Hamilton depend on for drinking water resources.

Two more farms protected doubled the length of stream protected along Little Twin Creek and two tributaries in Jackson Township, Montgomery County. The Hewitt and Sears farms, like the aforementioned Butler County farms, are all historic, scenic streamside, forested yet still working farms stimulating community business investment while preserving wildlife habitat. Interestingly, all five were protected with the help of the USDA- Natural Resources Conservation Service's (NRCS) Federal Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program, and are in the cohort of sixteen farms approved by NRCS as part of its major cooperative agreement with Three Valley Conservation Trust in 2011. The Trust expects to close on the balance of these properties in 2012. This federal program required the leveraging of private or other public funds to match a portion of the federal funding for eligibility. Among those funding sources included the Miami Conservancy District's Aquifer Preservation Project and a multi-jurisdictional environmental stream mitigation settlement regarding an unrelated property.

Finally, one of the other protected properties, the Wysong farm in Montgomery County, was protected through the Clean Ohio Agricultural Easement Purchase Program, overwhelmingly reauthorized by Ohio voters in 2008. The Trust is grateful to its federal, state, local and private partners for their efforts.

The Three Valley Conservation Trust partners with people and communities to conserve the natural environment and cultural heritage for future generations in its service area. The group covers parts of eight counties in southwestern Ohio and Eastern Indiana, and covers much of the Lower Great Miami River Watershed. For more information, become a member, or help to protect land and stream resources, please contact the Trust at 513-524-2150, or visit its website at www.3vct.org.