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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



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New Initiative aims to conserve Waldo County open space Coastal Mountains Land Trust launches effort to conserve land in 12 Waldo County towns for wildlife conservation, recreation, outdoor learning and climate mitigation

On November 2nd, Coastal Mountains Land Trust launched the *Waldo County Conservation Initiative*, a community-based effort to increase the conservation of natural lands in Waldo County for the purposes of wildlife conservation, outdoor recreation, outdoor learning, and climate mitigation. The goal of the initiative is to grow the capacity to complete land conservation projects within the 12 Waldo County towns served by Coastal Mountains Land Trust: Belfast, Belmont, Brooks, Knox, Lincolnville, Morrill, Northport, Prospect, Searsport, Stockton Springs, Swanville, and Waldo.

For the first year of the Initiative, by April 2023, the Land Trust is seeking to raise an additional \$250,000 to match the \$450,000 already raised from grants, land donations, and private gifts for important projects across Waldo County. Funds raised will support 12 conservation projects that will protect approximately 495 acres including open space on Mt. Tuck in Stockton Springs, near Hurds Pond in Swanville, at the headwaters of Passagassawakeag River in Knox, and across from the three schools in Searsport. Completion of these projects will conserve a wide range of forested and wetland habitats, provide space for hunting and future hiking trails, create an outdoor classroom, and add to the protection of several large areas of undeveloped forest that will continue to sequester carbon.

Faced with a record-setting real estate market and rising land values, many of Waldo County's most cherished open spaces and natural areas are currently under threat of development. Relative to other parts of the state, Waldo County has a much lower percentage of conserved land. While nearly 20% of land across Maine has been conserved, less than 10% of the land

within the 12 Waldo County towns served by Coastal Mountains Land has been permanently protected. The goal of the *Waldo County Conservation Initiative* is to grow community support in order to take advantage of the window of opportunity that remains to conserve some of the most vital open spaces in Waldo County.

Led by Coastal Mountains Land Trust, the *Waldo County Conservation Initiative* is supported by a committee of 13 local volunteers who are working together to build a fund to support the acquisition and stewardship of priority open spaces. Exemplified by the 12 projects currently underway, the Land Trust's focus is to conserve properties of two kinds: first, land within large ecologically significant areas that preserve the most diverse ecosystems in our region, and second, special properties valued by our community, that provide for trails, access to lakes, rivers and the ocean, and spaces for outdoor learning.

There are many ways to get involved: make a gift to the initiative, volunteer to help spread the word, or learn more about the initiative by visiting one or more of the proposed projects with a Land Trust representative. The Land Trust invites members of the community who are interested to contact the Land Trust directly through its Development and Communications Coordinator, Tempe Landi, by email at tempe@coastalmountains.org or phone at 236-7091.

Coastal Mountains Land Trust has worked since 1986 to permanently conserve land to benefit the natural and human communities of the western Penobscot Bay region. The Land Trust has protected over 13,000 acres, offering 55 miles of trails for public recreation. The Land Trust currently has over 25 preserves in Waldo County and was a lead partner alongside the City of Belfast in establishing the Belfast Rail Trail in Belfast.

For more information, please visit www.coastalmountains.org.