

## News Release

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### Westminster Open Space Committee North County Land Trust, Inc.

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

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**CONTACT:**

Alicia Altieri, Westminster Town Planner - 978 874-7414  
Janet Morrison, Executive Director, NCLT - 978 342-0174

### Funding Success in Farm Conservation Project

The Westminster Open Space Committee and North County Land Trust, Inc. have been working for several years to conserve the 109 acre Schenck Farm on Bartherick and Howard Roads in Westminster. This farm conservation project has been approved for state funding, which will allow the project to be presented to the voters for approval at the Special Town Meeting on November 27<sup>th</sup>.

The conservation strategy involved separate grant applications for the farm fields and the forestland on the farm. An Agricultural Preservation Restriction has been approved for the farm fields. The APR will insure that the fields are kept in cultivation and that this valuable real estate will never be developed. A state self-help grant will allow the town to purchase the forested part of the farm for public access and recreation. The forested land is laced with hiking trails, and has two vernal pools.

The Midstate Trail is a prominent feature of the Schenck Farm, running for two-thirds (2/3<sup>rd</sup>) mile through the forestland and along the edge of the fields. The protection of this historic long-distance trail is a state and local priority, especially where it runs through private land. The conservation of the Schenck Farm will provide a vital protected corridor for the Midstate Trail.

Development pressures threaten much of the remaining open space in Westminster, including many of the remaining farms. The conservation of the Schenck Farm has long been a priority for the Town. The Schenck Farm Project accomplishes several conservation goals: preserving working farmland, protecting the Midstate Trail, providing public recreation land, and conserving important wetland and grassland habitats.

Jennifer Shenk, a member of the Westminster Open Space Committee commented: *“We have always known that conserving the Schenck Farm would not be easy. North County Land Trust was persistent in keeping in touch with the seller and looking for a conservation buyer who wanted to preserve the farm fields. Seeing this project come to fruition, with so much state grant money involved, is an incredibly rewarding result.”*

Westminster voters must approve the use of town funds to complete the Schenck Farm project. The amount of state funding already approved will allow the town to conserve the Schenck Farm at a fraction of its value. This makes good economic sense and good conservation sense for the town.

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The Westminster Open Space Committee works with the Town Planner to implement the Town's Open Space and Recreation Plan and to conserve important areas of the town.

North County Land Trust, Inc. is a non-profit, land conservation organization which works to protect open space in Westminster and other communities in north central Massachusetts.