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DATE: June 13, 2005

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Upper Saco Valley Land Trust Awarded \$126,000 Federal Grant
To Preserve Farmland on West Side Road**

In a highly competitive grant-funding round, the Upper Saco Valley Land Trust (USVLT) recently received a \$126,000 grant from the Federal Farm and Ranchland Protection Program (FRPP). The purpose of the FRPP is to provide funding for the purchase of conservation easements on privately owned lands with high agricultural value. The FRPP funds will be used to purchase an easement on the 91.5-acre Frank & Carol Kennett property on West Side Road in Conway, N. H. According to Steve Hundley of the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS), the Kennett property has some of the best agricultural soils in the state. A conservation easement will permanently protect the land from future development.

USVLT is extremely grateful to the Frank & Carol Kennett family for the opportunity to permanently protect such an important community resource. In addition to valuable agricultural soils, an easement on the property will help protect the scenic values of the West Side Road, designated a scenic road by the Town of Conway. The Town of Conway Master Plan also states: "existing farmlands and open spaces in Conway represent some of the key aesthetic elements of the community". The Master Plan specifically identifies the farmlands on the West Side Road, including the Kennett property, as important resources to protect from development.

Located within the West Side Road Agricultural Historic District, the parcels include prime agricultural land in the Saco River floodplain and wooded upland. The Federal period farmstead built circa 1800, originally known as the Amos Merrill Homestead, was determined

to be eligible for inclusion in the National Historic Register as an excellent example of Conway's 19th century agricultural prosperity. Historic land use patterns are still in effect on the property, with cultivated fields along the Saco River intervale and woodland to the west.

“One of the biggest challenges our community faces is uncontrolled and unplanned development, which threatens the rural character and natural setting of the upper Saco River valley.” stated USVLT Program Coordinator Linda Comeau. “Without permanent protection, the Frank & Carol Kennett property, which has been in the family for over 200 years, is likely to be converted to non-agricultural use by subdivision and development as evidenced by the development of nearby properties.”

The Upper Saco Valley Land Trust is a private, nonprofit organization working in partnership with local landowners in the watershed of the upper Saco River in New Hampshire and Maine to permanently protect the lands and waters that define our communities and enrich our quality of life. The Frank & Carol Kennett Project advances the Upper Saco Valley Land Trust's mission to ensure that valuable farmland is permanently protected for future generations. The FRPP is a matching grant program and USVLT is in the process of developing a plan to acquire the balance of the funds for the conservation easement purchase. For more information call 356-9683 or visit USVLT's website www.usvlt.org.