



TAX CUT FOR CONSERVATION ON PRIVATE LAND

Congress recently passed an extension to the tax law that helps all of us who are interested in protecting clean water, natural areas, and family farms. The law enhances the federal tax benefits for landowners who donate voluntary conservation agreements. These agreements can provide a win-win solution for protecting resources important to our community while keeping land in productive private ownership.

Congress' action makes the tax law work much better for many modest income landowners who, under the old rules, only got credit for a small portion of the value of their donation. Now, a conservation donor can deduct up to 50 percent of their adjusted gross income in any year (up from 30%), and, if most of their income is from farming, ranching or forestry, they can deduct all of their income. Even more important is that if the value of their donation is larger than this, they can continue to use the deduction for up to 16 years (up from six).

These agreements, often referred to as conservation easements, are donations of a landowner's development rights to land, to protect specific natural, scenic, or historic resources. The landowner continues to own and manage their land, and continues to pay local taxes. The public gets protection of resources that are an important heritage for our community.

The Aiken Land Conservancy has been accepting donations like this since 1991, and has protected over 1,200 acres in Aiken County. This change in the law will enable us to help many more landowners to protect resources for our children and for our community's future.

The people of Aiken believe in protecting our family farms, ranches, forests, and wildlife habitat--part of the traditions that make this a great place to live. Thanks to a helping hand from Congress, we will be able to do even more of this in the next several years.

For more information on conserving your land, please contact:

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