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Rainy Lake Conservancy Honored

September 23—St. Paul, Minnesota—— This year the Minnesota Land Trust is happy to announce that the Rainy Lake Conservancy has been awarded the honor of the Minnesota Land Trust “Partner of the Year.”

“The Rainy Lake Conservancy truly is one of our unsung heroes when it comes to conservation,” says Kris Larson, executive director of the Land Trust. “Over the last 20 years they have worked side by side with the Land Trust to further land protections in the Rainy Lake area watershed and had an unmistakable impact on the area.”

A rare example of a cross-border land trust partnership, the groups have successfully protected miles of shoreline and nearly 500 acres of land including the four Review Islands where Ernest Oberholtzer, a founding member of the Wilderness Society, lived.

Former Rainy Lake Conservancy president Phyllis Callaghan explains that, “In 1996 a group of Rainy Lake cottagers met to discuss the possibility of forming an organization to preserve the

natural beauty and ecological values of the Rainy Lake and in 1999 the Rainy Lake Conservancy, a non-profit Canadian organization, was started.”

Near the same time, the Minnesota Land Trust was also protecting land along Rainy Lake. With similar goals in mind they decided to form a partnership and work together with private landowners to retain the area’s wilderness qualities of clean water, majestic red and white pine trees, rare flora and fauna, uncluttered shorelines, and exceptional beauty.

Since its inception in 1991, the Minnesota Land Trust has protected over 62,000 acres of important natural lands in Minnesota, across over 600 individual properties. This important work depends on the efforts of a dedicated staff, supported by hundreds of volunteers, partners across the state, and the generous families who protect their land for the benefit of all through conservation easements. Every year the Minnesota Land Trust celebrates people who make this conservation work possible at an annual “Treasured Places” event.

Rainy Lake is enormous at 227,604 acres and straddles the border with approximately 70% of the basin in Ontario and 30% in Minnesota. The area is a meeting place of three great North American ecosystems: the boreal, the eastern pine and the northern hardwood, where many rare species have been found.

“We are thrilled by the award and grateful for our partnership,” says Carolyn Wallis, current President of Rainy Lake Conservancy. “Along with the public lands that are protected in the area, it’s important for private landowners to also play a role so that the area can continue to be enjoyed as wilderness and treasured outdoor experiences for present and future generations.”

The Land Trust also is honoring the people chosen as 2020 Landowner of the Year (Carter and Florence Hedeon of Park Rapids, MN), and Volunteer of the Year (Jim Odden of Alexandria, MN). In lieu of an in-person gathering, readers may view a video celebration at www.mnland.org/treasured available September 23.

Both the Minnesota Land Trust and Rainy Lake Conservancy are membership-based non-profit organizations. The Minnesota Land Trust's mission is to protect and restore Minnesota's most vital natural lands in order to provide wildlife habitat, clean water, outdoor experiences and scenic beauty for generations to come. Similarly, the mission of the Rainy Lake Conservancy's mission is to preserve and protect Rainy Lake's natural beauty, historic features, ecological and recreational values for present and future generations. Visit www.mnland.org and www.rainylakeconservancy.org for more information on these partner conservation organizations.

A conservation easement is a voluntary, legal agreement between a landowner and a land trust or other qualified agency that permanently limits certain uses of land in order to protect its conservation values. Landowners continue to own and enjoy the land and pay property taxes. Once created, the conservation easement is binding on all future owners of the property. More information can be found at www.mnland.org.

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