Land tells the story of America

Historically, land has shaped us as a people; today, it is the key to a healthy and secure future for all Americans. It provides pure drinking water, healthy food, clean air and a home for plants and animals. Conserved, well-managed land also provides protection from natural disasters, such as floods and drought, while absorbing carbon and keeping it from the earth’s atmosphere.

The Land Trust Alliance shares its members’ passion for the land. As the voice of the land trust community, the Alliance is the national leader in policy, standards and education, working to strengthen and support land trusts so they can conserve and steward more land now and for future generations.

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About Us

A Quick Overview

Founded in 1982, the Land Trust Alliance is a national nonprofit conservation organization that helps land trusts work faster, better and stronger.

Our nation’s land trusts, together, have conserved over 56 million acres of land. The Land Trust Alliance represents 1,000 nonprofits and their 4.6 million supporters, 207,000 volunteers and more than 6.2 million annual preserve visitors. Watch video »
Message from the Chair

Protecting our landscapes, our sources of food and fiber, our air, our water and our wildlife — those are universal values, not partisan ones. They are the values that bring Americans together, deeply ingrained in all of us.

Just think about how land trusts can be the leaders in rebuilding the conservation center in this country. We are the ones who can bring back together people all along the political spectrum, as well as a new generation of people of all ages and backgrounds who are or who want to be connected to the land.

This is the power of the Land Trust Alliance and its members, partners and supporters.

Jamey French  
Board Chair  
Land Trust Alliance

Message from the President

Last year marked the 25th anniversary of my first Land Trust Alliance Rally in Big Sky, Montana, in 1993. I joined more than 600 other like-minded people to learn about conserving land.

I didn’t know then that I would one day lead this formidable organization, guided by a new 2018-2022 strategic plan that was inspired by and created in conjunction with the land trust community. That plan acknowledges that two of the biggest challenges facing the land trust community are climate change and the need to make land conservation relevant to far more people. I am confident that, working together, we can help our fellow citizens understand all the ways that land conservation creates healthy people and maintains a healthy planet.

Andrew Bowman  
President & CEO  
Land Trust Alliance
2018 Highlights

We rolled out a new strategic plan. We celebrated federal policy wins and landmark court cases, expanded our online educational offerings and enjoyed an invigorating Rally. Thank you for all you make possible for our entire community. Learn more »

“For 37 years, the Alliance has grown to address the challenges and meet the burgeoning demands of land trusts across the nation — helping its member organizations to grow our capacity, strengthen our professionalism and increase our conservation impact.”

— Glenn Hoagland, President, Mohonk Preserve, New York (accredited)
Community Conservation

The Land Trust Alliance is committed to shining a bright light on how community conservation can transform land trusts and their communities. Learn more »

Spotlight: Stories That Inspire Change

Land trusts are saving land and changing lives in communities nationwide. They are reaching out and listening to people from all parts of their community to address the challenges they care about.

The Land Trust Alliance created a series of five Community Conservation Spotlight publications with informative and inspiring short stories about the impact of these innovative land trusts.

Bringing People Together

“A lot of people think that Indiana is cornfields and highways, but we have a very diverse landscape,” says Eric Bird, stewardship director at the accredited Shirley Heinze Land Trust. Its wide-ranging programs earned it the Land Trust Alliance’s National Land Trust Excellence Award in 2018. “We bring people together,” says Director of Development Andrea Huntington. “Not only are we providing a respite for flowers and animals, we’re providing a refuge for people, too.”
Government Relations

Each year the Land Trust Alliance’s federal policy agenda reflects its member priorities and advances private land conservation for all stakeholders. Learn more »

Spotlight: Federal Policy

Farm Bill Success!

On December 20, 2018, the Land Trust Alliance and a powerful coalition it had formed celebrated the 2018 Farm Bill being signed into law. “We commend Congress for passing a Farm Bill that reflects so many of our community’s highest priorities,” said Alliance President & CEO Andrew Bowman. “We’re grateful for the vigorous efforts of countless individuals, including our member land trusts and Farm Bill conferees who together achieved increased funding as well as provisions to streamline implementation of the program that will result in conserving more farms and ranches.”

Erik Glenn was one of those many individuals. Executive director of the accredited Colorado Cattlemen’s Agricultural Land Trust, Glenn went to Washington, D.C., at least seven times to advocate for land trusts on the 2018 Farm Bill.

“The Land Trust Alliance commends Congress for passing a Farm Bill that reflects so many of our community’s highest priorities.”

– Andrew Bowman, President & CEO, Land Trust Alliance
Our Legacy

We Need You

“If you do advocacy, you know why it’s important. If you don’t, please consider getting in the game,” said Andy Bicking with the accredited Scenic Hudson in his acceptance speech for the Alliance’s Ambassador of the Year Award, presented at Rally 2018. “It is our right as members of our communities, our duty and responsibility as citizens and professionals, and our legacy, because beyond the lands we protect, what more could we leave behind than a strong social and political network to ensure they will be cared for by future generations?” Learn more about becoming an Advocacy Ambassador. Watch video »

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Climate Change

The Land Trust Alliance’s Land and Climate Program provides land trusts with the strategies, training and tools they need to adapt to and mitigate climate change in their work. Learn more »

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Let’s Talk About Climate Change

Shaped by survey results from land trusts in 2017, the Alliance partnered with Words That Work on a series of 2018 workshops designed to help land trusts navigate the challenges of communicating about climate change. One takeaway: Framing climate in terms of prosperity, public health or security can be more effective than approaching it as an environmental issue.

“Land trusts need to be ‘culturally sensitive’ when broaching climate change,” says Greg Abernathy, executive director of the accredited Kentucky Natural Lands Trust. Working in Appalachia, KNLT emphasizes how conservation of a large and connected forested landscape can foster tourism and help create communities that retain and attract the talent needed to transition from a focus on coal to outdoor recreation.

Photo courtesy of Lowcountry Land Trust
Conservation Defense

The Land Trust Alliance’s Conservation Defense Program offers resources, including Terrafirma, a member-owned insurance program, to help land trusts defend protected land from challenges. Learn more »

Spotlight: Terrafirma by the Numbers

Terrafirma reduces a land trust’s exposure to potentially high litigation fees and sends a clear signal that a land trust has the capacity to defend its easements and conserved lands. Moreover, coverage provides participating land trusts with access to a national team of experts.

- Number of Terrafirma members: 511
- Number of acres covered by Terrafirma: 8.6 million acres
- Number of successful Terrafirma challenges since 2013: 352

No Need to Worry

“Ours is a small land trust run by volunteers. Having had two conservation easements violated before the creation of Terrafirma, we find Terrafirma’s insurance and drafting updates for easements highly comforting,” said a note from the trustees of Owl Creek Conservancy (OH) to the Land Trust Alliance in 2018. “Insurance means not only that we can meet our obligations to donors and to protected properties without the worry of exhausting our reserves, but also that legal assistance with national experience and perspective is available to us. We encourage the participation of all land trusts in Terrafirma.”
Training and Education

The Land Trust Alliance trains thousands of land trust people each year. Our programs reflect our commitment to empowering land trusts to do more as their people become more skilled, connected and inspired. Learn more »

Spotlight: Rally

A Rewarding Experience

Each year the Land Trust Alliance brings together thousands of conservationists at Rally: The National Land Conservation Conference, where sessions are taught by experts (our “faculty”) from the land conservation community.

“Rally provided a wonderful professional development and networking opportunity for the staff who attended,” said Ek Ong Kar Singh Khalsa, executive director of the Amah Mutsun Land Trust in California. “We are a young organization and we are learning as we go. Participating in the workshops and seminars at Rally gave our staff a look at how leaders in the field are approaching issues that our organization faces. They also provided practical tips and valuable examples for ways to approach our work. Rally also provided an important platform from which to share our unique work as a Native American land trust.”

“Rally was one of the most rewarding professional experiences of my land trust career.”

— Suzanne Simpson, Land Stewardship Director, Bayou Land Conservancy, Texas (accredited)
Long and Deep Roots

“One of the marvelous features of the tall grass prairie is the long and deep roots that allow the plants to survive through droughts and other harsh conditions,” says Ken Lowder, board president of the accredited Bur Oak Land Trust in Iowa and a participant in the Land Trust Alliance’s Land Trust Leadership Program in the spring of 2018. “The Alliance’s support nurtures Bur Oak Land Trust in a very similar way and we would not be what we are today without your support and guidance. Thank you for helping us to conserve these precious areas for generations to come!”

“The Alliance’s investments in organizational development have transformed our land trust from a startup to a well-organized, professional, maturing organization.”

— Gavin Ricklefs, Executive Director, Bitter Root Land Trust, Montana (accredited)

Accreditation

Voluntary accreditation provides independent verification that land trusts meet the high standards for land conservation, stewardship and nonprofit management. Learn more »

Opening Doors

Linda Garrett, executive director of Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust in New York, knows how important partnerships are to getting more done with less. “But before we were accredited there were some state agencies that had doubts about our ability; we weren’t invited to the table.” When Tug Hill became accredited, Garrett received a call from a regional agency director. “He said, ‘I have a project I want to partner on with you.’”

The report “An Impact Evaluation of the Land Trust Accreditation Program’s First Ten Years” confirms that the time and money invested by land trusts, the Alliance and volunteer commissioners over the past decade has clearly mattered.
About Us

The staff, board of directors and leadership of the Land trust Alliance form the heart of its mission. Learn more »

Supporters

The Land Trust Alliance thanks all of our generous supporters, who together make countless successes in land conservation happen. Learn more »

Faculty

The Land Trust Alliance thanks the faculty who have taught at our local, regional and national events. Learn more »

Strategic Plan

The Land Trust Alliance’s strategic plan for 2018-2022 focuses on four big conservation goals: advancing the relevance, rate, rigor and resilience of land conservation. Learn more »

Awards Program

The Land Trust Alliance Awards program seeks to honor the innovative work of our member land trusts and land conservationists across the nation. Learn more »

Join Us

Join us in our efforts to ensure that land trusts continue their critical work to empower Americans to conserve our lands, our waters, our wildlife and our ways of life. Learn more »
Financial Overview

I am pleased to report that in 2018 the Land Trust Alliance had a positive year financially with $14.4 million in revenue. Total net assets decreased marginally to $18.4M due to an increase in accrued expenses for direct grants to land trusts.

Total expenses of $15.3 million include $4.0 million in direct grants, scholarships and awards to land trusts and other conservation organizations for organizational and leadership development, community conservation and innovative conservation projects. The Land Trust Accreditation Commission achieved a modest operating surplus while developing a new accreditation management system. Our combined balance sheet remains strong and liquid. Programmatic efficiency remains solid at 83.6%.

The Alliance’s complete, audited financial statements, which contain an unqualified audit opinion, are available at www.landtrustalliance.org/2018-annual-report or by request to info@lta.org.

Chase Warden
Chief Operating & Financial Officer
Land Trust Alliance
Land Trust Alliance Supporters

The Land Trust Alliance is deeply grateful to our generous supporters who make our work possible.

Special appreciation goes to donors supporting the Alliance through corporate matching programs and workplace campaigns and to the many land trusts that made charitable contributions above and beyond their member dues.

Please contact donate@ita.org for questions regarding your listing.

* indicates new and continuing multi-year gifts and pledges
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