HARNESSING THE POWER OF THE SUN

Finding Common Ground
Working with Corporations
Siting Solar Projects: The Right Power in the Right Place

By Marina Schauffler

Land trusts are stepping forward to help guide the design and siting of new solar facilities, always keeping top-of-mind the preservation of agricultural, ecological and other conservation resources.

ON THE COVER:
Sunset over the Roan Highlands, parts of which the accredited Southern Appalachian Highlands Conservancy has protected. SAHC Roan Seasonal Ecologist Travis Bordley is an accomplished photographer.

TRAVIS BORDLEY
DEPARTMENTS

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Our Most Important Asset

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OUR MISSION
To save the places people need and love by strengthening land conservation across America.

THE LAND TRUST ALLIANCE REPRESENTS MORE THAN 1,300 LAND TRUSTS AND PROMOTES VOLUNTARY LAND CONSERVATION TO BENEFIT COMMUNITIES THROUGH CLEAN AIR AND WATER, FRESH LOCAL FOOD, NATURAL HABITATS AND PLACES TO REFRESH OUR MINDS AND BODIES.

www.landtrustalliance.org SAVINGland Fall 2019 3
LAND IS THE FUTURE.

“Land trusts are in it for perpetuity. Having attended Rally: The National Land Conservation Conference for 22 years—with my parents volunteering at many—and having visited dozens of land trusts, I am always inspired by the incredible work and dedication of this community. My planned gift to the Alliance is my way to say thank you and help ensure the future of land conservation.”

— ANDY WEAVER, LAND TRUST ALLIANCE
Senior IT Manager, Legacy Society Member
(Pictured with his parents, Joe and Betty Weaver)
This summer the staff of the Land Trust Alliance gathered for a retreat to discuss the future of the Alliance, land conservation and our role in shaping both.

The retreat reminded me that the Alliance’s most important asset is the 60-person team consisting of people from across the country who care passionately about helping land trusts. As I told staff at the retreat, they are the most hard-working and dedicated colleagues I’ve ever had.

We kicked off by sharing what inspires, excites and motivates each of us to work at the Alliance, and I shared my three primary reasons:

• I want to make sure there are places for wild things to thrive in this world.
• I want a stable climate for myself and for those I love.
• I want to live in a world characterized by integrity rather than corruption.

Working at the Alliance allows me to achieve each of these goals. Our member land trusts save wildlife habitat every day, and the Alliance is helping land trusts prioritize the protection of those habitats that will remain resilient to climate change, both for the benefit of wildlife and people. Our Land and Climate Program goes further by helping land trusts understand the important role that natural climate solutions play in mitigating climate change, and the Alliance is actively exploring ways to bring more carbon market revenues to land trusts to power their conservation work.

My third reason requires a bit of explanation. Like so many people, I am concerned that we are living in an age of impunity characterized by a lack of consequences for those who break the rules. Unfortunately, the world of private land conservation has not been left unscathed as a few bad actors continue to abuse the federal tax incentive for conservation easement donations to generate obscene profits. But the Alliance is leading the fight to stop this abuse and we are making progress in Congress to achieve that end through passage of the Charitable Conservation Easement Program Integrity Act.

All in all, our staff retreat reminded me of what a privilege it is to work at the Alliance and provide our nation’s land trusts with the capacity, resources and tools to protect the lands that we all need and love. Thank you for making all of this possible through your support of the Alliance.

Andrew Bowman
Fighting Climate Change with Agroecology

In 2016, Park City, Utah, adopted North America’s most ambitious climate goal of reaching net-zero carbon emissions by 2030. Historic farmland protected and managed by the accredited Summit Land Conservancy is now part of that effort. The conservancy is collaborating on a project to regenerate and restore life at the 116-acre McPolin Farmlands.

Other than haying every summer, the iconic local farm has not been managed for agriculture in recent years, but that’s about to change. Park City is working with the conservancy and Bill White Farms to increase the farm’s ability to sequester carbon through agroecology, a holistic approach focused on the health of the entire ecosystem through agricultural practices that increase biodiversity and improve soil health and water quality.

Summit Land Conservancy is responsible for stewardship of the McPolin Farmlands property. “The land was once a farm, and we are excited to expand its historical value while helping in the fight against climate change,” says Executive Director Cheryl Fox. “When we let the cattle graze on McPolin Farmlands, we are working with nature and not against it. Proper grazing will prevent weed overgrowth without herbicides while improving water quality and increasing diversity on the land.”

The Healing Power of Trees

Are trees the answer to saving distressed communities? That was a question posed by Rich Cochran, president and CEO of the accredited Western Reserve Land Conservancy, during a TED talk at Cleveland State University. “We’ve looked at cities and urbanized areas all over the world…The common denominator of success happens to be a healthy tree canopy,” he said.

In many urban and suburban communities, tree canopies are dwindling. Once known as the “Forest City,” Cleveland now has so few trees that the city’s boundaries are visible on Google Earth.

Western Reserve Land Conservancy launched Reforest Our City to reverse the trend. The conservancy works with partners and residents to plant and maintain thousands of trees in Cleveland neighborhoods with the least amount of tree canopy, which tend to be the same areas where poverty and poor health outcomes are concentrated.

The conservancy also helped draft the Cleveland Tree Plan, which aims to increase Cleveland’s tree canopy from 19% to 30% by 2040. The goal is not only to improve the health and well-being of citizens but also to address climate change.

“By planting new trees in the city and training residents to take care of them, we’re helping combat the effects of climate change by reducing the urban heat island effect,” says Jim Rokakis of the conservancy’s Thriving Communities Institute. “In addition, more trees will absorb more stormwater, preventing flooding and erosion.”

Cochran adds, “In cities trees are essential infrastructure; they make everything better—human health outcomes are better, educational outcomes are better, crime is reduced, stress is lower, more stormwater is absorbed and communities become more cohesive. Trees really are the answer.”
Making Nature Accessible to All

Access to nature is important for everyone, including people with vision and mobility challenges. In May the accredited Southwest Michigan Land Conservancy unveiled a new barrier-free trail at Bow in the Clouds Preserve in Kalamazoo, where the entire community can enjoy the benefits of nature, regardless of age or ability.

“Thanks to generous support from the community, the universal access trail through the grassy upland is finished, along with a viewing platform overlooking the fern wetland and benches along the trail where people can relax and enjoy this beautiful natural area,” says Executive Director Peter Ter Louw. “In the project’s second phase, we are working to create barrier-free access down and into the wetland with a boardwalk.”

Plans to make the preserve barrier-free were developed in cooperation with the Disability Network Southwest Michigan.

The loop trail is smooth and level to make it easier for people with wheelchairs, walkers or visual challenges to navigate. A new trailhead is oriented so that it can be experienced from a standing or sitting position, and the wetland overlook platform accommodates wheelchairs and classroom lessons. •

Partnering on Podcasts

“A s we sat there, we felt at such ease. The rustling of the leaves, the birds chirping and the buzzing of bees,” rhymed Hanover College student Matthew Baggot on a podcast hosted by Oak Heritage Conservancy, which protects land and nature in southeastern Indiana.

The podcast, one of nine in the Nature Seek series posted by the conservancy on its website and via the streaming service Soundcloud, takes listeners on a journey through the 120-acre preserved Hilltop Farm, guided by students taking a class called “Community, Nature and Politics.”

“The students are doing a service-learning project for Oak Heritage, where they create podcasts and videos inviting the public to visit our nature preserves. It’s such an excellent partnership,” says Liz Brownlee, executive director.

In another podcast from the series, Hanover College students narrate a trip through Hall-Carmer Wetlands, exploring the unique habitat of the small family farm donated to the conservancy in 2012. The students highlight the nature preserve’s marshy fields, open forests and amphibian-filled pond where visitors hike, bird-watch and enjoy the natural beauty of Indiana.

Explore the podcasts and videos at https://oakheritageconservancy.org/findparks/nature-seek-podcast. •

Hanover College students record sound for an Oak Heritage Conservancy podcast about Hall-Carmer Wetlands.
The Benefits of Buffers

When an Apache helicopter from Fort Drum, a U.S. Army base in Jefferson County, New York, made an emergency landing on farmland due to poor visibility during a training exercise last spring, pilots were fortunate to find a safe place to touch down. The farm they landed on, owned by the Platt family, had been protected by the accredited Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust and the Army Compatible Use Buffer (ACUB) Program, which conserves buffer areas around military installations by purchasing conservation easements from willing landowners.

The purpose of the program is to limit the use or development of property near the Fort Drum installation to agriculture and forestry, minimizing encroachment while protecting conservation values and open space.

“This incident showed exactly why we are working with the Army to protect a buffer around Fort Drum. Landing in a farm field is so much better than landing on someone’s house or business,” says Linda Garrett, executive director of Tug Hill Tomorrow, which runs the Fort Drum Army Compatible Use Buffer Program along with the Army and the accredited Ducks Unlimited.

Since 1999, the local buffer program has protected 28 farms and 8,484 acres of working farmland. “The ACUB Program strengthens our local farming community by providing financial resources to these farm families,” says Garrett.

The Community Garden/Healthy Food Connection

This year on opening day of the Roosevelt Community Garden in Nassau County, New York, students, volunteers and North Shore Land Alliance staff members weeded, raked and planted more than 49 garden beds.

Last year, when the accredited North Shore Land Alliance, in partnership with Nassau County, first opened the garden on Long Island’s south shore, it gave community members the chance to grow their own affordable organic produce. The garden is also a learning center where students are taught about the connection of land, agriculture and a healthy lifestyle.

“We signed up for a garden bed this year so we could be more in control of what we were eating and be more in control of our budget,” said Chris Schilling, a new gardener who attended the opening with his son.

The garden is on a 10,000-square-foot lot owned by Nassau County. Two wooden storage sheds were added to the garden this year as well as a 6-foot wood perimeter fence and communal garlic bed. The garden also offers vertical growing for herbs.

The garden drew the welcome attention of the press. “We were proud to be mentioned in Newsday,” says Lisa Ott, executive director of North Shore Land Alliance. The online article, “Long Island parents share secrets to getting kids to eat well,” featured Jennette Watt, a nurse from Roosevelt who grows vegetables and herbs in the community garden. The article quotes Watt as saying she wanted her sons to see where fresh food comes from. “I wanted them to grasp the concept that it’s OK to get your hands in the soil.” She believes that “if parents practice it, kids will definitely follow.”

Children from Memorial Presbyterian Church Vacation Bible School attend an educational program led by a volunteer master gardener and garden member Audrey Thomas (back row with straw hat) at the Roosevelt Community Garden.
Saving Maine’s Lobsters

Few foods are more closely associated with Maine than lobster. It’s alarming to think this valued American crustacean could eventually thrive only in Canadian waters, dealing a devastating blow to Maine’s economy.

The problem is warming ocean temperatures in the Atlantic, which are sending lobsters north toward colder climates. Over the past decade, southern lobster fisheries along Long Island and Connecticut have seen their catch drop due to lobsters moving north into Maine, which hauled record catches during the same time period.

But now Maine lobstermen are starting to worry. Lobsters are moving north at a rate of 43 miles per decade, so it could only be 30 years or so until Maine lobsters completely relocate to Canadian waters.

The accredited Georges River Land Trust is one of the partners in the Maine Coastal Observing Alliance, a consortium of local citizen groups working to build a regional perspective on water quality. With good reliable data, the information can help local communities explore other fisheries, like shellfish and seaweed aquaculture, to diversify income if the local lobster fishery collapses. “There is nothing more valuable in making informed decisions about the future of our coastal economy and ecosystem than good information, which, in turn, is collected by citizens in the community who become the advocates for healthy water,” says Annette Naegel, director of conservation at the Georges River Land Trust. Through the alliance, citizen scientists are collecting information about the health of the Maine coast to inform decisions about how to proceed with changing acidification and warming temperatures related to climate change.

A Megaphone in the Forest?

In a forest clearing in Estonia, architecture students installed three giant wooden megaphones several years ago. Why? The conical structures provide shelter for hikers, allowing them to relax and meditate to the amplified sounds of nature.

The project, “A Nature Megaphone Art Estonia,” inspired Little Traverse Conservancy’s technology and stewardship coordinator, Charles Dawley, as a creative idea he wanted to replicate in one of the conservancy’s northern Michigan nature preserves. After the Petoskey High School Building Trades Class agreed to do the construction, the megaphone was installed in June 2019.

How to best use it? “Simply crawl inside, lie still and stay quiet,” says Dawley. “The design amplifies sounds filtering into the opening and lets you focus on your senses in a deeper way.”

The nature megaphone resides at the Agnes S. Andreae/Boyd B. Banwell Nature Preserve complex along the Pigeon River. See https://landtrust.org/agnes-s-andreae-nature-preserve.
When you hear the terms “dark,” “devious” and “disturbing,” you may think one is describing Hollywood’s next big fall blockbuster, but increasingly these terms are being used to describe the growing political practice of “astroturfing.” The practice is not new: The term was coined by former U.S. Sen. Lloyd Bentsen of Texas in 1985 to describe the way people or organizations hide their true purpose under a mantle of artificial grassroots support. Recently, it has become a more common occurrence within the conservation community.

“Over the past several years, our members have alerted us to newly formed entities claiming to represent the voice of land conservation,” says Land Trust Alliance Executive Vice President Wendy Jackson. “On the surface, these groups espouse goals that are in line or compatible with the Alliance, but when you really take a good look at who they are and what they represent—and I urge our members to do so—you see the experts they deploy and views they disseminate are in drastic contrast to the charitable interests that our respective organizations were founded upon.”

What’s at Risk?
Astroturf organizations are very good at cloaking their intent in rhetoric that echoes the language of land trusts, resulting in legitimate conservation organizations falling prey. Groups have aligned with astroturf organizations in good faith only to pay a price when their names and reputations are used to advance causes and activities they find objectionable. To ensure that your land trust is not the next organization to fall for these deceptive tactics, you need to be able to distinguish legitimate conservation organizations from
those formed solely for political gain. So I thought I’d share some of the sophisticated techniques employed by these faux grassroots groups.

What’s in a Name?
Individuals involved in astroturfing may use a variety of methods to make it appear they belong to a legitimate grassroots organization. One of the more common techniques involves establishing nonprofits with deliberately misleading names. In our community, that might include having terms like “conservation,” “grasslands,” “wetlands” or even “land trust” in their title. For example, consider the Coalition for American Land Trusts. Sounds legitimate, right? But, in fact, it’s a nonexistent organization I just made up, which proves the point that you can’t determine the merits of an organization solely by its name. Alas, this is not the only tactic utilized by astroturbers.

Who Needs an Address?
While legitimate grassroots organizations will always list a permanent office address on their websites, groups that utilize astroturfing may shield themselves by either not listing an address or choosing to list one belonging to a law or public relations firm employed by funders of the group. To evaluate whether a group is genuine or not, it’s important to first determine if the organization has a listed address. Should you find one, the next step is determining if that address also belongs to any other entities. This often can be done through a simple internet search. What you find may surprise you.

Pay Attention to Who’s Behind the Curtain
In addition to masking themselves behind innocuous-sounding names and ambiguous addresses, another common practice of astroturf groups is hiding the names of their members and board. This is often done to make it difficult to identify who is funding or directing the group’s activities. Legitimate conservation groups like the Land Trust Alliance almost always make their membership, board and supporter information publicly accessible.

The Alliance’s findalandtrust.org website is updated regularly to reflect the latest membership roster, and annual reports explicitly acknowledge all supporter donations of $50 and up. In addition, the Alliance has a dedicated website listing all of its board and staff members. While these transparent efforts may sound like standard nonprofit practices, they are rarely implemented by astroturf organizations, so this is one quick way to identify a possible astroturfer. And while you’re checking for members and supporters, you might also check how long an organization has been in place. While longevity is no guarantee of legitimacy, and a short history does not indicate fraudulent behavior, many astroturfing organizations have been in place only a short time.

Be Skeptical
Organizations involved in astroturfing are increasingly becoming smarter and more sophisticated. For example, to lend credibility to their views, they seek third-party validation of their positions, recruiting so-called “experts” or individuals who express support for their policies. These experts could be lobbyists, have advanced degrees, work in a relevant field or simply have a flashy résumé that positions them as knowledgeable and respected leaders on a specific topic or issue. Sometimes these individuals—especially in the case of lobbyists—are paid, but sometimes they have been duped into voicing support for a position or cause that they don’t actually agree with. As a result, it’s important that land trusts always listen carefully to what is being said, how it’s being said and who’s doing the talking when approached by these organizations.

Steps You Can Take to Stop Astroturfing
While it is on all of us to make an effort to not let astroturfing hinder our work to save the places people need and love, there are some simple steps you can take right away to ensure that you or your land trust don’t fall prey to astroturf organizations:

• Do your research. If you are approached by an unfamiliar organization, use a charity-rating website like GuideStar or Charity Navigator to learn more about the organization. Not only do these websites provide scores and ratings for hundreds of nonprofits, they also provide access to IRS Forms 990, which can help your land trust identify major funding sources and leadership structures for these organizations. If you don’t find the group listed, it could very well be a red flag that the group is operating as an astroturf organization.

• Ask important questions. Whether it’s understanding how long an organization has been around, who its members are or simply what its mission is, asking the tough questions can help you avoid pitfalls. Should the organization respond to many of your questions by saying that information is private or deflecting to another topic, be wary.

• Read the fine print. Make sure you read all of the organization’s materials and positions. In many cases you may agree with 90% of what an organization promotes, but that last 10% could be critical and may, in fact, represent the focus of the organization’s priorities.

• Let your conscience guide your decision-making. Only you and your land trust can determine whether joining a coalition or partnering with another organization is the right decision. Doing your research and asking the important questions can help guide you in the right direction.

• Check with us. The Alliance has additional resources available that can help safeguard you and your land trust. If you have questions about an opportunity or organization, reach out to us at policy@lta.org.

While the practice of astroturfing is not expected to cease anytime soon, being mindful, cautious and educated when dealing with new or unknown entities can ensure that your land trust does not inadvertently find itself supporting a cause that conflicts with its mission.
Building Resilient, Just Communities

During the summer, staff of the accredited Conservation Trust for North Carolina visited the small town of Princeville that has been repeatedly devastated by floodwaters. In 1999, Hurricane Floyd caused the Tar River to rise and the town was submerged. In 2016, Hurricane Matthew brought heavy flooding again. Princeville has yet to recover from either catastrophe.

This story is similar to the plight of many towns in North Carolina and across the country. Princeville is unique, though, in being the oldest town incorporated by African Americans in the nation. They were given few options for land on which to settle after emancipation. Since 1885, the people of Princeville have weathered many storms, and not just meteorological ones. Their resilience is deep, yet its limits are strained.

The town lies at the intersection of three issues that have been growing in urgency for CTNC: climate, community and equity.

Every piece of land we hope to protect is being affected by a more volatile climate. Not just hurricanes, as in Princeville, but also droughts, fires, infestations and other extremes. We have already incorporated climate resilience models into our planning. We must go further. Land conservation can help with the rising climate crisis by storing carbon to reduce long-term effects and by providing increased natural resilience to inevitable changes.

We are inspired by the many land trusts who already make innovative connections between community needs and conservation. We commit ourselves to leading with questions before answers, and to working alongside neighbors often given no voice in decisions affecting them. The process of building trust will take years of work and lots of humility.

Humility also requires us to admit the limitations of conservation. Our system of land ownership and use has too often excluded and disregarded entire communities of people. Again, Princeville is symbolic. Our work must honor the stories of black, indigenous and other people of color who have felt the loss of access to productive land for living, farming and for preserving their heritage. Land is at the core of racial and other inequities. We must ensure that we don’t worsen those realities and ultimately help change the system for the better.

Our staff and board embrace this new strategic vision. It builds on CTNC’s history of bringing together uncommon alliances. Our goal is to conserve land in ways that inspire and enable people to build resilient, just communities. Led by our values, we will continuously learn, share, admit and care.

Many of our plans are new and yet to be verified. So we’ve entered our experiment mindful that it will often be more about how we work than what we do.

History dictated that Princeville be in the floodplain of a river. We can’t change history. But, using the power of community and conservation together, we can change the future.
WE’RE ALL EARS!

Saving Land is your magazine and we want to hear from you.

It’s been a while since we’ve asked for feedback from our readers. The last Saving Land reader survey was conducted more than seven years ago. To ensure we’re covering the topics that matter most to you, we invite you to take a brief survey.

Please read the latest issue of Saving Land to familiarize yourself with the types of content, and then tell us what you think about the magazine.

To participate in the survey:

➤ Go to www.lta.org/savingland and click the link to the online survey.

➤ Whether you’re a land trust staff member, board member, volunteer, supporter or other stakeholder in the land trust community, your input will help us shape Saving Land to better address your needs.

➤ The survey should only take about 10 minutes of your time.

THE DEADLINE IS WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 23.

For more details about the survey please visit www.lta.org/savingland

If you have any questions about the survey or the magazine please contact:

• Christina Soto, Senior Editor & Content Manager — csoto@lta.org

• Elizabeth Ward, Vice President of Communications — eward@lta.org
Right plant, right place. That favored principle of gardeners, which guides landscape design, applies to siting renewable energy installations like solar farms: Even “right power” needs to go in the “right place.”

Land trusts are stepping forward to help guide the design and siting of new solar facilities, recognizing that a rapid transition to renewable energy is vital to sustaining natural ecosystems and human communities. Drawing on their ecological expertise and negotiation skills, they are working to ensure that solar installations minimize disturbances to wildlife habitat, wetlands and productive agricultural areas.

Engagement with energy projects can be a natural step for organizations already committed to advocacy and policy work, but for some land trusts it represents a new—and not always comfortable—challenge. “To help them become a voice for conservation in renewable power development, we created a guide, Reshaping the Energy Future, and a set of practical pointers for siting renewable power projects on conservation easement lands,” says Kelly Watkinson, manager of the Land Trust Alliance’s Land and Climate Program, which was funded by a generous $1 million catalyst grant from the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation in 2017.

Drawing on land trust experiences in New York, the guide holds lessons for land trusts nationwide. “In New York it’s no longer a question of if my land trust will be impacted by energy siting, but when,” says Meme Hanley, Alliance New York Program manager. “Reshaping the Energy Future offers land trusts of every size practical ways they can influence siting decisions.” (See Resources & Tools on page 34 for links to resources mentioned in this article.)

Complementing these resources are stories from the field, gathered here from land trusts working to accelerate renewable power adoption without compromising the integrity of place.

From Theory to Practice
Terri Lane, executive director at the accredited Northwest Arkansas Land Trust (NWALT), was aware of the important role land trusts can play in clean energy siting from Rally sessions and land trust discussions, but until recently this was not an immediate concern in her area. Then
one day a local preservation advocacy group
told her that the City of Fayetteville—
where the land trust is located—was plan-
ning a large solar installation on what Lane
calls “one of the last pockets of unplowed
virgin prairie left in the area.”

Teaming up with the advocacy group, NWALT met with the city’s mayor.
Fayetteville was the first city in Arkansas
to commit to 100% renewable energy by
2030, and the proposed solar construction
on city-owned land would offset electricity
use at wastewater facilities that represent
two-thirds of municipal consumption.

The meeting went very well, she says, in
part because the land trust already had a
constructive working relationship with city
administrators. “It’s definitely important to
establish those relationships in advance,”
Lane says.

“We applauded their intent,” Lane recalls,
“and came prepared with an alternative
site”—an adjacent city-owned parcel with
no significant agricultural or ecological
value. Although construction at that site
would cost more, the city agreed to
relocate its planned solar installation.

NWALT encouraged the city to go a step
further, permanently protecting the original
prairie parcel as another means to sequester
carbon. City officials agreed, and the land
trust is now completing a conservation
easement and land management agreement
and planning a small walking trail on the
land where area residents can enjoy birding
and rare plants (over 200 plant species were
identified in a recent “botany blitz”).

It was affirming, Lane says, to have such
a clear “win-win” resolution. Not all land
trusts, though, get to work on solar projects
with willing partners.

Not Backing Down
The accredited New Jersey Conservation
Foundation first learned through a news
story of a plan to clearcut 92 acres of
pine barren woodlands for a theme park’s
solar installation.

Michele Byers, NJ Conservation’s
executive director, acknowledges that it’s
“uncomfortable opposing a solar project,”
but five years earlier, NJ Conservation
had persuaded the state’s Board of Public
Utilities to provide incentives for solar
development on rooftops, parking lots and
brownfields, guiding new installations
away from productive farmland and
sensitive ecosystems.

So upon news of the theme park plans,
NJ Conservation joined forces with other
groups and requested that the developer
relocate the proposed panels to a carport
over its expansive parking lots. “We got
nowhere in negotiations,” Byers recalls,
and the organizations shifted to litigation,
a process that dragged out over several
years. Finally, the prospect of expiring
federal solar tax incentives helped push the
company toward a settlement.

That agreement, now in effect, Byers
characterizes as “a compromise, a much
better outcome than it would have been
otherwise” but not a conservation victory.
The park will clearcut 40 acres, rather
than 92, and the company has committed
to donate a conservation easement on 150
acres of forested wetland. Solar panels will
span three vast parking lots and addi-
tional acreage in what is to become the
state’s largest net-metered solar project—
supplying 98% of the theme park’s power.

Since the settlement, NJ Conservation
has been working to support advancement
of solar and other clean, renewable sources
of energy and to strengthen state solar
siting guidelines. It worked as part of a
coalition to secure passage of landmark clean
energy legislation last year that will bring
offshore wind to New Jersey and expand solar
energy, and then secured strong siting guide-
lines as part of the new Community Solar
Pilot Program.

Byers sees value in resources like the
Alliance’s new renewable energy guide. It
makes no sense, she says, for “groups to be
going it on their own, one at a time.”

Local Enhancement
Dave Clutter, executive director of
the accredited Driftless Area Land
Conservancy in Wisconsin, recalls vividly
the day that his conservation director, Amy
Alstad, came into his office with a strikingly
simple question. Following months of work
against a high-transmission energy corridor that would cross conserved lands, she asked, “What are we for?”

That question prompted the land trust to consider how it might “work proactively with solar installers,” Clutter says, and help easement holders develop larger solar systems—provided those installations were sited carefully and inter-planted with pollinator habitat.

Alstad is now at work on guidelines for solar developers, and is undertaking topographic analyses of the land trust’s service region to find the marginal croplands best suited for renewable energy sites.

Driftless is also exploring the possibility of creating an “energy district”—modeled after one in Iowa’s Winneshiek County—that could help build local momentum for an energy transition by offering energy audits, weatherization assistance and planning for small-scale renewable projects. “What’s very appealing to us as a land conservancy is the local ownership and local economic enhancement opportunities, given that it’s difficult for folks to make a living in southwest Wisconsin,” notes Chuck Tennessen, Driftless’s community organizer. “It might be just the right kind of fit for us.”

While Driftless is actively promoting these initiatives, it has chosen not to take a public stand on a newly approved solar project in its service region, a large installation that is the biggest project yet east of the Mississippi River. It would have no direct bearing on any conserved land, Clutter says, and “the board shied away from a formal endorsement so as not to complicate the power line issue.”

**Scaling Up**

Questions of scale are taking on added significance in New York, which recently committed to get 70% of its electricity from carbon-free sources by 2030 (known as 70 by ’30), the highest target for that date of any state. That ambitious goal will mean “building bigger megawatts,” both to accommodate increased energy use and replace electric generation now reliant on fossil fuels, says Audrey Friedrichsen, land use and environmental advocacy attorney with the accredited Scenic Hudson.

Land trusts, she adds, are caught in an “interesting position” simultaneously advocating for greater climate resilience while seeking to limit the impact that new facilities have on existing preserves, historic viewsheds and sensitive ecosystems. The driving question becomes, “How can we meet those two goals here?”

In March 2018, Scenic Hudson released a renewable energy siting guide at a “Solar-smart Hudson Valley” symposium with land trusts and solar developers. “Everyone agrees with the siting principles in concept,” Friedrichsen says, “but the devil is always in the details.” (Scenic Hudson’s guide inspired the Alliance to create its own.)

“Zoning for these projects is extremely difficult,” she notes, “so a second guide to help with that is due out this fall. Scenic Hudson is also advocating for a broader land-use planning effort to happen in conjunction with the 70 by ’30 buildout.”

**Promoting Smartly**

For the accredited Nature Conservancy’s North Carolina Chapter, best practices for siting solar are not fixed but evolving.
Liz Kalies, director of science, says Conservancy staff knew early on that they wanted to “promote solar—but smartly” and they found many other agencies and groups in the state “coming to the same level of awareness.” Collectively, they organized the North Carolina Pollinator Conservation Alliance so they could take a coordinated approach to determining best practices and sharing those findings with solar developers.

Kalies gives solar developers great credit for collaborating in the process, consistently being “receptive, interested and generous with their time.” Many projects are located on former agricultural land, and the Conservancy is working to restore some conservation value to those sites by fostering wildlife and pollinator habitat.

To help solar developers create pollinator-rich sites, the pollinator alliance has produced technical guidance on appropriate native plantings. Several renewable energy trade associations in the state have helped share that guidance with members, says Tiffany Hartung, the chapter’s climate and energy policy manager.

The Conservancy is now undertaking research at several solar sites to test how different fencing options might minimize wildlife impact by allowing for animal movement through facilities. The industry is still figuring out this challenge, Kalies says, whereas the support for pollinators is “a little more established.”

**Getting to Yes**

The steady succession of floods, droughts, wildfires and invasive species symptomatic of climate disruption serve to reinforce a growing sense of urgency many people feel to facilitate a rapid and responsible energy transformation.

Stakeholders, including local and state governments and clean energy advocacy groups are exploring how to build a clean energy system, how to accelerate large-scale solar and wind development while also preserving agricultural, ecological and other conservation resources. Land trusts are an increasingly important contributor to these efforts, helping to ensure that land conservation considerations are embedded into decision-making processes, that important natural areas are not developed and that environmental impacts are minimized. In addition, land trusts can work with stakeholders to identify places where siting is appropriate, including where conservation and renewable energy development can coexist.

When it comes to advancing solar power generation, Watkinson says, “Land trusts are looking for ways to say yes while keeping conservation top of mind.”

**Elevated Solar: Making Panels More Compatible with Farming**

Solar installations can help farmers—already struggling with erratic weather—by providing back-up power and added income. Research is under way in Germany and Massachusetts on methods that would allow solar panels to coexist on productive agricultural land without diminishing much productivity. Dual use of productive lands could reduce competition for land, provide needed income and increase the site’s overall efficiency (up to 60% in a 2017 pilot done by the Fraunhofer Institute for Solar Energy Systems ISE). In the German study, panels were situated high enough over winter wheat and potatoes (7 to 16 feet) that farm machinery could pass underneath. Under new state incentive, Massachusetts farms have begun adopting “dual-use arrays,” so more data will become available on how elevated panels affect vegetable growing, cattle grazing and hay production. The dual-use panels are “being met with a combination of enthusiasm and skepticism” by the farming community, notes Zara Dowling, a research fellow with UMass Clean Energy Extension. Some farmers welcome the prospect of additional income, she says, while others want to see more research results before they’re convinced.
It’s a conservation group that is very different from what you might expect,” says Zachary Brown, assistant superintendent of Hamilton County Department of Education and former principal of The Howard School in Chattanooga. “It sees people as part of the solution and uses land and its projects to both inspire and heal our community.”

Brown is talking about the accredited Lookout Mountain Conservancy (LMC), which has partnered with The Howard School, an urban public high school with a graduation rate in the mid-60% range, on an Intern and Leadership Program that affords 20 high school students and six college students intensive learning opportunities in a team environment using Lookout Mountain as a classroom.

“We come to LMC bearing every burden the world has placed on us, with nothing but a tool and a dream,” says Hayle Mack, a recent LMC intern. “Every project and task we do at LMC gives us some skill or trait that will be useful at some point in our lives,” says Mack.

“One of the biggest projects we worked on was to get rid of an invasive species,” she says. “I can’t tell you how many times we wanted to give up, yet we kept going for some reason. It was like finishing the project was our beacon of hope, and we wanted to preserve that light; wanting to offer a solution instead of giving up like most people have on us.”

Lookout Mountain Conservancy took on community conservation when its CEO, Robyn Carlton, had an epiphany several years ago. “I thought to myself, ‘What are we missing here?’ The answer was people.”

“With the outside world looking to tear us down... LMC is the stability we all need,” says Mack. “It is more than a job. It is a chance to show the world that we are important. Everything we do matters.”

This spring Mack graduated as valedictorian from The Howard School and is headed to college this fall.

At the Land Trust Alliance, we are building on these community conservation efforts and exploring how the Alliance can continue supporting this important work in the future. The Alliance has been promoting community conservation for several years, and has been collecting stories from around the country. Now, with Common Ground, it seeks to “channel the voices and insights of a broad and diverse range of sectors and stakeholders that serve important complementary roles to the land trust community in building and maintaining healthy and thriving communities,” says Mack.

Creating a Shared Vision for Conservation is a listening and learning initiative that seeks to create a dynamic exchange of information and ideas with land trusts, conservation advocates and individuals and organizations who are new to land conservation,” says Wendy Jackson, executive vice president of the Alliance, who is leading Common Ground. “The initiative is a critically important first step in continuing the land trust community’s collective momentum in making conservation efforts more inclusive, responsive and relevant to the needs of people and communities across the country. Through this initiative, the Alliance seeks to further prepare its members to address some of the most pressing challenges facing conservation while ensuring all people and communities share in its benefits.”

The Alliance has been promoting community conservation for several years, and has been collecting stories from around the country. Now, with Common Ground, it seeks to “channel the voices and insights of a broad and diverse range of sectors and stakeholders that serve important complementary roles to the land trust community in building and maintaining healthy and thriving communities,” says Mack.

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www.landtrustalliance.org  SAVINGland  Fall 2019  19
Standing atop Burnt Mountain, a great arc of the northern Green Mountains embraces you in soft-shouldered beauty stretching from horizon to horizon. Up close, the vivid colors of the fall foliage surround you. This is big, wild country, and you are standing within the largest privately conserved, forever-wild preserve in the state of Vermont.

The nearly 5,500-acre Burnt Mountain forever-wild easement is one of the most significant conservation achievements in Vermont of the past decade. Jointly purchased by The Nature Conservancy* in Vermont and Vermont Land Trust* in 1997, the Conservancy purchased VLT’s stake in the property in 2018, and then in early 2019 donated a forever-wild easement on the property to Northeast Wilderness Trust.*

“While large, wild forests like those on Burnt Mountain provide habitat and clean air and water, they also play a critical role in mitigating the effects of climate change,” says Jon Leibowitz, executive director of Northeast Wilderness Trust. “Protecting this area as forever-wild will give wildlife space to move and adapt to changes caused by climate change. And left alone the trees will grow old and store carbon—providing great benefit to both nature and people.”

The Nature Conservancy intends to enroll Burnt Mountain in California’s regulatory compliance market, making it Vermont’s largest carbon storage project (and the first to be eligible).

“Forests are the big ecosystems here in Vermont,” says Jim Shallow, director of conservation with the Conservancy. “People say we’ll develop a technology to remove carbon. Well, we’ve got that technology; it’s called a tree.”

*Accredited
Karena Mahung, a consultant with Indufor North America who is Common Ground’s technical lead and stakeholder engagement specialist. “There have been monumental shifts in movements that work in parallel to land conservation—equitable development, health, affordable housing, environmental education. Common Ground seeks to shed light on the shining stars and potential partners in other sectors, as well as approaches to more collaborative and equitable forms of conservation.”

Common Ground is a natural extension of the work begun by Rob Aldrich, former community conservation manager. “Rob did a fantastic job educating our land trust members about community conservation when very few knew what it was, or if they did, it wasn’t a priority,” says Jackson. “Common Ground is about shaping the next generation of the Alliance’s community conservation work, as outlined in our strategic plan. Our approach is not about seeking partners to support our work, rather we are seeking ways that the work of land trusts can better support communities and their issues. When we do that, land conservation becomes more relevant, communities thrive and everyone wins.”

“The focus is on putting the community’s voice into long-range plans, so hearing from them is the emphasis—what’s important to them; what do they value?” says Kay Kornmeier, project adviser with the Clarus Consulting Group. “One of the things we know is this idea that community conservation and land conservation are not two separate things. They are both conservation. That’s an important message to spread.”

“We recognize that now we need something much more broad-based, and now is the right time as the Alliance is prepping for our relevance campaign,” says Jackson. “The more we can help folks make connections, the stronger all of our work will be.”

The Alliance has undertaken efforts to better understand the conservation landscape. This research identifies that people are becoming more and more disconnected from the land—many children today have no idea where their food or water comes from, but at the same time research shows that time in nature is critical to childhood development and human health. Jackson says, “Regardless of whether you are concerned about education, physical or mental health, veterans’ health, clean water, climate, jobs, working lands, hunting/fishing, hunger, natural disasters, children, at risk youth or biodiversity—land conservation is a proven and valuable tool.

“MARC ANDERSON continued from page 19

Kay Kornmeier and Karena Mahung, with Clarus Consulting Group and Indufor North America, respectively, presented on the Common Ground Initiative at the Land Trust Alliance’s all-staff retreat this past June.

We want to make the voice of the community an integral part of the way land trusts go about doing the business of conservation.”

– WENDY JACKSON

Kay Kornmeier and Karena Mahung, with Clarus Consulting Group and Indufor North America, respectively, presented on the Common Ground Initiative at the Land Trust Alliance’s all-staff retreat this past June.

MARC ANDERSON

MARC ANDERSON
movement around conservation strategies rooted in the principles of collaboration, justice, equity, diversity and inclusion,” says Jackson.

Listening and Learning
The Common Ground Initiative begins with conversations across the country. The Alliance seeks to gain insight into the ways land trusts can transform their approaches to saving the places people need and love.

Consultants Kornmeier, Mahung and Taylor Cooper, also with Clarus, are gathering input from stakeholders. “The process taking place in 2019 involves engaging people in one-on-one interviews, in focus groups and through online surveys,” says Kornmeier. “We’re approaching land trusts, existing partners and potential partners in areas that are aligned with conservation benefits: health, housing, parks and recreation, social justice, education, resource protection, economic development, job creation, art, agriculture/food, energy, women’s issues—the list goes on.”

She adds, “Demographically, we are seeking to learn from those who represent what America looks like today. And we are asking those contacts, ‘Who else do we need to be talking to? Whose voices can we hear from to better understand how their needs and interests can be supported by the work of land trusts?’”

Jackson notes that Common Ground is guided by a national advisory council with strong geographic, cultural and sectoral diversity and experience, “including leaders who can guide the conversation and ensure we make meaningful connections to important voices, and who can help review the feedback to help us plan for the future.”

Goals and Results
Common Ground’s goal is to empower land trusts and conservation advocates to integrate and elevate community voices to co-author solutions and initiatives that meet community needs and ensure equitable access to the many benefits that land conservation provides. “We want to make the voice of the community an integral part of the way land trusts go about doing the business of conservation,” says Jackson. “Developing relationships with local folks and organizations that advance mutual goals will be the norm.”

Many land trusts already are finding ways to support community groups—such as farmers or ranchers, blue collar workers concerned about jobs, veterans or health advocates. And they are embracing projects that put people at the center, such as community gardens, trails in the urban core or natural disaster mitigation. Common Ground seeks to answer the question: How do we scale these efforts to ensure that all land trusts share in their community’s health and well-being while going about the work of conserving lands?

When the first phase of Common Ground wraps up in 2019, the team will compile the research into a report to the Alliance board of directors that will, in turn, be used to craft a multiyear implementation plan to guide the Alliance’s efforts. The Alliance will share the information with all those who gave of their time, including its land trust members and the community leaders and stakeholders who shared their voices.

“We are excited about the positive feedback we are receiving about Common Ground and the interest people have in knowing what the outcomes will be,” says Jackson. “For now, we are hearing from many voices, which makes defining a specific outcome challenging at this time. What we do know is that the end result will be shared with our stakeholders, and what we learn could expand on the work we’ve already begun or take us in entirely new directions. This year it’s our job to listen and learn.”

Common Ground Guiding Principles
Some of Common Ground’s guiding principles were adapted from the Center for Whole Communities’ “Whole Measures: Transforming Our Vision of Success” and are evolving as the project moves forward. They include:

• Diversity. Diversity is the representation of all our varied identities and differences, collectively and as individuals. We seek to proactively engage, understand and draw on a variety of perspectives. We believe that the solution to the challenges we face as a movement can be found by affirming our similarities, as well as by finding value in our differences.

• Equity. Seeks to ensure fair treatment, equality of opportunity and fairness in access to information and resources for all. We believe this is only possible in an environment built on respect and dignity.

• Inclusion. Builds a culture of belonging by actively inviting the contribution and participation of all people. We believe every person’s voice adds value, and we strive to create balance in the face of power differences. We believe that no one person can or should be called upon to represent an entire community.

• Dialogue. Active listening and learning provide a means to new ways of thinking and working together; exchanges should be rooted in openness, listening for understanding, speaking honestly and suspending judgment.

• Relationships are primary. Our tools and processes must help us see and better understand the relationships between the parts and the whole; the process should first and foremost foster healthy and respectful relationships.
“As a new executive director, I’ve set a goal for myself to increase corporate giving to our mission,” says Jennifer Chandler, executive director of Dumbarton Oaks Park Conservancy in Washington, D.C., in her article “Attracting Corporate Support for Your Nonprofit” on the National Council of Nonprofits’ blog.

“Fundraising gurus tell us that whether you are approaching a large corporation or a small business for support it is just like approaching any other donor,” Chandler says. “You have to build a relationship and discover what they are excited about.”

Land trusts, with their unique assets of place and perpetuity, can be very persuasive about the exciting opportunities they can offer corporations.

Starting on a Local Level
“Corporations are just people who live and work in your communities and care about the same things you do,” Kieran Fleming, executive director of Little Traverse Conservancy (LTC), says. “In Upper Michigan, it’s land conservation that unites us. While they may be large corporations, they have a significant local presence.”

Fleming explains that LTC’s corporate relationship with TransCanada is grounded in shaping the decisionmakers of the future through its environmental education program...
In a program supported by TransCanada, students from the Mackinaw City schools visited the Hathaway Family’s Regina Caeli Nature Preserve to put up a kestrel nesting box, go on compass adventures, learn about plants and build shelters (pictured).  

LITTLE TRaverse CONSERVANCY

in coordination with the Mackinaw City School District.

“We were gifted a property a few years ago in Mackinaw City that had an easement where the TransCanada pipeline crosses, so we talked to people at the company and gradually built a relationship,” Fleming says. “When they heard about our new immersive program in the Mackinaw City schools at a nature preserve within walking distance from the schools, they were very interested. TransCanada chose to give $100,000 to the environmental education portion of our endowment fund, a gift that will support the immersive programming and help us expand it to other schools.”

LTC is able to draw from the investment and take children out to learn on the property. Fleming says, “The primary underlying thought with our education program is that even up here in beautiful North Michigan it’s not as intuitive for kids to get outside and spend hours there as it was when I was a kid. Our belief is that our children have to develop an appreciation for what is so wonderful about northern Michigan if we are going to expect them to be good decision-makers on conservation in the future.”

Building Relationships

Cheryl Fowler, membership director of the accredited Southern Appalachian Highlands Conservancy (SAHC) in Asheville, North Carolina, agrees on the importance of local engagement, and adds that identifying a common element, such as water protection, can be key to building relationships.

SAHC enjoys a strong relationship with local Wicked Weed Brewing. “Wicked Weed is one of our new partners. They brew a beer called Appalachia Session IPA, and they are donating 10% of proceeds from all the sales of that beer to us. This year they hope to make it available in more western states and eventually go national,” Fowler says. “Our name and logo are on the packaging of this beer.”

She says Wicked Weed “sees our corporate partnership growing. They want to invest in the preservation of our local mountains for clean water.”

“Being a local from Western North Carolina and having the ability to grow up hiking the mountains, rafting the rivers and enjoying all the wonders nature brings us, I am thrilled to be partnering with SAHC,” says Wicked Weed founder Ryan Guthy. “As Asheville continues to grow, it is crucial to help preserve what makes this area so special. We need to focus on protecting it now for the generations to come.”

Fowler also talks about a long-term relationship that became something more. Oscar Wong, former owner of Highland Brewing, has been a SAHC member since the ‘70s, “so he was already invested in our mission, but the business had not yet committed.”

“Just building that initial relationship was crucial,” Fowler says. “Oscar would come to events and then a SAHC staff member’s husband started to volunteer his time at Highland and we started to talk about the different ways that we could partner.”

Now Highland, owned by Oscar’s daughter Leah Wong Ashburn, has become a local corporate partner that names its seasonal beers after properties that have been protected by SAHC, “and then we receive a part of the proceeds at the release party. Highland is very proud to support SAHC and that makes us feel good.”

SAHC keeps building relationships with these partners, Fowler says, spending time with them throughout the year, sending them pictures of how their donation has been invested in SAHC and “just making them feel really good by showing them that because of their support, this is what we were able to make happen.”

Also local to North Carolina, SAHC’s partner Mast General Store donates 20% of sales from its Asheville and Waynesville locations every year in support of Land Trust Day, the first Saturday in June. Unique to this relationship is the fact that it also supports other land trusts, and in 2019 Land Trust Day raised money for the accredited Blue Ridge Conservancy (BRC), among others. Communications and outreach associate for the conservancy, Nikki
Robinson, says, “This partnership with Mast Store fits particularly well. The owners are avid conservationists and through their business model they promote values such as cultural heritage, outdoor recreation and community. They are open to creative ways to collaborate and help BRC get our name out into the communities we serve.”

She adds, “They not only support us financially, but the owners donated a 21-acre farm to BRC that sits behind the Original Mast General Store in historic Valle Crucis, North Carolina. We hope to use the land as a showpiece of sustainable agriculture and environmental stewardship. This idea of community conservation will generate new opportunities connecting people to the land and engaging new audiences to support conservation.”

Thinking of Customers

“What we found together was that U-Haul’s customers overwhelmingly wanted to find a way to give back, and over time we began to expand the partnership, from planting trees to protecting forests to ways to support the green economy.”

The partnership may also produce benefits far beyond the region. “The Conservation Fund has planted more than 750,000 trees, which will trap an estimated 450,000 metric tons of carbon dioxide over the next 100 years,” Meredith says.

“To offset our vehicle emissions, U-Haul partners with proven environmental organizations like The Conservation Fund and Tree Canada, offering point-of-sale contribution opportunities to our customers so that carbon-consuming trees may be planted,” says Michelle Sullivan, manager of Corporate Sustainability at U-Haul.

“U-Haul serves customers across North America, so TCF’s national presence was appealing,” she says. “More so, U-Haul appreciates being treated in the same way that we strive to treat our customers—with respect, understanding and caring attention to our goals and challenges. TCF thoroughly vets and facilitates worthy projects supported by U-Haul and our customers’ hard-earned contributions.”

One of TCF’s strengths is truly getting to know its corporate partners, explains Sullivan. “Its staff members do this through diligent communication to ensure the corporation’s goals are being met and suggestions are being offered to evolve the partnership.”

She says TCF does not push its agenda “without understanding first if that agenda fits ours. It excels at finding projects that meet a corporation’s vision within its own mission statement.”

Meredith observes that, in general, “We have found that companies are getting involved in conservation when it affects their supply chain. If we say help us protect 100 acres, they don’t know if that’s big or small, but if we say help us protect the place where your customers get their drinking water, that’s when they can start to have some level of understanding of our being relevant to their company.”

Sullivan says U-Haul is “grateful to all of our customers, Team Members and The Conservation Fund for making a real, positive impact with lasting results for communities, economies and conservation.”
Sharing a Feeling of Responsibility

When the accredited Save Mount Diablo in Walnut Creek, California, was establishing relationships with sponsors, Shell Martinez Refinery was interested because of its social investment program, according to Caleb Castle, Save Mount Diablo communications manager. “Our Discover Diablo program—an educational series of guided hikes held on local preserved lands in the East Bay—was simply a great fit. It incorporates everything they are trying to do with outreach and stewarding the environment and giving back to their community.”

The program, now in its third year sponsored by Shell Martinez Refinery, boasts about a thousand participants each year, with about a quarter of the attendance made up of families. “We were impressed with the public outreach for these hikes, the opportunity for environmental education and a chance to offer an outdoor program that would be attractive to families and individuals with a wide range of abilities,” says Ann Notarangelo, external relations manager with the refinery.

“We enjoy being able to promote Save Mount Diablo and the program, and have shared it through community letters and with our employees,” Notarangelo says. “We are currently planning a video to showcase the partnership. It is nice to be able to highlight something that is important to us.”

Notarangelo has some good advice for land trusts seeking corporate partners: “Sit down and talk! Many of the best programs we are involved in are the result of talking through what the organizations want and seeing how that fits with our refinery’s priorities. It’s even easier to get to ‘yes’ when organizations like Save Mount Diablo come with clear guidance on how the money will be spent, what the benefits of the program will be and how many people will be reached or impacted. More and more companies are asking for metrics. Save Mount Diablo makes it easy to give and to understand how the social investment we make on behalf of our employees is reaching its objectives.”

Meeting the Bottom Line

Several recent studies have measured how consumer purchase decisions are increasingly influenced by brands’ social purpose and impact, and corporations stand to gain on many levels by showing their involvement in things that are good for everyone. For instance, 66% of consumers—and 73% of millennials—are willing to pay more for sustainable goods. Overall, 75% of Americans are particularly concerned about helping the environment as they go about their daily lives.

Another study found that 88% of consumers would buy a product from a purpose-driven company and 78% would tell others to buy products from purpose-driven companies, with the environment ranking as the number one cause consumers want companies to support.

This research makes the case that land trusts and corporations have a lot of reasons to get together. Other benefits to corporations include nonpartisan relationships, strong ties to local leaders, ways to support quality of life and resources needed for work in communities where employees and customers live.

“The stories we’ve shared here are such good examples where everyone wins,” says Land Trust Alliance Corporate Relations Manager Marissa Max. “We hope the word spreads that land trusts and corporations make great partners for achieving common goals.”

ENDNOTES
1 https://www.councilofnonprofits.org/thought-leadership/attracting-corporate-support-your-nonprofit

A Menu of Partnerships

There are a variety of ways for nonprofits to connect with corporations, including some of the following:

**Corporate Philanthropy:** Corporate underwriting or investment in a nonprofit’s strategic initiatives or general operating support without expectations of direct corporate gain.

**Marketing Partnership** (also called “cause-related marketing”): A marketing partnership between a business and a nonprofit entity that links a corporate brand to a charity’s cause to advance both business interests and provide benefits to society (may be regulated in your state).

**Corporate Practices:** Working with corporations to transform the impact of key industries (such as decreasing waste or water use).

**Corporate Sponsorship:** Support for a nonprofit’s strategic initiatives or operating costs that is recognized by the nonprofit with a public acknowledgment of the company’s support.
Do you have your financial adviser on speed dial? If not, it may be time to reprogram your phone. Financial advisers have become allies in conservation—a ready resource for expertise and advice to aid in your outreach to landowners.

We all know that preserving land forever can be a scary prospect for landowners, especially if that land is their major financial asset and they have retirement or children to consider. Furthermore, many landowners don’t realize that conservation can actually help them achieve their financial goals. A financial adviser can help landowners see that conservation can make fiscal sense, making their decision and your land trust’s job much easier.

Linda Mead, president and CEO of the accredited D&R Greenway Land Trust in New Jersey, knows firsthand how financial advisers can smooth the way for conservation. Twenty-two years ago, Mead and Wade Martin, financial adviser and executive director of Wealth Management at Morgan Stanley in Lawrenceville, New Jersey, came together to educate landowners on how they can simultaneously conserve their land and meet their financial goals. The results have been impressive—over 2,500 acres representing more than a half dozen transactions conserved in a rapidly developing area in central New Jersey. Their latest success is a small but highly visible landmark farm on a busy road corridor in the town where Martin grew up, making it an especially rewarding achievement.

A Double Pitch
Mead and Martin work together to identify properties ideal for conservation and then develop a personalized approach that helps landowners achieve their land goals—whether it’s earning an income from their land or outlining an estate plan that meets their family’s needs.

“It’s a tremendous asset for us to have a financial planner working with us to go out and speak to landowners about the financial aspects of a deal,” says Mead. She notes that it makes a difference when they talk about the different tools and techniques that are often used in estate planning and other financial work that can be applied to conservation deals.
“In the past, land trusts would knock on the door of landowners and say, ‘Do you want to preserve your land?’ and the conversation would often stop there because either the funds weren’t available or the landowner’s advisers had no understanding of conservation benefits,” says Martin. “We realized if we went in and also presented a few examples of how the landowners could benefit from their land, we were much better off.”

Building Relationships
To develop a fruitful landowner/financial adviser relationship to advance your mission there are three key steps:

1. **Seek out a local, conservation-minded financial adviser interested in a long-term relationship.** “It’s important to find a financial adviser who is rooted in the community, who cares about the land and really wants to see it preserved,” says Mead. Board members can play a key role in this search. The financial adviser’s willingness to work with you should not be based on getting paid. Also, be wary of advisers who promote projects involving the allocation of tax deductions.

2. **Understand it’s all about how the landowner benefits in the end.** “Every landowner has something different they want to accomplish,” says Martin. “Some people want to leave a legacy; some people want a tax deduction; some people need immediate income; and some people want to make sure their children are taken care of. You’ve got to sit down and help them figure out exactly what they want by talking through their hopes and dreams.”

3. **Know your roles and be up-front with landowners to build trust.** When you start the process with a landowner, be frank about the financial adviser’s role. “I will let them know that this is a financial adviser who has been working with D&R Greenway, and who has helped us complete a number of land transactions by bringing tools and techniques to the table,” Mead notes. It’s important to explain there’s no obligation, and this person is working to preserve land in their community on the land trust’s behalf. Be sure to encourage landowners to also have their own adviser take a look at everything prepared.

Once you and the financial adviser meet with the landowner to learn more about their goals, excuse yourself when the conversation turns to specifics about the landowner’s financial situation. The financial adviser is the only one who should stay in the room with the landowner to learn more about the landowner’s financial profile and to explain their financial options.

Changing the Conversation
Attending training taught by Mead and Martin was helpful to the accredited Freshwater Land Trust in Alabama, says former

Morgan Stanley Financial Adviser Wade Martin and D&R Greenway Land Trust President and CEO Linda Mead previously offered Land College, an in-person training program that paired land trusts with financial advisers. Although the program is no longer offered, both Martin and Mead are available for questions from land trusts at lmead@drgreenway.org or Wade.Martin@morganstanley.com.
Executive Director Wendy Jackson, now executive vice president of the Land Trust Alliance. She gained an understanding of the various tax savings and financial incentives that could interest landowners who had previously declined to give. When she informed one potential donor about the tax-savings benefits that he could gain from making a major gift, “It changed the conversation,” she says. “I was able to get in the door and talk to him. I explained some of the tax-saving scenarios and said, ‘These are conversations you need to be having with a financial adviser.’ Something clicked.” Turns out it really clicked because the donor went on to give one of the largest individual contributions in the land trust’s history.

Introducing New Donors
Financial advisers can help facilitate connections between land trusts and new donors. Georgia-Alabama Land Trust, an accredited land trust, protected an important Native American archeological site on the Alabama River with the help of Jody McInnes, financial adviser and vice president of Morgan Stanley in Montgomery, Alabama, who introduced the property’s owner to Executive Director Katherine Eddins, a graduate of Mead and Martin’s training program. “Jody found and worked with the donor on the investment piece of the project to make it work out for the donor,” says Eddins.

GALT has benefited from relationships with McInnes and a couple of other financial advisers, who have been very helpful in getting their clients interested in conservation easements as a financial planning tool that can provide tax savings. “If you can find a financial professional with an interest in land conservation, they can be a really good adviser for you,” says Eddins.

Financial Modeling
Financial advisers can do more than help with acquisitions. When a board member of the accredited Colorado Cattlemen’s Agricultural Land Trust questioned the land trust’s ability to meet its future stewardship obligations, CCALT turned to financial advisers of Morgan Stanley in Boulder, Colorado. The team worked together to develop a sophisticated financial modeling process to determine if CCALT had enough in its stewardship endowment. The answer? It still had work to do. CCALT then raised stewardship fees and increased its focus on fundraising. The financial planning required the land trust to do some hard work, but it was worth it, Carolyn Aspelin said at the time, who was then director of conservation transactions: “A big part of the benefit for CCALT is being able to provide our landowners with security that we are planning for the future and are engaging in financial modeling activities to quantitatively back that up.”

Developing a relationship with a financial adviser can pay dividends over the long term by helping your land trust achieve its mission. As Mead observes, “Our land trust, like all land trusts, wants to do the best possible job we can preserving land. These partnerships help land trusts get more deals done and stretch the dollars they have further.”

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HOW ACCREDITATION Pays You Back

How do you quantify better stewardship records, improved board and staff relationships or a stronger land trust community? While some benefits of accreditation aren’t easily measured, many land trusts find that investing in accreditation pays them back.

Accredited land trusts doubled their operating budgets from 2005–2015, according to a recent report on accreditation’s impact.* Accredited land trusts also had, on average, 55% more financial supporters and attracted three times more volunteers.

For California’s Marin Agricultural Land Trust, being accredited and talking about it with policymakers and funders has certainly paid off. MALT benefits from both county and statewide funding programs that require accreditation. Director of Conservation Jeff Stump explains that, for MALT, accreditation gives the policymakers drafting these funding programs—and the public voting on them—confidence in the organization’s stewardship of both the funds and the land.

Stump says, “We talk a lot with our partners about the improvements we’ve made through the accreditation process,” and how that helps MALT protect healthy food, diverse natural resources and farming as a way of life.

As part of Marin County’s farmland protection program, organizations applying for easement funding must be accredited by the Land Trust Accreditation Commission. MALT has received $14 million in grant funding through the program since it began in 2012 and brought in almost $15 million in matching funds. This has translated into helping a dozen farm families protect more than 7,000 acres of valued farmland.

MALT is also helping to address climate change by finishing up one of its first projects through California’s Sustainable Agricultural Land Conservation Program (supported by the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund), where accredited land trusts are automatically eligible to hold easements. Additionally, MALT has saved $6,300 on Terrafirma fees over seven years through the accreditation discount of the conservation defense insurance program.

Other land trusts across the country benefit from similar agency programs, such as in Colorado, with its expedited path to certification for accredited land trusts. Erik Glenn, executive director of Colorado Cattlemen’s Agricultural Land Trust, says that “expediting the state certification process every year has resulted in significant savings in staff time.”

Glenn appreciates that his land trust’s funders consider accreditation in their decision-making process.

He estimates that as an accredited land trust, CCALT averages eight to 12 deals a year. Given the current regulatory and funding environment in Colorado, he speculates that if it was not accredited it would only do one to two deals each year.

As for its Terrafirma discount, over the past five years CCALT has saved over $18,000 by being accredited.

Glenn says CCALT is also pleased with the new federal Farm Bill, which allows accredited land trusts to be recognized as certified entities if they meet certain criteria. Having the special consideration for accredited land trusts means “a significant reduction in time and a greater certainty in determining when closing will occur,” he explains. While the final Farm Bill rules are still being written, they will “undoubtedly save time, energy and money” for land trusts, landowners and other partners—which means saving more land at a lower cost.

*DOWNLOAD “AN IMPACT EVALUATION OF THE LAND TRUST ACCREDITATION PROGRAM’S FIRST 10 YEARS” AT WWW.LANDTRUSTACCREDITATION.ORG/ABOUT/IMPACT-EVALUATION.
Building Capacity:
How to Include Fundraising for Operations in Your Campaign

“We could see the writing on the wall,” says Linda Mead, President and CEO of the accredited D&R Greenway Land Trust in Princeton, New Jersey. “In recent years government funding has been harder to come by. It was time for us to launch a capacity-building campaign.”

Mead explains that New Jersey was the first state to fund an open space program in 1961, adding a nonprofit grant program in 1991 with government monies to support land trust acquisitions. “D&R Greenway was founded in 1989 after the IRS easement incentive was first established. When the state grant program began, we were able to tap into that money and complete our first acquisition.”

In 1998 then-Governor Christine Todd Whitman added money to a fund that lasted 10 years, but then the state funds started to dwindle. By 2014, Mead knew it was time to act and planning began for a special kind of campaign.

Structuring a Campaign
“We needed to ensure that we have a ready-fund with private dollars for land protection—acquiring land and easements—but also that we have the capacity to do that work by funding staff to do the negotiations and to steward the land,” says Mead.

The first step after board approval was to form a board committee to guide the campaign. Then Mead hired a consultant to do a feasibility study. “The study told us we could raise $6 million, but having a sense that we could potentially go beyond that, we upped the goal to $8.4 million.”

The money was to be divided equally among four pots: land fund, stewardship, educational programs and what
Mead calls “our conservation campus,” which includes a renovated barn that serves as headquarters, a place for learning, a public gathering spot and an art gallery.

“That last pot covers our operations costs, such as office equipment, utilities, maintenance, and most importantly, facilities staff,” says Mead. Each pot includes funds for both direct costs and to support staffing. “We built all this right into the campaign, and would encourage others to do the same. Donors understand that there is a cost to doing the land-saving work we do.”

The money raised would be unrestricted. “We wanted to be able to invest the funds but also to draw support for any extra costs we had in any of these categories,” Mead explains. “We know that from time to time we will have specific needs, for instance to take care of an unexpected land stewardship cost or to upfront funds for a large preservation transaction.”

Choosing a Name
In choosing the campaign name, Mead wanted something that reflected that this was a campaign for everyone, not just Princeton’s wealthier population. “We wanted people to understand that this work benefits everybody—through clean water to drink, farms for food and parks for people—that it supports life. So we decided to call it the ‘Land for Life’ campaign.” The name captured donors’ attention and continues to be used to describe the organization’s mission.

The campaign focused on “the reasons we do this work and also on what goes on behind the curtain—how we do what we do and why we need funds to get it done,” says Mead.

Implementation
D&R Greenway hired a consultant to guide implementation of the campaign. The total campaign budget, which included the consultant, staff, materials, a video and donor events, was $400,000 over three years. The campaign finished more than half a year early, and thanks to board members who covered lunches and dinners with donors, there was a substantial cost savings.

The board and staff pulled together to kick off the fundraising, which was focused on money raised primarily from individuals, rather than from foundations or government.

“The board formed a committee that included the leaders of the board, several board members (current and past) and some external folks who are very supportive of the organization,” says Mead. And like many campaigns, the fundraising began with the board. “I went to them for the first contributions, asking each member to make a ‘stretch’ gift. The board chair made the first gift, which included a pledge over three years, an annual giving pledge and a planned gift.”

Mead also created a board challenge: “We asked a board member to give $500,000 if the board collectively gave $1.5 million. I was ecstatic when she said yes!” says Mead. “I knew she had capacity and really cared about our work. Our goal was to raise $2 million from the board, and energized by this challenge, they did it. That meant when we went out and spoke to donors we could say that the entire board has made a substantial commitment and we are already 25% to our goal!”

“I did a lot of asks with board and committee members,” says Mead. “Some felt comfortable doing the asking while I was there to explain our needs, and others set the ask up for me. Our consultant had strategized with the committee; she had the research on donors and we were able to structure the asks accordingly. Our development director, Leslie Potter, made some of the smaller (five-figure) asks.”

Potter asked all of the staff to give as well, no matter the amount. “We wanted to also be able to say that the entire staff supports the campaign, but I asked Leslie to approach them as it was less intimidating coming from her than me. I didn’t want anyone to feel pressured—they already give so much of their time. But they all gave, some making pledges over a couple of years. It was wonderful to say to people in our community that we are all committed—board and staff—to Land for Life.”

Staff were also involved in arranging and running events and managing the donor database. Events included several small meet-ups at people’s homes, such as cocktail parties for 20-25 people that brought board and committee members together with key donors. “We would celebrate milestones, like ‘we’re halfway there!’ And we’d thank everyone for getting us to that point,” says Mead.

She was especially thankful for one former chair who was on the campaign committee. “He took it upon himself to reach out to every former trustee to ask them to make a gift. He was relentless in finding those who had moved out of the area, managing to track down one person who had been on the board 20 years ago and had moved to London. And he succeeded in getting every one of our former trustees to give to the campaign! Nobody wants to be the one who’s left out.”

Success!
The Land for Life campaign surpassed its goal by raising $8.5 million. “As anyone knows who has done a campaign, the hardest part comes at the very end, when you’re after that last $300,000 but you’ve exhausted most resources. At that point we went back to the board with a final challenge, and back to people who might have the capacity to give more, and they did. We can’t thank them enough—everyone who gave to the campaign.”

Mead says a nice side benefit was the relationships formed among board members, staff and donors. “With these common goals everyone felt a greater sense of belonging to the organization. This was a fun campaign. Everyone involved felt a great sense of accomplishment and enjoyed working together to ensure a stable future for D&R Greenway and our mission.”

CHRISTINA SOTO IS EDITOR OF SAVING LAND.
The article on page 14 of this issue mentions several resources for land trusts on renewable energy. The Land Trust Alliance has created two this year, both of which can be found on its climate change website:

- **Reshaping the Energy Future** - This guide aims to equip land trusts of all sizes with practical ways they can engage and influence siting decisions: [http://climatechange.lta.org](http://climatechange.lta.org)
- **Practical Pointer: Siting Renewables on Conservation Easements: What Land Trusts Need to Know** - This is the latest in the Alliance’s practical pointer series: [http://climatechange.lta.org](http://climatechange.lta.org)

Here are a few other resources mentioned in the article:


- Winneshiek County energy district (noted as a model): [https://energydistrict.org](https://energydistrict.org)
- Information from the University of Massachusetts on “dual-use arrays”: [https://ag.umass.edu/clean-energy/fact-sheets/dual-use-agriculture-solar-photovoltaics](https://ag.umass.edu/clean-energy/fact-sheets/dual-use-agriculture-solar-photovoltaics)

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**RESHAPING THE ENERGY FUTURE**

Renewable Energy and Land Trusts

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**Making Allies in the Midwest**

To help broaden and deepen public support for conservation, the Land Trust Alliance convened community partners in Wisconsin, including Ozaukee Washington Land Trust (accredited), Fondy Food Center, Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District and The Conservation Fund (accredited). The “Making Allies for Healthier Communities” partnership is conserving farmland, improving water quality and delivering good food, all while giving local farmers a helping hand. And now it has reached another exciting milestone.

On July 2 the Alliance’s blog, Inside Dirt, announced the release of the Making Allies for Healthier Communities video: [www.lta.org/blog/making-allies-healthier-communities](http://www.lta.org/blog/making-allies-healthier-communities).

Made by videographer DJ Glisson of Firefly Imageworks and the Alliance communications team, appreciation also goes to Mike Carlson and the team at Gathering Waters: Wisconsin’s Alliance for Land Trusts for providing the funding to make the video possible, and to the allies who provided input to make the film better and the many partners who have a hand in this work.

One partner, The Conservation Fund’s Emy Brawley, explains in the video: “We’re permanently protecting land for growing food close to the urban core, we’re serving an unmet demand for healthy fruits and vegetables in an underserved area and we’re assisting immigrant farmers in providing secure and affordable access to farmland.”

Staff with the Natural Resources Conservation Service in Wisconsin are providing funding, conservation planning...
and farmer education support. “Every day, we’re at work at the Alliance to promote land conservation and advocate funding to conserve our country’s bounty,” says Carolyn Waldron, Alliance Midwest director, “so we are especially pleased that the Farm Bill’s Regional Conservation Partnership Program is part of this spirited community effort.”

Waldron adds, “We have come far together and are at a critical juncture in realizing our shared vision. This video is intended to assist with additional farmer outreach, fundraising and other project endeavors to bring our ambitions home.”

Guides for Land Trusts on Multiple Subjects

The Pennsylvania Association of Land Trusts (PALTA) published 11 new guides in 2019, ranging from concise, one-page curated listings of links to key resources from around the web to multipage, in-depth analyses of issues. Some of the topics are Pennsylvania-centric but many, such as those listed below, could be helpful to all land trusts:

- Climate Change and Land Conservation
- Community Gardens
- Green Burial
- Permits for Events, Hunting, Camping and Other Uses of Conserved Lands
- Planned Giving
- Prescribed Fire
- Succession Planning for Nonprofits
- Working with Nature to Manage Stormwater

Find PALTA’s great library at https://conservationtools.org/library_items.

Videos

- In Washington, the accredited Inland Northwest Land Conservancy’s “Conservation with Private Landowners” video came about because “we needed a visual way to convey our work,” says Vicki Egesdal, program manager. “It was originally going to feature partners and supporters, but the landowner interviews were so great and we had limited post production funds so we chose to focus on landowners.” It was sponsored in part by the Kalispel Tribe. Watch it at https://youtu.be/OsSQf9uhlNE.

- From 2013 to 2017, the accredited Blue Ridge Conservancy and its local, state and federal partners worked to permanently protect the habitat of the endangered Virginia Big-Eared Bat in the Grandfather Mountain corridor in North Carolina. To celebrate this amazing conservation success, Appalachian State University’s Documentary Film Services produced a short film to tell the story: https://vimeo.com/321050970/ae15752170.

Bookmarks

Website

Association Trends is dedicated to providing association executives and industry partners the training, data and insights they need to better understand and serve their organizations. Check out its free library of downloadable reports on a wide range of resources and tools. Go to www.associationtrends.com/free-resources.

Guides

- The accredited Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy has created a “Birding Hot Spots” field guide, the latest in its ongoing series of guides designed to connect more people with its preserves and natural areas and to promote the many benefits of engaging with nature. See www.gtrlc.org/field-guides/birding-hot-spots.


- The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) has produced “Guidelines for Privately Protected Areas.” The guide mentions the Land Trust Alliance, the Land Trust Accreditation Commission and Land Trust Standards and Practices. See www.iucn.org/pa_guidelines.
Putting Solar to Work in Preserves

A generous grant awarded to the land trust from the Peter A. and Vernice H. Gasser Foundation recently funded a new solar system at Archer Taylor Preserve that will lower the preserve’s annual operating costs and allow the land trust to become more sustainable in its management of the property. The caretaker house at Archer Taylor now has 11 solar panels thanks to the $15,000 grant. The system allows the land trust to produce power locally and sustainably without generating greenhouse gases. The foundation’s generous grant will result in significant savings:

Per the solar company’s projections, the panels will save an estimated $15,000 in lower electric bills over the next 15 years.

In turn, these cost savings will help pay for stewardship projects at Archer Taylor Preserve, such as trail management, wildfire restoration and invasive plant removal.

This is the second grant for solar panels to the Land Trust of Napa County from the Gasser Foundation. In 2015, it awarded $40,000 for a solar system at the caretaker house at Wantrup Preserve in Pope Valley, leading to a 95% reduction in electric costs there.

Land trusts around the country continue to explore the use of renewable energy, including solar (see page 14). The accredited Land Trust of Napa County in California has installed solar panels at two of its permanent preserves, Archer Taylor and Wantrup. Both somewhat remote, these preserves had suffered multi-day power outages due to fire, trees on power lines and other problems.

A pre-fire photo taken in the Archer Taylor Preserve shows the beauty of the area, which is slowly recovering. Solar panels added to a caretaker house on the preserve were a welcome addition as the isolated house suffered frequent power outages from trees or branches falling on the wires.

Building Community Resilience

Helping to reframe the energy debate and build community energy resiliency is part of the accredited Taos Land Trust’s work as a community land trust in New Mexico.

In 2017 the land trust flipped the switch on its first solar energy array and as of today more than 50% of the energy used to run Taos Land Trust is generated by its solar panels. The 2-kilowatt photovoltaic array sitting on its downtown property was installed through a generous grant from the PPC Solar Photovoltaic Donation Program.

“The choices our community makes when it comes to energy production and consumption have far-reaching impacts,” says Jim O’Donnell, communications and policy coordinator at the land trust. “On a global scale these choices impact our climate. On a local and regional level, energy decisions impact the character of our economy as well as the quality of our water and air and the health of our community members.”

Taos Land Trust has seen significant cost savings on its energy use through the installation of the PPC solar array. “We’ve been able to invest those savings directly in our mission of land and water conservation” says O’Donnell. “The solar panels also help us to be an example for our community. It is part of our ethics. It benefits our bottom line. And it is also part of our mission of empowering people to protect the land and traditions they love through education, advocacy and conservation.”

Renewables like solar and wind offer more than just cost savings and clean energy, says O’Donnell. “Oil, gas and coal need to be shipped long distances, making them vulnerable to disruptions that can cause outages or cost increases. Our solar panels make energy right here, on site. The system is stable and reliable and we can depend on it. Land trusts will be key in building community resiliency through renewable energy projects such as this.”
"In 2018, all of us at the accredited Wallowa Land Trust in Oregon began taking a closer look at how we could strengthen our relationships with tribes around our service area," says Eric Greenwell, conservation program manager at Wallowa Land Trust. "We hosted a series of lectures in our community led by indigenous speakers, we visited tribal committees and we hosted listening sessions at three reservations. From these conversations, it became clear to us that one of the most common and pressing concerns was access to lands for gathering."

Since Wallowa Land Trust has relationships with several private landowners, it saw an opportunity, and on May 15-16, 2019, it hosted gatherers from the Nez Perce Tribe, Yakama Nation, Confederated Tribes of the Colville Indian Reservation and Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, all of whom connected with private landowners and gathered first foods and medicines in Wallowa County.

The gathering was funded by the Oregon Advancing Conservation Excellence Program, a partnership of the Land Trust Alliance and the Yarg Foundation. The Multiple generations of Nez Perce returned to Oregon’s Wallowa Valley for a special gathering in May 2019.

program delivers targeted services to enhance the effectiveness and capacity of the Oregon land trust community.

Carla Timentwa, a Nez Perce Tribal Elder, said the timing of the gathering had meaning. “In May 1877, Chief Joseph and his people were forced out of the valley. It is significant because 142 years after the exile from the Wallowas, this was the first time in recent memory for descendants of a shared history to gather with a common purpose of reestablishing traditional digging grounds. It also was a rare occasion for private landowners to welcome us on their property. Our journey to the Wallowa Valley became a day of healing for the land and the people.”

Timentwa says that the elderly ladies who gathered to carry on this work brought memories to life once again as they shared in song and heartfelt words. “While we did not fill our digging bags, our hearts were truly filled with the beauty of the land, the laughter of the younger ones and the presence of our ancestors who watched over us all these years.”

As they walked down the hill, Timentwa said a prayer, “thankful the land remembered us and we remember the land. My granddaughter’s footprints are now there, just as the footprints of her ancestors were placed there for her to follow.”

Ear to the Ground

In June the accredited Natural Lands in Pennsylvania announced Kelly Herrenkohl as its new vice president of communications and engagement. Also as of June, the accredited Conservation Florida has a new board president, Ed Montgomery, and a new development director, Donna Wilkinson. After a national search, the Sonoma Land Trust Board of Directors has chosen award-winning conservation leader Eamon O’Byrne of the accredited Nature Conservancy’s California Chapter as the organization’s new executive director. O’Byrne will succeed Dave Koehler, who is retiring after a lengthy career in leading conservation organizations, including Sonoma and the San Joaquin River Parkway and Conservation Trust, both accredited.
Imagine a junkyard. Picture a car crusher in operation for 50 years. Add to that vision 100,000 tons of broken concrete. It’s not a sight that inspires thoughts of conservation, is it?

But for all of us at the accredited RiverLink in North Carolina this woebegone site in Asheville was the perfect setting for a public park. For more than 10 years, we’ve been working to revitalize these 5 acres nestled along the French Broad River. If you were to walk that land today, you’d never suspect it was once covered with junked cars. And that’s just how we want it.

We recently took the next big step by completing a master plan for Karen Cragnolin Park, which we named after RiverLink’s first executive director because of her vision and perseverance on projects like this one across her three-decade tenure. Now, this land’s transformation honors her can-do, community-focused spirit.

That broken concrete is gone, recycled for free by a local company. Those cars, too, have long since been removed. Remaining contaminants were addressed through a natural process called phytoremediation, whereby microbes in the root system of plants digest the gas, diesel and other compounds left by the junkyard. All this progress gave us the confidence to hire Nelson Byrd Woltz Landscape Architects, an internationally recognized firm, to help us finalize our vision for the rejuvenated land.

Much of our shared success can be attributed to having reached out early to the community and connected our neighbors to the river and its surrounding lands. We want—no, we need—people to experience the French Broad River and its streams. This is how we create river stewards who, like us, view the river as a source of well-being and economic growth.

Our work will continue over the next few years, but we’ve already made a huge difference transforming this former junkyard. And with our community’s continued support, we will soon see Karen Cragnolin Park as a place of true beauty and civic inspiration.

Garrett Artz is executive director of RiverLink.
CONGRATULATIONS TO THE FOLLOWING LAND CONSERVATION GROUPS

NATIONAL
- Access Fund
- Ducks Unlimited and its affiliate, Wetlands America Trust
- The Conservation Fund and its affiliate, Sustainable Conservation
- The Nature Conservancy
- The Trust for Public Land
- The Wilderness Land Trust

ALABAMA
- Freshwater Land Trust
- Land Trust of North Alabama
- Weeks Bay Foundation

ALASKA
- Great Land Trust
- Interior Alaska Land Trust
- Kachemak Heritage Land Trust
- Southeast Alaska Land Trust

ARIZONA
- Arizona Land and Water Trust
- Central Arizona Land Trust
- Desert Foothills Land Trust

ARKANSAS
- Northwest Arkansas Land Trust

CALIFORNIA
- Bear Yuba Land Trust
- Big Sur Land Trust
- California Farmland Trust
- California Rangeland Trust
- Cayucos Land Conservancy
- Center for Natural Lands Management
- Eastern Sierra Land Trust
- Elkhorn Slough Foundation
- Fallbrook Land Conservancy
- Feather River Land Trust
- John Muir Land Trust
- Land Conservancy of San Luis Obispo County
- Land Trust for Santa Barbara County
- Land Trust of Napa County
- Land Trust of Santa Clara Valley
- Land Trust of Santa Cruz County
- Marin Agricultural Land Trust
- Mendocino Land Trust
- Mojave Desert Land Trust
- Mother Lode Land Trust
- Northcoast Regional Land Trust
- Northern California Regional Land Trust
- Ojai Valley Land Conservancy
- Pacific Forest Trust
- Peninsula Open Space Trust
- Placer Land Trust
- Rivers & Lands Conservancy
- Sacramento Valley Conservancy
- San Diego Habitat Conservancy
- San Joaquin River Parkway and Conservation Trust
- Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority
- Save Mount Diablo
- Save the Redwoods League
- Sempervirens Fund
- Sequoia Riverlands Trust
- Shasta Land Trust
- Sierra Foothill Conservancy
- Solano Land Trust
- Sonoma Land Trust
- Sutter Buttes Regional Land Trust
- Tejon Ranch Conservancy
- Transition Habitat Conservancy
- Tri-Valley Conservancy
- Truckee Donner Land Trust
- Wildlife Heritage Foundation

COLORADO
- Aspen Valley Land Trust
- Black Canyon Regional Land Trust
- Central Colorado Conservancy
- Colorado Cattlemen’s Agricultural Land Trust
- Colorado Headwaters Land Trust
- Colorado Open Lands
- Colorado West Land Trust
- Crested Butte Land Trust
- Douglas Land Conservancy
- Eagle Valley Land Trust
- Estes Valley Land Trust
- La Plata Open Space Conservancy
- Montezuma Land Conservancy
- Mountain Area Land Trust
- Palmer Land Trust
- Rio Grande Headwaters Land Trust
- San Isabel Land Protection Trust
- Southern Plains Land Trust
- Lyme Land Conservation Trust
- Naromi Land Trust
- New Canaan Land Trust
- Newtown Forest Association
- Norfolk Land Trust
- Redding Land Trust
- Roxbury Land Trust
- Salem Land Trust
- Saltville Land Trust
- Sempervirens Fund
- Sequoia Riverlands Trust
- Shasta Land Trust
- Sierra Foothill Conservancy
- Solano Land Trust
- Sonoma Land Trust
- Sutter Buttes Regional Land Trust
- Tejon Ranch Conservancy
- Transition Habitat Conservancy
- Tri-Valley Conservancy
- Truckee Donner Land Trust
- Wildlife Heritage Foundation

CONNECTICUT
- Avalonia Land Conservancy
- Branford Land Trust
- Candlewood Valley Regional Land Trust
- Colchester Land Trust
- Connecticut Farmland Trust
- Cornwall Conservancy
- Essex Land Trust
- Flanders Nature Center & Land Trust
- Granby Land Trust
- Greenwich Land Trust
- Housatonic Valley Association
- Joshua’s Tract Conservation and Historic Trust
- Kent Land Trust
- Land Conservancy of Ridgefield
- Lyme Land Conservation Trust
- Naromi Land Trust
- New Canaan Land Trust
- Newtown Forest Association
- Norfolk Land Trust
- Redding Land Trust
- Roxbury Land Trust
- Salem Land Trust
- Saltville Land Trust
- Sempervirens Fund
- Sequoia Riverlands Trust
- Shasta Land Trust
- Sierra Foothill Conservancy
- Solano Land Trust
- Sonoma Land Trust
- Sutter Buttes Regional Land Trust
- Tejon Ranch Conservancy
- Transition Habitat Conservancy
- Tri-Valley Conservancy
- Truckee Donner Land Trust
- Wildlife Heritage Foundation

FLORIDA
- Alachua Conservation Trust
- Conservation Florida
- Conservation Foundation of the Gulf Coast
- North Florida Land Trust
- Tall Timbers Research Station & Land Conservancy
- Tampa Bay Conservancy

GEORGIA
- Athens Land Trust
- Central Savannah River Land Trust
- Chattahoochee Conservancy
- Georgia-Alabama Land Trust
- Georgia Piedmont Land Trust
- Mountain Conservation Trust of Georgia
- Ocmulgee Land Trust
- St. Simons Land Trust

HAWAI’I
- Hawaiian Islands Land Trust

IDAHO
- Kaniks Land Trust
- Land Trust of the Treasure Valley
- Lemhi Regional Land Trust
- Palouse Land Trust
- Sagebrush Steppe Land Trust
- Teton Regional Land Trust
- Wood River Land Trust

ILLINOIS
- Jo Daviess Conservation Foundation
- Lake Forest Open Lands Association and its affiliate, Lake Forest Land Foundation
- Natural Land Institute
- Openlands
- Prairie Land Conservancy
- The Conservation Foundation
- The Land Conservancy of McHenry County
INDIANA
- Central Indiana Land Trust
- NICHES Land Trust
- Shirley Heinz Land Trust
- Sycamore Land Trust

IOWA
- Bur Oak Land Trust
- Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation

KANSAS
- Kansas Land Trust
- Ranchland Trust of Kansas

KENTUCKY
- Bluegrass Land Conservancy
- Kentucky Natural Lands Trust
- Louisville & Jefferson County Environmental Trust
- River Fields
- Woods and Waters Land Trust

LOUISIANA
- Land Trust for Louisiana

MAINE
- Androscoggin Land Trust
- Bangor Land Trust
- Blue Hill Heritage Trust
- Boothbay Region Land Trust
- Brunswick-Topsham Land Trust
- Cape Elizabeth Land Trust
- Chebeague & Cumberland Land Trust
- Coastal Mountains Land Trust
- Coastal Rivers Conservation Trust
- Downeast Coastal Conservancy
- Forest Society of Maine
- Frenchman Bay Conservancy
- Georges River Land Trust
- Great Pond Mountain Conservation Trust
- Harpswell Heritage Land Trust
- Kennebec Estuary Land Trust
- Kennebec Land Trust
- Loon Echo Land Trust
- Mahoosuc Land Trust
- Maine Coast Heritage Trust
- Medomak Valley Land Trust
- Midcoast Conservancy
- Oceanside Conservation Trust of Casco Bay
- Orono Land Trust
- Rangeley Lakes Heritage Trust
- Three Rivers Land Trust
- Vinalhaven Land Trust

MARYLAND
- American Chestnut Land Trust
- Eastern Shore Land Conservancy
- Lower Shore Land Trust
- Potomac Conservancy
- Scenic Rivers Land Trust

MASSACHUSETTS
- Ashburnham Conservation Trust
- Ashby Land Trust
- Buzzards Bay Coalition and its affiliate, Acushnet River Reserve
- Dartmouth Natural Resources Trust
- Groton Conservation Trust
- Kestrel Land Trust
- Lowell Parks and Conservation Trust
- Massachusetts Audubon Society
- Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust
- Sheriff’s Meadow Foundation
- Sudbury Valley Trustees
- The Trustees of Reservations and its affiliates, Hilltown Land Trust and Massachusetts Land Conservation Trust
- Wareham Land Trust

MICHIGAN
- Chikaming Open Lands
- Chippewa Watershed Conservancy
- Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy
- Keweenaw Land Trust
- Land Conservancy of West Michigan
- Leelanau Conservancy
- Legacy Land Conservancy
- Little Forks Conservancy
- Michigan Nature Association
- North Oakland Headwaters Land Conservancy
- Saginaw Basin Land Conservancy
- Six Rivers Land Conservancy
- Southwest Michigan Land Conservancy
- Upper Peninsula Land Conservancy

MINNESOTA
- Minnesota Land Trust
- Northern Waters Land Trust

MISSISSIPPI
- Land Trust for the Mississippi Coastal Plain

MISSOURI
- Ozark Regional Land Trust

MONTANA
- Bitter Root Land Trust
- Five Valleys Land Trust
- Flathead Land Trust
- Gallatin Valley Land Trust
- Montana Land Reliance
- Prickly Pear Land Trust
- Vital Ground Foundation

NEBRASKA
- Nebraska Land Trust

NEVADA
- Nevada Land Trust

NEW HAMPSHIRE
- Ammonoosuc Conservation Trust
- Ausbon Sargent Land Preservation Trust
- Bear-Paw Regional Greenways
- Five Rivers Conservation Trust
- Lakes Region Conservation Trust
- Monadnock Conservancy
- Piscataquog Land Conservancy
- Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests
- Southeast Land Trust of New Hampshire
- Squam Lakes Conservation Society
- Upper Saco Valley Land Trust
- Upper Valley Land Trust

NEW JERSEY
- D&R Greenway Land Trust
- Friends of Hopewell Valley Open Space
- Great Swamp Watershed Association
- Harding Land Trust
- Hunterdon Land Trust
- Monmouth Conservation Foundation
- New Jersey Conservation Foundation
- Raritan Headwaters Association
- Ridge and Valley Conservancy
- South Jersey Land and Water Trust
- The Land Conservancy of New Jersey

NEW MEXICO
- New Mexico Land Conservancy
- Rio Grande Agricultural Land Trust
- Santa Fe Conservation Trust
- Taos Land Trust

NEW YORK
- Adirondack Land Trust
- Agricultural Stewardship Association
- Catskill Center for Conservation and Development
- Cazenovia Preservation Foundation
- Champlain Area Trails
- Columbia Land Conservancy
- Dutchess Land Conservancy
- Edmund Niles Huyck Preserve
- Finger Lakes Land Trust
- Genese Land Trust
- Genesee Valley Conservancy
- Greene Land Trust
- Hudson Highlands Land Trust
- Indian River Lakes Conservancy
- Lake George Land Conservancy
- Mianus River Gorge
- Mohawk Hudson Land Conservancy
- Mohonk Preserve
- North Salem Open Land Foundation
- North Shore Land Alliance
- Oblong Land Conservancy
- Open Space Institute and its affiliate, Open Space Institute Land Trust
- Orange County Land Trust
- Otsego Land Trust
- Peconic Land Trust and its affiliate, South Fork Farm Foundation
- Putnam County Land Trust – Save Open Spaces
- Rensselaer Land Trust
- Rensselaer Plateau Alliance
- Rondout-Esopus Land Conservancy
- Saratoga P.L.A.N.
- Scenic Hudson and its affiliate, Scenic Hudson Land Trust
- Thousand Islands Land Trust
- Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust
- Wallkill Valley Land Trust
- Westchester Land Trust
- Western New York Land Conservancy
- Winnipesaukee Land Trust
- Woodstock Land Conservancy
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▶ Playing a leading role in securing federal funding and policies for conservation.
▶ Establishing standards and practices for the land trust community and providing training and funding to land trust leaders, staff and volunteers.
▶ Hosting our signature event, Rally: The National Land Conservation Conference, which brings together conservation professionals from across the nation to share lessons learned, explore emerging trends and connect with each other.

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