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DOWNEAST LAKES LAND TRUST

14 COVER STORY ▸

Launching a New Climate Change Initiative for Land Trusts

By Erin Heskett and Erin Derrington

Recognizing the important role land conservation and the land trust community can play in combatting climate change, the Land Trust Alliance has launched a new initiative to provide land trusts with strategies, training and tools to both adapt to and mitigate climate change in their land conservation work.



DOWNEAST LAKES LAND TRUST

ON THE COVER:

On its blog, the U.S. Department of the Interior identifies nine animals already feeling the effects of climate change, and moose are number one. A booming parasite population caused by rising temperatures can weaken a calf. Read about a new climate change initiative on page 14.

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When Bad Things Happen to Good Land Trusts

By Elisabeth Ptak and Christina Soto

Embezzlement. Fraud. Disastrous decisions. When a crisis strikes, is your land trust ready? Read about practical steps that any nonprofit can take to help prevent bad things from happening and become more resilient.



ART WEBER/NATIONAL CENTER FOR NATURE PHOTOGRAPHY

LAND WE LOVE 20

A Beautiful Filter

The accredited Black Swamp Conservancy in Ohio protects wetlands that act as "nature's kidneys."



ACCREDITED WALLOWA LAND TRUST (OR)/DAVID JENSEN

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By and For the Community

By Sylvia Bates

The Land Trust Alliance has released the revised *Land Trust Standards and Practices*, the ethical and technical guidelines for the responsible operation of a land trust. Now it's time to adopt them.

OUR MISSION ▸ To save the places people 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.

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Together, conserving the places you love

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This year the Alliance celebrates a

LEGACY OF SERVICE

on behalf of the land trust community.

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SUPPORT OUR NEXT 35 YEARS by becoming a Guardian of the Land so the programs we've begun can grow well into the future. With your generosity, we stand ready to tackle the challenges and create opportunities in the years ahead, such as our work with the IRS, our community conservation efforts to engage wider support for conservation and developing innovative training options to strengthen conservation leaders.

Together, we can do more to strengthen land conservation across America. Thank you for supporting the Land Trust Alliance.

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An envelope is enclosed in this magazine for your convenience.

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A Year of **Anniversaries**



DJ GLISSON, II

It's amazing the things you rediscover when you're preparing to move.

Examining your life room by room, drawer by drawer, often yields surprises. Maybe there's a misplaced memento you thought you'd lost or a shoebox stuffed with photos. These special finds remind us to appreciate the past as we prepare for the future.

Many of my Land Trust Alliance colleagues and I are experiencing this process as we prepare to move to a new Washington, D.C., office this spring. And the timing for our walk down memory lane couldn't be better as we celebrate several significant anniversaries this year.

Terrafirma is starting its fifth policy year with over 500 land trusts and more than 8 million acres; the Conservation Defense Initiative celebrates its 10th anniversary.

Six years ago our policy team first led a contingent of conservationists onto Capitol Hill for Land Trust Advocacy Days. The annual event has helped us win significant gains for land trusts, such as the enhanced tax incentive for conservation easement donations. Members of Congress now better understand and value the work of land trusts, which will be important as we turn to other pressing issues, including the Farm Bill and the Land and Water Conservation Fund.

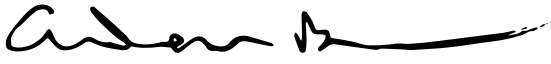
It's been 10 years since the Land Trust Accreditation Commission began recognizing land trusts that meet the rigorous qualifications for accreditation. As evidence of this program's impact, a recent review found that 77% of the total acres owned and under easement are held by accredited land trusts.

Additionally, 2017 marks the Alliance's 30th Rally: The National Land Conservation Conference. Consider all we've accomplished across three decades of helping our peers network with their colleagues, advance their skills and work to solve some of their greatest professional challenges.

Perhaps most important, though, is what we celebrated on February 22: the Alliance's 35th anniversary. As an essential player in the success of land trusts, the Alliance has been there, in some form, in each project that has saved land since 1982. Land trusts and land conservation would not be where they are today without the Alliance.

Individually, each of these accomplishments is inspiring; collectively, they are amazing. As I mark my own one-year anniversary at the Alliance, I'm reminded how proud I am to be a part of the work of the Alliance and the Accreditation Commission.

Andrew Bowman



BY Rose Jenkins

Video Contest Engages Communities

"When communities support their land trusts, we all win," says Rob Aldrich, community conservation director with the Land Trust Alliance. That was the goal of the Alliance's first video contest: helping land trusts engage their communities through visual media.

Stephen Ramirez of San Marcos, Texas, won the contest with his "Land Is My Life" video, a poetic montage of the many ways he experiences the land with those who are close to him, making it the foundation of his life. A stewardship director at the accredited Texas Land Conservancy, Ramirez chose the land trust as the recipient of the $10,000 grand prize. He donated his personal prize of $4,000 to the San Marcos River Foundation, a local environmental nonprofit.

"The video contest has generated a whole new spring of enthusiasm and support for Texas Land Conservancy," says Ashley Lovell, the conservancy's director of partnerships and outreach.

Lovell explains that some of the money will go to their daily operations, as well as expanding a fledgling internship program. "Our goal is to cultivate informed, critical thinkers that serve as ambassadors for conservation through learning and leadership development. We will partner with schools, state agencies and other nonprofits to engage students who wouldn't otherwise have the opportunity to work in conservation."



COURTESY OF ASHLEY LOVELL

Stephen Ramirez, winner of the inaugural LandIsMy.org video contest.

"We are incredibly impressed with the 75 videos people submitted for our inaugural video contest," says Aldrich. Social media was buzzing with news of the contest, generating 42,000 total votes. See the videos at www.landismy.org.

Details of the 2017 video contest are coming soon. •

Is Energy the New Sprawl?

Many land trusts were formed in response to sprawl, as housing developments, strip malls and highways took over open land. Now a new kind of sprawl poses a growing challenge for land conservation. A new report in the scientific journal PLOS ONE sums it up in its title: "Energy Sprawl Is the Largest Driver of Land Use Change in United States."

This study finds that—based on current projections—between now and 2040, land will be converted for energy development at twice the rate that land was converted for urban and residential development from 1970 up to now. New technologies in oil and gas extraction are turning millions of acres into potential drill sites. Mountains are eyed for wind turbines and deserts for solar arrays. Vast new transmission lines and pipelines are proposed to link energy sources to cities and ports. In all, an area larger than Texas could be impacted by new energy development—over 300,000 square miles.

The lead author of the report, Anne Trainor, conducted her research as part of a fellowship at Yale University, sponsored by the accredited Nature Conservancy. She produced the report with coauthors Robert McDonald and Joseph Fargione. In a Conservancy blog post, Trainor says, "Improved siting, energy conservation and more end-use energy production like rooftop solar are needed to allow us to switch to low-carbon energy production while avoiding impacts to natural areas that support wildlife and benefit people."

Find the report at http://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0162269 and the post at http://blog.nature.org/science. •

Getting Conservation on the Map

Where is the protected land in your state? How close is the nearest park or preserve? Conservationists and planners will soon have access to a comprehensive map of protected areas throughout the United States. An ambitious project to inventory U.S. terrestrial and marine protected areas is on its way to completion. A new report from the Protected Areas Database of the United States (PAD-US) outlines a plan to finish the job by 2020.

PAD-US aims to include everything from neighborhood green space to vast wilderness areas. It includes parks and other public lands, marine reserves, land trust preserves and land under conservation easement. Already 150,000 protected places are listed in the database, including publicly and privately protected land and water.

The goal is to produce a continuously updated database that is free for users. According to PAD-US, this information will help create jobs, boost recreational opportunities, encourage outdoor exercise, improve public health, protect wildlife habitat and encourage people from all walks of life to visit parks. PAD-US is a partnership between federal agencies, state organizations and national nonprofits.

Read the full story about the new report and find out how you can help with PAD-US: www.protectedlands.net/new-pad-us-report-charts-future-to-2020. •

Native Americans Gain Access to Cape Cod Preserve

On the Cape Cod peninsula Native people are invited to reconnect with a place where the earth breathes. "We see marshland as the lungs of Mother Earth," says Ramona Peters, a Mashpee Wampanoag elder and founder of the Native Land Conservancy. As of December, an agreement between the conservancy and the Dennis Conservation Trust provides access for Native people to hold cultural activities and gatherings on a 250-acre preserve that the Dennis Conservation Trust owns. The preserve—with its marshland, dunes, estuary and beach—is a place rich in life where indigenous people, including the Wampanoag, once came to draw sustenance from the land and water.

"This land has seen a lot of activity by our people over thousands of years," Peters says. "This is a place for us to give adoration, respect and thanksgiving for the plants and animals that return to the area every year. We don't take for granted that they always will." She adds, "This agreement is giving our people safe and clear access to have ceremonies and make offerings." The two conservation groups also plan to hold educational activities on the preserve, raising awareness about the region's Native American heritage.

This unique contract is called a "cultural respect agreement"; conservationists and Native people have forged similar agreements in the West. Mark Robinson, executive director of the Compact of Cape Cod Conservation Trusts, told the *Cape Cod Times* that he hopes this agreement will inspire more collaboration between land trusts and Native people in the region. •

Partnering for Wellness

The Aspetuck Land Trust in Connecticut is working with senior citizens at a local retirement home to help get its conservation message out. At The Jewish Home in Bridgeport, residents help prepare the land trust's mailings to go out to members and prospects—one of a variety of jobs available through the home's Work Activity Center. David Brant, the land trust's executive director, says that the partnership is good for the nonprofit and good for the residents. The land trust gets bulk mail services at a discounted rate and the work gives residents a sense of purpose while helping to keep their hands and minds sharp. Residents are paid on a piece-rate basis for their work.



ASPETUCK LAND TRUST

Jewish Home residents help Aspetuck Land Trust get its conservation message out.

The Jewish Home describes the mission of the Work Activity Center as "work for well-being." The center provides tasks that people can do even with a range of impairments. Workstations are arranged to accommodate arthritis, limited vision or partial paralysis from strokes. The Jewish Home's website states, "If a person wants to work, we'll find a way. That's our job, to be sure everyone who wants to work has a job to do." •

Greater Access to the Great Outdoors

Last fall the Black Rock Forest Consortium in New York created the first access into the Black Rock Forest for people using wheelchairs, walkers or strollers. A new Americans with Disabilities Act–accessible path extends into the forest for approximately a third of a mile to an overlook with breathtaking 50-mile views up the Hudson Valley to the Shawangunk and Catskill mountains.



BLACK ROCK FOREST CONSORTIUM

Steven Sirota enjoys the fall view on the new accessible trail.

Doug Hovey, president and CEO of Independent Living in Newburgh, New York—a nonprofit that serves people with disabilities—was there to cut the ribbon and follow the new trail to the overlook. "This is the deepest I've been into the woods in 36 years," he said, as recorded by radio station WAMC. "I've used a wheelchair ...since I was 18. This is a great experience to be here at Black Rock Forest, to be able to come out and enjoy the beauty of nature, and see the sights, hear the sounds and smell the scents of the great outdoors."

The Black Rock Forest Consortium maintains the 3,870-acre forest and a scientific field station 60 miles north of New York City. The forest offers a 23-mile network of hiking trails—but the consortium realized it was serving only part of its community, says Executive Director Bill Schuster. People with physical disabilities and people who are too young or too old to travel the rugged hiking trails had no way to experience the forest.

Grant funding from the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation helped create the accessible trail, which is part of a broader success story of trails, access and collaborative conservation in recent years involving Open Space Institute (accredited), the New York-New Jersey Trail Conference, Hudson Highlands Land Trust (accredited) and Orange County Land Trust (accredited), with funding support from the New York State Conservation Partnership Program. •

Veterans Help Restore Oaks to the Prairie



CONSERVE LAKE COUNTY

Veterans at the Liberty Prairie Preserve.

Last fall a group of veterans volunteered to plant oak trees in a special landscape near Lake Michigan, north of Chicago. The group from Growing Healthy Veterans teamed up with the staff of Conserve Lake County to plant 13 bicolor oaks at Aaron's Prairie outside of Libertyville, Illinois.

Aaron's Prairie is part of the 5,000-acre Liberty Prairie Reserve, an area that was recognized in 2000 by Scenic America as a Last Chance Landscape—a treasured landscape under threat. Today nearly 3,400 acres of this reserve are protected, including both public and private land. The reserve is a patchwork of woodlands, farms, prairie, neighborhoods and trails, with a beautiful brook flowing through it.

The local community, including the veterans, is stepping up efforts to plant oak trees because so many species of wildlife depend on them and so few young oaks are growing up to replace aging ones. Greg Rajsky with Conserve Lake County said, "We spent a quiet day with our hands in the soil. It was a healing experience."

Growing Healthy Veterans is a grassroots group dedicated to helping veterans heal through farming and gardening. The group is part of a nationwide movement to support veterans in finding personal renewal and career opportunities in agriculture. Along with numerous grassroots organizations, the U.S. Department of Agriculture offers programs to assist veterans who are pursuing careers in farming and ranching. •

Engaging Generations, From Boomers to Gen Z

People of all ages have a role to play in land conservation, but people tend to engage in different ways depending on when they were born. Here are some tips from MemberClicks.com for engaging members across four generations.

- **Baby Boomers:** Boomers are used to working hard to achieve results. They like to get valuable information in print—but you can find them on social media, too, especially Facebook. Most of all they appreciate face-to-face communication.
- **Generation X:** In contrast to workaholic boomers, this generation prioritizes work-life balance. They like to be productive without wasting time. They value personal connection, humor and fun.
- **Millennials:** These young adults are multitaskers who are fluent in technology. To reach them, keep your messages short—or at least scannable—and get them out on social media. Millennials like flexibility, so offer more than one way to get involved.
- **Generation Z:** Here they come! Born after 1996, this generation expects to do just about everything online. They grew up in the Great Recession, so they're motivated to get their careers off to a strong start. They also want to make a positive impact in the world.

You can download the guide at http://blog.memberclicks.com/how-to-engage-different-generations-at-your-association.

BY Russ Shay and Bryan David

IRS MOVES *Against* TAX SHELTERS

In December the Internal Revenue Service issued a notice that seeks to deter certain types of transactions that the Land Trust Alliance has been concerned about for some time.

These tax-driven deals look like a charitable donation, but, by valuing the donation far higher than it was purchased for, they give outside investors back more than they invested. Normally, if you donate $10,000 to a charity, the tax deduction for your gift returns as much as $4,000. In contrast, here's how these schemes work: First, a promoter identifies a piece of land, forms an LLC and then markets the shares to investors who are seeking tax deductions. As an example, 100 investors each kick in $10,000 to purchase the land for $1 million. Second, the promoter claims a lofty valuation for an easement on that land—let's say for $10 million. Third, the easement (or the land itself) is donated to a land trust, and each investor gets a $100,000 deduction for his or her $10,000 investment. This is many things, but it is not charity.

Last year, at Rally in Minneapolis, the IRS announced it was considering "listing" such transactions as potentially illegal tax shelters. Listed transactions must be separately reported to the IRS, carry serious penalties for failure to report and are a huge red flag to financial advisors and attorneys.

The Alliance immediately sprang to action, urging the IRS to be very specific and clear in what it did and did not target in its notice. We wanted to ensure that any IRS action would not discourage the vast majority of conservation easement donations. In addition, we urged the IRS to exempt land trusts from having to decide which transactions needed to be reported—decisions that would have imposed a significant new burden on land trust boards.

On December 23, the IRS issued Notice 2017-10. The notice is specifically targeted to these investment schemes and should not affect other conservation donations. It also specifically excludes land trusts from having to report. The notice clearly exempts donations by traditional landowners and family partnerships. In short, we believe that the IRS took our concerns very seriously and addressed them.

However, this is not the only conservation donation issue the IRS is targeting. The Service is further asserting that easements with amendment clauses are not perpetual and thus should not be eligible for a tax deduction. Our Conservation Defense Program is in court, arguing the Alliance's long-held position that such clauses protect land trusts' right to be able to manage and, when necessary, amend their easements over time. We have provided the IRS with background and research showing that easements are amended in very limited cases and often lead to better conservation outcomes.

That court action may not be enough, as exploitation of conservation tools abuses the public trust and jeopardizes congressional support for our work. Therefore, we are actively working to ensure that tax law encourages private land conservation. At the same time, we may seek to simply make the tax shelter transactions illegal, so that it doesn't take 10 years of court cases to stop them for good.

For more information about how the IRS notice may affect your work, please view a PDF on our website at http://s3.amazonaws.com/landtrustalliance.org/IRSNotice2017-10.pdf.



DJ GUSSON, II

Peter Paden (at right), executive director of the accredited Columbia Land Conservancy in New York, accepts the Ambassador of the Year award at Rally 2016, saying, "The goal with the Ambassadors program is to see that every senator and every member of Congress has a personal relationship with at least one person from a land trust."

Previewing Land Trust Policies for 2017

The sixth annual Land Trust Advocacy Days, May 1–3, is an opportunity for land trusts to introduce ourselves to the freshman class and returning members of the 115th Congress and ask for support, not just on tax issues, but also on key funding issues like the Land and Water Conservation Fund and the Farm Bill's conservation programs. It also will be the land trust community's chance to introduce ourselves to the new Trump administration.

Right now much of what the new administration will do is a mystery. But we know that conservation is a bipartisan issue, and we can ensure that the administration will include people who know land trusts and value our voluntary, locally driven conservation work. The Alliance needs to find and engage them—and your participation in Advocacy Days is an important first step!

Tax reform is high on the congressional agenda and will be a risky proposition for land trusts. The Alliance will keep close tabs on developing proposals to ensure that such items as President Trump's campaign proposal to limit tax deductions to no more than $100,000 don't succeed.

We also know that there will be a fight over the future of the Land and Water Conservation Fund—again. The Alliance will continue to help reauthorize this important conservation tool—and ensure that it is fully funded.

A new Farm Bill is coming, with some talk that legislation could be debated in the House or Senate as soon as this year. The Land Trust Alliance has helped keep $70 million a year for conservation easements on working lands in the last Farm Bill and $220 million a year in regional conservation initiatives, many of which involve land trusts. However, budget pressures and competition for limited funding from other pieces of the Farm Bill will require us to work hard to keep conservation programs and to try to make the Farm Bill easement programs easier for land trusts and their landowners to use.

During Advocacy Days we hope to educate D.C. friends new and old about land trusts and their work—carrying a message to Capitol Hill that for so many challenges we face, "land is the answer."

In many ways 2017 will be a venture into unknown politics. But our mission—getting the federal government to help land trusts conserve land—continues, and we believe that with your help it can continue to be successful.

BY Dave Harding



Firefighters respond August 12, 2016, to the historic Dvoor Farm House, headquarters of New Jersey's Hunterdon Land Trust.

NILO HODGE

Fellowship Follows Fire

As the accredited Hunterdon Land Trust (HLT) prepared to celebrate its 20th anniversary, a small fire broke out Aug. 12 at our historic Dvoor Farm House headquarters on the outskirts of Flemington, New Jersey. The fire was confined to the back entrance of the home and extinguished promptly thanks to some quick-thinking contractors who were working on the property.

Although our offices were closed that day, one staff member was working on the second floor when the fire began. Two police officers rushed into the smoke-filled home without protective gear and guided her down the stairs and onto the front lawn where she could be treated for smoke inhalation. She made a full recovery.

Our headquarters isn't your typical office building. The Georgian-style stone farm house was built 218 years ago by the son of one of Hunterdon County's earliest settlers. It boasts several original features that offer a glimpse of our area's rich agricultural history, including a basement with multiple fireplaces for cooking and canning food, and 18th-century graffiti scrawled on the attic walls that records in pounds, shillings and pence how many bushels of wheat and oats were sold.

The building is an iconic local landmark and on the National Register of Historic Places; it's not uncommon to hear a knock at the door from someone who "just wants to take a look around."

After the fire we surveyed the damage: The back entrance needed substantial repairs, and every surface in every room was coated with a layer of soot. Not great, but it could have been much worse. HLT now confronted the challenges of continuing our day-to-day operations and planning our 20th anniversary Farm to Table dinner without our offices and equipment.

But as word of the fire spread in the community, something wonderful happened. Phone calls and emails began arriving: *Do you need a place to meet? We have a few extra workstations; can you use them? Do you need space to store things?*

Beyond our efforts to keep Hunterdon County a beautiful slice of bucolic life for the past two decades, HLT has worked to strengthen the bonds of community. Whether it's through our farmers' market, which attracts more than 1,000 visitors to the farm each week, or the stewardship events we host on our preserved trails, we have sought to connect people to the land and to each other.

To be at the receiving end of such community generosity and care is a humbling feeling, indeed. We are so thankful to everyone for all the kindnesses and support bestowed upon us, which helped us to continue working seamlessly on our preservation and stewardship projects. And our sold-out Farm to Table dinner was a terrific success.

When you see hundreds of hands reach out in support, you realize how deeply your work is appreciated and how you've become an integral part of the community. It reaffirms the value of the work you do and redoubles your desire to protect the land and water in the places we call home.

DAVE HARDING IS DIRECTOR OF OUTREACH AT HUNTERDON LAND TRUST.

BEYOND BUCKS & ACRES

Introducing two new Alliance tools to create alternative benchmarks for conservation





The Land Trust Alliance, with the help of land trust practitioners, has created a new framework based on nine common community assets for measuring success:

Assessing and Planning Community Conservation Impact

Assess the impact of your current activities, plan to amplify the positive impacts of current projects, and create new ones for wider and/or deeper impact.

Flexible Framework for Evaluating Community Conservation

Includes sample goals, indicators and measures with tips on how to develop your own measurement framework to track community conservation outcomes over time.

> "We are now able to see much more potential in our projects, and when planning, we focus on those that bridge the natural world and our community."
>
> — Geoff Cripe, accredited Southwest Michigan Land Conservancy

▸ Learn more and get started with these tools at: **www.lta.org/community-conservation**

Photo courtesy of accredited Monadnock Conservancy (NH)

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Launching a New CLIMATE CHANGE INITIATIVE *for Land Trusts*

BY Erin Heskett and Erin Derrington



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"I believe we have a moral obligation to address the greatest environmental crisis of our time," Andrew Bowman, president of the Land Trust Alliance, told the crowd at Rally 2016. "The land trust community can help mitigate climate change by doing what we've always done: conserving more land and stewarding it effectively. In doing so we will demonstrate our relevance to people and their well-being, while simultaneously bringing home significant financial resources to power our land conservation efforts."

Recognizing the important role land conservation and the land trust community can play in combatting climate change, in January 2017 the Land Trust Alliance launched a new program to provide land trusts with strategies, training and tools to both adapt to and mitigate climate change in their land conservation work. The Land Trust Climate Change Initiative (the Initiative) is funded by a generous catalyst grant from the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation (see box on page 17).

The goals of the Initiative include:

1. **Increasing the number of land trusts whose strategic conservation plans address climate impacts and promote climate resilience.** The Alliance has developed a partnership with the Open Space Institute (accredited) to deliver training and tools for land trusts that want to incorporate climate science into their acquisition and stewardship planning.
2. **Advancing the use of land to mitigate climate change, in partnership with The Nature Conservancy (accredited), Finite Carbon, government partners and others.** To do this, the Alliance will:
   - Promote the concept of natural climate solutions (i.e., the ability of soils and vegetation to absorb carbon) within the land trust community;
   - Help land trusts participate in carbon markets (primarily the California Compliance Offset Program) and federal carbon-reduction programs; and
   - Shape federal policies targeting private landowners to promote natural climate solutions.
3. **Empowering land trusts to encourage the build-out of renewable energy facilities while steering them away from sensitive lands through a pilot project in New York state.** As part of a larger stakeholder process led by The Nature Conservancy, this effort will help shape New York state policy and guidelines related to renewable energy siting. The Alliance will use the outcomes and lessons learned from this pilot to help land trusts effectively navigate similar challenges in other states.

Many land trusts are already addressing climate change, including planning for adaptation and resilience in their service areas, and exploring the role that land management and acquisition can play to help slow the pace of climate change. The Initiative will provide resources and training to help these land trusts advance their work and empower those just getting started to integrate planning and projects that address climate change as part of their core missions.

The Alliance has developed a collection of case studies that offer examples of how land trusts are working to address climate change in their communities. The following two case studies illustrate the types of projects and outcomes the Alliance aims to expand across the land trust community through its Initiative. Land trusts can read all of the case studies in detail on the Alliance's climate change website (see Resources box on page 16) and find the resources they need to take action.

Launching a New
CLIMATE CHANGE INITIATIVE *for Land Trusts*

HOW DO FOREST CARBON OFFSET PROJECTS WORK?

The California cap-and-trade program's goal is to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the state to 1990 levels by the year 2020 and achieve an 80% reduction from 1990 levels by 2050. Mandatory compliance with the emissions cap began in 2013 for electric utilities and large industrial facilities in the state and in 2015 for distributors of transportation, natural gas and other fuels. The owners of these facilities can purchase offsets to meet their greenhouse gas emissions obligations. The California Forest Protocol provides detailed and rigorous standards for forest projects to earn offsets.

Managing Forests to Absorb Carbon and Fund Conservation

In November 2013, Finite Carbon (a developer of forest carbon offsets) and Downeast Lakes Land Trust (DLLT) registered the Farm Cove Carbon Project in the California Compliance Offset Program, one of the first two "improved forest management" projects to be registered in the United States under the California Air Resources Board's cap-and-trade program.

An initial issuance of nearly 200,000 carbon offsets (each offset is equivalent to one ton of carbon dioxide) valued at more than $2 million was awarded to DLLT. A second project in August 2016—registered by DLLT, Finite Carbon and the Lyme Timber Company—generated over 450,000 offsets and nearly $5 million in revenue. DLLT has reinvested the income from these carbon projects into conserving vital land and habitat surrounding the community of Grand Lake Stream, Maine.



DOWNEAST LAKES LAND TRUST

Downeast Lakes Land Trust volunteers harvest balsam fir tips for an annual community wreath-making event.

The Downeast Lakes region is a haven for fishing, hunting and ecotourism. "Guiding, logging and traditional crafts, such as canoe building, provide many local jobs, all of which depend on public access to healthy forests," says DLLT Executive Director David Montague.

DLLT acquires working forestland that it then sustainably manages for wildlife habitat, public recreation, improved water quality and a thriving forest products economy. Realizing that these forests could be registered with the California cap-and-trade program, DLLT contracted with Finite Carbon. The California cap-and-trade program aligns well with DLLT's long-term management philosophy, which focuses on increasing timber stocking (a term referring to the quantitative measure of the area occupied by trees) and improving habitat for wildlife.

The income from these projects catalyzed more conservation. The first carbon offsets project sparked a $19.4 million campaign for the acquisition of the 21,870-acre West Grand Lake Community Forest. That property was combined with the Farm Cove Community Forest to create one of the largest community forests in the nation. The West Grand Lake parcel is an integral piece of a 1.4-million-acre international corridor of conserved forests and wetlands between Maine and northern New Brunswick, Canada.

Peter Stein, a Lyme Timber Company managing director, said, "We are proud to be part of a project that will enhance carbon storage and preserve forest values for generations."

DLLT's two carbon projects require its commitment to manage forest stocking at or above a sustainable level for 100 years. The projects encompass over 40,000 acres and will continue to provide valuable support for community-led conservation and a flourishing traditional economy.

Projecting and Buffering Against Sea Level Rise Impacts

The Hudson River Valley region is a dynamic environment bordering the largest mega-city in the United States. Once hosting a variety of industries, Hudson riverfront communities are once again looking to their waterfronts as the key to unlocking their economic futures through a mix of parkland and residential and commercial development. Yet, as Superstorm Sandy and tropical storms Irene and Lee demonstrated, these very same riverfront communities face unprecedented challenges from accelerating sea level rise and the increased frequency of flooding, storm surges and severe weather events.

Scenic Hudson, an accredited land trust, is spearheading efforts to ensure its landholdings will conserve ecologically significant processes and habitats by projecting sea level rise impacts and using GIS mapping to prioritize critical conservation areas that, among other things,

Resources

Land Trust Alliance climate change website: http://climatechange.lta.org.

Open Space Institute's Conserving Nature in a Changing Climate
A guide to help land trusts understand and incorporate terrestrial resilience science into their conservation plans. Available on the website above.







1 Scenic Hudson Park at Peekskill Landing on the Hudson River in Westchester County, New York. Scenic Hudson is helping riverfront communities unlock their economic futures through a mix of parkland and residential and commercial development. ROBERT RODRIGUEZ JR **2 Flooding at Scenic Hudson's Long Dock Park after Superstorm Sandy.** ED MENDOZA
3 The Hudson River shoreline at Esopus Meadows in Ulster County, New York. ROBERT RODRIGUEZ JR./ WWW.ROBERTRODRIGUEZJR.COM

will provide pathways for the migration of tidal wetlands. It is also sharing this data with communities and partners throughout the Hudson River Estuary to help these communities become more resilient. For instance, wetlands can provide valuable storm buffering services by absorbing floodwaters and dissipating wave energy, increasing the resilience of the adjacent uplands and waterfront communities.

Following the swell of public interest that emerged after Sandy and Irene, Scenic Hudson spearheaded 10-month-long, community-based Sea Level Rise Task Forces in three riverfront cities and villages. The task forces examined data on the impact of various sea level rise scenarios at the local level and developed land use and other recommendations for their local elected officials. Scenic Hudson worked with the New York State Departments of Environmental Conservation and State to compile various information resources, including its estuary-wide Sea Level Rise Mapper (SLR Mapper), to inform long-term planning, as well as to aid its own strategic acquisition planning efforts.

Scenic Hudson's SLR Mapper, launched in 2013, uses LIDAR-based elevation data for the estuary to display increments of sea level rise and draws on current census data in order to place potential impacts in a socio-economic context. Projections for future sea level rise along the Hudson River and elsewhere in the state have been provided in the recent ClimAID reports from the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority. The SLR Mapper is a powerful tool that helps communities shape future development and conservation in a manner that anticipates the impacts of sea level rise.

Scenic Hudson also conducted research to understand the response of the estuary's tidal wetlands to sea level rise, and in May 2016, released the groundbreaking report *Protecting The Pathways: A Climate Change Adaptation Framework for Hudson River Estuary Tidal Wetlands*. "Our study found that the estuary's tidal wetlands have significant potential to expand inland, or migrate," said Nava Tabak, Scenic Hudson's conservation scientist. "In response, we have begun to focus conservation, outreach and policy advocacy efforts to protect these wetland migration pathways."

"These analyses complement each other in enabling us to address climate change on multiple fronts in order for our region to be truly resilient to threats," says Seth McKee, Scenic Hudson's land conservation director.

A Critical Time

The Land Trust Climate Change Initiative is designed to help land trusts prepare and respond to climate change at a time when land conservation is more important than ever. The next five to 15 years are critical for global action if we want to abate the worst impacts of climate change, and land trusts have an opportunity to occupy a critical niche in this arena. Protecting and stewarding land is a core mission of the land trust community, and through effective planning and targeted land acquisition, land trusts can help strengthen the resilience of our lands for plants, animals and people as climate impacts increase in the decades to come.

ERIN HESKETT IS DIRECTOR OF NATIONAL AND REGIONAL SERVICES FOR THE LAND TRUST ALLIANCE. **ERIN DERRINGTON** HELPED TO BUILD AND NOW MANAGES THE ALLIANCE'S CLIMATE CHANGE WEBSITE AND WROTE THE CASE STUDIES ON IT. THE ALLIANCE CONTINUES TO COLLECT CASE STUDIES HIGHLIGHTING CLIMATE ACTION. CONTACT ERIN DERRINGTON AT EDERRINGTON@LTA.ORG TO SHARE YOUR STORY.

The Catalyst

The Doris Duke Charitable Foundation's $1 million grant to the Land Trust Alliance has launched the new Land Trust Climate Change Initiative. The grant will catalyze support from other sources to provide $2 million over four years. "We share the Land Trust Alliance's commitment to creating enduring conservation outcomes and are excited to support the launch of this critical effort," said Sacha Spector, director of the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation's Environment Program. "We encourage land trusts across the country to make climate change considerations an essential element of their work and welcome other funders to help extend the reach of this important initiative."



Mindi Crabb, Green River Valley program director of the Jackson Hole Land Trust with her dog, Cora. "I spent the first week after the merger in the mountains. Lack of stress is a pretty wonderful thing."



When Bad Things Happen to Good Land Trusts

THRIVING IN THE FACE OF ADVERSITY

BY Elisabeth Ptak and Christina Soto

"While most of the time we celebrate the good things in our land trust community, we all know that bad things happen," says MaryKay O'Donnell, Midwest senior program manager of the Land Trust Alliance. "If you don't think it can happen to your organization, think again."

A Rally 2016 seminar highlighted stories of land trusts that faced adversity to offer important lessons learned from recovering from the brink of disaster.

"There are practical steps that any nonprofit can take to help prevent bad things from happening and become more resilient," says Meg Domroese of Gathering Waters, Wisconsin's Alliance for Land Trusts and co-facilitator of the session with O'Donnell. "A good first step is establishing systems to ensure things run smoothly. Implementing good governance practices will make your land trust stronger. Developing short- and long-term strategic plans will guide you. Paying attention, developing a keen risk management protocol and practicing adaptability will prepare you to weather a crisis when it comes."

The following stories highlight how land trusts not only recovered from crises but came back from them stronger than before.

TERRY A. ALLEN

West Wisconsin Land Trust

Last October when West Wisconsin Land Trust (WWLT) Conservation Director Rick Remington walked across the Rally stage to receive recognition for WWLT's accreditation, few in the room knew of the painful journey of recovery that the land trust had undergone to reach that moment of triumph.

"WWLT faced what many of us never want to think about—embezzlement and fraud," says Domroese. Peter Vaughan recalls that it was at his first board meeting in January 2009 when things started to unravel. The executive director at the time made the startling announcement to the board that the organization had been denied accreditation, assuring them that there were just a few minor problems to be addressed and that the application would be resubmitted soon. "In retrospect, that was our first red flag," says Vaughan.

Over the next 10 months more alarms were raised. The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources contacted the board chair of WWLT, concerned about whether grant money was being spent appropriately. At about the

continued on page 22

PHOTOGRAPH BY Art Weber/National Center for Nature Photography



A *Beautiful* Filter

This lovely 170-acre coastal wetland on Lake Erie is an example of the remnant systems that Black Swamp Conservancy, an accredited land trust, has been working to protect for nearly 25 years.

Ohio has lost more than 90% of its original wetlands. The situation is even more acute in northwest Ohio, a region that was once covered by a 1,500-square-mile wetland complex known as the Historic Great Black Swamp, which has all but been cleared and drained.

"Wetlands act as 'nature's kidneys,' removing pollutants from our waters," says Rob Krain, executive director of the conservancy. "The decrease in wetlands has contributed to harmful algal blooms, which are increasingly becoming an issue for communities across the country. This is a problem known all too well in the Western Lake Erie Basin, where in 2014 toxic microcystin shut down Toledo's water treatment plant—leaving half a million people without access to drinking water."

In recent years the conservancy launched a new focal program to restore wetlands across the region. "Our restoration initiatives are both expanding wildlife habitat and also helping to protect our water resources by capturing sediments and nutrients before they are able to reach our waterways," says Krain.



When Bad Things Happen to Good Land Trusts

THRIVING IN THE FACE OF ADVERSITY

continued from page 19



DJ GLISSON, II

Rick Remington (left), conservation director for West Wisconsin Land Trust, receives recognition for the land trust's accreditation at Rally 2016.

same time, the U.S. Department of Agriculture issued a report alleging misuse of federal funds. The board eventually learned that the executive director, supported by the associate director, had embezzled organizational monies and mismanaged state and federal funds to an extent that would nearly destroy the organization.

Located in northwest Wisconsin, WWLT preserves natural lands, blue-ribbon trout streams, Mississippi River bluffs, Great Lakes frontage and open space in some 20 counties. No other land trust in the area would have been able to manage, monitor or assume financial responsibility for the perpetual protection of the 175 easements and 20 nature preserves on 22,000 acres that WWLT held at the time. "We came to realize that a failure of the organization could negatively impact the perception of land trusts everywhere and of conservation easements as tools with both the public and with government agencies, including the IRS," says Vaughan. "We came to understand that our success or failure was larger than just WWLT."

The group turned to Gathering Waters and the Land Trust Alliance, who jointly helped bring together resources, experts and other assistance. Consulting firm Mayes|Wilson & Associates was hired to conduct a thorough organizational assessment and provide critical advice on needed improvements. Dana Chabot, CPA, reviewed WWLT finances. He confirmed the misuse of funds, despite the fact that the land trust previously had gone through several clean audits. "There's a cautionary tale to be told about the limited value of audits," he warns. "Auditors only audit the information they're given. There's no guarantee that fraud will be discovered. It's a struggle if you're a small land trust and can't afford a financial manager, so staff and board have to stay on top of these things. The board has an oversight role and is responsible for making sure internal controls are in place."

Jane Prohaska, attorney and former executive director of the accredited Minnesota Land Trust, was brought in as interim executive director after the previous executive director was fired (he had pleaded guilty). Prohaska realized that



Land trust veteran Jane Prohaska was brought in to lead West Wisconsin Land Trust through a difficult time.

although board members were ardently engaged in the purpose of conservation, they weren't well-schooled in their governance responsibilities, particularly related to issues unique to land trusts. To their immense credit, says Prohaska, all the board members stayed on to help solve the crisis and provide needed oversight and leadership. They went from being unaware of the situation to being highly involved in helping WWLT recover from it, including making significant financial contributions. They undertook a thorough study of *Land Trust Standards and Practices* and revised their own operating policies and procedures. They developed short- and long-term strategic plans. "They took very seriously that this happened on their watch and were deeply committed to fixing the problems," says Prohaska. Changes made over the next couple of years were



Bob Fitzwilliam, current executive director of West Wisconsin Land Trust.

followed by a compliance audit conducted by the Alliance and Gathering Waters to verify that improvements were in place.

Bob Fitzwilliam took over as executive director in 2012. His charge was to implement accounting reforms and organizational restructuring, restart the land protection work that had been halted during the investigations and mend relationships with donors and partners. WWLT's reputation as an important and respected player in land conservation was in jeopardy. It had to prove it was worth supporting again. "It was a slow process," Fitzwilliam acknowledges, "but people really wanted us to succeed. When I got here, they would always bring it up. It's really taken four years for people to stop asking how we're doing. We had to have patience."

In fact, both the board and staff had been somewhat traumatized by the experience. So while the earlier executive director had banned all contact between them in an effort to conceal his deceit, Fitzwilliam urged open communication. WWLT now has an institutional culture that is participatory, one where everyone's opinion matters and the board and staff work as conservation partners. Through an orientation program, new board members come to understand the extent of their fiduciary and other governance responsibilities as they learn how the organization operates.

"Land trusts are complicated, multifaceted organizations," says Vaughan, now serving as WWLT's board chair. "New board members cannot be expected to understand them prior to joining and need to be educated in a formal way about how conservation easements work, the role of the stewardship and defense funds and the importance of tracking restricted funds.

"We are very proud of what we accomplished once we went to work to solve our problems," adds Vaughan. "We became accredited in 2016, we've built a healthy stewardship and defense fund, we're back in the good graces of our funding partners at both the state and federal level and we were able to retain outstanding staff who are wonderful conservation professionals doing important work. We've also regained the trust of our donors, and we've been able to attract several new and outstanding board members. This outcome did not look likely for way too long, but it is now our reality. The WWLT story is one of redemption; it can give hope to other land trusts who find themselves in troubled waters."

QUALITIES OF RESILIENT ORGANIZATIONS

Good governance
- Clear structures and systems support people and programs; well-known and well-constructed policies and procedures streamline administration.
- The organization is strategic and regularly evaluates its programs and impact.
- Board members are engaged, understand their roles and responsibilities and regularly receive training.
- The organization follows *Land Trust Standards and Practices*.

Financial health
- Financial oversight includes checks and balances for handling finances.
- Diversity of funding streams creates a strong financial portfolio.
- Board members take responsibility for financial oversight.
- Restricted funds are tracked correctly and used appropriately.

Community relations
- The work culture respects and welcomes diversity and engages people who are broadly representative of the community.
- Relationships are built with community leaders, partners and other stakeholders.
- Leaders are transparent about mistakes, take responsibility and listen to affected people.

Risk management and resilience
- The organization is aware of potential risks and its own risk tolerance.
- The organization prepares for transitions.
- The organization learns from failure.

Land Conservancy of West Michigan

In 2010 the Grand Rapids–based Land Conservancy of West Michigan (LCWM) received a grant under the Sustain Our Great Lakes Program to use an herbicide to help control Oriental bittersweet, an invasive species that poses a significant threat to native plant communities along the shores of Lake Michigan. It grows rapidly and can shade out native vegetation, girdling trees and shrubs in its way and cutting off the flow of water and nutrients.

"LCWM was excited to receive this assistance," says O'Donnell, "but owing to a series of overzealous and misguided decisions, it treated, with the landowners' permission, lands owned by the state, the city and private landowners that were adjacent to LCWM land. So while the application was done with good intentions, it all went horribly wrong."

The first herbicide application was made in 2010 without problems. However, the second application, which was done in late 2011, was followed by a combination of unusual weather activities. In early 2012 precipitation was well below normal and a bizarre weather pattern led to 80-degree temperatures for five days in March, followed by freezing nights in

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LAND CONSERVANCY OF WEST MICHIGAN

The accredited Land Conservancy of West Michigan practiced good crisis management, including signage.

April. To make matters worse, the drought continued until the fall. Without moisture and microbial action to break the herbicide down, it remained pervasive in the soils and ultimately was absorbed by tree roots, killing or stressing the trees.

"By May we realized we had problems," remembers Vaughn Maatman who had been hired as executive director just five months earlier. Nearly 1,100 trees were dead or dying. "We were responsible for applying an herbicide that was killing trees. It was an existential threat to the organization. Our work depends on trust. It looked like we had been the conservation organization that wasn't careful enough."

Fortunately, Maatman had extensive experience in developing crisis management plans. He and the board set about creating a crisis management team made up of him, the executive committee and an environmental attorney who was also a board member. They developed key messages, identified a spokesperson, partnered with their insurance company and made sure to create an electronic trail for documentation.

Communication was central to their efforts. They contacted every landowner, giving reassurances that they would bring in experts to assess the damage and propose solutions. They hired an arborist, a horticulturalist and an environmental restoration firm. They listened to the landowners' concerns and offered to restore all the affected trees or provide financial compensation. A large full-color informational sign posted at Mount Baldhead's Critical Dune Area, one of the most affected spots, illustrated what had happened and how LCWM planned to remediate the situation.

These personal contacts and proactive efforts paid off. No lawsuits were filed and no regulatory actions were taken. LCWM's insurance company settled 25 claims with landowners.

The board was initially divided about how open to be with the media, some preferring a more cautious response. However, the majority of the board members refused to obfuscate their responsibilities, says Maatman. "It took a while to work through this. In the end, taking responsibility and practicing transparency won out." He did radio, TV and newspaper interviews and LCWM received crucial support from the Saugatuck city manager and the local newspaper. While the crisis team focused on the situation, other staff and board members continued with the work of the land trust. "The way we handled this demonstrated who we were as a land trust, and we came out stronger than before."

Good crisis management is good risk management. LCWM now has appropriate risk assessment systems in place.

According to Maatman (now retired), "Everything we had to do to resolve the crisis should have been planned out in advance. Land trusts need strategic planning, organizational planning and a regular review of practices with an eye to risk management."

Green River Valley Land Trust and Jackson Hole Land Trust

In 2013 the Wyoming Land Trust (WLT) distributed a press release announcing that it would be working to transfer its 58 conservation easements to similar Wyoming land conservation organizations. "In light of difficult financial projections...the WLT board has made the decision to restructure and possibly close in 2013."

Cue the panic.

"This was a successful, respected, accredited land trust running out of money and going defunct," says Alliance Western Director Wendy Ninteman. "There was disbelief in the land trust community."

The WLT was founded in 2000 as the Green River Valley Land Trust by a group of ranchers, teachers and local business owners in Sublette County who wanted to provide



landowners—particularly working ranchers—with a voluntary way to conserve their land, wildlife habitat and agricultural heritage. The decision to expand the county-based land trust into a statewide organization (and to change its name to the Wyoming Land Trust) was made in 2010. "That decision, made against the advice of its advisory board over concerns about capacity, coupled with a number of outside factors and a lack of fiscal oversight, caused a downward spiral for the land trust," says Mindi Crabb, interim director following the restructuring.

When the press release came out, Ninteman raised the alarm at the Alliance, which immediately stepped up to help. "The Alliance and the Wyoming land trust community convened for a day-long meeting," says Ninteman. "It was an amazing community response to try to address the issue." The Alliance hired contractor Leni Wilsmann to facilitate the meeting. "I also asked the WLT board to agree to work with us on a transition plan," says Ninteman.

Over the next three years Wilsmann worked with the land trust—which had gone back to using its original name, the Green River Valley Land Trust (GRVLT)—on a sustainability plan. Wilsmann formed a team of representatives from GRVLT and the accredited Jackson Hole Land Trust (JHLT), to advance the idea of a full merger. The Alliance funded much of the transition



MINDI CRABB

The protected Bar Cross Ranch in the Green River Valley.

process, JHLT provided stewardship support and the accredited Nature Conservancy helped with some capacity issues early on.

"It took the board a year to wrap their heads around being merged with another organization," says Crabb. "We're a very independent community." On the other side, Laurie Andrews, president of JHLT, also had to convince her board. "We came to the marriage without a dowry," says Crabb. "We weren't a matched pair."

"Jackson Hole Land Trust has always been interested in Sublette County," says Andrews. "We helped start the Green River Valley Land Trust with The Nature Conservancy. The merger made sense in the context of our work on connecting wildlife corridors."

Andrews says that the two groups had "lots of talks about culture. As land trusts, small or large, we all feel that we have a culture in the communities in which we work. We were sensitive to keeping and honoring the culture in Sublette County, not just Jackson Hole."

On October 1, 2016, JHLT announced that GRVLT's easements would transfer to and be held by JHLT as part of its new Green River Valley Program. Mindi Crabb was retained as program director in a new office in Sublette County.

"I can't overstate how pivotal the Alliance, Wendy Ninteman and Leni Wilsmann were to this elegant solution," says Andrews. "It would not have happened without them, especially in such a systematic and thoughtful way."

"Mergers are like a dance," says Wilsmann. "You go forward and backward. When humans are involved, everybody's got a different opinion. You listen, you discuss, you work your way through all of it."

Brian Gray, former GRVLT board president, agrees. "It is clear that the Jackson Hole Land Trust recognizes the big picture of conservation in Wyoming and has dedicated an immense amount of time to understanding the history and dynamics of our land protection efforts and goals here in the Green River Valley," he says. "We are grateful to the funders who stepped up to guarantee the operating support for the new program. They did so because JHLT, with its excellent reputation, backed the merger and future operations of the Green River Valley Program."

Problems are more common than you think, and we need to spread the word that as part of the land trust community, you're not alone.

Conclusion

As these case studies illustrate, serious mistakes—often with unintended consequences—can happen at any land trust. How can you safeguard your organization? Good governance practices can go a long way toward preventing such things as fraud and mismanagement. But Ginny Moore, Midwest field representative for the accredited Conservation Fund, counsels, "We're not saying, 'Don't take risks,' but rather, 'Evaluate the risks you're willing to take.' If an organization doesn't take calculated risks, it is never going to grow or move to the next level." O'Donnell adds, "If something does go wrong, don't hesitate to ask for help from the Land Trust Alliance, your state service center or other land trusts. Problems are more common than you think, and we need to spread the word that as part of the land trust community, you're not alone. There will be help for you."

ELISABETH PTAK IS A WRITER, EDITOR AND COMMUNICATIONS PROFESSIONAL IN CALIFORNIA. **CHRISTINA SOTO** EDITS SAVING LAND.



By and For THE COMMUNITY:

The revised *Land Trust Standards and Practices* are ready

BY Sylvia Bates

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Fair, comprehensive, inclusive, deliberative, current, responsive, flexible, affirming. Those are the "key words" that the Standards Advisory Team members used to describe the *Land Trust Standards and Practices* revisions process. They should know. They spent countless volunteer hours on the undertaking.

On February 3 the Land Trust Alliance Board of Directors approved the final revised version of the *Land Trust Standards and Practices* (the Standards). You can download the document and find more information at www.lta.org/sp. Now it's time for land trusts to adopt them.

Recap of the Revisions Process

The Standards are the ethical and technical guidelines for the responsible operation of a land trust. The Land Trust Alliance drafted the first Standards in 1989 at the urging of land trusts and to affirm certain best practices as the surest way to secure lasting conservation. To maintain the land trust community's strength, credibility and effectiveness, the Standards were updated in 1993, 2001 and 2004. In preparing the 2017 update, an advisory team, composed of land trust professionals from across the country, reviewed and discussed more than 1,600 comments from conservationists throughout the United States. These many voices were an invaluable asset throughout the revisions process.

The Standards are a collective product of the land trust community. The advisory team was as diverse in perspective as the comments the team reviewed. Unanimity was not necessarily achieved on each standard or practice, but the final product reflects the expressed values and recommendations of the overall community.

What Has Changed?

While the substance of the Standards remains the same, with 12 overarching principles (see sidebar) and supporting practices, we have made some significant changes, including

- a new format that improves clarity and reduces redundancy;
- a focus on those practices that apply broadly to the land trust community;
- greater alignment with the requirements for accreditation and Terrafirma eligibility.

The content reflects changes over the past decade in the legal and operational environment of the land trust community. For example, new practice elements call for land trusts to file an annual Form 990 (or equivalent), develop and implement a



fundraising plan and build relationships with community leaders and other stakeholders in their communities.

Over the next several months, the Alliance will be revising its current materials, including the Standards and Practices Curriculum, to reflect the revised Standards. Check the Standards webpage and The Learning Center for frequent updates. Our goal is to help land trusts understand how best to implement the revised Standards given the size and scope of their organizations.

Time to Adopt and Implement

The nation's more than 1,300 nonprofit land trusts have conserved 56 million acres of wildlife habitat, farms, ranches, forests, watersheds, recreation areas and other open spaces as of 2015. The continued success of land trusts depends on public confidence in—and support of—our community as we build conservation programs that stand the test of time. It is therefore every land trust's responsibility to uphold this public confidence and ensure the permanence of its conservation efforts. Implementing the Standards positions a land trust to achieve these goals and, if it so wishes, to seek insurance through Terrafirma and pursue accreditation through the Land Trust Accreditation Commission. In the final document Terrafirma enrollment prerequisites are denoted with a square and elements required to achieve accreditation are marked with a circle.

Each member of the Land Trust Alliance must adopt the Standards as guiding principles for its operations, pledging a commitment to uphold the public confidence and the credibility of the land trust community as a whole. (See the board adoption resolution in the document.) It is important to note that while the Standards are thorough, they are not exhaustive. There will be times when the Standards do not make clear a land trust's best path forward. In these moments the organization's board should exercise its best judgment as informed by the spirit of these Standards.

Land Trust Standards and Practices were first created by practitioners who understood that a strong land trust community would enable conservation to last through time. Land trusts are a respected and integral part of our nation's land conservation work. Together we must support our peers and hold ourselves to the highest standards as we continue to conserve the places we need and love. The Alliance is committed to continuing to foster this process by and for the community.

For instructions on how to adopt Land Trust Standards and Practices *go to www.lta.org/adoption.*

SYLVIA BATES IS DIRECTOR OF STANDARDS AND EDUCATIONAL SERVICES AT THE LAND TRUST ALLIANCE.

12 GUIDELINES FOR ALL LAND TRUSTS

Standard 1: Ethics, Mission and Community Engagement
Land trusts maintain high ethical standards and have a mission committed to conservation, community service and public benefit.

Standard 2: Compliance with Laws
Land trusts fulfill their legal requirements as nonprofit tax-exempt organizations and comply with all laws.

Standard 3: Board Accountability
Land trust boards act ethically in conducting the affairs of the organization and carry out their legal and financial responsibilities as required by law.

Standard 4: Conflicts of Interest
Land trusts have policies and procedures to avoid or manage real or perceived conflicts of interest.

Standard 5: Fundraising
Land trusts conduct fundraising activities in a lawful, ethical and responsible manner.

Standard 6: Financial Oversight
Land trusts are responsible and accountable for how they manage their finances and assets.

Standard 7: Human Resources
Land trusts have sufficient skilled personnel to carry out their programs, whether volunteers, staff and/or consultants/contractors.

Standard 8: Evaluating and Selecting Conservation Projects
Land trusts carefully evaluate and select their conservation projects.

Standard 9: Ensuring Sound Transactions
Land trusts work diligently to see that every land and conservation easement transaction is legally, ethically and technically sound.

Standard 10: Tax Benefits and Appraisals
Land trusts work diligently to see that every charitable gift of land or conservation easement meets federal and state tax law requirements, to avoid fraudulent or abusive transactions and to uphold public confidence in land conservation.

Standard 11: Conservation Easement Stewardship
Land trusts have a program of responsible stewardship for their conservation easements.

Standard 12: Fee Land Stewardship
Land trusts have a program of responsible stewardship for the land held in fee for conservation purposes.

BY Anne Sundermann

BEYOND Bucks and Acres

Creating New Benchmarks for Conservation

How does your land trust define success? Traditionally, the Land Trust Alliance and land trusts have measured success by numbers of acres conserved and money raised. While these numbers are important they don't tell the whole story of the impact of land conservation—a story of vital interest to your community. Having a more complete understanding of what you have accomplished and what needs more attention is critical in planning. Adopting a broader view of measuring success may help explain to community members how you are directly impacting their lives, thus garnering more support for your work.



LOOKOUT MOUNTAIN CONSERVANCY

Leadership interns and YouthWorks volunteers for Tennessee's Lookout Mountain Conservancy celebrate the end of a workday in June 2015. "Instead of simply preserving land, we are using it to change and enrich lives," says conservancy CEO Robyn Carlton.

New Benchmarks for a New Outlook

To assist land trusts in looking beyond the traditional benchmarks of bucks and acres, the Land Trust Alliance, with the help of land trust practitioners, has created a new framework for measuring success. *Assessing and Planning Community Conservation Impact* is based on nine common community assets, grouped into three major categories against which land trusts can assess their work (Figure 1).

The first step is to assess what you are already doing; this creates a baseline. Many land trusts are surprised that they are actually impacting many more assets than they first thought. For each of your projects or programs, apply the framework to identify the community assets you are bringing positive change to and the extent of your impact (Figure 2). While it may be challenging to have impacts on multiple assets with one project, the tool allows you to see results across all of your projects and programs. "The key to the framework is its flexibility. Land trusts of all sizes and missions will find they can adapt the tool to their unique situation and community, allowing them to identify the changes they are making," says Rob Aldrich, the Alliance's director of community conservation.

In addition to using the new framework, you may want to consider tracking other activities. Softer benchmarks, suggested by prevailing social science, can be very revealing. Benchmarks can include the creation of new experiences or connections; number of people connected to the land via community outreach;

Figure 1. Assessing and Planning Community Conservation Impact

RESOURCE	SYSTEM	HUMAN
Natural & Working Lands	Justice, Equity, Access	Intellectual & Emotional
Financial	Political	Skills & Health
Built	Social	Cultural

Figure 2. Tool Sample: Asset Description

How important are your community's skills and health assets to your conservation work?

Not important | Somewhat important | Important | Extremely important

What is your impact on the skills and physical and mental health of people in your region?

Have not considered impacts | Minor impacts | Moderate impacts | Significant impacts

Skills and Health Attributes
These include individual skills and the physical and mental healthiness of people in a community or region.

Skill building includes leadership or social skills and technical skills like carpentry or land management.

Investments can include programming and direct experiences on or associated with the land and water.



number of meetings in the community and number of people met; and number of issues identified. The key is that whatever you choose to measure, be consistent over time.

Planning for the Future

After you create the baseline, it's important to continue measuring so you can spot key trends. This data will be critical as you plan for the future. By using the same framework, you can talk about each expanded or new project or program to see what other assets you might impact by modifying your approach.

The second tool, *A Flexible Framework for Evaluating Community Conservation*, provides draft goals, indicators and sample measures of impact for each of the nine community assets. It also provides tips and guidance on how you can develop your own measures to track different types of land conservation projects and programs and their outcomes over time.

Southwest Michigan Land Conservancy, an accredited land trust, runs all of its projects through the assessment, the results of which the board reviews before approving. "The tool makes our community more present in our everyday work," observes Geoff Cripe, director of land protection. "We are now able to see much more potential in our projects, and when planning, we focus on those that bridge the natural world and our communities."

This framework can also help organizations evolve from a strictly transaction-oriented approach to include a relationship-based approach. Robyn Carlton, CEO of the accredited Lookout Mountain Conservancy (TN) says, "Instead of simply preserving land, we are now using the land in a valuable way—changing and enriching lives and partnering with people and organizations to better our community." The challenge is to measure that impact and to track trends.

Communicating Success

After you have measured that success, you'll want to communicate it in a way that is relevant to those who live in your community. There are many ways to share your message, from high-flying videos or social media to more traditional methods. The accredited Nebraska Land Trust relies on word of mouth and tried and true print media outlets to communicate its conservation efforts across the Cornhusker State. "Media coverage is our litmus test," says Executive Director David Sands. "It's how we know we are doing good work." Whatever method you choose, it's

critical to also keep track of what seems to work and what doesn't.

Measuring the Whole Community

In addition to its traditional land protection criteria, driven by traditional goals and funding sources, the accredited Eastern Shore Land Conservancy (MD) created a parallel portfolio of community-based conservation projects that prioritizes work in both the rural areas and town centers and emphasizes a sense of place, the local economy and the community. As part of this shift, ESLC embraced the whole communities concept espoused by the Center for Whole Communities and created new metrics to measure success. New metrics include number of community meetings held at their new Eastern Shore Conservation Center, number of residents canvassed, number of meetings with stakeholders, presentations to community groups and so on. End result: Their goals are more specific in engaging different groups.

"Our strategic plans for the last 20 years have been pushing us to be more inviting to all communities of this region—and the new metrics keep up the pressure toward that end," says Executive Director Rob Etgen. "While there have been many practical benefits of this effort, more than anything else this broadening has helped maintain the relevance of our work and the passion of the community behind it."

By traditional measures, Nebraska Land Trust's fundraising campaign for the Northern Cheyenne Breakout Monument was a success: It met its fundraising goals and completed the project. The monument commemorates the Cheyenne's perilous attempt to return to their historical lands, "capturing the 'exodus' story of an entire people," says Sands. "It's one of the most important things we've done." The project created a longer-term cycle of success, for which the NLT created new measures. It now evaluates its 1) credibility and reputation within its community; 2) ability to build and foster partnerships; 3) acceptance by underserved and nontraditional communities; and 4) if it undertakes noteworthy projects. Although these are "softer" metrics, the land trust also measures success over the long term by number of interactions or meetings in that community, tracking new land preservation and project opportunities in the area, and media coverage. Sands notes that the trust's priorities are interwoven: "Community acceptance leads to quality projects, which leads to media coverage, which leads to credibility, which leads to community acceptance, and so on."



MOUNTAIN AREA LAND TRUST

A Mountain Area Land Trust (accredited) hike in Colorado. Adopting a broader view of measuring success may help explain to community members how your land trust is directly impacting lives, thus garnering more support for your work.

Take It to the Next Level

Ready to explore and share ideas on community conservation? Join the conversation in the Community Conservation Group on The Learning Center at http://tlc.lta.org.

ANNE SUNDERMANN, PRESIDENT OF MORNING SUN EDITORIAL SERVICES, INC., PROVIDES WRITING, EDITING AND PUBLICATION MANAGEMENT SERVICES TO NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS.

Resources

- *Assessing and Planning Community Conservation Impact*, Land Trust Alliance, 2016. www.lta.org/community-conservation-impact-tool
- *A Flexible Framework for Evaluating Community Conservation*, Land Trust Alliance, December 2016. www.lta.org/flexible-framework
- *Self-Evaluation: Ideas for Participatory Evaluation of Rural Community Development Projects*, Jim Rugh, World Neighbors, 1992.
- "Conservation Horizons: Keeping Conservation and Land Trusts Vital for the Next Age," California Council of Land Trusts, 2015. www.calandtrusts.com/horizons
- Center for Whole Communities. www.wholecommunities.org/practice/whole-measures

More Than Numbers

Every five years the Land Trust Alliance collects data to measure land trust success as a whole. The 2015 National Land Trust Census recently revealed a vibrant, growing and increasingly sophisticated community. Land trusts have conserved 56 million acres. The land trust community is strong, with $2.18 billion in endowments and dedicated funds and 5 million volunteers and supporters. And, for the first time, the Census asked a question the answer of which reveals how deeply communities care for the natural world and connecting people to nature: 6.25 million people visited land trust properties in 2015. While numbers provide a good snapshot of land trust success, they can never tell the whole tale. Check out the full Census report to read the stories behind the numbers at www.lta.org/census.

LAND TRUST ACCREDITATION COMMISSION
An independent program of the Land Trust Alliance

Adapting the Accreditation Program to the Revised Standards



JAIME GONZÁLEZ

The beautiful Katy Prairie in Texas.

Katy Prairie Conservancy in Houston, Texas, may not be the typical Texas land trust, admits Executive Director Mary Anne Piacentini. "We are a smaller group that owns a lot of the land we protect instead of having most of our protected acreage under easement," she says. The accredited land trust has protected more than 20,000 acres—nearly 14,000 acres of which it still owns—of the Katy Prairie, a tallgrass prairie home to hundreds of species of wildlife and native grasses and wildflowers.

Piacentini had her land trust's accreditation experience in mind when she agreed to serve on an advisory group of accreditation stakeholders in the fall of 2016. The 13-member advisory group provided guidance to the Land Trust Accreditation Commission on adapting the accreditation program to reflect the 2017 *Land Trust Standards and Practices* (the Standards).

As part of the advisory group, Piacentini helped shape the process that was created to identify the accreditation "indicator elements." Indicator elements (previously referred to as "indicator practices") are used by the Commission to verify a land trust's ability to implement the Standards and to operate in an ethical, legal and technically sound manner.

"Land trusts operate in a different world now than when the 2004 Standards were published," says Melissa Kalvestrand, the Commission's associate director for reviews. "As part of the 2017 Standards, we wanted to make sure the indicator elements kept the most essential elements and also addressed the highest risks that land trusts and the community face. The advisory group helped us identify what those risks are and remove any remaining redundancies."

While the fundamental indicator elements have not changed, the updates reflect what the Commission has learned from a decade of accrediting and gathering feedback from land trusts across the country, Kalvestrand says. For instance, the indicator elements are now stronger with respect to financial health, governance, transactions and stewardship.

The advisory group's guidance was critical in making sure the accreditation program stays relevant in the years ahead, Kalvestrand says. "We wanted the accreditation indicators to be informed by land trust stakeholders who live and breathe the Standards. The advisory group gave us a fresh perspective as to how accreditation impacts their work."

What's next? In the fall of 2017, the Commission will again engage the land trust community, this time by seeking input on the requirements related to the new indicator elements; they will then be finalized and published in 2018 to be applied to applicants in 2019 and beyond.

The coming changes will keep the accreditation program rigorous but will "make better sense to people," Piacentini believes. "The goal is to maintain the integrity of the accreditation process while helping land trusts follow the best practices and maintain the confidence of the public.

"The accreditation process is very deliberative. You have to sit down and think…it makes you want to be the absolute best you can be for your organization and all the people who benefit from your work," she says.

FREELANCE WRITER AND EDITOR **KIRSTEN FERGUSON** IS A FREQUENT CONTRIBUTOR TO *SAVING LAND*.

BY Mark Rovner

Finding the Email Balance

The "how many emails are too many" question has supplanted the "which day is best" question as the most pondered issue in email fundraising. According to the M+R *Benchmarks 2016* study, email revenue grew by 25% in 2015, making this question especially timely.

There's no easy answer. Maybe that's why people keep asking.

Following are some guideposts you might follow to answer that question for yourself.

1 **Once a month is probably too infrequent.** You are not the only one sending email to your donors and prospects. Your email recipients are on a plethora of lists. All those other groups are sending email out weekly or more. It's a tragedy of the commons situation. You will be invisible unless you are emailing 2–3 times per month.

2 **If your sole objective is money, then more is better, with almost no limit.** There is loads of evidence that increasing email frequency will increase income, and almost no evidence of serious blowback from list members. I don't know why people seem not to get annoyed with constant email, though certainly a few do. But most seem not to mind or care. That said, we would not counsel this fire hose approach. Not because it's ineffective; it's just rude.

3 **It's about them.** The caveat to #1 and #2 above is that if you continue to send content that is uninteresting or irrelevant to your people, you're training them to ignore you. *What you send should be entirely about what your donor or activist or list member cares about and not at all about what you "want them to know."* We see that rule broken on a daily basis. If you are a land trust, think about what your list members want—it might be as simple as being reminded about visiting hours (if you have them), birding or wildlife trail updates or volunteer opportunities. Even a beautiful photo from your land trust would probably make a perfect cultivation email. Just remember the cardinal rule: It's not about you; it's about them.

4 **Don't view email solicitations as intrusions.** Giving makes people feel good. Neuroscientists have found that giving to charity causes an endorphin rush akin to having sex or eating really good chocolate. There's an unspoken notion in many organizations that solicitations for funds are necessary evils. Get that thought out of your mind. You're providing opportunities for your donor to be a hero.

5 **Keep the cultivation to solicitation ratio at 2:1 or better.** All that said, donors do not like being treated like ATMs. They need feedback, success stories, progress reports, recognition and gratitude. Always asking—even if you're asking them to be a hero—is wearing in the absence of good consistent cultivation. See #3 for some specifics.

6 **Ask your audience what they want.** I have been in countless meetings where red-faced debates take place among staff about what their readers want without a single piece of real evidence on the

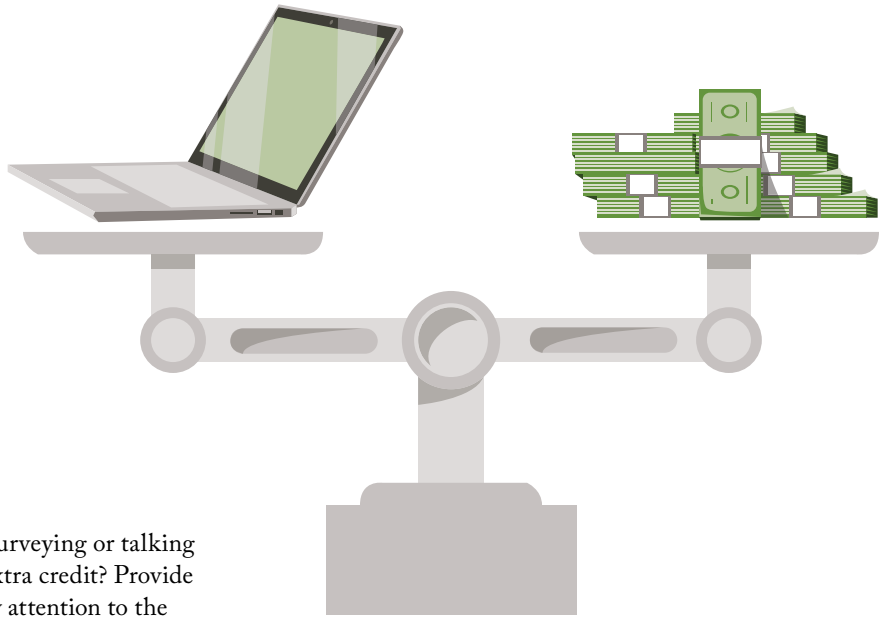


table. You have no excuse not to be surveying or talking to donors on a regular basis. Want extra credit? Provide multiple feedback channels. And pay attention to the feedback. Do a standalone survey on SurveyMonkey. Ask for feedback in your cultivation emails. Call a few donors, thank them and ask them what they'd like to hear more about. Otherwise, you'll never know what your donors and lapsed members really want, will you?

7 **Change up your subject lines.** Try this trick of the trade and find out which wording resonates more. Save two versions of the same email and change only the subject line. Then split your mailing list in half and send one email with one subject line to one half of the group and the other to the other half. Check your open rates and clickthroughs to compare one subject line's results with the other.

8 **Let your audience members set their frequency.** Not *everyone* is indifferent to high frequencies of email (though if you're taking care to send stuff that is personal and relevant then the annoyed few will be very few indeed). And what better way to keep them happy than giving them the option of choosing fewer messages? This has become standard practice throughout the corporate world, though it seems all but absent in nonprofits.

So how many emails? At least 2–3 per month. Beyond that, focus on quality, not quantity. And of course if there's an emergency (e.g., flooding, fire, etc.) email frequency can go up drastically for short periods.

The rest is up to you.

MARK ROVNER IS FOUNDER AND PRINCIPAL OF SEA CHANGE STRATEGIES, WWW.SEACHANGESTRATEGIES.COM.

WHAT MATTERS MOST: Supporters Who Are Engaged with Your Cause

BY Kivi Leroux Miller

Tracking your results and split testing different options can help you measure your progress against yourself, but we bet you are curious how you stack up against other nonprofits, aren't you? M+R and the Nonprofit Technology Network publish the *Benchmarks* study for nonprofits, which you can find at http://mrbenchmarks.com. It includes such stats as open and click-through rates, list churn rates and average online gift size. While it is one of the better reports available, it still only measures what's going on with a relatively small number of very big nonprofit organizations.

While benchmarks are helpful, remember that the most important measure of your success is how the people on **your** mailing list are responding to **your** nonprofit. While open and click-through rates are easy to measure, they aren't the results you are actually seeking. Focus on more meaningful outcomes instead: Are more people volunteering, or are they volunteering more often? Are more people telling you they learned about your organization from a friend? Are more people attending your events, writing bigger checks or signing up for monthly giving programs?

*From The Nonprofit Email Marketing Guide, by **Kivi Leroux Miller** of NonprofitMarketingGuide.com, Published under a Creative Commons License by Network for Good, 2009*



DIANA PROEMM, COURTESY OF GALLATIN VALLEY LAND TRUST (ACCREDITED)

UPDATE *on Census Public Access Data*

The Land Trust Alliance has revised the percentage of land owned by land trusts with public access on the national level from 46% to 72% in the 2015 Land Trust Census. Here's why.

When the Land Trust Alliance released the Census, it received feedback that anyone comparing the public access acres to the total acres protected would think that most (or nearly all) of the land owned by land trusts is closed to the public. Based on the Alliance's direct experience with land trusts across the country, it does not believe this to be the case. This misperception is especially problematic in states where public access is required—for example, for government project funding or property tax exemption.

At the top of each Census state page at www.lta.org/census-map, the total acres owned represent a comprehensive tally of all acres owned by state, local and national land trusts. At the time of launch, the Alliance also included another box showing state totals for public access to properties owned and under easement.

Because these two data points relate to different sets of data from two different pools of respondents, making a direct comparison was often misleading and inaccurate. This is because the amount of historical data the Alliance has on acres owned is much more comprehensive than the more limited, relatively recent data it has on public access. "We revisited the analysis to ensure that we are making a valid comparison based on organizations for which we have good data in both areas," says Katie Chang, educational services manager for the Alliance.

"As a result, we chose to condense the 'public access to land trust properties' data figures to a single percentage, instead of acres," says Chang. "We also limited our analysis to Alliance member land trusts, with the reasoning that our members are more likely to give us accurate information *and* it is easiest for us to follow up with them for corrections or clarification as needed." •

New Membership Services Coordinator a Conduit to Information



Jorge Astorga Jr. has joined the Alliance as the new membership services coordinator and will be responsible for the recruitment and retention services for land trusts members. But Alliance member land trusts should consider him their link to a whole array of resources.

"Think of me as a gateway," says Astorga. "When a land trust needs information or help, I can lead it to data or to people it needs to be in touch with. The Alliance has a wonderful group of regional staff around the country who work with land trusts on the ground. I can make those connections."

For more than eight years Astorga managed member relations and fundraising campaigns for nonprofits in the Washington, D.C., area, including the Center for Nonprofit Advancement and Friends of the National Zoo. At the Alliance he will strengthen the membership program and emphasize educational and other professional development opportunities for land trust members. "I believe that land trusts and communities are at their best when everyone comes together to support one another," says Astorga, "and I will work to bring all organizations engaged in conservation into the Alliance family."

Originally from Texas, Astorga's family has a long history of owning land in the Rio Grande Valley. He is an ultra-marathon distance runner and loves to participate in endurance and mountain races. "I believe that the best way to approach anything in life is to take the first step toward a goal and enjoy what comes as you move forward to accomplish it," he says.

Questions or concerns about your land trust's membership? Email Astorga at jastorga@lta.org.

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Pass this invitation on to attorneys and senior practitioners associated with your land trust! Earn up to 11 hours of CLE credit (pending approval and may vary from state to state).

Many thanks to our Program Committee

Cathy Howell, *The Nature Conservancy*
Burgess Jackson, *Law Office of Burgess Jackson*
Bill Silberstein, *Kaplan Kirsch & Rockwell LLP*
Leslie Ratley-Beach, *Land Trust Alliance*

Photos L-R: San Pedro Ranch/Texas Agricultural Land Trust/John Dyer; San Antonio Missions & Cibolo Bluffs Preserve/The Nature Conservancy/Rich Kostecke; Mission Reach & Longhorns/VisitSanAntonio.com/Bob Howen.

BY Christina Soto



Clara Nyman.

Conservation Through Philanthropy

A New Voice in Development

"It is with great pleasure that I announce that Clara Nyman has accepted the position as vice president of development for the Alliance," said Andrew Bowman this past November. "Clara brings the right skills at the right time to our development department and to our organization. She is seasoned and strategic, and I have great confidence in her leadership abilities."

Nyman, a certified fundraising professional, comes to the Alliance most recently from the Museum of Jewish Heritage in New York City. She has extensive experience in major gift fundraising, directing development operations, building board and donor relationships and growing membership and planned giving programs.

"I understand the responsibility we share in conservation of our lands and am honored to join this stellar team in making our world a better place," says Nyman. cnyman@lta.org. •

Land Trust Enhances Carbon Sequestration



MICHAEL WOOLSEY

The accredited Marin Agricultural Land Trust (MALT) in California preserves working farms in Marin County. Its work protects much more than the land, though.

Feeling the impacts of climate change in its region, MALT is working with its landowners to improve farming and ranching stewardship practices while providing the benefits of local food production, habitat protection and enhancement of ecosystem services, such as clean air, clean water and carbon sequestration.

In 2008 MALT became one of the founding members and the fiscal sponsor of a partnership that would become the Marin Carbon Project (MCP). This collaboration of scientists, ranchers, agencies and policymakers is working to develop and advance climate-friendly agricultural management practices, known as carbon farming, which could make food production part of the climate solution. MALT and MCP are responding to the rapid pace of global climate change by enhancing carbon sequestration in range- and agricultural land through applied research, demonstration and implementation projects on Marin's family farms and ranches.

Working with the Natural Resources Conservation Service, 34 climate-beneficial practices were identified to support "Farm Carbon Planning." In a collaborative process, once a landowner is selected, MALT staff and MCP partners go out on the land and identify what management practices might work on a given property. Using the carbon farm plan template, the landowner's local knowledge and the rangeland manager's professional expertise, opportunities are identified, data is compiled and potential projects overlaid on a property map—and potential carbon gains are quantified. This focus on carbon management enables landowners to build more resilient and sustainable systems, which, over time, will also yield higher productivity and expanded ecosystem benefits.

The economic incentives are not limited to higher yields. In 2014, the American Carbon Registry, which certifies carbon offsets, used results from the MCP to approve a protocol for adding compost to rangeland. Through the new protocol, ranchers who spread compost on their pastures can now sell carbon offset credits through voluntary carbon markets. •

Strong Processes Help Land Trust after Tragedy

Chris Thompson was the executive director of Chikaming Open Lands, a land conservancy located in southwest Michigan. In May 2016, Thompson had just completed his second year of the Wentworth Executive Leadership Program and was looking forward to leading Chikaming Open Lands in community conservation initiatives and programs developed during the training. Sadly, Thompson passed away unexpectedly in June. It is a testament to his leadership that the people in his organization, despite their grief, were well positioned to carry on the programs he helped to initiate.

Board members pitched in to inform members, partners and the community. Staff and board came together to ensure that the important work of the organization continued, while honoring Thompson. The board conducted a search for a new executive director, and, because of the organization's commitment to professional development, there was a current staff member ready and able to assume the helm.

Chikaming Open Lands was one of the first land trusts accredited in the country. It works hard to ensure that its programs, policies and procedures run smoothly from year to year. Good governance is in place. Staff members are knowledgeable and experienced. Financial health is strong. Board members are engaged. All of these factors, in addition to having the right people in place, enabled Thompson's legacy to carry forward, honoring his leadership and vision. •

Land Trust Excellence: Nominations Open



DJ GLISSON, II

Theresa Ryan, board chair of Oblong Land Conservancy and Judy Terlizzi, president of Putnam County Land Trust.

Each year at Rally: The National Land Conservation Conference, the Alliance presents awards to people and groups in the conservation community who have been nominated by their peers.

At Rally 2016 in Minneapolis, Oblong Land Conservancy and Putnam County Land Trust, both in New York and both all-volunteer land trusts, won National Land Trust Excellence Awards for their collaboration to conserve the Great Swamp, one of the three largest wetlands in New York state.

This important wetland provides around 10% of the water to New York City. "But it's challenging to protect because it runs 40 miles from north to south and is over 60,000 acres," said Judy Terlizzi, president of Putnam County Land Trust.

The idea of a collaboration between the land trusts was prompted by a conversation with Ethan Winter, New York senior program manager for the Alliance. "Ethan said, 'Well, you know, you guys really need to get together and do something constructive. Instead of talking about it, do something,'" said Chris Wood, former co-chair of the accredited Oblong Land Conservancy. "The fact of the matter is that Mother Nature does not pay much attention to lines on maps and municipal boundaries."

Know a land trust or conservation leader doing excellent work? Nominate them online at www.lta.org/awards. The deadline is April 24. •

Ear to the Ground

Vicki Preston is the new executive director of Desert Foothills Land Trust.* Preston joined the land trust in 2011 as the conservation director and will continue her role in land conservation as well as assume her new duties as executive director.

The North Carolina Coastal Land Trust* announced that its deputy director, **Janice Allen**, received the Order of the Longleaf Pine, one of the most prestigious awards conferred by the governor of North Carolina. The land trust stated, "Janice has dedicated herself to protecting North Carolina's natural areas and conservation lands. Many of her most significant achievements have been the result of the Military Encroachment Partnership, which has protected various types of land and waterways beneath flight paths, training routes and tracts adjoining nearby bases."

In other news from North Carolina, Governor Roy Cooper appointed **Reid Wilson** to be Chief Deputy Secretary of the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources. Wilson will be leaving the Conservation Trust for North Carolina,* of which he had been executive director since 2003.

Accredited land trust

BY Sylvia Bates



TOM MASLAND

Sylvia Bates spearheaded the *Land Trust Standards and Practices* revisions process.

Thanks to a Remarkable Community

What does it feel like to see the revised *Land Trust Standards and Practices* approved by the Land Trust Alliance Board of Directors after almost two years of reshaping by the land trust community? Remarkable. And we couldn't have done it without the commitment and passion of a remarkable community. Thank you, all.

Thank you to the incredible volunteers who made up the Standards Advisory Team (listed at www.lta.org/standards-advisory-team), which started its work in January 2016, devoting an entire year to the revisions process. Team members served as liaisons in the community participation process, and reviewed and thoughtfully considered all the feedback received. Their careful, intelligent deliberations shaped the revised Standards.

Thank you to all of you in the land trust community. You were a huge part of this process. We received almost 1,600 individual comments from more than 450 stakeholders, providing feedback on the content, language and structure of the practices. All comments were sincere and thoughtful, putting the best interest of the land trust community first. You helped form standards that are truly representative of this community.

Finally, thank you to all my remarkable colleagues at the Alliance and at the Land Trust Accreditation Commission—committed board members and commissioners, management and staff all contributed in some way to the process. Your dedication, optimism and good humor made this effort a successful collaboration.

So here we are at the end of the process, but it's really just the beginning. Now land trusts around the country will start adopting the revised Standards and following them to save land in the best way possible.

SYLVIA BATES IS DIRECTOR OF STANDARDS AND EDUCATIONAL SERVICES AT THE LAND TRUST ALLIANCE.

Accredited Land Trusts

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE FOLLOWING LAND CONSERVATION GROUPS
from around the country for achieving accreditation and demonstrating they meet rigorous quality standards and strive for continuous improvement.

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

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

ALASKA
- Great 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 Rangeland Trust ◊
- Center for Natural Lands Management ◊
- Central Valley Farmland Trust ◊
- Eastern Sierra Land Trust ◊
- Elkhorn Slough Foundation
- 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 Cruz County
- Marin Agricultural Land Trust ◊
- Mendocino 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 ◊
- Riverside Land Conservancy
- Sacramento Valley Conservancy ◊
- San Diego Habitat Conservancy
- San Joaquin River Parkway and Conservation Trust
- Save Mount Diablo
- Save the Redwoods League
- Sempervirens Fund ◊
- Sequoia Riverlands Trust
- Shasta Land Trust ◊
- Sierra Foothill Conservancy
- Silicon Valley Land Conservancy
- Solano Land Trust
- Sonoma Land Trust
- Sutter Buttes Regional Land Trust
- Tejon Ranch Conservancy
- Tri-Valley Conservancy ◊
- Truckee Donner Land Trust
- Wildlife Heritage Foundation ◊

COLORADO
- Access Fund
- 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 ◊
- Crested Butte Land Trust
- Douglas Land Conservancy
- Eagle Valley Land Trust ◊
- Estes Valley Land Trust ◊
- La Plata Open Space Conservancy ◊
- Mesa Land Trust ◊
- Montezuma Land Conservancy ◊
- Mountain Area Land Trust
- Palmer Land Trust ◊
- Rio Grande Headwaters Land Trust ◊
- San Isabel Land Protection Trust ◊

CONNECTICUT
- Avalonia Land Conservancy *
- Candlewood Valley Regional Land Trust
- Colchester Land Trust
- Connecticut Farmland Trust
- Cornwall Conservation 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
- Newtown Forest Association *
- Norfolk Land Trust
- Redding Land Trust ◊
- Roxbury Land Trust
- Salem Land Trust ◊
- Sharon Land Trust
- Steep Rock Association *
- Warren Land Trust
- Weantinoge Heritage Land Trust

FLORIDA
- Alachua Conservation Trust ◊
- Conservation Foundation of the Gulf Coast ◊
- Conservation Trust for Florida
- Tall Timbers Research Station & Land Conservancy ◊

GEORGIA
- Athens Land Trust ◊
- Central Savannah River Land Trust ◊
- Chattahoochee Valley Land Trust
- Chattooga Conservancy *
- Georgia Piedmont Land Trust
- Mountain Conservation Trust of Georgia ◊
- Oconee River Land Trust ◊
- Southeastern Trust for Parks and Land
- Southern Conservation Trust
- St. Simons Land Trust

The accreditation seal is awarded to land trusts meeting the highest national standards for excellence and conservation permanence.

For information on the land trust accreditation program:
LANDTRUSTACCREDITATION.ORG

HAWAI'I

· Hawaiian Islands Land Trust ◊

IDAHO

· Kaniksu Land Trust
· 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 ◊
· Openlands

INDIANA

· Central Indiana Land Trust
· Niches Land Trust *
· Shirley Heinze Land Trust *

IOWA

· Bur Oak Land Trust
· Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation ◊

KANSAS

· Kansas Land Trust
· Ranchland Trust of Kansas *

KENTUCKY

· Bluegrass 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 ◊
· Damariscotta River Association
· Forest Society of Maine ◊
· Frenchman Bay Conservancy
· Georges River Land Trust
· Great Pond Mountain Conservation Trust
· Harpswell Heritage Land Trust
· Kennebec Estuary 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
· Potomac Conservancy ◊

MASSACHUSETTS

· 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, Boston Natural Areas Network, Hilltown Land Trust and Massachusetts Land Conservation Trust ◊
· Wareham Land Trust
· White Oak Land Conservation Society

MICHIGAN

· Chikaming Open Lands ◊
· Chippewa Watershed Conservancy
· Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy ◊
· 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

MINNESOTA

· Minnesota Land Trust ◊

MISSISSIPPI

· Land Trust for the Mississippi Coastal Plain ◊

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 ◊
· Five Rivers Conservation Trust *
· Monadnock 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
· Harding Land Trust
· Hunterdon Land Trust
· Monmouth Conservation Foundation
· New Jersey Conservation Foundation
· Ridge and Valley Conservancy
· 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

· Agricultural Stewardship Association
· Champlain Area Trails
· Columbia Land Conservancy ♦
· Dutchess Land Conservancy ◊
· Finger Lakes Land Trust
· Genesee 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

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- 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
- Rensselaer Land Trust ◊
- 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
- Winnakee Land Trust ♦

NORTH CAROLINA

- Blue Ridge Conservancy
- Carolina Mountain Land Conservancy ◊
- Catawba Lands Conservancy ◊
- Conservation Trust for North Carolina ◊
- Eno River Association ◊
- Foothills Conservancy of North Carolina ◊
- Highlands-Cashiers Land Trust
- LandTrust for Central North Carolina
- Mainspring Conservation Trust ◊
- New River Conservancy ◊
- North Carolina Coastal Land Trust
- Piedmont Land Conservancy ◊
- RiverLink
- Southern Appalachian Highlands Conservancy ◊
- Tar River Land Conservancy
- Triangle Land Conservancy

OHIO

- Black Swamp Conservancy
- Gates Mills Land Conservancy
- Licking Land Trust
- Tecumseh Land Trust ◊
- Three Valley Conservation Trust

OREGON

- Deschutes Land Trust ◊
- Greenbelt Land Trust ◊
- McKenzie River Trust ◊
- North Coast Land Conservancy
- Southern Oregon Land Conservancy
- The Wetlands Conservancy
- Wallowa Land Trust
- Western Rivers Conservancy

PENNSYLVANIA

- Allegheny Land Trust ◊
- Bedminster Regional Land Conservancy ◊
- Brandywine Conservancy & Museum of Art ◊
- Chestnut Hill Conservancy ♦
- ClearWater Conservancy
- Countryside Conservancy ◊
- Delaware Highlands Conservancy ♦
- Edward L. Rose Conservancy
- French and Pickering Creeks Conservation Trust
- French Creek Valley Conservancy
- Heritage Conservancy ◊
- Lancaster County Conservancy ◊
- Lancaster Farmland Trust ◊
- Land Conservancy of Adams County
- Natural Lands Trust and its affiliate, Montgomery County Lands Trust ◊
- North Branch Land Trust ◊
- The Land Conservancy for Southern Chester County ◊
- Tinicum Conservancy ◊
- Western Pennsylvania Conservancy
- Westmoreland Conservancy
- Willistown Conservation Trust ◊

PUERTO RICO

- Conservation Trust of Puerto Rico

RHODE ISLAND

- Aquidneck Land Trust ◊
- Block Island Conservancy
- Sakonnet Preservation Association ◊
- South Kingstown Land Trust
- Tiverton Land Trust
- Westerly Land Trust *

SOUTH CAROLINA

- Aiken Land Conservancy
- Beaufort County Open Land Trust
- Congaree Land Trust
- Edisto Island Open Land Trust ◊
- Kiawah Island Natural Habitat Conservancy *
- Lowcountry Land Trust
- Pee Dee Land Trust
- Spartanburg Area Conservancy
- Upstate Forever ◊

TENNESSEE

- Land Trust for Tennessee ◊
- Lookout Mountain Conservancy
- Tennessee Parks & Greenways Foundation ◊
- Wolf River Conservancy

TEXAS

- Bayou Land Conservancy
- Galveston Bay Foundation
- Green Spaces Alliance of South Texas
- Hill Country Conservancy
- Hill Country Land Trust
- Katy Prairie Conservancy
- Pines and Prairies Land Trust
- Texas Agricultural Land Trust
- Texas Land Conservancy ◊

UTAH

- Summit Land Conservancy ♦
- Utah Open Lands

VERMONT

- Greensboro Land Trust ◊
- Lake Champlain Land Trust ◊
- Northeast Wilderness Trust ◊
- Stowe Land Trust ◊
- Vermont Land Trust

VIRGINIA

- Blue Ridge Land Conservancy ◊
- Historic Virginia Land Conservancy
- Land Trust of Virginia ◊
- New River Land Trust
- Northern Neck Land Conservancy
- Northern Virginia Conservation Trust ◊
- Piedmont Environmental Council ◊
- Virginia Eastern Shore Land Trust ◊

WASHINGTON

- Bainbridge Island Land Trust
- Blue Mountain Land Trust
- Capitol Land Trust
- Chelan-Douglas Land Trust
- Columbia Land Trust
- Forterra ◊
- Great Peninsula Conservancy
- Jefferson Land Trust ◊
- Lummi Island Heritage Trust
- Methow Conservancy
- Nisqually Land Trust
- North Olympic Land Trust
- PCC Farmland Trust
- San Juan Preservation Trust
- Skagit Land Trust ◊
- Whatcom Land Trust
- Whidbey Camano Land Trust

WEST VIRGINIA

- Cacapon and Lost Rivers Land Trust
- West Virginia Land Trust

WISCONSIN

- Bayfield Regional Conservancy
- Caledonia Conservancy
- Door County Land Trust
- Driftless Area Land Conservancy *
- Ice Age Trail Alliance
- Kettle Moraine Land Trust
- Kinnickinnic River Land Trust ◊
- Mississippi Valley Conservancy
- Natural Heritage Land Trust
- Northwoods Land Trust
- Ozaukee Washington Land Trust
- Tall Pines Conservancy
- West Wisconsin Land Trust

WYOMING

- Jackson Hole Land Trust ◊
- Wyoming Stock Growers Agricultural Land Trust

As of February 2017

* Indicates Newly Accredited

♦ Indicates Newly Renewed

◊ Indicates Previously Renewed

LAND TRUST ACCREDITATION COMMISSION

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