

# Assessing and Planning Community Conservation Impact

(October 2016)



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Sincerely,

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# ASSESSING AND PLANNING COMMUNITY CONSERVATION IMPACT

(October 2016)

For background and the basics of community conservation, please see our companion publication  
*An Introduction to Community Conservation* (October 2016).



*Credit: Feather River Land Trust*

## WHY THIS TOOL?

Land trusts are asking for assistance on how to assess their current community conservation efforts or plan for new projects or programs. Some are working in their existing communities and others are reaching out to new ones; some are going deeper with people and partners they already know, and others are seeking new connections. This tool provides a structure to help your land trust do all of the above: assess current activities, frame opportunities and prioritize new approaches.



When the Alliance started promoting community conservation, many land trusts asked how they could gauge to what extent they already were doing community conservation and how to plan for doing even more. In response, the Alliance developed *Assessing and Planning Community Conservation Impact* with the help of land trust practitioners and an impact evaluation consultant. It is offered not as “the only way” but as one option to help you think about how your land trust work and programming will have impact on your community.

Community conservation is responsive to community needs and therefore unique to each community and each land trust. Whether your land trust has been focusing on community conservation for years or is just starting to think about it, this tool is designed to be adaptable and responsive to the work of all land trusts in different types of communities. This tool provides a consistent framework for assessing and planning your community conservation work, no matter where your land trust works or who lives in your community.

Any analysis of your land trust work and programming should also be about informing future decisions. By understanding the impact of past projects, your land trust can make decisions about how to design future projects based on an informed understanding of potential return on investment.

And as you consider future projects (whether community conservation or not), part of the planning should include articulating what you hope to accomplish and then setting metrics for evaluating success. Another companion publication, *Flexible Framework for Evaluating Community Conservation* (expected release: December 2016) can help guide you through that process.



## COMMUNITY IMPACT FRAMEWORK

Adapted from a tool the Ford Foundation uses in its social change initiatives, this framework has been enhanced using ideas from research in the social sciences for measuring change. It identifies nine assets found in every community (definitions can be found on the following page); any work your land trust may do in your community will impact one or more of those assets. The idea behind this framework is that the more assets your organization influences and the higher the degree of impact on each asset, the farther along the “community conservation continuum” you are.



## COMMUNITY ASSETS

### RESOURCE-LEVEL IMPACTS



#### Natural and Working Lands

Healthy natural resources (air, water, land, flora, fauna, etc.), working lands, and systems in a region. Investments include preservation, restoration, maintenance, access and engagement.



#### Financial

Monetary assets invested in other attributes. Financial assets can be invested in land protection, site improvements and/or programming to build the community's economic health using land as a tool or catalyst.



#### Built

Infrastructure, including trails or other structures, that serves the needs and desired experiences of a variety of community users. Investments include construction, renovation and maintenance as well as the relevancy of these attributes to the community.

### SYSTEMS-LEVEL IMPACTS



#### Equity and Access

Programming, planning and opportunities that promote just practices, increase equity of access and experience to all parts of the community, and removes disparities.



#### Political

Community conservation can help change, support or enhance individual, group and/or organizational connections that can be held, spent or shared to achieve desired ends. Political power is demonstrated by the ability to influence the distribution of resources and to set the agenda about what resources are available. Investments are made through inclusive organizing that includes information gathering and dissemination, increasing community voice and increasing access to and inclusion among decision-makers.



#### Social

Trust, relationships and networks that support communities and regions. Investments may lead to unprecedented conversations, shared experiences and connections between otherwise unconnected individuals and groups, as well as those that strengthen relationships within groups.

### HUMAN-LEVEL IMPACTS



#### Intellectual, Emotional and Spiritual

Knowledge, innovation, creativity and spirituality in a region. Investments include activities that engage the imagination, enhance spirituality, connect people with the environment (or land and water) and generate new knowledge.



#### Skills and Health

The individual skills and physical and mental healthiness of people in a community or region. Investments can include programming and direct experiences on, or associated with, the land and water.



#### Cultural

Practices that reflect values and identity rooted in place, class and/or ethnicity. Investments can include support for venues to showcase cultural achievements, programs to preserve and pass on cultural knowledge and skills, and support for cultural transformations.

## DIFFERENT KINDS OF IMPACTS

There are many land trusts that have already been doing community conservation for years. They have many reasons for doing so. Some land trusts strategically plan to do community conservation and others are responsive. Not only have these land trusts had positive impact on their communities, their work has had a positive impact on their organization. You may expect community conservation work and programming to have positive outcomes for your own land trust as well. Described in *Introduction to Community Conservation*, these could include (but would not be limited to) increases in number of donors, funding from different sectors, diversity of board members, media recognition and political support, as well as increasing numbers and diversity of partners with which to collaborate.

This tool is all about your impact on the community; it doesn't tackle the impact of community conservation on your organization. Current practitioners may or may not have thought about how it would impact their organizations. With increased understanding and practice, you may start to anticipate these impacts. When or if you do, you may then integrate that thinking into your decision-making process for selecting which projects and programs to take on.

You may want to be explicit about these expected benefits when convincing board, staff or donors why you want to implement community conservation projects and programs. Community conservation is not charity. It is reciprocal, benefiting the community as well as your land trust.

Some land trusts have said that this framework helps them bridge their thinking from a transaction-oriented approach to more of a relationship-based approach and that it can be used to think creatively about developing new programming, projects and partnerships.

To assess current activities, you could use this framework to identify, for each of your projects or programs, which community assets you are bringing positive change to, and to what extent. This would create a baseline for where your organization (and its entire portfolio of projects and programs) lies on a community conservation continuum. While it may be challenging to have impact on multiple assets with one project, you may see results on a wide variety of assets across all of your projects and programs.

This tool is designed to allow your land trust to identify opportunities that could be initiated over time. Using it to plan projects allows you to identify areas and types of impact, potential partners, funding sources, etc. It provides a unified framework with which you can design and track different types of land conservation projects and programs and their outcomes. One of the features of this tool is that it is designed to respond to how each land trust evolves.

The Alliance understands and applauds the tremendous land conservation work that land trusts undertake every day and acknowledges that not every land trust will frame all of its work as community conservation.

## ASSESSING AND PLANNING COMMUNITY CONSERVATION IMPACT TOOL

This is an assessment tool, designed to help you evaluate how your land trust's conservation work is currently impacting your community. It is also a planning tool. Once you assess what you are doing currently and the assets of the community you are having the intended effects on, you can use this to plan how to amplify the positive impacts of current projects or create new ones for wider and/or deeper impact.



The *Flexible Framework for Evaluating Community Conservation* (expected release: December 2016) companion document to this tool 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 appropriate and meaningful measures by asking the right questions about your work. Thus, you can use this tool to create a baseline of your potential community impacts and to plan for additional impact, and then use the *Flexible Framework* companion document to set specific goals, indicators and measures to track your progress.

Assessing traditional land conservation progress is challenging, and assessing community conservation performance even more so. Community conservation has a lot to do with relationships, perspectives and process. How are those assessed? It's difficult to do, yet important, as community conservation projects often take a long time to mature and show results. Because of this, it's valuable to have a framework for assessing current projects and programs to create a baseline. Then, as your land trust conceptualizes new projects and programs or modifies existing ones, you can track the changes over time.

## HOW THE FRAMEWORK WORKS

While there are a number of ways to use the framework, most land trusts have expressed an interest in using it in a phased approach. The following questions can help guide your land trust during each phase.

### 1. ASSESSMENT

- a. What land conservation work and programming are you doing currently?
- b. What were your goals in taking on that work?
- c. Have you realized those goals?
- d. What is the community impact of that work?

### 2. PLANNING

- a. Where are the opportunities for enhancement, replication or change?
- b. How could you amplify your current impact?
  - i. Address additional community assets?
  - ii. Replicate methods being used in another location in your community?
  - iii. Replicate how you are serving a portion of your community with another partner?
- c. Who else could you serve, and/or support, using conservation projects and programs as a tool for change?
- d. Would you need to partner with other organizations or individuals? If so, how do you identify them?



Credit: Eliza Wiley



## BOOSTING IMPACT

The following example shows how your land trust might choose to boost its impacts on a wide variety of assets.

If your land trust works on farmland conservation projects, it would clearly have impact on the natural and working lands asset of your community—one of the nine assets identified herein and described in detail on page 3. Your land trust, in the community or service area where that particular project was located, may be satisfied with having focused its impact on that one community asset.

On the other hand, as is occurring with a number of community-based conservation projects and programs, your land trust may use this framework to consider other community assets and identify additional challenges or opportunities in the community that farming (or ranching, forestry, natural areas or water) could address in creative ways.

For example, if your land trust's service area includes immigrant populations, you might consider adding a cultural component to the project. The Triangle Land Conservancy (North Carolina) took this approach and offered the use of its conserved land to a group of refugee farmers from Southeast Asia who wanted to grow food from their native country but were unable to access local land on a long-term basis.

Triangle Land Conservancy listened to local community challenges and needs and then tweaked the scope of their original land conservation project. As a result, this program touched more lives and addressed a number of community challenges. In terms of our framework, the re-envisioned project positively impacted more community assets, including natural and working lands, social, equity and access, and cultural assets.

As your land trust employs this tool and refines how it is used over time, you may find it becomes a catalyst for discussion and change. The framework may open new doors, create new partnerships or reveal possibilities by helping you think about how conservation can be a creative device to enhance and enrich the lives of more people. In short, it may empower you and your land trust—as it has done for others—to think and act in new and nuanced ways to ensure that people from all walks of life experience a direct benefit as a result of your land conservation projects and programs.

By doing the right thing—helping people from all walks of life benefit from your work and programming—you will be doing the smart thing: building broad and deep support for your mission of land conservation. The result will be healthier and more vibrant communities and broader, deeper and longer-lasting support for your land trust.

Some land trusts call this phenomenon “mission creep.” Our *Introduction to Community Conservation* explores changing demographics and the need for land trusts to be relevant to their communities. If we aren't relevant, people won't know or care about land conservation. And if they don't care about it, no amount of conservation-defense funding will protect the land we have already saved. People make laws; that means the laws that protect land can be changed by people who don't care about the land. Some land trust practitioners consider this community stewardship. Far from mission creep, using community conservation to build broad and deep support is mission-critical.



Credit: Palos Verdes Peninsula Land Conservancy



## SELF-ASSESSMENT

As your land trust goes through this process, it may be helpful to think about your organization's conservation work and programming with the following in mind:

- **Who else can benefit—and how?** When you reflect upon the definitions of each of the nine community assets, consider how these assets represent different opportunities for different members of your community to benefit from the land conservation and/or programming work of your organization.
- **What are the stories of change that grow momentum?** Your land trust may find that this assessment and planning process provides opportunities to think about the different aspects of community change that have resulted—or could result—from your work. Many land trusts have had success going beyond “counting things” to actually conveying the change they are making through stories that resonate with their communities.
- **Are there more connections and opportunities?** Where and what are the networks in your community? Whom do you know who knows others? This is an opportunity to explore new ways to connect people to the land and water—and to each other.

**TIPS:** The following tips can help land trusts as they begin to assess their current work and plan for the future:

- Start by assessing one project. Once you are comfortable with the tool, you can expand your scope to consider your entire portfolio.
- Don't assume that every project needs to address every community asset.
- Consider not only the assets your work addresses but also the extent to which that work addresses each one; your work may go deep in one area rather than be focused on many community assets.
- Recognize that your community and your land trust are unique, and your goals and your community conservation work may not be the same as that of another land trust.



*Credit: American Chestnut Land Trust*



*Credit: Feather River Land Trust*



*Credit: American Chestnut Land Trust*

You may want to assess your land trust work from the single project or single program perspective to get comfortable with the tool. After that, you could look at your entire portfolio of work and programming. The more community assets a project or program positively affects, the farther along the community conservation continuum it may be. It is not necessary to have an impact on every asset with one project: the same community asset may realize positive change in different ways at different times by different projects. A portfolio of projects may collectively affect multiple assets—where one project or program serves a particular need while others are more integrated and serve a multitude of needs and assets.

It is also important to understand the extent of your engagement or degree of impact as it relates to the needs of your community. Your land trust may have one or two important assets to address; using your resources to focus on a limited number of assets may be more appropriate for your organization. On the other hand, you may find that your situation calls for projects or programming that speak to a number of different assets but none to a great extent. Or you could opt for a mix of the two.

Not all of the nine identified assets may be important to every land trust’s mission, work or community. What is possible and what actually happens is specific to each land trust, its location and capacity; its community; and the unique combination of resources and opportunities that are found there. Your community conservation work, therefore, will not be the same as that of another land trust. In addition, whatever it is now will likely evolve.

## Teamwork

You could conduct the assessment internally or you may want to invite a group of “outsiders”—people not actively involved in the land trust but who are interested in exploring community conservation—to work through this tool with you. In addition to board and/or staff, this working group may include your partner organizations or the community members who may be beneficiaries of your work.



*Credit: Capital Roots*



## Community Impact and Assessment Questions

The first step may be for your organization to better understand what outcome(s) you're seeking from a community assessment. Any and all concerns should be acknowledged and discussed; your organization should approach this assessment process with an open heart and mind, understanding that you may not know where it might eventually lead. This uncertainty can be a scary prospect for some but, undertaken with the right attitude, can be an interesting and exciting experience.

### Sample Questions

The following questions are provided as a starting point to help facilitate your assessment and brainstorm:

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**1 Who would you say benefits directly, in a tangible way, from your current conservation and programming work?**

- a. What is the geographic distribution of beneficiaries?
  - b. Who is not benefiting in a direct and tangible way (and if they are not benefiting, why not? Is it because they can't or because they don't choose to?)
  - c. Might there be opportunities to fill a void, or create an experience, to draw people closer to the types of lands you conserve?
  - d. What, if any, misconceptions might people in the community have about your land trust?
  - e. How might your conservation work or programming adapt to address these issues?
- 

**2 How well has your land trust listened to the community to identify what different people really care about?**

- a. What are some of your community's needs? It is often helpful to think about this from the perspective of community stress points.
  - b. What other organizations, in addition to conservation groups, already exist in your community? Consider civic organizations, town officials, schools, existing coalitions, etc. Do you have any goals in common with them?
- 

**3 Is your land trust implementing projects and programs that are responsive to one or more of the community needs identified in question 2.a. above?**

- a. If yes, with and for whom are you working?
  - b. If no, could you create some common ground or could you find overlap between the community need and the mission and resources of your organization?
  - c. Are there ways to partner with other organizations to fill this need?
- 

**4 What opportunities are there for you to incorporate community programming into your land conservation efforts?**

- a. How might you find ways to be more welcoming to new or different audiences in your outreach language and methods?
- b. Can you find ways to make conservation special and/or accessible to different types of people by adding value to their lives on a daily basis?
- c. If you are concerned about perpetuity, how have you assessed the need to ensure that future generations will care about the land?

- 
- 5 How many and what types of properties (land trust-owned, land trust-managed or having no connection to the land trust) are being used to connect people to land/water or serve a community need?**
- a. What is going well? What have you learned?
  - b. Where are there land and/or water access needs (geographic location, landscape/water type, experiential, accessibility)?
  - c. Where might there be opportunities to position your land trust as a partner or facilitator to inspire the love of the land or enhance other community benefits using your mission of land conservation?
- 

- 6 Have you done any assessment, planning or evaluation of your trust's land conservation efforts?**
- a. Have you created metrics for success for your community conservation achievements, and do those metrics include impacts on the land trust and on the community?
  - b. What do those measures tell you about your impact?



## Engaging New Partners

- 1** Reflecting on your answers to the previous questions, can you identify potential new partners that might be a good fit to enhance the impact of your community conservation efforts across one or more of the nine assets? How might their partnership benefit your land trust and its work?
- 2** What might make it attractive for them to partner or participate with your land trust? How might you add value to their organization and its work?
- 3** What kind of system exists for shared leadership and decision-making with your partners? If there isn't one, how might one be created?



## DECIDING WHAT'S MOST IMPORTANT TO YOUR LAND TRUST: RATINGS

The following rating scales have been created to help you assess your land trust's community conservation efforts and how you might want to frame future work and programming.

### Ratings Graphics

Identifying the importance of an asset to your community and to your land trust's conservation work and programming, as well as the possible impact (positive or negative) of that asset, can help clarify your next steps. You can use the Alliance's *Stakeholder Analysis Tool* (draft version expected release: November 2016) to help determine what is important to the community. Once the importance has been calibrated, your land trust can target which assets you plan to impact and to what degree. It's important to consider how to use this tool with the companion tool *Flexible Framework for Evaluating Community Conservation* (expected release: December 2016) to set goals, indicators and measures during the planning stage. Incorporating the evaluation elements early on will help to sharpen your focus and make it easier to assess performance against them on an ongoing basis.

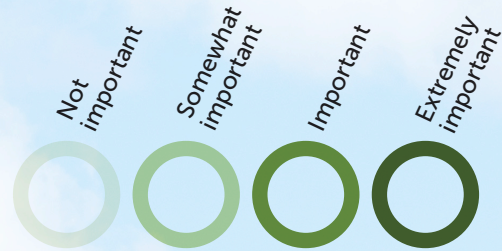
These two scales used together are designed to allow a project or program to be placed on a community conservation continuum, with an entry point and progressive levels of involvement and/or impact. Each land trust will be able to identify the projects and programs that seem appropriate based upon its mission, capacity, strategic focus and community relationships.

### Nine Community Assets

The following discussion provides more detail on the nine assets that are found in every community on which your land conservation work and programming may or may not have an impact.

For each one, there is a description, two examples of land trust work or programming that impact that asset, and questions for your team to discuss as you consider that asset in relation to the community conservation goals of your organization.

#### IMPORTANCE RATINGS



Use the Importance Ratings scales to rate how important each asset is to the health of the community. How do you know? It's crucial to realize that this is a snapshot in time; your land trust may find that what is important now may evolve as you learn more about new community needs and opportunities.

#### IMPACT RATINGS



Use the Impact Ratings scales to rate the actual outcomes of your conservation work and programming on each type of asset.

## RESOURCE-LEVEL IMPACTS

One of the ways to measure conservation work is to evaluate possible opportunities to enhance natural resources, working lands and water; impact financial assets; and impact built infrastructure. These resources often provide the building blocks for community conservation efforts.



### Natural and Working Lands Assets

These include healthy natural resources (air, water, land, flora, fauna, etc.), working lands and systems in a region.

Investments include preservation, restoration, maintenance, access and engagement.

#### **Example: Great Outdoors Colorado**

*The Rio Grande Healthy Living Park sits on what was once an elementary school campus and today provides an oasis for healthy foods and connecting to nature in a rural Colorado community. One land trust purchased the land and another holds the easement on this 38-acre property, which allows the Alamosa community to enjoy green space, walkable access to and from downtown and the first urban farm of its kind.*

*The town's residents raised nearly \$1 million to save the land for the potential park, which was at risk of being developed. The park will build out its trail system to connect to downtown and provide 16 acres of agricultural land, access to the river, programming for young farmers and a gathering place for the community. The park will eventually move beyond the current community farmers to invite budding farmers looking for small plots of land.*

#### **Example: Driftless Area Land Conservancy, Wisconsin**

*Driftless Area Land Conservancy (DALC) is a small land trust serving 7 counties in rural Wisconsin. Dotted with urban centers and hamlets, it's a landscape still dominated by rolling farm fields and patches of prairies and oak savannahs. You would think that getting kids outside in a rural place would be easy, but that's not the case. Teachers reported that their students were disengaged with nature and so DALC decided to take action.*

*The land trust purchased a beautiful parcel of land that abuts a school and the playground. Then the land trust created an outdoor classroom with trails (which will soon include accessible trails), wetlands, a stream and oak woodlands—a special place for the community to walk, connect with nature and relax.*

*The teachers and kids love it, and so do others in the community. DALC is now regarded as a community partner and not an outside conservation group, and it has been asked to expand the conservation work on the parcel and throughout the area.*











Credit: Driftless Area Land Conservancy.



## For Discussion

- 1 Describe the most significant change to your community's natural, working lands or water assets that has resulted from your community conservation work. Why is this significant?
- 2 How many and what types of sites (land trust owned, land trust managed or not conserved directly by the land trust) are being used to connect people to land/water?
  - a. Is this a need in your service area? If so, is that a role your land trust wants to fulfill?
  - b. Where might there be opportunities to position your land trust as a partner or facilitator to connect people to the land, inspire the love of the land or enhance other community benefits using conservation as a tool?
- 3 Do you see opportunities to use this conservation work to impact other assets?

How important are the community's natural or working lands or water assets to your conservation work?	What is your land trust's impact on healthy natural resources and working lands in your region?
<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; align-items: center;"> <div style="text-align: center;">  <p>Not important</p> </div> <div style="text-align: center;">  <p>Somewhat important</p> </div> <div style="text-align: center;">  <p>Important</p> </div> <div style="text-align: center;">  <p>Extremely important</p> </div> </div>	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; align-items: center;"> <div style="text-align: center;">  <p>Have not considered impacts</p> </div> <div style="text-align: center;">  <p>Minor impacts</p> </div> <div style="text-align: center;">  <p>Moderate impacts</p> </div> <div style="text-align: center;">  <p>Significant impacts</p> </div> </div>

*Credit: Eliza Wiley for Prickly Pear Land Trust*





## Financial Assets

These include funds invested in other assets in the community.

Investments include land protection, site improvements and/or programming to build the community's economic health using land as a tool or catalyst.

### Example: Saginaw Basin Land Conservancy, Michigan

Saginaw Basin Land Conservancy, located in Bay City, Michigan, on Lake Huron's Saginaw Bay, has long been involved in widespread restoration efforts of the Saginaw Bay Watershed. The conservancy partnered with Michigan Audubon and attracted the Midwest Birding Symposium to Bay City. This was possible because of its work conserving habitat for the Kirtland's warbler, a bird on many people's life lists. The four-day event attracts an estimated 1,000 people to the region and generates \$500,000 in direct expenditures for visitor services within the local community, such as food, lodging and retail sales.



Credit: Saginaw Basin Land Conservancy

### Example: Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy, Michigan

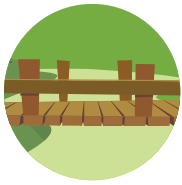
Shoreline Fruit in Yuba, Michigan, was thinking about pulling out of the region but instead decided to invest in more cherry-processing facilities. This was a boon for the economically challenged state and happened in part because Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy worked with local farmers to protect farmland and help make it economically viable for them to keep farming. Ensuring that a large swath of land was off limits to development created a stable, long-term environment for cherry production in the region, making that kind of infrastructure investment economically feasible for the company, thus saving local jobs and preserving a way of life for many in the community.

## For Discussion

- 1 Describe the most significant change to your community's financial assets that has resulted from your conservation work. Why is this significant?
- 2 What are some of the ways your land trust might improve or enhance its impact on this area moving forward?
- 3 Do you see opportunities to use this conservation work to impact other assets?

How important are the community's financial assets to your conservation work?	What is your impact on the monetary assets in your region?
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## Built Assets

These include physical infrastructure, including trails or other structures that serve the needs and desired experiences of a variety of community users.

Investments include construction, renovation and maintenance as well as the relevancy of these assets to the community.

### Example: Eastern Shore Land Conservancy, Maryland

*Eastern Shore Land Conservancy (ESLC) has played an integral role in preserving and enhancing the unique and irreplaceable qualities of Maryland's Eastern Shore. Initially ESLC primarily worked to protect open space and working lands. When ESLC outgrew its office and looked around for new space, the organization decided to transform an abandoned historic building and a neighboring fire-damaged historic building in Easton, Maryland, into its office.*

*As a result, ESLC has been the catalyst for a thriving hub of learning and collaboration for other regional nonprofits in a previously neglected part of town. Now there is a place for community members to gather for classes and meetings, with open areas and conference rooms for public use. ESLC also gets the benefit of having their partners close by, making collaboration and information sharing that much easier.*

### Example: Openlands, Illinois

*Openlands in Chicago is removing playground equipment to make room for more flexible green space, including a field that can be used as an outdoor classroom, soccer field or for any number of activities. Part of their agreement is that the areas must remain open to the community even if school is not in session. Its plans also include a rain garden, boulders, ADA-compliant pathways, and tree stumps and nooks for unstructured play, exploration and scientific observation. Its 77-acre Lakeshore Preserve features new pathways and parking areas accessible to visitors in wheelchairs. Openlands also offers podcasts for the vision-impaired and uses art as an innovative interpretive tool to help people understand the area's unique attributes.*

## Questions:

- 1 Describe the most significant change to your community's built assets that has resulted from your conservation work. Why is this significant?
- 2 What are some of the ways your land trust might improve or enhance its impact on this area moving forward?
- 3 Do you see opportunities to use this conservation work to impact other assets?
- 4 What types of infrastructure has the land trust been a part of investing in or building to directly benefit the community, such as to connect people with land and water?

How important are your community's built assets to your conservation work?	What is your impact on the physical infrastructure in your region?
<div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div> <div><div>Not important</div><div>Somewhat important</div><div>Important</div><div>Extremely important</div></div>	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div> <div><div>Have not considered impacts</div><div>Minor impacts</div><div>Moderate impacts</div><div>Significant impacts</div></div>

## SYSTEMS-LEVEL IMPACTS

Community conservation can have important impacts on equity and access, political assets and social cohesion. These systems create shared experiences that connect people from all walks of life to the land and to each other, and build the foundation for healthy and well-functioning communities.



### Equity and Access Assets

These include programming, planning and opportunities that promote just practices, increase equity of access and experience to all parts of the community and remove disparities.

Investments include engaging all parts of the community in land trust planning and programming, understanding community needs and working to serve those needs.

#### **Example: Rendezvous Lands Conservancy, Wyoming**

*Jackson Hole, Wyoming, is a beautiful location with iconic views of the Teton Mountains and incredibly scenic rivers. Yet access to these amazing rivers is often out of reach for the average citizen in the area who cannot afford riverfront property, particularly for those who live in town. After discussions with the community, the Rendezvous Lands Conservancy created “R” Park, a 40-acre natural park along a beautiful river, restoring a commercial gravel pit into a habitat area that connects people in the community to the river through recreational use and enjoyment.*

#### **Example: Monmouth Conservation Foundation, New Jersey**

*The Monmouth Conservation Foundation in New Jersey helped to preserve land in an urban area for use as a neighborhood park and civic center. The park provides an outdoor community space that complements grassroots community redevelopment efforts spearheaded by partner organizations.*

*Monmouth Conservation Foundation bridged a significant funding shortfall in order to move forward the stalled development of the park, which now offers the community a playground, grassy area, decorative fountain and outdoor stage area. Additionally, a unique training program for teens and young adults who want to enter the hospitality industry, as well as an urban farm project, are operated by a partner organization, Interfaith Neighbors, all within a stone’s throw of the newly opened park.*





*Credit: DJ Glisson II, fireflyimageworks.com*

### For Discussion

- 1 Describe the most significant change to your community’s equity and access assets that has resulted from your community conservation work. Why is this significant?
- 2 What are some of the ways your land trust might improve or enhance its impact on this area moving forward?
- 3 Do you see opportunities to use this conservation work to impact other assets?



- 4 How many people are being served or engaged through your community conservation work?
- Which kind of diversity is there among those served? (socioeconomic, age, ability, gender, race, religious affiliation, etc.)
  - How much diversity is there among those served (how many different groups are represented)?
  - Who are you still not reaching? Who continues to lack access to/benefit from your community conservation projects and programs?
  - What strategies can you use to overcome identified access barriers?

How important are your community's equity and access assets to your conservation work?	What is your impact on equity and access for all parts of your region?
 <p>Not important    Somewhat important    Important    Extremely important</p>	 <p>Have not considered impacts    Minor impacts    Moderate impacts    Significant impacts</p>



### Political Assets

These include individual, group and/or organizational connections that can be held, used or shared to achieve desired ends. Political power is demonstrated by the ability to influence the distribution of resources and set the agenda about what resources are available.

Investments are made through inclusive organizing that includes information gathering and dissemination, increasing community voice and increasing access to and inclusion among decision-makers.

#### Example: Centre County Farmland Trust, Pennsylvania

The Centre County Farmland Trust, a small volunteer-led land trust in Pennsylvania, invited Congressman Glenn Thompson (R-PA) to its Farmland Preservation Celebration at the conserved Schempf Farm in Harris Township, Pennsylvania.



Credit: Centre County Farmland Trust









While land trust leaders did not realize it when the event was scheduled, Congressman Thompson had just been named chairman of the Agriculture Subcommittee responsible for allocating about a billion dollars to land conservation programs in the 2012 Farm Bill. By making their conservation work tangible and expressing the benefits of conservation in a relevant manner to a powerful elected official, the land trust leaders served as important community spokespeople, which had significant impact on land conservation nationwide.

#### Example: Tall Timbers Research Station and Land Conservancy, Georgia

Tall Timbers Research Station and Land Conservancy in Georgia hosts the Greater Red Hills Awareness Initiative, a collaborative effort that connects people and organizations, enhances communication and fosters a commitment to promote and conserve the irreplaceable ecological, historical and cultural resources that provide a cherished way of life for the residents of this distinctive region. The collaboration of 20 different organizations in one place serves as a sort of "Chamber of Commerce for conservation."

## Questions:

- 1 Describe the most significant change to your community's political assets that has resulted from your community conservation work. Why is this significant?
- 2 What are some of the ways your land trust might improve or enhance its impact on this area moving forward?
- 3 Do you see opportunities to use this conservation work to impact other assets?
- 4 Who are the potential champions in town/county/state government and local/regional institutions who could support policies that further community conservation?
- 5 Who has political power? How can you engage them?
- 6 Who lacks political power or access? How can you empower them?

How important are your community's political assets to your conservation work?	What is your impact on the power and connectedness of individuals, groups and/or organizations?
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## Social Assets

**These include agreements, relationships and networks that support communities and regions. Investments may lead to unprecedented conversations, shared experiences and connections between otherwise unconnected individuals and groups, as well as those that strengthen relationships within groups.**

**Investments include bringing people together in different ways and creating safe spaces for dialogue, as well as connecting with organizations in a community to better understand their needs.**

### Example: Lookout Mountain Conservancy, Tennessee

*Lookout Mountain Conservancy runs a series of youth enrichment programs using Lookout Mountain as an outdoor classroom. Its best-known program, a partnership with the Howard School (a local high school), works directly with 18–24 low-income, inner-city high school students per year.*

*Students go through an intensive mentoring program as interns. As interns, they get paid during all school breaks and summer vacation to work as part of the organization's mountain restoration team. During this program they learn leadership and social skills, teamwork and community trust, study skills and job/work skills.*

*As a result of this program, 100 percent of participating seniors have graduated from high school, far surpassing their high school average of 43 percent. The land trust assists with post-graduate placement in technical schools, colleges, additional intern programs, the military and job identification. Should these students decide to go on to college, they are reserved a paid position as a Leadership Intern in the land trust's summer program, where they mentor other interns in the program.*



Credit: Ken Fisher, Truth Be Told





Credit: LandPaths

### Example: LandPaths









*With the Santa Rosa Recreation and Parks, LandPaths in California is supporting the Bayer Neighborhood Park and Gardens. This six-acre urban farm and city park in the heart of the Roseland neighborhood has old barns, community gardens and other agricultural aspects that form an oasis in the urban environment.*

*Bayer is also home to the Farming for Health project, where Roseland Community members come together to explore and share ideas on growing vegetables, herbs and medicinal plants in an effort to address health issues that require drastic shifts toward healthy eating.*

*The group will work together to create a Farming for Health garden plot (or two) at Bayer Farm, including nutritional and medicinal plants and labeling each one with nutrition and health data. The group will also organize healthy eating workshops and cooking sessions, where family-tested recipes can be shared. Ultimately, the group hopes to create bilingual printed materials that include healthy eating recipes and other information for distribution at Bayer Farm and beyond.*

### For Discussion

- 1 Describe the most significant change to your community's social assets that has resulted from your community conservation work. Why is this significant?
- 2 What are some of the ways your land trust might improve or enhance its impact on this area moving forward?
- 3 Do you see opportunities to use this conservation work to impact other assets?
- 4 Are you partnering with, or do you see opportunities to partner with, businesses or community groups?
  - a. With whom are you partnering?
  - b. Are there partners with whom you might collaborate?
  - c. What might be some shared values or goals?

How important are your community's social assets to your conservation work?	What is your impact on the trust, relationships and networks that support your region?
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## HUMAN-LEVEL IMPACTS

Community conservation human-level impacts include those on intellectual, emotional and spiritual assets; on individual skills and health; and on cultural assets.



### Intellectual, Emotional and Spiritual Assets

**These include knowledge, innovation, creativity and spirituality in a region.**

**Investments include activities that engage the imagination, enhance spirituality, connect people with the environment (or land and water) and generate new knowledge.**

#### **Example: Big Sur Land Trust, California**

*Big Sur Land Trust, through its Glen Deven Ranch property, hosts youth nature camps for teenagers in the Salinas Valley, an area on the east side of Big Sur composed of dense urban communities with an economy based largely on agricultural labor. Around 90 percent of camp participants identify as Latin American. The land trust provides 10 different three-day, two-night camps free of charge for youth in the community.*

*The Big Sur Land Trust's outdoor programs are designed to inspire, connect and empower local youth to break down barriers that prohibit them from fully experiencing the land outside their backdoor. The program helps kids discover a passion to explore, share and care for the area's treasured landscapes.*

*The curriculum provides a framework for exploration, ecological learning, stories of the land and creative expression. Professional music clinicians join each camp and lead and teach the youth to find their own creative voice in the amphitheater of Big Sur. There is also time for quiet moments of reflection and sharing of challenges affecting their teen lives.*

*The camp programs and activities are run entirely by Big Sur Land Trust staff and represent the organization's commitment to an inclusive conservation community and the fostering of the environmental stewards of tomorrow. There are many nonprofit community partners in this work, including CHISPA (Community Housing Improvement Systems and Planning Association), Girls Inc., Youth Orchestra of Salinas, The Village Project and more.*

#### **Example: Groton Open Space Association, Connecticut**

*The Groton Open Space Association (GOSA) in Connecticut, along with partners, including a University of Connecticut faculty member, a STEAM (Science Technology Engineering Arts Math) coordinator with the Groton Public Schools, the University of Connecticut at Avery Point, New England Science and Sailing and the Town of Groton School District, created an after-school club for fourth- and fifth-graders at the Catherine Kolnaski Elementary Intra-District Magnet School (CK), which has now completed its third year. The Explorers Club started in 2014 with one group of 15 students meeting once a week for seven weeks in the spring to hike and kayak different parcels of open space and water. University of Connecticut students volunteered as instructional aides and the school district supplied busing, an iPad for each student (to create a photographic portfolio of their experiences) and after-school funding for teachers.*











*Credit: Groton Open Space Association*

*Over the past three years the program has expanded to include three clubs with 45 students participating. Over 60 students entered the lottery to join the clubs in 2016. Seven University of Connecticut students volunteered in 2016 along with several CK teachers and GOSA members.*



## For Discussion

- 1 Describe the most significant change to your community's intellectual, emotional and spiritual assets that has resulted from your community conservation work. Why is this significant?
- 2 What are some of the ways your land trust might improve or enhance its impact on this area moving forward?
- 3 Do you see opportunities to use this conservation work to impact other assets?

How important are your community's intellectual, emotional and spiritual assets to your conservation work?	What is your impact on the knowledge, innovation, spirituality and creativity in the region?
<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; align-items: center;"> <div style="text-align: center;">  <p>Not important</p> </div> <div style="text-align: center;">  <p>Somewhat important</p> </div> <div style="text-align: center;">  <p>Important</p> </div> <div style="text-align: center;">  <p>Extremely important</p> </div> </div>	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; align-items: center;"> <div style="text-align: center;">  <p>Have not considered impacts</p> </div> <div style="text-align: center;">  <p>Minor impacts</p> </div> <div style="text-align: center;">  <p>Moderate impacts</p> </div> <div style="text-align: center;">  <p>Significant impacts</p> </div> </div>



### Skills and Health Assets

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

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

#### Example: Great Plains Restoration Council, Texas

The Great Plains Restoration Council (GPRC) in Texas has a Restoration Not Incarceration program that combines ecological restoration training with personal rehabilitation. GPRC is building into the program a psychosocial component and striving to advance the new medical field of applying work in wild nature as a therapy to improve mental and physical health. As part of this program, Restoration Not Incarceration is stabilizing damaged lives through its efforts to save the critically endangered native coastal prairie ecosystem from extinction.

#### Example: Houston Audubon, Texas











Credit: Mary Anne Weber for Houston Audubon

Houston Audubon launched “Bird Tales” to bring the healing power of nature to Houstonians suffering from dementia. Houston Audubon is offering this unique presentation to facilities providing dementia and memory care across southeast Texas. The initiative has three levels: The first is to bring the joy and love of birds to residents in memory care facilities. The second and third components involve assisting a facility to set up bird feeding and watering stations and to re-landscape courtyards and grounds with native plants to attract birds and butterflies.

This is a holistic approach that impacts residents, staff and family members. It uses multisensory stimulation and the outdoor world of birds and butterflies to help people living with dementia share a meaningful experience with others while also providing local and migratory bird populations with improved habitats.

## For Discussion

- 1 Describe the most significant change to your community's skills and health assets that has resulted from your community conservation work. Why is this significant?
- 2 What are some of the ways your land trust might improve or enhance its impact on this area moving forward?
- 3 Do you see opportunities to use this conservation work to impact other assets?

How important are your community's skills and health assets to your conservation work?	What is your impact on the skills and physical and mental health of people in your region?
<div>     </div> <div> <p>Not important</p> <p>Somewhat important</p> <p>Important</p> <p>Extremely important</p> </div>	<div>     </div> <div> <p>Have not considered impacts</p> <p>Minor impacts</p> <p>Moderate impacts</p> <p>Significant impacts</p> </div>



### Cultural Assets

These include practices that reflect values and identity rooted in place, class and/or ethnicity.

Investments can include support for venues to showcase cultural achievements, programs to preserve and pass on cultural knowledge and skills and support for cultural transformations.

#### Example: Taos Land Trust, New Mexico

*Taos Land Trust, after seven years of building a relationship based on mutual trust and respect and the hard work of many individuals, returned the sacred Ponce de León Hot Springs site to the people of Taos Pueblo. In addition to the basic justice of returning a sacred site to its original indigenous owners, this transfer addresses some of the long-standing issues of oppression and exclusion and of local history and intercultural relations, and may help heal old wounds.*

*Crestina Trujillo Armstrong, native Taoseña rancher and long-time Taos Land Trust board member, was particularly moved by the signing: "I've devoted seven years of my life to this project. To see it finally completed is monumental. This is the right thing to do. I believe that in the long run, the transfer of the hot springs to the Pueblo will strengthen relations in our community."*



Credit: Tina Larkin.

#### Example: East Cooper Land Trust, South Carolina

*East Cooper Land Trust in South Carolina recently preserved a 3.84-acre wooded lot in partnership with Charleston County (through its Urban Greenbelt Program) and the Phillips Community Association (which now owns the lot). Located in an unincorporated area of Mount Pleasant, this historic African-American community of about 600 residents can now use the property for a cultural, interpretive community center and a site where Sweetgrass basketmakers can gather the natural materials they need to continue their craft and teach it to future generations.*



## For Discussion

- 1 Describe the most significant change to your community's cultural assets that has resulted from your community conservation work. Why is this significant?
- 2 What are some of the ways your land trust might improve or enhance its impact on this area moving forward?
- 3 Do you see opportunities to use this conservation work to impact other assets?

How important are your community's cultural assets to your conservation work?	What is your impact on practices that reflect values and identity rooted in place, class and/or ethnicity?
<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; align-items: center;"> <div style="text-align: center;">  <p>Not important</p> </div> <div style="text-align: center;">  <p>Somewhat important</p> </div> <div style="text-align: center;">  <p>Important</p> </div> <div style="text-align: center;">  <p>Extremely important</p> </div> </div>	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; align-items: center;"> <div style="text-align: center;">  <p>Have not considered impacts</p> </div> <div style="text-align: center;">  <p>Minor impacts</p> </div> <div style="text-align: center;">  <p>Moderate impacts</p> </div> <div style="text-align: center;">  <p>Significant impacts</p> </div> </div>



*Credit: Capital Roots*

## CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS

This document is a guide and framework for assessing and planning your community conservation work and programming for greater impact. It will be up to your land trust to determine where you would like to begin and how far you will allow this to take you.

The following are the key tasks for assessing and planning for community conservation. Note that this assumes awareness of how a project or program may affect your land conservation mission, such as attracting more members, funding, new ideas, etc. Arguably, all of these would strengthen your organization as well as increase your sustainability and ability to live up to your promise of perpetuity.

1. Explore your current work and programming – and understand your community and its needs – with a community conservation lens using the discussion questions for each asset.
2. Assess your current work using the rating system to better understand which assets are most important to your community.
3. Set priorities for greater impact. This can happen in many ways:
  - a. You may want to determine how to serve community needs through new work.
  - b. You may want to amplify (widen or deepen) the work you're already doing. Your approach could be wide, in which case you touch a variety of populations. Or it could be deep, working intensively with the same group of people for a series of days, weeks, months or years to build trust, new skills and life experience.
  - c. You may want to expand your work to impact more community assets and populations.

This is a living document We created it to help you grapple with what might be a relatively new concept for your organization. It makes sense of community conservation so that you can see how your land trust might operationalize it. We welcome feedback and ideas for making this document more useful to you and others.

Before you expand current work or implement new community conservation programs, it is critical to measure and evaluate the impact of those programs so that you can continually learn and improve. The Land Trust Alliance is developing a companion document, *Flexible Framework for Evaluating Community Conservation*, to assist in establishing goals, indicators and measures for your community conservation work that are based on the nine community assets described herein. The expected release date is December 2016.

The Alliance is also creating the “Stakeholders Analysis Tool” to help you understand your community better, learn more about your own organization and prepare to take a first step in community conservation. The expected release date is November 2016.

We hope that this will help you and your land trust learn, adapt, respond and re-frame what it means to connect others to the land, to each other and to the mission of your land trust. This will lead to conservation becoming more meaningful and more relevant to more people for generations to come.

