

39 Land Trusts Awarded Accreditation

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Land Trust Accreditation Commission Announces Accreditation of 39 Land Trusts

Pittsburgh, PA – The Land Trust Accreditation Commission, an independent program of the Land Trust Alliance, awarded accreditation to 39 land trusts from across the country at its inaugural awards ceremony last night. This is a milestone for the land conservation community.

“At a time when the public is demanding increasing accountability from nonprofit organizations and government, including land trusts, the new independent accreditation program provides the assurance of quality and permanence of land protection the public is looking for,” said Commission Executive Director Tammara Van Ryn. “Today land trusts can join museums, hospitals, universities and other nonprofit institutions that demonstrate that they deserve the public’s trust through rigorous accreditation programs.”

Thirty-nine land trusts were awarded accreditation at a special inaugural ceremony at Rally: The National Land Conservation Conference in Pittsburgh, PA on September 19. Rally, hosted by The Land Trust Alliance, is the largest annual gathering of land conservationists in the country.

Conserving land helps ensure clean air and drinking water, food security, scenic

landscapes, recreational places and wildlife habitat. Across the country, local citizens and communities have come together to form land trusts to save the places they love. These groups have conserved over 37 million acres of land.

“Anything land trusts or other public charities are able to do directly depends on retaining the public trust, as well as the confidence of Congress and the IRS who have granted land conservation special tax incentives,” commented Rand Wentworth, president of the Land Trust Alliance. “Accreditation is an essential way to demonstrate to the public that land trusts are operating at the highest standards.”

Newly accredited land trusts range from groups that protect the Atlantic coastline to those that save the rocky shores of the Pacific, to those that work on affordable housing in the urban Southeast and those that conserve ranches in the wide expanses of the Rocky Mountain west. Some of these land trusts work in a single town, others have a national scope.

Six land trusts from Pennsylvania are now accredited. “Although it was a big undertaking for our small land trust, we knew it was the right thing to do – to make sure we were, in fact, doing the ‘right thing’ for land preservation in our area, and in turn, for land preservation efforts across the country,” said Wendy Battisti, president of the Bedminster Land Conservancy, one of the Pennsylvania land trusts awarded accreditation.

The Alliance congratulates its members who have been awarded accreditation. “We are thrilled that they are more effective at saving land because they’ve gone through this process for improvement,” said Wentworth.

Land trusts applying for accreditation submit extensive documentation and make a significant commitment of time and money to participate. In a rigorous review process, the Commission examines each application, interviews the land trust and evaluates multiple sources of information, including comments from the public.

All of the accredited land trusts have made significant investments in their organizations. “Through the accreditation process land trusts have dramatically increased the funding dedicated to stewarding and defending conservation land in perpetuity, engaged and trained board members and new citizen conservation leaders, and improved systems for managing land and ensuring that the terms of

conservation easements are being upheld,” remarked Van Ryn.

“The tremendous staff resources diverted to preparing our application in early 2007 left us anxious about our capacity to close out a successful land protection year, but in fact the opposite came true,” says Ryan Owens, executive director of the Monadnock Conservancy in New Hampshire. “Thanks in large part to the refinement and rejuvenation of our policies and procedures brought about by the accreditation effort, our 2007 acreage total was more than double that of 2006, itself a record year, and we made great strides toward reaching the goal of a major capital campaign. The simple increases in efficiency and professionalism alone were well worth the long hours.”

“On September 19 we celebrated the inaugural announcement of accredited lands trusts. This is an important beginning,” remarked Van Ryn. “The accreditation seal will be a mark of distinction in land conservation signifying that the accredited group meets national standards for excellence, upholds the public trust and ensures that conservation efforts are permanent.”

About The Land Trust Accreditation Commission

The Land Trust Accreditation Commission, an independent program of the Land Trust Alliance, awards the accreditation seal to community institutions that meet national quality standards for protecting important natural places and working lands forever. The Commission is governed by a volunteer board of diverse land conservation and nonprofit management experts from around the country. More information is available on the Commission’s website, www.landtrustaccreditation.org.

About The Land Trust Alliance

The Land Trust Alliance is a national conservation group that works to save the places people love by strengthening conservation throughout America. It works to increase the pace and quality of conservation by advocating favorable tax policies, training land trusts in best practices, and working to ensure the permanence of conservation in the face of continuing threats. 2007 marked the 25th anniversary of the Alliance. The Alliance publishes *Land Trust Standards*

and Practices and provides financial and administrative support to the Commission. It has established an endowment to help ensure the success of the accreditation program and keep it affordable for land trusts of all sizes to participate in accreditation. More information can be found at www.landtrustalliance.org.

2008 Accredited Land Trusts

Aspen Valley Land Trust (CO)

Athens Land Trust (GA)

Bedminster Land Conservancy (PA)

Boxford Trails Association/ Boxford Open Land Trust (MA)

Brandywine Conservancy (PA)

Carolina Mountain Land Conservancy (NC)

Cascade Land Conservancy (WA)

Central Valley Farmland Trust (CA)

Chikaming Open Lands (MI)

Coastal Mountains Land Trust (ME)

Colorado Open Lands (CO)

Countryside Conservancy (PA)

Eagle Valley Land Trust (CO)

Estes Valley Land Trust (CO)

Five Valleys Land Trust (MT)

Gallatin Valley Land Trust (MT)

Green River Valley Land Trust (WY)

Greenbelt Land Trust (OR)

Heritage Conservancy (PA)

Hudson Highlands Land Trust (NY)

Lake Champlain Land Trust (VT)

Leelanau Conservancy (MI)

Minnesota Land Trust (MN)

Monadnock Conservancy (NH)

Mountain Conservation Trust of Georgia (GA)

North Branch Land Trust (PA)

Northern Virginia Conservation Trust (VA)

Open Space Conservancy (Land Acquisition Affiliate of Open Space Institute)
(NY)

Peninsula Open Space Trust (CA)

Placer Land Trust (CA)

Rensselaer Land Trust (NY)

Scenic Hudson, Inc. (NY)

Scenic Hudson Land Trust (NY)

Sippican Lands Trust (MA)

Upstate Forever (SC)

Washtenaw Land Trust (MI)

Westchester Land Trust (NY)

Wilderness Land Trust (CO)

Willistown Conservation Trust (PA)