



PROFILES IN EXCELLENCE

Greensboro Land Trust

Volunteers Achieve Accreditation

Board Chair Leads by Example

BY KIMBERLY SEESE

The farms, forests, open land and lakes of Greensboro, Vermont charm hundreds of tourists each year. Clive Gray, once a summer resident, shares countless memories with his siblings from their family adventures here.

Today, as a member of a close-knit community of 800, he serves as the board chair of the Greensboro Land Trust, an all-volunteer organization dedicated to conserving Greensboro's rural character.

Conservation is a family tradition for Gray. In 1971, his father donated 250 Greensboro acres to The Nature Conservancy. This parcel, known as the Barr Hill Nature Preserve, has long been a favorite hiking and picnic spot in Northeast Vermont.

As leader of the Greensboro Land Trust since 2002, Gray has contributed to preserving the GLT's 900 acres, plus another 1,000 acres in partnership with the Vermont Land Trust.

A conservation easement protects land in perpetuity, but Gray's deep love of the land and desire to see it cared for now and in the future drove his desire to pursue accreditation for the organization.

He urged the land trust to go beyond securing easements to demonstrating excellence in all its conservation work.

In 2007, the Greensboro Land Trust was one of 38 land trusts nationwide to participate in the accreditation pilot program. By 2009, the land trust had earned the accreditation seal—one of only two all-volunteer land trusts to be part of the pilot program.

The board, mostly retired residents, volunteered hours of their time to the accreditation process, with Gray completing much of the legwork.

"It was a fun process," said Gray. "The road to accreditation was challenging, but very rewarding. Once the application was compiled, I was impressed by our documentation and our organization's accomplishments," he said.

Gray said *Assessing Your Organization* was very useful to prepare for accreditation and stimulated the land trust to adopt a set of standard policies.



Clive Gray (right) with Land Trust Accreditation Commission Chair Larry Kueter

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CHAIR CLIVE GRAY



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“We consistently followed appropriate procedures, but before accreditation, we did not have an organized set of written policies. We studied *Land Trust Standards and Practices* to adopt new policies and flesh out the existing ones. Now, we have 14 policy statements to guide our land trust in the right direction.”

Accreditation taught the board proper recordkeeping and helped to develop a baseline documentation report for each easement, documents the land trust did not have for most of its easements prior to considering accreditation.

“Board members, one a retired banker and the other a retired accountant, prepared our financial paperwork. Other members teamed up to visit the easement properties on site to photograph the boundaries,” said Gray.

“The most difficult accreditation step for our land trust was having an adequate stewardship fund. In order to ensure proper stewardship and protection of our easements from future legal challenges, the Commission asked us to double the value of that fund over the next five years.”

Gray explained that, as part of the accreditation process, they had to create a fundraising plan to ensure they could reach the goal by late 2013, when the time would come to apply for renewal. This required the shift of money from program funds to the stewardship endowment.

“Some members of the board were skeptical of transferring funds from programs to stewardship. They asked ‘What is the point of enhancing our stewardship, if we have insufficient funds to conserve additional land?’ But our organization respected the opinion and expertise of the Commission and followed their advice,” said Gray.

The hard work, dedication and patience of Gray and his board have paid off.

Since earning the accreditation seal, their annual fundraising has increased by 25%.

“The seal has enhanced our standing in the community. It demonstrates our dedication to our mission and our community,” said Gray.

Gray offered one tip to land trusts that are now applying or are considering applying for accreditation—“Feel free to consult land trusts who have gone through the process. Ask for advice and suggestions on specific steps. We’ve had one or two inquiries, but we’re ready to tell our story and offer help to all-volunteer land trusts facing the same challenges.”

GREENSBORO LAND TRUST

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ACRES OF LAND SAVED	900
VOLUNTEERS	15
ACCREDITED	2009