



PROFILES IN EXCELLENCE

Little Forks Conservancy

Help Along the Path to Accreditation

BY LAURA DIBETTA

“Being able to call MaryKay [O’Donnell, Alliance Midwest conservation manager] with questions specific to our land trust and being honest and forthright without worrying about it influencing our application was invaluable,” says Joelle Ferguson from The Little Forks Conservancy in Michigan.

The Conservancy was accredited in 2010, but had been preparing to apply since 2007. In the time leading up to their application, the Conservancy took advantage of the many Land Trust Alliance training tools and the guidance of Alliance staff.

“We did a Guided Organizational Assessment in 2007, which was the start of preparing for accreditation for us. In between the assessment and registering to apply, we made sure all of our policies and files were in order. To prepare our land projects for review, MaryKay spent half a day with us. The time we took to prepare before we even registered was just as important to us as completing the application for accreditation. Without that time and support from the Midwest office we probably would have been overwhelmed by the process,” said Ferguson.

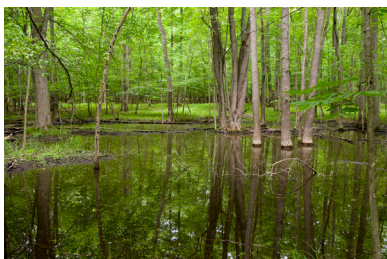
When the accreditation program was created, the Land Trust Accreditation Commission was established as an independent program of the Alliance. The Commission is separately incorporated and its board has the same obligations of any nonprofit board. The two organizations work cooperatively, but

abide by a strict confidentiality policy that protects information about specific land trusts from being shared between the organizations.

The original program design steering committee recommended this structure to protect applicants for two reasons. First, as a separately incorporated nonprofit the Commission’s accreditation decisions are independent from the Alliance and are not influenced by things like grant funding. Second, land trusts can feel free to ask questions about their practices and seek training from the Alliance without worrying about how their questions or training needs might affect their accreditation application.

When the accreditation program was created, the Alliance promised land trusts that there would be ample resources available to ensure that any land trust that had the will could learn everything it needed to get accredited. The Alliance offers a suite of online, in-person and in-print training on how to implement *Land Trust Standards and Practices* and get on the path to accreditation.

But when it comes to the nuts and bolts of the process, putting together the application, and specifics on what the Commission is looking for, it’s the Commission staff that gets the call.



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COMMUNICATIONS SPECIALIST JOELLE FERGUSON

"I felt like I called the Commission every other day," Ferguson recalls. "But it was better to call them to get it right rather than guess and get it wrong. The Commission staff was always so nice and willing to answer any question that came up during the process."

The Conservancy also participated in every one of the Land Trust Accreditation Commission's webinars before applying and found them to be particularly helpful in demystifying the process.

The Alliance and Commission both strive to ensure that land trusts have the information and tools they need to be successful in the accreditation process.

Here is a table to guide you to the right resource:

	Land Trust Accreditation Commission	Land Trust Alliance
Online	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Registration Pre-application and application materials Guidance Documents Indicator Practices Applicant Handbook Webinars Fact sheets eNewsletter FAQs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Learning Center <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Land Trust Standards and Practices Pathways to Accreditation Standards and Practices Curriculum Course Digital Library Forums Webinars and Workshops
In-Person	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rally Regional workshops 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rally Regional workshops
In-Print		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Land Trust Standards and Practices Guidebook (2006) Assessing Your Organization: A Tool for Evaluating Implementation of the 2004 Land Trust Standards and Practices The Standards and Practices Curriculum (15 volumes) Saving Land
Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Questions on the process Questions on how to put together application materials Questions on accreditation requirements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Questions on best practices Questions on non-indicator practices Training and technical assistance

LITTLE FORKS CONSERVANCY

105 Post Street, Midland, MI 48640
(989) 835.4886 | www.littleforks.org

ACRES OF LAND SAVED	2,671
STAFF	3
ACCREDITED	2010