



**Excellence · Trust · Permanence**

*The Commission awards the accreditation seal to land conservation organizations that meet national standards for excellence, uphold the public trust and ensure that conservation efforts are permanent.*

# Benefits of Accreditation

## What it Means to Land Trusts, Donors, Government, and the Public

### **The Benefits of Accreditation to Your Land Trust**

There are more than 1,800 land trusts operating in the U.S. Being accredited helps a land trust to stand out, to say to landowners, funders and other supporters: "Invest in us. We are a strong, effective organization you can trust to conserve your land forever." The accreditation seal is a mark of distinction.

The public is increasingly demanding accountability from government and nonprofit organizations, including land trusts. Independent accreditation provides third-party assurance of quality and permanence of land conservation that the public and donors look for, and publicly recognizes a land trust's ability to protect important natural places and working lands forever.

Preparing for accreditation and the application process also affords land trusts the opportunity to review and implement policies and procedures that will help streamline their operations and lead to more effective land conservation.

The Land Trust Alliance conducted a survey of 113 accredited land trusts in late 2010. Of the roughly 60 responses that were received:

- 96% report the process strengthened their organization.
- 63% report it being easier to meet agency/funder requirements.
- 51% of those with staff report the sense of teamwork among staff is stronger.

Aside from becoming a stronger organization with better policies and more efficient processes, what other benefits does accreditation offer? That seal proudly displayed on your publications and website also provides your land trust additional tangible benefits to take advantage of:

### **Conservation Defense Insurance**

A dollar saved, is a dollar earned. Accredited land trusts are automatically eligible for the proposed conservation defense insurance program being designed by the Land Trust Alliance and will receive an automatic premium discount of \$11 per insured unit.

### **Federal Grassland Reserve Program (GRP)**

Land trusts applying for GRP funds for conservation easements must meet the provisions outlined in the 2008 Farm Bill. The new GRP rule also requires a dedicated account (Natural Resources Conservation Service policy calls for at least \$50,000) for the purposes of legal defense, monitoring and management for each GRP easement or accreditation by the Land Trust Accreditation Commission.

### **Colorado State Certification**

In 2008, the State of Colorado passed a law that in order for a donor to receive a tax credit for a conservation-easement donation, the holder of the easement must be certified by the state. Recognizing the rigor of the national land trust accreditation program, there is an expedited certification process for accredited land trusts.

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## **Donnelley Foundation**

The Gaylord and Dorothy Donnelley Foundation works in the Great Lakes and southeast regions of the U.S. Because it supports accreditation, land trusts that are based in their area of operation have been given unsolicited grants of \$10,000 each when they earn accreditation.

## **What People Are Saying About Accreditation**

You've heard a lot about accreditation already – the paperwork, the time, the excitement of walking across the stage at Rally to receive your recognition – but there's more you need to know about why accreditation is so important to the future of your land trust and to saving our land.

"Accreditation is important in showing the communities we serve that our organization has a solid foundation and delivers a professional program. It will give landowners additional confidence to work with us to permanently conserve their land, and assure donors that their support is well-placed."

*Coastal Mountains Land Trust (ME),  
accredited in 2008*

"Land trust accreditation is a powerful tool to strengthen land trust operations, foster public trust, and ensure the permanence of land conservation. The Kresge Foundation awarded a challenge grant to help build an endowment for the accreditation program so that the costs of the program will remain affordable for land trusts. We viewed this investment in the accreditation program as a logical complement to our historic support for land acquisition by land trusts. It also was a good fit with Kresge's values of advancing environmental stewardship and institutional transformation."

*Lois R. DeBacker, Senior Program Director,  
The Kresge Foundation*

"I interviewed several land trusts to work with me on my conservation easement for the family ranch, and I chose the Texas Land Conservancy. Now that they have the accreditation seal – just two months after I completed my easement – I'm really pleased that I chose them because that really validates that it's a solid organization."

*Joyce Lucas, landowner, Birk-Sommerfeld  
Heritage Ranch (Texas Land Conservancy was  
accredited in 2011)*

"When we learned our local conservancy was accredited, it was further confirmation of our choice to trust it to protect our land forever. Accreditation is an assurance of the high standards the conservancy uses to protect land today and for future generations."

*Dick Shuster (Dick and his wife Posy donated a  
conservation easement to the Leelanau  
Conservancy in Michigan, accredited in 2008)*

"With Congress' approval of an extension of our enhanced tax incentives, we expect an additional 250,000 acres of forests, mountains, farms and natural areas will be protected in 2011. All of this could not have happened without the land trust accreditation program, which was essential for restoring the confidence of Congress in land trusts."

*President Rand Wentworth, Land Trust Alliance*

## **For more information**

For more information on the land trust accreditation program, visit [www.landtrustaccreditation.org](http://www.landtrustaccreditation.org), e-mail [info@landtrustaccreditation.org](mailto:info@landtrustaccreditation.org), or call 518-587-3143.