

# Land Trust Accreditation Impact Evaluation

## Appendix E: Analysis of Land Trust Census Data

February 5, 2018

# Overview of Document

- Summary
- Public confidence
- Permanence
- Discussion

# Summary

## Purpose and Approach

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The data analysis outlined in this document looked at the changes in accredited land trusts (ALT), and land trusts that were eligible for accreditation but were not accredited (EBNA), between 2005 and 2015

Specifically, the set of land trusts examined included all land trusts eligible for accreditation as of the 2015 Land Trust Census that also appeared in the 2005 Census (one year before accreditation was launched)

In total, there are 859 land trusts in the cohort analyzed, including 323 accredited land trusts (as of February 2016), and 536 land trusts that were eligible for accreditation but were not accredited

The cohort represents 92 percent of all land trusts eligible for accreditation in the 2015 census (931). ALTs comprise 38 percent of the cohort, and 36 percent of all eligible land trusts in 2015

Central to the Accreditation Program evaluation, this analysis will contribute to an understanding of whether land trust accreditation has had an effect on public trust and confidence, and also on the ability of land trusts to permanently conserve land

## Key Results

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1. ALTs advanced substantially between 2005 and 2015, during the period in which Accreditation was implemented

2. ALTs garnered an out-sized share of the growth in operating funds, financial supporters, and volunteers between 2005 and 2015. This likely would not have occurred without public confidence in these land trusts

3. ALTs protected a disproportionate share of the acres conserved between 2005 and 2015, indicating stronger conservation performance (by the admittedly crude measure of acres). And ALTs experienced a greater share of the growth in staff, giving them more capacity to do conservation. These more indirect measures suggest at least a basis for public confidence, and perhaps that confidence itself

3. A higher proportion of ALTs monitor all their CEs, have baseline documents, and have CE amendment and enforcement policies in place. In addition, ALTs have much higher balances in permanence endowments, and in operating reserves. ALTs became even better positioned to permanently conserve land than EBNAs over the period, itself a basis for, if not a direct sign of, public confidence

## Discussion

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By a wide range of metrics, ALTs grew healthily between 2005 and 2015, and outperformed EBNAs

Accreditation does not appear to have inhibited the development of ALTs. It may even be the case that the changes needed to become accredited, or the credential itself, produced growth

It could also be the case that land trusts with a strong desire to grow seek to improve their practices, among other things, and to gain accreditation

One cannot say definitively what drove growth via the data

It is worth noting that even in 2005, ALTs were generally larger than EBNAs. And it may be the case that larger land trusts are better positioned to grow and are more inclined (and able) to strengthen their stewardship practices

In the area of practice, it is interesting how many more land trusts put key policies in place and grew their permanence endowments over the period, whether or not they were accredited. This across-the-board change may have been stimulated by the simple presence of accreditation

# Public Confidence/Trust

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To assess public confidence, we looked at factors that indicate direct public support for a land trust. These include operating budgets, financial supporters, and volunteers

In addition, we looked at the somewhat indirect measures of organizational performance (inferring that higher performing organizations earn public confidence by that performance) and capacity (as suggested by staff size)

# Public Confidence – Financial Support

One way we sought to understand changes in public confidence was whether there was a difference between financial support for, and volunteer engagement with, ALTs and EBNAs

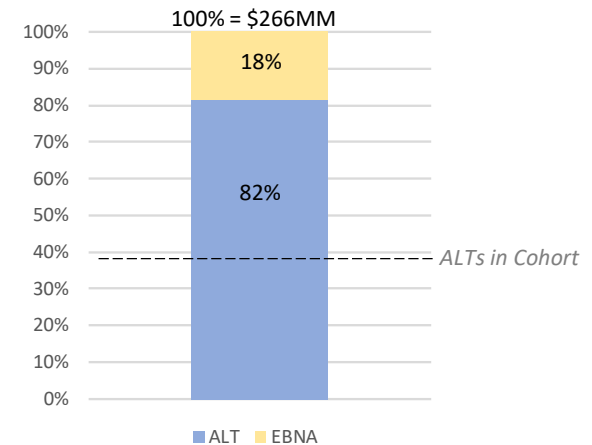
## ***Financial Support – Operating Budgets***

ALTs captured most of the added financial resources flowing to the operating budgets of cohort land trusts between 2005 and 2015

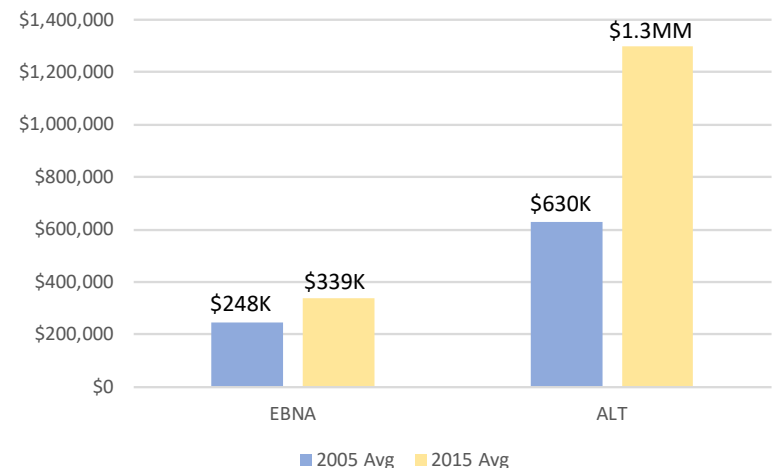
The budgets of land trusts in the cohort collectively grew from \$336MM in 2005 to \$602MM in 2015, an increase of \$266MM. ALTs captured 82% of the increased flow of resources

As a result, the average operating budget of an ALT doubled (107% increase) over the period, from \$630K (Med=\$190K) to \$1.3MM (Med=\$450K), as compared to a 37% increase for the average EBNA, from \$248K (Med=\$25K) to \$339K (Med=\$50K)

## **Share of Total Operating Budget Growth**



## **Average Land Trust Operating Budget, 2005 & 2015**



# Public Confidence – Financial Support

## ***Financial Support – Financial Supporters***

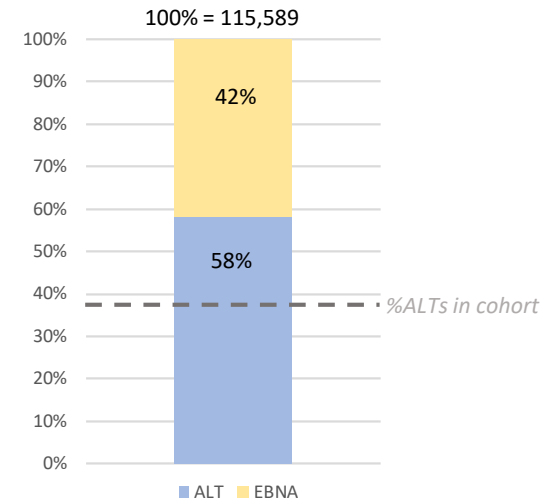
The total number of financial supporters of land trusts in the cohort grew modestly over the period, with ALTs outpacing EBNAs in attracting new financial supporters

The total number of financial supporters reported in Census by cohort land trusts grew from 963,000 in 2005 to 1.1 million in 2015. ALTs captured nearly 60% of this increase

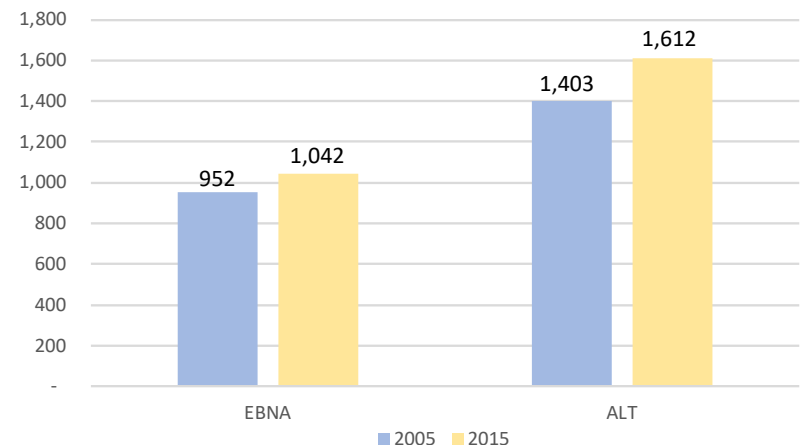
The average number of financial supporters per land trust grew by approximately 15% for ALTs and 10% for EBNAs. However, by 2015, the average ALT had 55% more supporters than the average EBNA.

In terms of specifics, the average EBNA had 1,042 supporters in 2015 (Med=200) versus 952 in 2005 (Med=200), while the average ALT had 1,612 (Med=600) versus 1,403 (Med=550)

## **Share of Total Growth in Financial Supporters**



## **Average Number of Land Trust Financial Supporters**



# Public Confidence – Volunteers

## Volunteers

Cohort land trusts more than doubled (111%) the number of volunteers involved with their organizations between 2005 and 2015

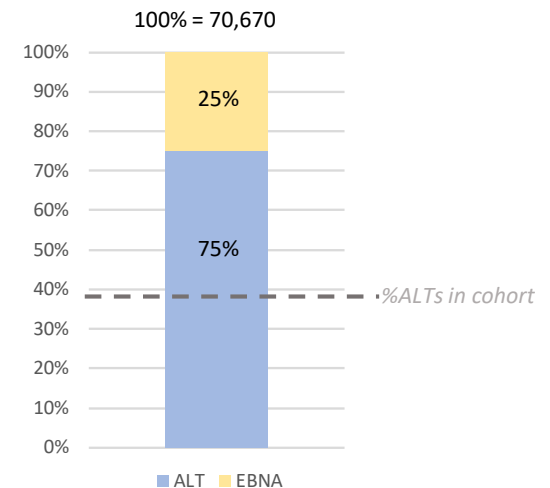
ALTs experienced stronger growth in attracting volunteers than EBNAs, capturing 75% of the more than 70,000 newly-engaged individuals over the period

The average ALT had 160% more volunteers in 2015 than in 2005, while the average EBNA had about 60% more

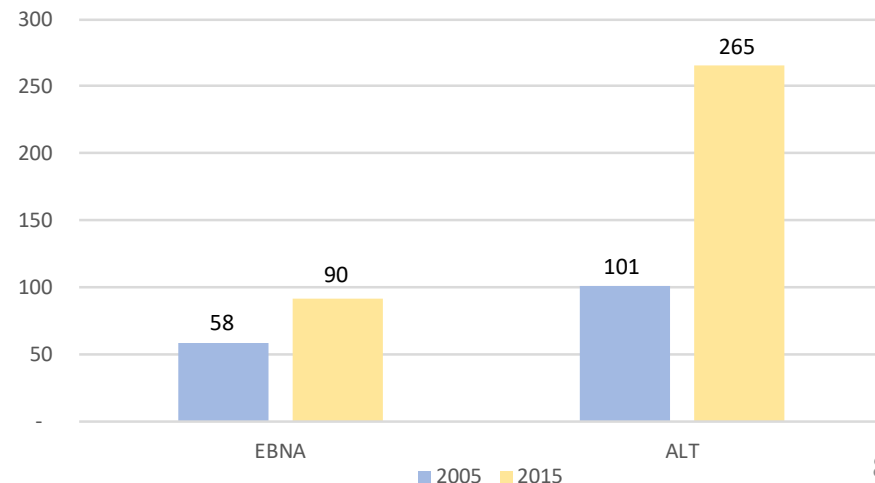
In 2015, ALTs averaged 265 volunteers (Med=60)(versus 101 in 2005, Med=25), while EBNAs averaged 90 (Med=20)(versus 58 in 2005, Med=12)

70% of ALTs experienced gains in the number of volunteers, as compared to 58% for EBNAs

## Share of Total Growth in Volunteers



## Average Number of Land Trust Volunteers





# Public Confidence – Additional Indicators

Beyond the limited number of more direct expressions of public confidence – budget, financial supporters, and volunteers – we looked to somewhat indirect indicators

Here, we examined the conservation “performance” of land trusts, in terms of the crude measure of acres conserved, and the organizational capacity to do conservation, in the form of the equally crude measure of overall staffing

## ***Acres Conserved***

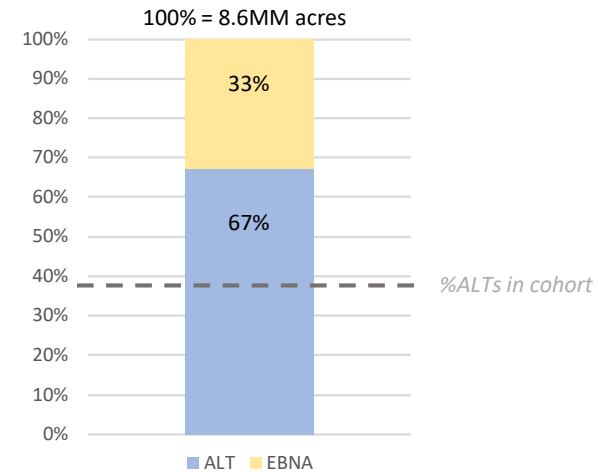
ALTs protected more land on average than EBNA in 2005, and this gap widened over the period. In total, cohort land trusts protected 8.6 million acres between 2005 and 2015, nearly doubling their total conserved acreage, from 9.9MM in 2005 to 18.5MM in 2015

Further, while the total acres conserved by the average EBNA grew by roughly 70% between 2005 and 2015, the average ALT’s total acres conserved grew by 100%

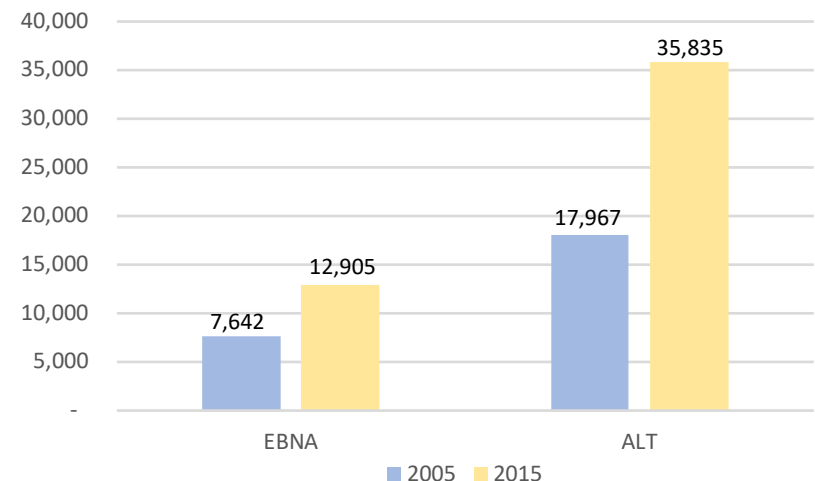
By 2015, the average ALT conserved nearly 3x the acres of the average EBNA, 35,635 (Med=8,513) versus 12,905 (Med=1,034)

(In 2005, the average ALT conserved nearly 18,000 acres (Med=3,009), and the average EBNA conserved 7,642 (Med=490))

## **Share of Total Growth in Acres Conserved**



## **Average Number of Acres Conserved**



# Public Confidence – Additional Indicators

## Staffing

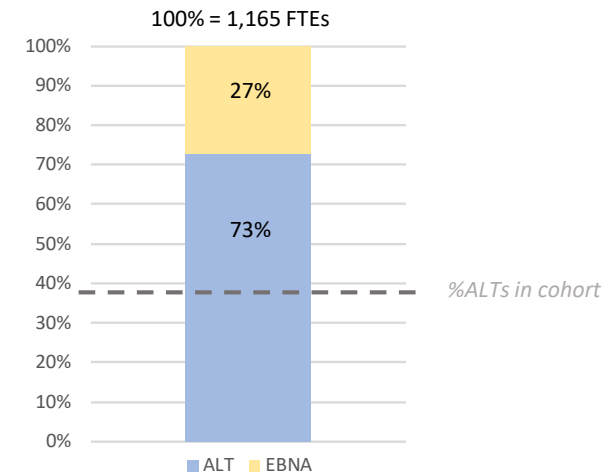
Staff capacity of cohort land trusts, measured in full-time-equivalent staff (FTEs) grew from 3,634 in 2005 to 4,799 in 2015, or by around one-third

ALTs experienced nearly three-quarters of the total growth in cohort FTEs, maintaining their average staff size difference over EBNAs of nearly 4x

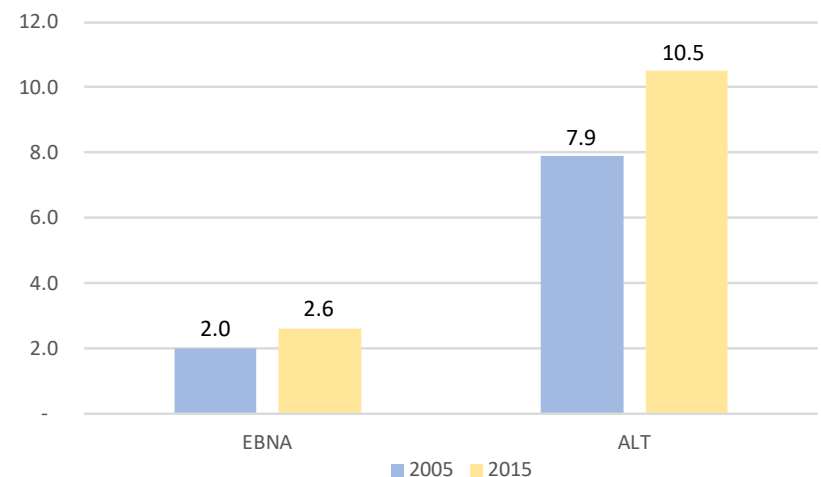
77% of ALTs gained staff between 2005 and 2015, as compared to 38% of EBNAs

The average ALT had 10.5 FTEs in 2015 (Med=5.0), and the average EBNA had 2.6 FTEs (Med=0.5). This compares to 7.9 FTEs in ALTs in 2005 (Med=2.5), and 2.0 FTEs in the average EBNA (Med=0.5)

## Share of Total Growth in FTEs



## Average Number of FTEs



# Permanence

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To assess permanence, we examined measures of good stewardship practice, and the degree to which cohort land trusts were economically prepared to defend protected land

We looked at four indicators of stewardship practice

- Monitoring 100% of CEs yearly
- Having in place baselines for 100% of CEs
- Having an amendment policy in place
- Having an enforcement policy in place

And for economic preparedness for the long term, we looked at stewardship and legal defense funds and operating reserves

# Permanence – Monitoring and Baselines

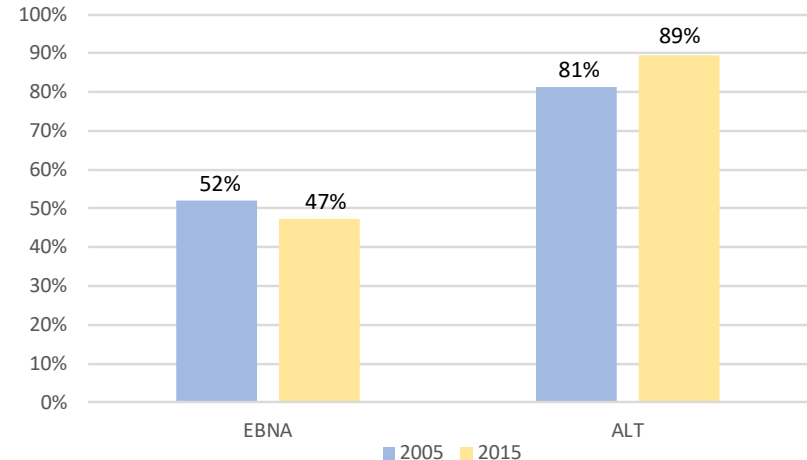
## **Monitoring**

The number of ALTs monitoring 100% of their CEs yearly grew by about 10%, while the number of EBNAs doing so actually declined by nearly 10%\*

81% of ALTs were already monitoring 100% of their CEs in 2005, and this grew to nearly 90% in 2015. 52% of EBNAs were doing so in 2005 and this dropped to 47%

The share of ALTs monitoring 100% of their CEs yearly was more than 40 percentage points greater than the share of EBNAs

**Percent of Land Trusts Monitoring 100% of their CEs Yearly**

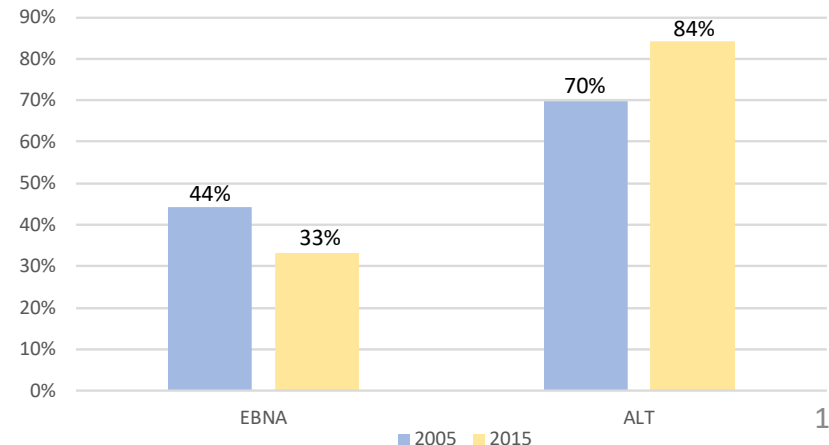


## **Baselines**

The number of ALTs with baseline documents for 100% of their CEs grew by about 21%, while the number of EBNAs with baselines for all CEs actually declined by nearly 25%\*

70% of ALTs had baselines for 100% of their CEs in 2005, and this grew to 84%. 44% of EBNAs had baselines in place for all CEs in 2005, and this declined to 33%

**Percent of Land Trusts with Baseline Documents for 100% of their CEs**



\*It would seem counterintuitive for fewer land trusts to monitor all their CEs in 2015 v. 2005, or have baseline documents for all of their CEs. Some of the difference could be accounted for by the change in the phrasing of the questions asked on Census between 2005 and 2015

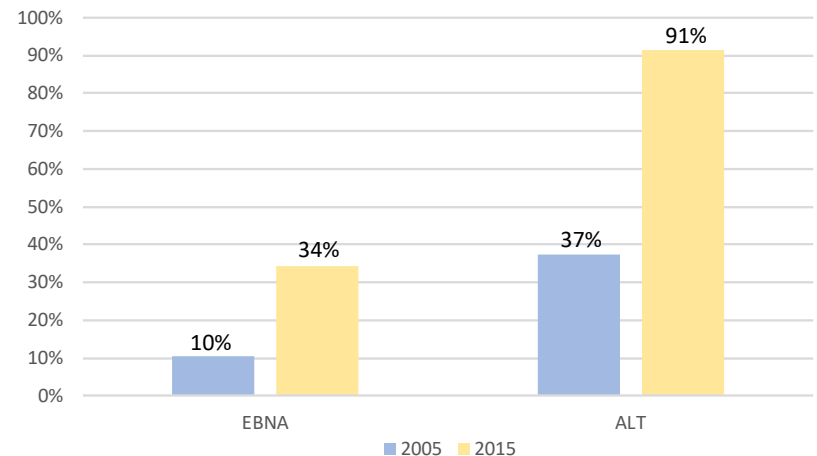
# Permanence – Amendments & Enforcement Policy

## ***Amendments Policy***

The number of cohort land trusts with an amendment policy in place nearly tripled from 2005 to 2015

While there was a substantial growth in the share of EBNAs with an amendment policy (10% to 34%), a rate of increase greater than that for ALTs, the share of ALTs with amendments policies in place increased from 37% to 91%

**Percent of Land Trusts with an Amendments Policy in Place**



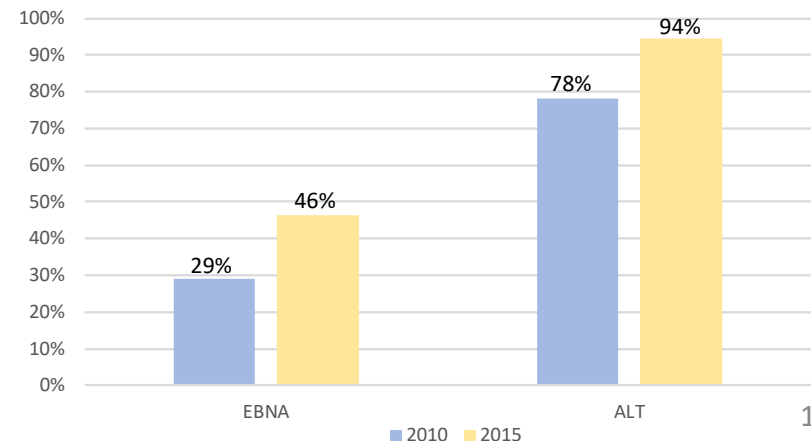
## ***Enforcement Policy***

The number of cohort land trusts with an enforcement policy in place grew by more than one-third, with the number of EBNAs, starting from a much smaller base, growing at 3x the rate of ALTs

Still, by 2015, more than twice the share of ALTs had an enforcement policy in place as EBNAs

*[Note: No data available for 2005. Figure at right is 2010 and 2015]*

**Percent of Land Trusts with an Enforcement Policy in Place**



# Permanence Endowments

## *Number of Land Trusts with Permanence Endowments*

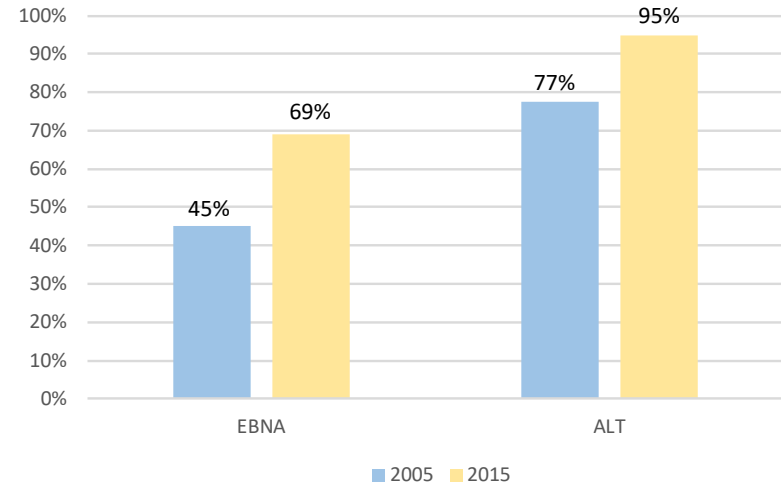
In Census, land trusts report on the funds they have set aside to ensure the permanence of their conservation work, either through dedicated stewardship funds and legal defense funds, or through combined stewardship and legal defense funds

While the number of EBNAs that had permanence endowments of any kind grew by >50% between 2005 and 2015, the total proportion that had a permanence endowment of any kind was 69% in 2015, as compared to 45% of ALTs

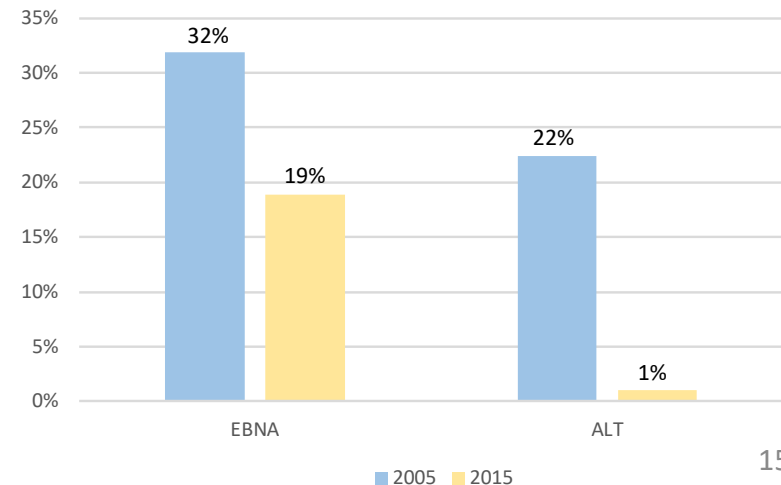
The growth in the number of EBNAs with combined funds exceeded that for ALTs (47% v. 12%), however, a sizeable minority of EBNAs that have established a permanence fund still have only a stewardship fund (19%). This compares with just 1% of ALTs

An important trend for the field is that while more land trusts established combined and stewardship-only funds, many more land trusts – both ALTs and EBNAs – established legal defense funds. There was a nearly identical increase of roughly 270% in the number of cohort land trusts that established legal defense funds

**Percent of Land Trusts with a Permanence Endowment in Place**



**Percent of Land Trusts with a Permanence Endowment that Have ONLY a Stewardship Endowment**



# Permanence Endowments

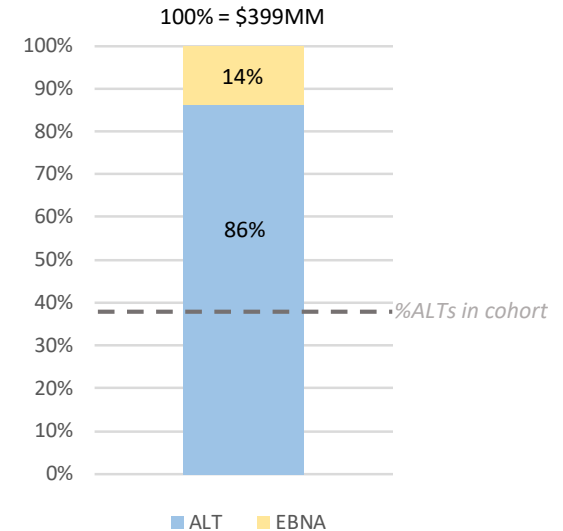
## *\$Amounts in Permanence Endowments*

The total dollar amounts in permanence endowments of cohort land trusts grew from \$197MM in 2005 to \$596MM in 2015, a difference of \$399MM. ALTs experienced more than 86% of this growth

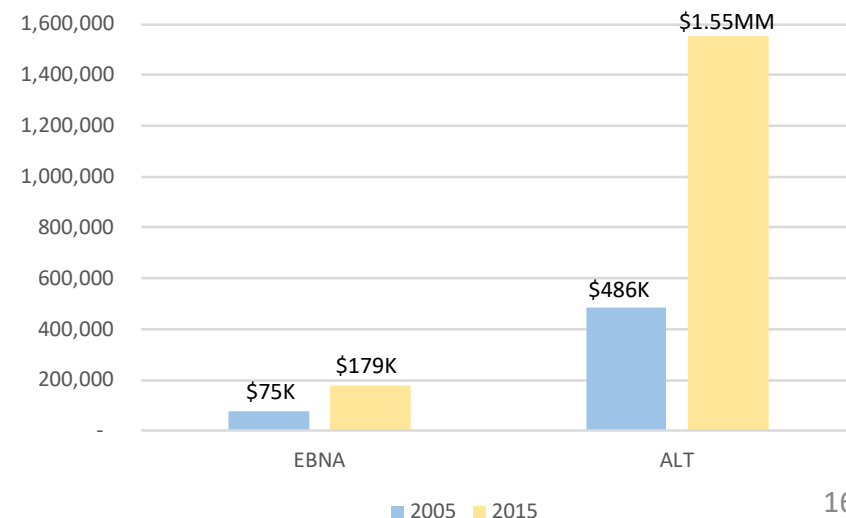
The average permanence endowment grew by 220% for ALTs v. 140% for EBNAs. The balance in the average ALT permanence endowment increased by more than \$1MM, to an average of \$1.5MM (Med=\$481,000), as compared to an increase of only \$104,00 to \$179,000 (Med=\$20,000) for EBNAs

The average ALT permanence endowment is more than 8x the size of the average EBNA permanence endowment

## Share of Total \$Growth in Permanence Endowments



## Average Permanence Endowment Size





# Permanence – Operating Reserves

## ***Operating Reserves***

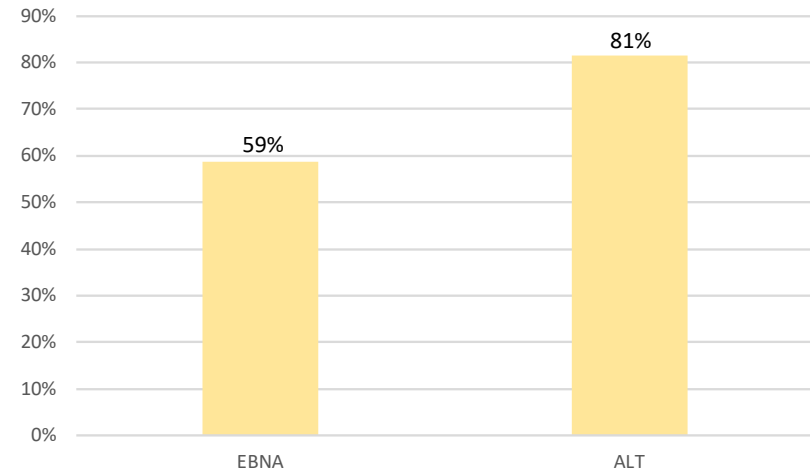
As a final quantitative measure of permanence, we looked at operating reserves

More than 80% of ALTs had operating reserves in 2015 (this data was not collected in 2005), as compared to around 60% for EBNA

The average operating reserve balance for an ALT was about \$940,000, more than 4x that of the average EBNA (approx. \$223K)

Reserves could cover about 9 months of operating expenses for the average ALT (Avg Op Reserve/ Avg Op Budget), and just under 8 months for the average EBNA

**Share of Land Trusts with Operating Reserves in 2015**



**Average Operating Reserve Balance per Land Trust in 2015**

