

BY Francesca Dalleo

LAND TRUST ACCREDITATION  
COMMISSION 

An independent program of the Land Trust Alliance

# Standing *Ready to Help*



JENNIFER BRADY-CONNOR

A farm protected by Agricultural Stewardship Association.

**D**id you know that accreditation and land protection experts at the Land Trust Accreditation Commission are on standby to guide you through your application and act as a resource for your land trust? Commission staff can offer advice and help solve problems as you make important decisions, or just provide answers to quick questions.

This can be a real time-saver as you prepare an application. Have questions? Just ask!

Courtney Dodge, stewardship coordinator at Kachemak Heritage Land Trust in Alaska, didn't hesitate to ask any and all questions as her land trust applied for renewal this year. Her team inquired about everything from specifics on the land trust's previous expectations for improvement to general application questions. They were delighted to have only one Additional Information Request to respond to this time around—unprecedented for an accreditation applicant—and attribute this success to their frequent contact with Commission staff. Dodge says that staying in close touch “saved us many potential hours of guesswork. Instead of assuming what the Commission wanted, we just asked them and then knew exactly how much documentation was sufficient for each question.”

Renee Bouplon, associate director of Agricultural Stewardship Association (ASA) in New York, found the Commission to be “an ally in terms of providing information and advice that can save an applicant time and unnecessary worrying.” Bouplon worked with Commission staffer Greg Good during renewal, seeking clarification on filling out the Land Conservation Project List. She appreciated that he provided advice on how to handle unique circumstances, and that “the responses were always prompt, concise and tailored to me.”

Even if your land trust isn't currently going through the application process, the Commission can act as a resource for you. After ASA completed its application earlier this year, Bouplon says having such a positive experience helped her “feel more comfortable seeking input beyond the renewal process.”

Bouplon has stayed in touch, including “running a few hypothetical questions by Greg as our organization was presented with new opportunities and challenges that required thoughtful consideration and research.”

After attending an accreditation renewal seminar at Rally, Gretchen Salm, land conservation support specialist of Finger Lakes Land Trust in New York, found the speakers from the Commission highly approachable and knowledgeable. Though the land trust is not due for renewal until 2021, Salm subsequently contacted Commission staffer Melissa Kalvestrand to determine whether an appraisal was necessary when exchanging a small portion of land with a neighbor to one of their preserves. Salm says, “Melissa has been a wonderful resource for my land trust, and having a personal connection with Commission staff gives me confidence to ask questions and seek advice.”

Another organization seeking Commission advice is Harford Land Trust in Maryland. Although only in the early stages of preparations and not yet registered to apply, Executive Director Kristin Kirkwood has reached out to the Commission numerous times. She discussed issues with Commission staffer Valerie Roof, including best practices for listing a trade property for sale when one of the interested buyers was an “insider.” Kirkwood wanted to be absolutely sure that they were proceeding according to the recommended *Land Trust Standards and Practices*. She says, “I found that speaking directly to a professional who has reviewed dozens of land trusts operating at the highest standard helped me to make the best possible informed decision.” 

**FRANCESCA DALLEO** IS A COMMUNICATIONS AND OUTREACH CONSULTANT FOR THE LAND TRUST ACCREDITATION COMMISSION.