



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.

The Land Trust Accreditation Commission

What is Land Trust Accreditation?

The public is increasingly demanding accountability from government and nonprofit organizations, including land trusts. Museums, libraries, zoos, universities and many other organizations serving the public interest are able to gain professional recognition for their work through accreditation. In 2008, land trusts joined these ranks and are now able to participate in a voluntary accreditation program.

The land trust community has considered some form of verification system since *Land Trust Standards and Practices* was created in 1989. A Land Trust Alliance-convened steering committee designed the basics of an accreditation program in 2004 and 2005 through an extensive public participation process. This resulted in the creation of the Land Trust Accreditation Commission.

Benefits of Accreditation

Independent accreditation provides the assurance of quality and permanence of land conservation the public is looking for and is essential for building public confidence in land trusts. The accreditation seal recognizes land conservation organizations that meet national standards for excellence, uphold the public trust and ensure that conservation efforts are permanent. This recognition provides for enhanced credibility and respect with land conservation donors, partners, members and the public.

Voluntary accreditation also offers land trusts another tool in their toolbox. The preparation and application process affords applicants the opportunity to review and implement policies that will help streamline their operations and lead to more effective land conservation.

The Land Trust Accreditation Commission

The Commission was incorporated in April 2006 as an independent program of the Land Trust Alliance to operate a land trust accreditation program to build and recognize strong land trusts, foster public confidence in land conservation and help ensure the long-term protection of land.

The Commission is governed by a board of diverse land conservation and nonprofit management experts from around the country. Commissioners volunteer their expertise to verify that a land trust is implementing *Land Trust Standards and Practices* by evaluating a sample of the practices known as indicator practices.

Program Milestones

The Commission tested its procedures in 2007 and began operations in 2008. As of July 2010, there were nearly 100 accredited land trusts across the United States. The number of accredited land trusts is expected to grow steadily over time as the program accommodates all eligible organizations and as land trusts make the significant commitment necessary to prepare and apply for accreditation. While each land trust will consider when and if voluntary accreditation is right for it, the Commission anticipates that most interested land trusts will complete the accreditation process by 2012 and renew every five years thereafter. For a complete list of accredited land trusts, visit <http://www.landtrustaccreditation.org>.

Vision for the Future

The Commission envisions a future in which land trusts have made dramatic gains in land conserved, membership, practices and overall effectiveness. The continuing increase in citizen leadership and professionalism in land trusts reflects the growth of the movement into a well-respected force serving the public interest. The growing pool of accredited land trusts reflects the broad diversity of organization sizes, missions and geography – united by strong ethical practices and by a commitment to sound transactions and the long-term stewardship of land and conservation easements. The land trust accreditation program is a model of self-regulation in the nonprofit sector. It is run by a Commission that reflects and responds to its diverse constituents and has earned the trust of land trusts, regulators, funders, and others. As a result, land conservation is widely supported by private philanthropy and government policies, and more land is permanently conserved.

Statement of Values

In our actions and in our goals for the land trust community, the Commission aspires to the following values.

Integrity

To be clear and honest in our communications with land trusts, the public and others; to build trust in, and respect for, the accreditation program; to respect the confidentiality of data provided to us.

Accountability

To operate an accreditation program that is fair and makes consistent decisions; to learn from and respond to the land conservation community, the public and other stakeholders.

Service

To manage an accreditation program that is efficient and makes productive use of participants' time; to work cooperatively with land trusts of all types and sizes as they go through the accreditation process.

For More Information

To learn more about the Land Trust Accreditation Commission, contact:

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