The Land Trust Accreditation Commission was established as an independent program of the Land Trust Alliance in 2006. The program was designed by a Program Design Steering Committee formed by the Alliance in 2004. The Steering Committee gathered input from land trusts via interviews, surveys, focus groups, conference calls, web dialogues, and other venues and used this input to inform the design of the program. The Alliance board approved the Steering Committee’s recommendation to create a voluntary land trust accreditation program to be managed by a Commission incorporated as a subsidiary of the Alliance in September 2005. The Commission was incorporated in April 2006. The Commission conducted two rounds of pilot applications in 2007 and, after holding a lottery in fall 2007, accepted the initial applications in the spring of 2008. The inaugural accreditation awards ceremony was held at Rally 2008: The National Land Conservation Conference in Pittsburgh, PA. Today, there are several hundred accredited land trusts across the country.

- View an early timeline
- View Annual Reports
- View Notice of Accreditation Decisions

Goals and Objectives

The primary goals of the accreditation program are to:

- Build and recognize strong land trusts;
- Foster public confidence in land conservation; and,
- Help ensure the long-term protection of land.

The Commission’s primary objective is to have 450 accredited land trusts that hold 90% of conserved land in America.

Not all of our donors care if we are accredited, but some definitely do. They want to be associated with high-functioning non-profits that deliver results. Yes, accreditation is a huge investment in time and effort, but it is an investment that pays back on many levels.

— Doug Sensenig, Executive Director, Coastal Mountains Land Trust

Through accreditation, the Commission believes these additional goals can be achieved.

- The pool of accredited land trusts will reflect 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 will be viewed as a model of self-regulation in the nonprofit sector, run by a Commission that reflects and responds to its diverse constituents and has earned the trust of land trusts, regulators, funders, and others.
- Accredited land trusts will make dramatic gains in land conserved, membership, practices and overall effectiveness.
- The continuing increase in citizen leadership and professionalism in land trusts will reflect the growth of the movement into a well-respected force serving the public interest.
- Land conservation will be widely supported by private philanthropy and government policies, and more land will be permanently conserved.