

The Commission is governed by a diverse board of 19 volunteer commissioners involved in land conservation around the country. Commissioners share their expertise in land protection, stewardship and nonprofit management with the land trust community, collectively donating nearly 4,000 hours of service a year. Commissioners are united by three core values for the accreditation program: integrity, accountability, and service.

Have you ever thought about serving as a member of the Commission or do you know someone who you think would be a good commissioner? Serving on the Commission is a great opportunity to work with a dedicated group of volunteer conservation leaders from around the country and be part of a national program that fosters excellence, trust and permanence in land conservation. [Read more](#) >>

Current Commissioners (effective January 2024)



Dana Chabot For the last 16 years Dana (now retired) provided accounting and financial management services to not-for-profit organizations as a sole proprietor CPA, mainly in south-central Wisconsin. Among his clients were a half-dozen land trusts and conservation organizations. Dana helped these organizations develop budgets and financial reports that clearly communicate their operating results, operating reserves, and uses of restricted contributions.

Prior to starting his own firm, Dana spent a total of 8 years as a CPA firm employee performing financial statement and compliance audits for not-for-profit, manufacturing, and retail organizations. Dana has a Ph.D. in political science from the University of Minnesota and has ten years' experience teaching political theory at the college level. This helped prepare him to work with nonprofit boards of directors to improve their understanding of financial concepts. He has worked with the Land Trust Alliance, Land Trust Accreditation Commission, and Gathering Waters (Wisconsin) to provide financial management training and technical assistance to land trusts.

Dana and his wife Patricia (retired from Wisconsin DNR) now live in Minneapolis. He serves as a volunteer and director of the Ice Age Trail Alliance and enjoys hiking segments of the unique footpath that follows the edge of glacial advance across 1,000 miles of Wisconsin landscape



Andrew Dana is an attorney with Conservation Law Associates in Bozeman, Montana, and represents land trusts, primarily in Montana and the Northern Rockies, including the Montana Association of Land Trusts. He has consulted nationally with the Land Trust Alliance and other organizations about a broad range of conservation easement matters, including easement transactions, drafting, interpretation, enforcement, amendment and termination, and tax policy.

Andy was a founding member of the Land Trust Alliance's Conservation Defense Advisory Council, and he helped launch the coordinated conservation easement defense insurance ideas that ultimately gave rise to TerraFirma. He received his law degree from Stanford Law School, and also holds degrees in geography from the University of Washington and Middlebury College. With his brothers, he also owns a working ranch on the Yellowstone River that is protected by a conservation easement, which fortunately allows fly fishing. [You can read more about Andy in his 2020 profile story.](#)



Vice-Chair: Karen Ferrell-Ingram is a co-founder and former executive director of Eastern Sierra Land Trust based in Bishop, California. As a founding board member, projects coordinator, lands director and executive director, Karen worked on a variety of organizational, outreach, fundraising, and conservation projects, including accreditation in 2011. Focusing on the protection of wildlife habitats and working landscapes, Karen joined with her community, as well as state, federal and private foundation partners to preserve thousands of high priority acres.

Karen has also worked as a native plant propagator and restoration specialist. After her conservation easement property, where she resides, burned in 2015, Karen focuses on active management of her land and recovery after fire. She and her husband live in the scenic Eastern Sierra Nevada of California where Karen was

raised.



Robin Fitch is an environmental scientist who retired from the Department of the Navy in 2014 after more than 34 combined years of service as a uniformed officer and civilian employee. Her professional path evolved from being a National Park Service Interpretive Ranger, to an unrestricted line officer in the Navy, to education, and finally to work in environmental science and policy. In her final assignment she worked extensively on marine environmental issues such as ocean noise and coastal and marine spatial planning both internally with the Navy and externally with multiple federal agencies including the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the Marine Mammal Commission, the National Ocean Council, and the White House Council on Environmental Quality.

Since her retirement, Robin has engaged as a volunteer with several organizations, most notably the Jefferson Land Trust in Jefferson County, Washington, and the Blue Mountain Land Trust in in southeastern Washington and eastern Oregon. Robin served as JLT's Board President from 2017- 2020, and is currently serving as BMLT's Board President. She is also a rare plant monitor with the University of Washington. Robin holds a B.S. in Biology from Utah State University, a M.A and M.S. in Postsecondary Education and Biology from San Diego and Fresno State Universities respectively, and a PhD in Environmental Science and Policy from George Mason University. Robin and her husband Dan Brake live in Dayton, Washington and are parents to two young men.



Ellen Gass is the Texas Field Representative at The Conservation Fund. Her career has focused on land protection, stewardship, outdoor education, volunteer management, and trail construction and has included positions in Texas, South Carolina, New Mexico, and up and down the Appalachian Trail. Ellen holds a master's degree in Geography from Texas A&M University. An enthusiastic and avid backpacker, Ellen thru-hiked the Appalachian Trail following graduate school and continues to spend as much time as she can outside whether hiking, running, biking, or enjoying time on central Texas rivers and lakes.



Chris Jage is the Conservation Program Director for the Adirondack Land Trust in northern New York State where he works with staff in all aspects of land protection and stewardship including ALT's initial accreditation and subsequent renewal efforts. Prior to this, he served in land protection roles for the Adirondack Chapter of The Nature Conservancy and the New Jersey Conservation Foundation where he completed over 100 land transactions resulting in the protection of thousands of acres from city parks to an 11,000-acre nature preserve in the New Jersey Pine Barrens. He has served on the boards of the Rancocas Conservancy, South Jersey Land & Water Trust, Camden Greenways and Great Egg Harbor Scenic & Recreational River Council and in 2010, was awarded the Environmental Quality Award from the EPA for his conservation work in South Jersey.

Chris holds a B.S in Environmental Resource Management from Penn State, a M.S. in Crop and Soil Environmental Sciences from Virginia Tech and a Certificate in Non-Profit Management from LaSalle University. After work, Chris enjoys hiking, cross country skiing, and eventually paddling the cedar strip canoe that he is currently building.



Secretary: Heather Jobst has a deep connection with nature. Her love began on her family's farm and learning in her middle school science class (taught by the famous Chris Adkins) and searching wooded trails for spring ephemerals. As the Senior Land Protection Facilitator at Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation (INHF), Heather oversees the full gamut of INHF's land protection work including purchasing land for protection, restoring land through stewardship, and working with private landowners on conservation easements. Working in conservation in her home state is meaningful to Heather because she sees Iowa as a state that needs the work the

most. When not in the office or traveling throughout the state, you can find her in the garden.



Ann Johnston is the executive director of Forever Our Rivers, a foundation established to provide sustainable funding for river conservation. Ann has 15 years' experience in land and water conservation, previously serving as executive director of the Crested Butte Land Trust (CO), where she conserved wetlands and other ecologically significant lands, local ranches, and hiking and biking trails. During her tenure the organization tripled its operating capacity and achieved national accreditation. She completed several award-winning river restoration projects and was instrumental in bringing together diverse viewpoints.

Ann later served as the Russian River program manager for the Sonoma Land Trust (CA). She was responsible for creating a land and water conservation program to protect the natural processes of the river while meeting social and economic needs. Climate adaptation and the voices of underserved communities were key aspects of her conservation planning.

Ann is serving her second term as commissioner for the Commission. Prior to that she served an appointment by Colorado's governor to the Conservation Easement Oversight Commission. She holds a bachelor's in journalism and a master's in natural resources. When not working you will find Ann outside with her husband Dave, enjoying the rivers and mountains of Colorado's western slope.



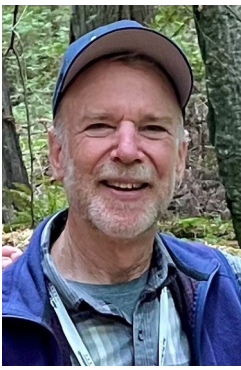
Andrew Kota is the executive director of Foothills Conservancy of North Carolina, and has nearly two decades of experience in resource protection and ecological research. Andrew is a resident of Morganton, NC, with his wife, two sons, four dogs, two horses, and a cat. He enjoys outdoor recreation with his family and his work is inspired by the possibility of making the world a better place for his children by preserving some of North Carolina's most important natural and cultural features.



Clint Miller joined The Conservation Fund in 2008 and serves as the Central Midwest Regional Director. In his regional capacity he oversees the Fund's work in Nebraska, Missouri, Iowa and Kansas as well as working in Wisconsin, Michigan, North and South Dakota. Clint is a seasoned conservation professional who has worked since 1988 in land conservation and wildlife management from Alaska and Florida to the Great Plains. He is the Fund's lead on implementation of the Midwest Habitat Mitigation Project, a \$22 million compensatory mitigation program for a 600-mile oil pipeline running across four states. He is a recognized expert negotiator and facilitator, working with federal, state and local agencies, corporations and families on complex real estate transactions, conservation easements, mitigation, public and private funding and finance.

Clint serves as a commissioner on the Land Trust Accreditation Commission and on Gathering Waters Conservancy's Land Trust Council in Wisconsin. He previously worked as a regional director for the Minnesota Land Trust and led a community-based conservation program for The Nature Conservancy in the Dakotas after spending 12 years as a wildlife biologist and land manager. In his spare time Clint enjoys traveling in domestically and abroad, hiking and exploring new places, and spending time with wife and adult children. He is a former structural and wildland firefighter and spent 15 years as an EMT.

Harry Pollack retired in 2022 as General Counsel at Save the Redwoods League,



based in San Francisco. In that role, Harry was responsible for anticipating, identifying and evaluating legal risks and analyzing legal issues, negotiating and drafting the League's land conservation and general business contracts, and assuring legal compliance. Harry worked with and supported each staff member to enable them to better accomplish their work while serving as a member of the leadership team and advising the Board of Directors. Prior to the League, Harry had a private law practice representing land trusts throughout the State of California.

Harry continues to advise Save the Redwoods League as an outside counsel. He also volunteers on the Board of Directors of the California Council of Land Trusts and on its policy committee. His prior roles with LTA include serving as a (board) Member of Terraforma, on the Standards (and Practices) Advisory Team, and the Legal Defense Advisory Council.

Harry lives in Berkeley, California with his wife Joanne; they very much enjoy having their two daughters, their partners and grandchild also living in the SF Bay Area. Hiking and biking in the beautiful hills of the East Bay and Marin County are Harry's favorite, routine outdoor activities.



Treasurer: Michael Pope was the executive director of the Greenbelt Land Trust, an accredited land trust in the mid-Willamette Valley of Oregon, for ten years. He was president and secretary of the board for the Oregon Coalition of Land Trusts. He has worked for the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife as the coordinator of the Oregon Conservation Strategy and managed the agency's wildlife mitigation program. Michael was a faculty research associate at Oregon State University conducting research on greater sage-grouse, mountain quail and blue and ruffed grouse. He also worked as a professional boatbuilder in Washington, Maine, Maryland, and Alaska from 1976-1987. Michael holds a B.A. in history from the University of North Carolina and a B.S., M.S. and PH.D. in wildlife science from Oregon State University. [You can read more about Michael in his 2020 profile story.](#)



Chair: Catherine Rawson is the executive director of Northwest Connecticut Land Conservancy, chair of the Connecticut Land Conservation Council, council member of the Land Trust Alliance Conservation Defense Advisory Council, and a Litchfield Hills Greenprint Steering Committee member. A graduate of Bates College and Vermont Law School, where she studied environmental law, Catherine also has a master's degree in environmental management from the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies. Prior to joining Northwest Connecticut Land Conservancy, she served as an assistant attorney general for the State of Connecticut. [You can read more about Catherine in her 2020 profile story.](#)



Andrea M. Reese Andrea M. Reese serves as the Public Conservation Funding Director for the Potomac Conservancy. She is also principal of an indie consulting company, providing land trusts and conservation agencies with capacity building, grant writing, and project management. Previously, she directed a land conservation team in Northern Virginia, worked to acquire regional park lands, stewarded easements in Virginia's Piedmont and Shenandoah Valley, sought grants for Southeast and Mid-Atlantic battlefields, and helped preserve farmland in Connecticut. Andrea holds two master's degrees from Duke University and a bachelor's degree from Pomona College. She was raised in the Palouse region of Idaho and lives in Arlington, Virginia with her husband and young son.

Commissioner Emeritus Katharine Roser founded La Plata Open Space Conservancy, a land trust in Durango, Colorado. As its executive director, she completed more than 200 conservation projects and successfully guided them through the accreditation process. She was one of the founders of the Colorado





Coalition of Land Trusts and served as its president for several years, as well as served on the Land Trust Alliance's National Land Trust Council in the 1990s.



Commissioner Emeritus Bruce Runnels practiced law for 10 years in Indiana, then worked 34 years for The Nature Conservancy (TNC), retiring in 2019. During his tenure with TNC, Bruce served as New Jersey State Director, Eastern, Midwestern and Western Region Directors, Chief Conservation Officer, and Chief Risk Officer; and, he led several organization-wide initiatives, including efforts to re-frame TNC's conservation approach, codify TNC's Core Values, and secure first-time accreditation from the Land Trust Accreditation Commission. Bruce currently lives in Fort Collins, Colorado, with his wife, Katherine. [You can read more about Bruce in is 2021 profile story.](#)



Kay Sohl has provided training and consultation for Executive Directors, CFOs, and Boards of Directors of over 7,500 nonprofit organizations throughout the United States. Kay focuses her work on organizational assessment and capacity building strategies, financial sustainability, Board financial oversight, and the challenges of nonprofit accounting and financial reporting.

Kay has worked extensively with land trusts and is co-author of the Land Trust Alliance standards and practices curriculum, Financial Management of Land Trusts. She worked with LTA to develop guidance and resources to support the implementation of LTA's revised Standards and Practices. Kay worked closely with the Land Trust Accreditation Commission on the development of the 2018 Finance Indicator Elements and Requirements. She serves as lead finance trainer/consultant for the annual Wentworth Leadership Program and is a frequent LTA webinar presenter.

Kay founded and lead TACS (Technical Assistance for Community Services) now known as the Nonprofit Association of Oregon, the Northwest's largest and most comprehensive capacity-building resource for community-based nonprofit organizations. She is an Oregon Licensed Public Accountant, active in the Oregon Society of CPAs, and an active nonprofit Board member and volunteer.



Becky Thornton is the President/CEO of the Dutchess Land Conservancy in New York. She is a dedicated conservationist who is passionate about her work and about the DLC's mission. When she first joined the DLC team in 1989, she loved the idea of working for a grassroots organization that was building momentum during a time when conservation wasn't well known. At that time 2,500 acres had been protected; today, the DLC has preserved over 46,000 acres of land.

Becky has had the pleasure of working with hundreds of landowners to plan for and preserve their land, negotiating hundreds of conservation deals, and helping to raise millions of dollars to protect working farms and public conservation land. Her love for the outdoors, her deep sense of commitment, and care for the people she works with,

combined with her background, give her a unique perspective that helps connect people with the importance of land.

The DLC was one of the first land trusts in the country to become accredited by the Land Trust Accreditation Commission in 2007, consistently striving for organizational excellence, and successfully renewing ever since. Becky proudly served on the TerraFirma Members Committee, and its Advisory Council, is a member/past Chairman/Vice Chairman of the Land Trust Alliance New York Advisory Council, and has served on a number of other boards and committees throughout the years.

You can often hear Becky say that she loves her job because she can feel good about her work every day as she heads home.



Shane Wellendorf is the Land Conservancy Director with Tall Timbers Research Station and Land Conservancy, an accredited land trust in North Florida and South Georgia. He has been part of Tall Timbers since 1996, working as a wildlife biologist for many years before transitioning to the Land Conservancy in 2011. Shane is involved with conservation easement project development, stewardship of existing conservation easements, and extension services to landowners. He serves on the Boards of the Partnership for Gulf Coast Land Conservation, the Alliance of Florida Land Trusts, and the Association of Georgia Land Trusts. Before joining the Commission, he served on the Land Trust Standards Advisory Team. Shane enjoys exploring the Red Hills region and beyond with his wife, two daughters, and three bird-hunting dogs. [You can learn more about Shane in his 2021 profile story.](#)



Mark Weston has been an independent real estate appraiser since 1986, specializing in valuation of conservation easements encumbering private land. After a stint as the State of Colorado's first Director of the Division of Conservation, he retired in September 2019. Today, he consults on matters related to qualified appraisals, qualified appraisers, and conservation of land & water rights. Mark co-authored the Alliance's Tax Benefits & Appraisals of Conservation Projects, 2007. He is a contributing author to the Water Rights Handbook for Colorado Conservation Professionals, Colorado Water Trust, 2011, and Appraising Easements: Guidelines for Valuation of Land Conservation and Historic Preservation Easements, 3rd ed., Land Trust Alliance & National Trust for Historic Preservation, 1999. Weston was an appraisal instructor for the International Right of Way Association from 1991 - 2016. He assisted in development of and was an instructor of the five-day conservation easement valuation seminar developed by the American Society of Farm Managers and Rural Appraisers, and the Appraisal Institute in 2006. Mark was an Appraisal Qualifications Board Certified USPAP Instructor from 2004-2020. Weston volunteered as a member of the Colorado Board of Real Estate Appraisers (1999 - 2005), the Colorado Conservation Easement Oversight Commission (2008 - 2011), and the Cherry Creek Basin Water Quality Authority (2001 - 2008). In the early 1990s, he worked on the citizen-initiated campaign to institute a sales and use tax in Douglas County, Colorado that has now protected over 63,000 acres in one of the nation's fastest-growing counties. He was also one of the founders of the Colorado Coalition of Land Trusts and served as its president for several years. Mark graduated from The Colorado College in 1974 and obtained a Master's in Library and Information Science from the University of Denver in 1978.