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I. Statement of Policy

The Land Trust Accreditation Commission inspires excellence, promotes public trust, and ensures permanence in the conservation of open lands by recognizing land trust organizations that meet rigorous quality standards and that strive for continuous improvement. The Commission publishes a list of land trusts that have been awarded the accreditation seal. It also publishes aggregate data about application success rates. It does not release the names of, or individual information about, institutions that apply for but are not awarded accreditation.

II. Commission Decision

The Commission makes decisions on each application that has proceeded through the complete review process. The Commission's decision is based on a review team's evaluation of the applicant's compliance with *Land Trust Standards and Practices* (Standards), the accreditation indicators drawn from the Standards and program requirements. ("Program requirements" here and throughout this policy are defined as those identified in the Commission's *Applicant Handbook*, *Requirements Manual*, and other published material). The Commission may also consider an applicant's disregard of a non-accreditation indicator if it could put the applicant organization at risk or threaten the credibility of the accreditation program. The Commission can award or not award first-time accreditation or can table an application for first-time accreditation pending additional information. It can renew or not renew accreditation or award conditional accreditation at renewal.

[A. Accreditation Awarded](#)

Land trusts that demonstrate acceptable compliance with the Standards and program requirements are awarded accreditation or renewed accreditation. The term of accreditation is for a period of five years for the first three consecutive terms and is seven years thereafter.

Decisions to award or renew accreditation may be accompanied by expectations for improvement (EFI) when the Commission determines that the land trust must take action over its accredited term to improve compliance. If an accredited land trust submits an application for renewal, it must document how it met each EFI over its term and that its current practice is compliant.

[B. Accreditation Not Awarded](#)

The Commission may make a decision to not award or not renew accreditation in the following circumstances:

- The applicant does not comply with, has not complied during its accredited term with, refuses to comply with, or has demonstrated the intent not to comply with the Standards and program requirements.
- The applicant has falsified documents.
- The applicant has not provided sufficient evidence of its compliance with the Standards and program requirements at the time of application and would need substantial additional time or resources to correct areas of noncompliance identified during the accreditation process.
- The applicant shows disregard for a non-accreditation indicator that could put the applicant at risk or threaten the credibility of the accreditation program.
- The Commission can document other compliance failures that would put the applicant at risk or would threaten the credibility of the accreditation program.
- A decision to accredit or renew accreditation would jeopardize the Commission's integrity.

[C. Table \(First Time Accreditation Only\)](#)

The Commission may table an application for first-time accreditation when it needs an applicant to provide specific information or to take a specific action before the Commission can make a final decision. The decision to table is at the discretion of the Commission. If tabled, the applicant must provide information or take action within a timeframe specified by the Commission. The Commission will establish a timeframe specific to the information or action required, but in no case will the timeframe exceed 12 months.

[D. Conditional Accreditation \(Renewal Only\)](#)

Conditional accreditation allows the Commission to recognize the work of an accredited land trust while confirming that all

accredited land trusts meet the program requirements. The Commission may award conditional accreditation at renewal when an accredited land trust has not yet demonstrated it is in full compliance with the Standards or program requirements. Conditional accreditation may be awarded when the area of noncompliance is readily resolvable, specific steps can be taken early in the accredited term to allow the accredited land trust to demonstrate compliance before revocation is considered, and the Commission finds that confirming compliance during a conditional period will not put the accredited land trust or the credibility of the accreditation program at risk. The following circumstances are examples that may lead to conditional accreditation at renewal.

- An accredited land trust that failed to implement the Standards or program requirements over its accredited term and/or did not demonstrate at time of application for renewal that it met an EFI but, demonstrated that it took significant steps through the renewal process to address the noncompliance.
- An accredited land trust was unable to show compliance the Standards and/or program requirements but is likely to be able to provide confirmation of compliance during a conditional period.
- An accredited land trust's failure to fully meet the Standards or program requirements would put the applicant, its conservation land, or the credibility of the accreditation program at risk and a conditional period could minimize the risk(s).

When granted conditional accreditation at renewal, the land trust is provided with notice of the specific actions or evidence needed and a timetable for when materials must be submitted. A land trust that fails to satisfy the conditions and confirm compliance may have its accreditation revoked according to the Disciplinary Action Policy and Procedures.

III. Notification and Appeal

When accreditation is not awarded or not renewed, applicants are provided with information on the reason(s) for the decision. If accreditation is not awarded or renewed, the Commission may establish a waiting period before the applicant can reapply. If an accredited land trust applies for renewal and is not awarded renewed accreditation, its license to use the trademarked accreditation seal will be terminated. To reapply, it must complete the application used by those seeking first-time accreditation and pay all accreditation fees applicable to first-time applicants. The land trust would need to be awarded three consecutive accreditation terms before it could be awarded a seven-year term. Accreditation fees are not refundable. A Commission decision to not award or not renew accreditation or to revoke accreditation may be appealed by the applicant. For more information about the appeals process, see the Appeals Policy and Procedures.

IV. Withdrawal

An applicant can choose to withdraw from the accreditation review process at any time or may cause the application to be deemed to be withdrawn for failure to meet deadlines as detailed in the Commission's Policy on Deadlines and Exceptions for Catastrophes. See the policy for additional details.

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