The Commission is managed by a professional staff operating from a central office in Saratoga Springs, NY, and field offices in Washington and Massachusetts. Land Trusts are encouraged to contact the Help Desk with questions about the program.

Melissa Kalvestrand, Executive Director

Melissa has served in many roles since joining the Commission in November 2009. Most recently, she served as Deputy Director, overseeing the accreditation review process and facilitating the accreditation decisions for over 100 land trusts each year. She partnered in developing, interpreting, reviewing and revising the accreditation requirements and maintaining the Requirements Manual. She also co-facilitated the 2017 revisions to Land Trust Standards and Practices.

Effective January 2020, Melissa was named the executive director after an external search process. She looks forward to leveraging the successes of the first decade of the accreditation program and of accredited land trusts into next phase of the Commission’s work.

Melissa has a master’s degree in biodiversity, conservation and policy from the University at Albany and a bachelor’s degree in biology from Cornell University.

Email | (518) 587-3143, ext. 214

Jennifer Brady-Connor, Associate Program Director

Jennifer has worked with the Commission since March 2008 on almost every aspect of the accreditation program. As Associate Program Director, Jennifer manages the application deadline and review schedule in addition to reviewing applications. Jennifer previously worked for the Land Trust Alliance, helping develop the 2004 revised Land Trust Standards and Practices and the land trust accreditation program in addition to providing technical assistance to land trusts. Jennifer worked many years for a local land trust and other nonprofits to address wetland and water quality issues, she has served on a number of nonprofit boards, and she has served and operated two small businesses. In addition to earning a bachelor’s degree in biology from the University at Albany, she has a certificate in project management from Empire State College’s School of Graduate Studies.

Email | (518) 587-3143, ext. 209

Greg Good, Senior Review Specialist
Greg joined the Commission in 2012. As the former executive director of North Olympic Land Trust in Washington, he became familiar with accreditation while leading that organization through the process. He began his land conservation career in 2005 as a Colorado Conservation Fellow, and has education and experience in the fields of environmental science, regional planning, natural resources management, and finance.

Email | (360) 797-1292

Stacy Girmindl, Program Coordinator

Stacy joined the Commission in March 2015. As program associate she is responsible for office management, assisting in applicant tracking and correspondence along with coordinating Commission meetings. Prior to joining the Commission, she has worked in both the non-profit and corporate sectors as a marketing associate, event planner and executive coordinator. Stacy holds a bachelor’s degree in communications from the College of Saint Rose.

Email | 518-587-3143

Lisa McCarthy, Communications Liaison

Lisa joined the Commission in January 2020. As communications liaison she is responsible for communicating messaging about the commission across a variety of platforms. Prior to joining the Commission, she has worked for the Peconic Land Trust, a historic museum farm and a NY state based advocacy organization. Lisa holds a bachelor’s degree in english and art history from Stony Brook University and is certificed in graphic design and digital arts from the New School.

Email | (518) 587-3143, ext. 215
Valerie joined the Commission in 2012. She previously served as executive director of the Saginaw Basin Land Conservancy in Michigan where she managed $4 million dollars in grant funding to purchase conservation easements. Prior to that she served in various roles with the Bay Area Chamber of Commerce, Alliance for Bay County Schools, United Way, and VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America). Valerie also served as a consultant and facilitator with Crystal Planning Solutions, and was on the boards of several nonprofits and a private foundation. Her educational background includes a master’s degree in quality management.

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Jessica Whittaker, Senior Review Specialist

Jessica is a licensed attorney, who practiced in primarily the areas of real estate and estate planning law. Prior to entering into private practice, she was the executive director of the Sippican Lands Trust, Inc. (SLT), where she successfully guided staff through the accreditation process during the pilot program. Jessica also worked in land protection for both SLT and the Buzzards Bay Coalition, Inc. She has served on several nonprofit boards and committees, and served as Commissioner from 2009 to 2012.

Email | (508) 763-2053