News of the inaugural accreditation announcements has been traveling throughout the country. We invite you to read some of the recent press clippings on accredited land trusts and other news from the accreditation program, including the release of a new Guidance Document and the election of a new commissioner.

**New Guidance Document Released**

The Commission released a new Guidance Document today focused on independent appraisals. The Guidance Document provides information on how the Commission evaluates applicant compliance with the independent appraisal requirements of indicator practices 9.J. Purchasing Land and 9.K. Selling Land and Easements. While the Commission will evaluate applicant compliance against each complete indicator practice, land trusts have had repeated questions about independent appraisals. Download the Guidance Document.

The Commission occasionally publishes Guidance Documents to help applicants interpret specific indicator practices drawn from Land Trust Standards and Practices. See the complete list of Guidance Documents.

**Jean Hocker Named to Commission**

We are pleased to announce the election of Jean Hocker as a new commissioner to fill an existing vacant seat on the Commission. Jean, president emeritus of the Land Trust Alliance, was the Alliance’s president from 1987 to 2002, where, among many other things, she oversaw the initial development of Land Trust Standards and Practices. She is now president of Conservation Service Company, LLC, where she provides consulting services that draw on more than 25 years of land conservation and nonprofit experience. From 1980 to 1987, she led the Jackson Hole Land Trust (WY) as its founding executive director. Jean applied to serve on the Commission as part of our open call for volunteer commissioners this past summer and we are pleased to have her skills on the Commission. We expect to announce the election of another commissioner early in 2009 to replace a seat being vacated by Marc Smiley when his term ends.

“The accreditation program is a vital step in the maturing of land trusts, critical for their long term success and credibility,” says Jean. “I am just delighted to be elected to the Commission and look forward to both learning from and contributing to the program.”

**Application Tip**

As part of a complete application, applicants for accreditation must submit their most recent Form 990 and the Form 990 from three years ago. The Commission expects to receive the unredacted copies of these forms that include the names of substantial contributors to the land trust as we use this information to evaluate several practices. We understand that many land trusts keep this information confidential. The Commission is committed to maintaining the confidentiality of Forms 990 like all other material submitted by applicants. Please see the Commission’s Confidentiality Policy for more information.

**Register for 2009**

If your land trust would like to apply for accreditation, you must complete an online registration form to hold your place for 2009. Registration is the required first step in applying for accreditation in 2009. The registration system allows land trusts to sign up for a specific application due date in 2009, enabling the land trust and Commission to plan ahead for next year. An electronic payment of a $750 nonrefundable, nontransferable fee is due upon registration.

In thinking about when to apply in 2009, consider when your busiest time of year is and when you would be able to devote a considerable amount of time to preparing your application. Note that organizations that apply in rounds 2 and 3 of 2009 will not have decisions in time for announcements at Rally 2009: The National Land Conservation Conference in Portland, OR.

Use the links in the sidebar to learn more about registration details. And as always, call us! The Commission staff is here to answer your questions about the accreditation program.