

You may know [Coastal Prairie Conservancy](#), CPC, by their former name, Katy Prairie Conservancy, but their rebranding more accurately captures their expanded mission of land conservation in the Western Gulf region of Texas. While the Katy Prairie will always remain a critical area for conservation, CPC protects lands that stretch from Katy to the Gulf Coast. Coastal prairie lands are critical for the health of coastal lands. Prairie grasses absorb and hold back floodwaters, and the wetlands are a diverse ecosystem.

We caught up with Coastal Prairie Conservancy to find out how becoming an accredited land trust has helped them grow and expand their mission.

**Q: How has Coastal Prairie Conservancy benefited from being an accredited organization?**

**A:** Meeting the standards and practices established by the Commission ensures our landowners, donors, board, volunteers, and the public that they can depend on our efficiency, integrity, and effectiveness. The adoption of these high standards has aided our organization in becoming more organized and offering increased transparency about how we function. Working with the Commission on the various metrics has allowed the CPC staff to learn from Commission staff as well as other land trusts on practices and procedures that improve organizational operations and policies.

Becoming accredited and then renewed provided access to Land Trust Alliance funding that expanded our ability to provide services to our community. Alliance funds continue to serve as a stimulus/leverage for other funding, but more importantly provide opportunities to explore new initiatives and take risks. Many of CPC's past Alliance grants have resulted in new programs, projects, and policies that have strengthened our organization, expanded our reach into the community, and encouraged further collaboration. The process also introduced us to the practices, policies, and procedures of land trusts around the country which meant that we were able to implement refinements to what we were already doing as well as undertake new projects based on the lessons learned from our colleagues. As an accredited land trust, we have been invited to serve on various panels and collaborative leadership initiatives.

**Q: What did CPC consider before deciding to renew accreditation?**

**A:** We thought about the cost, the time, and the resources needed to prepare a successful application. We never thought about not renewing because for CPC the benefits far outweighed the cost.

**Q: What surprised you about going through the renewal process?**

**A:** We did not experience any surprises, but were pleased that we did not experience any deficiencies or red flags in preparing our application. The process is rigorous so going through it really makes the board and staff identify practices, procedures, and policies that need to be in place in advance of the renewal process.

**Q: What resources were most helpful as CPC prepared for was in the renewal process?**

**A:** The Commission staff was extraordinarily helpful and responsive. The Commission website provided straightforward information and clear instructions. The online interface was helpful in keeping the process organized, as we were able to answer questions and upload documents as we were ready, and come back later to items that needed additional input. It was helpful that CPC has a complete set of digital records for our transactions, as these were readily accessible.

**Q: What has been the biggest success that you attribute to being accredited?**



*The Coastal Prairie Conservancy staff during the renewal process, Indiangrass Preserve, Waller, Texas*



*Children enjoying and exploring nature, Indiangrass Preserve, Waller, Texas*

**A:** Our biggest success is the credibility we have gained and how it has enabled us to take on a more expansive role in the region – we now focus on nine counties instead of three and have expanded conservations lands by more than 2/5ths our original size.

**Q: Anything else you would like to share?**

**A:** We really were aided by not only the Commission staff, but also the Alliance staff – all of whom are always willing to step in with advice, resources, and support. It was rewarding to look back to transactions where CPC took the time and effort to comply with Alliance *Standards and Practices* and to achieve a successful renewal.

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Thank you to Coastal Prairie Conservancy for sharing their accreditation story. **Are you interested in sharing your story with the Commission? Please contact us at [info@landtrustaccreditation.org](mailto:info@landtrustaccreditation.org).**