

As one of the only regional land trusts in northeast Wisconsin, [Northeast Wisconsin Land Trust](#) works to protect natural lands over a 12-county territory. This area encompasses a majority of the Green Bay watershed, one of the largest freshwater estuaries in the world and the source of one-third of the surface water flowing into Lake Michigan. Since 1996 they have preserved more than 6,000 acres which includes forests, wetlands and miles of shoreline.

We caught up with the staff of Northeast Wisconsin Land Trust to talk about how being accredited has impacted their organization.

Q: How has Northeast Wisconsin Land Trust (NEWLT) benefited from being an accredited organization?



A: NEWLT has benefited from being accredited in a myriad of ways. We have internal processes and policies that we can depend on. Knowing that we are doing our work well has given us confidence to take on higher profile projects.

Q: What did NEWLT consider before deciding to renew accreditation?

A: We didn't even need to consider whether we would renew our accreditation. We realized such a great benefit from being accredited the first time; we simply put it in our strategic plan and committed the resources we would need to make sure the renewal process would go well.

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

A: We were pleasantly surprised by how terrific the new on-line application was. It really was a one-stop-shop for everything. It's not only an application, but a tool for organizing the process and helping the team work together. On top of that, it's easy to use (for people with all levels of technological skill) and works seamlessly.

We were also surprised to see the emphasis of the application shift a bit. It was the perfect balance between continuing to vet the core practices from first-time accreditation and adding in new elements for renewal of accreditation.

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

A: The on-line portal was not only a tool but a resource, providing direction and links to the specific information we needed. And, of course, the [Applicant Handbook](#) and [Requirements Manual](#) are valuable. We use the *Requirements Manual* as a reference alongside *Standards and Practices* in our daily work. They are the first place we go if we have a question about the how to do something.

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

A: Confidence and a commitment to continual improvement have become part of our organizational culture. Accreditation has given us the confidence to take on large-scale projects where our partners and funders know that they are working with an organization that's committed to doing things right. And our community as a whole has recognized accreditation as a mark of distinction. Instantly, people know that the land trust is truly dedicated to perpetual

conservation.

Enhancing our reputation in the community has brought in more resources and has helped to enable conservation projects that have really made an impact.

Q: Anything else you would like to share?

A: Since the inception of the Accreditation program, we knew becoming accredited was a priority for our organization. But, we also knew the process would take time and energy. We spent several years making updates and getting training so that when we applied, we would be able to go through the process more smoothly. We chose to act once we had a good understanding of the process and we had most of the major elements in place.

Thank you to Northeast Wisconsin Land Trust for sharing their accreditation story. **Are you interested in sharing your story with the Commission? Please contact us at info@landtrustaccreditation.org.**



Klika Grasslands, NEWLT's first protected land in Outagamie County. This conservation easement protects a beautifully restored prairie by landowners Mark and Cindy Backhaus. Photo by Danica Oudeans.



One of NEWLT's latest conservation easements, Maple Creek Conservancy, features northern mesic forests.