

Have you ever wondered who the commissioners are and what they do? **We caught up with Commissioner Tom Reed** and asked him five questions about his experience as a volunteer commissioner and about his love of the land.

Meet Commissioner Tom Reed. Tom has served for fifteen years as a board member of the Black Swamp Conservancy in Pemberville, Ohio, including terms as treasurer and president. He joined the Accreditation Commission in 2016. As a CPA, Tom spent 10 years at Ernst & Young as an auditor and 10 years as the vice president for finance at the Public Broadcasting Foundation of NW Ohio. He also has 25 years of tenure as the chief financial officer of a closely held investment company specializing in venture capital and real estate. He has also served on the boards of the Toledo Ballet Association, Alliance Francaise de Toledo, Torch Club of Toledo and is the Toledo Chapter officer of La Chaine des Rotisseurs and Les Chavaliers du Tastevin. He holds a Bachelor of Business Administration and an MBA in finance, Master of Taxation from the University of Toledo. He enjoys bicycling through the countryside, hiking and puttering around his lake home.



Q: What drives your passion for land conservation?

A: I grew up on the outskirts of a small town in Northwest Ohio. A couple of hundred yards from our house was a small river and two city reservoirs. I spent many summer hours along the creek banks examining the plants, and in the winter the river was my ice rink. I learned to identify poison ivy at an early age! I participated in scouting for years, tent camping, attending summer camp, and learning about nature. As I got older, I took backpacking/camping trips and paddled through national and state parks whenever and wherever possible. I took classes on tree and plant, wildflower, and mushroom identification. To this day I cannot resist a greenhouse that specializes in native plants. I even played golf for about twenty years, not for the game, but to be outside. Currently, bike rides through farm country in Northwest Ohio and long walks through our local park system or on nature trails in Florida satisfy my need to be outside. About 25 years ago, I began to volunteer for our local land trust, which at that time, was an all-volunteer land trust, becoming a board member and officer for 20 of those years and helping the land trust grow exponentially. The power of a land trust to preserve special outdoor spaces became apparent. I simply did not want the kinds of places that gave me such joy throughout my life to disappear.

Q: What inspired you to become a volunteer commissioner?

A: After 20 years as board member, executive committee member and officer of our local land trust, I termed off the board for the final time. But land trusts were still part of my DNA. I joined a small group of former board members as a member of the advisory committee. The Commission was a way to have a larger impact on land conservation throughout the country and to learn how other land trusts operate. Land trusts are my way to create a permanent legacy to benefit others, now and in the future. I also have a passion for not-for-profit organizations. I spent 10 years as a vice president of a chain of NPR stations and one public television station, which were some of the most emotionally rewarding times of my working days. After my NPR/PBS days, I worked as a CFO/Treasurer for a holding company that placed easements on large tracts of land in Colorado. The preservation of those landscapes inspired my involvement in the land trust community.

Q: As a commissioner, you have the chance to travel around the country for Commission meetings. Which place have you enjoyed spending time in the most?

A: During my tenure as a commissioner, most meetings outside of Saratoga have been in urban areas. Seattle was my favorite. The conference venue was excellent, the tour of the preserve on Bainbridge Island scratched my outdoor itch and Seattle was a pleasant big city experience. We spent a few additional days visiting museums, walking through parks, and absorbing the local culture. The only drawback was the cold, damp weather (remember I spend winters in Florida, so I am not acclimated to the cold).

Q: Do you have any advice to someone considering becoming a volunteer commissioner?

A: The commissioner's role is an ongoing and substantial commitment of time and energy. Having a passion for land trusts and land preservation is very important. Your fellow commissioners and accreditation reviews are unrivaled learning

opportunities. Guaranteed, you will learn something new about how to properly operate a land trust and will discover no two land trusts are alike.

Q: What is your favorite way to spend time in nature?

A: At this stage of life, trail hikes, bird watching (especially in Florida where birds of many species spend their winter), and summer on the bike through Northwest Ohio farm country. And of course, at the lake, watching the plant and animal activity in the marsh change with the time of day and the seasons.

Thanks to Tom for sharing his story with us! At the end of the year Tom will finish his time with the Commission. We want to thank him for his dedication and service to the Commission. His thoughtful contributions and financial expertise were invaluable to our work. Thank you Tom.

About the Commission

The Land Trust Accreditation Commission's main office is located in Saratoga, New York. There are five full-time staff who work out of this office and three staff members who work remotely (though right now, we're all working remotely!). The staff are responsible for the day-to-day operations of the Commission and are responsible for processing and reading applications as well as promoting accreditation. [Click here for more detailed information about the role of the Commission.](#)

The Commission is governed by a diverse board of 18 volunteer commissioners involved in land conservation and nonprofit management experts from around the country. Commissioners volunteer their expertise to verify that a land trust is implementing specific accreditation indicator elements from Land Trusts Standards and Practices. [Click here to learn more about the commissioners, including a commissioner job description.](#)

Commissioners and the Commission review staff work together to review accreditation applications. Several times a year, Commission meetings are held to make decisions on applications.