

If your land trust is considering applying for first-time accreditation, now is the best time to start planning. In our "Be Prepared" series, we're exploring how land trusts can ensure they are eligible to apply and have strategies to show they are meeting the requirements. In this second edition we're looking at the importance of annually monitoring conservation easements and inspecting fee properties.

Need a refresher on what resources all land trusts considering accreditation should have on hand? Read and review:

- [Is my Land Trust Ready to Apply for First-Time Accreditation](#)
- [Part I, Be Prepared: Review Your Policies](#)
- [Part II, Be Prepared: The Importance of Annual Monitoring and Inspections](#)
- [Part III, Be Prepared: Recordkeeping](#)
- [Part IV, Be Prepared: Don't Forget the Date](#)
- [Part V, Be Prepared: Annual Financial Evaluations](#)



Pre-Application Requirements

To meet the pre-application requirements, your land trust must be able to show it has monitored its conservation easements and inspected its fee properties once per calendar year for the last three years prior to the pre-application. For example, a pre-application due in February 2024 must show monitoring and inspections occurred in 2021, 2022, and 2023. The Commission verifies compliance by evaluating the dates on the Land Conservation Project List submitted with the pre-application and by reviewing a sample of reports in the targeted verification and project documentation sections of the application.

If your land trust will not have three years of monitoring and inspection documentation, then plan on waiting to apply for first-time accreditation. You can use this time to continue to build documentation of compliance with the accreditation requirements. Requiring three years allows the Commission to confirm the Standards related to monitoring, inspections, enforcement, and ownership challenges. *(If there are isolated gaps in annual monitoring or inspections, the pre-application does allow an opportunity to explain the circumstances for each to help the Commission understand if the land trust meets the pre-application requirements.)*

Resources

We commonly refer to requirements from the Commission's *Requirements Manual* and *Land Trust Standards and Practices* published by the Alliance. Remember, accreditation uses indicator elements from the Standards as the basis for the requirements. It's helpful to have a copy of the [Requirements Manual](#) handy and to log into your [Alliance Resource Center](#) account before clicking the links below.

Conservation Easement Monitoring

Review on the Resource Center:

- [Practice Element 11C2](#)
- Take the course, [Learn Practice Element 11C2: Conservation Easement Monitoring](#)
- [See an example of a conservation easement monitoring report](#)

Review in the *Requirements Manual*: Stewardship I.I

Conservation Property Inspections

Review on the Resource Center:

- [Practice Element 12C2](#)

- [See an example of an annual preserve stewardship monitoring report](#)

Review in the *Requirements Manual*: Stewardship I.2

The Land Conservation Project List (LCPL)

Your land trust should be monitoring each conservation easement and inspecting each fee property on an annual basis. In the pre-application section of the accreditation application, land trusts are required to provide an LCPL (this is true at first-time application and renewal). Your LCPL allows the Commission to:

- Select projects and targeted verification that accompany your application.
- Confirm that the land trust meets the requirements for easement monitoring, baseline documentation reports, fee property inspections, and/or fee property management plans (as described in the *Requirements Manual*).
- Determine how many holdings your land trust has in counting towards the minimum stewardship and defense funding requirements for accreditation.

When you're planning to apply for first-time accreditation, one way to be prepared is to create and regularly update the LCPL. The template LCPL provided by the Commission is an excel spreadsheet. The spreadsheet has integrated instructions, and we also provide a separate instruction sheet and a [comprehensive video tutorial](#). Some land trusts use their LCPL to track their portfolio of projects and update the report over time with new monitoring/inspection dates and with new projects. By familiarizing yourself and working with the template, you'll be ready to provide a complete LCPL at the time of pre-application.

Some land trusts maintain a database for their projects. If so, your land trust does not have to transfer information to the Commission's template, you are welcome to output an LCPL report. However, you must ensure that your data is presented in an Excel spreadsheet and contains the same columns as indicated on the Commission's LCPL template.

- [See the template and learn more about the LCPL](#)