

The Commissioners are a diverse group of individuals involved in land conservation around the country. **We caught up with Commissioner Andrea Reese** and asked her five questions about her experience as a volunteer commissioner and about her love of the land.

Meet Commissioner Andrea Reese

Andrea currently serves as the Public Conservation Funding Director for the Potomac Conservancy. She is also principal of an indie consulting company, providing land trusts and conservation agencies with capacity building, grant writing, and project management. Previously, she directed a land conservation team in Northern Virginia, worked to acquire regional park lands, stewarded easements in Virginia's Piedmont and Shenandoah Valley, sought grants for Southeast and Mid-Atlantic battlefields, and helped preserve farmland in Connecticut.



Andrea holds two master's degrees from Duke University and a bachelor's degree from Pomona College. She was raised in the Palouse region of Idaho and lives in Arlington, Virginia with her husband and young son.

Q: What inspires you to work in land conservation?

A: I grew up in a region with a very distinctive landscape, and that sense of place has always been a factor for me. Plus, the sheer range of critical environmental issues that land conservation can address made it stand out to me in my early career as a way to have an impact. In recent years, I've been able to take my son hiking where I hiked as a child – places that are now protected by my hometown's land trust – and to bring that full circle is more meaningful than I could put into words.

Q: Why did you want to become a volunteer commissioner?

A: When I joined, I was in the market for more professional growth. Also, I came into the land conservation field right as it was becoming paramount to hold ourselves accountable (to keep the federal tax incentives), so becoming a commissioner was a chance to contribute to the high standards and integrity that are essential to this work. But I admit, my first experience of accreditation was challenging! The small land trust I'd just joined had undergone complete turnover of its staff during the renewal application, and it became a trial by fire for us new staff. We were so grateful for the Commission staff and their guidance. I've tried to keep that perspective on how the process feels from the applicant side.

Q: What has been the most surprising thing about serving on the commission?

A: Probably how often I change my mind during discussions. Each meeting comes with this beautifully thorough packet of information, and I get to nerd out about conservation work across the country while I read these detailed matters up for decision. I think I've settled on a position, but often, the insights I hear from other commissioners end up changing and expanding my views. When we disagree, that's fine and welcome – differences of opinion are left in the meeting room. It's an incredibly supportive culture because we choose to make it that way.

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

A: Every voice and perspective around the table at the Commission carries weight. I had somehow thought, before a colleague suggested I apply, that all the commissioners were board members or executive directors or lawyers – and I've



come up through the program side of land conservation. Well, I was mistaken â€“ it takes all of us! If you have a perspective to contribute and are willing to put in the time, consider joining this team. It's my favorite professional experience I've ever had.

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

A: It's hard to choose! Hiking is my go-to for most of my life and such a great way to appreciate new places. I've been out in a kayak on three continents and that's pretty fun. Where I live now, in a major metropolitan area, I love exploring parks â€“ there are all sorts of hidden gems. Lately, I think I might have to start traveling to see more eclipses!

Thanks to Andrea for sharing her story with us!

- *Image 1: Andrea with her husband and son, gathered for the 2024 eclipse in the Texas Hill Country*
- *Image 2: Andrea and her son at a Frist Day hike by the Potomac River*
- *Image 3: Andrea hiking above Lake Pend Oreille, Idaho*



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.