

BY Caity Pinkard

LAND TRUST ACCREDITATION COMMISSION 

An independent program of the Land Trust Alliance

ON CALL: HOW COMMISSIONERS AND STAFF CAN HELP



COURTESY OF EASTERN SIERRA LAND TRUST

Following *Land Trust Standards and Practices* enables Eastern Sierra Land Trust to save beautiful places like the Scirine Point Ranch in Bridgeport Valley, California.

Conservation, particularly stewardship, during the time of COVID-19 can be quite a challenge for land trusts. It's important for them to know what helpful resources are available, and accredited land trusts have a resource all to themselves: the Land Trust Accreditation Commission. In addition to their role of reviewing accreditation first-time and renewal applications, the commissioners and staff are just a call away, ready to discuss the particular situation of a land trust and to offer assistance during these trying times. And because accredited land trusts follow *Land Trust Standards and Practices*, they are already ahead of the curve when it comes to meeting challenges.

When the state of California issued mandatory stay-home orders in response to COVID-19, the Eastern Sierra Land Trust (ESLT) had to close its office, transition staff to working remotely and postpone field work. Executive Director Kay Ogden decided to call the Commission to get help with questions, but also to receive much-needed moral support. "I was greatly relieved that the Commission understood that the health and safety of staff is the highest priority, and I was given concrete steps to take if we are not able to monitor


all of our conservation easements and fee properties per our normal processes."

In order to create new processes for day-to-day business and monitoring and stewardship work, ESLT turned to *Land Trust Standards and Practices* (the Standards). "Upholding the Standards is embedded into our organizational culture," Ogden says. "Referring to the Standards helped us make modifications to our procedures to be safe and still adhere to best practices." Because of the Standards, ESLT staff already have resources available when new

challenges arise. As Ogden says, "We have guide-rails to rely on, which means that we can spend more time being creative with problem-solving."

Similarly, at The Conservation Fund in Virginia, Deputy General Counsel Lily Engle refers to the Standards regularly to keep staff on the leading edge. "Having an outside guide and watchdog forcing us to be better is essential," Engle says. "It's always a challenge to make sure everyone in a large organization follows best practices, but we make sure that we regularly prompt everyone." For Engle, the Standards help ensure that The Conservation Fund is doing its best work. "Knowing that everything we do will be reviewed against high standards is a necessary and important reminder," she says.

For Engle, accreditation not only means that The Conservation Fund is ready to take on challenging and cutting-edge projects, but also that it has the capacity and ethical standards to do the best work that can be done. "The most powerful tool an organization has is its reputation, and it gains and keeps that reputation by performing with excellence and integrity," Engle says. However, she knows that she can always reach out to the Commission for support if she ever needs guidance. "Knowing the Commission is there helps us make better decisions on projects," she says. "The Commission is always readily available to provide us with advice on even the smallest of questions."

Kay Ogden completely agrees. After she called the Commission, she says, "I actually slept that night!" 

CAITY PINKARD IS THE COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER AT CONSERVATION STRATEGY FUND.

Land Trust Accreditation



CONGRATULATIONS TO THE BIGGEST RENEWAL CLASS TO DATE!

Land trusts stand firm on their commitment to conservation excellence

With 47 land trusts achieving renewal over the summer, it is clear that investment in accreditation is valued. Applying for accreditation is a voluntary process and we know it is a commitment of resources and time. The land trusts who continue to strive for conservation excellence through the accreditation program show us that the investment is worth it. They demonstrate fiscal accountability, strong organizational leadership, sound transactions and lasting stewardship of the lands they conserve.

NEWLY ACCREDITED IN 2020

- 7 Lakes Alliance (ME)
- Alabama Forest Resources Center (AL)
- Golden State Land Conservancy (CA)
- Great Rivers Land Trust (IL)
- Middlebury Land Trust (CT)
- Mountains Restoration Trust (CA)

NEWLY RENEWED IN AUGUST 2020

- Ashby Land Trust (MA)
- Athens Land Trust (GA) ♦
- Bangor Land Trust (ME)
- Black Canyon Regional Land Trust (CO) ♦
- Blue Mountain Land Trust (WA)
- Boothbay Region Land Trust (ME)
- Cape Elizabeth Land Trust (ME)
- Catawba Lands Conservancy (NC) ♦
- Central Savannah River Land Trust (GA) ♦
- Coastal Mountains Land Trust (ME) ♦
- Colchester Land Trust (CT)
- Colorado Cattlemen's Agricultural Land Trust (CO) ♦
- Colorado West Land Trust (CO) ♦
- Feather River Land Trust (CA)
- Forest Society of Maine (ME) ♦
- Freshwater Land Trust (AL) ♦
- Georges River Land Trust (ME)
- Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy (MI) ♦
- Great Peninsula Conservancy (WA)
- Greensboro Land Trust (VT) ♦
- Hawaiian Islands Land Trust (HI) ♦
- Jefferson Land Trust (WA) ♦
- Lake Champlain Land Trust (VT) ♦
- Lake Forest Open Lands Association and its affiliate, Lake Forest Land Foundation (IL) ♦
- Land Trust for Santa Barbara County (CA) ♦
- Land Trust for Tennessee (TN) ♦
- Land Trust of Bucks County (PA) ♦
- Legacy Land Conservancy (MI) ♦
- Lyme Land Conservation Trust (CT)
- Minnesota Land Trust (MN) ♦
- Monadnock Conservancy (NH) ♦
- New Mexico Land Conservancy (NM)
- Northern California Regional Land Trust (CA) ♦
- Northwest Arkansas Land Trust (AR)
- Peninsula Open Space Trust (CA) ♦
- Rensselaer Land Trust (NY) ♦
- Salem Land Trust (CT) ♦
- Saratoga P.L.A.N. (NY)
- Skagit Land Trust (WA) ♦
- St. Simons Land Trust (GA)
- Tall Pines Conservancy (WI)
- Thousand Islands Land Trust (NY) ♦
- Utah Open Lands (UT)
- Warren Land Trust (CT)
- Westchester Land Trust (NY) ♦
- Wilderness Land Trust (WA) ♦
- Willistown Conservation Trust (PA) ♦

♦ Second Renewals

AT A GLANCE



100%

ACCREDITED LAND TRUST
AVERAGE INCREASE IN
ACRES CONSERVED

2005-2015



107%

ACCREDITED LAND TRUST
AVERAGE INCREASE IN
OPERATING BUDGET

2005-2015



87%

OF ACCREDITED LAND TRUSTS
SAID ACCREDITATION
MOTIVATED THEM TO MAKE
ORGANIZATIONAL
IMPROVEMENTS

SOURCE: "AN IMPACT EVALUATION OF THE LAND TRUST
ACCREDITATION PROGRAM'S FIRST 10 YEARS" (2018)

LAND TRUST ACCREDITATION
COMMISSION

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landtrustaccreditation.org