

# LAND TRUST ACCREDITATION COMMISSION

An independent program of the Land Trust Alliance

## Commission Member Position Description: Roles and Responsibilities

*Approved July 2015*

### Organization Mission

The mission of the Land Trust Accreditation Commission is to inspire excellence, promote public trust and ensure permanence in the conservation of open lands by recognizing land trust organizations that meet rigorous quality standards and that strive for continuous improvement.

### Organization Description

The Land Trust Accreditation Commission is an independent program of the Land Trust Alliance (Alliance), incorporated in 2006. It is a tax-exempt 509(a)(3) supporting organization of the Alliance.

### Commission Description

The Commission is a board composed of volunteers who have substantial knowledge and experience in the management and conduct of land conservation programs and activities, and includes commissioners who are distributed geographically throughout the United States. The Commission has two roles: a) governance of the organization, and b) participation in its programmatic work, particularly by participating in the review of land trusts applying for accreditation. The overarching goals of the Commission are to ensure that the accreditation process is consistent, fair, and credible, and that the accreditation program fosters continuous improvement of accredited land trusts and throughout the land conservation community.

### The Role of the Commissioner in Governance

The Commission is the governance board of the Land Trust Accreditation Commission, and together the commissioners have the following responsibilities in fulfilling this role.

- Establish the mission statement and strategic directions of the organization and evaluate progress toward their fulfillment, including providing an annual report to the Board of Directors of the Alliance.
- Develop and approve the policies that govern the organization.
- Develop and approve the requirements for awarding accreditation.
- Make final decisions on each accreditation and renewal application and oversee the use of the trademarked accreditation seal.
- Make decisions to address appeals of Commission decisions by applicant land trusts and to respond to complaints about accredited land trusts.
- Approve and oversee the annual operating budget in conjunction with the Alliance to

ensure fiscal accountability.

- Recruit and vet qualified commissioner candidates and approve recommendations for candidates for the Commission to be ratified by the Board of Directors of the Alliance.
- Hire and supervise the Executive Director; evaluate her/him and consult with the President of the Alliance as part of the evaluation.
- Provide recommendations to the Alliance regarding revisions to *Land Trust Standards and Practices* and to the indicator practices for the accreditation program.
- Act in compliance with the Commission's bylaws and the operating agreements made between the organization and the Alliance.

#### The Role of the Commissioner in Programmatic Work

Management of programmatic work of the organization is conducted by staff, led by the executive director. Commissioners participate with staff in many aspects of this programmatic work, and do so under supervision by the staff. The following are the principal ways in which commissioners provide programmatic assistance.

- Participate on at least one of the organization's committees.
- Advise on the development of programmatic procedures through the relevant committee.
- Serve as a peer reviewer of applications for accreditation and participate with staff in the reviews of 4-8 applications per year, primarily through telephone discussions or very rarely, by visiting the site of the applicant land trust, and present the results of the review to the Commission at its decision meeting.
- Help develop and implement a program of communications, promotion and outreach around land trust accreditation.

#### Additional Expectations for Commissioners

- Commit to at least one three-year term of service.
- Participate in commissioner orientation and training.\*
- Act as ambassadors of the organization to broaden public knowledge about and appreciation for the accreditation of land trusts.
- Strictly abide by the confidentiality and conflict of interest policies and the standard of conduct.
- Provide about 200 hours per year of commissioner volunteer service.\*\*
- Attend in-person two meetings of the Commission, one in mid-summer and the other in mid-winter.\*\*\*
- Attend by telephone conference call the majority of other meetings of the Commission.
- Attend in-person the Commission meeting that occurs at Rally (if attending Rally for other reasons).
- Prepare for each meeting by reviewing all advance materials.

#### **Legal Duties for Commissioners**

Above all, Commissioners shall discharge their duties in good faith and in keeping with the duties of care, loyalty and obedience as defined by federal law and the laws of the District of Columbia and applicable states as summarized below.

- **Duty of Care:** be familiar with the organization's finances and activities and take reasonable care in making decisions concerning the organization.
- **Duty of Loyalty:** act in the best interests of the organization and abide by the conflict of interest policy's requirements for disclosure and recusal.
- **Duty of Obedience:** ensure that the organization complies with applicable laws and regulations, its mission and its internal governance documents and policies.

### **Key Qualifications of Commissioners**

- Substantial knowledge and experience in one or more of following: conservation land trusts or government agencies involved in land conservation, foundations that support land conservation, nonprofit organization management, or specific knowledge related to the needs of the land trust accreditation program (e.g., legal, financial, or public sector expertise).
- Experience with, or willingness to learn about, similar accreditation or certification programs.
- Collegiality, tact, diligence, and willingness to engage in complex and rigorous discussions of the commissioners and staff with the best of intentions and good spirits.

\*Commissioner training consists of a half-day in-person orientation, attendance at a Commission meeting, a training conference call, and shadowing an application review.

\*\*Commissioners review applications as part of a review team; individual reviews are completed by each commissioner on his/her own schedule and take concentrated blocks of time. Review teams and committees meet by phone during business hours. Commissioners may also occasionally lead an applicant site visit. There is variability in number of hours, number of applications, and number of review team meetings depending on the review experience of the commissioner, the preparedness of the applicant, and the number of applicants under consideration at any one time.

\*\*\*Commissioner service includes attending two multi-day Commission meetings each year. Travel expenses to Commission meetings are generally covered by the Commission per its expense reimbursement policy. There can be significant variability in number of days per month depending on committee assignments and additional volunteer assignments that become available.

*Last revised July 2015*

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## Commissioner Emeritus Position Description

*Approved December 1, 2011*

*Amended December 6, 2023*

The Commission welcomes former commissioners who are willing to review applications after their formal term on the Commission ends in a continued role as a “commissioner emeritus.” Emeritus status will be considered in the following circumstances when a former commissioner has:

- Served at least two complete terms on the Commission, or when extenuating circumstances prevent the completion of a shorter length of service.
- Committed to completing approximately 4 application reviews each year.
- Committed to attending on-going training via conference calls or webinars to remain current on review calibrations, generally at least once per year outside of a Commission meeting.
- Agreed that he/she will not provide direct accreditation support during his/her service as a commissioner emeritus and for one year thereafter.
- Agreed that he/she will continue to abide by the Commission’s confidentiality and conflict of interest policies.

In return for this service, a commissioner emeritus will be invited to attend one of the Commission’s in-person meetings each year in a non-voting capacity to retain connections with commissioners and staff on review teams and to learn about adjustments in Commission policies and procedures. The Commission will cover travel expenses under its standard reimbursement policy for attendance at this meeting. A commissioner emeritus may attend additional meetings at his/her own expense.

The Commission’s board governance committee will review the service record of the commissioner seeking emeritus status and make a decision whether or not to confer emeritus status. An individual serving in an emeritus capacity may serve up to three years in this role. At the end of three years an evaluation will be conducted to determine if continued service for a period of up to three additional years will be approved.

Former commissioners may also be asked to participate on Commission committees or to assist the Commission in other ways. However, these less formal and less time intensive activities would not confer emeritus status.

## **Commissioner-Designate Position Description**

*Approved September 2012*

*Last Revised September 2015*

### Overview

Serving as a member of the Land Trust Accreditation Commission is a significant time commitment and takes considerable training. In order to ensure that the Commission can quickly and efficiently fill vacancies that occur on the Commission, it may nominate one or more commissioner-designates for consideration and election by the Land Trust Alliance.

### Role of the Commissioner-Designate

A commissioner-designate fills the same roles and responsibilities that are described in the Commission Member Position Description, with the sole exception that he/she does not vote on Commission business. To enable his/her service, he/she will receive the same orientation and training as commissioners. He/she is expected to serve as commissioner-designate until a vacancy occurs on the Commission, at which time his/her status will be changed to commissioner.

### Nomination, Election, and Transition to Commissioner

The Commission will identify, evaluate, and approve the nomination of candidates to serve in the commissioner-designate position. The Land Trust Alliance will consider and elect commissioner-designates, including approval that the commissioner-designate will succeed to the commissioner position when a vacancy occurs on the Commission. The commissioner-designate is expected to serve a full three-year term once he/she has transitioned to the Commissioner position.

