

Land Trust 
 Accreditation Commission
 An Independent program of the Land Trust Alliance

Strength and Confidence Open Doors

When a neighbor cut down a swath of trees in a nature preserve in Washington State's San Juan Islands, the San Juan Preservation Trust (WA) knew exactly what steps to take.

The land trust recently had been through the accreditation process with the Land Trust Accreditation Commission, says Dean Dougherty, director of stewardship. "Beefing up our policies is what helped us out here," he says, and the accreditation process showed them where policies needed strengthening. "When it occurred, we knew what to do, how to document it and who to get in touch with."

Quick and thorough enforcement after the timber trespass led to a \$100,000 legal victory for the trust.

Being accredited doesn't always have such dramatic benefits for land trusts. But the more subtle, constant benefits are just as useful, such as the sense of security your accreditation gives the landowners who are thinking about working with you.

"I usually do due diligence," says Gordon MacAdam, a landowner who, with his brother Henry, recently conserved 26 acres and the family homestead in Sullivan County, New York, with the Delaware Highlands Conservancy (NY, PA). "People can tell me whatever they want, but I wasn't born yesterday, so I want to see it and hear it myself."

MacAdam spent 38 years as a financial planner, and the federal income tax benefit from conserving his land is important to him. He knew the IRS would scrutinize the organization that held his easement to make sure it has the commitment and resources

to protect the property. The Delaware Highlands Conservancy's national accreditation was his assurance that it would meet that test. And, he says, it did.

"Let's put it this way, the federal government never came back to me with even one question," MacAdam says.


Funders also rely on accreditation to guide them to worthy organizations to invest with. "The 1772 Foundation considers a number of factors when evaluating grant applicants, including whether a land trust has prioritized the highest level of professional commitment to land protection by undergoing accreditation," says Mary Anthony, executive director of The 1772 Foundation.

The 1772 Foundation farmland grant application asks specifically whether a land trust is accredited, says Kevin Case, Northeast director of the Land Trust Alliance. He says that the Alliance administers the grant program for the foundation, but it was the foundation that brought up

accreditation as a factor in its funding decisions. "It shows that they recognized it as an important consideration," he says.

"Knowing the accreditation process is comprehensive and reliable," says Anthony, "gives us confidence that a land trust applicant is a good long-term investment."

Renewing your land trust's accreditation means you maintain all these benefits, and offers additional benefits too. Dougherty says that accreditation renewal will be a valuable check for San Juan Preservation Trust. It will allow them to confirm the improvements they made during accreditation, and show them new ways to strengthen their policies.

"Not renewing didn't even enter our minds," says Dougherty. "We saw such value in the process and in that seal of approval you get when you say you're an accredited land trust." 

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DELAWARE HIGHLANDS CONSERVANCY

Brothers Gordon and Henry MacAdam