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LAND TRUST ACCREDITATION  
COMMISSION   
An independent program of the Land Trust Alliance

## NEW SYSTEM

# Saves Paper and Time, Eases Burden

In the past, land trusts applying for accreditation couldn't escape the reams of paper required to document their adherence to *Land Trust Standards and Practices*.

"I remember when we originally applied for accreditation, I felt like I was constantly flipping through binders," says Jane Calvin, executive director of Lowell Parks & Conservation Trust, Inc., which is applying for renewal this year.

That reliance on paper changes with the new online application system launched in January for first-time and renewal accreditation, says Jennifer Brady-Connor, associate director for technology and communications for the Land Trust Accreditation Commission.

"I constantly heard frustrations with the old system," she says. "We could never fully address those problems—until now. Land trusts applying on the new system will be excited. There will be no more binders that are heavy and expensive to ship."

Lowell Parks & Conservation Trust, Inc.—a small urban land trust north of Boston—is one of several land trusts that helped test the new system during its pre-application renewal.

"I thought it was much more efficient," says Calvin. "I like that the new system provides document storage, so you can go back and refer to a document without having to upload it again. Also, I liked the resources tab, which gives you lots of video instruction on how to get from step to step."

For Trish Percival of Granby Land Trust in Connecticut, having a central platform where board members could collaborate on accreditation renewal was a major benefit she found while testing the system.

"I assigned the financial piece to our treasurer. With the old system, he would have sent me the files, and I would have downloaded them, saved them to a thumb drive, printed them in triplicate, three-hole punched them and inserted them into binders. The new system saves so much time and paper," she says. "Plus, it's reassuring to see your progress in the new system, through the progress bars and percentage-complete estimates. I always knew where we stood in relation to the finish line."

Although Jordan Leff, director of operations for Harding Land Trust in New Jersey, wasn't involved with the group's initial accreditation, he had heard plenty about how cumbersome the process could be at times.

"Going from that to using the online system was pretty great," he says of the group's pilot testing during their renewal process. "I liked that the new system linked to videos and support files directly. We're a small group, a single town land trust. But our adjustment to the new system has been seamless."

On Block Island off Rhode Island, there's no high-speed internet. "We frequently have issues with uploading speed due to our rural location," says Clair Stover, executive director of Block Island Conservancy. Stover says that although she had to visit the mainland to upload some of the group's renewal pre-application, she appreciated the time- and paper-saving nature of the new process.

"It went very smoothly," she says. "I liked that the website was very intuitive and



The way it was.

divided up into four categories [finance, governance, stewardship and transactions] that made sense. Accreditation is such a great exercise in doing a really thorough check to make sure you're being the best you can be." 