Land Conservation and the Public Trust

The Case for Community Conservation

by Ernie Atencio, Peter Forbes, and Danyelle O'Hara

January 2013

CENTER FOR WHOLE COMMUNITIES

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A message from the Land Trust Alliance to readers of *Land Conservation and the Public Trust: The Case for Community Conservation* by Ernie Atencio, Peter Forbes, and Danyelle O'Hara (January 2013)

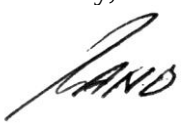
The Land Trust Alliance thanks the Center for Whole Communities, the authors and all of the people who provided valuable information, perspectives and experience to this report. We are grateful for all of the time spent and good thinking offered through focus groups, interviews, and workshops. Thank you for celebrating the connections between land and people in this way, and helping all of us engage communities more broadly and deeply.

The Land Trust Alliance Board reviewed the research findings and recommendations as part of a larger board discussion about what the Alliance can and should do in this arena. The recommendations outlined represent decades of potential work for the Alliance and the land trust community, work that will continue to evolve as the communities we serve grow and change. This report represents a preliminary first step in listening to others as we begin to explore the optimal role for the Alliance in helping land trusts build deeper and broader relationships with their communities – what we are calling a Community Conservation Initiative.

The Alliance is not a pioneer in this arena; great work is happening within the land trust community already that deserves recognition. The innovative and inspirational stories of community conservation from land trusts large and small are all around us. For several years the Alliance has shared these stories through *Saving Land*, at Rally: The National Land Trust Conference, in eNews and elsewhere, and we will continue to do so.

Throughout the rest of 2013, the Alliance will continue to listen and discuss this and we welcome feedback from land conservation practitioners, other partner organizations, and others who are interested in community conservation as we think more holistically and proactively about our mission of land conservation and how it serves and meets community needs.

Sincerely,



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We thank all the people interviewed for this project, (see appendix) each of whom care enough about the relationship between conservation and community to have shared their time, wisdom, and honest perspectives with us. This research and report were conducted in just six months and would never have been possible without several partners who believe in this topic and gave to it their time, their reputations, and their resources. We want to especially thank Margaret Newbold and Melanie Allen at Conservation Trust for North Carolina; Tahz Walker and Claudia Horwitz of Stone Circles and Stone House in Mebane, NC; Jane Calvin at Lowell Parks and Recreation Trust; and Hawk Rosales and the Native Land Trust Working Group. We hope your wisdom and kindness is adequately reflected in these pages.

We are grateful to numerous individuals who supported, advised, and provided important information throughout the research and writing process, and particularly to several anonymous reviewers, all of whom volunteered their time and thoughtful guidance to help strengthen this final report.

Lastly, there's a cadre of old souls who have dedicated their lives to the conservation of community, of land, of place, and of opportunity who have been doing "the work" long before this report was ever commissioned and will be at it long after the sun goes down. Their work continues to inspire and inform everything that is written in these pages and that is practiced out there on the land. We want to especially thank this group of guiding lights, among them: Charles Jordan, Gil Livingston, Mikki Sager, Judy Anderson, and the late Chuck Matthei.

With our gratitude,

Ernie Atencio

Peter Forbes

Danyelle O'Hara

Author Statements:
What We Bring to this Project

Ernie Atencio

I always think of myself a hood in the woods, straddling different worlds, ever since a life-changing Outward Bound "hoods-in-the-woods" wilderness course after high school. The label captures my love of the land and wild places and a dedication to conservation, but also my experience growing up as a person of color in a rough inner-city neighborhood, which imprinted my acute sense of justice. I carry that sense, along with substantial knowledge and perspective from inside the conservation community after nine years as executive director of the Taos Land Trust, including leading the organization through the land trust accreditation process. My roots run deep in rural northern New Mexico, where my family and culture go back at least three centuries, but I became a "first generation American" growing up in Denver. After many scrapes with the law and dropping out of high school twice, I finally graduated, and with no greater horizons in life I considered a high school diploma and minimum wage as "success." Through a literal luck of the draw, I ended up with a full scholarship for a three-week Outward Bound trip, which revealed a much bigger world, set me on a different path, and gave me what I needed to break away. I owe much to that transformational experience of the land. I led Outward Bound and other wilderness courses, worked as a national park ranger, taught environmental education at Yosemite Institute, and traveled and studied in the Himalayas and the Tibetan Plateau. Combining my love of wild places with a fascination for traditional cultures, I eventually earned a Master's degree in applied cultural anthropology and have spent much of my career studying and promoting the powerful connections between land and culture. Eventually landing back home near Taos, I have worked for various environmental and conservation organizations and written extensively on environmental justice and cultural issues. The greatest lesson I have learned along the way is that the healthy lands and healthy community are dual priorities; one is not more important than the other.

Peter Forbes

I consider myself a writer, a farmer, and a teacher. My father came here from the Ukraine and was willing to change his name and his language to make a home here; his journey is very likely why I see a powerful connection between identity and place. There are three experiences I had as an adult that might help to explain what I have brought to this research. As a young man, I worked as a photographer in remote eastern Nepal where I spent many months living among indigenous people who were seeing much of their traditional land become a national park. I loved that land, still dream about it, and understand why it should be protected for the larger world as a national park. But I also loved the people who lived there, counted them as my family, and I mourned how the park restricted their own relationship to that place and eroded their culture. And I fear that the national park will never care for that land as well, physically and spiritually, as those people did. I returned to the United States and spent the next 15 years working as a conservation "dealmaker" at Trust for Public Land. There I learned much about the power of different landscapes to different people. And, in my forties, I yearned for a life in conservation as much as a career in conservation and brought my family to a farm where we

have been learning about the land and feeding our community for a dozen years. There, we also created Center for Whole Communities, a place-based leadership development organization devoted to bringing together people who care about the land with people who care about our communities. During the past decade, I helped to create the Whole Thinking Curriculum, Whole Measures and a variety of other efforts to help hundreds and hundreds of conservationists think, act and live more in relationship to community. My calling now is as a facilitator, advisor, and public speaker to conservation groups and citizen activists.

Danyelle O'Hara

Growing up first in a military family in different states around the country, including Hawaii, then in a small town in Montana, where my city-bred parents forged a new life for us as back-to-the landers, and later on a scholarship at an east coast boarding school, I had ideas early on about place, connection, and belonging and not belonging. Following one fairly nebulous calling to "be of service" and another clearer one to see the world, I lived and worked for years in Africa, first in West Africa with Catholic Relief Services and later with the World Wildlife Fund in Central Africa. My experiences in Africa taught me many things about livelihood, connection to the land, and stewardship of that land. Living and working in Africa also taught me about accountability for my work, surfacing in me a desire to work closer to home, where I would be pushed more to link my own destiny with that of people with whom I was working. When marriage to a Louisianan brought me to the American South, a place I'd never been and that felt in many ways as foreign as Africa, I was surprised to find threads of familiarity. The accents, the rhythm of speech, and mannerisms of rural folks reminded me of my grandparents, who, prior to moving north with many of their counterparts during the Great Migration, had grown up in the rural south. While I am by no means an insider, my connection to people, history, and land in the south is undeniable. My work (in the U.S. and Africa) has been to help build capacity in issues related to community development, community change, and natural resources management. I do this by helping to strengthen organizational infrastructure that supports communities in developing visions for their aspirations and practical plans for achieving those visions in the most inclusive ways possible. It is in these communities that I have learned that the main indicators of good work on my part, whether conservation, community development, or anything else, is that people—mostly African Americans of modest means—experience connection to the work and each other, improvement in their lives, and a sense of belonging in their place.

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Executive Summary

The Land Trust Alliance recognizes that land trusts share a destiny with the communities in which they work and that more must be done to understand and respond to the needs and aspirations of those communities. The United States of America that is emerging *right now* is very different from the USA of the 1980s when the majority of land trusts were formed. How will land trusts choose to relate with their changing communities? What can be learned about land and conservation from so many new perspectives? What will define the relationship between land trusts and community? All successful long-lived social, political and economic movements have required re-invention—it is part of innovation. How will land trusts innovate in the next 25 years as they have in the past 25 years? These questions are all addressed in this report by Center for Whole Communities.

The land trust movement in the United States has never been stronger, and from that success comes new responsibilities. If you control 20% of a state like conservationists do in Maine, it's no longer feasible to assume that issues like transportation, poverty, food security or how people heat their homes is not your concern. Because of your success, the public assigns you some measure of responsibility regardless of what your mission statement says. This is part of becoming a public citizen. Many land trust leaders, including the Land Trust Alliance itself, believe that the movement's enormous strength at accomplishing "wins"—what is known as *transactional strength*—must now be matched with *relational strength* and other competencies in order to rise to the challenges of this moment.

This research did discover strong trends among respondents. Potential community partners out there are ready and waiting for meaningful partnerships with land trusts. There is a hunger within parts of the land trust community to expand the work, to authentically engage with a broader range of community allies, and to make a contribution to addressing community issues. There are land trusts throughout the country that have been doing this work for years, and we can learn from them and follow their leadership. The iron is hot.

These pioneering land trusts are making *communities* stronger because communities have access to experiences on and with the land that matter and are transformative. Land trusts are helping to bring healthy food to the table, to improve local and regional economies, to provide land-based youth education, to improve peoples' health and wellbeing, and to help communities own significant land resources, all of which helps communities to be more resilient. And it helps land trusts to become more resilient, innovative, and successful. Community conservation is already building a stronger constituency for conservation far beyond the usual suspects. It's helping land trusts to learn and to become better public citizens.

Today, our communities need to be more closely connected to the land and our practices of conservation need to be more closely aligned to the needs of people. By focusing conservation on sustaining livelihoods, on increasing public health, on strengthening food systems, and on how we educate our children, conservation becomes culture and culture becomes more rooted in the land. The outcomes of this work are more resilient, healthier communities more closely

connected to the land, and a conservation movement that transcends its privileged roots to be in service to more Americans.

The main thrust of these 17 recommendations is directed internally at the tribe of land trusts and its leader, the Land Trust Alliance. This report is mostly about surfacing the need for structural changes, aligning that movement around who it really wants to be and, should it choose, preparing it to be better partners with a much larger universe of actors already working successfully to create healthier, whole communities. The allies are waiting and are excited, willing to meet land trusts on equal ground.

The opportunities are for a much larger set of shared and durable successes, and for land trusts to fulfill the calling of one of their greatest heroes, Aldo Leopold, to create a stronger and broader land ethic in this country. The reason this has been so hard to achieve is that it could never be done alone; to strengthen a land ethic in this country requires that conservationists join others.

These recommendations are not a call to change the mission of land trusts. Emphatically, we heard this from both community allies and land trusts themselves. No one wants land trusts to stop doing what they do best. Community conservation has never been about mission drift, but about the possibility of finding a larger and shared purpose for that mission. Community conservation is about putting the unique expertise of land conservation in service to larger community objectives.

This alignment between land trusts and community interests is particularly critical right now, as so many urban and rural communities are in the process of re-inventing themselves and attempting to create comprehensive future visions. Our nation's demographics have already shifted and will continue to shift. There's enormous public attention focused right now on our food systems and how we educate our children. These are all major opportunities for every land trust to serve, to learn, and to grow.
Based on our research, we have 17 recommendations for the Land Trust Alliance which are described in detail in this report:

1. Undertake Community Conservation for Authentic Reasons and Communicate It Clearly
2. Make Mission Equal in Importance to Real Estate Transactions
3. Focus Instead on the Relationships between People and the Land
4. Recognize and Respect the Centrality of Land to All Community Development Issues as Part of the Public Trust
5. Honor and Address the Structural Obstacles to Engaging with Different People and Communities
6. Create an Aligned Understanding, Appreciation and Shared Vision of Community Conservation within the Alliance and the Land Trust Movement as a Whole
7. Evolve How the Alliance Speaks to its Primary Internal Audience about Conservation
8. Speak about Land Ethics, Not about Geographies

9. Foster Meaningful and Lasting Community Relationships through Programs that Connect Land Trusts to community groups, new internal Policy and Other Support
10. Publicly Honor First Nations and Create a New Standard Regarding Appropriate Engagement with Tribes
11. Adopt a New Community Conservation Standard with at Least One Substantive Indicator Practice that is Reviewed as Part of the Accreditation Process
12. Become More Creative and Community-Oriented regarding Conservation Easement Amendments
13. Level the Playing Field of the Existing Accreditation Process to Make It Less Costly and Fairer to the Smaller Land Trust
14. Significantly Broaden the Alliance's Legislative Lobbying Efforts to Refocus on the Needs of Communities at the Federal, State, and Local Levels
15. Significantly Evolve the Goals and Audience for the National Land Trust Rally
16. Create and Co-Fund Community Conservation Pilot Projects in All Regions of the Country
17. Take Action at the Highest Levels and Be Transparent about What You Will Do and Cannot Do

The Land Trust Alliance has made enormous strides in creating durable, successful organizations and now it must point that formidable strength toward a larger, more integrated, and inclusive purpose. This is the right thing to do, and it's also what will make land trusts more innovative and successful as well all move forward together.

Background

Motivations for and a Definition of Community Conservation

In this era of hard-earned conservation successes, the leadership of the Land Trust Alliance recognizes that land trusts share a destiny with the communities in which they work and that more must be done to understand the needs and aspirations of those communities. One land trust executive director said it this way: *"The Alliance's emphasis has been on creating durable, professional organizations and that's been absolutely critical. But now it needs to put equal attention on creating meaning, shared values, about what a relationship to land looks like for all Americans. That's what I'm excited about."*

This aspiration to bring conservation and community together in order to strengthen both is bold, timely, and likely bigger and more complex than the Land Trust Alliance ever imagined. Some would say it is the big work of our times. Many of the most respected voices in the history of our movement have called for land conservation to be more deeply rooted in the ideals and everyday needs of the whole community. In *Sand County Almanac,* Aldo Leopold wrote in 1949, "*There are two things that interest me: the relation of people to each other, and the relation of people to land."* And a decade ago, Wendell Berry wrote, "*And so conservationists have not done enough when they conserve wilderness and biological diversity. They must also conserve the possibility of peace and good work, and to do that they must help to make a good economy. To succeed, conservationists must help to give more and more people everywhere the opportunity to do work that is both a living and a loving."*

If this work of re-imagining land conservation as being about relationship and community were easy, we would have done it long ago.

The courage to reach for something that may not be fully attainable in the short term is always hard and always an act of leadership. And that leadership couldn't come at a more important time for the land trust movement. The political, economic and cultural landscape is rapidly changing and, as a result, new challenges and vulnerabilities are emerging within the land trust movement. Some of these arise from the very success of the movement itself. For example, when conservationists control 20 percent of a state's landmass, as they do in Maine and several other states, it's no longer feasible to assume that transportation, poverty, food security, or how your neighbors will heat their homes is not your concern. Though the land trust movement has always respected private property rights and focused primarily on mechanisms to protect private property, we are suggesting that there is a broader public trust responsibility. At a recent Quivira Coalition conference, agroecologist Dr. Miguel Altieri talked about land and water as *commons*, a basic human right that every individual deserves access to, and said that the work of land trusts and conservation easements is important for providing some of that access. One long-time land trust executive director said, "Land trusts have unwittingly taken land off the table that could have served to do more for the community if others in the community had been more involved in the decisions about how the land was conserved. For example, workforce housing, land for a young rancher. . . ." With greater *success comes the*

expectation of public citizenship, which for land trusts is the responsibility and commitment to think about and act upon issues that impact the community they serve.
Another profound change facing the pioneering generation of the land trust movement is that the United States is in the midst of the largest demographic shift in 150 years. *"2042"* is the year when the latest census data predicts that the population of the majority of metropolitan areas in the country will be more than 50 percent people of color. At the same time, our country is experiencing a great consolidation of wealth as the top 1 percent income earners control a growing share (now 35 percent) of all our nation's assets. The question for community conservation is can land trusts play a role in bridging these divides and helping our communities to share their wealth – not only financially but in terms of access to land itself.

Simply put, the United States of America that is emerging *right now* is very different from the USA of the 1980s when the majority of land trusts were formed. How will land trusts choose to relate with their changing communities? What can be learned about land and conservation from so many new perspectives? What will define the relationship between land trusts and community? Will it be about land trusts striving for their own relevancy, or will it be about finding a shared destiny and discovering with the community the ways to "lift all boats"?

Lastly, all successful long-lived social, political and economic movements have re-invented themselves. Re-invention is part of innovation. The re-invention isn't necessarily about changing mission, but about expanding the *why* and *with whom* that mission is achieved. Often the re-invention comes about by creating new partnerships and trying out new tools to achieve the end goals. Many land trust leaders, including the Land Trust Alliance itself, believe that the movement's enormous strength at accomplishing "wins"—what is known as *transactional strength*—must now be matched with other competencies. This is an exciting moment in time for land trusts to *meet transactional strength with relational strength*.

In this opportune moment, the Land Trust Alliance asked Center for Whole Communities to undertake research that would yield recommendations on "levers for innovation" that, if pulled, would help the Alliance and land trusts to begin making big and small changes that would enable broader and deeper engagement with the American public. (As "Levers for Innovation" was the original title of this project, the "levers" analogy will be used throughout the report)

Five years ago, Alliance president Rand Wentworth called for "the conservation community to look more like America." In 2012, the Alliance created this Draft Vision:

Our vision is for land trusts to be respected civic organizations with widespread public support and a variety of authentic partnerships that reflect the diversity and demographics of a changing America. Land trust conservation work is seen as essential to advancing important community priorities like improving people's health, providing clean water, safe food, and generating economic benefits, whether in urban or rural areas.

Further, the Land Trust Alliance aspires for land trusts to become "more open, more humble" representatives of the communities they serve. To become better partners, and more in partnership to communities across the country: doing "conservation that tangibly improves the lives of peoples and groups who have traditionally had lower-than-average access to parks, open space, public health, and healthy and affordable food." The Land Trust Alliance has also spoken publicly about the political vulnerability of conservation if the broader American public is not engaged. The changeable winds of state and national politics, combined with what nine men and women sitting in the Supreme Court can decide, have greatly evolved the belief that laws alone will not sustain conservation. Many conservationists and land trust leaders see "protected" land as being increasingly vulnerable to a public that doesn't understand, doesn't relate, perhaps doesn't care and, in the future, might ask for something different. To endure and evolve, conservation must be grounded not just in law, but also in the hearts, minds, and everyday choices of diverse people. That means that those who love land and nature need to build up their capacity to fully engage people. *All people*. Indeed, Rand Wentworth writes, "*In the end, our future depends on each generation loving the land enough to fight for its protection all over again."*

It is very important to note that this need to reinvent is shared by all successful long-lived social, political, and economic movements. And for these movements to succeed, the innovations must occur when the organizations themselves have the strength and resources to make the changes. The expectation for public citizenship, demographic changes, and the need to match transactional strength with relational strength are significant opportunities for the land trust movement, which is precisely why the authors of this report feel that this is the right moment to look forward and begin a process of creating land conservation that meets the changing needs of our communities.

With all this in mind, and in a world of imprecise terms and definitions, we offer this as a working definition of what we mean by "community conservation":

Community conservation is an approach to land conservation in both urban and rural settings that embraces and is grounded in local cultural and socioeconomic diversity and local perspectives, is relevant and responsive to the concerns and priorities of the local communities in which it is practiced, and benefits a broad cross-section of the public. Through authentic engagement, community conservation contributes to healthy and sustainable communities by advancing important matters like improving people's health and quality of life, providing clean water and access to healthy food, providing equitable access to housing, generating economic benefits, and land-based education.

The Research

This report is the best thinking and advice of 72 individuals, inside and outside the land trust movement, translated with the professional experience of the three authors. This report is a starting point for a new and better level of community engagement based upon listening, evaluating how our own brothers and sisters in the land trust community are innovating, and the authors' construction of what they believe are solid, important recommendations based on their experience in organizational development and land trusts in particular.

This research does not purport to represent consensus on what community conservation is, or consensus on what the Alliance and its members ought to do to be better community partners. Nor does this research prioritize actions or create a strategy. This work of community conservation is so new we feel it would be a mistake for the Alliance to begin in any posture other than "open and listening."

Our research was completed using four methodologies: 1) listening sessions in Boston and Salt Lake City; 2) direct one-on-one interviews with dozens of land trust practitioners and potential allies; 3) focus groups with small groups of senior land trust leaders and potential community allies; and, finally, 4) a regionally-focused workshop that brought together land trust practitioners and their potential community partners.

This latter methodology—a sustained dialogue between land trusts and potential community partners—was convened in North Carolina. We are particularly enthusiastic about this effort because it modeled the values and objectives of community conservation and demonstrated the very positive and healthy opportunity for similar dialogues across the country as a starting point for land trusts to make deeper collaborations with their community. The North Carolina community conservation dialogue was a collaboration between Center for Whole Communities, Conservation Trust of North Carolina, and Stone Circles (a social justice organization in Mebane, NC). We had two over-arching goals for this workshop: 1) to create real relationships between people and fields of endeavor that may lead to collaborations on the ground, and 2) to conduct research on what works and doesn't work in forging relationships between land trusts and others working for healthy, whole communities. We completed very instructive research and we created a learning environment where land trust leaders were able to forge new relationships with their counterparts working in food security, urban greenspace, land loss prevention, and youth in nature. It was a powerful and, we hope, useful experience that will lead to real outcomes. As one participant stated: "Participating in CWC's community conservation dialogue was probably one of the most important experiences I have yet participated in during my time with the [land trust]. The deep listening has reinforced for me the necessity of that practice as I work to help this organization look at the social and institutional change we think we can be a part of."

Appendix A is a full roster of all the individuals who were part of this research project. Of the 72 involved in our research, the following percentages apply:

18% are senior land trust practitioners with a significant history within the movement

24% also work for land trusts but with less history in the movement
58% work for potential community partners to land trusts
39% work in an urban context (some overlap between urban and rural)
74% work in a rural or suburban context
51% are men
49% are women
65% are Caucasian
35% are people of color

Potential Community Partners

In consultation with the Land Trust Alliance, we identified seven "affinity groups," within the much larger universe of all community groups, with whom to meet and to listen to about their experience of land trusts. Collectively, the Land Trust Alliance and Center for Whole Communities felt these groups had the most potential shared overlap in work and aspirations with conservation land trusts:

1. Community Land Trusts and Affordable Housing
These are community-based groups promoting economic equity and sustainable development through affordable housing, equity-caps, and long-term access to land for lower- and middle-income people.

2. Rural Economic Development Groups
These are community-based groups working on job creation, stabilizing populations, and more equitable wealth distribution through agriculture, forestry, land-ownership, fishing, and tourism and energy production.

3. Public Health Organizations
These are community-based groups working on the long-term health of individuals and population sectors through illness prevention, health care**,** and community / neighborhood development.

4. Food Systems
These are community-based groups working on more equitable production and distribution of healthy food to those who do not have it due to their economic status and/or location.

5. Urban Conservation
These are urban gardening, urban rivers, and urban parks groups for whom land is the medium for community development. Some of these groups consider themselves to be land trusts and others do not.

6. Education through Nature
These are education, advocacy, and community organizing groups across the country who believe that lack of access to nature is greatly diminishing healthy human development and

therefore the future of our country. Richard Louv's and Gary Nabhan's work has placed a special emphasis recently on the child's need for access to nature, and a movement has grown up around those ideas. And other leading activists and academics (such as Steven Kellert of Yale and Francis Ming Kuo at University of Chicago) have long demonstrated the critical need for all human beings for a natural habitat to learn and function optimally.

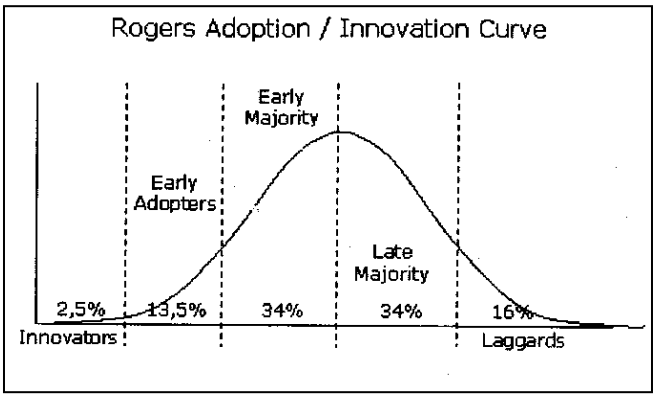
7. Native Lands Groups

These are land trusts and other programs that seek to help First Nations protect and expand their natural and cultural land-based heritage.

While these are the community ally groups we researched in this report, there are many others with whom land trusts should consider partnering. These are volunteer-based or informally established groups who are working to make their communities a better place for everyone, and often for populations with specific needs. They might be recreation committees; committees through religious organizations to address hunger, poverty, displacement; economic development groups or committees; or groups working on energy issues.

Why focus on the innovators and the margins to find new directions?

The basic question of our research has been: how will land trusts innovate in the next 25 years the way they innovated in the past 25 years?



Innovation and change is an enormous topic that has earned the attention of several generations of organizational development gurus, but most—if not all—would likely agree on the value of watching and supporting the groups and the individual leaders who are already breaking the mold, who are already innovating on their own. In the case of land trusts, we're fortunate to have many really successful senior organizations who are exploring the terrain even without the map in hand. It made logical sense to focus on these innovators, large and small, including, Vermont Land Trust, Taos Land Trust, Monadnock Conservancy, Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy, Athens Land Trust, Lookout Mountain Conservancy, LandPaths, Big Sur Land Trust, Eastern Shore Land Conservancy, Maine Coast Heritage Trust, The Trustees of Reservations, Conservation Trust for North Carolina, Los Angeles Neighborhood Land Trust, and the many other land trusts like them who are innovating with their own communities. Within the world of social change efforts, it's also widely understood that change comes from the margins or the edges of a movement, not initially from the mainstream. The Innovation Adoption Curve suggests that movements are heavily influenced by a small number of early innovators. In any movement, approximately 2.5 percent will see the need for change,

13.5 percent will be willing to take the risk of adopting it, and the majority (68 percent) will wait to follow these leaders. This model says that 16 percent will never change.

This model of how movements innovate and adopt new behaviors and strategies suggests that significant change can emerge from the new practices of as few as 50 land trusts. Our research, along with a 2008 survey of over 360 land trusts, suggests that this core group of innovator land trusts for community conservation exists. In addition, about a quarter to a third of all land trusts, or somewhere between 250 and 550 land trusts, have prioritized community engagement, either through commitment of budget and staff resources or involvement in community conversations about access and equity issues related to land. These fit within the categories of "early adopters" or "early majority." Our recommendations center around supporting these innovator land trusts and those ready to follow them, modeling their practices at the Alliance itself, telling the stories of their change-making work, and defining the path toward community conservation.

State of the Land Trust Nation

"Through land conservation, we give people the opportunity to taste something of what it is like to be authentically human: children rolling in the grass of an urban park; a grandfather teaching his granddaughter the quiet art of fishing; a fifth-generation farmer growing vegetables on his family's homestead—nourishing his community with both fresh food and a farm stand where neighbors gather. We set out to save land, but, in the end, we build community, preserve beauty and instill hope."

— 2010 National Land Trust Census Report

Accomplishments of a Successful Conservation Movement

The land trust movement in the United States has never been stronger. From the first land trust in Massachusetts established in 1891 to only a few hundred by 1975, the movement has grown exponentially to over 1,700 land trusts across the country. Land trusts worked successfully for new federal tax incentives established in 1980, other federal and state incentives that followed, and public conservation funding programs, all of which reward landowners for conserving their land and have fueled the growth of the movement. And these incentives follow hand in hand with a growing public awareness of the importance of permanently protecting our fast-disappearing open lands. These 1,700 land trusts, under the leadership of the Land Trust Alliance for the last 30 years, have generated the tools, resources, and political influence to permanently protect more than 10 million acres between 2005 and 2010, for a total of 47 million acres. That is an area more than twice the size of all the national parks in the lower 48 states—no small achievement.

Land trusts took a radical and revolutionary idea—permanently protecting land from development using the legal mechanism of a conservation easement—and turned it into a mainstream approach embraced by a huge cross-section of the public as well as politicians. That, too, is no small achievement. According to the National Conservation Easement Database, today there are over 95,000 conservation easements in the U.S. held by both nonprofit land trusts and governmental entities. And this revolutionary work of land conservation has been professionalized and mainstreamed into a sector that today includes 12,300 staff, 15,600 board members, 347,000 active volunteers, and nearly 5 million members across the country. The number of paid staff increased by 19 percent just with the five-year period between 2005 and 2010, with 46 percent of land trusts reporting at least part-time staff. (However, the majority of land trusts are still volunteer run.) Also during that five-year period, land trusts more than doubled the amount of funding dedicated to monitoring, stewardship, and legal defense of conserved lands and at the same time nearly tripled their operating endowments. The movement is vast and robust.

Not satisfied with resting on its laurels, the Alliance was simultaneously working to strengthen the organizational underpinnings of the land trust community it supports even while making these great strides in conservation. With a process of full public participation, the Alliance established the *Land Trust Standards and Practices* that all land trusts are expected to adopt, a

rigorous Land Trust Accreditation program to certify land trusts that are in compliance with best practices under *Land Trust Standards and Practices,* and most recently the establishment of the Terrafirma conservation defense insurance program, which will help ensure the perpetuity of conservation easements. These are monumental undertakings, the likes of which no other sector of the conservation or environmental community can boast.

Who Land Trusts Are Today

For all the impressive pace of land conservation and continuing successes, the evolving membership of land trusts has not kept pace with growing racial and ethnic diversity in the United States. People of color today make up 36.3 percent of our nation's population, and all the polling data and election results suggest that those groups are the strongest supporters of conservation. Still, people of color account for only 11 percent of staff members and 9 percent of board members of natural resource organizations nationwide. Thirty-three percent of environmental institutions have ***no*** people of color at all on staff. In a different measure from a 2008 survey of over 360 land trusts, 19.5 percent said their boards of directors were "somewhat" to "very" racially diverse and 31.2 percent said that their membership was "somewhat" to "very" racially diverse. However that data might be interpreted, land trusts still fall far short of representing the diversity of the populations they serve. In the same survey, 67 percent of land trusts said that their community at large was "somewhat" to "very" racially diverse.

It is important to recognize that race and ethnicity are only one kind of diversity, and that for community conservation, socio-economic class and various livelihoods are equally as important to representing the full range of community concerns and land conservation priorities.

This report does not intend to paint a picture of land conservation and land trusts stuck in some irrelevant past. It is clear that the land trust movement has responded to changing priorities and emerging constituencies, and is very capable of continuing to do so. In 2005 only 21 percent of land trusts listed conserving farmland as a priority, for instance, but only five years later that number had increased threefold, to 61 percent. Similarly, there was a threefold increase in focusing on urban parks, community gardens, or other city greenspaces, which are now a priority for 27 percent of land trusts. This indicates to us that land trusts can and do have the capacity to evolve to address changing community needs.

In the 2008 survey of land trusts, 95.8 percent—nearly everyone—said that community engagement was an important value, which points the way toward community conservation. That value is reflected in some shifting of resources from land acquisition to outreach and education, to finding meaningful ways for more of the public to engage with the land. *"Everyday we're making a choice between a dollar spent on buying land and a dollar spent on getting people out into that land. More and more of our dollars are getting spent on the latter*," said one executive director. Another made a similar point: "We look like a land trust from the outside because we have the easements, own land, and steward our easements, but we really work on the connection to land stuff. We foster love of land by connecting to people to land

where they live. Conservation easements, urban growth boundaries, state ownership, parks, etcetera are great tools, but they are just tools." Yet another executive director explained, "When we go to community meetings, we talk about the park or the garden, but we've also got to engage in other issues as they emerge. That's a place of disconnect with other land trusts—they're out there doing the conservation monitoring, which is super important, but we have to engage on the other community issues as well." It's that process of asking the community what they need, and being responsive to those needs, that defines community conservation.

This pioneering generation of land trust leaders has much to be proud of. The present position of strength, success, and resiliency provides a springboard from which to broaden the focus, approach, and relevancy of the land trust movement. It is time to include other people, other organizational allies with complementary missions, and other community priorities to bring the benefits of land conservation to more people, as a number of innovative land trusts are already doing. This is a pragmatic imperative, but also the right thing to do, as the Alliance has previously stated. And now it is time. Like the ambitious initiatives of *Land Trust Standards and Practices*, Accreditation, and Terrafirma, the Alliance and its land trust members are poised for the next bold initiative of Community Conservation.

A Summary of Findings

"Much needs to be said that has gone unsaid for a long period of time. Struggles we are running into as land conservationists, what people are saying and telling us on the ground, the real deal with urban conservationists. There has been a change in our lives, our land, our community, our outlook, our feelings and these thoughts may help someone."

— New York City conservationist

Through the various research methodologies described earlier, numerous interviews, focus groups, listening sessions, conversations, and a three-day retreat, we heard much from people working in the mainstream of the land trust movement, those working on conservation at the margins of the movement, and potential community allies. We asked and heard about the importance of land to community issues; about the role of land trusts in communities and people's images of land trusts at their best and falling short; about opportunities for collaboration with land trusts how land trusts could make more of a difference in their communities; and about the role the Land Trust Alliance could play in strengthening community partnerships. There is far too much data to include all of it in this report, but we will do our best to summarize and synthesize and draw out the salient themes and what matters most. Additional ideas and thoughts are fleshed out more completely in other parts of this report.

It is important to note that among the seven specific affinity groups we identified, we did not gather extensive information from potential allies in the public health sector. We will include a few insights we gained and some commonsense ideas regarding land and public health, particularly related to youth education and access to healthy foods. We still believe that there are important potentials for alliances with that sector, but that linkage may be less well developed than others and require more time for the Alliance and the land trust community to cultivate.

The Role of Land in Community and Opportunities for Collaboration

All affinity groups and potential allies saw clearly the important role that land plays in their work and all imagined opportunities to collaborate or to continue and strengthen ongoing collaborations with land trusts. Some are land trusts themselves and a few had direct experience working with land trusts, but most knew of the land trusts in their communities and had some sense of what land trusts do. All could describe real or imagined roles land trusts might play in the community, particularly related to their respective sectors. And all respondents thought that land trusts' work of preserving green and open spaces in their natural state or for agricultural activities, when those spaces might otherwise be developed, could be a good thing, depending on local circumstances. It was clear that the idea that land trusts might dedicate an explicit dimension of their work toward community benefit was most exciting and inspiring to most respondents.

Affordable Housing

"Land is the lifeblood for sustaining rural housing organizations," said one respondent. Although there is often a shortage of affordable housing—particularly rental housing—in agricultural-based communities, the expense of acquiring land is a huge challenge to developing housing. Large companies can buy up big tracts of farmland and hold them because they have the capital resources to do this. For Community Development Corporations and other affordable housing developers, holding costs are usually too high, crippling options for balancing multiple projects and being productive.

One rural housing practitioner underscored the need for a holistic approach to conversations about land that recognize the importance of agriculture in the economy, the need for housing, and the need for conservation. In Vermont, this conversation has been happening since 1987, when the agricultural, conservation, and housing sectors came together to create the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board. Housing interviewees thought an exploration of partnerships between conservation land trusts and community land trusts might have strong potential for furthering this particular conversation in other places in the country.

Another area for inquiry might be around land that individuals or land trusts might want to donate or dedicate specifically for affordable housing, whether through an easement or through a lease used by a community land trust or other housing entity. Such scenarios would require pilot initiatives to experiment with technical issues and unconventional practices that might emerge through land trust/housing partnerships, such as un-linking the ownership of the buildings from the land. Pilot initiatives would provide opportunities to learn from and document lessons and best practices and would provide tools with which to help educate financial institutions and/or other investors.

Rural Economic Development

"Land is the asset for redefining the future—energy, food, ecosystem services, flexible manufacturing, all have some connection to the land base." Land will play a critical role in reimagining and re-shaping economic development in many rural communities. Affordable housing and food systems could fit into this sector, along with agriculture, forestry, energy, and natural resource-based economic development.

Rural economic development practitioners saw a clear role for land trusts in helping communities consider possibilities for working landscapes, specifically livelihood opportunities that sustain, protect, and manage the land for the future. Land trusts could also contribute to the visioning conversations and processes currently underway in many rural communities. Land trust participation in these conversations could: leverage land trust expertise in assessing the asset base; bring different audiences and new stakeholders to the conversation; and, as tasks and goals come to light, advance implementation strategies.

Many rural communities lack intermediary capacity, and land trusts might help to fill this gap. "If land trusts could play that [intermediary] role and be forward thinking about the products and services from the land, this could greatly serve the community," in terms of facilitating

sustainable economic development. Land trusts might help to assess marketable opportunities within a community and help shape or influence how land might be used productively to meet market demand. This might include management of certified forests or local food systems and could drive economic development as a local wealth-building activity. In some cases, the land trust role could be as simple as providing a link between conservation easement landowners and economic development organizations that can help add value to and market local products.

One respondent, thinking outside the traditional economic development framework, looked at land trusts as entities with "potential to be an incubating benevolent force by supporting the self-sustaining ability for a small rural school, other enterprises, and the people who live there. [There are] opportunities for economic development and education, it's one of the major antidotes or hopes to our current economy—a sharing economy where you have incubators of collective communal self-reliance." Again, it comes down to sharing in the challenges facing our local communities and collaborating with people and organizations to create solutions.

Public Health

"I went from being depressed, isolated, sleeping in past noon. When I began gardening, it just all came into focus for me. I physically feel 100 percent better," said one 26-year-old woman who credits a land trust with changing her life when it granted her a community garden plot. She gained a hunger to learn more about gardening and local flora and fauna, a love of natural areas near her home that she had never before explored, a sense of community with other gardeners, and she became a runner. This land trust discovered indirectly that a focus on sustainable agriculture, local foods, and community gardens turned out to yield dramatic and practical public health benefits. Now the land trust has a staff member who consults with pediatricians at the local hospital to write prescriptions for children to get outdoors and exercise.

In a country facing a crushing epidemic of obesity and other accompanying health problems—like heart disease and hypertension, stroke, type 2 diabetes, and certain types of cancer—the health benefits of a good diet and outdoor activity cannot be overstated. Thirty-six percent of all American adults and 16 percent of children are obese. Physical activity, like walking or biking on open space trails, can cut the risk of developing heart disease in half and cut the risk of hypertension by almost a third. The authors of this report believe that there are great untapped potentials for land trusts to collaborate with public health organizations in the areas of community gardens, to produce nutritious local foods for those who do not otherwise have access, and to provide some public access to conserved lands for outdoor physical activity.

Food Systems

Food is the one way human beings connect to the land each and every day. Work on food production, distribution (through farmers markets and community-supported agriculture) and innovative models of farmland ownership and access are some of the richest and most fertile areas where land trusts might engage with community. The enormous popularity and demand for healthy, local food is evidenced almost everywhere one looks today from supermarket shelves to the New York Times bestseller list. Healthy food matters right now to nearly

everyone in the United States and there are literally thousands of land-based communities efforts that have made that happen. Those land trusts who see the connection of their work to these other land-based efforts have significantly broadened and grown their membership base and found new ways to explain the meaning and importance of conservation.

"[Land is] the critical place where people gather to grow food, [and land trusts have a] role of sustaining it for future," observed one interviewee. On the other hand, "a lot of times the conversation [about food] doesn't turn to land—it's assumed and not highlighted." Land and land stewardship are essential for food production, but it is often invisible in the discussion of food systems. While land is essential to produce food, the expense of land makes it prohibitive for some populations—such as traditional farmers, immigrants, youth, and other new farmers—to enter the sector.

Using well-honed expertise in the legal and tax issues around land acquisition, ownership, conservation, and access, some land trusts are helping to re-imagine the traditional model of family farms and developing collective structures for land ownership that make land more accessible to a broader base of aspiring farmers. More than 25 land trusts own and operate working farms that have either a specific food production or community benefit goal, and many have both. Many more land trusts own farmland that they lease to farmers. Partnerships are being developed between land trusts and farm transition organizations that work on a broad array of issues related to making farming a sustainable endeavor and livelihood. Groups like Equity Trust and Land for Good have pioneered forms of conservation easements that have addressed long-term affordability of farmland. These tools have been adopted by some innovative land trusts and state agencies, but are not nearly widely enough used.

Another key issue in the food and farming community is the fact that agricultural lands in many places are owned by older Baby Boomers, and many wonder what will happen with that land in the future. In some of those same places, new, young, and immigrant framers usually do not have access to land. Land trusts might promote ways to preserve land through conservation easements to keep it in farming families and/or make it accessible for young, immigrant, and other emerging farmers. Land trusts are already participating in, or have established local "land link" programs, which connect aspiring young farmers and ranchers to agricultural lands that are part of land trusts' conservation portfolios. Land links can also help connect untested young agrarians with elder mentors to pass on traditional wisdom as well as the practicalities of running an agricultural business.

Urban Conservation

"It's about a land ethic," said one urban land conservationist. "We're as connected to the land as the suburbs and others." In terms of resource efficiency, the carbon footprint and the land footprint in cities, urban conservationists are at the forefront of the environmental movement and charting a more sustainable course forward. There is much, much more to urban conservation than community gardens, and there was a sense from most urban conservationists interviewed that it was the ignored stepchild of the movement, often held up

as a tokenized example of community conservation, but not really given the support and attention it deserves.

Investing in urban conservation means investing in the people and organizations who are already at work on the many urgent problems cities are faced with. We heard loudly that it is important for conservation to listen first, to address first things first, and to follow the lead of those who know their own communities and what they need. "Don't talk to me about my kids sitting in front of the TV or obesity, when that's the only safe place," was the way one interviewee expressed it. So land trusts can start with creating a safe place for neighbors to gather, for instance, and grow from there. As one urban conservationist explained, "When you're working on a community issue, it's all of it—the pothole, the broken light, police brutality, crappy schools. When we go to community meetings, we talk about the park or the garden, but we've also got to engage in other issues as they emerge." Urban community gardens are definitely important and worthy projects, but there is more to do than that. We also heard that land trusts need to focus on public access to conserved lands in or near cities, on advocating for policy that benefits those less privileged, and on management of conserved lands for low-income neighborhoods.

Youth in Nature

"[Land is] the fabric underneath our projects," said one outdoor educator. Land is the means to get people outside so that we can build a citizenry that is interested in protecting and stewarding greenspaces. "Land trusts talk about perpetuity—[nature education] is a critical piece of that. If we want to see our work continue, we have to get kids involved." In many places, land also creates possibilities for reconnecting to history, culture, and heritage of a place. "Rural communities have a deep and historic connection to land that is being lost.… We seek to reconnect a generation to their role in maintaining the environment and learning to interact in a healthy way." Whatever the educational needs of a community, whether for youth or adults or seniors, land trusts have the opportunity to listen and be responsive regarding the role that land can play.

Land-based educators and youth development professionals saw opportunities for partnerships with land trusts in developing education, mentoring, and employment programs to help young people understand their connections to the greater landscapes in which they reside. Service learning programs, in which participants gain valuable skills and knowledge through the experience of completing conservation or community work projects, are particularly beneficial and ripe for partnerships with land trusts. In addition to environmental knowledge, local connections to the landscape include the complex historical, cultural, social, and economic realities of place. "It's easy to embrace a leave-no-trace principle when you're camping," said a youth corps executive director. "It's less easy to do it when your uncle is selling his pasture because he is having a hard time meeting his property tax needs. How do those two meet?"

This variety of collaborative programs would ultimately help youth see their role in protecting and stewarding the land. Land trusts are leveraging nature education partnership opportunities to identify federal, state, and philanthropic funds to develop and support programs.

Native Lands

"Native people will always be connected, spiritually, ecologically … in all ways, to the land," said one Native land trust professional. Land is absolutely central to Native culture and identity, and those we spoke to feel a sacred charge to care for it, but they also feel alienated by the mainstream land trust and conservation community where there really should be a bond of common conservation cause. "There's just this huge educational gap, ignorance, and misunderstanding of tribal people and tribal nations and their work," said Chuck Sams, CEO of the Indian Country Conservancy. Some of that ignorance goes so far as rewriting history and disregarding ancestral ties to certain landscapes. One participant called for a tribunal to hold land trusts accountable and set the record straight. In addition to strong ancestral ties to the land, Native people also hold aboriginal and ancestral use rights and treaty rights to traditional lands and waters that extend well beyond the boundaries of their reservations, and in many cases to parcels of land protected by land trusts.

The conservation movement historically has not seen Native people, cultural resources, and stewardship as part of the landscape that they seek to protect. "It doesn't make sense to protect land without people. That's not what the land is telling us," said one non-Native conservationist. Despite frustrations, most Native conservationists are open and willing to partner with mainstream land trusts. One important step would be respecting the great value of their traditional ecological knowledge, based upon thousands of years of living in relationship with the land, and placing those principles alongside science and conservation biology as conservationists attempt to restore ailing ecosystems.

Tribes have found that forming their own land trusts can help protect important off-reservation lands and cultural sites through conservation easements or cultural preservation or access easements, but working in partnership with existing land trusts can achieve the same results. Other concrete ideas for engaging and consulting with tribes, which would go a long way toward strengthening this primary relationship between land trusts and First Nations, are found in the Recommendations section and in the appendices. One Native-run land trust has joined the Land Trust Alliance—the Kumeyaay Diegueño Land Conservancy—and a more welcoming posture might encourage others to join. In the meantime, a vigorous Native land trust movement has formed its own working group and is moving ahead on collective conservation issues.

Senior Land Trust Leaders

In addition to identifying potential community allies, we also interviewed many senior leaders within the land trust movement. "I think the world has changed in the past four to five years; the definition of a land trust at its best is changing," said one executive director. "Knocking down big acreage 20 years ago would have been huge success. It's not now." All the executive directors we spoke with shared this strong sense that land trusts have a new role to play in their communities and that relationships are as important as completing conservation deals. Many felt frustration that the Alliance and the mainstream of the movement were still excessively focused on transactional skills and becoming less relevant to the daily realities of

local, on-the-ground land conservation work which requires time to understand what a community most needs in its relationship to land. As the evolution process is underway, that tension between the relational and the transactional persists even within some of their own organizations.

One senior land trust leader described that tension this way: "What's changed the most is that process is now as important as product. Today, equity, fairness in our dealings, transparency and real partnership are as important as getting the deal done."

Land trusts have found numerous avenues for authentic community engagement through creative partnerships and new approaches (some examples are highlighted in the What Is Already Working Well section below). Land trusts have had and continue to have a clear public trust responsibility, but the nature of the public benefit is shifting and land trusts are advancing in the quality and depth of their engagement with community to identify and ensure that benefit. Land trust leaders recognize that the benefits of authentic community engagement flow in both directions, with communities gaining a new set of tools, expertise, and partners for problem solving, and land trusts gaining new knowledge, trust, and greater support from the community. And the collective benefits create healthier, more inclusive, and more resilient communities for one and all.

Why Community Conservation

The pragmatic and moral imperatives for engaging more effectively with community are spelled out clearly in other parts of this report. Below are additional thoughts and ideas, quoted or paraphrased from various listening sessions and interviews, about how community conservation can make both land trusts and communities better, stronger, and more resilient by working in partnership.

Communities are stronger through the experience from working with land trusts because they can have access to experiences on the land that are transformative. This may include getting the experience of and an investment in natural open lands close to home, community gardens to bring neighborhoods together, conserved farmland for local food production, having clean water, safe places to gather and play, and potentially take actual ownership of significant resources. Communities can develop a deeper capacity, greater technical expertise, and more resilience to problem solve. Communities may also gain access to more shared program funding or direct philanthropic connections through collaboration with land trusts.

Land trusts are strengthened because through community they are building a stronger constituency for conservation, not just working with the usual suspects. They can learn from community groups and gain more perspective about other worldviews, and about power and privilege and institutional oppression, all of which can stand in the way of meaningful community partnerships. They develop a better knowledge base, more tools, and much more resilience around their central mission of land conservation through broader, authentic connection with the communities they serve. And eventually they become a trusted and more

visible member of the community. Land trusts and communities of all sorts working together are a powerful political force for a shared conservation vision.

Not engaging effectively or in a relevant way with communities can have many negative impacts, both for land trusts and for the community. Land trusts focused on "doing deals" or selling and advocating for conservation before learning what the community most needs creates the sense that what matters most is the land trust, not the community. And working with a small universe of supporters, members and benefactors unwittingly creates a cliquey atmosphere that is not transforming or addressing root causes of problems related to the land. They become isolated in a small circle of people who speak the same language of conservation easements, but it is not the language of inclusion. "We do not adequately use land to connect people to landscape because the community is either excluded from a process or unaware it's happening. In either case, the community doesn't benefit as much as it could from the land trust's work and we miss the opportunity to build a vibrant relationship." "Our failure to listen, engage with communities, and understand the impacts of our work reinforces that image [of elitism] and erects more barriers and creates more divisions."

By not engaging, the land trust misses an opportunity to broaden its impact and constituency and, inevitably, becomes marginalized rather than being a tool in service of community or part of a larger collaboration. The land trust becomes less relevant and powerful because it is not authentically engaged and, as a result, there is less support for its work. Some even questioned whether conservation nonprofits should continue to exist if not genuinely serving a community need.

One social justice advocate boiled it all down: "Yes, there are costs to change, but costs of not doing it are so much higher, they're just less visible."

What Gets In the Way

Internal Obstacles to Change

We heard from many land trust practitioners about the challenges to fully engaging in community conservation, even when leadership within the land trust is dedicated to making the shift. In part it is the slow process of creating a new organizational culture that requires building new relationships before a land trust can recruit and incorporate the perspectives of a diverse board and staff. As one land trust executive director said, there is "insufficient understanding of the historical and current connection to land ownership and dynamics related to privilege, and specifically, where people are placed socially and economically in the community. There is a deficit of training and learning around this." Some land trust leaders simply feel that it's not their business to advance broader community agendas, though they paradoxically see the benefit of broadening the constituency for conservation.

There is also some tension in shifting from the "old" tried-and-true model of land conservation, which has been so effective for so long, to the "new" and unknown approach of community conservation. Some even feel a sense of loyalty to the old guard that is hard to shake. The pace

of work under that old model is focused on the rush and gratification of completing projects each year, where community engagement requires a much slower pace of building relationships over time. For some land trusts, working through all these internal organizational issues will require deep intention, as well as significant time and resources. Others may be ready to take first steps tomorrow.

External Obstacles to Change

Many of the external obstacles and skepticisms we heard from non land trusts have to do with a basic lack of information and understanding about who land trusts are and what they do, underscoring the thoughts above about land trusts working in isolation from the communities in which they operate. As any land trust staff member knows, even among ardent supporters there is often an incomplete understanding of how land trusts operate and the legal and financial tools they use to conserve land. As a recent land trust executive director, one of the authors of this report often had to frequently correct the mislabel "Taos Land and Trust," which made the organization sound like an investment firm or financial institution. "In general, folks in our community don't have an adverse opinion about land trusts, it's more that they don't understand them," said one potential ally. Some see land trusts as extreme preservationists who lock up land and keep the people out. "I don't know that conservation easements impact negatively, but the perception is out there, particularly when you're dealing with lower wealth folks struggling to get by. The poverty trumps the environment every time. To the extent that land trusts are viewed as being extreme in environmental protection, the perception is hard to overcome."

There is the persistent perception that land trusts are well-endowed and primarily serve the wealthy, even though it is less true today for some land trusts. "It's hard to hear land trusts complaining about funding and resources when community groups have always been under-resourced," said one community organizer. "Locking up land that the public can't access—it creates an idea of elitism that [land trusts] are disconnected from the community and only serve rich friends that have lands that they want a tax break for." From a rural economic development perspective this was seen as "… taking land off the market. [They are] taking it away from the stock of assets that might be available for economic development. That perception is particularly prevalent in communities where land ownership by individuals is viewed as a right, for example, in the Deep South and Midwest." From a broader community development perspective, the question becomes, "What is that wealth creating, how do they use it and invest it? And how does it benefit the community?"

Another widely held perception of land trusts shared by respondents is that land trusts appear to be more focused on getting transactions done than in building relationships. "They're very transactional and can be limited to just getting the land. You wonder if there is a broader community benefit to what they're doing, something more than just counting the number of acres. I wonder if there are ways they can bring their expertise to bear in ways that are more responsive of community interests." Most understood that focusing on the core competencies required for conserving land was important to get the work done, but there was some encouragement about balancing technical expertise on land trust staffs with holistic "systems

thinkers" to create more relational capacity, connect better, and become more relevant to communities.

A final external perception of land trusts is that they tend to work in isolation in their own narrow silos and are seldom "at the table" for broader community conversations. There were various opinions about why this might be true, but many thought that land trusts tend to be focused on a "one dimensional approach" of land conservation. It's not that land conservation does not overlap with other community agendas, but because there seems to be a lack of effort in exploring, articulating, and leveraging those points of overlap. Some potential community allies acknowledge that they tend to work in isolation as much as land trusts and don't reach out like they should, but our conversations spurred more interest in creating those linkages.

Where land trusts are at the table, they play a critical role. The Vermont Housing and Conservation Board came about as a result of a partnership between conservation, agriculture, and housing and now serves an important "glue" function through funding, convening and information sharing, partnerships, and facilitating a cross-sector vision for livable communities. An interviewee with a youth corps in New Mexico made the case for why a similar vision might be developed for rural communities around the country: "The nature of landownership is changing in Taos. People come in and don't have that land ethic and connection, but they own the land.… Protecting land is protecting Taos, everyone has a stake in it."

The Iron Is Hot

While our research was qualitative and not quantitative, we did uncover some strong trends among respondents. Most potential community ally groups, while possibly not completely knowledgeable about the approach and scope of land conservation, were generally respectful of the work of land trusts, understood its importance, saw potential added value to their community work, and were eager to partner. Even those affinity groups working at the fringes of the conservation movement who have been frustrated trying to work with the Alliance or mainstream land trusts in the past are open, willing, and hopeful about the potentials for community conservation going forward that could come out of this project.

The most critical and frustrated about the current state of community engagement were senior leaders and long-time executive directors of land trusts themselves. In many cases these are directors of some of the largest and most respected "mainstream" land trusts in the nation.

Potential partners out there are ready and waiting for meaningful partnerships with land trusts. And there is a hunger, at least within some corners of the land trust community, to expand the work, to authentically engage with a broader range of community allies, and to make a contribution to addressing community issues. There are land trusts throughout the country who have been doing this work for years, and we can learn from them and follow their leadership. The iron is hot.

The Courage to Make Big Change: Introduction to the Recommendations

It is a courageous act of leadership to question end goals, to aspire to work differently, and to welcome a critique. Alan Savory, founder of Holistic Management International, spoke at a recent conference about how institutions are "water tight to new knowledge," that despite brilliant and well-intentioned people, organizational culture will not budge out of its comfort zone. The Land Trust Alliance deserves praise for proving this axiom wrong and stepping out of its comfort zone to commission this report. The team conducting this project heard tremendous appreciation for the work of land trusts and for the leadership of the Land Trust Alliance to innovate around how and why you might engage more deeply in the communities in which you work. An African American forester interviewed in this project said this about the land trust movement: *"We can only have conversation about what land trusts have <u>not</u> gotten right because of what they <u>have</u> got right. We can provide a nuanced critique of land trusts because they've been so effective."* Many folks, inside and outside the land trust movement, can see the big picture and can even name where we are today in the process. One land trust executive director said this: *"It's like medical triage; the first thing you've got to do is stop the bleeding, then you can take time to look at the long term, the systemic challenges that are preventing health."*

This is a particular moment in time for the land trust movement and these recommendations are designed to help you rise to this moment.

The story of all long-term efforts—and organizations—is that they need to evolve in order to innovate and serve. As examples we might look at what the NAACP, IBM and American Lung Association were doing 30 years ago and what they are doing today. Organizational change is always a slowly swinging pendulum-of-a-conversation between "how" and "why." How land trusts do their work has been the focus of the last 25 years, and those hard skills are imbued today in the culture and DNA of the Alliance and land trusts everywhere. The question for the next 25 years is why, for whom, and how will they do their work differently to achieve these more systemic goals and approaches? And as the Alliance authentically answers these critically important questions, change will begin to occur.

The main thrust of these recommendations is directed internally at the tribe of land trusts and its leader, the Land Trust Alliance. This report is mostly about aligning that movement around who it really wants to be and, should it choose, preparing it to be better partners with a much larger universe of actors already working successfully to create healthier, whole communities. The allies are waiting and are excited, willing to meet land trusts on equal ground. The opportunities are for a much larger set of shared and durable successes, and for land trusts to fulfill the calling of one of their greatest heroes, Aldo Leopold, to create a stronger and broader land ethic in this country. The reason this has been so hard to achieve is that it could never be done alone; to strengthen a land ethic in this country requires that conservationists join others.

These recommendations are not a call to change the mission of land trusts. Emphatically, we heard this from both community allies and land trusts themselves. No one wants land trusts to stop doing what they do best. No respondents felt that land trusts should expand into new sectors of work. In fact, *"At their best, land trusts are keeping their focus on the conservation parts of their mission. They're not trying to build brand new people-type programs if there are already partners doing those things."* Community conservation has never been about mission drift, but about the possibility of finding a larger and shared purpose for that mission. Community conservation is about putting the unique expertise of land conservation in service to larger community objectives. Land trusts share a destiny with the communities in which they work. The goal is to find the sweet spots where those destinies overlap and then to learn the skills of being a good and effective partner.

But, truthfully, community organizing is often very new for land trusts. And it does require different skills and competencies for land trust leaders. Transactional skills will need to be matched with relational skills; it's about becoming full leaders on a larger stage. For some land trust leaders who just love "doing deals" this may be an uncomfortable stretch, but our conclusion is that many land trust leaders are already doing some of this community work and the far majority will enjoy and personally grow from what it asks of them.

The premises of effective community organizing are: to meet the community where it is; to listen deeply to its interests, aspirations, and needs; and to move forward where there is overlap. Some land trusts are already practicing good community organizing. They are protecting the land while helping people to connect to and benefit from it, in ways both tangible and intangible. They are becoming voices to help their communities think about what the land means—culturally, historically, socially, and economically. These land trusts are defined by their local culture, community, and economy, not by a set of organizational outcomes. "*I love to see land conservation where it ties together a connection between land, economy, enterprises, and community*," said one senior land trust leader.

These land trusts are leveraging community "green infrastructure" to serve a broad base of the population in supporting community health and viability, including supporting working families, ranchers, and helping farms and farmers to thrive. They are dynamically drawing on a wide range of tools for conserving and sustainably utilizing land. They are reaching people by entering into partnerships with organizations whose strengths are in people's skills. They come in with deep curiosity and are working hard to understand how to engage at the grassroots, trying to understand community sensibilities and sharing decision making, and co-creating rather than selling their own "product."

These land trusts are making *communities* stronger because communities have access to experiences on and with the land that are transformative. Land trusts are helping to bring healthy food to the table, to improve local and regional economies, to provide land-based youth education, to improve peoples' health and well being, and to help communities own significant land resources. This helps communities to be more resilient. And it helps land trusts to become more resilient, innovative and successful. Community conservation is already

building a stronger constituency for conservation far beyond the usual suspects. It's helping land trusts to learn and to become better public citizens.

As one land trust executive director said, *"Each time we engage in a new place, our knowledge base increases. We try new tools and learn what does and doesn't work … **and** become a trusted part of the community."*

There is very effective community conservation going on today, but it is the exception rather than the rule. And it is these innovating exceptions, among some of the oldest and most successful land trusts in the movement, who are calling most ardently for changes. This is because they care so much about the movement they helped to create. And it's because they are not feeling supported, they are weighted down by perceptions that the majority of land trusts reinforce, that they have a sense of urgency, and they desire to see movement spread within their Alliance. They speak openly about having outgrown the infrastructural support that the Land Trust Alliance offers and, in fact, many feel that today it holds them back. Our recommendations elevate and honor these innovators because they are already doing community conservation, and they need to feel part of a movement that moves forward along with them.

We find two big costs to land trusts when they are not deeply engaged in the community: they are weakened by their disconnection from the people, and the people are weakened by their disconnection from the land. Every land trust executive director well-trained in negotiation and real estate transactions can understand how their work gets more difficult when people and community don't understand and trust them. The great news is that potential allies are open to collaboration, see the possibilities, and have a lot of practical ideas of how it could happen. They are respectful of land trusts, cut them a lot of slack, and are eager for partnership.

Times are changing for land trusts. "*We're probably a pretty typical land trust—we have a relatively large staff and our board is clear that our mission is not about communities, it's about land. We also recognize, however, that our mission can't be accomplished without engaging people in a different way than we have in the past,"* says one executive director.

And there are always tensions in shifting from "old" to "new." We've heard many of the explanations why not to engage with community: "*now's not a good time … it's not our mission … we need to stay focused ... it costs too much money … we don't know how to measure it … it's not what I'm good at.*" We heard, too, about a sense of disloyalty about moving away from "old model," which has worked so well and accomplished so much. All of these feelings are natural.

But the time ***is*** right. This alignment between land trusts and community interests is particularly critical right now, as so many rural communities are in the process of re-inventing themselves and attempting to create comprehensive future visions. Our nation's demographics have already shifted and will continue to shift. The Land Trust Alliance has made enormous strides in creating durable, successful organizations and now it must point that formidable strength

toward a larger, more integrated, and inclusive purpose. This is the right thing to do, and it's also what will make land trusts more effective.

These recommendations are grouped by their relative priority and address all aspects of the Land Trust Alliance "house," beginning at its foundation. Our recommendations call upon the Alliance to begin with internal steps to clarify why they are undertaking this work and to find internal alignment on purpose and goals. In addition to this significant organizational cultural change, the recommendations call for learning from within about the innovations already underway, acknowledging and respecting history and repairing relationships, identifying and pursuing ways to engage authentically with potential partners in other sectors and, lastly, messaging to a broader audience**.** Some of these recommendations ask the Alliance to model the change themselves, others are aimed at policy, and still others ask the Alliance to support its members in creating change. In particular, we recommend making a substantial investment in the individual and organizational innovators who are already practicing community conservation.

We also recommend that community conservation be embodied in two new standards in the *Land Trust Standards and Practices*.

Attempting community conservation requires the courage to make big changes. And when a person or an organization of people takes on big change, it's easy to be hard on oneself, it's easy to criticize more than encourage, and it's easy to get overwhelmed. To all readers of this report, we offer these words of encouragement: "*Do the best you can in the place where you are and be kind,*" said Scott Nearing, an historical, social justice leader whose work spawned the back-to-the-land movement in the United States.

All of the recommendations you are about to read are "levers," that if pulled, will begin in different ways to create changes in land trusts and in the relationship between land conservation and community. That's the main purpose of this research: to strengthen community *and* conservation by trying to bring them together. It takes courage, willingness to hear feedback, and more than a few deep breaths to begin this important work of making big change. We recognize that big change may start with small steps and we also recognize that those small steps can be extremely powerful when taken with intention and wisdom. This report is an effort to provide the Land Trust Alliance with some of the information necessary to take its next steps.

Structural Change

An effective response to the opportunities of community conservation, from the perspective of the innovator land trusts who are calling for change, would entail deep "structural change" within the Alliance. In addition, some of the land trust movement's most important potential allies may not be ready to stand alongside conservationists to do this deeply important work of connecting land and community until they see evidence of structural change.

"Structural change" is a term used to describe efforts that go directly toward changing inequitable social arrangements that are so deeply embedded in our culture, practices, and institutions that they are often unnoticed or "invisible." Dr. Paul Farmer, the internationally celebrated public health leader, Harvard professor, and winner of many awards (Tracy Kidder's book *Mountains Beyond Mountains* is all about Dr. Farmer) says of these social arrangements that they, "*are structural because they are embedded in the political and economic organization of our social world … neither culture nor pure individual will is at fault; rather, historically given (and often economically driven) processes and forces conspire to constrain individual agency."* Structural change as a process undoes inequitable social arrangements that systematically disadvantage certain groups and replaces those arrangements with equitable ones that ground our culture, practices, and institutions.

The direct and prominent connection between wealth, class, and land conservation has been well documented in this country by generations of academics and practitioners. This information, however, is not well integrated into the story that land conservation tells about itself or the practices it uses to address these dynamics. At the same time, stories in the United States abound within the living blood memory of Native Americans, low-income white people in Appalachia, black family farmers, and Indo-Hispano land grant heirs, to name but a few groups for whom a loss of land is tightly connected to loss of income and economic wellbeing, history and culture, and their sense of self and dignity. In some communities, mental health professionals have recognized a collective "historical trauma" connected to the loss of land and identity that is directly linked to substance abuse and violence. The gap between the stories told by conservationists and those told by others who are deeply connected to and love the land impede authentic collaboration, although connection to and love for the land should unite the two groups. This is the sorrow of the conservation movement, of our nation too, and one major obstacle to creating healthy, whole communities.

The ability to integrate land trust stories with the depth and complexity of the movement's roots and with the fullness and richness of the broader United States story about land requires first that land trusts know and understand these different stories. According to one land trust executive director, *"In our land trusts there's an insufficient understanding of the historical and current connection to landownership and dynamics related to privilege, and specifically, where people are placed socially and economically in the community. There is a deficit of training and learning around this."*

Here's an example of a sentiment we have all heard often enough that bears re-telling to explain the challenge of making the structural changes that are necessary to succeed at community conservation. "*I choose not to live in the past. I cannot possibly address what happened 150 years ago. I choose to focus on the future."* This kind of statement is sometimes used today as an excuse by some conservationists to not engage in issues that are important to others, or are difficult, or perceived "unsolvable" to conservationists. It may refer to Native lands, the history of slavery, the history of black family land loss, the history of the creation of our National Parks, the history of Hispanic land grants. To say, "I'm not going to talk about that" closes more doors that it opens. And the authors of this report fully understand that the

intention behind these kinds of comments is not to do harm, but there have been resulting impacts which are, nonetheless, harmful.

As one Native lands conservationist explained, "The problem is [land trusts are] not recognizing all of the different Tribes in the region and their long history in the area. So we found ourselves at odds with the land trust groups. We had to say, 'look, you can't rewrite history as you see it. I mean the history is what it is.' If there was some vehicle that would hold land trusts accountable, so they just can't come in and do what they want on our homeland.... I wish there was a tribunal for land trusts. Some way to not only set the history straight but the cultural record straight."

The difficult truth is that without structural change, inequitable social arrangements will be repeated forever unless we, as a primarily white conservation movement, step forward and do something to take apart the structure. In this case, the structure is one created by silence. By not talking about the issues, by "choosing to focus on the future" we are actually perpetuating the past. We recall William Faulkner's famous statement that "the past is never dead; it's not even past."

Wendell Berry, one of the wisest sages of the conservation movement, put that challenge this way: "The crucial difference, I think, between our society and others that have been divided, by class if not by race, is that in our self-protective silence up to now about the whole problem, we have not developed the language by which to recognize the extent or the implication of the division, and we have not developed either the language or the necessary social forms by which to recognize across the divisions of our common interest and our common humanity."

Some readers of this report may feel that historic injustices may not be their personal responsibility or within our power to directly remedy, but it is our responsibility as a movement and as members of the dominant culture to acknowledge and openly discuss that history. This points to developing new muscle—the competency and knowledge around cultural issues that are fundamentally connected to the work of conservation. Community conservation requires our movement to recognize this competency is as important and critical to the skills we have mastered in negotiating real estate deals or passing complex public policy.

Even one of the authors of this report with roots in a culture that has lost traditional land to the interests of conservation has had to take responsibility for speaking the truth about that history as a member of the conservation community. Each of us has to do our part, and our leading organizations must do their part. Otherwise that largely unspoken history of power within the conservation movement will continue to be an obstacle to more constructive engagement with some key potential allies with whom we need to work alongside, for the sake of the land.

The ramifications of this history are still with us. Another interviewee asks, "*What is that wealth creating, how [land trusts] use it and invest it? And how does it benefit the community*?"

It's not a question of whether or not we as a movement are privileged and powerful; the question is, what do we each do with that power and privilege? Who do we aspire for it to serve? It's no longer a question of whether or not our nation's systems of parks and conserved lands were often built upon the forcible removal of the people of that land. The question is how will we conserve lands differently today? What have we learned? What can we put our talents in service to today?

This can feel overwhelming to any land trust, no matter how big or small, traditional or innovative. What's a caring and aware conservationist to do? Our recommendations speak to this: the first step is educating ourselves and the second step is speaking the truth however authentically each and every one of us can. And let's remember again what Scott Nearing said, "Do the best you can in the place where you are and be kind."

We know that the Alliance will need to take on these recommendations in different stages and might not be able to focus entirely on the foundation or act in the order that we suggest.

We offer up a top-end, brand new Ford F150 pickup version of comprehensive recommendations for the Alliance as a whole, which will require significant investments of time and resources. And we also offer the beat-up old Subaru version that most of us can actually afford and drive, designed to fit better a small land trust that's sincere in trying to meet their community where they are, but will still involve rubber hitting the road. While there are innovator land trusts breaking new ground in community conservation, it's possible for every land trust in the United States to take steps to engage more deeply in the community and for it and the community to both benefit.

The authors of this report understand the challenging questions this work raises for the Land Trust Alliance. Is the Land Trust Alliance prepared to remake itself into an organization focused on the land/community/people relationship? Do you have a critical mass of support from your board to follow the innovative leaders? How do you keep this movement together? Can the Alliance afford to move slowly, nodding to the innovators while moving the traditional folks along? How little is enough? How much is too much?

A look to your past is helpful. At one of the earliest Rallies at Rocky Mountain National Park in 1987 there was a panel that included Rick Carbine, Darby Bradley, Peter Stein (longtime highly respected leaders) that took up many of these exact same questions about the critical importance of the "social side" of land conservation. Many of those "radical" ideas became the foundation of success for the Vermont Land Trust, certainly one of the largest, most successful and respected land trusts in this country. In the 1970s, when conservation easements were still quite young, Kingsbury Browne risked his partnership in a law firm to pursue a form of law that was unproven, economically questionable, and not rewarded. We are thankful he took that risk. His work with conservation easements turned out to be his legacy to the nation. Today there are over 95,000 conservation easements in the U.S., but his old law firm has long since disbanded.

Land trusts were once revolutionary, now they are mainstream. Don't forget the sacrifices and risks that made the movement mainstream. Critiques say that what was once a movement has become an industry. How do we take the strengths of an industry—its skills, power, and reach—and reconnect those with the sensibilities of a movement: service in purpose, listening well, resource sharing, and big-picture change-making. We might hold Faulkner's words that "the past is never dead" to honor the blood memory of Native Americans and black families and all those who have lost their land, but also to remember our movement's roots and its enormous capacity to take risks, to learn and grow, and to secure that land back in the service of healthy and whole communities.

Levers for Innovation:
Tools for a Movement
to Be Better Community Partners

Internal Changes

1. Undertake Community Conservation for Authentic Reasons and Communicate It Clearly

For change to occur, the Alliance must state clearly ***why*** they want to do community conservation. Why does the land trust movement want to evolve, to serve communities, and to include different people? Why do land trusts care about the social, economic, and other needs of the communities within which they work? To be sure, this is a strategic and pragmatic decision to some extent, but the motivations must go deeper than just strategy to also be inclusive and authentic. Without a clear and compelling articulation of this thinking, the Alliance will encounter skepticism and obstacles from some sectors to engaging communities and to broadening the benefits of conservation and those who are drawn to it.

"*To gain allies in this work, to succeed with community conservation, requires that the Alliance first express their vision for building healthy, whole communities, not just saving land,*" said one potential ally. Another said, *"Please stop thinking of this as the right message to be relevant in a changing world. I want to hear why the Alliance wants to do this because it's who they want to become."*

"It's offensive to hear conservationists talk about the demographic shifts to a non-dominant-white nation as a problem to be addressed rather than an opportunity to strengthen conservation."

"I see LTA wanting to do urban work just because a foundation somewhere told them they need to or because it gives them street credibility."

As it approaches this important work, the Alliance must ask itself, "who is benefiting from this?" There are many within land trusts as well as potential allies who are watching and waiting for the answer to this question. If the Alliance is primarily benefiting, then the motivations are more calculating than they are inclusive and authentic, and the initiative will ring hollow. If motivations and goals are transparent, if communities and community allies are benefitting, if it raises all boats, then strategic reasons are balanced with the desire to be inclusive and authentic and the initiative will be embraced and gain traction.

One key example of communication around this idea is how we talk about the demographic shift of 2042. Language that makes it sound like the conservation movement is mainly concerned with maintaining its relevancy and its funding base with a changing demographic in which people of color will be the new majority sounds like shallow self-interest and the wrong motivation. That will turn off the community audience the Alliance hopes to reach. "This focus

on 2042 makes me cringe. It sounds like a fear of being outnumbered," said one land trust practitioner. "We should be doing it for the values we believe in, because it's the right thing to do, not out of fear or just being strategic." An alternative communication might be something like this: "*The land trust movement has worked very hard and quite successfully for some thirty years at stopping bad things from happening to land all over the United States of America. We've used our significant power and privilege to create the political and cultural systems to hold this land in trust. As our successes have grown, we have recognized more and more that we share a destiny with the communities in which we live. We aspire to serve these communities, to bring the benefits of conservation to all people. Today, we must ask ourselves who are we accountable to? Now that the land is held in trust, whom do we trust it to? What are we for today? And who must we be sitting down with answer these questions?"* That kind of communication is more likely to create authentic relevancy and attract a broader base of community support.

2. Make Mission Equal in Importance to Real Estate Transactions

The community needs your best articulation for why your work is important to them, and that's not just a story about deals and acres. Forty-five years ago, Dr. Martin Luther King wrote, "No movement will ever succeed that cannot paint a picture of the world that people actually want to go toward." Land trusts need to spend as much time painting that picture of the future as they do speaking about real estate. Why land trusts do the work of conservation may be self-evident to other land trusts, but that is no longer sufficient when trying to do community conservation with others.

Conservation easements, public finance, and fee acquisitions are the important tools of land conservation, but not its purpose. What are the outcomes and larger goals for using these tools? To what ends do you believe land and its conservation can serve communities? This is what needs to be elevated in the land trust dialogue in order to engage more fully in community conservation.

We heard numerous sentiments like this:

One city conservationist put it this way: "*We hardly ever hear LTA talk about a philosophy or a purpose that might connect us all who are working for the land. All I ever hear about is the tools, and the tools we use are different, so because of that we're not fully allowed into the club, but we're just as much conservationists as a land trust in Montana."*

"[Land trusts] are very transactional and can be limited to just getting the land. You wonder if there is a broader community benefit to what they're doing, something more than just counting the number of acres. I wonder if there are ways they can bring their expertise to bear in ways that are more responsive of community interests."

An Alliance leader told us, *"Our movement's single biggest challenge is that the lens for every single thing we do is a transaction. We don't focus as much as we need to on what results from those transactions which I think is people's relationships to land and to one another."*

Another said, "*We see our work being wholly integrated into community to create a durable, local economy with a vision for green infrastructure that includes parks and trails, clean drinking water, alternatives for kids to experience land. Our role is not just land transactions, but brokering community access to land and supporting them to be part of the story of the land."*

3. Focus Instead on the Relationships between People and the Land

Community conservation, at its core, is about honoring and protecting the different relationships that people have to the land. When the Alliance and its member organizations begin to focus on that relationship, rather than the tools they use, then the language used, the groups who feel comfortable joining in, how projects are funded, will all begin to change and orient more toward people and community needs.

And land trusts working in untraditional contexts, such as in cities, with ranching communities, and with Native populations, represent a great opportunity as partners to build relationships directly with people. But these entities must see themselves as part of the heart and soul of the land trust movement as opposed to its fringes.

"It doesn't make sense to protect land without people. That is not what land is telling us. Land does need restoration and stewardship."

"I struggle with defining land trusts as being about conservation easements or even owning land. We work with hospitals, schools, elder care facilities. I love seeing multigenerational families walking on the trails. Our motto is to improve the quality of life of people through access to land. But because we focus on the relationships and not just on owning interests in land, we're made to feel that we're not a real land trust. "

"I used to fight land conservation organizations because they excluded people from the lands they conserved. I would try to explain that what you call wild we call home and that barring people from the land will only cause it to be disturbed from lack of understanding."

a. Develop a nuanced understanding and valuation of the different relationships that people have with the land. How does scenery, biodiversity and recreation compare with food and energy production? How will the land trust movement address these different relationships with the land?
b. Develop a stronger voice in the United States on land ethics. Consider conducting an annual poll about how people value place and relationship to land. Become the "go to" source for data and qualitative information about peoples' relationship to land and place in this country.
c. Seek out new media partners to begin to tell the story of our nation's relationship to land.

d. Honor others' relationship to land and place. Communications and actions from land trusts and the Alliance need to show humility and reflect awareness that land trust members are not the only good conservationists in the United States. In fact, there are many individuals and groups, not members of land trusts, who have been positive stewards of the land for a long time. The Alliance's ability to connect with the larger community rests on their humility and receptiveness to others' relationship to place.

4. Recognize and Respect the Centrality of Land to All Community Development Issues as Part of the Public Trust

All the potential ally groups we interviewed—food security, affordable housing, rural economic development, youth in nature, public health, Native lands, and urban conservationists—said that the land was ***central to their work***. Therefore, even if community development isn't in the mission statement of a land trust, its work directly affects the capacity of other groups to succeed. This requires of land trusts humility and, especially as they control larger percentages of a community's land base, a willingness to engage on issues that may not be in their mission statement.

The public trust embodied in the name, "land trust," and their stature in the community, place a responsibility on land trusts to be responsive to those communities. Here's that expectation from a potential community ally for land trusts to be public citizens: *"What does that [land trust] mean? Who owns it? Is it publicly owned?… land trusts get their buy in from suggesting there's the community ownership when perhaps there's not. Help us understand it—they should make it a reality if a land trust is indeed a trust and help us understand how we can interact with it. What's our role in it? If it's not a trust for the public, they shouldn't use that term."*

IRS regulations for donated conservation easements are very clear about the requirement for public benefit, not simply ecosystem health or beautiful but remote landscapes that no one will ever see. Land conservation ***is*** for the people. Typically, however, land trusts limit their public trust responsibility to the narrow and technical criteria found in those IRS regulations. We propose that the Alliance and land trusts reexamine what "trust" means to their organizations in a changing world with shifting community needs—who are we saving land for?—and broaden the definition of public trust beyond the narrow IRS regulations. That expanded definition, expressed through new project work and partnerships, will extend the benefits of land conservation much further and in more meaningful ways into the community. Land trusts need to explain to the broader community in clear terms what they do (and what they do not do and cannot do) and how conservation easements and conserved fee lands are used and could be used for public benefit. And they should draft conservation easements and other conservation agreements with flexible language that allows for appropriate future uses of the land, while still protecting important conservation and community values.

To this end, we propose that the Alliance use its legal and technical expertise to explore new language for "community conservation easements" that stipulate the "community values" being protected and advanced (as part of or in addition to other conservation values), the

express "community purpose" of the easement, and the "community benefit" of the easement (as part of or in addition to other public benefit).

5. Honor and Address the Structural Obstacles to Engaging with Different People and Communities

There are many organizations and individual leaders outside of land conservation who will stand with us in helping to create healthy, whole landscapes and communities if we demonstrate first that we understand, appreciate, and respect the story of their lives and their lifework. It is not the job of a person of color to educate land trusts about their story, it is the responsibility of the dominant actor to show the genuine curiosity and the need to comprehend more fully what we do not know now.

a. Educate yourselves and other land trusts about the history of black family land loss and the creation of our national parks and system of wildlife refuges by the forceful removal of Native people and low-income, less-privileged whites. Though we recognize that this is not necessarily part of the land trust movement's history, it is part of the larger history of the conservation movement that we are lumped together with, for better or worse. Regularly publish articles in *Saving Land* about this history. Publish anthologies which offer this education and organize discussion groups, as TPL once did, that create organizational dialogues on this history and the significance of it to their conservation work.

b. Educate yourselves and other land trusts about the role that privilege and class have played in the conservation movement. Create the space where open conversations can be had about the positive and negative ways that privilege is wielded by the conservation movement and who has benefited and been hurt by it. Conduct trainings, workshops and webinars that offer more information and experiential learning about class and privilege issues. This is essential for the Alliance and member land trust to better understand and respond to the very common charge from the community that land trusts are elitist: *"There's a perception that it's a wealthy, lock it up, keep people out kind of movement."*

c. Demonstrate a nuanced understanding of the difference between diversity, inclusion, and equity. Be able to publicly speak of where the Alliance is today in this continuum and what the conservation movement aspires to become. The term "diversity" is used very often by the Alliance, but in a manner that signals a lack of understanding of its context within the world of social and organizational change that many community groups are familiar with.

d. Recognize that the skills of community conservation are more relational than transactional and require a new set of trainings and workshops related to systems thinking, story, and citizen leadership; working across divides and humility about intercultural competency; and the mindfulness and practice of diversity, inclusion, and equity.

"We lack the ability to have good community conversations and to go into a community with curiosity. We need more skills around community and grassroots engagement and strategies

around engaging locally, including sharing leadership, decision making, and power. This will require internal learning around understanding difference, including developing a better understanding of the nexus between landownership and privilege; personal economic circumstances in communities, especially rural communities; and a better sense of structural supports for doing our work in this context."

e. Integrate community engagement skill building into Alliance leadership development and training programs, such as the Land Trust Leadership Program.

f. Continue to restructure the Alliance's board to better represent the evolving needs of its members. "*LTA shouldn't have an independent board but one that represents the members."* An organization focused on people and community should reflect community in its governance structures. Systems and practices that constantly engage members in Alliance decision-making would breathe fresh air into the organization. Listening sessions, polling, focus groups, member councils, visiting land trusts as they do this work should become the new governance practices. Selling new initiatives to membership, managing the conversation, marginalizing organizations outside the mainstream, avoiding confrontational issues will all perpetuate the status quo. Representative diversity and equity on the board would allow the Alliance to remain closer in step with the evolving needs of its member organizations and help foster organizational cultural change.

g. To help create a common understanding and shared vision of community conservation, and organizational movement in that direction, hold a leadership retreat at Knoll Farm with Alliance board members and senior staff.

h. Create a Community Conservation Advisory Committee comprised in equal parts of engaged land trust leaders and community allies.

i. Change the Alliance's mission statement to explicitly embrace community conservation. This would both signal a genuine commitment to it and help drive the evolution toward a broader and more inclusive approach.

j. Establish a national community conservation initiative. This would require a significant investment of resources, but would also signal a genuine commitment and help root this work firmly into the organizational structure. Staff might include a national director, a national ombudsman, and/or community conservation staff in every office and level of the organization. It will be important that this initiative not become an isolated silo within the organization that is at the mercy of budget cuts, but integrated into the structure and culture of the organization throughout. To maintain some autonomy and authority, this office should be tied directly to the office of the president. The Alliance should take the time to look at models of how other organizations have included similar positions, such as the Conservation Trust for North Carolina's Conservation and Diversity Program, to see what has worked and what has not worked. This office would take a leadership role in implementing the recommendations in this report, and could start immediately, with the

help of an advisory committee, to develop community conservation outreach and education programs, Land Trust Leadership Program curriculum, Rally programming, trainings, retreats, publications, webinars, website resources, etc. to get the conversation going ASAP (many in the land trust movement are hungry for it).

k. Develop the tools to assess and measure all land conservation as being more than "bucks and acres." It is critically important to see, believe in, gage, and measure the progress of all of conservations' community benefits. As a culture, we are what we measure. New ways of measuring success will help very significantly to drive change within land conservation. Center for Whole Communities' "Whole Measures" tool is one developed product to help, and it and other tools should be adapted as quickly as possible to assess the hard-to-measure community benefits, effectiveness, and multiple bottom lines of community conservation.

Language and Communication

6. Create an Aligned Understanding, Appreciation and Shared Vision of Community Conservation within the Alliance and the Land Trust Movement as a Whole.

a. Create the space for senior staff and board to think deeply together about the goals and objectives of community conservation and to seek alignment on those objectives so that the work can be led with awareness, clarity and assuredness.

b. Create opportunities for Alliance staff to dialogue regularly together through discussion groups on the meaning of community conservation and what it asks of the Land Trust Alliance.

c. Create and launch, with partners, a "Community Conservation Road Show" training module that offers explanations, skill-building experiences, space for dialogue on the these recommendations, best practices, at every national and regional land trust training venue. Goal would be to reach 50 percent of the land trusts in the country over the next 18 months.

7. Evolve How the Alliance Speaks to its Primary Internal Audience about Conservation

"*Crisis mode of conservation has to be over to do community conservation." "To change the chip, the movement has to relax just a bit and slow down." "the effect of telling us that everything has to happen faster and bigger is to keep us on the treadmill and unable to change.*"

We can't accept the treadmill narrative and do community conservation well. Conservationists who want that narrative to shift away from "bigger and faster" aren't asking the movement to kick back and relax, nor are they ignoring or naive about the real and present threats of land loss and development, they are asking for the space to engage in new relationships and the

opportunities to explore, together as a movement, what conservation can most be in service to today. They feel critiqued by the "bigger and faster" narrative because relationship building takes time and because great community conservation projects aren't necessarily big acres.

It also doesn't seem to be true that community conservation projects take longer or that traditional conservation projects happen faster. What does seem to be true is that there's a perception among many land trusts that the culture of our movement honors taking fifteen years to complete a real estate transaction but feels that 15 years spent on developing a relationship is excessive.

Encouraging the pace of conservation to be faster and bigger may be necessary in some cases, but so is communicating that in other cases it's very important to first go slow in order to go fast later. Time is what is most often needed to do work differently and more effectively. And in time-pressured situations, land trusts will continue to see this work as mission drift rather than the emergence of critically important new directions.

Dr. King had some powerful advice about this when he said, "If you want to go fast then go alone, but if you want to go far then go together." Practitioners of community conservation want to go farther than they have seen conservation go before and to do that takes time to build new relationships.

8. Speak about Land Ethics, Not about Geographies

Groups that are currently considered at the margins of the land trust movement must believe that their "land ethics" are honored by the Alliance and its member organizations. They are marginalized further by being spoken of as geographies ("urban") rather than as people and communities with their own deep relationships to land and place. Native groups believe they are the original conservationists and have a good deal of ethnographic documentation and preserved landscape to prove it. Conservationists working in the core of cities can speak about multigenerational relationships to place just easily as conservationists working in rural areas. If we can shift the dialogue from geography to quality of land ethics then we will gather together rather than push apart our movement.

"*How people within communities use the land is the dominant story of our time, but most land trusts are silent on this because they don't want to be political. But talking about land ethics isn't being political; it's showing we have some sense of what's right and wrong. There is no national entity that has a voice on land ethics in USA across the geographic board from cities to ranchers."*

a. Be mindful of excessive focus on urban gardening and particular urban gardeners, which becomes a poster-child "tokenism" and not authentic engagement. "*White conservationists love urban gardening because they're comfortable with it, but I need to hear that conservationists really believe in our land ethics not just that we make good photos and*

stories for their magazines. We're as connected to the land as anyone living in the suburbs or the country, but we're always referred to by our geography not by our values."

b. Observe the degree to which the naming of conserved lands reflects priorities and sends its own story. "*Conserved lands are most often named after the donor, second most often named after geography, and rarely ever named after a community of people that have been in relationship with that place forever."*

c. Stop using terms "America" and "American" to refer only to the U.S. This is alienating to other conservation allies in this hemisphere who are equally American.

Relationships and Engagement

9. Foster Meaningful and Lasting Community Relationships through Programs that Connect Land Trusts to community groups, new Internal Policy and Other Support

In our research we heard time and time again about the critical importance of building personal relationships to help ground any sort of community conservation initiative, otherwise collaborative professional relationships have a tendency to be tenuous and brittle. *"The work is often urgent, so in a pinch we are more likely to work with people with whom we have a relationship,"* explained one community activist. The Alliance can and should do whatever it can to foster that essential relationship building, whether it is able to act as a convener, to secure and re-grant resources directly to others, or use its significant influence to direct local funding to the effort of connecting land trusts and community groups. *"Generally speaking, the current practice of 'partnership' [in the land trust community] is about selling/advocating, getting others to join us on our terms, imposing our transactional frame, and 'hit-and-run' relationships,"* said one veteran land trust executive director. Clearly, Land trusts want authentic relationships, and these take time and effort that the land Trust Alliance could support in a variety of ways. Relationship building is a slow and not very linear process, so it is important that any efforts and resources in this regard are committed for the long term, even though the short-term benefits and tangible outcomes the land trust community tends to focus on may not be obvious.

a. Replicate tested efforts for "community conservation workshops" that bring together conservation and community groups. A three-day retreat with local land trusts and local community organizations in North Carolina that we designed and conducted as part of our research for this report was very successful, both in terms of gathering ideas for this report and in terms of modeling an approach to building relationships and developing collaborative projects. This "community conservation workshop" could be replicated throughout the country in statewide or communitywide retreats, with the right combination of partners and funding.

b. Fund or help secure funding for ongoing community conservation leadership councils in every state or smaller regions within states throughout the country. This idea is based on

the highly successful model of the New Mexico Strategic Leadership Institute, funded by the McCune Charitable Foundation and which has very specific criteria and expectations regarding willingness to share, collaborate, and build alliances across sectors.

c. Research and adopt a policy statement, less than a new Standard, on how best to respond to community needs regarding land resources and engage in authentic, collaborative relationships to address those needs.

The most common current perception from potential community allies about land trusts is that they simply aren't at the table. The lack of information about what a land trust is, its perception of being only for the wealthy, and its laser focus on transactions reinforces that land trusts are not present for broader community conversations. Some felt this absence was, in large part, due to land trusts not being proactive in bringing themselves to the table: *"Sometimes it seems like land trusts are just waiting for people to come to them."*

However, the most common perception for land trusts absence was that they tend to be focused narrowly on a mission of land conservation, defined as acquiring and conserving land. One respondent described it as a *"one dimensional approach,"* which another described as exclusive, not because it doesn't overlap with other community agendas, but because there seems to be a lack of effort in exploring, articulating, and leveraging those points of overlap.

Part of deeply engaging in the community includes *"Honoring the people that are already doing this kind of work ... being cognizant of what's been done before and how people are going about it. It requires coming in with great curiosity."* This situation is amplified by this land trust leader: *"We're going to have to be the best partner organization in the county. We'll need a new kind of competency; partnership ability to work collaboratively with unlikely partners—education, housing, hospitality, etc."*

Understanding how to have a dialogue that isn't one-dimensional, isn't about selling an idea, but is about finding that shared overlap of interests takes some new skills and ground rules. We recommend that the Alliance lead the way by collaborating with others to create a policy statement on how land trusts should best engage communities and then model that policy through their own behaviors and relationships with others.

Central to this new policy statement should be the following protocols:

- Face to face communication is key.
- Listen first. *"I wish I would hear this from a land trust: how can we help you to do what you want to do better?"*
- Understand other worldviews through community discussion about land, history, power, and privilege—internally and externally—through such exercises as a local land-loss timeline and whole communities exchange.
- *"Invest in community before requesting from community"*: Identify community needs from within the community—ask and listen well—respond to the real community needs and

determine with community guidance how to best fill those needs. Even if the land trust does not acquire new properties or conservation easements in the process it will build trust and relationship while providing important community service.

- Work with landowners and amend conservation easements as necessary and feasible to address community-identified needs for public access to accommodate educational and youth programs, social service programs, food production, appropriate economic enterprises, housing, and/or traditional cultural activities. Explore alternative systems of communal land ownership and stewardship.
- *"Must work with the tribal nations. If you don't then you are being disrespectful."* In other words, there are specific channels of communication that outsiders have to learn if they want to work productively with Tribes, just like working in different state and county jurisdictions.
- Honor others' legal and cultural connections to place. *"Mainstream organizations need to learn how to partner with Tribes, even if they have to be in a supporting role. Under treaty rights, I have cultural rights even if the land is owned by a private conservation organization, if they used federal money to acquire it."*
- Share the wealth. *"There's a culture in land trusts of being 'gatekeepers' to money and other resources. They need to stop being gatekeepers and start being doorstops that open doors for others without gain for themselves. The trust is that the land trusts will actually get far more back."* Break out of old ways of raising money on your own and start collaborating before dollars are in hand, then jointly apply for funding with community partners. Re-grant money to non land trusts to partner with land trusts. A good-faith, no-strings-attached approach will go a long way toward building trust and strong relationships.
- Do no harm. Make sure a land trust is always working in partnership with whoever is already there in the community and effective. Do not reinvent wheels and spread organizational capacity too thin by trying to do the work that other community organizations are already doing well; honor those already doing the work, follow their lead, collaborate, and create a synergy greater than the sum of its parts.
- Actively recruit representative diversity and promote equity and internal cultural change on the board and in staff leadership positions.
- Create opportunities for sustained leadership roles for local community members, including hiring community members to manage conserved lands.
- Show up at open community meetings to listen, see how you might help, then contribute land trust tools and expertise to collaborative solutions.
- Share leadership, resources, and decision making in community partnerships. Sometimes land trusts will use their expertise in a subordinate technical support role to a community project.
- Encourage land trust board exchanges with community groups for cross training and deeper understanding of mutual issues and priorities (land trust executive director join other board and vice versa).

The Land Trust Alliance can best advances these principles by modeling themselves new relationships by searching out over the next five years its own collaborations outside its

comfort zones (not TNC, TPL, The Conservation Fund, NOAA, NPS, or The Department of Defense) such as The Local Initiatives Support Corporation, The National Community Land Trust Network, The Black and Hispanic Congressional Caucuses, Wholesome Wave, National Association of Development Organizations, NeighborWorks America, and the Native Land Trust Working Group, to name a few.

10. Publicly Honor First Nations and Create a New Standard Regarding Appropriate Engagement with Tribes

Tribes and Native communities hold a unique position among conservation allies simply because all land conservation in this country takes place on ancestral tribal lands; all public and private lands, all lands taken from other racial or ethnic groups, were originally taken from Native people. *"Natives are the people who are most connected to land, and the most impacted by activities of land trusts."* We have a special responsibility to acknowledge and honor First Nations as the first people of this continent. Proclaiming that truth would be an important first step in re-forming and strengthening relations with Tribes and Native land trusts, which the conservation movement has long venerated as examples of conservation and stewardship.

The Alliance, too, is a land-based organization and it must show the nuanced appreciation that Native Americans are very closely connected to what the Alliance stands for and therefore should receive a high degree of public respect from the Alliance at all of its national and regional events. Public land agencies throughout the country are bound by various legal regulations regarding tribal consultation and cooperation with Tribes and that recognize tribal sovereignty, aboriginal and customary-use rights, traditional cultural rights, and treaty rights. Land trusts can easily do the same, and do it even better. This is essential in signaling respect not only to Native Americans but to all marginalized land-based peoples in the United States.

a. All future Rallies should begin with an honoring of the first peoples of that place. Request, with ample notice, that a representative of a local Tribe open each Rally with a traditional welcome. Local tribal officials should be acknowledged along with and equal to other state and local governmental dignitaries at Rally opening. And Indigenous Nations should be acknowledged along with and equal to foreign nations represented at Rally (this recommendation is a specific request of the Native Land Trust Working Group).

b. In addition to the important symbolism of publically honoring Tribes, the Alliance needs to work in a meaningful way with Tribes, the Native Land Trust Working Group, and other Native land trusts. That work can begin with identifying needs and collaborative projects and implementing actual work on the ground. Ongoing work can be guided and informed by creating a new Native Lands Advisory Committee.

c. To bring land trusts into closer alignment with the regulations governing public lands, we strongly recommend adding a new Native Lands Standard to the *Land Trust Standards and Practices* regarding appropriate engagement and consultation with Tribes, intertribal consortia, and Native communities. That standard should include at least one substantive

Indicator Practice that is reviewed as part of the accreditation process. We recognize that this is a significant undertaking, but it's important. The Native Land Trust Working Group has already developed draft practices for a Native Lands Standard (see Appendix C), which would be an appropriate starting point for a collaborative process with the Alliance, and certainly that interaction alone will go a long way toward strengthening relations.

d. As a simple and temporary placeholder for the lengthy process of developing a new standard, the Alliance should upgrade the "Land Trusts and Tribal Entities" factsheet on the website to a full webpage that lists updated and correct information about established Native land trusts (whether Alliance members or not) and related resources, and explains basic concepts of tribal sovereignty, tribal engagement, and consultation procedures.

Internal Policy Changes

11. Adopt a New Community Conservation Standard with at Least One Substantive Indicator Practice that Is Reviewed as Part of the Accreditation Process

Some land trusts have experienced tension around accreditation, as it requires staff to focus very heavily on the transactional rather than the relational, and there is some concern that it could stifle creativity with conservation easements. A conservation organization board member felt that *Land Trust Standards and Practices* imply rigidity, instead of the more fluid and responsive needs of community engagement—"Beware the checklist. Community conservation needs to be more an overarching umbrella about the 'why'." Standards and Practices and accreditation need to inspire, as well as restrict. This is tricky ground, because S&Ps should not be the "why" of community conservation. Nonetheless, it gets land trusts in the door to start new conversations and new relationships within their communities, and that in itself is likely to inspire curiosity and empathy and create a new community learning curve. It is not ***the*** solution, but it is one important entry point. And many within the land trust community endorsed the idea of a new Community Conservation Standard as a significant lever that will help foster new ways of engaging in community. As one practitioner put it, "Make [community engagement] a part of the accreditation process. Put your money where your mouth is."

A few preliminary ideas about elements or practices to include in a Community Conservation Standard:

- Gauges land trust's curiosity about its community.
- Requires projects to meet community-defined needs and goals.
- Requires that land trusts consult with local Tribal Historic Preservation Officers and conduct a preliminary survey of Indigenous lands on every conservation project.
- Documents how public will have access to the land for purposes that are responsive to community need.
- Documents how projects will build relationships between people and the land.
- Requires that community fits into ongoing stewardship of the land—will the land managers be from the local area and reflect the demographics of the region?

- Requires that Community members and land users serve on land trust boards.
- Requires an equity audit as part of accreditation.

As a starting point, here is draft language for a proposed new standard from "A Framework for a Discussion of 'External Community Ethics'," from the 2009 annual conservation leadership retreat at Rally:

"Community Needs. The land trust develops its mission, and periodically evaluates its work in the context of the social, economic and natural resource needs of the broader community within which the land trust works, and the land trust engages that community in this periodic evaluation."

The Alliance should also explore other accreditation programs around the country, like Standards for Excellence, that include representation of community, population demographics, etc.

12. Become More Creative and Community-Oriented regarding Conservation Easement Amendments

Inevitably land trusts and landowners cannot fully anticipate the future, particularly of human community need. Older "first-generation" conservation easements may not allow the changes necessary to respond to critical community needs, and even flexibility in the language of newer easements may not be enough to address unforeseen community circumstances. Designing in flexibility at the front-end, introducing public access, permitting community-owned renewable energy production, responding to climate change imperatives, altering agricultural practices on farms or ranches, or allowing housing for farmworkers, as a few examples, might serve community needs but not be possible within the "strict construction" approach to conservation easements and amendments.

Within the existing legal and tax framework, many easements could be amended to respond to certain community needs while maintaining conservation values, without creating private inurement or impermissible private benefit. Those kinds of creative amendments, as long as they do not raise any legal or tax red flags and work within the rules, should be encouraged, rather than discouraged, in land trust amendment policies and in the *Land Trust Standards and Practices*. Without changing anything else, and with the idea of a broader "public trust" at its heart, land trust policies can simply list "Significant Community Benefit" as one of the conditions under which amendment requests may be considered.

13. Level the Playing Field of the Existing Accreditation Process to Make It Less Costly and Fairer to the Smaller Land Trust

One city-based land trust told us: *"LTA's current Standard and Practices are sacrificing the good for the perfect and this is really hurting smaller land trust who is actually working with people in communities."* It's in the Alliance's best interests and in the interest of furthering community

conservation to accredit smaller land trusts serving broader community purposes. Due to the multifaceted nature of community partnerships, these organizations are already working on a very complex technical level and doing fantastic "community conservation," and would very likely make the cut for accreditation, but often do not have the resources and capacity to take on the enormous accreditation process. The Alliance should help lift up and showcase these exemplary land trusts by providing the technical and funding assistance necessary to attain accreditation. The Alliance has begun this important change by building new tools and technical assistance programs to help small and all-volunteer land trusts to prepare for accreditation at their own pace, and with assistance that is tailored to their particular needs.

Specific Activities and Projects

14. Significantly Broaden the Alliance's Legislative Lobbying Efforts to Refocus on the Needs of Communities at the Federal, State, and Local Levels

"*The Alliance's policy machine needs to focus more on the needs of its allies."*

This alignment between land trusts and community interests is particularly critical right now, as so many rural and urban communities are in the process of re-inventing themselves and attempt to create comprehensive future visions. Those dialogues are happening now and are very welcoming to the Alliance if you can take a seat at their table as a partner and collaborator willing to explore areas of shared concern. Examples are the National Association of Development Organizations and NeighborWorks America.

The Alliance's policy strengths are formidable and must be applied toward collaborations that build support rather than compete for it.

a. Analyze the indirect effects of land conservation policies on ally groups and actively support legislation and public policy that benefits ally groups even if there is no direct or immediate benefit to land conservation. Chances are that these moves would be reciprocated by ally groups for mutual benefit to one and all.
b. Work on climate change policies related to land management, including subsidies for carbon sequestration and renewable energy sources on conserved lands, as one of the most important issues impacting many communities.
c. Promote transferable state income tax credits and transferable federal income tax credits for donated land or easements. Putting the financial benefits of land conservation within reach of the lower-income landowners who need it most broadens support, increases land conservation, and shares the benefits of conservation more broadly.
d. Explore a "sliding-scale" policy for tax benefits for donated land or easements of small urban and agricultural parcels.
e. Put equal policy focus on initiatives that benefit people who live in cities. *"LTA puts a huge amount of time and energy into tax benefits for large conservation easements that don't benefit people in cities where parcels are often smaller than their minimum requirements."*
f. Support parts of the Farm Bill that support community food systems.

g. Tap into city legislators who care deeply about urban rivers and parks not just rural legislators.
h. Focus on lobbying for Land and Water Conservation Fund funding for state projects, not just federal projects, which can be used for smaller projects like urban pocket parks, community gardens, and other public acquisitions to benefit communities.

15. Significantly Evolve the Goals and Audience for the National Land Trust Rally

Many senior land trust professionals that we spoke with feel that the Rally: National Land Conservation Conference no longer meets their needs especially around the new work of community conservation. *"They really need to shake up the rally. It's repetitive and boring. I stopped going five years ago,"* was a common sentiment.

a. Make community engagement the theme of the next several Rallies, focusing each on community issues where land conservation can play a role, including keynote speakers from community ally groups and workshops and creative gatherings with ally groups. Examples include food security, land-based education, rural economic development, public health, housing, Native lands.
b. Develop a national dashboard on community engagement at Rally that assesses the number of participants at Rally that reflect the growing diversity of the community.
c. Actively invite and assist land trusts in bringing community partners to Rally.
d. Create community conservation programming workshops that make more possible these recommendations and focuses on the skill building highlighted in this report: working with difference, leadership development, cultural competency, story, explorations of different relationships to land.
e. Have a speaker from a human-centric orientation talk about reconciling the perspectives around whether to organize the work around natural or human community outcomes. Holistic Management International, as one example, applies a holistic approach to planned livestock grazing and other land management as well as organizational management, and could talk about integrating human-centered practices with conservation.
f. Explore opportunities for a forthcoming Rally to do a joint conference between the Alliance and a national ally group to promote cross-fertilization of learning and opportunities for collaboration.
g. Have more sessions of leadership development and building "citizen leadership."
h. Organize a "sub-Rally" where people deeply engaged with community shape the agenda around dialogues, narratives, sharing of challenges and successes. Have it begin with First Nations welcome. Integrate music into the program. Practice community conservation without preaching it.
i. Create opportunities to explore all the different ways that local communities, where the Rally occurs, connect to and are in relationship with the land through agriculture, art, recreation, economy, spirituality, and history. This would be the opening to explore and talk about land ethics as opposed to conservation successes..
j. Create and highlight ongoing community engagement sessions, but more importantly, look for ways to incorporate community engagement into every Rally session.

16. Create and Co-Fund Community Conservation Pilot Projects in All Regions of the Country

Supporting existing land trusts that are doing exemplary community conservation may be one of the most effective ways in the field to advance this work. Land Trusts follow other successful land trusts.

"Prove to me that my land trust will be better if I do this new work." "Land trusts tend to be very success-oriented cultures that can be adverse to risk-taking and often are deeply uncomfortable when they don't know how to do things."

We recommend that the Alliance develop and fund a new national program, delivered through its regions, that identify and fund pilot projects on aspects of exemplary community conservation, including measuring success differently, becoming a multicultural organization, collaborating to address food security or public health or Native lands, addressing the needs of low-income people. The Alliance would celebrate and promote their stories in *Saving Land*, at Rally, on the website and facilitate exchanges between pilot projects and other land trusts engaged or preparing to engage in similar projects. The Alliance could make grants to a few influential, innovative, change-making land trusts with non land trust partners to implement their aspirational community conservation project to "move the needle."

Examples of these potential pilot projects might include:

- *Measuring success differently from bucks and acres:* potential partnership between Vermont Land Trust and Center for Whole Communities.
- *Moving from Diversity to Equity:* potential partnership might include Center for Diversity in the Environment and Columbia Land Trust
- *Youth in Nature:* Support LandPaths to continue its work with the recently formed Sonoma Environmental Education Collaborative in transforming local landscapes into outdoor classrooms for education excellence.
- *Guidelines for Community Engagement:* potential pilot might include Conservation Trust of North Carolina, Stone Circles, and Center for Whole Communities.
- *New Legislative Initiatives:* potential pilot project to experiment with programs that make tax benefits of land conservation accessible and relevant to low income people (use the New Mexico transferable land conservation tax credit as an example).
- *Explorations of long-term tenure by community of conserved lands:* for example the work of Vermont Land Trust in conveying conserved timberlands to cooperatives of low-income Vermonters.

A key deliverable of this program, in addition to the examples provided by the pilot projects themselves, would be partnerships and collaborations with groups at the margins of the land trust movement who have a great deal to offer. For example, urban conservationists, conservationists working on housing and food security, Native lands conservationists, tend to all have their feet in at least two different worlds which make them very important

ambassadors for the mainstream land trust movement. They already have proven the capacity to listen well, to build real relationships with people different from themselves, and to connect people to the land in ways that are deeper than recreation or scenery to include how people heat their homes, put food on their tables, educate their kids, and give spiritual meaning to their lives.

The Alliance might also develop a re-granting program that directly supports land trust that are aspiring to replicate these pilots in their own home ground.

17. Take Action at the Highest Levels and Be Transparent about What You Will Do and Cannot Do

Many people see the Land Trust Alliance as a dominant, white organization and believe that speaking about its intentions to engage the community and then failing to move forward significantly is actually worse than not beginning in the first place.

One senior land trust leader spoke to us about the danger of the Alliance committing "*equity burn*" by spending money, talking the work up, but not advancing it in meaningful ways. This is an important pivotal moment in time created by land trust success, by changing demographics, and by the Alliance's own willingness to take up this work. Movement toward community conservation has started, and the question is what role will the Land Trust Alliance have in it? One longtime director of a large regional land trust debated this with us by wondering if it would be possible to change the Alliance and even possible to change her own organization. *"I think it just may be easier to start a new organization than to reform my own land trust to do community conservation."* Don't lose this opportunity to prove this person wrong.

Of course, almost no one expects the Alliance to tackle every recommendation in this report, but many hope to see meaningful forward momentum and transparency about what you can and cannot do.

Transparency is very important and is its own act of leadership. Sharing this report widely, explaining your process for what you feel you can do and what you feel you cannot do, stating what you feel is your responsibility and what is the responsibility of your member organizations are all very helpful steps to take.

"*The Alliance can't ask its members to do anything they're not willing to do themselves. I hope the Alliance's message out to the world is 'watch and see what we're doing, you may be surprised*.'"

a. Adopt an aspirational board statement on community conservation which publicly explains (posted on your website) why this work is important (see recommendation 1) and what steps the Alliance will take in the short and long term. Posting it prominently asks others and yourself to evaluate your actions against your aspirations (see Appendix D for an example).

b. Follow this with editorial in *Saving Land* signed by the President and board chair explaining the importance of the work and what steps you are willing to take.
c. Share this report widely and distribute it to every registrant at the 2013 National Rally. Encourage yourself and every other land trust to "be the leaders we've been waiting for."

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The First 24 Months

Our full recommendations include 17 primary categories, and dozens of specific recommended actions which span an endless timeline from tomorrow to forever ongoing. Where should one start? We offer here some important potential next steps, places to start tomorrow and some things we feel are essential to commence within the first 24 months. It's important to think of these recommendations in two ways: internal work and external work. The internal work, as always, should come first to better assure t6hat the external work is authentic and durable.

Internal Work

Alliance Senior Staff and Board of Directors

- Convene a leadership retreat (recommendation 5g) and create the ongoing space for conversations at the most senior level about what community conservation means for the land Trust Alliance. The authors of this report understand the challenging questions this work raises for the Land Trust Alliance. Do you have a critical mass of support from your board to follow the innovative leaders? How do you keep this movement together? Can the Alliance afford to move slowly, nodding to the innovators while moving the traditional folks along? How little is enough? How much is too much? This would the essential opportunity to ground truth the cultural changes necessary with the Alliance for community conservation to succeed. This is the opportunity, also, to envision how best to embody the other recommendations made in this report.
- Following this retreat, consider writing and adopting a board statement on community conservation (recommendations 1 and 17a) that lays out your aspirations for change and what you are willing and not willing to take on. Publicly share this statement widely.

Alliance Staff

- Identify and seek funding to support the pilot projects (recommendation 16) that will accelerate the community conservation being done by some of your member organizations. Help them to be successful and then spread the word far and wide.
- Develop and affirm a policy statement on community engagement (recommendation 9c).
- Explore the process for adding two new Standards recommendations 10c and 11).
- Determine how best to approach a new national position for community conservation. Look first at what's worked well and failed within other organizations (recommendation 5j).

External Work

Alliance Senior Staff and Board of Directors

- Open up a direct dialogue with the Native lands conservation community (recommendation 10). Have this be the first group with whom the Alliance rebuilds a solid relationship of mutual trust and shared destiny. Use personal credibility and trust at senior staff and board levels to build a new and visibly different relationship between the Alliance and the Native lands community. This is a relationship that ought to be tight and mutually beneficial, and your efforts to make it that way will be seen and appreciated by many other groups as well.
- Connect with the senior leadership of the National Association of Development Organizations to begin dialogue about shared vision and opportunities for collaboration (recommendation 9c) .

Alliance Staff

- Launch a "Community Conservation Road show" training module (recommendation 6c) that offers explanations, skill-building experiences, space for dialogue on the these recommendations, best practices, etc. at every national and regional land trust training venue. Goal would be to reach 50 percent of the land trusts in the country over the next 18 months.
- Develop the policy statement on community engagement (recommendation 9c) that would set out goals for how land trusts might most authentically and successfully engage with community groups. This would be foundational to subsequently piloting community conservation workshops (recommendation 9a) that bring together land trusts and community groups in every state.

2013 Rally in New Orleans

- Include Native Americans in the opening and closing ceremonies of the New Orleans Rally (recommendation 10a).
- Leverage the extensive African American history of New Orleans to announce your Community Conservation Initiative (recommendations 3d, 8, 15i).
- Distribute this full report to every attendee at this rally and organize roundtables to discuss it (recommendation 17c).

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First Steps for Any Land Trust

There are any number of levers that a land trust might pull to immediately start creating change in its internal culture and the quality of how it engages with its larger community. Some land

trusts will find this work to be second nature and may have already started moving down the path of community conservation, and for them the levers will be easier to reach and pull. For others it may require more work on internal changes to broaden thinking about conservation work, and will take a little longer to reach some of those levers. Though they have less capacity in some ways, smaller local land trusts—even all-volunteer organizations—can often be more fluid and responsive and have their finger closer to the pulse of their communities. But we feel confident that any land trust with a genuine intention and desire to begin down this path can start taking first steps immediately and at minimum expense with some of the following recommendations adapted from the comprehensive list above. These recommendations follow the order of the recommendations above, and are not necessarily in the order that a land trust may choose to implement them.

- Considering a broader public trust, draft conservation easements and other conservation agreements with flexible language that allows for appropriate future uses of the land, while still protecting important conservation and community values.

- Create a Community Conservation Advisory Committee comprised of land trust members and community allies.

- Observe the degree to which the naming of conserved lands reflects priorities and sends its own story. "*Conserved lands are most often named after the donor, second most often named after geography, and rarely ever named after a community of people that have been in relationship with that place forever."*

- *"Invest in community before requesting from community"*: Use land trust tools and expertise to respond to real community priorities and needs, even if the land trust does not acquire new properties or conservation easements in the process. This will build trust and relationship while providing important community service.

- Work with landowners and amend conservation easements as necessary and feasible to address community-identified needs for public access to accommodate educational and youth programs, social service programs, food production, appropriate economic enterprises, housing, and/or traditional cultural activities. Become more creative and community-oriented regarding conservation easement amendments, while working within the existing legal and tax framework and without creating private inurement or impermissible private benefit.

- Explore alternative systems of communal land ownership and stewardship.

- Share the wealth. Break out of old ways of raising money on your own and start collaborating before dollars are in hand, then jointly apply for funding with community partners. Re-grant money to non land trusts to partner with land trusts. A good-faith, no-strings-attached approach will go a long way toward building trust and strong relationships.

- Do no harm. Make sure a land trust is always working in partnership with whoever is already there in the community and effective. Do not reinvent wheels and spread organizational capacity too thin by trying to do the work that other community organizations are already doing well; honor those already doing the work, follow their lead, collaborate, and create a synergy greater than the sum of its parts.

- Actively recruit representative diversity and promote equity and internal cultural change on the board and in staff leadership positions.

- Create opportunities for sustained leadership roles for local community members, including hiring community members to manage conserved lands.

- Show up at open community meetings to listen, see how you might help, then contribute land trust tools and expertise to collaborative solutions.

- Share leadership, resources, and decision making in community partnerships. Sometimes land trusts will use their expertise in a subordinate technical support role to a community project.

- Encourage land trust board exchanges with community groups for cross training and deeper understanding of mutual issues and priorities (land trust executive director join other board and vice versa).

- Consult with local Tribal Historic Preservation Officers and conduct a preliminary survey of Indigenous lands on every conservation project.

What Is Already Working Well

"At their best, land trusts are keeping their focus on the conservation parts of their mission. They're not trying to build brand new people-type programs if there are already partners doing those things."

— Veteran land trust executive director

With the long and successful history of land trust conservation in the U.S. and under the leadership of the Land Trust Alliance, there is much to point to that is working extremely well in terms of supporting community conservation and contributing pragmatic solutions to community issues. The conventional tools and approaches that land trusts use have done and will continue to do a tremendous amount of good for local communities, and there is no reason that the Alliance or land trusts need to feel that they have to abandon their past and current approaches and start over from scratch. In addition, there are many innovators within the land trust community who are adding to conventional approaches and undertaking very successful community partnerships, important models that motivated land trusts can learn from. That said, community conservation is not rocket science, it's common sense and an eminently accessible goal for any land trust. Some land trusts may have to invest more in terms of holistic "systems thinking" capacity to figure out where and how to effectively engage in the bigger picture of community issues, whereas for others it is second nature or they have already started making a shift. In any case, there are so many opportunities and any number of little levers that a land trust might pull—small, incremental, painless steps—to engage more meaningfully with community. And it can start with something as simple as listening to the community about its needs and responding with some assistance. "People need to see that it's not scary," as one conservation practitioner said.

Conventional Tools and Approaches that Make a Difference to Community Conservation

The basic land trust tool box is still very effective and includes many existing mechanisms that can be immediately used to benefit community issues. Land trusts have much to offer in terms of their transactional and legal expertise, knowledge of federal and state incentives and cost-share programs, and most importantly their ability to apply creative problem-solving skills to complex problems. Even a basic conservation easement alone, for instance, can create an urban pocket park or community garden that can transform a neighborhood and give underprivileged residents a greater sense of purpose and hope. In most cases, the concept of perpetuity in lives filled with much uncertainly can be a source of comfort. "We are using conservation easements in nontraditional ways, mostly urban settings for pocket parks, holding easements and giving land to local government," explained one land trust executive director.

Conservation easements to protect the farm and ranch lands that grow our food and fiber are often drafted with language that allows for significant flexibility, including reserved sites for barns and other appropriate buildings required for agricultural production, temporary or permanent fencing for rotational grazing practices, etc. Agricultural easements can promote innovation by allowing flexibility in agricultural activities and by encouraging "best practices,"

even if those practices might be different in the future. Similarly, conservation easements on any working landscape or wildland or scenic open land can be written with enough flexibility to provide for adjustments in land management as conditions or future changes require, or to provide public access or other activities that are consistent with conservation values. We often think about potential future changes in terms of the ecology or climate or catastrophic events, but they could just as easily be sociological or economic changes. And we can just as easily allow some social flexibility and encourage social innovation and "best practices" through creative and thoughtful easement language.

The existing tax incentives for donated conservation easements certainly favor the wealthy, but they can also help land-rich, income-poor landowners. Those landowners are often farmers or ranchers producing food and fiber and providing jobs for their communities. In many cases, they are multigenerational families trying to hold on to the family land legacy—a legacy which unexpectedly became a financially valuable "estate" due to gentrification and increased land values. There can also be a cultural legacy identity and valuable traditional knowledge tied to land and livelihood. Though it is a constantly moving target, the estate tax benefit, in particular, can sometimes make the difference between the next generation inheriting the land or having to sell it to pay the estate tax bill. Helping low-income landowners maintain family lands strengthens equity and levels the economic playing field in communities.

The proposed enhanced federal conservation tax incentive, championed by the Alliance, would extend benefits much further and within reach of almost every qualifying rancher or farmer, by allowing them to deduct 100 percent of their income from federal income tax for up to 16 years. Transferable state conservation tax credits put the financial benefits directly into the hands of even the lowest-income landowners, by allowing them create income by selling the value of their income tax credit to a third party. Transferable tax credits are available now only in Colorado, Georgia, New Mexico, South Carolina and Virginia, but they have made a tremendous difference, both for low-income landowners and for land conservation.

Some state and local governments have established public funding for conservation, which can be used to pay landowners for the market value of their conservation easements (or the value of the development rights that they give up). The existing USDA Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program and Grassland Reserve Program provide federal funding for 50 percent to 100 percent of market-value purchase of development rights. Though this funding is for acquisition and not for land trust operations and staff, it is important to note that it helps keep land trusts engaged in accomplishing their missions, which is often more of a challenge for grassroots community organizations just struggling to survive. And public funding targeted to low-income landowners would compensate people who most need it, strengthen economic equity, and permanently protect important working landscapes to grow food.

Innovative Community Conservation Projects and Partnerships Already Underway

Land trusts always have worked for the public benefit. Today we are expanding the definition of that public and the definition of community benefit and looking for new, meaningful, and more effective ways to engage. There are numerous examples of land trusts working with communities and in community partnerships, from small initiatives that just start the discussion and begin to build relationships to precedent-setting projects that are real game changers and expand our thinking about what land trusts can accomplish.

Below are many such examples representing a variety of partnerships with community allies, including diversity initiatives and engaging with new audiences, local food production, public health, economic development, affordable housing, urban greenspace, reconnecting youth to nature, protecting and celebrating important cultural sites, and working with Tribes. They are intended as inspiration, but also as real and workable models that make a difference. The brief descriptions below are just snapshots and do not do the projects justice, but land trusts are encouraged to find more information online or contact these land trusts directly to learn more.

Lookout Mountain Conservancy: Serving Wherever People and the Land are Hurting

Lookout Mountain Conservancy in Tennessee was formed pretty much the traditional way, by a group in 1991 who were primarily concerned with protecting the nature of a specific place: the front slopes of Lookout Mountain. Invasive plant species, unrestricted signage, and what was viewed as inappropriate uses had devastated the historical and scenic quality of this area. But as they began to connect with more and more people who loved that place, they found that to best protect the place they also had to help the community itself. Lookout Mountain Conservancy is now establishing a park that will include green affordable housing, educational programming with schools, and green-job training for at-risk youth and adults. As their perspectives have broadened so has their supporters and political clout.

Conservation Trust For North Carolina: The Conservation and Diversity Program

Recognizing a disparity between the people protecting the land and the people who live, work, and play on it, the Conservation Trust for North Carolina (CTNC) launched a highly successful Conservation and Diversity Program to ensure that the people engaged in conservation are truly representative of the people in the communities they serve. CTNC realized early on that an effective strategy would include not only diversification of their board of directors, but also the creation of a more inclusive set of programmatic activities, public policy, and partnerships. An early project involved collaboration between the North Carolina Community Development Initiative, the Black Family Land Trust, the Conservation Fund's Resourceful Communities Program, and many local land trusts creating a formidable team to implement a statewide conservation-based affordable housing pilot project. In addition to the practical on-the-ground results, the effort fostered trust and deepened relationship among the new ally groups opened up avenues for other partnerships. Today, CTNC plays a critical support role, providing local land trusts with opportunities to make land preservation meaningful to traditionally underserved groups and helping diversify the staff, constituency, or the land trust board itself, as well as providing support to projects conducted by land trusts in collaboration with non-

traditional partners. According to the director of this initiative, the keys to success in this endeavor included concentrating on what land trusts do well and allowing partners to concentrate on their expertise, patience for indispensable relationship and trust building, and listening to new perspectives from diverse leadership.

Palmer Land Trust and Rio Grande Headwaters Land Trust: Engaging New Partners and Support

Under the Colorado Conservation Trust's Community Engagement Initiative, these two Colorado land trusts—one urban and one rural and agricultural—successfully engaged local communities by reframing land conservation through different kinds of public events and in ways that resonated with their communities. This work was successful, according to the Palmer executive director, because of the enthusiasm of the staff, willingness of the board to take risks, a board that models inclusiveness by recruiting new members from the new constituencies they wanted to reach, and a two-way communication between the community and the land trust. For both organizations, it was important to understand how their respective communities are changing and transform organizational philosophy to reflect those changes. In the Headwater group's case, that involved one powerful realization of the connection between low-income farmworkers in the valley and the agricultural lands and water that the land trust conserves. Ultimately, all these new partnerships and new support were forged at the grassroots level through authentic communication and engagement.

Big Sur Land Trust: Creating Transformative Opportunities for Youth and Community

Connecting young people to the land is a critical vanguard strategy of The Big Sur Land Trust's expanded conservation mission. It is vital that communities work together to create an environment in which every child in Monterey County can learn from and develop connections to the land. They envision a future in which *No Child Left Indoors* is more than a hopeful slogan: It is the reality for all. In 2013, the Big Sur Land Trust is launching the Glen Deven Center for Art, Science & Inspiration, one of three diverse sites where BSLT is focusing its efforts as part of its new *Impact Now* initiative to connect people and land. In the summer of 2013, BSLT will implement 7 weeks of summer camps aimed at enriching the lives of young people through the educational and healing powers of nature and music. These intensive immersion programs will use music as an avenue for communication that can be helpful for those who find it difficult to express themselves in words, providing an outlet for expression of feelings. Many of the young people coming to these camps have never even seen the ocean—living in one of the most densely populated areas in CA. Spending time outdoors, engaging in creative projects, learning the culture history of the landscape and accepting physical challenges boosts self-esteem and promotes experiential learning. In nature, young people will experience firsthand the health benefits of exercise, recreation and fresh air. BSLT has the programming expertise and the land, places of unrivaled beauty and ecological importance, to contribute to this effort. The project will provide a nature and music experience for young people that will give their communities a feeling of pride. It will provide, for BSLT, a much larger dialogue with new communities. It will create a new model of collaboration, working with the Monterey Jazz Festival, an arts organization, as our collaborator and numerous partners—Second Chance, Youth Orchestra

Salinas (El System program), Girls Inc. —all involved in helping choose the girls who are awarded the opportunity to attend the camp (no musical experience required).

Vermont Land Trust: Assuring Rural Economies and Livelihoods

The Vermont Land Trust (VLT) and its 5,000 members have a long history of engaging deeply in the communities they serve as evidenced by this statement: "The conservation work of the Vermont Land Trust changes the lives of families, invigorates farms, launches new businesses, maintains scenic vistas, encourages recreational opportunities, and fosters a renewed sense of community." VLT's relative size of 45 staff members and $17 million budget in the third smallest population in the United States suggests a very broad level of popularity, relevance and engagement with its communities. In addition to conducting traditional land conservation to the tune of about 50 conservation easements per year, Vermont Land Trusts also works on projects that re-sell conserved lands to low-income Vermonters, provide lumber for affordable housing projects, get young farmers onto farmland, ensure long-term farm affordability, and sells conserved land to Native American Vermonters so they, too, can have a land-base. One current project near the state's largest city involves buying and conserving a 400-acre dairy and making portions of that farm available on a long term basis to African immigrants. Vermont Land Trust has defined a set of land ethics that they aspire to achieve through their conservation work and is developing the systems to measure their progress toward achieving the creation of those land ethics in Vermonters.

LandPaths: Focusing on Childhood Education

LandPaths is continuing its work with the recently formed Sonoma Environmental Education Collaborative in transforming local landscapes into outdoor classrooms for education excellence. This work first brings local Land Trust protected areas to the environmental education "table" as a resource for use by education providers, and secondly capture and articulate the critical value environmental education brings to overall childhood education. Environmental education has historically been viewed as an enrichment activity, and, only for those that can afford it. However, today environmental education brings unique and essential learning modules to school age students—hands-on learning, science, and inter-disciplinary critical thinking. Many teachers assert that these programs are *the* science education at school. Increasingly, it is also the only experiential learning. And, thanks to the commitment of many funders, environmental education programs increasingly work with underserved schools. Land Trusts have not traditionally been involved with education, yet offer many local protected areas and restoration projects that could serve as outdoor laboratories. This would translate into more sites available as outdoor classrooms, and richer and deeper education possibilities. Instead of the traditional 6th grade one-time trip to the nearest national park, local sites offer more time on the ground not in the bus, more relevance to daily lives, and more opportunity for sustained engagement. All these factors mean increased learning and educational value, as well as creating the next generation of advocates for the land.

Howard County Conservancy: Community Gardens and Public Health

The Howard County Conservancy in Maryland has focused significantly on sustainable agriculture, local foods, and community gardens, all of which has turned out to yield very

important and practical public health benefits. One 26-year-old woman credits the conservancy with changing her life when it granted her a community garden plot. In addition to nutritious food, she gained a love of natural areas near her home that she had never before explored, a sense of community with other gardeners, and a hunger to learn more about gardening and local flora and fauna. Eventually she emerged out of depression, lost about 30 pounds, and became a runner. The conservancy now has a staff member who meets with pediatricians at the local hospital to promote outdoor access and physical activity as a very inexpensive prescription for health, literally written as prescriptions for children.

The Conservation Fund's Resourceful Communities Program: The Triple Bottom Line

The Resourceful Communities Program works with age-old challenges in North Carolina, such as poverty, racism, and resource loss. But it has a long and solid track record using its "triple bottom line" approach, integrating sustainable economic development, environmental stewardship, and social justice. Working with a network of over 250 grassroots and community organizations across the state, Resourceful Communities provides support to build grassroots capacity, help partners demonstrate innovative approaches to blending conservation, economic development, and social justice, build a movement of organizations dedicated to the triple bottom line, and engage in local and state-level policy initiatives that support the cause. Ultimately, all this builds upon the most important local assets of people, heritage, land, and water to create whole, healthy, and sustainable communities.

Eastern Shore Land Conservancy: Conservation and Rural Economies

The Eastern Shore Land Conservancy (ESLC) in Maryland has a mission to conserving land, but also very explicitly to preserve and sustain the vibrant communities of the Eastern Shore of Chesapeake Bay. Like more and more land trusts today, ESLC recognizes that public policy and sound land use planning are critical to its goals, so have actively stepped into that arena. The conservancy works with community leaders, elected officials, planners, designers, entrepreneurs, and farmers from around the region to collaboratively tackle pressing local problems. Its most recent annual planning conference was titled "Rural Jobs Summit: Vibrant Towns + Working Landscapes," and focused on diversification and shifts in the agricultural economy, methods for anchoring towns in working landscapes, and the legislative and regional policy tools needed to enable the economic future that is possible for the region.

Athens Land Trust: Conservation, Affordable Housing, and Community Gardens

This small land trust in Athens, Georgia works to improve the quality of life for the entire community through a holistic approach that combines land conservation, affordable housing, and community gardens. Both a community land trust and a conservation land trust, the organization integrates community with the natural environment by preserving land, creating energy-efficient and affordable housing, and revitalizing neighborhoods. It's big and ambitious, yet the land trust has protected nearly 3,000 acres of forests, wetlands, working farmland, county parkland and neighborhood open space in four Georgia counties, has 149 affordable housing units, and has helped establish over 30 school and community gardens. The land trust attributes some of its success to a racially diverse board of directors made up of trust homeowners, conservation experts, and others with residential planning expertise.

Rensselaer Land Trust: Greenspace for a Low-Income Neighborhood

In 2011, the Rensselaer Land Trust was presented with an opportunity to protect a 23.6-acre parcel in the city of Troy, New York—one of the last remaining tracts of open space in the city—and create a preserve for the low-income minority neighbors who otherwise have little access to natural landscapes. The John B. Staalesen Vanderheyden Preserve provides one of only three public access point for Wynantskill Creek and recreational opportunities that are usually very rare in the middle of a city, and also includes ecologically important wildlife habitat. Local children are already out playing on and learning from the land, residents were surveyed to identify what sort of recreational structures would best meet their needs, and a 4,800-square-foot community garden to provide fresh fruits and vegetables to local residents is also in the works. Support for the project has come from every direction, including funding from New York State's Conservation Partnership Program, private donations, and a volunteer committee formed by several enthusiastic local households who are feeling a sense of personal "ownership" and want to help with stewardship projects.

Los Angeles Neighborhood Land Trust: Parks for the People

The Los Angeles Neighborhood Land Trust (LANLT) builds healthier, safer, and stronger communities by creating green and recreational spaces in densely populated, underserved urban areas. The projects always start with listening, working with community organizers and local residents to envision, build, and maintain urban parks and gardens. LANLT does not consider itself a typical conservation organization, but it practices a kind of community conservation that makes a vital difference in the neighborhoods in which it works by using conservation tools to acquire and hold properties and nurturing an environmental and stewardship ethic.

Conservation Trust of Puerto Rico: Public Engagement for Social, Economic, and Quality-of-Life Goals

The Conservation Trust of Puerto Rico (CTPR) acquires and conserves functional and healthy ecosystems, but with a very clear intention of protecting the ecosystem services that those ecosystems provide, which in turn support social, economic, and quality-of-life goals. CTPR recognizes that their preserves and those ecosystem services will have no meaning to the public unless the public has opportunities to spend time in and learn to love those landscapes. To that end, CTPR conducts a very active series of educational programs to get people of all ages and all economic circumstances out onto the preserves and to instill a sense of responsibility about protecting these critical natural areas. CTPR engages people on every level through immersion in their conserved lands. It is truly experiential instead of theoretical, doing instead of just talking.

Shirley Heinze Land Trust: Reconnecting Urban Kids with Nature

Collaborating with public agencies, park districts, and cultural institutions, the Shirley Heinze Land Trust in Indiana works with schools throughout the greater Chicago area to bring kids out of the classroom and into the natural world for hands-on learning experiences. The "Mighty Acorns" program has developed a curriculum that aligns with state standards and currently

serves 33 classrooms and 865 fourth to sixth grade students, with more each school year. Students learn natural science concepts and land stewardship, but also actively participate in restoration projects; including removing non-native plant species and replanting with native plant seeds harvested the previous year. As well as using public preserves for nature education, the land trust is committed to providing public access for all nearby residents to the preserves it manages around the region.

Great Rivers Land Trust: Uniting Complementary Conservation Goals

Like the many streams and small tributaries that feed into the Piasa Creek Watershed in western Illinois, the Great Rivers Land Trust brought together many diverse partners along the creek to unite seemingly disparate goals and form a cohesive base of support for land conservation and stewardship. Partners included the American Farmland Trust, the American Water Works Company, the National Park Service, a Boy Scout camp, and an Underground Railroad group. Starting out as a sediment remediation project involving more than 78,000 acres within the watershed, the project morphed into a partnership to dredge out a lake used by the Boy Scouts that had filled with so much sediment they could no long swim or canoe in it. This in turn led to a conservation easement buffer around the lake that included the site of an Underground Railroad way station that had been used by runaway slaves escaping from Missouri. A small African American community on the site is comprised of descendants of some of those former slaves who decided to stay. The project did not turn out as originally planned, but the land trust continued to fluidly explore every possible new relationship and ended up protecting and putting on the map the forgotten Underground Railroad site, restoring the lake for the Boy Scouts, and making many new friends. Local landowners initially skeptical of the land trust and conservation easements are now on a waiting list to conserve their properties.

American River Conservancy: Protecting the Site of the First Japanese Colony in the U.S.

The American River Conservancy (ARC) in Coloma, California, worked with numerous public and private partners to protect the Wakamatsu Tea and Silk Colony Farm, which was the first Japanese colony in the U.S. in 1869. It is important also as the only known settlement by Samurai outside of Japan, it holds the gravesite of the first Japanese woman buried on American soil, and is the birthplace of the first naturalized Japanese-American citizen. Along with protecting this important cultural heritage, the property includes a farm lease on 10 acres, which will ultimately supply a Community Supported Agriculture initiative with local food to feed the community. With significant wetland, pond, and riparian habitat and old ranch roads being converted to trails, it has also become a destination for hands-on outdoor education for local school kids to instill a land ethic in the next generation. It is a beautiful project that combines habitat and open space conservation with multiple cultural and community benefits.

Taos Land Trust: Return of a Sacred Site

The Ponce de León Hot Springs near Taos, New Mexico is a sacred site to Taos Pueblo and has been used by members of the Tribe for ceremonial activities for at least a thousand years. Like Blue Lake and a few other sites throughout their historic homeland, the springs “are critical to our well-being, without them we would not exist,” as one tribal official said. In 1997 the Taos Land Trust acquired the 44-acre property from private landowners to protect it from

development. Over the years the land trust entertained numerous proposals and considered many alternatives for ownership and management of the property. In the end it returned home to the first people of the Taos Valley, the true and original stewards of the property. According to land trust staff, it was not always an easy or smooth process, but involved nearly seven years of slowly building relationship and a strong sense of trust between the Tribe and the land trust before they could finalize the terms of the transfer and reach agreement with all parties. In a community with a long and thorny history of intercultural relations that goes back centuries, the justice of returning land to the Native community was not immediately embraced by everyone, but nonetheless extremely momentous. A local Hispanic rancher and long-time land trust board member said, "To see it finally completed is monumental. This is the right thing to do. I believe that in the long run, the transfer of the hot springs to the Pueblo will strengthen relations in our community."

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Appendix A
List of Participants

first name	last name	organization/affiliation	city	state	race/ethnicity	gender	urban/rural	sector	research
Jeanette	AbiNader	Community Food Security Coalition (formerly)		WV	Arab American	F	rural	food	interview
Melanie	Allen	Conservation Trust For North Carolina	Raleigh	NC	African American	F	rural	land trust	NC retreat
Craig	Anderson	LandPaths	Santa Rosa	CA	White	M	rural	land trust	interview/focus group
Ross	Andrews	Center for Human-Earth Restoration	Raleigh	NC	White	M	urban/rural	youth	NC retreat
Ernie	Atencio	Taos Land Trust (formerly)	Arroyo Hondo	NM	Latino/Hispanic	M	rural	land trust	interview
Miriam	Avins	Baltimore Green Space	Baltimore	MD	White	F	urban	land trust	interview
Kim	Bactad	Kumeyaay Diegueño Land Conservancy	El Cajon	CA	Native American	M	rural	Native land trust	Native lands listening session
Heather	Benham	Athens Land Trust	Athens	GA	White	F	urban	land trust/housing	NC retreat
JoAnne	Berkenkamp	Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy	Minneapolis	MN	White	F	rural	food	interview
Alina	Bokde	Los Angeles Neighborhood Land Trust	Los Angeles	CA	?	F	urban	land trust	interview/focus group
Charlie	Brown	Kumeyaay Diegueño Land Conservancy	El Cajon	CA	Native American	M	rural	Native land trust	Native lands listening session
Brad	Buschur	Groundwork Lawrence	Lawrence	MA	White	M	urban	community	MA urban listening session
Jane	Calvin	Lowell Parks and Conservation Trust	Lowell	MA	White	F	urban	land trust	MA urban listening session
Maria Elena	Campisteguy	Metropolitan Group/Land Trust Alliance	Washington	DC	Latino/Hispanic	F	urban	land trust	Rally urban listening session
Bethany	Chaney	YouthBuild	Carrboro	NC	White	F	urban/rural	youth	interview
Glen	Chown	Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy	Traverse City	MI	White	M	rural	land trust	interview
Sandi	Cihlar	Freelance Rural Health Advocate		WI	White	F	rural	health	interview
Aaron	Clausen	City of Lowell	Lowell	MA	White	M	urban	community	MA urban listening session
Carl	Colonius	Rocky Mountain Youth Corps	Ranchos de Taos	NM	White	M	rural	youth	interview

Land Conservation and the Public Trust: The Case for Community Conservation

Stephen	Conant	Lowell Parks and Conservation Trust	Lowell	MA	White	M	urban	land trust	MA urban listening session
Jeff	Corey	1 Roof Community Housing	Duluth	MN	White	M	urban/rural	housing	interview
Carol	Coulter	National Committee for the New River	West Jefferson	NC	White	F	rural	land trust	NC retreat
Dania	Davy	Land Loss Prevention Project	Durham	NC	African American	F	rural	community	NC retreat
Jim	Dyer	Southwest Marketing Network	Hesperus	CO	White	M	rural	econ development	focus group
Jim	Erdelac	Shirley Heinze Land Trust	Michigan City	IN	White	M	urban/rural	land trust	interview
Robert	Etgen	Eastern Shore Land Conservancy	Queenstown	MD	White	M	urban/rural	land trust	interview/focus group
Kifu	Faruq	Green Space Initiative	Durham	NC	African American	F	urban	community	NC retreat
Soledad	Gaztambide	Conservation Trust of Puerto Rico	San Juan	PR	Latino/Hispanic	F	urban	land trust	Rally urban listening session
Madeleine	Greymountain	Goshute Tribal Council		UT	Native American	F	rural	Native lands	Native lands listening session
Kelly	Griffith	Center for Economic Integrity	Tucson	AZ	White	F	urban	econ development	interview
Heidi	Hannapel	Land Trust Alliance	Durham	NC	White	F	urban/rural	land trust	NC retreat
Lisa	Haws	Kumeyaay Diegueño Land Conservancy	El Cajon	CA	White	F	rural	Native land trust	Native lands listening session
Sandi	Helgerson	Jo Daviess Conservation Foundation	Elizabeth	IL	White	F	urban	land trust	Native lands listening session
Camilla	Herlevich	North Carolina Coastal Land Trust	Wilmington	NC	White	F	rural	land trust	NC retreat
Claudia	Horwitz	Stone Circles	Mebane	NC	White	F	rural	community	NC retreat
Chad	Jemison	Triangle Land Conservancy	Durham	NC	White	M	rural	land trust	NC retreat
Roberto	Jiménez	Farmworker Housing Development	Woodburn	OR	Latino/Hispanic	M	rural	housing	interview
Julianne	Johnson	Carolina Mountain Land Conservancy	Hendersonville	NC	White	F	rural	land trust	NC retreat
Gwen	Kozlowski	Lowell Parks and Conservation Trust	Lowell	MA	White	M	urban	land trust	MA urban listening session
Eric	LaChappa	Kumeyaay Diegueño Land Conservancy	El Cajon	CA	Native American	M	rural	Native land trust	Native lands listening session
Glenn	Lamb	Columbia Land Trust	Vancouver	WA	White	M	rural	land trust	interview/focus group
Dune	Lankard	Eyak Preservation Council	Cordova	AK	Native American	M	rural	Native lands	Native lands listening session

Land Conservation and the Public Trust: The Case for Community Conservation

Bill	Leahy	Big Sur Land Trust	Monterey	CA	White	M	rural	land trust	interview/focus group
Noah	Levy	Sanctuary Forest	Garberville	CA	White	M	rural	land trust	Native lands listening session
Gil	Livingston	Vermont Land Trust	Burlington	VT	White	M	rural	land trust	interview/focus group
Deb	Markley	Rural Policy Research Institute	Columbia	MO	White	F	rural	econ development	focus group
Heather	McMann	Groundwork Lawrence	Lawrence	MA	White	F	urban	community	MA urban listening session
Beth Rose	Middleton	Department of Native American Studies, UC Davis	Davis	CA	African American	F	rural	Native land trust	Native lands listening session
Margaret	Newbold	Conservation Trust For North Carolina	Raleigh	NC	White	F	rural	land trust	NC retreat
Colin	Novick	Greater Worcester Land Trust, Inc.	Worcester	MA	White	M	urban	land trust	MA urban listening session
Megan	Olds	Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy	Traverse City	MI	White	F	rural	land trust	interview
Kristina	Ortez	Sierra Club Bridges to the Outdoors	Taos	NM	Latino/Hispanic	F	urban/rural	youth	interview
Cristina	Rivera Chapman	Tierra Negra Farm	Durham	NC	Latino/Hispanic	F	rural	food	NC retreat
Thomas	Robinson	NC State University, Department of Forestry	Raleigh	NC	African American	M	rural	conservation	NC retreat
Corre	Robinson	ETR Services	Raleigh	NC	African American	M	urban/rural	community	NC retreat
Hawk	Rosales	InterTribal Sinkyone Wilderness Council	Ukiah	CA	Native American	M	rural	Native land trust	Native lands listening session
Mikki	Sager	Conservation Fund, Resourceful Communities Program	Chapel Hill	NC	White	F	rural	community	NC retreat/interview
Chuck	Sams III	Indian Country Conservancy	Portland	OR	Native American	M	rural	Native land trust	Native lands listening session
Meg	Schumacher	Howard County Conservancy	Woodstock	MD	White	F	rural	land trust	interview
Gus	Seelig	Vermont Housing and Conservation Board	Montpelier	VT	White	M	rural	housing	interview
Angela	Shepherd	Southern Appalachain Highlands Conservancy	Asheville	NC	White	F	rural	land trust	NC retreat
Maurice	Small	Interfaith Food Shuttle	Raleigh	NC	African American	M	urban	food	NC retreat
Nancy	Stangle	Athens Land Trust	Athens	GA	White	F	urban	land trust/housing	interview
Rupert	Steele	Confederated Band of the Goshute Tribe	Ibapah	UT	Native American	M	rural	Native lands	Native lands listening session
Kristin	Tracz	Mountain Association for Community Economic Development	Berea	KY	White	F	rural	econ development	focus group

Christie	Trifone-Simon	Jo Daviess Conservation Foundation	Elizabeth	IL	White	F	rural	land trust	Native lands listening session
Sonya	Wadman	Waltham Land Trust	Waltham	MA	White	F	urban	land trust	MA urban listening session
Tahz	Walker	Stone Circles	Mebane	NC	African American	M	rural	food	NC retreat
Jason	Walser	Land Trust for Central North Carolina	Salisbury	NC	White	M	rural	land trust	NC retreat
Gerry	Wang	William Penn Foundation (formerly)		PA	Asian American	M	urban	food	interview
Amy	Wright	Cathedral Square Corporation	South Burlington	VT	White	F	urban/rural	housing	interview
Todd	Wynward	Expeditionary Learning School Designer	El Prado	NM	White	M	rural	youth	interview

Appendix B1

Draft Agenda for Urban Conservation Listening Session
September 28, 2012

1:00 Welcome and explanation of the project

-Introduce ourselves (Peter and Ernie)

-Introduce CWC

-Introduce project and today's process (make room for all voices, not every person will be able to answer every question. Speak to the questions you have the strongest feelings about.)

Questions from participants to clarify process

1:15 Opening Circle: Introduce yourself and briefly describe how this object you brought speaks to the biggest challenges to your community and the role that land/land access might play in addressing those challenges?

2:00 Relationship to mainstream land trust community

1. How would you describe your place in the land trust community (in the mainstream, on the margins, somewhere in between)?

2:30 The role of land trusts in the community

2. Based on your place in the land conservation community, what perception do you have of land trusts doing the best work they can do? What is your image of land trusts "at their best"? For example, what kind of work are they able to accomplish? Who do they partner with?

3. What are the benefits (real or imagined) to your broader community when land trusts are at their best?

4. What perception do you have of land trusts not reaching their full potential? What is your image of land trusts "falling short"? What accounts for falling short?

5. What kind of impact does it have on your broader community when land trusts are falling short?

6. When you think twenty-five years into the future, what do you most hope your organization can achieve in relation to your community? What innovations will be necessary over the next few years to achieve this vision?

7. What do you think the larger land trust community can do over the next few years to help you achieve your vision?

3:00: 15 minute break

3:15: The role of Land Trust Alliance

8. What single most important change could the Land Trust Alliance make in three years, in five years, in ten years, to support you?

9. Are there general standards or practices that land trusts could adopt, with support from the Land Trust Alliance, that could support those community alliances? In other words, what's a good process for land trusts to follow in order to dance more gracefully with other sectors?

10. What institutional obstacles do you believe that land trusts face *internally* in doing work that supports various broader community agendas?

11. How about moving beyond simple support to doing work that is integrated with and proactively advancing community agendas?

12. What institutional obstacles do you believe land trusts face *externally* in doing this kind of work?

13. What other things would local land trusts and/or the Land Trust Alliance need to start, stop and/or keep doing in order to become a better allies to other sectors in your community?

5:00 Adjourn for dinner

Appendix B2

Draft Agenda for Native Lands Listening Session
September 29, 2012

2:00 Welcome and explanation of the project

- Introduce ourselves (Ernie and Sandy)
- Introduce LTA, Levers for Innovation, CWC
- Today's process and agreement:
  - We know there is a lot of history but we want to focus on what needs to change going forward
  - Limited amount of time, so make room for all voices
  - speak to the questions you have the strongest feelings about
  - Confidentiality (ideas, but not names; let us know if there is any background that you want us to know that you do NOT want to be part of the report; recorder)
- Photos
- Questions from participants

Opening by Madeleine Greymountain?

2:15 Opening Circle: Introduce yourself and briefly describe how this object you brought speaks to the biggest challenges to your community and the role that land or access to land might play in addressing those challenges.

3:00 Relationship to mainstream land conservation community

1. How would you describe your place in the land conservation community (in the mainstream, on the margins, somewhere in between)?

3:30 The role of land conservation organizations in the community

2. What is your image of land conservation organizations doing the best work they can do in your community?

3. What are the benefits to your broader community when conservation organizations are at their best?

4. What is your image of conservation organizations not reaching their full potential? What impact does it have on your community when conservation organizations are falling short?

5. In a perfect world, what would conservation organizations be doing to make a difference in addressing the issues in your community.

4:00: 15 minute break

4:15: The role of Land Trust Alliance

6. What single most important change could the conservation community or the Land Trust Alliance make in three years, in five years, in ten years, to support this kind of community conservation?

7. Are there general standards or practices that land trusts could adopt, with support from the Land Trust Alliance, that could support community alliances? In other words, what's a good process for land trusts to follow in order to engage more meaningfully with other sectors?

8. What institutional obstacles do you believe that land conservation organizations face *internally* in doing work that supports various broader community agendas?

9. What institutional obstacles do you believe land conservation organizations face *externally* in doing this kind of work?

10. What other things would local land conservation organizations and/or the Land Trust Alliance need to start, stop and/or keep doing in order to become a better allies in your community?

6:00 Adjourn for dinner

Appendix B3

Levers for Innovation
Ally Interview Protocol

A. Knowledge of and relationship to land trusts

1. How would you describe the role of land, if any, to your work? (reframe the question to "land use" or "environment," if necessary)

2. Are you familiar with land trusts? If so, do you work (or have you worked) with them on the land-related aspects of your work? If so,

- What was/is the content of the work you did?
- How was/is the collaboration structured?
- What was/is the experience like?

3. What other organizations, if any, do you collaborate with on land-related work?

4. If you don't currently work with land trusts, can you imagine opportunities for doing so? What are they?

B. The role of land trusts in the community

5. Based on what you know about land trusts (reframe to land conservation, environmental organizations, or other if necessary), what perception do you have of land trusts doing the best work they can do? What is your image of land trusts "at their best"? For example, what kind of work are they able to accomplish? Who do they partner with?

6. What are the benefits (real or imagined) to your sector, the work you do, and your community when land trusts are at their best?

7. What perception do you have of land trusts not reaching their full potential? What is your image of land trusts "falling short"? What accounts for falling short?

8. What kind of impact does it have on your sector, the work you do, and your community when land trusts are falling short?

9. When you think twenty-five years into the future, what do you most hope your organization can achieve for your community? What innovations will be necessary over the next few years to achieve this vision? What role could land trusts play in supporting this vision?

C. Overlap of land trusts and other sectors

Focus on question that corresponds with interviewee's sector.

10. What, in your opinion, is the relationship between healthy and sustainable communities and land? Can you imagine what role land trusts (land conservation, environmental organizations, or other, if necessary) might play in supporting healthy communities?

- What kinds of relationships would this require?
- What role would land trusts play (supportive, lead, technical, financial, etc)?
- Who are the other partners?
- What are some immediate actions that your land trust might take toward building these relationships?

11. Is there an explicit role that land trusts might play in supporting healthy rural *economies*? (Prompts: keeping land open, undeveloped, and productive)

- What kinds of relationships would this require?
- What role would land trusts play (supportive, lead, technical, financial, etc)?
- Who are the other partners?

12. What kind of role might land trusts (land conservation, environmental organizations, etc) play in healing people and preventing illness? (Prompt: What is the link, if any, between the obesity epidemic and lack of access to parks and the outdoors?)

- What kinds of relationships would this require?
- What role would land trusts play (supportive, lead, technical, financial, etc)?
- Who are the other partners?

13. How do and can land trusts partner with organizations to ensure that housing needs are met?

- What kinds of relationships would this require?
- What role would land trusts play (supportive, lead, technical, financial, etc)?
- Who are the other partners?

14. In what ways might land trusts play a role in supporting a more just food system in America? (Prompt: Providing space for production and marketing to increase community access to healthy foods.)

- What kinds of relationships would this require?
- What role would land trusts play (supportive, lead, technical, financial, etc)?
- Who are the other partners?

15. Across sectors, how might land trusts (land conservation, environmental organizations, etc) effectively involve and engage with young Americans to support and enhance youths' experiences of and relationships with land?

- What kinds of relationships would this require?
- What role would land trusts play (supportive, lead, technical, financial, etc)?
- Who are the other partners?

D. The role of an umbrella organization

16. What are two or three key roles an umbrella organization might effectively play in supporting land trusts to more deeply engage in communities?

Appendix B4

Levers for Innovation
Rural Economic Development Focus Group Guide
October 18, 2012

A. Knowledge of and relationship to land trusts

1. How would you describe the role of land, if any, to rural economic development?

2. Do you work with land trusts to promote rural economic development?

3. If you don't work with land trusts, can you imagine opportunities for doing so?

4. What other organizations do you collaborate with on land-related work?

B. The role of land trusts in the community

5. What perception do you have of land trusts doing the best work they can do? What is your image of land trusts "at their best"?

6. What are the benefits to the rural economy when land trusts are at their best?

7. What perception do you have of land trusts not reaching their full potential? What is your image of land trusts "falling short"?

8. What kind of impact does it have on rural economic development and rural communities when land trusts are falling short?

C. Overlap of land trusts and other sectors

9. What are the key issues in your community right now?

10. Can you imagine what roles land trusts might play in addressing these issues? What capacities, innovations, and relationships will be necessary for land trusts to play this role?

11. When you think twenty-five years into the future, what kind of economic development is happening in the rural communities you work in? What innovations will be necessary over the next few years to achieve this vision? What role could land trusts play in supporting this vision?

D. The role of an umbrella organization

12. What are two or three key roles an umbrella organization might effectively play in supporting land trusts to more deeply engage in communities?

Appendix B5

Levers for Innovation
Protocol for Land Trusts, version 2

Start with some kind of lead in describing the project. End with, "We define the term community conservation as 'approach to land conservation in both urban and rural settings that embraces and is grounded in local cultural and socioeconomic diversity and local perspectives, is relevant and responsive to the concerns and priorities of the local communities in which it is practiced, and benefits a broad sector of the public. Through authentic partnerships with ally groups, community conservation contributes to healthy and sustainable communities by advancing important matters like improving people's health, providing clean water and access to healthy food, providing equitable access to housing, generating economic benefits, and connecting youth to land.'"

Ask: "Would you also call this work community conservation, or do you call it something else?" and "Does this definition resonate for you?" "Why/why not?"

A. Relationship to mainstream land trust community

1. How would you describe your place in the land trust community (in the mainstream, on the margins, somewhere in between)?

2. What other organizations, if any, do you collaborate with on land conservation work?

B. The role of land trusts in the community

3. Based on your place in the land conservation community, what perception do you have of land trusts doing the best work they can do? What is your image of land trusts "at their best"? For example, what kind of work are they able to accomplish? Who do they partner with?

4. What are the benefits (real or imagined) to your broader community when land trusts are at their best?

5. What perception do you have of land trusts not reaching their full potential? What is your image of land trusts "falling short"? What accounts for falling short?

6. What kind of impact does it have on your broader community when land trusts are falling short?

7. When you think twenty-five years into the future, what do you most hope your organization can achieve in relation to your community? What innovations will be necessary over the next few years to achieve this vision?

C. Overlap of land trusts and other sectors

8. What, in your opinion, is the relationship between healthy and sustainable communities and land?

9. What are the issues in your community? (Prompts: healthy rural economies, public health, housing, just and healthy food systems, youth education and relationship with land, urban lands, Native lands)

10. Can you imagine what role your land trust might play in addressing these issues and supporting healthy communities?

- What kinds of relationships would this require?
- What role would land trusts play (supportive, lead, technical, financial, etc)?
- Who are the other partners?
- What are some immediate actions that your land trust might take toward building these relationships?

D. The role of LTA

11. How would you describe your relationship with the broader land trust community? Is it central to your work? Tangential? Distant ? Why?

12. Beyond specific project collaboration, do you see opportunities for long-term collaboration between your land trust and other sectors?

13. What single most important change could the Land Trust Alliance make in three years, in five years, in ten years, to support you in pursuing those collaborations?

14. Are there general standards or practices that land trusts could adopt, with support from the Land Trust Alliance, that could support those community alliances? In other words, what's a good process for land trusts to follow in order to dance more gracefully with other sectors?

15. What institutional obstacles do you believe that land trusts face *internally* in doing work that supports various broader community agendas?

16. How about obstacles to work that goes beyond support and is integrated with and proactively advancing community agendas?

17. What institutional obstacles do you believe land trusts face *externally* in doing this kind of work?

18. What other things would your land trust and/or the Land Trust Alliance need to start, stop and/or keep doing in order to become a better allies to other sectors in your community?

Appendix B6

Curriculum: Community Conservation workshop
November 12-14, 2012
Conservation Trust of NC, stone circles at The Stone House, Whole Communities

DAY ONE: Monday Nov 12

12:00: Arrivals and hospitality
Be here to greet people, get folks settled in their rooms.

1:00: Shared Meal

2:20 Ring bell (Claudia)

2:30 Opening Session

Welcome
Claudia - welcome to TSH, partnership with CWC and CTNC
Ernie - overall project context and why are we here together
Melanie & Tahz - vision/role around landscape and constituency
Peter - design and process

3:00 Introductions
Facilitator: Peter

1. First round - full group of participants
2. Second, deeper round - personal life history exercise; build in an awareness of difference that's in the room - in pairs
3. Third round of introductions - professional - the part of your organizational mission statement that has the most resonance for you

Group reflecting on itself
Who's in the room? What do we have in common? How are we different?

Longings, fears, setting of group agreements
Facilitator: Claudia

- What do folks need from each other to be and work together? What longings and fears do people have?
- Hear from the group, synthesize into three primary agreements.
- Holding place for compassion
- What happens with folks who are in and out, relevance to larger movement work
- Recording and reporting (Ernie)

Logistics and check in
Yoga gentle, 45 min; answer any other questions

6:00 Shared Meal
Remind people to bring their object to evening session.

7:30 Opening Circle
Facilitator: Peter
Ritual to build a community table reflecting individual aspirations for their work around nurturing healthy, whole communities. Honor youngest and oldest. Talking circle and object sharing: How does this object reflect why I do what I do to create healthy, whole communities?

DAY TWO: Tuesday Nov 13

7:00 Yoga in Practice Space
Leader: Claudia

8:00 Shared meal
Team check in - the library

9:00 Group check-in
Space for group to process reflections from previous evening

9:15 Highlighting and Honoring Difference

Diversity Wheel
Facilitator: Peter
Remind folks of importance of difference to work of creating healthy, whole communities; why it's important to include this; architecture of the day - want to be better allies, and need to understand differences
Race, class, gender within history and within the group.
Warm up exercise in duets around how diversity shows up personally.
Diversity wheel exercise, reflective of the broader community we serve

Diversity, equity, and inclusion
Facilitator: Melanie
Why the exploration of equity is critical to our collective success

9:45: Land Loss Timeline
Facilitators: Tahz and Claudia
Use timeline as the context for an activity and discussion about the landscape of race and land and systemic inequality.

I. Intro (Claudia)
Build off Melanie's piece and definitions around equity, oppression/racism and land loss. Land loss means differs (in the conservation community - means land being lost to development, not cultural/political/economic loss)

II. Timeline (Tahz)

Introduce the timeline. Tool for developing our historical analysis. Not about coming to consensus or resolution. More about naming.
Have each marker on the timeline on an index card and invite folks to read the event/etc out loud in chronological order. We will let folks know that we're asking people to hold comments until after we've finished the timeline.
Then we will have people post these chronologically on a clothesline.
We'll have blank paper to invite people to add any other stories, knowledge, events.
After the timeline ask people to say 1 word to describe how they are feeling hearing this. What emotions did it bring up?

III. Break into pairs to discuss the impact of the timeline. (Tahz)
Pair people one each from land trusts and food/land justice folks
Prompting questions:

- It's clear that racism and systemic inequality have greatly impacted land in the U.S. What stands out for you the most about this?
- What are the implications for the work you are doing and want to do?

IV. Come back for a group discussion (Claudia)
What are the implications?
What does it mean to create greater equity in the work around land and food?
Ernie bring in piece around culture and identity around land loss

11:30 Synthesis
Facilitator: Peter
Synthesis of why understanding and honoring difference is essential to innovation in social movements and within this particular group.

12:00 Shared meal

1:30 Whole Communities exchange
Facilitator: Peter

Usually use matrix which divides people into 4 groups.
traditional environmentalists, business/economy, live & work on the land, justice
But could be two groups - nature & community

Affinity groups meet for 1.5 hours

- What do we best?
- What do we do the least well?
- What do we most need to be better allies/more successful?
- What do we have to offer others?
- For land trusts: What role does equity play in land conservation?
- For community groups: What role does land and water play in your work

Exchange for 1.5 hours:

- Here's what we do best

- Here's what we need to be better allies/more successful Here's what we have to offer you
- Respectful challenges
- Debrief

Can we look at the way that non-land trust groups use land and water as a part of this?
To Land Trusts: What role does equity play in the success of your work?

Find ways to make more explicit transition to opportunities for collaboration discussion on Wed. What does this tell us? Can we begin to see opportunities to collaborate?

6:00 Shared Meal

7:30 Evening program
Build on personal relationships and understand challenges/opportunities of working together. Story-based or not?

DAY THREE: Wednesday Nov 14

7:00 Yoga in Practice Space
Leader: Claudia

8:00 Breakfast
Team meets in the Library

9:00 Moving Forward
Facilitators: Peter, Melanie, Tahz

- What are the on-the-ground opportunities to work together?
- What are the forms of leadership that we need to embody to do this? (Peter)
- What needs to start/stop/continue for us to work together to build healthy, whole communities?

11:30 Validation ritual and closing
Facilitator: Peter
Kamoa's Gift and remove objects from the community table

12:30 Shared meal

1:00 Departures

Appendix C

Collaborating with Tribes and Native Communities

Summary of Standards and Practices from Final Work Group Session

Group 1:

1. Inquiry- "Consultation Lite"- Check known maps and sources for known sites as part of due diligence.
2. Work with tribes to make sure you are not excluding traditional uses by the policies your land trust create to manage the lands you own.
3. Include a general clause to allow traditional or cultural land uses in land management plans.
4. Listen to local tribes- example: You may protect plants that are not already listed- chamis (?), bear grass, etc.
5. Artifacts: Clarify in management plans how they will be protected. Work within existing legal and consultation frameworks.
6. Do not sell historic artifacts.
7. Develop framework for protecting/allowing prayer or ceremonial uses while protecting individual privacy.
8. Burials: How to deal with new burial requests or repatriation of remains.
9. New Senate Bill? Explore Native Landowner Conservation Easements- being brought to Senate level as agricultural/ranching easements.

Group 2:

10. Add criteria for a cultural resource review as part of the due diligence process.
11. Identify aboriginal boundaries of Land Trust service area and contact respective tribal representatives.
12. Contact State Native American Heritage Commission (or equivalent) to ensure adherence to cultural rules or regulations.
13. Land Trust should ask selves what is their strategy for 2042.
14. LTA should add a cultural resource protection clause to Conservation Easement template.

Group 3:

15. Regardless of a specific transaction- outreach to state tribal commission. Seek list of state recognized tribes and federally recognized tribes. Could LTA provide contact list?
16. Meeting with and engaging with tribe. Build relationship.
17. Adopt consultation practices that are used by State/Federal discussions.
18. Land Trust should consider cultural heritage of a particular property.

Group 4:

19. Due diligence: Inventory summary.
20. Land Trust should know the tribal significance of the service area in consultation with SHPO/THPO
21. Consultation (at least attempted).

Appendix D

Example of Aspirational Board Statement

Center for Whole Communities

On Land, Race, Power and Privilege: An organizational statement of values

Background
This statement is part of our ongoing process as an organization to identify and articulate our deepest-held values and to put forth in the world why we do the work that we do and how we might strive to do it better. With that in mind this is an evolving statement, as we ourselves evolve. It felt most pressing to us to begin with a statement on race, power and privilege for many of the reasons articulated below.

Our Statement
We, as a primarily white organization, stand in a place of privilege and opportunity that was afforded to us partly through a long history of exploitation, racism and inequality in this country. Even as we seek to understand more deeply this history and its implications, we know that we cannot become the honest and far-reaching organization we wish to be without acknowledging that fact and beginning to try to address it. Understanding the history of this country as it plays out around land use and land access is a first step toward being a social change organization with integrity.

We hold that healthy relationships between people and the land are an essential piece of creating a more tolerant, generous and inclusive culture in this country. We aspire to strengthen American communities by building healthier, more enduring relationships between people and the land. But one cannot talk authentically about land in this country without addressing issues of oppression and inequality. We believe that all people deserve equal access to land and equal opportunities for healthy relationships with land. With this, we assert that issues of racism, power and privilege as they play out in relationship to land must be challenged, and continuing inequities and injustices must be reconciled and healed.

Understanding our own personal and instructional connections to race, class and privilege is a fundamental and ongoing part of Center for Whole Communities' (CWC's) work. If we are to forge a new land movement in America – one that recognizes the centrality of our human relationship to nature, that recaptures lost moral ground, and that defeats the narrowness of its own special interests – then we must speak honestly and passionately about race, class and privilege in our movement and in our country. And we must do CWC's work in a way that resolves and bridges these divides, or we must accept that we are very likely creating further divides.

Knoll Farm, 700 Bragg Hill Road, Fayston, Vermont 05673
info@wholecommunities.org

Center for Whole Communities is striving to be an anti-racist organization.[1] We are doing this in many ways, all expanding and evolving as we learn:

1. Our staff and board are examining how racism and privilege operate within our organization's walls, coming to a deeper understanding of how they frame our decisions and determine the culture of our organization and learning how to change that culture.
2. We are striving to diversify the leadership of our programs and the audiences they serve. We hold a standard of having at least one faculty member and at least 30 percent of the participants of our retreats be people of color.
3. We offer full fellowships to our programs to remove financial barriers for participation, and we make available our facilities to groups working specifically on issues of race, power and privilege.
4. We actively seek alliances with any organization working to overcome present injustices in the structure of land use and land access in this country.
5. In all of our programs, we are committed to raise awareness about issues of oppression, power and privilege and to galvanize change around those issues within the environmental movement.

In the future, we intend to offer identity caucuses and training opportunities to encourage discussions about racism, white privilege and power. We will create the internal forums that set accountability and clear standards for inclusion at all levels of the organization, and which annually review the mission, vision, policies, procedures, board agreements, etc. to ensure that this commitment to end racism is a consistent part of our culture.

Only when we have built a shared and strong analysis of race and privilege within ourselves and helped to build it within the environmental movement will our mission of building healthy, whole communities be authentic and possible.

[1] We use this somewhat inadequate term for now, while acknowledging that we are still looking for a way to fully express what we mean by an organization that opposes oppression in all forms. Ideally, this could be stated it in a positive way, yet language is a barrier. It is a bit like the dilemma of making a stand for "non-violence," which is different than "peace," but which lacks its own identity in our language. How can we talk about non-violence, or anti-oppression, as a thing in itself?