

What is a Land Trust?

Conservation land is essential to our health and well-being. There are more than 1,600 land trusts in the United States. These community-based institutions have protected more than 37 million acres of land.

Land trusts are local, state, or regional nonprofit organizations directly involved in permanently protecting land for its natural, recreational, scenic, historical, or productive value and for the benefit of the public. Most land trusts are private, nonprofit corporations. Land trusts are not "trusts" in the legal sense, and may also be called "conservancies," "foundations," or any number of other names descriptive of their purpose. Because most land trusts are 501(c)(3) corporations, membership fees and additional donations are tax deductible. Donors have not only the benefit of tax savings, but also an enduring legacy of generosity and foresight. Each land trust regularly monitors the properties that it holds.

Land trusts work with landowners and the community to conserve land by accepting donations of land, purchasing land, negotiating conservation agreements on land (called conservation easements), and stewarding conserved land through the generations to come. Most land trusts are community-based and deeply connected to local needs, so they're well-equipped to identify land that offers critical natural habitat as well as land offering recreational, agricultural and other conservation value.

Some land trusts are organized to protect a single piece of property, but the more active trusts have a larger land protection agenda. They may focus their efforts in a community, in a region, on a particular type of resource, or on a protection project. Resources protected by land trusts include forests, prairie grasslands, islands, urban gardens, river corridors, farmland, watersheds, parklands, marshes, ranchland, scenic vistas, cultural landscapes, Civil War battlefields, and hiking trails.

Most land trusts depend on volunteer leadership and support even if they also have a professional staff. They have the potential to bring together a wide range of people in a community, such as naturalists, planners, farmers, hunters, landowners, community leaders, sometimes developers, and others who care about special lands in their communities.

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www.naromi.org

(Content compiled from Land Trust Alliance publications)