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## Accreditation:

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### PRESS RELEASE

#### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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#### **Twenty-two Land Conservation Organizations Selected for National Accreditation Pilot Program**

(Saratoga Springs, NY) – Twenty-two land conservation organizations from 19 states have been selected to test a new national accreditation program. The new land trust accreditation program will recognize land conservation organizations, also known as land trusts, that meet national quality standards for protecting important natural places and working lands forever.

“We are extremely grateful to the land trusts that volunteered to demonstrate publicly their commitment to high standards and to serve the land conservation community and the American public by shaping this new program,” said Tammara Van Ryn, executive director of the Land Trust Accreditation Commission.

The Commission is an independent program of the national Land Trust Alliance and was created in 2006 to operate the new accreditation program. “In an era when the public is demanding accountability from government and nonprofit organizations, independent land trust accreditation will help provide the assurance of quality and permanence of land conservation the public is looking for,” Van Ryn said.

The accreditation program will be tested in 2007 and will be available to interested organizations starting in 2008. At that time, land trusts can join the ranks of other nonprofit organizations that gain professional recognition through accreditation, such as museums, zoos, aquariums, colleges and hospitals. Accredited land trusts will be able to display a seal indicating to the public that they meet national standards for excellence, uphold the public trust and ensure that conservation efforts are permanent.

The Monadnock Conservancy, located in Keene, New Hampshire, is one of the land trusts participating in the pilot program. “The Monadnock Conservancy has long been a supporter of the Land Trust Alliance’s efforts to build the collective strength of the land trust community,” said Monadnock Conservancy Executive Director Richard Ober. “Today, we can think of no better way to bolster and improve the great work we all do than to develop a rigorous and meaningful program of accreditation. We are pleased to be part of the pilot program.”

The Monadnock Conservancy and the other 21 land trusts in the pilot program are

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just a few of the more than 1,660 land trusts across the country. These community-based conservation organizations have conserved more than 11.9 million acres of land – an area twice the size of New Hampshire.

Organizations volunteered to be part of the pilot program. The Commission selected groups from the volunteers to make sure that the tests include a diversity of land trust sizes, geographic locations and types of land protected.

Jane Prohaska, president and executive director of the Minnesota Land Trust, explained their reasons for volunteering to be in the pilot program. “Being a pilot organization will help us assess and improve our own operations, allow us to help our colleagues throughout the region, and be a part of constructing an effective program that will improve overall conservation efforts in America.”

For the full list of participants and more information on the pilot program, please visit [www.lta.org/accreditation/pilot.htm](http://www.lta.org/accreditation/pilot.htm).

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*The Land Trust Alliance promotes voluntary land conservation and strengthens the land trust movement by providing the leadership, information, skills and resources land trusts need to conserve land for the benefit of communities and natural systems.*



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## 2007 Pilot Program

The Land Trust Accreditation Commission is pleased to announce the participants in the first round of the 2007 pilot program.

[Bedminster Land Conservancy](#) (PA)

[Cascade Land Conservancy](#) (WA)

[Coastal Mountains Land Trust](#) (ME)

[Eagle Valley Land Trust](#) (CO)

[Eastern Shore Land Conservancy](#) (MD)

[Geneva Lake Conservancy](#) (WI)

[Green River Valley Land Trust](#) (WY)

[Greenbelt Land Trust](#) (OR)

[Lake Champlain Land Trust](#) (VT)

[Lake Forest Open Lands Association](#) (IL)

[Leelanau Conservancy](#) (MI)

[Maui Coastal Land Trust](#) (HI)

[Minnesota Land Trust](#) (MN)

[Monadnock Conservancy](#) (NH)

[Monmouth Conservation Foundation](#) (NJ)

[Peninsula Open Space Trust](#) (CA)

[Southern Rockies Agricultural Land Trust](#) (NM)

[Upstate Forever](#) (SC)

[Washtenaw Land Trust](#) (MI)

[Westchester Land Trust](#) (NY)

[The Wilderness Land Trust](#) (CO)

[Willistown Conservation Trust](#) (PA)

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### About the Pilot Program

*"We know it will be a substantial commitment of time, but serving as a participant in the pilot test program would enable us to give back to the land trust community and help ensure the credibility of our collective work."*

The Commission will formally test the complete accreditation application and review process in 2007. Two rounds of pilots will allow us to do the following:

- Learn how much time it takes applicants to apply for accreditation.
- Learn how much time it takes the Commission to review applications.
- Clarify and document decision-making criteria to ensure consistency.
- Finalize all the steps in the accreditation application and review process.

The Commission will conduct the second round of pilots later this year with expanded coverage of land trust demographics.

Land trusts that participate in the pilot tests will help determine what information is essential for the Commission to have in order to make objective decisions. Participants will undergo a complete review of their application and will pay all fees in 2007, although final decisions will

### Pilot Program Update

[Read the Feb. 22 press release announcing the pilot program participants.](#)

[Learn about public comments.](#)

not be made until 2008. Pilot organizations will be up for renewal in 2012.

One applicant for the pilot program summarized their interest and the purpose of the pilots well.

*"We are interested in serving as a pilot test organization for accreditation for three primary reasons: 1. Help us continually assess and improve our own operations; 2. Allow us to help our colleagues through the region...navigate accreditation when they are ready; and 3. Provide ...appropriate feedback on the accreditation process to construct the most effective program possible."*

### **Pilot Participation**

Last fall land trusts across the country responded enthusiastically to the Land Trust Accreditation Commission's call for organizations interested in the 2007 pilot program. These organizations are excited to showcase their work and provide a service to the land trust community. Pilot organizations are being chosen to represent a diversity of land trust characteristics – such as volunteer or staffed, age of the organization, size of geographic region served, location, type of land protected and protection methods used.

*"We have a long and deep understanding of many of the issues facing land trusts and feel that we can be helpful in evaluating and improving the accreditation process so that it is valuable for the individual land trust and raises the level of performance for the overall land trust community."*

*"The ...Conservancy has long been a supporter of the LTA's efforts to build the collective strength of the land trust community. Today we can think of no better way to bolster and improve the great work we all do than to develop a rigorous and meaningful program of accreditation. Accordingly, we are eager to do all we can to see the accreditation program succeed."*

### **Pilot Program Timeline**

February 2007	First round of pilot organizations announced
April 2007	Pilot applications due
June 2007	Second round of pilot organizations announced
August 2007	Pilot applications due
January 2008	Pilot program evaluated
2008	Final decisions announced on pilot applications (concurrent with first round of 2008 application decisions)

*"The Land Trust sees the accreditation process as imposing the discipline needed to bring our own house into order. We also believe that the current regulatory climate, proliferation of aging, all-volunteer boards, and more challenging fundraising environment will drive land trusts to consider new partnerships. The Land Trust wants to be prepared to participate in this new and challenging arena."*

updated 2/22/07

