

Activating Land as a Climate Solution

When equipped with the right information, strategies, training and approach, land trusts can be powerful, visionary and necessary players in the global effort to address climate change.

Yet many land trusts — often focusing on smaller, regional service areas — need assistance in assessing the anticipated social, economic and ecological impacts of this global crisis on their local landscapes and communities; guidance on how to best align conservation priorities in response; and support in communicating the impact of their local climate-related work in addressing this global challenge.

The Land and Climate Program of the Land Trust Alliance empowers land trusts to meaningfully address climate change through land conservation. Since its launch in 2017, the program has urged the land trust community to incorporate climate science into conservation planning, land stewardship and outreach.

Support from the Alliance enables land trusts to understand how climate change is expected to impact their lands, and to identify an appropriate climate strategy, develop a plan to strengthen protected lands' resilience and position their work as an impactful form of climate action, helping communities recognize the climate relevance of land conservation.

KEY STRATEGIES

The Land and Climate Program has built integrated strategies to help land trusts learn how climate change and renewable energy infrastructure will impact their regions, plan for change, and adapt management practices for agriculture and wildlife habitat. The Alliance's primary strategies include:



Highlighting research and resources, enabling land trusts to assess anticipated climate impacts on their landscapes and identify appropriate actions to take.



Providing grant funding to support development and implementation of climate-informed strategies across conservation planning, advocacy, communications, and land protection and management.



Offering technical assistance tailored to each land trust's needs for incorporating climate data into decision-making, outreach and communications.



Fostering knowledge-sharing of successes, strategies and lessons learned from peers, helping to build a movement of land trusts addressing climate change through land conservation.



Land and Climate Program impact by the numbers:

- \$1.2 M+ invested
- 1,900 hours of technical assistance provided to grantees
- 133 strategic conservation / climate action plans created with grant support
- 230 trainings
- 7 peer cohorts facilitated since 2017
- 90% of grantees report increased capacity to address climate change

HARNESSING THE POWER OF THE LAND TRUST COMMUNITY TO ADDRESS CLIMATE CHANGE

By protecting and managing land with climate resilience in mind, land trusts can help natural and human communities adapt and prepare for climate change. The Alliance scales this impact by equipping the land trust movement with the knowledge, tools and support needed to identify and protect resilient lands in communities across the nation; maximize the potential of forests, grasslands and wetlands to store and sequester carbon; and work with renewable energy producers to ensure that solar or wind energy installations and transmission lines avoid our most sensitive and productive lands.

We connect land trusts to trusted sources of climate data and mapping tools that visualize projected changes to landscapes, such as shifts in species ranges, flood risk or habitat resilience. For many land trusts, this reduces the need to develop or interpret data independently. These resources also help internal stakeholders see the urgency and relevance of climate work, helping overcome skepticism and reinforcing that climate action is a natural extension of their conservation mission.

Once equipped with data, land trusts can work with the Alliance to determine which approach, or combination of approaches, is appropriate for their capacity, needs and anticipated impacts on their landscapes, such as:

CLIMATE STRATEGY	BENEFITS AND OUTCOMES
Identify and protect migration corridors or climate-resilient areas.	Species are able to adapt to new and changing conditions.
Conserve large, intact landscapes that store and sequester carbon.	Protected lands contribute to national and global emissions reduction goals.
Conserve lands that buffer communities from the impacts of climate change.	Communities are more resilient to intense flooding, extreme heat, wildfire or drought.
Update land management to reflect climate-smart stewardship best practices.	Protected lands maintain their ecological functions or agricultural productivity under shifting conditions.
Ensure that renewable energy siting plans take conservation values into consideration.	Renewable energy installations avoid sensitive agricultural and biodiverse landscapes.

Additionally, land trusts can apply for grants through the Alliance’s Land and Climate Program to support both the development and implementation of climate strategies. Funded plans may include climate-informed land protection strategies, stewardship and management plans for conserved properties, communications plans to engage stakeholders and landowners, or renewable energy siting plans that align with conservation values.

Finally, the Alliance convenes peer networks to connect land trusts addressing climate change across the country. These spaces allow practitioners to share insights, challenges and successes — and to learn from one another’s work. Fostering this sense of community helps land trusts see that they are not working in isolation, but contributing to and building a broader movement for climate resilience and conservation.

“It takes leadership from forward-thinking initiatives like the Land and Climate Program to help create momentum in climate-smart conservation across the country. The support has helped us immensely as we do all we can to help prepare our land and community for what’s coming.”

—Erik Kingfisher, director of stewardship and resilience, Jefferson Land Trust