

# Going Far Together

*Stories from the Land Conservation Community*

2009 ANNUAL REPORT





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*Lists current as of  
March 2010*



Our Mission: To save the places people love  
by strengthening land conservation across America.

“If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.”

AFRICAN PROVERB



2009 was a tough year. We all had to do more with less, and many land trusts were forced to cut staff, budgets and programs. Although shaken, most land trusts have weathered the storm intact. Just as trees with deep roots can withstand a drought, land trusts are thriving thanks to the deep roots in their communities. People may have less to give, but they still value and support the protection of places they love. They recognize that the recession is temporary, but the land we save will last forever.

At a time when our country is skeptical about the ability of government to solve problems, land trusts demonstrate the genius of the local. We have prevailed because we are small, we know our neighbors, and we are accustomed to lean budgets—indeed, for most of us, this is all we have ever known.

In this annual report, you will read the stories of some of the inspiring people who are keeping conservation alive in the midst of the recession: a Texas rancher who set up a program for inner-city kids to camp on his land so they could hear owls hoot in the night; a land trust on the Washington coast that figured out how to emerge from the recession stronger than ever; and a land trust near Buffalo, New York, that fought back when someone started building on their conserved land.

The recession forced the Land Trust Alliance to cut costs, but, at the start of 2009, the Alliance board decided to invest \$250,000 from operating reserves so that we could sustain services to land trusts at a time when they needed them most. Among many other accomplishments, we built a rare bipartisan coalition for conservation tax incentives, completed a comprehensive 15-course Standards and Practices Curriculum, available free online, and designed an innovative insurance service that will help land trusts fund the high legal costs of defending land and easements.

We are grateful for your friendship and support over the past year. Together, we are building a strong future for conservation in America.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David Anderson".

David Anderson  
Chair

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rand Wentworth".

Rand Wentworth  
President

# Sharing the Wonder

Bob Ayres

As strange hoots and howls echo across the night sky, most kids are unnerved their first night at the El Ranchito Nature Discovery Camp. Very few have slept away from their inner-city homes—even fewer outside in a tent. In the span of one week, something magical happens. They become experts on algae. They are advocates for clean air. They are believers in the wonders of nature.

For Bob Ayres, introducing new generations to outdoor adventures is vital to land conservation. “They will determine the future of our natural resources. My family has always been interested in connecting young people to nature, especially those who otherwise may not get to experience it firsthand.”

Bob’s family provided for programs like El Ranchito in their conservation easement for the

Shield Ranch near Austin, Texas. “Growing up in San Antonio I saw ranches become subdivisions and shopping centers, and I could see Austin headed our way. I didn’t want that for our property.”

After a decade of work, Bob’s family agreed on an easement strategy that satisfied conservation and financial interests. Because tax incentives played a significant role, Bob gladly said yes when Lynne Sherrod, Land Trust Alliance western policy manager, asked for his help to make the enhanced incentive a permanent part of the tax code.

Since 2006, the incentive has increased the pace of conservation by more than 250,000 acres per year in its first two years. It allows family farmers, ranchers and other moderate-income landowners to deduct a larger portion of their income over a longer period of time for their easement donation.

Lynne asked Bob to try to get co-sponsorship of the bill from his representative. In 2009, Bob took time away from a family trip to D.C. to visit Congressman Lamar Smith personally. “I made the case as a satisfied customer. It is effective to reward families for their time and investment in a public good—the permanent protection of land and water.”

Congressman Smith agreed to co-sponsorship that day. “He was impressed by the groups that the Alliance helped get behind the bill. He noted any issue that could bring the Humane Society and 30 hunting and fishing groups together is worth consideration.”

Word spread quickly. Soon, other Texas land trusts contacted their representatives. While the bill is still not permanent, it’s closer than ever before. And Bob’s policy work is not done. “The land conservation community will never reach our goals without government money, incentives and programs.”

Why does he do it? “It’s immensely gratifying to know we’re making a difference. I see it every year with the kids who come through our camp. We’re preserving and sharing something we love.”

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## THE LAND TRUST ALLIANCE...

- Recruited 264 co-sponsors (majorities of both Democrats and Republicans) for the House bill to make the enhanced tax incentive for conservation easements a permanent part of the tax code.
- Played a lead role in introducing four separate House proposals to improve conservation incentives in the estate tax.
- Convened national environmental groups to design a new land conservation initiative with the Departments of Interior and Agriculture.





*Bob Ayres is the managing partner of the Shield Ranch near Austin, Texas and president of El Ranchito. He serves on the advisory board of the Hill Country Alliance, the national council for the Land Trust Alliance, and is a member of the Texas Land Trust Honorary Council.*





*Board member Ralph Heft is retired from the U.S. Bureau of Land Management. Molly Doran, executive director, has more than 24 years of experience in environmental education worldwide. Rusty Kuntze, president of the board, is a retired attorney who worked for the Swinomish Tribe for 25 years. The Skagit Land Trust's board of directors participates in the Alliance's Board Member Challenge ([www.lta.org/bmcl](http://www.lta.org/bmcl)).*

# Emerging Stronger

Ralph Heft, Molly Doran, Rusty Kuntze

“Walking across that stage was an unforgettable moment, like a graduation. I saw everyone waving flags and cheering. I pointed to our board and staff, acknowledging the countless hours of hard work from so many people. It was a great feeling.”

Rally 2009 in Portland held special significance for Skagit Land Trust (WA) and Rusty Kuntze, president of its board of directors. The trust had just earned accreditation from the Land Trust Accreditation Commission, an independent program of the Land Trust Alliance. “It was an amazing time. Walking into the workshops, we felt almost like rock stars. People congratulated us and wanted to know all about the process.”

For the trust, accreditation was not a question of if, but when. “We first looked into it when Congress was coming down hard on land trusts and threatening regulations,” said board member Ralph Heft. “Fortunately, the Land Trust Alliance was very proactive about promoting self-governance to minimize federal involvement.”

“We owe it to our constituents to be the best land trust we can be,” added Executive Director Molly Doran. “Accreditation is a major step toward elevating the quality of our work and our integrity.”

In 2008, the trust prepared for accreditation by reviewing and implementing policies to streamline operations. “Our previous boards and founders put us in great shape,” said Molly. “Following *Land Trust Standards and Practices* [developed by the Land Trust Alliance with the land trust community] from the get-go was essential!”

The Commission reviewed the materials and met with key Skagit Land Trust staff and Ralph. “We had a two-hour conversation about the business of land conservation, and I loved it,” said Molly. “You invest a lot of time and effort, but it saves time and effort going forward. You become stronger, more efficient and more effective.”

Rally 2009 was also special because all of the trust’s staff members and half of its board attended.

“Even in this recession, we felt we had to get the whole staff there,” said Ralph. “We pinched pennies, carpoled and shared rooms. Rusty slept on a friend’s couch.”

“It was worth it,” said Rusty. “Along with new strategies and tools, you get re-energized working with like-minded people. Our newest board member learned more about the land trust world in three days than he would’ve learned in a year on his own.”

For Rusty and his colleagues, education and engagement remain priorities for improving the quality of Skagit Land Trust’s work. “We want to emerge from the economic downturn healthier and stronger than before. Our accreditation will give us the confidence to achieve these goals.”

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## THE LAND TRUST ALLIANCE...

- Completed a comprehensive 15-course Standards and Practices Curriculum, now available at training events, in print, and online.
- Built strong land trusts by delivering customized services to 139 land trusts; presenting 277 training workshops reaching more than 2,400 people; broadcasting 16 webinars; and providing 65 organizational assessments.
- Coordinated over 100 instructors, partners and consultants to deliver assessments, training and technical assistance.
- Developed the online service, *Pathways to Accreditation*, to help land trusts prepare for accreditation.

# Taking a Stand

Patricia Szarpa

It took just a few hours to destroy hardwood swamp, crush fragile ecological communities and wreak havoc that will take generations to restore.

And it all happened on protected land.

The Western New York Land Conservancy worked for years to purchase the Kenneglenn Scenic and Nature Preserve to protect its lush meadow, diverse wildlife and 150-foot gorge.

A cottage on the property became the conservancy's office and headquarters for public programs—a major step up for Patricia Szarpa, executive director. “We used to operate from a tiny basement with no windows and literally sat on file folders. Now we look out over the land we're charged with protecting.”

However, the new arrangement wasn't entirely ideal. At the preserve's center was a 12.5-acre

parcel, sold by the previous owner to a wealthy businessman for his private retreat. Despite having access to a shared driveway, he cleared large swaths through protected land to give construction vehicles easier access. “Our board sent him letters, but never heard back. We put up a chain, but the destruction didn't stop.”

Conservancy volunteers discovered the neighbor also started building a new pond and a bridge—encroaching 120 feet on protected property. “Survey stakes were just tossed aside. We learned later that some contractors refused to do the work because it was clearly trespassing.”

When the Western New York Land Conservancy threatened legal action, the neighbor filed his own lawsuit, claiming the land trust infringed on his enjoyment of his property.

After making every attempt to avoid litigation, the conservancy pursued justice in the courts. “We were confident, not only because of our strong case, but because of our preparation. Our reliance on sound recordkeeping and on *Land Trust Standards and Practices* was instrumental to our success.”

The Land Trust Alliance created the Conservation Defense Center to help land trusts protect their lands and easements from legal attacks such as this one. Services include a legal defense fund, pro bono attorneys and a legal clearinghouse. The Alliance is currently testing the feasibility of an insurance program to cover litigation costs.

For the Western New York Land Conservancy, victory was hard won. The jury ruled unanimously to award the conservancy nearly \$600,000 in compensatory and punitive damages. In September 2009, the regional court of appeals upheld the verdict, though more appeals are pending.

“Ours is an important lesson and victory,” says Patricia. “Permanence applies just as much to land trust organizations as it does to our conservation efforts. We appreciate the Alliance's programs that build our capacity and ensure our sustainability. More battles lie around the corner, and we have to make sure we'll be around to fight them.”

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## THE LAND TRUST ALLIANCE...

- Designed a Conservation Defense Insurance Program that has already garnered commitments for 83% of the 12,000 properties to make the program feasible.
- Developed a Conservation Defense Clearinghouse and provided weekly updates on judicial opinions, journal articles and research.
- Provided research and guidance on easement amendments, terminations, 'orphan' easements, and state easement enabling acts.
- Created a central source of information for responding to IRS audits of easement donations.





*Patricia Szarpa is the executive director of the Western New York Land Conservancy, which has more than 4,000 acres conserved in eight counties in western New York. She also serves on the board of the Buffalo Audubon Society.*



# Increasing Relevance

Maria Elena Campisteguy

Four years ago I didn't know what a land trust was, but then our firm was hired to lead the branding work for the Land Trust Alliance and the Land Trust Accreditation Commission. The more I learned, the more I was hooked.

I realized that if we could create a brand that could move people like me, we would be successful. I'm a mom concerned about schools, about safety.

I recycle and buy organic food. I volunteered in the community, but never once considered working with a land trust. They didn't seem important.

Every land trust needs to articulate its mission in a powerful way, describing the value to people so it is compelling and relevant to them. We can do that by putting people back in that special place they cherish.

We all have a memory of special places from our childhood. For me, it was growing up surrounded by the Rio de la Plata in Montevideo, Uruguay. Learning to ride at the age of six on my uncle's ranch. Picking fruit on my father's little farm and then arriving at midnight at the market to sell it.

Land trusts must make an emotional connection with people. Easements are important, but what will initially move people to action is what touches their heart.

Think about the "unusual suspects"—those who don't know about land trusts already. What do they care about? Then tap into *their* interests, values and needs, and start communicating in their terms. Leave the jargon behind, and tell them that the health of nature is connected to their health; that land for local farms means fresh food on their table and habitat for wildlife; that wetlands filter our water, and forests keep the air clean.

We're losing land to development at an alarming rate. If I want my son and his children to be able to enjoy their own special places, then the land trust movement must become relevant to *everyone*. When people are asked to name their top three concerns, I want to hear "Protecting natural areas" on that list. It should be that important.

*Maria Elena Campisteguy is the executive vice president/principal of Metropolitan Group, and a Land Trust Alliance board member.*





## INDIVIDUALS AND FAMILY FOUNDATIONS

The Land Trust Alliance is so grateful for all of the support you provided to fuel our work in 2009. Whether you gave \$1 or \$1,000,000, you made countless successes in land conservation happen! Because of space limitations, we have listed only those who made gifts of \$500 and above. Please visit [www.landtrustalliance.org](http://www.landtrustalliance.org) for lists of all of our supporters and how you can help.

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## COMBINED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

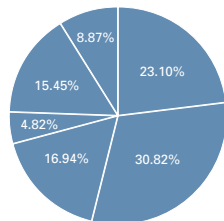
Year Ended December 31, 2009 (with comparative totals for 2008)

To request a copy of the complete Notes to Financial Statements, e-mail info@lta.org.

Combined Statement of Activities	2009				2008
	Unrestricted	Temporarily Restricted	Permanently Restricted	Total	
<b>Support and revenue</b>					
Grants	\$ 90,738	\$ 5,827,668	\$ 50,000	\$ 5,968,406	\$ 5,071,647
Contributions					
Individual memberships and donations	1,744,447	25,192	-	1,769,639	2,315,651
Organizational memberships	909,778	-	-	909,778	920,608
Other donations	29,136	-	-	29,136	21,797
Conference fees	910,666	-	-	910,666	880,490
Investment income (loss)	345,929	94,243	-	440,172	(113,224)
Accreditation fees	163,250	-	-	163,250	219,500
Publication sales	57,883	-	-	57,883	97,481
Other programs	13,143	-	-	13,143	9,769
Net assets released from restrictions	5,292,069	(5,292,069)	-	-	-
<b>Total support and revenue</b>	<b>9,557,039</b>	<b>655,034</b>	<b>50,000</b>	<b>10,262,073</b>	<b>9,423,719</b>
<b>Expenses</b>					
Program services	7,864,304	-	-	7,864,304	7,678,945
Management and general	544,331	-	-	544,331	630,575
Fundraising	1,434,158	-	-	1,434,158	1,425,703
<b>Total expenses</b>	<b>9,842,793</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>9,842,793</b>	<b>9,735,223</b>
<b>Change in net assets</b>	<b>(285,754)</b>	<b>655,034</b>	<b>50,000</b>	<b>419,280</b>	<b>(311,504)</b>
<b>Net assets</b>					
Beginning	3,126,225	3,745,355	1,302,216	8,173,796	8,485,300
Ending	\$ 2,840,471	\$ 4,400,389	\$ 1,352,216	\$ 8,593,076	\$ 8,173,796

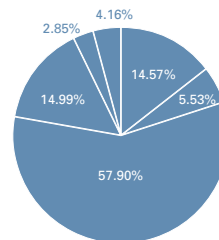
### REVENUE

Individuals	23.10%
Foundations	30.82%
Government	16.94%
Corporations/Organizations	4.82%
Earned revenue	15.45%
Organizational memberships	8.87%



### EXPENSE

Fundraising	14.57%
Management & General	5.53%
Education & Capacity Building	57.90%
Policy and Outreach	14.99%
Conservation Defense	2.85%
Accreditation	4.16%



## Combined Statements of Financial Position

	2009	2008
<b>Assets</b>		
<b>Current Assets</b>		
Cash and Cash Equivalents	\$ 2,138,879	\$ 2,194,664
Receivables	13,794	58,190
Promises To Give	1,937,226	1,393,127
Investments	3,048,777	2,932,411
Prepaid Expenses	144,537	142,370
Inventory	55,230	51,637
<b>Total current assets</b>	<b>\$ 7,338,443</b>	<b>\$ 6,772,399</b>
<b>Property and Equipment</b>		
net of accumulated depreciation of \$809,658 (\$740,241 in 2008)	464,518	564,186
<b>Other Assets</b>		
Promises to give, long-term	726,444	687,223
Investments - Endowments	1,440,371	1,068,828
Deposits	8,419	8,419
<b>Total other assets</b>	<b>2,175,234</b>	<b>1,764,470</b>
<b>Total assets</b>	<b>\$ 9,978,195</b>	<b>\$ 9,101,055</b>
<b>Liabilities and Net Assets</b>		
<b>Current Liabilities</b>		
Accounts payable and accrued expenses	\$ 982,617	\$ 515,761
Deferred rent	402,502	411,498
<b>Total liabilities</b>	<b>1,385,119</b>	<b>927,259</b>
<b>Net Assets</b>		
Unrestricted	2,840,471	3,126,225
Temporarily restricted	4,400,389	3,745,355
Permanently restricted	1,352,216	1,302,216
<b>Total net assets</b>	<b>8,593,076</b>	<b>8,173,796</b>
<b>Total liabilities and net assets</b>	<b>\$ 9,978,195</b>	<b>\$ 9,101,055</b>

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