

# America's Conservation Network

2010 ANNUAL REPORT



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*Lists current as of  
March 2011*

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

## From the Chair and President



Land is essential to life. We depend on it for the food we eat, the water we drink, and the air we breathe. And yet, governments everywhere are cutting the funds to protect our most treasured lands. The question is how we do *more* in a time of *less*?

Over the past year, we asked land trusts this question and the result is a bold strategic plan with three goals: accelerate the pace, improve the quality and ensure the permanence of land conservation. Even at a time of fiscal constraint, America's 1,700 land trusts are working locally to save land through voluntary conservation agreements with their neighbors.

We are already making great progress. In spite of the partisan divide, the Land Trust Alliance persuaded a majority of both Republicans and Democrats to co-sponsor our tax incentive bill, and we convinced Congress to extend the enhanced tax incentive. The Alliance mobilized hundreds of land trusts to ensure that our policies were included in the America's Great Outdoors initiative.

All of this required Congress to have trust and confidence in land trusts, and we were proud to be able to tell them that there are already 130 accredited land trusts. If all the current applicants are successful, 54% of conserved land will be held by accredited land trusts.

The Alliance is also taking the lead to ensure the permanence of conservation. Land trusts have committed more than 18,000 properties to participate in the proposed conservation defense insurance program. Once we raise the funds to capitalize the program, 76% of easements held by land trusts will either be covered by insurance or held by a group capable of self-insuring.

In this annual report, we would like to tell you a few stories about people who embody the dedication and spirit of the land trust movement. Each land trust does great work. But a national community of land trusts can do wonders. We share ideas, inspire each other, build public support and shape public policy. Together, we are America's conservation network, and, as the economy improves, we are ready to advance land conservation to new heights.

Thank you for your friendship and support.

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

# A Profound Legacy

## Cathy McNeil

At the White House Conference on America's Great Outdoors last spring, Secretary of Interior Ken Salazar reminisced about growing up in Colorado's San Luis Valley: "That's where I began my effort on conservation because I know that the farmers and ranchers really are the greatest of stewards of our lands."

Cathy and Mike McNeil embody this remark. At the 114-year-old McNeil Ranch in the San Luis Valley, their grass-fed beef cattle and holistic management style have won countless awards. Not one generation used pesticides.

"The ranch is an incredibly profound legacy we're so fortunate to have, and we want to leave it better than we got it," Cathy says.

Paying hefty estate taxes upon inheriting the property, and hoping their daughter could avoid the same challenge, prompted Cathy to research conservation easements and help establish the Rio Grande Headwaters Land Trust (RiGHT) in 1999.

From day one, RiGHT emphasized education and outreach to landowners and the region's six county commissioners. Continually engaging their representatives at all levels of government has served them well.

"Our state representative used to be the county commissioner. Our local investment paid off," says

Executive Director Nancy Butler, whom the White House invited to its conference last year. "Many of our representatives are farmers and ranchers, so it's neighbor to neighbor."

From these connections, they've built support to help enact the state conservation tax credit, a state law tying water rights to easements (critical to agriculture here) and the enhanced federal conservation tax incentive.

"The change in the federal law made conservation much more appealing for land donors," says Cathy. "It's played a role in every single deal we've done," adds Nancy. "Being a small rural land trust, we really do rely on those federal incentives and programs."

In just the last three years, RiGHT has helped double the pace of conservation along the Rio Grande in Colorado with the help of tax incentives and \$13 million in grants from government conservation programs. Keeping the river and its waters healthy, bountiful and free from exploitation is important to the farmers and ranchers in this community.

Several ranching communities in Colorado have been lost to development, Cathy says. But not here. "We love our way of life and want to preserve it."

### LAND TRUST ALLIANCE SUCCESSES

- Won renewal in Congress of the enhanced federal tax incentive for conservation easement donations through 2011, making it more attractive for working farmers, ranchers and foresters to conserve their land.
- Set the stage for making this incentive permanent by recruiting 274 co-sponsors in the U.S. House of Representatives, including majorities of both parties.
- Organized extensive land trust comments to the federal America's Great Outdoors initiative, a 21st century conservation strategy. President Obama became the first U.S. president to publicly recognize the importance of land trusts and local partnerships.
- Became a key actor in the planning of electric transmission to ensure that new energy policies will avoid, mitigate or compensate for disturbance of conserved lands.
- Successfully encouraged the IRS to remove conservation easements from the "Dirty Dozen Tax Scams" list for the first time since 2004.





*Cathy McNeil is a founding board member/president of the Rio Grande Headwaters Land Trust, and a current board member. RiGHT was accredited in 2010.*

# Back from the Brink

Judy Steckler

“We lost absolutely everything.”

Judy Steckler, executive director of the Land Trust for the Mississippi Coastal Plain (LTMCP), recalls August 29, 2005 well, when Hurricane Katrina brought devastation to countless people on the Gulf Coast and to the land trust.

Their office was a servants’ quarters behind an antebellum home in Biloxi that had stood since the 1700s. It survived the hurricanes of 1947 and 1969, so they were confident. But when Judy was able to return a week after the storm, nothing was left.

Files in board members’ homes were also destroyed. In fact, three sets of records in three different counties were all lost or badly damaged.

This didn’t stop LTMCP from being among the 130 organizations nationwide that have now earned land trust accreditation.

“Our board considered it important because there are just a few land trusts in Mississippi and we wanted to be one that the business community looked at as being sound, one of the best. Accreditation gives you that,” Judy says. “If those were the standards that the Land Trust Alliance thought were important, then we wanted to assure ourselves we were meeting them.”

To rebuild their files, from legal documents to baselines to board minutes, Judy called anyone who may have had pieces of the puzzle. Everyone chipped in. Preparing for accreditation, earned in 2009, was very helpful to complete the picture.

Last year, the Deepwater Horizon oil spill brought new devastation to the Gulf Coast. In its wake, however, another opportunity arose. Judy, 39 other land trusts, and Alliance Southeast Director Chuck Roe are creating a new Partnership of Gulf Coast Land Trusts to win increased funding and resources for land conservation in the region through a strong, united voice.

Judy believes the adversity of both the hurricane and the oil spill has made the “resilient” people in this largely urban community more aware of their environment and the importance of sustaining it for future generations. Every year since 2005, LTMCP has substantially increased its land protection, including from donations.

“People hung onto limbs of oak trees to survive the storm,” she remembers, “They’ll say ‘the trees saved my life because they blocked the wind.’ You can see this path where there are homes still standing...and it has to do with the environment.”

## LAND TRUST ALLIANCE SUCCESSES

- Celebrated the first 100 accredited land trusts in America. Independent accreditation by the Land Trust Accreditation Commission provides the assurance of quality and permanence of land conservation to the public. If the current applicants are accredited, 54% of conservation land will be held by an accredited land trust. See the full list, now 130 strong, on the back cover.
- Built strong land trusts by delivering training to more than 3,000 people through Rally, workshops and webinars; and by utilizing our faculty of more than 400 teachers, our Alliance-trained cadre of 82 instructor-consultants, and numerous partner organizations.
- Strengthened the online Learning Center—now used by 4,800 board, staff and volunteers—by launching the *Pathways to Accreditation* guide, and adding courses and other content.
- Created and piloted a new Leadership Training Program hailed as organization-changing, and in some cases life-changing, by the first 23 executive directors enrolled.





*Judy Steckler stands near 400-year-old trees on the 12 Oaks property, protected by the Land Trust for the Mississippi Coastal Plain. The trees, like the land trust, have persevered.*





*George Moore (in sunglasses) with members of Lyme Land Conservation Trust's Executive Committee, as well as the Stewardship Chair (and one director's grandchildren). The group (minus the grandchildren) directs the legal efforts in the present legal challenge rather than involving the whole board.*



# Eyes Wide Open

## George Moore

Traveling up the Connecticut River, the view of the town of Lyme appears little changed from its founding in 1665. Its pastoral scenes and wooded hills contrast with the development on the opposite shore.

“We’re somewhat of an island,” says George Moore, president of Lyme Land Conservation Trust (CT). The rural landscape brought George and his wife here, and serves as an oasis for many from New York City.

The trust knows the importance of good stewardship—of its 95 properties including 64 easements and 400 acres of linked trails—and its obligations to the community it serves. About half of the town’s 1,000 households are land trust members. And with no full-time staff, the organization’s 15 directors and about 40 additional volunteers do much of the work.

So it was an “eye opener” when a dispute over its very first easement brought the 44-year-old land trust to court for the first time.

They tried educating and engaging the new owners of the sensitive waterfront property—as they had two previous owners. But continually rebuffed and with infractions escalating, they finally filed suit. Concerned that the community

might lose faith in the land trust, George reached out and explained its fiduciary responsibility to uphold conserved land in perpetuity. That’s when the landowner sued him personally.

Last year, Lyme Land Conservation Trust joined the Alliance’s Conservation Defense Insurance Program. Once launched, the new insurance service will help land trusts afford legal costs and collectively defend conservation everywhere.

“Because of our experience, we are more acutely aware of the need for this program than most land trusts might be,” says George. He likes that it will also build case law where little exists. “We believe this isn’t unique to us and it won’t be going away.”

There is no end in sight to the case in Lyme, and costs are escalating. George is grateful for the wonderful support of many in town, and that the land trust had Directors and Officers insurance\* to cover the personal lawsuit.

With nearly 45% of Lyme already protected, “there’s a narrow window left for land acquisition—maybe 20 to 30 years,” George says. Increasingly, they will be focused on ensuring what has been protected stays protected.

*\*Directors and Officers insurance is available to Alliance land trust members through the Conserve-A-Nation® Program.*

### LAND TRUST ALLIANCE SUCCESSES

- Enrolled 18,276 conservation properties from 460 land trusts in 47 states and D.C. in the proposed Conservation Defense Insurance Program.<sup>†</sup> Our next step is to raise the \$4 million in capitalization required by the Insurance Commissioner with the goal of beginning the service by the end of 2012.
- Added and updated case law summaries and opinions to the online Conservation Defense Clearinghouse on The Learning Center.
- Recruited 12 national law firms to provide the Alliance with 4,000 hours of *pro bono* time to assist with precedent-setting cases.
- Strengthened the conservation defense network, made up of 450 conservation attorneys and conservation experts from every state in America. Created a new stewardship network.
- Taught practices to prevent legal problems by responding to more than 350 information requests.

<sup>†</sup> Numbers current as of March 31, 2011.



# A People Business

## Mark Ackelson

“Our land conservation business is really a people business,” says Mark Ackelson, president of the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation (INHF). “If we don’t help to build relationships between people and the land, our efforts will be challenged and may very well be lost.”

Thirty years ago, and one year after helping found INHF, Mark was among the 40 land conservation



practitioners brought together by visionary Kingsbury Browne in Boston to talk about common challenges. Only about 400 local land trusts dotted the nation, and many didn’t know the others existed. In what Mark calls “spontaneous combustion,” the meeting launched the Land Trust Exchange, now the Land Trust Alliance, with INHF as an incorporator.

Flash forward to 2007, when Mark won the Kingsbury Browne Conservation Leadership Award and a fellowship at the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy, which allowed Mark to study an emerging challenge: adapting to a changing human landscape.

“One of the reasons land trusts are so successful is they grow out of local communities and are in close touch with what is important to each,” says Mark. But communities are changing as America urbanizes and people spend less time outdoors.

Mark found that when it comes to reaching out to new racial, ethnic and socioeconomic groups, some land trusts are doing an incredible job, “and many of us are struggling.”

He admits INHF is not a leader on this issue, but found that one way to start was to partner with another type of community group. *Future Talk*, a summer program led by Iowa professor Dana Livingston, provides at-risk teenagers with meaningful conservation work and a lifelong connection to nature.

“Out of this partnership, we’re now finding other partners we might be able to engage,” Mark says.



A board member of the Alliance, Mark helped create its bold new strategic plan in 2010 to accelerate the pace, improve the quality and ensure the permanence of land conservation. One urgent focus is building broader public support for America’s land trusts, which now number 1,700.

“We all have to learn how to best engage people from as many sectors as we can, in ways that make sense for each of us.” But it takes patience and perseverance—just like conserving land.

*Left: The Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation, a newly accredited land trust, has completed over 800 projects, including a record 58 projects in 2010. Mark Ackelson is shown pointing. Above: Young people participating in Future Talk.*



## INDIVIDUALS AND FAMILY FOUNDATIONS

The Land Trust Alliance thanks all of our individual supporters, who together make countless successes in land conservation happen! Because of limited space, we have listed supporters who gave \$500 or more in 2010, including members of our *Guardians of the Land Society*, who made leadership gifts of \$1,000 or greater. Visit [www.lta.org/join](http://www.lta.org/join) for a list of all our supporters and how you can help.

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### NOTES FOR ALL LISTS

<sup>†</sup> Gifts in-kind, listed at the estimated value of the gift.

Multi-year gifts and grants are reflected in the amount allocated for 2010.

If your name has been inadvertently omitted or misrepresented on any of the lists, please contact Kelly Carter Rollison at [krollison@lta.org](mailto:krollison@lta.org).

## GIFTS FROM ORGANIZATIONAL MEMBERS

The Land Trust Alliance is the membership organization for America's land trusts. We thank the 1,134 land trusts and the 219 Government, Nonprofit and Professional Partners that were members in 2010. In the list below, we give our special thanks to those land trusts and partners that gave gifts of \$1,000 or more *above and beyond their member dues*.

All of our members' support helps advance the pace, quality and permanence of land conservation throughout the country! To see a complete list of Alliance organizational members, please visit [www.lta.org/join](http://www.lta.org/join).

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We thank the following individuals and institutions for contributing to an endowment for land trust accreditation.

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The Peter and Carmen Lucia Buck Foundation  
Levin Campbell  
Doris Duke Charitable Foundation  
The Kresge Foundation  
The Tiffany & Co. Foundation  
West Hill Foundation for Nature

## IN-KIND SUPPORT FOR CONSERVATION DEFENSE

In addition, the following firms provided generous *pro bono* support for the Conservation Defense Program.

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The Land Trust Alliance thanks the following people for teaching or speaking at Alliance-sponsored local, regional or national events and writing for Alliance publications. Thanks also to the many land trust partners who helped us plan and carry out trainings and conferences. People marked with an asterisk gave their time and expertise to the Standards and Practices Curriculum in 2010.

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## COMBINED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

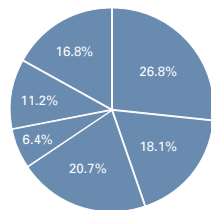
Year Ended December 31, 2010 (with comparative totals for 2009)

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

Combined Statement of Activities	2010				2009
	Unrestricted	Temporarily Restricted	Permanently Restricted	Total	
<b>Support and revenue</b>					
Grants	\$ 43,125	\$ 4,070,679	\$ 175,000	\$ 4,288,804	\$ 5,968,406
Contributions					
Individual memberships and donations	1,936,369	27,800	-	1,964,169	1,769,639
Organizational memberships	972,427	-	-	972,427	909,778
Other donations	36,924	-	-	36,924	29,136
Conference fees	897,717	-	-	897,717	910,666
Investment income (loss)	72,252	196,132	-	268,384	440,172
Accreditation fees	241,917	-	-	241,917	163,250
Publication sales	38,004	-	-	38,004	57,883
Other programs	15,750	-	-	15,750	13,143
Net assets released from restrictions	3,684,062	(3,684,062)	-	-	-
<b>Total support and revenue</b>	<b>7,938,547</b>	<b>610,549</b>	<b>175,000</b>	<b>8,724,096</b>	<b>10,262,073</b>
<b>Expenses</b>					
Program services	6,223,250	-	-	6,223,250	7,864,304
Management and general	461,503	-	-	461,503	544,331
Fundraising	1,252,122	-	-	1,252,122	1,434,158
<b>Total expenses</b>	<b>7,936,875</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>7,936,875</b>	<b>9,842,793</b>
<b>Change in net assets</b>	<b>1,672</b>	<b>610,549</b>	<b>175,000</b>	<b>787,221</b>	<b>419,280</b>
<b>Net assets</b>					
Beginning	\$ 2,840,471	\$ 4,400,389	\$ 1,352,216	\$ 8,593,076	\$ 8,173,796
Ending	\$ 2,842,143	\$ 5,010,938	\$ 1,527,216	\$ 9,380,297	\$ 8,593,076

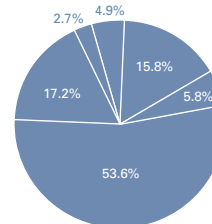
### REVENUE

Individuals	26.8%
Foundations	18.1%
Government	20.7%
Organizational memberships	11.2%
Corporations/Organizations	6.4%
Earned revenue	16.8%



### EXPENSE

Fundraising	15.8%
Management & General	5.8%
Education & Capacity Building	53.6%
Policy and Outreach	17.2%
Conservation Defense	2.7%
Accreditation	4.9%



## Combined Statements of Financial Position

	2010	2009
<b>Assets</b>		
<b>Current assets</b>		
Cash and cash equivalents	\$ 1,700,711	\$ 2,138,879
Receivables	7,361	13,794
Promises to give	3,012,756	1,937,226
Investments	2,782,533	3,048,777
Prepaid expenses	165,390	144,537
Inventories	62,049	55,230
<b>Total current assets</b>	<b>\$ 7,730,800</b>	<b>\$ 7,338,443</b>
<b>Property and equipment</b>		
net of accumulated depreciation of \$913,963 (\$809,658 in 2009)	403,302	464,518
<b>Other assets</b>		
Promises to give, long-term	330,284	726,444
Investments - endowments	1,817,590	1,440,371
Deposits	8,419	8,419
<b>Total other assets</b>	<b>2,156,293</b>	<b>2,175,234</b>
<b>Total assets</b>	<b>\$ 10,290,395</b>	<b>\$ 9,978,195</b>
<b>Liabilities and net assets</b>		
<b>Current liabilities</b>		
Accounts payable and accrued expenses	\$ 525,684	\$ 982,617
Deferred rent	384,414	402,502
<b>Total current liabilities</b>	<b>910,098</b>	<b>1,385,119</b>
<b>Net assets</b>		
Unrestricted	2,842,143	2,840,471
Temporarily restricted	5,010,938	4,400,389
Permanently restricted	1,527,216	1,352,216
<b>Total net assets</b>	<b>9,380,297</b>	<b>8,593,076</b>
<b>Total liabilities and net assets</b>	<b>\$ 10,290,395</b>	<b>\$ 9,978,195</b>





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*List current as of March 2011*

*The Land Trust Accreditation Commission awards the accreditation seal to community institutions that meet national quality standards for protecting important natural places and working lands forever [www.landtrustaccreditation.org].*

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