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## Your November accreditation news update

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From Melissa Kalvestrand - Land Trust Alliance <mkalvestrand@email.lta.org>

Date Thu 11/20/2025 12:21 PM

To Jennifer Brady-Connor <jbconnor@landtrustaccreditation.org>



**Your news update**  
**November 2025**

## Season of reflection



*Hiking in the Lake George, New York area.*

At the beginning of each year, I pick a word or phrase to serve as a guidepost for the year. During the plenary at Rally 2025, I shared that the word “local” resonated with me. While Sir Patrick Geddes’ concept of “Think Globally, Act Locally” is 110 years old, it continues to be relevant today. Personally in 2025, I volunteered on a board of a trail advocacy non-profit, kept my little free library stocked and hiked with my dog on properties protected by local land trusts. For the accredited land trust community, it has meant a continual commitment to

conservation excellence and doing the hard work, day in and day out, to meet the promise of perpetuity.

Collectively, the impact of the more than 475 accredited land trusts is impressive. Accredited land trusts protect more than 51 million acres either with a conservation easement or in fee ownership. But, a local impact cannot always be measured in acres; it is connections with people, land that keeps a community fed, healthy waters, protection of special spaces and so much more.

Each accredited land trust has a story of how its work has impacted its community — seeing that work shine through when we look at an accreditation application is one of the great joys of the work we do at the Commission. Even those of us who have reviewed over 100 applications still find something in each application that is exciting or sparks our curiosity into wanting to learn more.

The Commission program would not be what it is today without the talented and **dedicated staff** I am fortunate to work with, and without the guidance and strength of our volunteer **Commissioners**. Commissioners share their expertise in land protection, stewardship and nonprofit management with the land trust community. I especially want to extend my gratitude to Commissioners Andrew Dana, Karen Ferrell-Ingram, Andrew Kota and Catherine Rawson for their incredible work during their years on the Commission. Read more below.

As you reflect on 2025, I hope you find inspiration in all that the land trust community has accomplished. I hope that the collective power of local conservation carries you forward into 2026 as we all work together to build a bigger global impact.



*All my best,*  
**Melissa Kalvestrand**  
**Executive Director**

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## Commissioner spotlight: With gratitude

The Commission is governed by 18 volunteer commissioners who collectively volunteer over 4,000 hours each year. Commissioners are a diverse and dedicated team who bring together knowledge from all facets of conservation work. They serve as peer reviewers of accreditation applications, advise on programmatic goals, create policies that govern the organization, develop and approve the accreditation requirements and many more tasks related to the oversight of the Commission. ([Learn more](#) about volunteering as a commissioner).

We would like to recognize Commissioners Andrew Dana, Karen Ferrell-

Ingram, Andrew Kota and Catherine Rawson for their dedicated service to the land trust community as they step off the Commission at the end of the year. Combined, the four have been commissioners a total of 34 years and reviewed nearly 150 applications.

Andrew Dana founded Conservation Law Associates in Bozeman, Montana and provided legal service to land trusts in Montana and the Northern Rockies. He has consulted nationally about a broad range of conservation easement matters, including easement transactions, drafting, interpretation, enforcement, amendment and termination and tax policy. With his brothers, Andy owns a working ranch on the Yellowstone River that is protected by a conservation easement. Andy served as a commissioner for six years.



Karen Ferrell-Ingram is a co-founder and former executive director of the accredited Eastern Sierra Land Trust in California. In her various roles at the land trust, Karen worked on a variety of organizational, outreach, fundraising, and conservation projects. After her conservation easement property, where she resides, burned in 2015, Karen focused on active management of her land and recovery after fire. Karen served as a commissioner for 11 years and served as secretary for four years and vice chair for two years.



Andrew Kota is the executive director of the accredited Foothills Conservancy of North Carolina and has nearly two decades of experience in resource protection and ecological research. Andrew enjoys outdoor recreation with his family, and his work is inspired by the possibility of making the world a better place for his two children by preserving some of North Carolina's most important natural and cultural features. Andrew served as a commissioner for seven years.



Catherine Rawson is the executive director of the accredited Northwest Connecticut Land Conservancy, board member of the Connecticut Land Conservation Council, and steering committee member of the Working Lands Alliance. Under Catherine's direction since 2011, Northwest Connecticut Land Conservancy has achieved significant growth in its regional impact and capacity for long-term, sustainable conservation. Catherine served as commissioner for 10 years, including two years as vice chair and four years as chair.



## We need to hear from you if you...

- » Have a new executive director.
- » Have a new contact for accreditation.
- » Changed names.
- » Decided to merge with another organization.
- » Changed geographical area.
- » Changed corporate structure.
- » Changed programming, such as accepting easements when previously only accepting fee lands.

Update your information now

518.587.3143 | [info@landtrustaccreditation.org](mailto:info@landtrustaccreditation.org)

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*The mission of the Land Trust Accreditation Commission is to inspire excellence, promote public trust and ensure permanence in the conservation of open lands by recognizing land trust organizations that meet rigorous quality standards and that strive for continuous improvement.*  
*Land Trust Accreditation Commission, 36 Phila St, Suite 2, Saratoga Springs, NY 12866*

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