INDIANA LAND TRUST ADVANCEMENT PROGRAM

INTRODUCTION

Indiana's 27 land trusts have preserved 20,591 acres of natural areas, wildlife habitat, working farms and forests, wetlands, karst topography and other open spaces (based on the Land Trust Alliance's most recent census). These land trust holdings include 5,135 acres that are open to the public for nature walks and other forms of recreation.

However, Indiana's land trusts must act quickly if we hope to conserve the state's remaining natural areas and other open spaces for future generations. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the state lost 93,000 acres of rural open space *per year* to development from 1997-2002.[1]

Natural resources, including wildlife habitat, farmland, and recreational lands, contribute greatly to Indiana's economic health, quality of life, and environmental sustainability. To protect these valued lands, all land trusts in Indiana need to play an increasingly prominent role in marshaling citizens' interest in land conservation. To do so will ensure your organization's sustainability, effectiveness, and credibility.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The Land Trust Alliance (the Alliance) is pleased to announce the new, 3-year Indiana Land Trust Advancement Program that will provide the state's land trusts with training, organizational growth services, and technical assistance to help them upgrade their practices, develop sustainable operational and financial structures, and prepare for accreditation review. Working in close partnership with the Indiana Land Protection Alliance (ILPA), the program will also facilitate strategic collaboration among land trusts across the State, and provide tailored technical services to help address the conservation challenges land trusts face in different regions of the State.

The four goals for this three-year program are to:

1. Strengthen land trusts' capacity to accelerate the pace of land conservation in Indiana and ensure its permanence
2. Strengthen the role of land trusts as regional leaders in conservation across Indiana
3. Prepare Indiana land trusts for accreditation review
4. Promote awareness of land trusts and private land conservation among elected officials, private land owners, and local communities.

[1] http://www.farmlandinfo.org/agricultural_statistics/index.cfm?function=statistics_view&stateID=IN

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This program will fund an array of services to help build the overall capacity of land trusts to conserve and steward land, and prepare them for accreditation. The program is designed to ensure that, at the end of participation in the program, each land trust will be significantly more prepared to apply for accreditation review.

PROGRAM SERVICES

As the foundational component of the Indiana Land Trust Advancement Program, the Alliance will identify critical needs by conducting a **Needs Assessment Survey**, and convening focus groups and interviews with land trusts in various regions of the State. Building on existing knowledge and relationships, we will use the information gained from the needs assessment and the interviews to help structure services so that they are relevant and timely to the needs of the land conservation community in Indiana.

The program will provide a suite of services that will be available to all land trusts in Indiana, including:

- Update the 2004 land trust needs assessment: In partnership with ILPA, the Land Trust Alliance will conduct regional focus groups and interviews with Indiana land land trusts to identify critical needs of individual land trusts. Based on this assessment, and our existing knowledge, we will structure a focused and efficient program. The assessment results will guide program delivery so that services offered, whether they relate to technical, legal, or administrative aspects of land trust management, are relevant and timely to the needs of the participating land trusts.
- *Technical Training:* Based on the needs assessment, the Land Trust Alliance will organize and deliver training workshops with assistance from ILPA and other organizations. Land trust staff and board members will have an opportunity to participate in substantive training workshops on such subjects as: board development; land transactions; ethics and conflicts of interest; and conservation easement stewardship. In addition, the Alliance's new online Learning Center will provide a continual resource and reference to all land trusts to facilitate effective problem solving and ongoing learning.
- *Strategic Partnerships and Collaboration:* Through statewide and regional meetings, the Indiana Land Protection Alliance and the Land Trust Alliance will continue to foster and strengthen collaboration and partnerships among Indiana land trusts to advance strategic conservation and strengthen the land conservation community as a whole.

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In addition, through an **application** process, land trusts will have the opportunity to participate in tailored **organizational development service**s based on their individual needs. The nature, extent, and sequence of those services will be identified in consultation with the Alliance. These include:

- Guided Organizational Assessments: The Alliance will work with the board and staff of land trusts to conduct comprehensive assessments of their business practices. These assessments are designed to help land trusts identify priority areas for enhancing organizational health, and gauge their compliance with *Land Trust Standards and Practices*, with each assessment resulting in a plan for implementing needed improvements. These assessments will require a $300 cost-share payment from each land trust, with funds from the program underwriting the balance of costs (the cost of delivering one guided organizational assessment typically ranges from $2,500 - $3,500).
- *Mentoring, Technical Assistance, and Consultations:* Based on the results of organizational assessments and ongoing dialogue with land trusts, Alliance staff and contractors will deliver consultations to land trusts to help them implement desired improvements. These one-on-one consultations will address such needs as board leadership development, policy development, and strategic conservation planning, and may be delivered to a group of participating organizations with similar needs. These consultations may focus on specific tasks that are required for accreditation, such as completing baseline data or management plans. More experienced and successful land trusts participating in the program will be encouraged to coach one another and may be brought together periodically for peer exchange around common issues.

- Facilitated Leadership Retreats for Land Trust Boards: Each year we will offer a facilitated day-long retreat for a land trust that is at a critical transition point – e.g., having just hired its first staff member, or seriously evaluating a merger with another land trust. We will design the agenda in consultation with the leaders of each land trust, to ensure content is closely tailored to need.

PROGRAM TIMELINE

The estimated timeline and schedule for program components is as follows:

Program Launch: July 29, 2008
Needs Assessment and Focus Groups: August 2008 – January 2009
Organizational Advancement Services: Application process on an annual basis
Technical Trainings: 2 per year beginning late 2008
Strategic Partnerships and Collaboration: regional meetings, multiple per year based on need
Program Completion: July 29, 2011

APPLICATION AND SELECTION

All Indiana land trusts will have the opportunity to participate in Technical Trainings, Strategic Partnerships and Collaborations, and the Needs Assessment. Those interested in participating in the **organizational development services**, outlined above, must submit an application for consideration.

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The first deadline for applications is Wednesday, November 5, 2008. Additional deadlines and information about the application process are posted on the Alliance's website (http://www.lta.org/community/Regions/mid_west).

Application Process

1) Application forms may be downloaded from the Land Trust Alliance's Midwest section of its website (http://www.landtrustalliance.org/community/Regions/mid_west/indiana-program).

2) One copy of the completed application should be mailed to Land Trust Alliance – Midwest, 6849 S. Sprinkle Road, Portage, Michigan, 49002. Applicants may also submit an electronic application to Erin Heskett at eheskett@lta.org.

3) The Alliance will contact key staff and board members by phone to discuss the program and application.

5) Questions during the application process should be directed to Erin Heskett of the Alliance. (See contact information below.)

Eligibility

Land Trusts eligible to participate in the organizational development services must be:

- *A member, or willing to become a member of the Land Trust Alliance,*
- *A U.S.-based 501(c)(3) tax-exempt or quasi-governmental organization, or have applied for 501(c)(3) status.*
- *Focused on acquiring or stewarding conservation land or conservation easements*
- *Have formally adopted, or are planning to adopt the 2004 edition of Land Trust Standards and Practices*

PROGRAM ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The Alliance organized an advisory committee to provide guidance and expertise for the Indiana Land Trust Advancement Program. This committee is comprised of the following conservation leaders:

- Hugh Brown, Indiana Land Protection Alliance
- Ted Harris, Indiana Land Protection Alliance
- Paul Kohlhoff, Valparaiso University School of Law
- Jon Seymour, Oxbow, Inc.
- Joe Tutterrow, The Nature Conservancy

PROGRAM CONTACT

Erin Heskett
Midwest Director
Land Trust Alliance
269-324-1683
eheskett@lta.org

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