



Upper Mississippi River Land Trust Excellence Program¹ Program Description

The Land Trust Alliance is pleased to announce a new, comprehensive two-year program to strengthen the capacity, expertise, and conservation impact of land trusts operating within a seven-state region of the Upper Mississippi River Basin (IL, IA, KS, MN, MO, NE, and WI). A key objective of this program is to build land trust capacity to help improve water quality through land conservation and restoration.

Program Elements

Organizational Advancement Services

This excellence program will provide guided organizational assessments, staff and board training, coaching, and a small grants program to help land trusts implement needed organizational improvements and prepare for accreditation.

These advancement services will help enhance land trusts' technical and organizational capacity to protect and restore natural and working lands, wetlands, and riparian buffers. Further, earning land trust accreditation will help to demonstrate that these land trusts are positioned to uphold the permanence of land conservation and contribute to improving water quality within the Upper Mississippi River Basin.

Training and Education

The Alliance will offer training opportunities to help increase the knowledge and ability of land trusts and landowners to leverage federal, state, and local programs that provide technical assistance and funding to permanently protect and conserve farmland and natural lands. The trainings will help develop more effective advocates for land protection and conservation funding. Moreover, the trainings will promote stronger relationships and collaboration among land trusts, farmers, government agencies and other conservation partners toward more strategic land protection and conservation practices in the Upper Mississippi River Basin.

In 2011, Land Trust Alliance policy staff will lead a workshop that helps land trusts understand advocacy tools and strategies to become more effective advocates for land conservation. This training will cover several aspects of organizational advocacy, and utilize real-life case studies and hands-on exercises to teach participants how to apply techniques in their own communities. We will also focus on a national strategy for strengthening the Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program and the Grassland Reserve Program in the upcoming reauthorization of the 2008 Farm Bill, including specific roles that land trusts can play in their regions to advance this strategy.

In early 2012, we will offer a second workshop led by staff from the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and land conservation experts on how to leverage federal

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conservation funding; primarily Farm Bill programs, such as the Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRPP), the Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP), the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), and the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). This training will also include instruction for land trusts and landowners on how to draft agricultural conservation easements that are consistent with federal farm bill program requirements, and protect land and water resources while enabling farmers and ranchers to continue to farm and ranch.

To help offset participants' costs in attending these workshops, we will offer a limited number of travel stipends.

In addition, as part of the program, we will invite you to participate in periodic "Ask An Expert" conference calls and webinars on topics identified by land trusts in the region. All Land Trust Alliance members will have access to The Learning Center, our online resource library, and Alliance staff members will be available to answer questions and coach land trusts through a variety of organization, land transaction, and stewardship issues.

For additional information regarding this program please contact:

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