## ESSAY **TEN**

By Armando Carbonell

## LAND CONSERVATION, the Land Trust Alliance AND the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy:

30 YEARS ON

t began more than 30 years ago. A handful of land trusts had started to talk to each other and some to Kingsbury Browne, a Boston tax lawyer. Browne soon embarked on a sabbatical from his firm, traveling the American West in 1980 as a fellow of the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy. He visited more than 30 conservationists and institutions to round out his knowledge of private land conservation based on his legal work for land trusts in the Northeast. Browne was an expert on the use of conservation easements and the effects of tax policy on land conservation. Observing a lack of awareness of recent developments in federal tax policy and the need for better communication among land trusts to avoid "reinventing the wheel," Browne was instrumental in persuading the Lincoln Institute to convene the first meeting of land trust leaders from around the country. This initiative led to the establishment of the Land Trust Exchange, the name under which the Land Trust Alliance was incorporated in 1982. Since those beginnings, our interests have continued to dovetail with the work of the Alliance.

The Lincoln Institute of Land Policy is a nonprofit education and research organization concerned with the use, regulation and taxation of land. Its interest in land conservation has continued to grow since the 1980s, especially over the last dozen years. A quick search of the term "conservation" on the Institute's website yields hundreds of relevant publications, including books, policy focus reports, working papers and Land Lines articles. Available for free downloading are more than 50 working papers and a number of policy focus reports, ranging from John Tibbetts' 1998 Open Space Conservation: Investing in your Community's Economic Health to Matthew McKinney, Lynn Scarlett and Daniel Kemmis' 2010 Large Landscape Conservation: A Strategic Framework for Policy and Action.



The Lincoln Institute has focused its efforts related to land conservation on a carefully selected set of themes based on the interests of our two main subject area departments: Planning and Urban Form and Valuation and Taxation. Much early work focused on conservation easements and their potentially significant tax implications. The Institute has offered many training sessions for appraisers and local tax assessors on this topic, as well as a free online introductory course. Conservation easements were the subject of a 2005 policy focus report by Jeff Pidot, Reinventing Conservation Easements: A Critical Examination and Ideas for Reform, and another report on conservation easements and issues of perpetuity is being developed by the Department of Valuation and Taxation.

The Institute has also supported work on conservation finance, leading to the 2005 volume edited by James N. Levitt, From Walden to Wall Street: Frontiers of Conservation Finance (2005), published in collaboration with Island Press. Our work in the American West, in the spirit of Kingsbury Browne's pioneering visit, has included a joint venture with the Sonoran Institute that initially focused on state trust lands and now encompasses a range of conservation challenges in this rapidly developing region. We also have worked on a place-based collaborative conservation initiative in the Crown of the Continent in partnership with the University of Montana and we are gratified that the Crown has become recognized as an exemplary large landscape in the national program

known as America's Great Outdoors. The Montana partnership led to another Lincoln Institute book, Working Across Boundaries: People, Nature, and Regions (2009), by Matthew J. McKinney and Shawn Johnson. Our work on planning for climate change began on the urban side of our program, but has grown to include its impacts on habitat and implications for long-range conservation strategy.

The Institute's longstanding international interests, including programs in Latin America and China, have led us to look beyond the U.S. border, as evidenced by such books as *Conservation Capital in the Americas:* Exemplary Conservation Finance Initiatives (2010), also edited by James Levitt. With more than a nod to the success of the Land Trust Alliance, we have convened a network of large landscape conservation practitioners and launched a new networking initiative for universities and research institutions that serve as conservation catalysts, a topic to be discussed at a 2012 Rally breakfast meeting in Salt Lake City.

Following Kingsbury Browne's death in 2005, former Alliance president and Lincoln Institute board member Jean Hocker proposed that, in addition to the Alliance's Kingsbury Browne Conservation Leadership Award, it would be fitting to recognize his contributions with a fellowship at the Lincoln Institute. The Kingsbury Browne Fellowship was established in 2006 to encourage individuals active in the land trust movement to pursue research, writing and mentoring on land conservation topics. The current fellow is Audrey Rust, who recently retired as president of the Peninsula Open Space Trust (see graphic below for the list of recipients).

For more than 10 years, the Lincoln Institute has organized a number of Rally workshops on such topics as conservation innovation, conservation finance and landscape-scale conservation. Returning the favor, the Alliance has participated in Lincoln Institute Conservation Leadership Dialogues during this same period. The Institute helped design and carry out the most recent National Land Trust Census and has been active in a series of Alliance events focused on international land trust activity, including recent "Rally 'Round the World" sessions. We are proud to be part of this valuable collaboration over the past 30 years and congratulate the Alliance on its growth from the early days of the Land Trust Exchange to its current role as a vital organization serving more than 1,700 land trusts around the country.

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## The Cream of the Cr

The following are the recipients of the Kingsbury Browne Conservation Leadership Award and Fellowship with the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy, announced annually at Rally.

