

BY Sean Robertson

CULTIVATING INFLUENCE

Have you heard the one about the Republican senator and Democratic senator who co-hosted a fundraiser for their local land trust?

It sounds like a joke, right? One Alaska land trust actually made it happen.

It all started when the new mayor of Anchorage said “no” to Great Land Trust’s conveyance of a coastal park.

Executive Director Phil Shephard wouldn’t take “no” for an answer. He enlisted almost every influence tactic imaginable to change the mayor’s mind—an economic analysis, property tours for the mayor’s friends, pressure from federal agencies, collaborative fundraising for park maintenance and a grassroots campaign that featured everything from coalition letters to events with cute kids holding signs that were covered in the Anchorage paper.

It worked. The mayor changed his mind, Alaska’s senators pitched in to help raise \$7.5 million for the project; Campbell Creek Natural Area is now under construction and the campaign raised Great Land Trust’s profile in the community.

All land trusts stand to benefit from the relationships Great Land Trust built with federal officials. For example, one tour participant and fundraiser co-host, Senator Lisa Murkowski, is the top ranking Republican on both the Senate Energy & Natural Resources Committee and the Interior Appropriations Subcommittee. Land conservation funding may be a hard sell in a state that is nearly 90% public land, but Senator Murkowski now has a compelling

GREAT LAND TRUST



Senator Mark Begich (D-AK) invited Senate Energy and Natural Resources Chair Ron Wyden (D-OR) and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Director Dan Ashe to tour Great Land Trust’s Campbell Creek Estuary project.

example of the impact local land trusts have on people in their communities.

Phil helped to bring these relationships full circle when he participated in the Land Trust Advocacy Day in Washington, D.C., advocating in the halls of Congress for land conservation issues. Our 2014 Land Trust Advocacy Day is scheduled for April 1–2. Learn more at www.lta.org/advocacyday.

Want to learn more about this remarkable story? It was the feature of our most recent Advocacy Webinar. View the recording and look for upcoming webinars at www.lta.org/policy/webinars.



Tax Issues

Bipartisan Support Boosts Easement Incentive

Even as partisan rancor ties Congress in knots, the Land Trust Alliance has provided local land trusts the tools they need to prove that “all politics is local.” Working together in D.C. and back in the representatives’ districts, we recruited a diverse list of 59 Republicans and 76 Democrats to join with Representatives Jim Gerlach (R-PA) and Mike Thompson (D-CA) as original co-sponsors of the Conservation Easement Incentive Act, H.R. 2807.

We are just four months away from losing the enhanced tax deduction that has boosted the pace of

conservation easement donations by a third, to over a million acres a year. Learn how you can help make the incentive permanent at www.lta.org/easementincentive.



Farm Bill

Much to Celebrate in the Farm Bill

Thanks in large part to great work by Michigan and Colorado land trusts, the House and Senate have both passed Farm Bill proposals that would provide about \$1.4 billion over 10 years for land trusts to purchase Agricultural Land Easements. We are increasingly optimistic about enacting this legislation, but there is one more victory we'd like to see through.

On the eve of Senate passage, the Alliance helped Senator Michael Bennet (D-CO) win unanimous approval of an amendment that allows a waiver for landowners to donate more easement value in lieu of the existing 25% cash match requirement that many land trusts simply cannot afford.

"Senator Bennet's amendment will save land trusts millions of dollars and help them conserve more land in more places," notes Western Policy Manager Lynne Sherrod. "As the House and Senate work to reconcile

their bills, the Alliance will continue to work with Chairwoman Debbie Stabenow (D-MI) to ensure that this commonsense provision survives in the final agreement."

For the latest updates visit www.lta.org/farmland.



Public Funding

\$100 Million for Wetlands

Land trusts are celebrating the news that North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA) projects will receive nearly \$100 million from the BP oil spill settlement. Details still need to be worked out by December, but this infusion far exceeds the program's usual annual funding nationwide.

Land trusts have used NAWCA grants to acquire, restore and enhance millions of acres of wetland ecosystems for the benefit of migratory birds and other wildlife. It is a natural partnership considering that the donated value of easements negotiated by land trusts can satisfy the match requirements.

"Land trusts should take advantage of this program, but we must also act now to save it," says Land Trust Alliance Executive Vice President Mary Pope Hutson, who

serves on the council that administers these grants. "NAWCA's enabling legislation expired in 2012 and House appropriators have proposed eliminating all funding next year, so the program's survival is very much at risk."

You can help by asking your senators and rep to co-sponsor legislation reauthorizing NAWCA.

Chairwoman Debbie Stabenow (D-MI) celebrated Senate passage of the Farm Bill at Ken Engle's conserved cherry farm, alongside other easement donors and staff from Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy and Leelanau Conservancy.

Learn more about S. 741 and H.R. 2208, track next year's appropriations and learn how your land trust can access these funds at www.lta.org/nawca.

Help Shape Our Policy Work at Rally 2013

Is the Alliance prioritizing the right policy issues? Are we providing the tools you need to be effective advocates? Anything goes in the Big Easy, so come and speak your mind!

Share your comments in advance at www.lta.org/policy/priorities or join us in person at the Public Policy 2013 Update and 2014 Forum—it's workshop D18 on Thursday, September 19 at 8:30 a.m.

The Policy Forum is just one of nearly two dozen policy-related seminars and workshops at Rally. Learn to be an effective advocate (SEM-3), secure state funding (A17 and FS10), avoid trouble with the IRS (C17 and D14), respond to conspiracy theorists (E16) and access federal programs (B18, C19, D17, FS01, FS02). Find a complete list at www.lta.org/policy/rally.



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U.S. SENATOR DEBBIE STABENOW