

BY Kimberly Seese

GET THE OWL to the top of the tree



CONSERVATION DEFENSE INSURANCE PROGRAM
Commitment Progress

Almost There! Defense Insurance Commitments Climb

If you ask any member of the 100% Rally attendance club, they'll tell you that land trust people have talked about the idea of collective defense for at least the last 15 years. One called it the Holy Grail of conservation defense: highly desirable but elusive.

At the end of April more than 279 land trusts from 46 states had committed over 10,864 conservation easements and fee land parcels to the proposed program, moving us 90% of the way towards the minimum start-up of 12,000 conservation easements and fee land parcels needed for feasibility. Your commitment is essential in order for the Alliance board to vote to proceed to the next step. Scott Wilber, executive director of New Mexico Land Conservancy, explains why his board of directors committed:

"While New Mexico Land Conservancy has been diligently building a stewardship endowment to adequately cover the long-term costs of easement monitoring and legal defense, NMLC's board of directors

the country affect our industry's ability to remain viable and serve the communities we represent. Therefore, we are very interested in seeing that all land trusts either have, or are actively working toward, building the resources and capacity to adequately defend their conservation portfolio. We envision the collective insurance program will enhance NMLC's ability to legally defend our conservation easements and provide superior stewardship services."

The Land Trust Alliance is still accepting commitment letters to reach the minimum of 12,000 easements or fee parcels. If started, the program will be owned and operated by the participating land trusts.

The one-time registration fee would be used for start-up costs if the program launches. If not, the Alliance will return it in full. One of the next steps after enough land trusts commit is to create a \$4 million dollar endowment for the program. Land trusts who sign up for the program will *not* be asked to contribute to that fund, although all contributions are welcome. The Alliance proposes to raise the \$4 million in capital from foundations and individual major donors, and welcomes suggestions, introductions and advice from land trusts about who might be interested in contributing to that fund.

On July 1, 2010, the registration fee increases by 50%, so land trusts have an incentive to decide soon if participation makes sense for them. Send questions to Leslie Ratley Beach at lrbeach@lta.org or call her at 802-262-6051. •

FIND DETAILED INFORMATION ON THE ALLIANCE WEBSITE AT WWW.LTA.ORG/CDINSURANCE.

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and staff have concluded that the proposed collective insurance program would enhance not only our organization's capacity to defend our conservation easements, but that of the larger land trust community as well.

"NMLC realizes that the status and standing of conservation easements across

Do you have news land trusts can use? Send it to savingland@lta.org so we can spread the word to your peers.



Middle school students building a rain garden they designed.

Partnerships with school and library systems, as well as local governments, fund projects on properties in highly visible areas in local communities.

Rain, Rain *Don't* Go Away Gardens Take Root to Catch Runoff

Washington State landowners in King, Pierce and Thurston counties are giving root to new, innovative gardens in the Puget Sound community. Rain gardens are sprouting up across the region to catch the 26,000 gallons of runoff stormwater from homeowners' rooftops and driveways each year—water that would otherwise pollute the sound or cause flooding.

Stewardship Partners, a nonprofit organization committed to helping private landowners restore and preserve the natural landscapes of the state, has overseen the installation of more than 40 rain gardens since the program began in 2008.

Executive Director David Burger said planting a rain garden is for all ages and gardeners, from the inexperienced homeowner to the masters. One hundred green

thumbs at Columbia Crest Middle School planted shrubs to form two interlocking letter Cs, a salute to their school spirit and environmental conscience. As the spirit spreads, more private homeowners and landscape professionals are inspired to use this low-impact development tool to capture and make use of stormwater.

“Rain gardens are not only an effective way to address the runoff from stormwater, but they provide the community with a beautiful biodiversity of plants. They create a colorful landscape where there would otherwise be grass,” said Burger.

The gardens incorporate plants and flowers native to the Washington landscape, mostly perennials, so the maintenance is low and less costly. But the start-up cost of a rain garden is high—close to \$5,000. The gardens are typically installed by profes-

sional landscapers, but free rain garden workshops are presented across the counties to give step-by step instruction to homeowners.

Stewardships Partners has engaged the community through its *Nominate Your Neighborhood* program. They recently worked with seven lucky landowners in Puyallup to install a free rain garden, and their next stop is Eatonville, in northwest Washington. Partnerships with school and library systems, as well as local governments, fund projects on properties in highly visible areas in local communities.

Burger said rain gardens are intended for an urban landscape, but they can be beneficial in a rural one, too. And although Washington weather is rainier than most, you don't need excess rain to maintain a successful rain garden. •

Leadership skills required for the next generation **are as much relational as they are transactional.**



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2042 Today

Training the Leaders of Tomorrow

The Center for Whole Communities and the Center for Diversity and the Environment are launching a pilot program this summer for a new training initiative that responds to a particular need within the conservation community of the U.S.

More and more conservationists are thinking about the exciting significance of 2042, the date one generation out when demographers predict that every metropolitan statistical area will be predominantly non-white, but few efforts are in place *today* to equip conservation leaders with the skills to engage different constituencies.

The movement's early conservation leaders faced one set of challenges when they started—those concerning transactional strength: buying land, changing laws and building institutions. Leadership skills required for the next generation are as much relational as they are transactional: How will conservation be integrated—or not—into the needs and values of a changing American public?

“2042 Today: Young Leaders Reimagining Conservation” will be designed to build the practical leadership skills needed to engage a dramatically changing American public. It will address how best to equip *now*

the emerging conservation leaders under the age of 35 who will lead the conservation movement through one of the most transformative moments in our history.

Young conservation leaders from all backgrounds and sectors will 1) gain the historical context that the activists and nonprofits from other sectors share, 2) learn the skills to engage in alliances and collaborations that are necessary for their own work to succeed in a changing America and 3) discover the perspectives that will help them to understand how their success is fully dependent on the success of environmental and social justice advocates across the board. The program will be inter-cultural and inter-racial, and will include a leadership retreat, one-on-one mentoring, and special follow-up training over a year-long period. •

WWW.WHOLECOMMUNITIES.ORG
WWW.ENVIRONMENTALDIVERSITY.ORG

Conservation at the Polls

Voters of Color Reveal Strong Support

As Americans face financial challenges during a lingering recession, it isn't surprising that boosting the economy is any voter's #1 concern. But in this time of economic downturn, American voters, and voters of color in particular, also remain highly committed to conservation.

The Democratic polling firm of Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin & Associates and the Republican polling firm of Public Opinion Strategies recently collaborated to complete a national survey of registered voters to assess public attitudes toward conservation and to measure the support for increased investments in the protection of America's outdoors.

According to the survey, three out of four voters believe that we can protect land and water and have a strong economy at the same time, and two-to-one majorities support increased public investment in conservation.

In their key findings memo, the two polling organizations state: "In almost every case, voters of color express concern

about the condition of land, water and wildlife—and support for investments in conservation—that are equal to or greater than those expressed by white voters. These data continue trends we have observed regularly in state and local opinion research over the past decade, which show that communities of color in America are some of the most dedicated supporters of conservation."

When asked if they would support programs through the state or federal government that would purchase land to conserve it, nearly 65% of Americans are in favor, despite the proposal's need for a small tax increase. Even more striking is that the numbers increase by 16% among voters of color at the local level, and 27% at the federal level.

As a nation, Americans, regardless of ethnicity, stand firm in their belief that we can continue to conserve our lands while strengthening our economy. More than 75% of all voters do not see a conflict of interest between environmental protection and economic growth. •

ISSUE	ALL VOTERS	WHITES	AFRICAN AMERICANS	LATINOS	ALL VOTERS OF COLOR
Pollution of rivers, lakes and streams	49%	46%	70%	47%	60%
Global warming	43%	39%	61%	55%	57%
Toxins and pesticides in our food and drinking water	42%	38%	63%	61%	60%
Loss of working farms and ranches	38%	38%	30%	44%	38%
Loss of habitat for fish and wildlife	38%	35%	63%	39%	51%
Loss of natural areas	34%	32%	58%	29%	54%

SOURCE: FAIRBANK, MASLIN, MAULLIN & ASSOCIATES AND PUBLIC OPINION STRATEGIES

A Good Return

Colorado Easements Provide a 6 to 1 Investment

Conservation easements are the primary land preservation tool in Colorado, accounting for more than two-thirds of all conserved land in the state. The Trust for Public Land (TPL) recently partnered with the Colorado Cattlemen's Agricultural Land Trust (CCALT) and other conservation organizations to determine the economic value of Colorado's conservation easements.

The study, conducted with the assistance of Colorado State University, not only examined the production value of the land, but also its public value, such as recreational benefits and clean water supply. By assigning values to the land and public benefits, the study found that since 1994, the \$511 million invested in 1.41 million acres of Colorado conservation easements has returned a value of \$3.51 billion to the state's citizens.

Chris West, CCALT executive director, said the study was undertaken to demonstrate the true value of land conservation easements at a time when state legislators are examining tax credit programs in an attempt to save money.

"We wanted to show the benefits of conserving farm and ranch land that go beyond the feel-good aspects of open space and conservation," Tim Wohlgenant, state director at TPL, told the *Western Livestock Journal*.

West added that the public needs to know they are getting a good return on their investment and that it is actually generating revenue for the state. A six-to-one investment gets anyone's attention.

By protecting land from development and leaving it in the care of agricultural producers, the public are freeing up tax dollars that would be needed for maintenance of the infrastructure in those developments. American Farmland Trust has run many studies in the past, called "Cost of Community Services," that demonstrate this.

Many conservationists have been successful in protecting large tracts of farm and ranch land from development, but with funding in jeopardy, groups across the nation are working hard to protect their programs from cuts. By examining the true return on investment they will be better able to challenge attempts to cut funds from those programs. 