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## The Value of the Board

**M**y first job in conservation was a small, start-up operation. I worked out of my house, poor as a church mouse, with big dreams and no budget. The founding board chair invited three or four of his friends to our first board meeting, and we waited anxiously to see if anyone would show up. Once we got a quorum, the board created a strategic plan and decided that we should protect the river corridor through our city. We hired a fundraising consultant who reported: "I have bad news for you. No one has heard of you. You have no members, no history of giving, and no prospects for success."

This would stop most people in their tracks, but my board took it as a personal challenge. Over the next year, they recruited a team of corporate CEO's and convinced the governor to host a breakfast to kick off a fundraising campaign. It took some time and hard work, but my board raised \$145 million and we protected 75 miles of riverfront.

Board leadership is at the heart of every great conservation achievement. They do what staff could never do by themselves: shape a strategic vision, galvanize public support, recruit friends, build credibility and raise funds. And, for the 800 land trusts that do not have staff, board members also negotiate deals, monitor easements, keep the books, and do everything else it takes to keep an organization going.

For this reason, the Land Trust Alliance is launching a new program to support and serve the board members of land trusts. In this issue of *Saving Land*, we feature practical advice on how to build a highly effective board and, in future issues, you will find more good advice in our regular department called "Board Matters." The Alliance will also lead board retreats and provide special training for board members at Rally and our regional conferences. If you would like to receive quarterly e-mail briefings focused on board issues, please e-mail [boardmatters@lta.org](mailto:boardmatters@lta.org).

Across the country, land trust boards are doing extraordinary work to protect the places they love. When I asked one board member why he gives so much time to land conservation, he said, "It is the single most important and rewarding thing I do. Nothing makes me happier than seeing a tract of land preserved forever."



**Rand Wentworth**