

Our LAND.
Our LIFE.
Our LEGACY.



Land Trust Alliance

Together, conserving the places you love

Lake Tahoe, California

PHILOSOPHY OF THE LAND TRUST ALLIANCE

Do you remember?

Do you remember that hillside where your mom taught you to find the Big Dipper and Orion?

Do you remember walking with your grandfather on his farm, learning from him about your family history and the power of good soil?

Do you remember once a year getting up before the sun and leaving the city for that drive with your dad to the river, and one more attempt to catch your dinner?

Do you remember running with your sister through the woods at the end of your street and picking blackberries until your fingers were purple?

Do you remember the smell of sagebrush and pine that night you walked together and talked, and she said, “yes”?



We each have memories of the special places where wild and natural lands spoke to us and changed our lives. When we describe our communities and our country we might speak of our culture, our economy and our politics, but we always speak of our landscapes. America is a land of majestic mountains, fertile valleys, endless plains, powerful rivers and

dramatic coastlines that create a sense of place and identity. This land – our land – feeds our bodies and souls. It is America’s greatest natural resource and greatest national treasure. It is the most important legacy we can pass on intact to our children and grandchildren.

For each of us, it is important to conserve the special places that people value.

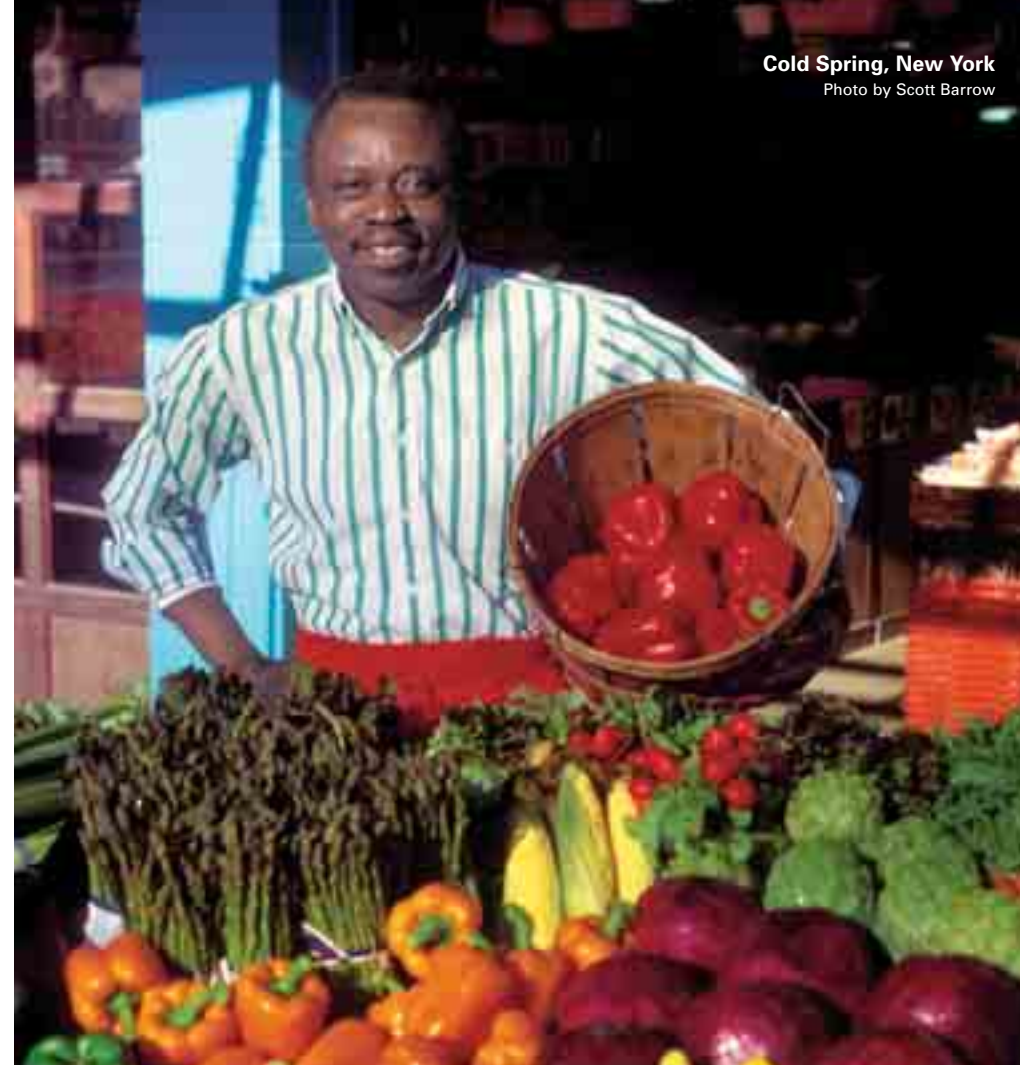
Conservation Matters.

natural areas are preserved is critical to the quality of the air we breathe, the water we drink and the food we eat. Conservation is essential to healthy, prosperous communities.

Our air and water are limited resources. The tree canopy and vegetation serve as critical filters for our air. Wetlands that border our rivers, lakes and streams filter pollution before it reaches our drinking water. If we do not remove the pollutants that our society puts into the air and water, we consume them ourselves. In many communities it is not uncommon for air quality alerts to close schools and businesses. Already, nearly half of the river miles in America are too polluted to drink from and over 50 percent of our drinking water comes from rivers.

And just as land use impacts what we breathe and drink, it also affects what we eat. Americans are becoming increasingly concerned about food quality and want access to food that is safe, healthy and sustainably produced. Across the country, people are realizing that when food is grown close to where we live, we can better understand how it was grown (organically, naturally, conventionally) and when it was harvested. Preserving viable farms in our communities provides local access to diverse food products, reduces transportation costs and pollution, and provides a natural buffer against sprawl development.

Cold Spring, New York
Photo by Scott Barrow



Linville, North Carolina
Photo by Tony Sweet



Photos courtesy of Craig Line

CHANDLER POND FARM, VERMONT

Molly Davies remembers driving past the Chandler Pond Farm and admiring its enormous, cupola-topped barn. "When I heard it was up for sale," she says, "my first thought was, 'Oh no, another Vermont dairy farm bites the dust.'" But, Molly acted quickly, selling her family's ski house in Stowe so she could buy the farm – not as a second home for herself, but as a working dairy farm for the right family. Not only did Molly donate the conservation easement, she also

donated an agriculture affordability option which will ensure that the land is accessible and affordable to future generations of farmers. She conserved the 544-acre farm with the help of the Vermont Land Trust in 2005, and then sold it at an affordable price to Mike and Elsa Betit, a young pair of native Vermont farmers who had managed to build an organic pork business.

“The land is the appointed remedy
for whatever is false and
fantastic in our culture ...
food for our mind,
as well as our
body.”

– Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803–1882)



Manassas, Virginia
Photo by David Brooks

In addition to health and food benefits, study after study has demonstrated the tremendous economic benefits of land conservation. Conserving land increases property values near greenbelts, saves tax dollars by encouraging more efficient development, and reduces the need for expensive water filtration facilities.

While health and economic reasons alone demonstrate the need for conservation, they do not capture the full human benefit. As our population increases and our lives become busier, the opportunity to experience the outdoors and to connect with nature becomes more important. As development rapidly removes the places where we walk, hike and relax, the importance of protecting remaining natural areas increases. **Everyone deserves the opportunity to see the stars and hear the sounds of nature.** We want our children and grandchildren to have the chance to see a great blue heron, a bald eagle or an elk in the wild, not merely in a book or on a DVD.

Conserving our land matters.

What is a **conservation easement**?

A conservation easement is a legal agreement between a landowner and a land trust (or other eligible entity) that restricts future activities on the land to protect its conservation values. When people donate a conservation easement to a land trust, they give up some of the rights associated with the land. For example, they might give up the right to build additional structures, while retaining the right to live on the land and grow crops. Future owners of the property will be bound by the easement's terms. The land trust is responsible for making sure the easement's terms are followed in perpetuity.

POLING THE BRULE RIVER, WISCONSIN

“Everybody on the Brule River feels the same way about the land. It gives a sense of history and continuity to the place. My parents would get together and share their meals with the neighbors. They used to have ‘wild dinners’ where everything had to be wild – asparagus, mushrooms, and fish they caught, wild rice and maple syrup – very few store-bought ingredients. I was a kid when the conservation easement was set by my mother, Mary, in the 1960s. It was created to keep the place quiet and pristine and allow people to enjoy it without degrading the river. That was in our minds then and we are happy with the solution.”

– Peg Brinig praising The Nature Conservancy Wisconsin Chapter



Photo courtesy of Jill Brinig



Photo courtesy of Katie Brinig

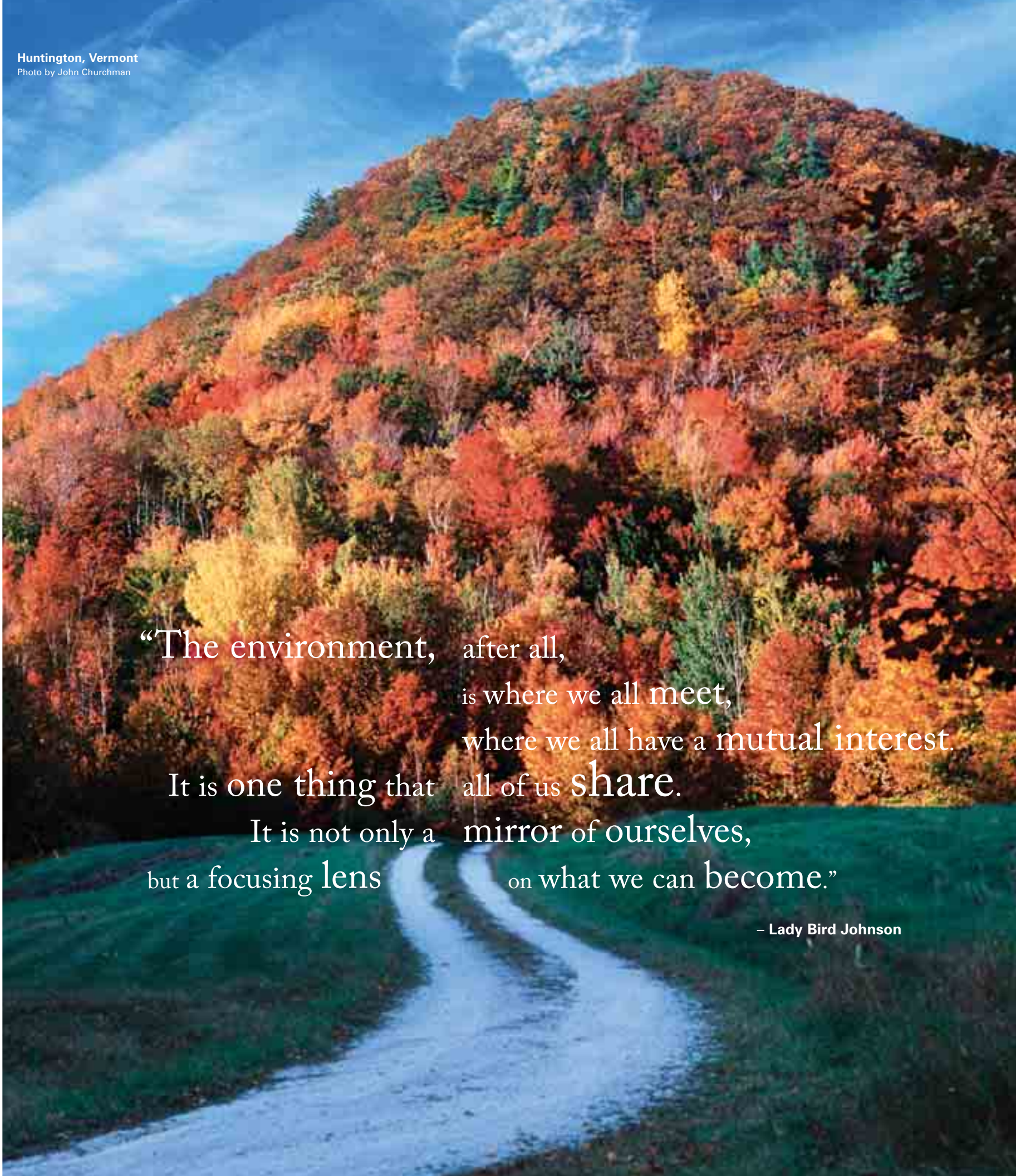
LIFE ON THE RANCH, COLORADO



When Sam Capps of Walsenburg was asked why he wanted to protect his productive and beautiful 28,000-acre ranch at the foot of southern Colorado's Spanish Peaks, he would get a very stern look on his face. "Because I want to know that this place will always look the way that God made it" was his answer. Before his death in 2001, Sam finalized a conservation easement on the ranch, which includes vast expanses of short-grass prairie, rare playa wetlands, old growth ponderosa pine forests and a thriving cattle herd. The easement placed on the Capps Ranch started a movement toward easements in the area, and many neighbors joined in. After Sam placed his ranch in an easement, neighbor Bob Barber stated, "We all knew that there was now a chance for this valley to stay just as it is, and it was now our turn to step up." Since 2001, ranch families have protected an additional 35,000 acres in the immediate area. Landowners have done this through the Colorado Cattlemen's Agricultural Land Trust, making this area one of the largest protected landscapes in all of Colorado.

Praise for the Colorado Cattlemen's Agricultural Land Trust

Huntington, Vermont
Photo by John Churchman



"The environment, after all,
is where we all meet,
where we all have a mutual interest.
It is one thing that all of us share.
It is not only a mirror of ourselves,
but a focusing lens on what we can become."

– Lady Bird Johnson

SAVING MY BERRY PATCH, MICHIGAN



"For me the drumbeat started when the Bete Grise land was subdivided. As children, this had been our favorite swimming beach. One could go all the way from where the road reached the lake, out to the channel to swim, play and pick berries. My grandfather died when I was 14. He is the one I picked berries with the most. In my later teens, I started picking alone. One time – maybe not the exact property where the Preserve is now, but somewhere near it – someone came out and told me it was private property. They said: 'You have to get off.' That for me was a wake-up call. Later, I bought the three westerly lots in this spot – 643 feet of lakefront reconnected. Now the Lizzadro Preserve is in the public trust, and everybody can use it."

– Gina Nicholas praising Keweenaw Land Trust

Our disappearing landscape.

Despite the importance of land conservation to our health and communities, we are quickly losing critical natural areas as poorly planned development eats the map. Every day, over 5,000 acres of land are developed in the U.S. That's the equivalent of losing New York's Central Park, Chicago's Lincoln Park, San Francisco's Golden Gate Park, Houston's Memorial Park, Tampa's Al Lopez Park, and the National Mall in Washington, D.C., all in one day.

**DUTCHESS MALL,
NEW YORK**



The Hudson River Valley of New York State is legendary for its beauty and history. In a small town called Fishkill, surrounded by rolling hills, forests, and historic homesteads, a supply depot established by General George Washington played an essential role in the Continental Army's victory over British forces. But by 1974 times had changed and the region was facing rapid suburbanization. Despite the best efforts of local conservation groups, a famous Revolutionary War site was sacrificed to build the sprawling Dutchess Mall. This development, which robbed Fishkill of important history and community, largely failed. Today, Home Depot is the only active store in the otherwise dead Dutchess Mall, and the land is covered by abandoned stores, crumbling parking lots, and lonely trees attempting to grow through the concrete.

Photo courtesy of Bill Irwin



Big Island, Hawaii



Las Vegas, Nevada
Photo by Lindsay Hebbert



Valdez, Alaska
Photo by Karen Kasmauski

Land Current rates
and patterns
of land consumption, if left
Lost. unchecked,
will result in
wide-scale loss and fragmentation
of our most important natural places
within the next 20 years.

Across America the signs of change are increasingly clear. We see farms from Minnesota to Maine turned into subdivisions. Woodlands along stream banks from Oregon to Georgia are clear-cut. Orchards and meadows adjacent to suburbs are converted to shopping malls and office parks. Wetlands are filled and developed to build golf courses and industrial parks.

This loss of our land is not happening by accident. For many decades, our country has created tax laws, zoning, and transportation policy that fuel rapid, sprawling development of natural areas. Typical building patterns in America drive us further and further from the center of our communities as we carve up increasingly distant fields and forests.

The places we have counted upon for generations are disappearing at an accelerated pace and the window of opportunity to reverse this trend is rapidly closing.

But the window for change is still open.

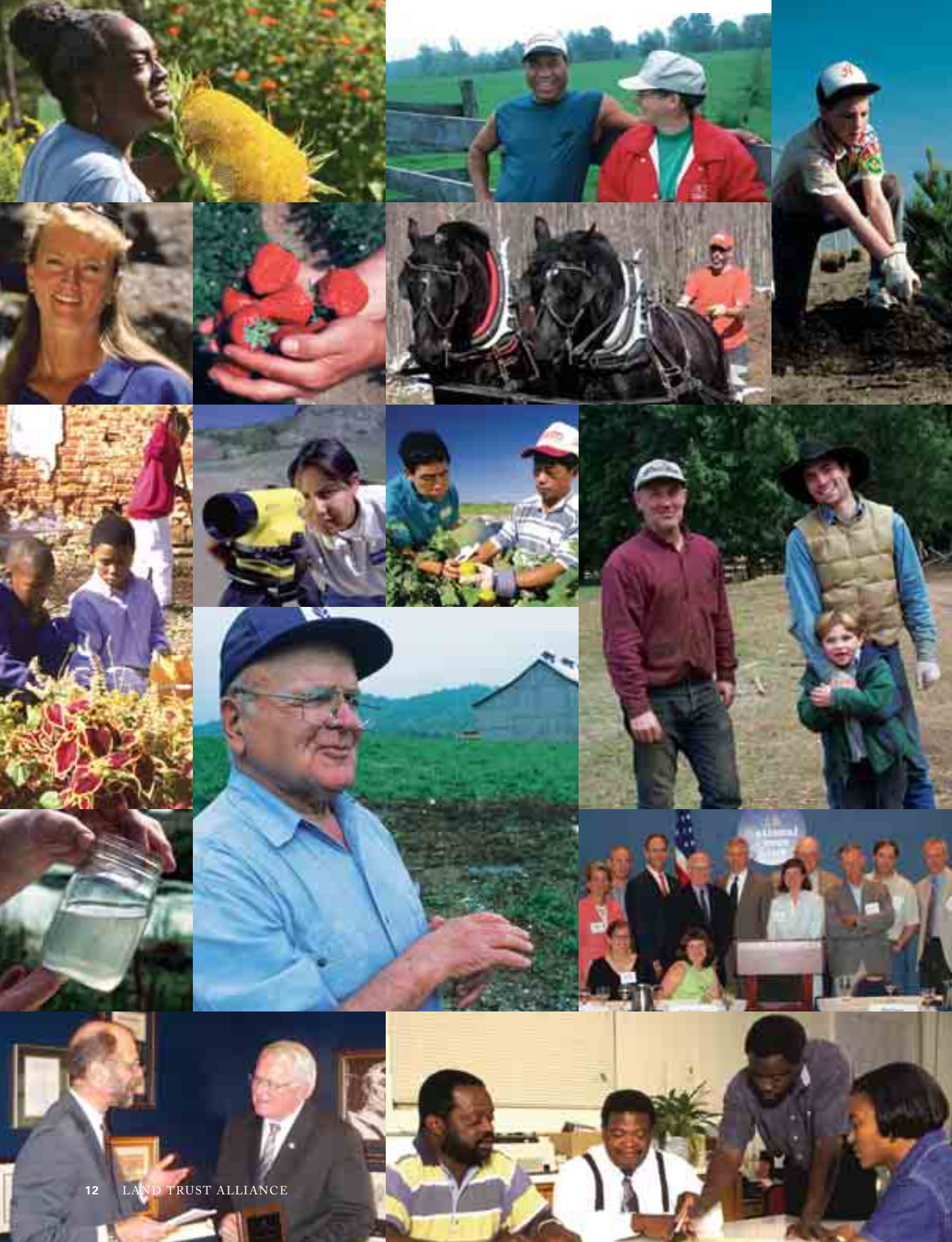


“So bleak is the picture ...

that the **bulldozer**
and not the atomic **bomb**
may turn out to be
the **most destructive invention**
of the **20th century.**”

– Philip Shabecoff, author, *Earth Rising*,
New York Times Magazine, June 4, 1978

Washington state
Photo by Gary Braasch



Powerful Together.

Across America, thousands of people are determined to conserve the places they value. For more than 100 years, leaders in local communities have come together to save the riverbanks, meadows, woodlands and family farms that are important to them. They seized a powerful idea that combines local knowledge of people and places, the flexibility of the private sector, and the energy of volunteerism.

They formed land trusts.



The three Milne sisters – Flora, Marcia and Bonnie – celebrated with a walk through the prairie after the easement was executed on the Milne property in Lake County, Illinois.

Photo courtesy of Liberty Prairie Conservancy

On page 12, all photos courtesy of USDA NRCS, except top left (woman with sunflower) courtesy of Katie McMahon and The Trustees of Reservations; upper right (man with draft horses) courtesy of Vermont Land Trust; middle right (two men and a boy) courtesy of Columbia Land Trust; and lower left corner by Deanna Eastman

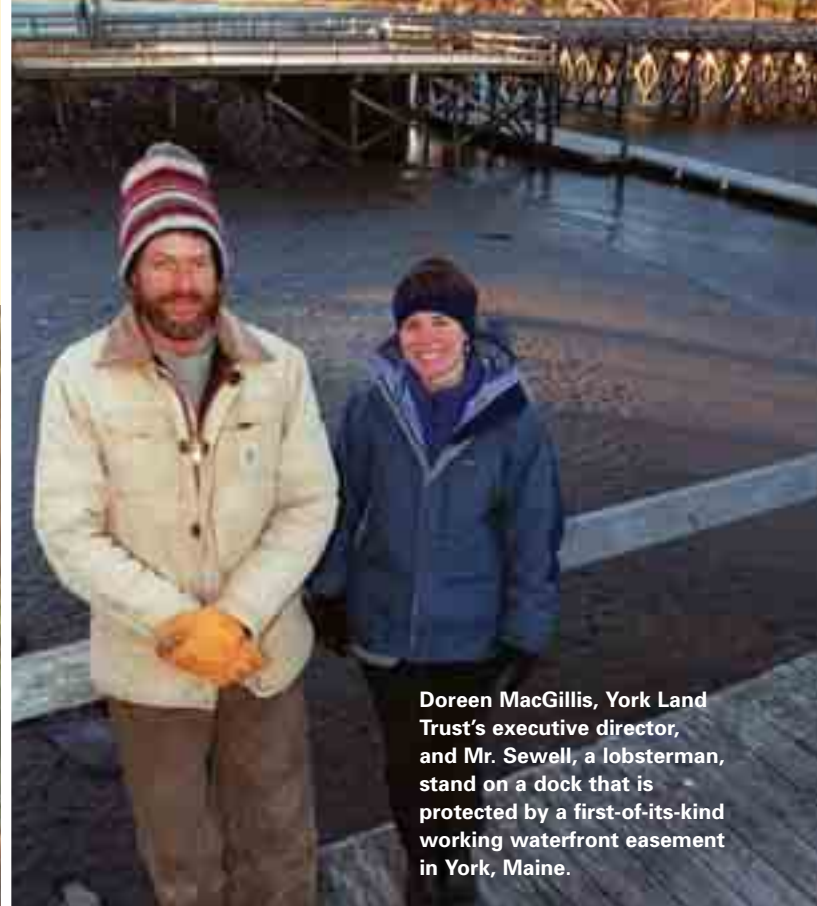
SAVING A HISPANIC TREASURE, NEW MEXICO



In a lush meadow along a clear flowing mountain stream sits a simple adobe chapel called “El Santuario de Chimayo.” It was built on the ruins of an ancient Pueblo village between 1814 and 1816, and Hispanic New Mexico residents hold the place close to their hearts. Pilgrims from throughout New Mexico, indeed the world, have come to this sacred place for decades to bless themselves with the holy earth. Imagine, then, if what has been called the “Lourdes of America” suddenly had a 30-unit mobile home park plopped down in a meadow directly behind the church, as proposed by a landowner in the 1990s. An outcry ensued from the residents of the village, but there was little to do except fight it at the development review level. That is, until The Trust for Public Land, the Santa Fe Conservation Trust and 1000 Friends of New Mexico came together in a partnership that protected this cultural treasure and increased county open space support among Hispanic residents by showing them the power they held in their own voices.

Photo courtesy of Bill Bivens

Photo courtesy of York Land Trust



Doreen MacGillis, York Land Trust's executive director, and Mr. Sewell, a lobsterman, stand on a dock that is protected by a first-of-its-kind working waterfront easement in York, Maine.



Ernie Atencio of the Taos Land Trust was honored for his commitment to wild places and wild spaces.

Frying Pan River, Colorado



Land Trusts in Action.

Land trusts are private, nonprofit organizations that acquire and manage land for the purpose of permanent conservation, and steward land for public benefit. They are accountable for conservation returns instead of generating profits. By holding land or conservation easements on land with high conservation value, land trusts counter the economic model that drives poorly planned development and sprawl.

Land trusts harness three fundamental aspects of the American ethos: volunteerism, community spirit and connection to the land. The impact of this idea has spread rapidly, creating **nearly 1,700 land trusts that involve over 100,000 volunteers and more than 2 million members.** Most land trusts are community-based and deeply connected to local needs, so they're well-equipped to identify land that offers critical habitat as well as recreational, agricultural and other conservation value. Land trusts have conserved 37 million acres of land in America – an area roughly the size of all the New England states combined.

And through this energizing process of private land conservation, land trusts communicate and demonstrate the powerful benefit that land has on our lives and on the human spirit. As America comes to view land conservation as a priority, **we will hand to our children an intact and healthy landscape that can nourish and sustain all future generations.**

The approach clearly is working. But to turn the tide on poorly planned development that paves over our important natural places, land trusts need more leadership and support.

Partners for Our Land.

Just as friends and neighbors gathered together in communities to form land

trusts, in 1982 these land trusts came together to create the **Land Trust Alliance**. The mission of the Alliance is to save the places people love by strengthening land conservation across America. To reverse the trend of land loss, the land trust community must successfully focus on three goals: accelerate the pace, improve the quality and ensure the permanence of conservation. In partnership with land trusts across the U.S., the Land Trust Alliance advances these goals by ensuring:

More landowners choose to protect their land.

By mobilizing the political power of a grassroots land trust network, the Land Trust Alliance gives local communities a national voice. Together, this powerful alliance convinces federal policymakers to **increase land protection funding and change the federal tax code** to encourage more landowners to conserve their land. Through the Land Trust Alliance's work to increase resources for conservation and help land trusts strengthen their local outreach programs, more landowners choose conservation over development and the pace of land protection increases.

Conservation leaders are more effective at saving land.

Given the increasingly sophisticated and technical nature of land conservation, the Land Trust Alliance provides the best practices, state-of-the-art tools, information and training that professional practitioners and volunteers need to effectively save land. The Alliance invests deeply in **setting standards and developing curriculum** as a tool for capturing decades of nationwide learning in the conservation community. Through our expansive online, classroom style, and in-the-boardroom training, land trust leaders become more effective and strategic in their land acquisition and management practices. By infusing continuous learning and professionalism into the land trust movement, the Land Trust Alliance makes it easier to save land and improve the quality of lands conserved.

Strong nonprofits and legal systems protect land in perpetuity.

The Land Trust Alliance recognizes that perpetuity is a very long time, that people do not live forever, and that legal challenges will increasingly threaten conserved lands. To build strong land trusts, foster public confidence in land conservation, and help ensure the long-term protection of land, the Land Trust Alliance created and provides financial support for the Land Trust Accreditation Commission. The Land Trust Alliance is also working to **create national laws, policies, judicial precedents and legal resources** to make certain that hard-earned protections on land conserved today will not be unraveled in the future by interests opposed to conservation. In short, the Alliance invests in strengthening a network of enduring nonprofit institutions and legal systems that can be counted on to keep the public trust and permanently safeguard land through the generations to come.

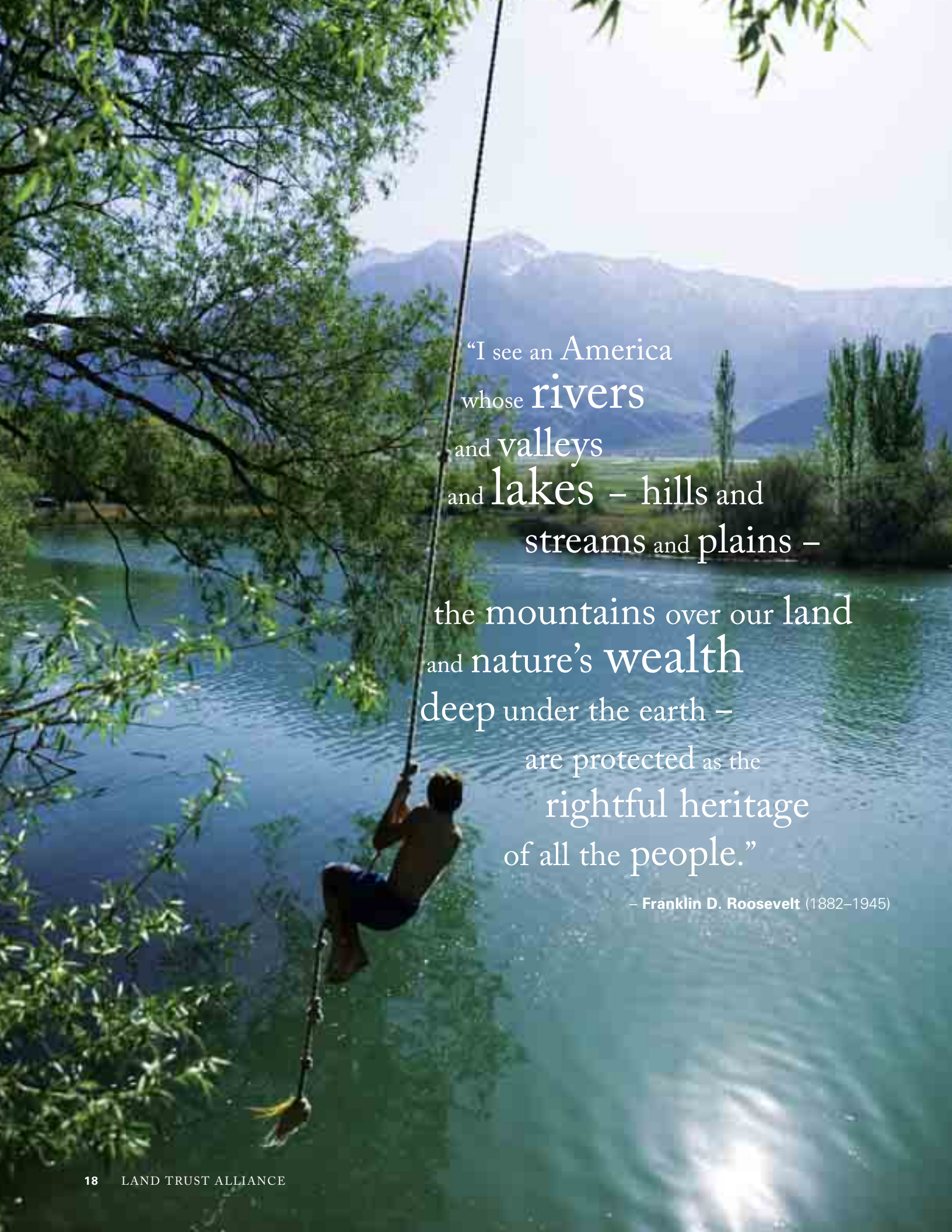
Planning in action: Above, Columbia Land Trust board and staff meet alongside the Columbia River Estuary in Washington to finalize a new five-year strategic plan. It will engage communities in protecting tens of thousands of acres of forests, wetlands, urban greenspaces, farms and ranches. The plan shares a common theme with land trusts across the country: **conserving cherished places while growing the next generation of land stewards.**

ACCREDITATION FOR LAND TRUSTS

A new national land trust accreditation program will help create strong, effective, well-managed organizations that can ensure long-term protection of the land, and foster public trust and support for conservation over time. The program is operated by the Land Trust Accreditation Commission, an independent program of the Land Trust Alliance.

Photo courtesy of Columbia Land Trust





“I see an America
whose **rivers**
and **valleys**
and **lakes** – hills and
streams and **plains** –
the mountains over our land
and nature’s **wealth**
deep under the earth –
are protected as the
rightful heritage
of all the people.”

– Franklin D. Roosevelt (1882–1945)

Our Vision for America.

The Land Trust Alliance
believes
that if

we focus our combined efforts to increase the pace, quality and permanence of conservation, we can turn the tide and ultimately change the way that land development takes place in America. **Together, we can move the basis of our land-use choices from a short-term private gain model to a long-term model of conservation and economic vitality.** We can hold the expectation that our children’s grandchildren will purchase food grown in their region as easily as food grown around the world. We can know that future generations will be able to swim in a river, drink from the tap, and run in their neighborhood without worrying about the safety of the water they drink or the air they breathe.

We can have faith that in every part of this land children will be able to see the stars, climb the trees and experience a personal connection to a cherished place.

Join us. America is at a crossroads. The special places we value are vanishing quickly. In less than a generation our remaining natural areas could be gone.

At the same time, neighbors are banding together to take conservation into their own hands in a groundswell movement that crosses political, regional, ethnic and economic boundaries.

On one side, we have the systemic and short-term economic paradigm that drives poorly planned growth. On the other, we have local land trusts in every part of the country, and a national alliance to champion their success. In support of conservation, we also have Americans' fundamental love of the land, economic common sense and commitment to our children and grandchildren. Which path our nation will take will be determined by the individual choices we all make today to save the places we cherish.

You can help save the places that are important to you by:

1. Learning how to permanently conserve land that you, your family or your friends own.
2. Promoting conservation to important landowners in your community.
3. Letting your elected leaders know that land conservation matters to you and asking them to support land conservation measures.
4. Volunteering your time and expertise and contributing resources to land trusts in your community and to the Land Trust Alliance.

If you are committed to saving the American landscape, driven by your personal ties to the land, and are in search of tangible progress, then join us. You will be inspired by each and every private land conservation success. And through this work you will improve your life and the lives of people around you – today, tomorrow and forever.

For information on land conservation, advocacy, connecting to a land trust near you, or to contribute to the work of the Land Trust Alliance, visit **www.lta.org**.

Together,
conserving the places
you love.



West Union, Oregon

Photo by Beth Dixon



Land Trust Alliance

Together, conserving the places you love

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