Salaries and Benefits for Land Trusts' Staffs Rise, Keep Pace with Inflation

Land Trust Salaries and Benefits Survey Summary, Fifth Edition

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As a well run, stable and successful all volunteer group looking to make the leap to hiring their first staff, the Barrington Hills Conservation Trust was struggling to figure out what salary and benefits they needed to offer in order to attract adventurous, well-qualified candidates for their first executive director position. "We asked different organizations here in the Chicago metro area - small to large, and rather simple to very sophisticated - what salaries they paid. Then looked at how they corresponded to the Land Trust Alliance salaries and benefits survey," explained Mary Bradford White, president of the Barrington Hills Conservation Trust. "It was a good touch stone for us for salaries as well as benefits packages. And having that information gave our board the confidence to make the leap to offer the highest salary we can afford in order to get the experience and skill sets we need."

With these new numbers just released in our 2007 Land Trust Salary Survey as a guide, Barrington Hills Conservation Trust and many other land trusts will be able to offer competitive compensation packages to hire and retain. On average, executive directors earned $65,573, up 11% from the $59,000 reported in 2002, according to the Land Trust Alliance's fifth salaries and benefits survey. However, $59,000 in 2002 was worth $64,050 in 2005 (because of inflation), making it a 2.4 percent increase[1].

Twenty three percent of responding land trusts report their executive directors are earning $80,000 or more, compared to 19 percent in 2002. *(See Figure 1.)*

Figure 1: Full-Time Executive Director Salary Ranges

[1] Using the Consumer Price Index (data not available for 2006) Samuel H. Williamson, "Five Ways to Compute the Relative Value of a U.S. Dollar Amount, 1790 - 2005," [MeasuringWorth.Com, 2007]

As reported in previous salary and benefits surveys, executive directors heading land trusts with larger operating budgets earned higher salaries. In fact, those who led organizations with budgets of at least $2 million earned almost three times the average salary of those with budgets less than $100,000. (*See Figure 2.*) The average salaries of executive directors also varied by region. The Pacific region surpassed the Mid-Atlantic region with the highest salaries, reporting an average of $84,170 compared to the Mid-Atlantic average of $67,608. The Midwest was third, with average salaries reported of $66,792. (*See Figure 3.*)

Figure 2: Average and Median Full-Time Executive Director Salaries by Operating Budget

Budget Levels	**<$100,000**	**$100,000 - $249,999**	**$250,000 - $499,999**	**$500,000 - $999,999**	**$1 million - $1,999,999**	**$2 million +**
# Land Trusts Responding	23	63	38	33	18	11
Average	$ 45,687	$ 50,125	$ 60,503	$ 79,567	$ 96,531	$ 124,648
Median	$ 48,000	$ 48,000	$ 60,000	$ 79,500	$ 101,426	$ 120,000

Figure 3: Average and Median Full-Time Executive Director Salaries by Region

Region	**Average**	**Median**	**No. of LTs**
Pacific	$ 84,170	$ 77,750	28
Mid-Atlantic	$ 67,608	$ 66,040	25
Midwest	$ 66,792	$ 59,000	27
Southwest	$ 65,682	$ 64,000	11
National	$ 65,000	$ 65,000	1
Northeast	$ 61,414	$ 50,000	57
Northwest	$ 61,277	$ 60,108	20
Southeast	$ 54,286	$ 50,000	25

Staffing

The size of the organization matters, as does the mission. A large, sophisticated land trust may require a more seasoned professional than a smaller land trust. In addition, the knowledge required to run a land trust may be more extensive than for other environmental nonprofits, which may mean a land trust has to pay a higher salary to attract a specialized candidate.

"We know what office managers in our area make, but how do we know what a stewardship director or land protection specialist makes?" That's Brian Price, executive director of the Leeleenau Conservancy. He continues, "it's one of those things that virtually every organization wants to know: are we compensating our people fairly? Are our personnel policies, leave time, etc. on par with norms for the industry?"

Since the last survey, other land trust staff salary averages were increasing at a rate slightly ahead of inflation. Excluding executive directors, land trusts' legal staff

were paid the most, with salaries averaging more than $75,000 in the mid-range and more than $87,000 for senior staffers. Senior finance staff earned the third-highest average salary, more than $64,000. *(See Figure 4.)* Senior development staff were the next-highest paid, with an annual salary reported of almost $62,000. For entry-level staff, salaries of full-time or full-time equivalent staffs ranged from an average of $28,000 for legal staff positions to $35,000 for fundraising staff. The average, mid-level salary for those in easement stewardship was more than $40,000—up 15 percent from levels reported in 2002 (and a 6% increase from the 2003 inflation-adjusted figure). The same figures for land protection staff were $43,000 for the average, mid-level salary, which is up 11 percent from 2002 (and a 3.5% increase from the 2003 inflation-adjusted figure).

Of the land trusts surveyed, 61 percent employ interns, and of those, 62 percent offer paid internships. The average pay of an intern is $9.92 an hour, which is very close to the median hourly wage reported of $10.00.

Figure 4: Average Salaries of Land Trusts' Staff Positions (excluding Executive Directors) by Operating Budget

	<$100,000	$100,000 - $249,999	$250,000 - $499,999	$500,000 - $999,999	$1 million - $1,999,999	$2 million +	Total Average
Administration							
Entry	23,200	43,816	25,701	27,737	28,556	30,062	30,115
Mid	28,000	30,919	32,645	35,603	37,231	40,279	34,098
Senior	25,667	40,035	39,020	44,017	54,275	54,240	44,452
Communication							
Entry	20,000	24,800	24,400	28,750	37,000	34,054	29,540
Mid		31,819	39,842	40,300	43,917	47,042	40,138
Senior	38,000		41,250	41,088	61,400	61,199	51,908
Fundraising (Development)							
Entry	32,000	39,213	31,890	35,801	35,909	34,000	35,083
Mid	25,000	38,471	41,343	46,925	49,910	50,030	45,180
Senior		52,815	47,857	58,189	66,497	77,839	61,877
Land/Easement Stewardship							
Entry	24,000	31,539	30,212	33,825	37,333	32,982	33,102
Mid	30,200	35,698	38,094	41,822	46,857	43,954	40,865
Senior	33,000	40,173	41,450	51,432	56,056	60,806	51,077
Education							
Entry		15,005	25,750	32,600	40,333	28,867	29,216
Mid		31,200	35,533	41,047	44,833	42,333	40,349
Senior	20,000		35,000	39,917	60,573	66,850	47,860
Finance							
Entry	30,000		17,500	31,725	30,667	33,625	30,628
Mid		37,440	34,000	41,620	40,767	49,735	42,586
Senior			30,000	52,333	69,750	71,250	64,130
Land Protection							
Entry		28,733	33,217	34,031	34,750	36,373	33,681
Mid	40,000	38,942	40,094	43,188	50,354	53,546	43,623
Senior		40,512	46,571	51,570	57,705	75,590	56,065
Legal Services							
Entry			29,150			55,000	28,325
Mid		166,000	63,000	40,000	61,700	75,000	75,771
Senior				90,000	78,500	110,000	87,813

Executive Director Details

The average tenure of full-time executive directors is 5.8 years, down 9 percent from 2002. The median tenure is 4 years. Seventeen percent of respondents have held their positions for one year or less – the same as reported in 2002; one individual reported 28 years in the position. However, 15 percent of these executive directors have experience with another land conservation organization; the average is 8.2 years (median is 5 years) and the longest reported tenure with another land conservation organization is 30 years.

Executive directors come from all walks of life and bring an array of experience to their positions: 44 percent have prior primary experience in conservation (up from 28% in 2003); 38 percent in land conservation specifically; and land use planning and business are each reported by 25 percent of the respondents (respondents could choose more than one primary experience, so percentage totals exceed 100). The top secondary experiences reported are similar to primary experience: 11 percent have primary experience in conservation; 10 percent in land conservation specifically; and 9 percent report secondary experience in fundraising.

Executive directors also work long hours! Thirty one percent of the respondents say they work between 50 and 59 hours per week, and another 7 percent work 60 to 69 hours per week. Thirty four percent work 40 hours or less, while 28 percent work 41-49 hours per week.

Personnel Policies, Raises, Bonuses

As noted in *Land Trust Standards and Practices*, Practice 7F: Personnel Policies recommends that if the land trust has staff, it has written personnel policies that conform to federal and state law and has appropriate accompanying procedures or guidelines. Seventy nine percent of respondents report having a personnel policy, which is up slightly from 75 percent in 2002. Eighty six percent of the respondents say that annual raises are not automatic. For those who do provide automatic raises, seventy two percent base their automatic raise on the Cost of Living Adjustment (see: http://www.ssa.gov/OACT/COLA/latestCOLA.html for additional information on how the COLA is calculated). Seventy two percent of responding land trusts base their annual salary increases on employee performance, down from 84 percent in 2003. The range for most performance raises is from a low of three percent to a high of ten percent.

Eighty four percent of the land trusts responding have an employee evaluation process, the same percentage reported in 2003. Bonuses are awarded by 37 percent of the respondents. The majority of those make the decision on whether or not to award bonuses based on performance; others leave it up to the discretion of the board; and still others leave it to the executive director and senior staff, a joint decision between the executive director and the board, or award bonuses based on budget surpluses.

Land trust work often involves meetings in the evenings and work on the weekends, and the amount and timing of work outside also depends on the season. Rarely do staff have a steady nine to five schedule. Reflecting this fact of land

conservation life, 93 percent of respondents offer flexible work schedules for their employees, up from 50 percent in the last survey. Most of the comments in this section emphasized the varied nature of the work hours and noted that employees were trusted to "just get the job done." Compensatory time is offered by 54 percent of the respondents, up from 33 percent in 2003. Some organizations treat this as a type of flextime, while others have requirements such as the leave must be approved in advance and be taken with in the same month or in the same pay period.

Benefits

Benefits offered is another factor besides salary level that affects a person's willingness to accept a job or to stay in an existing position. Some organizations pay higher salaries, but do not provide health or retirement benefits. For employees with access to health benefits through a working spouse's plan, or younger employees who may not value a retirement benefit, this might be more attractive. Vacation, personal, maternity and paternity leave policies also vary widely and may or may not be a factor in attracting and retaining employees.

Retirement

Fifty six of the respondents offered a retirement package, down from 59 percent in 2003. Many land trusts (45 percent) offer Simplified Employee Pension plans (SEPs – see http://www.dol.gov/ebsa/publications/SEPPlans.html for more information) or Individual Retirement Accounts (IRA), while 43 percent offer a 403B plan. Of those that offer this benefit and also provide an employee match, the majority (61 percent) are in the 3% - 5% range. Twenty are in the 6% - 10% range and 11 percent are in the 1.5% - 2.5% range. It is not uncommon to have a limit on the amount of matching funds contributed by the employer. Most land trusts report a percentage limit of 3% - 5%, while 4 have no limit. A few others limit the dollar amount in any give year; most reporting a dollar amount have a limit of from $1,000 to $5,000; one has a limit of $40,000. Vesting is the amount of time it takes for an employee to own the employer's contribution to the employee's plan. Fifty two percent of the land trusts reporting noted an immediate to 2-month vesting period. Another thirty two percent have a 6-month to one year vesting period.

Health Insurance and Other Benefits

Seventy two percent of respondents provide health insurance for their staff, down from 79 percent in 2003. Of these, 48 percent pay 100% of the premiums; another 27% pay 51% - 90%; eight percent pay 50% or less of the premium; and 11 percent provide a dollar amount to the employee.

Forty percent of land trusts responding offer health benefits to spouses and dependents; 45 percent of those that offer this do not pay the premium, while 22 percent pay 100% of the premium. Seventeen percent extend the benefit to domestic partners, and three of those reporting pay 100% of the premiums.

Land trusts often experience difficulties in securing health benefits. Thirty eight percent of these land trusts secure them through their own group plan. Another 26

percent reimburse the employee for the cost of an individual plan. Other associations and Chambers of Commerce are the source for another 20 percent of the respondents, while 16 percent use other sources such as insurance agents, brokers, state plans, or leave it up to the employees to find their own. The type of health plan used varies. Forty one percent report using a PPO, 28 percent use an HMO, and 24 percent use other sources, like Blue Cross\Blue Shield or an HSA[2].

Dental

Compared to health insurance, fewer (31 percent) land trusts provide dental insurance. And of these, 39 percent pay 100% of the premiums; 17 percent pay 51% - 90%; 10 percent pay 50% or less; and 5 percent include the dental benefit in their health plan. Dental insurance for spouses and dependents is offered by 21 one percent of the respondents, and 15 percent of those who offer it pay 100% of the premiums. Seven percent offer this benefit to domestic partners and one respondent pays 100% of the premium.

Disability

Disability insurance is used to replace a percentage of your income when you are not able to work due to serious injury or illness. There are two different types of disability coverage, long term and short term. Twenty percent of the land trusts responding provide long term disability insurance. And of those that do, 59 percent cover 100% of the premiums. The same percentage offers short term disability insurance, but only 44 percent cover 100% of the premiums. An even lower percentage of respondents, 18 percent, offer life insurance. Sixty nine percent of the organizations that do offer this benefit pay 100% of the premiums. About equal percentages (30%) of respondents had the following coverages: 1 times salary; or cash payouts of between $5,000 and $25,000, and between $50,000 and $100,000. A few organizations offered coverages of two times salary and cash payments of between $300,000 - $500,000.

Holidays, vacation and sick leave

Land trusts reported on average 10.5 holidays per year. Vacation time is reportedly offered by 78 percent of the respondents, down from a high of 97 percent in 2003. The number of days offered is most commonly based on length of service or job title. Land trusts reported similar vacation benefits to the last survey. Sixty percent offered standard 10- 15- and 20-day vacation increments; the tenure required for each increment was variable. Sixty five percent of land trusts responding offer some type of paid sick leave. Seventy percent provide the same number to all employees regardless of tenure, and the average sick day benefit is 10 days.

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[2] A High Deductible Health Plan (HDHP) with a Health Savings Account (HSA) or a Health Reimbursement Arrangement (HRA) provides traditional medical coverage and a tax free way to help you build savings for future medical expenses. The HDHP/HSA or HRA gives you greater flexibility and discretion over how you use your health care benefits. See http://www.opm.gov/hsa/ for more details.

Family and Personal Leave

Maternity leave is offered by 56 percent of the respondents, higher than the 33 percent reported in 2003. Of those, 11 were paid (two weeks to four months), 3 were partially paid (unspecified), and 77 were unpaid (unspecified to 3 months). Slightly fewer (43%) offered paternity leave, up from 25 percent in 2003. Seven of those offered paid leave (two to six weeks), one partially paid leave (unspecified), and the rest were unpaid (unspecified to 3 months).

Fifty six percent of land trusts responding reported some other type of family leave that allowed for the care of elderly or ailing family members, or for bereavement, up from the 40 percent reported in 2003. Many organizations responding direct employees to use up other forms of leave, such as sick, vacation or flextime, and also grant unpaid leave in certain circumstances. As in the past survey, many respondents reported that they follow the Family and Medical Leave Act.

Congress enacted the Family and Medical Leave Act in 1993 (Visit http://www.dol.gov/esa/whd/fmla/ for more information), requiring companies and organizations that employ 50 or more people for at least 20 days in a calendar year to have a family leave policy. In addition, land trust should be aware that state statutes covering this type of leave have been enacted.

Educational Benefits

Educational benefits are offered by 74 percent of the respondents, almost unchanged from the 75 percent reported in 2003. The bulk of these (45 percent) reimburse employees for Land Trust Alliance trainings. Another 32 percent offer assistance for continuing education; nine percent cover university courses; and 14 percent cover other trainings such as seminars, workshops and conferences. Like the previous survey, 21 percent of the respondents offered sabbaticals to their employees. Eight organizations grant specific sabbatical leave, from a low of 1 week to a maximum of 12 weeks. All are at full pay except one at ¾ pay. There is usually a tenure requirement of from 5 to 10 years of service, and some also require continued employment. Twenty organizations offer this benefit on a case-by-case basis or leave it to the discretion of the executive director or board. Nine report offering unspecified personal leave or leaves of absence for this benefit.

Methodology

The Land Trust Alliance e-mailed the salaries and benefits survey to approximately 500 land trusts that reported having at least one full-time, paid staff member in the 2005 National Land Trust Census. The Alliance received 214 responses.

This was an opportunistic survey and not a random sample; it was neither scientifically designed nor administered. We received a response from 39 percent of the staffed land trusts. (*See Figure 5*). This provides a useful snapshot of what land trusts are paying their staff and what benefits they offer for comparison to their own compensation packages.

Figure 5: Numbers of Land Trusts With at Least 1 FT Staff and Percentage Respondents by Budget for National Land Trust Census and 2007 Salary Survey

Budget Levels	**<$100,000**	**$100,000 - $249,999**	**$250,000 - $499,999**	**$500,000 - $999,999**	**$1 million - $1,999,999**	**$2 million +**	**Totals**
Census	97	170	115	66	35	33	516
Salary Survey	32	72	35	34	18	11	202
Percentage Respondents	33%	42%	30%	52%	51%	33%	39%

This survey would not be possible without the generous contributions of time and effort by the respondents – thank you sincerely for filling out yet another survey!

For having her name selected at random from all of the named surveys submitted by the February 23rd deadline, ***Susan Henderson of the Monmouth Conservation Foundation*** wins a free iPod ® Shuffle!

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