



Being an Ambassador: Frequently Asked Questions

Thank you for taking the pledge to become one of the first Advocacy Ambassadors! This guide will walk you through some questions you may have about how to get started. We also welcome your feedback on how we can make this initiative more effective and rewarding.

How do I get started as an Ambassador?

Over August Congressional recess you can expect a call from your region's advocacy lead to discuss strategy. Please consider this person your personal guide to the world of advocacy and never hesitate to seek their guidance or share your successes:

- **Southeast:** [Barton James](mailto:bjames@lta.org) (202-800-2239, bjames@lta.org)
- **Northeast:** [Sean Robertson](mailto:srobertson@lta.org) (202-800-2229, srobertson@lta.org)
- **West:** [Bethany O'Donovan](mailto:bodonovan@lta.org) (202-800-2240, bodonovan@lta.org)
- **Midwest:** [Bryan David](mailto:bdavid@lta.org) (202-800-2223, bdavid@lta.org)

My representative already does everything I ask; why do I need a formal program?

Congratulations on that close relationship, but here are two reasons to be an Ambassador:

- **Conscious cultivation:** It helps to think of legislators like major donors. An email asking your rep. to sign a letter could be compared to sending a standard dues renewal letter to a major donor prospect. There's a decent chance both will succeed, but think about the missed opportunities if you stop there. You probably wouldn't ask that donor for \$10,000 in your first phone conversation. Likewise, you'll want to consciously build a relationship before asking your rep. to take a tough vote or introduce an amendment on your behalf. Building this relationship includes teaching your legislator and their staff about your issues, in an effort to make them a proactive supporter – they may find opportunities you never knew existed!
- **Sharing stories:** Even if advocacy is already routine for your organization, we're eager to help you take credit for advancing policies that support conservation nationwide. In recognizing you, we hope to inspire other organizations to follow in your footsteps. Meanwhile, as the Land Trust Alliance lobbies your delegation here in Washington, it's critically important for us to know about the conversations you are having back in the district.

Ok, you convinced me; how do I share my stories?

We've created a temporary web form where you can share your stories. They can range from a single sentence telling us about a phone call, to a site visit story with insights, lessons learned, photos, and press materials. Find the submission form and some recent examples at www.lta.org/ambassadors or simply email stories to your regional lead.

Wait, why does the webpage talk about points? I thought this was supposed to be simple!

The basic model to move from an "Ambassador Pledge" to "Ambassador" is to have a face-to-face meeting, site visit, and follow-up communication for your rep and each senator. If that simple model works for you, great!

But, early conversations suggest that ambassadors want alternatives to this one-size-fits-all approach, as well as credit for going above and beyond. We're building in flexibility for you to select 3-5 legislators and complete a wider range of cultivation activities, like inviting staff to events or getting your board member to attend their fundraiser. There will also be points for general achievements, like attending a webinar or recruiting another ambassador. We're still designing this program and the point system could change but see the final page of this document for a list of activities and point values that illustrate their relative importance. We welcome your feedback on this.

You want me to talk to *both* my Senators? I think my Senior Senator *eats* endangered species to make a point!

From Charlie Rangel (D-Harlem) to Ron Paul (R-Houston) you'd be surprised how easily compelling local stories and genuine constituent support can slice through even the most profound ideological predispositions. Even if that Senator remains opposed, a display of constituent support can be critically important in making her less vocal about that position. Your regional lead can help you troubleshoot opposition – for example if a particular industry is a concern (timber, Realtors, etc) we may be able to find mutual friends and common ground through the board positions and professional affiliations reported on the Ambassador pledge form.

Of course, we realize not every office will be easy to work with, and that's why we've given the option of selecting up to 5 legislators or federal officials to cultivate – that way you can fall short on some fronts and still reach "Ambassador" status. Think about constituency connections through your land trust's service area, board member relationships, and the wider interests in watersheds, foodsheds, or recreational assets you conserve.

How long do I have to reach "Ambassador" status? Do I need to do this every year?

To maintain your "ambassador" status, we encourage pledges to refresh their relationships in every two-year Congressional term. Since the 113th Congress is nearly over, we'll lump this year's activities in with the 114th (2015-16), and yes, you can take credit for activities over the past year as well.

What if somebody else at my organization helps? Should they take the pledge?

We envision each ambassador as the advocacy "quarterback" for his or her organization – inspiring, sharing, and taking credit for the advocacy efforts of the entire organization, even if they aren't directly involved in every aspect.

There's no rule against having multiple ambassadors associated with an organization, but beyond a point, reporting and engagement could become redundant. Instead Ambassador pledges can designate "associate ambassadors" to receive all the same emails and invitations, but share a single login to track progress on our engagement platform (coming soon). This can be a great option to add communications contacts, assistants, and/or board members. Simply tell your regional lead who you'd like to add.

What issues will I be asked to work on? What if I don't know enough?

Don't worry about knowing all the details – that's our job here in DC! Your job as a constituent is to make them care, and we'll show you how.

We hope the skills and relationships you build through the Ambassadors initiative will help support your policy interests at every level of government. That said, we will ask your help in supporting the specific federal policy priorities established through our annual priorities survey and issues forum. Learn more about current priorities and weigh in on 2015 at www.lta.org/policy/priorities. As our elite advocates, we'll be counting on you to highlight the emerging threats/opportunities and programmatic nuances that require our attention.

By establishing one set of national priorities, we can ensure that Ambassadors in the districts of key committee members are working on the issues that matter to you. In return, we may ask you to highlight programs relevant to your legislators' committees, even if you don't directly benefit.

How will the Alliance support Ambassadors?

The Alliance stands ready to help all Ambassadors build the skills and confidence necessary to advocate persuasively for land conservation. We provide:

- **Training:** Workshops, webinars, websites and publications from policy experts and successful advocates.
- **Tools:** Background information and talking points you need to make a persuasive case for conservation.
- **Tracking:** Guidance in setting goals and tracking progress, so we can recognize and promote strategies that meet with success.
- **Thanks:** Recognition of all Ambassadors in Saving Land magazine and other media, as well as an annual event at Rally.

What events can I expect?

Watch your email for announcements for quarterly conference calls and occasional webinars on various advocacy topics. But first, the fun stuff:

- **Exclusive Ambassadors Reception** – After the Welcoming Dinner at Rally 2014 in Providence, RI. On September 18 at 8:30pm come on up to Suite 1234 of the Omni Hotel. RSVP to bodonovan@lta.org -- *by invitation only*.
- **2015 Land Trust Advocacy Day** – We've narrowed possible dates down to March 24-25 or April 21-22. We welcome your feedback and look for an announcement soon.

What should I do first?

The August Congressional recess is fast approaching – Aug 1-Sept 7. There's no better place to start building a relationship than on a visit to the beautiful places you've conserved. See our guide at www.lta.org/policy/meet for tips on scheduling events over recess, or simply call up your legislators' nearest district offices and ask about upcoming town halls, breakfasts, or similar events you could attend.



Discussion Draft: Alternative Paths for Ambassadors

Recognizing that no one cultivation strategy will work for every legislator and every land trust, we've brainstormed a hypothetical point system for becoming an "Ambassador" outside the "traditional" path described on the pledge form. This system may well change, so we're eager to hear your feedback, along with any early success stories we can share. Please send comments and stories to: srobertson@lta.org.

Success (to be considered an "Ambassador" in each 2-year term)

- 10 points each for 3 legislators, *OR*
- 40 points total

Components of the "Traditional Path"

- Face-to-face with Senator/Rep = 3 points
- Meeting with staff = 2 points
- Site visit or LT event = 5 points
- Communication via press, newsletter or social media = 2 points

Member-specific Alternatives

- Site visit/event for staff = 3 points
- Befriend staff outside work = 4 points
- Greet legislator at a public event = 2 points
- Reach legislator through a mutual friend = 3 points
- Phone conversation with legislator = 2 points
- Phone conversation with staff = 1 point
- Get legislator to follow you on twitter = 1 point
- Get legislator to co-sponsor a bill or sign a letter = 2 points
- Political contribution (as individual) = 3 points
- Attend fundraiser (as individual) = 5 points
- Host fundraiser (as individual) = 10 points

Other Achievements

- Non-pledged legislator meeting/event = 2 points
- Non-pledged staff meeting/event = 1 point
- State/local official meeting/event = 1 point
- Attend Advocacy Day = 1 point (plus points for each meeting)
- Recruit an ambassador = 4 points
- Advocacy feature in your newsletter = 2 points
- Attend a webinar/workshop = 1 point
- Contribute to Alliance policy program = 3 points
- Respond to our annual priorities survey = 1 point
- Follow your congressional delegation on twitter = 1 point