



# Land Trust Alliance

## BRITISH COLUMBIA

Backgrounder March 31, 2009

Re: Land Trusts and Conservancies Mandate is to Protect Land in Perpetuity

Land Trusts in BC and across Canada and the US were formed to protect natural and cultural sites – in perpetuity. That is a difficult task, especially in BC where the costs of land are triple to ten-fold what they are in other areas of Canada. And that's just the beginning, as they must then in some cases pay property taxes, monitor and potentially enforce conservation covenants, and manage these lands. BC's more than 30 land trusts have protected close to a million acres of land (450,000 ha) in the past 10 – 15 years, financed through public donations and foundation and government agreements -often in partnership with each other, and sometimes with local and provincial governments. Because they are charitable organizations with a mandate to protect lands in perpetuity, they have unique opportunities to protect private lands, and in some cases, negotiate land purchases that would take too long or are not within a government agency's work plans.

Land Trusts work with landowners on voluntary stewardship actions, and these often lead to landowners permanently protecting the trees or streams they have on their properties, through conservation covenants and through outright acquisition. Land Trusts not only protect habitat for wildlife, but also natural areas that provide our basic ecosystem services – watersheds and riparian areas, forests and grasslands that take up our greenhouse gas emissions and mitigate floods, and areas which provide greenways, recreational trails and parks, and cultural heritage sites – all essential for a balanced and healthy lifestyle, especially in this age of climate change.

Land Trusts, such as TLC The Land Conservancy of BC, have helped protect many of BC's protected areas, whether they were passed onto government as parks, such as Burgoyne Bay on Salt Spring Island, The new Valhalla Mile, Skaha Bluffs and many other Capital Regional District parks in the Victoria area. Each land trust (sometimes called a conservancy) has a unique mandate, some with a cultural focus, like TLC, and others like the Nature Conservancy of Canada, with a strictly ecological focus, primarily on ecosystems at risk in Canada. Victoria's own Habitat Acquisition Trust (HAT) is another land trust who has worked for more than 10 years in the Victoria region, placing conservation covenants on land, running a very successful landowner contact program resulting in numerous voluntary agreements to protect natural areas, and the final successful protection of the trails and Endangered Garry Oak woodlands, in Esquimalt area – the Matson Lands.

Land Trusts across Canada have adopted the *Canadian Land Trust Standards and Practices*, which have specific standards that address long term property protection and

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**stewardship. These include standards that ensure Sound Transactions, including documenting the purposes and responsibilities of the properties and responsible stewardship for conservation agreements, including plans to secure these with funds. A special addendum for BC was added to the Canadian Land Trust Standards and Practices advising that in addition to a conservation land trust holding a conservation covenant on the property, that they provide for joint covenant holders in order to add additional assurances that the land will be protected in perpetuity regardless of any organizational changes within the land trusts. TLC The Land Conservancy of BC has in the past, modeled this practice, co-holding numerous covenants on lands across the province with other land trusts, and seeking covenant holders on the properties that they own.**

**Any lands that are legally protected through Environment Canada’s Ecological Gifts Program, include a severe financial disincentive to ensure that the land cannot be disposed or the land use changed without penalty, and requires prior written authorization from the Minister of the Environment or a designated certification authority.**

**For further information on the Land Trust Standards and Practices, other land trusts in BC or other resources on land conservation, please contact the Land Trust Alliance of British Columbia, 250-538-0112 – [www.landtrustalliance.bc.ca](http://www.landtrustalliance.bc.ca)**

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