

Western Virginia Land Trust

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First National Census of Land Trusts in Five Years:

Big Gains in Voluntary Land Conservation Despite Recession

Land Trusts Conserve 10 Million U.S. Acres, See Increased Budgets and Endowments, Add Staff and Volunteers in Down Economy

Roanoke, VA – The first census of land trusts in five years found 10 million new acres conserved nationwide since 2005, including 1.1 million acres here in Virginia. Virginia ranked fifth nationally in acres conserved and first overall in the southeast.

The National Land Trust Census, released by the Land Trust Alliance, shows that voluntarily protected land increased 27 percent between 2005 and 2010. In the same time period, local land trusts and state agencies added 1,129,787 acres—a 77 percent increase since 2005—despite a recession that has seen a decrease in non-profit giving and state budget cuts. The census is online at www.lta.org/census.

A total of 47 million acres—an area over twice the size of all the national parks in the contiguous United States—are now protected by land trusts. A greater percentage of the new acreage comes through local and state land trusts like the Western Virginia Land Trust (WVLT).

“Virginia residents value their land, and we are conserving it at the community level,” said Roger Holnback, executive director of WVLT. “Here in Virginia, we are investing in our future with land trusts that ensure clean water, local food and places to play for our children and for generations to come.”

Since 2005, WVLT has permanently protected more than 13,300 acres in its 10-county service area surrounding Roanoke. This includes 11,400 acres in Carvins Cove Natural Reserve—the largest city-owned park east of the Rockies—as well as nearly all of Mill Mountain and



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Promoting the conservation of western Virginia's natural resources—farms, forests, waterways, and rural landscapes

properties in Roanoke, Franklin, Craig, Bedford, Floyd, and Botetourt counties. WVLT earned national accreditation by the Land Trust Alliance in 2011, providing assurance of quality and permanence of land conservation, and publicly recognizing WVLT's ability to protect important natural places and working lands forever.

Virginia's Land Preservation Tax Credit has encouraged thousands of conservation-minded farmers and other landowners to permanently protect lands essential to Virginia's rural and agricultural heritage through donations of land or conservation easements. An enhanced federal tax deduction for conservation easement donations has helped America's land trusts work with farmers, ranchers and other modest-income landowners to sustain a remarkable pace of more than one million acres protected by conservation easements each year! But if Congress allows this incentive to expire at the end of 2011, fewer landowners will receive tax benefits from the generous donation of development rights on their land.

WVLT thanks Rep. Bob Goodlatte for being among the 262 House co-sponsors of H.R. 1964, a bill to make this important conservation tax incentive permanent. That's more co-sponsors than any other tax bill in Congress! We encourage Reps. Morgan Griffith and Robert Hurt and Senators Mark Warner and Jim Webb to join them as co-sponsors of this important legislation.

Other findings of the new National Land Trust Census include:

- There are now 36 land trusts operating in Virginia, including 19 staffed groups and 5 all-volunteer groups.
- Virginia increased their full- and part-time staff and contractors 17% in five years, for a total of 130 paid positions in 2010.
- Land trusts in Virginia drew upon the work of 1,305 active volunteers and the contributions of 15,394 members and financial supporters.
- As a signal of the land trust community's commitment to excellence, there are now five accredited land trusts in Virginia. Together, these five groups have protected 452,053 acres as of 2010.

About the Western Virginia Land Trust

The Western Virginia Land Trust (WVLT) was formed in 1996 and works to preserve our region's unique scenic, historic, agricultural, recreational and natural features. WVLT protects more than 15,000 acres of land and 33 miles of streams in 40 conservation easements held by the land trust. We work in ten counties in the Roanoke region: Bedford, Botetourt, Carroll, Craig, Floyd, Franklin, Henry, Montgomery, Patrick and Roanoke. WVLT is a private, 501(c)(3) non-profit and is accredited by the Land Trust Accreditation Commission, an independent program of the Land Trust Alliance.

2010 NATIONAL LAND TRUST CENSUS REPORT



VIRGINIA

New Report Shows Strong Growth in Land Conservation

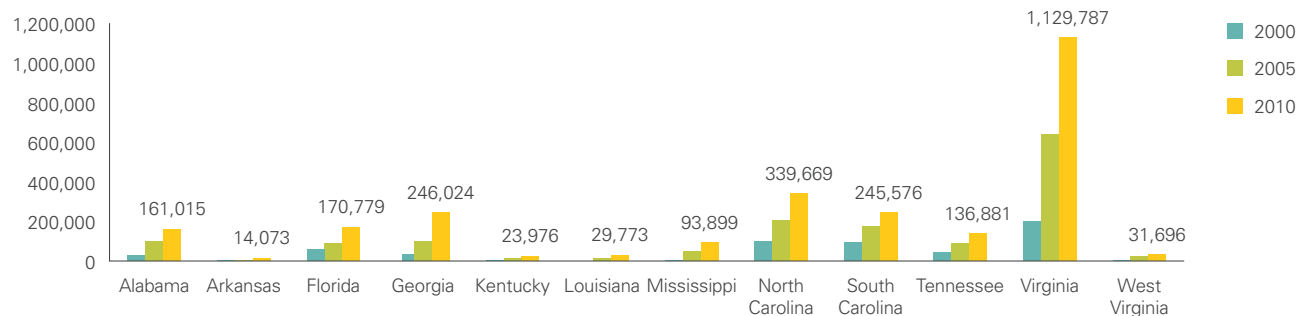
A new report by the Land Trust Alliance shows that land conservation by nonprofit land trusts across the United States is thriving, with more than 10 million acres conserved from 2005 to 2010. Land trusts in Virginia contributed to this success, reporting an increase of 77% in acres conserved over this period.

The Land Trust Alliance has reported on the status and successes of land trusts since its founding in 1982. The National Land Trust Census measures the pace and quality of the important conservation work of local, state and national land trusts in the United States.

Virginia's Trends in Conservation: 2005–2010

- Land trusts in Virginia have protected 1,129,787 acres—this represents a 77% increase in acres conserved since 2005. Virginia ranks 5th in the nation in acres conserved, and 1st in the Southeast.
- There are now 36 land trusts operating in Virginia, including 19 staffed groups and 5 all-volunteer groups.
- Virginia increased their full- and part-time staff and contractors 17% in 5 years, for a total of 130 paid positions in 2010.
- Land trusts in Virginia drew upon the work of 1,305 active volunteers (an increase of -1% since 2005) and the contributions of 15,394 members and financial supporters.
- As a signal of the land trust community's commitment to excellence, there are now 5 accredited land trusts in Virginia. Together, these 5 groups have protected 452,053 acres as of 2010.

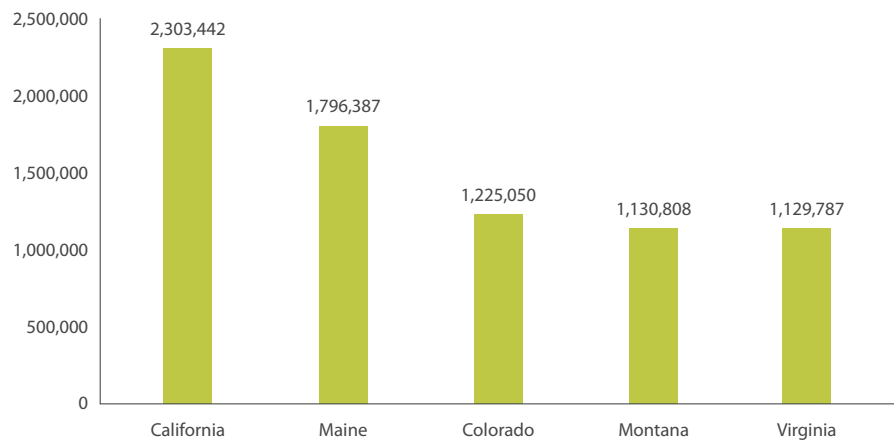
Total Acres Conserved by States in the Southeast



National Trends in Conservation

- Total acres conserved by state, local and national land trusts grew to 47 million as of year-end 2010—an area over twice the size of all the national parks in the contiguous United States. This represents an increase of about 10 million acres since 2005 and 23 million acres since 2000.
- The number of active land trust volunteers increased by 70% since 2005, while the number of paid staff and contractors increased by 19%.
- From 2005 to 2010, state and local land trusts almost tripled the amount of funding they have dedicated to monitoring, stewardship and legal defense. They also almost tripled their operating endowments.
- State and local land trusts budgets' doubled and the number of paid staff and contractors increased by 19%.

Top 5 States for Acres Conserved as of 2010



For more information about the 2010 National Land Trust Census, including a state-by-state summary of acres protected, please visit <http://www.lta.org/census> or email census@lta.org.

Land Trust Alliance

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The mission of the Land Trust Alliance is to save the places people love by strengthening land conservation across America. Land trusts are nonprofit organizations that work with private land owners to voluntarily conserve forests, farms, parks, and other cherished places that enrich our lives. We focus our work on three strategic goals: accelerating the pace, improving the quality, and ensuring the permanence of conservation. By building highly effective and well-governed land trusts that protect lands with the highest values to their communities and ensure their protection in perpetuity, we can preserve healthy human and natural communities, clean air and water, beautiful vistas, recreation areas, and working lands.