



Community Integrity Principles for California Land Trusts

Revisions Adopted 10-2012; Adoption 10-2005

“Public trust in our sector demands enforcement of legal standards, but it calls for more than that. Our world is migrating from a standard of what the law ‘allows’ us to do, to what we are comfortable reading about ourselves in the newspaper.” *Dorothy S. Ridings, President of the Council on Foundations, Foundation News (November-December, 2003)*

CCLT’s goal is to have a strong, credible land trust community where an individual land trust’s activities enhance the reputation and identity of the community, the viability of land protection tools, and public support and confidence in land conservation. CCLT members agree to act in the spirit of these principles.

The principles below reflect the standards to which we hold ourselves in relating to each other, our supporters, the public, landowners and funders. The principles can be a source of fruitful and positive self-examination and discussion between land trusts and within a land trust.

- 1 **Good Neighbors.** Land trusts operate in a cooperative and supportive manner with other land trusts, and have an obligation to create and maintain open lines of communication about potential and ongoing projects.
- 2 **Maintain Conservation Purpose.** Land trusts ensure that each conservation transaction has a public benefit, and that the conservation purposes are upheld over time whatever the source of financial support for the project, such as public or charitable funds, tax benefits or regulatory requirements. Land trusts must achieve this while respecting the rights and preferences of landowners, public and private funders, and the public in their transactions and operations.
- 3 **Community Leadership & Sensitivity.** Land trusts serve their communities with leadership, vision and commitment. Land trusts make tremendous contributions to local communities, and have a responsibility to consider the goals and preferences of the community in choosing conservation projects and practices.

- 4 **No Transaction is an Island.** Land trusts are mindful about fostering long-term public confidence and support for land conservation beyond any single transaction.
- 5 **Our Fates Are Linked.** The effectiveness and reputation of each land trust is related to the actions of other land trusts. Land trusts carry out their activities so as to uphold the effectiveness, reputation and identity of the California land trust community and its conservation tools.
- 6 **Keeping the Public Trust.** Public confidence and support for land conservation is critical to land trust success, and land trusts avoid situations that could jeopardize public confidence and support.
- 7 **Conflicts of Interest.** Land trusts avoid conflicts of interest with the broad spectrum of individuals and entities with which they work, and within their own operations and board composition. To the extent feasible, land trust transactions and operations are transparent.
- 8 **Independent Governance.** The board of directors of a land trust is engaged in active, independent and informed oversight of the organization's activities, and they share a commitment and duty to advance the purposes of the land trust.
- 9 **Planting a Good Seed.** Land trusts work to develop enduring projects that accomplish their stated conservation goals, and are mindful of the demands of stewardship and perpetuity.
- 10 **Financial Sustainability.** Land conservation takes considerable financial resources for both initial acquisition and perpetual stewardship. Land trusts build and manage the necessary funds for these activities and obligations.
- 11 **Circle of Friends.** Land trusts work to continually foster community support and organizational passion to carry out their mission and uphold their commitments in perpetuity.
- 12 **Spreading the Word.** Land trusts share information with CCLT that could have an impact on the land trust community or land conservation efforts or practices.

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- ¹ No category of membership or participation has voting rights to govern the affairs of the California Council of Land Trusts.
- ² The CCLT Board of Directors reserves the right to allow exceptions to the adherence to *Qualifications for Membership* under exceptional circumstances and if the organization is in substantial compliance with the *Qualifications*.