



Land Conservation Organizations Addressing Climate Change

{based on online research conducted in May 2007}

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SECTION I: Research Notes

A. GLOBAL/NATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

1) The Nature Conservancy

A huge section of TNC's website is devoted to its Global Climate Change Initiative. It features a summary of impacts, a personal carbon calculator, and climate-saving tips. It also includes information on how TNC addressing the issue in the following three ways:

- * Reducing emissions from deforestation
- * Helping natural areas adapt to the impacts of climate change
- * Supporting policies to reduce emissions

TNC has placed a staff member, Bill Stanley, in charge of the Initiative.

Read more at:

<http://www.nature.org/initiatives/climatechange/>

On May 8, TNC announced that they had joined the U.S. Climate Action Partnership, "a highly influential, relatively new alliance of more than two dozen major companies and environmental and conservation organizations calling for significant, mandatory reductions in U.S. greenhouse gas emissions."

Read more at:

<http://www.nature.org/initiatives/climatechange/features/art2104.html>

TNC New Mexico recently became the first state chapter to hire a climate change scientist, Carolyn Enquist, whose "job will be to review, synthesize and interpret emerging climate change science for conservation practitioners and policy-makers in New Mexico and the greater Southwest USA, with special focus on New Mexico's most important natural landscapes, species and ecosystems."

Read more at:

<http://www.nature.org/wherework/northamerica/states/newmexico/science/art18406.html>

Among the featured initiatives of TNC's North Carolina Chapter is an effort to mitigate the impacts of rising sea levels on the Albemarle Peninsula, where some 540,000 acres have been conserved.

Read more at:

<http://www.nature.org/wherewework/northamerica/states/northcarolina/initiatives/art20694.html>

2) The World Land Trust (UK)

The following is an excerpt from “Climate Change and Nature Conservation: What the World Land Trust is doing,” by Renton Righelato, Chairman of the WLT Trustees.

Global warming will affect all of us; indeed rising sea levels, desertification or other loss of agricultural land could result in many human populations around the globe being displaced. The same applies to the flora and fauna in natural habitats. So, as a charity concerned with nature conservation, the World Land Trust has developed a two-pronged approach:

- * Regenerating and protecting forest land to remove carbon dioxide;*
- * Creating, where we can, wildlife refuges that can accommodate climate change.*

Read more at:

<http://www.worldlandtrust.org/about/climate-change-policy.htm>

WLT also operates a website called “Carbon Balanced” that provides personal and business strategies for reducing carbon emissions. The site also includes a few examples of WLT conservation projects that are helping to offset climate change.

Read more at:

<http://www.carbonbalanced.org/>

3) Land Trust Alliance

The following seminar is on the agenda for LTA’s Rally 2007:

Leadership on Global Warming and Climate Change: A Land Trust Response

Climate change caused by global warming may have wide ranging ramifications for land conservation – as both problems and opportunities. Land trusts are uniquely positioned to play a leadership role in response to this challenge due

to our collaborative skills, community connections, and knowledge of ecosystems. This engaging and inspiring seminar will offer a primer on climate science as the basis for meaningful dialogue on issues related to land conservation, such as carbon sequestration, ecosystem health, severe weather events, forestry and agricultural issues, and community justice and stability. We will explore current land trust initiatives and build a basis for leadership vision and action at the individual, organizational, and community levels. Given the importance of this issue, there will be time for personal reflection and peer dialogue. Participants will receive a preparatory memo and questionnaire.

Read more at:

<http://www.lta.org/training/rally/seminars.htm>

4) Trust for Public Land

The only readily accessible information on climate change on the TPL website is in a press release highlighting the organization's partnership with VivaTerra ("the nation's leading catalog and Internet retailer of distinctive eco-living products"). For every order over \$75 VivaTerra will donate \$1 to TPL's "protection of America's crucial forest ecosystems and natural lands." VivaTerra co-founder Robert Perkowitz is quoted as saying that "Supporting The Trust for Public Land is a simple, direct way for VivaTerra and our customers to participate in reducing our impact on the climate."

Read more at:

http://www.tpl.org/tier3_cd.cfm?content_item_id=21217&folder_id=186

5) The National Trust (UK)

Like The Nature Conservancy, the National Trust devotes substantial web space to the issue of climate change. From the website:

Climate change is one of the world's greatest challenges. It is also one of the National Trust's biggest challenges. The impacts of climate change in the UK are increasingly affecting the historic buildings, gardens, countryside and coast in our care. We are learning how to manage these impacts, such as floods, storm damage and seasonal change. However, in doing this we need the support of our neighbours, partners, and, importantly, you. The causes of climate change also need urgent action. We are starting to tackle our greenhouse gas emissions, and using our experience to put pressure on Government.

Read more at:

http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/main/w-chl/w-countryside_environment/w-climate_change.htm

The National Trust has “adopted energy policy that commits us to reduce our overall use of energy and to substitute fossil fuels with renewable energy wherever appropriate, as quickly as possible given financial, technological and conservation constraints. This includes a target to cut our electricity use by 10 per cent by February 2007.”

A significant piece of this transition is being done through the development of ‘microgeneration’ renewable energy projects at conserved properties. A PDF summarizing these projects is available for download at:

http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/main/w-microgen_policy_practice.pdf

National Trust Director-General Fiona Reynolds has called on the Government to make the conservation of peat moorlands a climate change priority. At the same time, she announced a call to action for thousands of volunteers to help save the precious peat resources of England’s Peak District.

Read more at:

http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/main/w-global/w-news/w-news_peat_crisis.htm

6) Conservation International

CI has a climate change link among its website’s conservation programs. There you can find a carbon calculator and a number of climate-related stories from the countries where CI works. From the website:

CI is working with partners in all sectors to better understand the impact of climate change on global biodiversity and to promote conservation as a strategy for mitigating global warming. By incorporating the science of climate change into conservation strategies, CI is demonstrating that CO2 emissions can be reduced not only by protecting and restoring forests that absorb the gas, but also by preventing release of the greenhouse gases when forests are cleared or burned.

Through its Center for Environmental Leadership in Business (CELB), CI engages industry in this effort and offers cost-effective options for businesses to offset

their emissions. Conservation Carbon projects are unique in that they are designed to deliver multiple benefits: mitigating climate change, conserving biodiversity, and promoting human welfare. Thus, a donation for offsetting carbon also prevents species extinctions, restores ecosystem services for communities, and fosters economic growth.

Read more at:

<http://www.conservation.org/xp/CIWEB/programs/climatechange/>

7) The Conservation Fund

The Conservation Fund has two major initiatives to help individuals and companies reduce carbon emissions.

1) Carbon Sequestration:

The Conservation Fund offers the nation's leading carbon sequestration program using reforestation to absorb CO₂ from the atmosphere, generating carbon credits and strengthening community relations for partners. Through its Carbon Sequestration Program, the Fund provides participating companies with an effective strategy for addressing climate change, as well as other environmental concerns such as the loss of wildlife habitat and declining water quality. From site identification and land acquisition to restoration and management, the Fund provides a comprehensive and cost-effective program to offset CO₂ emissions.

2) Go Zero:

The Conservation Fund has launched a new program that makes it easy and affordable for individuals, corporations, or even entire communities to "Go Zero" by measuring and then offsetting their carbon dioxide emissions – simply by planting trees.

Read more at:

http://www.conservationfund.org/land_and_water_conservation_services/climate_change

8) American Farmland Trust

AFT's website has a feature story on the role of agriculture in addressing climate change in California:

Another promising strategy for reducing greenhouse gases is the preservation of land in agriculture rather than developing it. This can secure the long-term carbon sequestration benefits of greener pastures and croplands. And, if strategically planned, the preservation of land can also influence the direction and configuration of urban development, resulting in more tightly-knit, livable communities where people don't have to rely exclusively on autos to travel between their homes, jobs, school and shopping. That, in turn, will reduce vehicle miles traveled per household (VMT/H), a key indicator of carbon dioxide and other air pollution emissions. Moreover, preservation of farmland close to cities will keep open the option of growing food more locally, thus reducing "food miles traveled."

Read more at:

<http://www.farmland.org/programs/states/ca/ClimateChangeandAgriculture.asp>

B: REGIONAL/STATE ORGANIZATIONS

1) The Pacific Forest Trust (California/Oregon/Washington)

PFT is "the only conservation group in the nation solely committed to alleviating the threat to the integrity and productivity of America's private forests with a comprehensive strategy to Retain, Sustain and Gain."

The following is excerpt from a web page describing PFT's forest climate program:

Companies seeking to offset carbon dioxide emissions have a unique opportunity to accomplish their goal by conserving forests for their climate benefits in partnership with the Pacific Forest Trust. PFT's forest climate program can provide carbon producers with high quality, long-term carbon offsets – and society with a practical approach to reducing the threat of global warming through forest conservation and stewardship.

All of PFT's carbon credits are secured by permanent conservation easements owned and managed by PFT. These conservation easements ensure the forests will not be cleared or converted to other uses, and ensure that only forest

management that enhances carbon stocks will occur on these properties. In this way, carbon gains made today will not be lost tomorrow.

Stewardship forestry, which is practiced on lands protected by PFT's easements, maximizes a forest's natural carbon-sequestering capacity. Because the forest grows older and more complex, stewardship forestry can more than double carbon stores compared to results from conventional forest practices. The resulting forests, with large snags, rich understories and coarse woody debris, also provide better fish and wildlife habitat, watershed protection and increased biodiversity.

Read more at:

<http://www.pacificforest.org/services/climate.html>

2) The Trustees of Reservations (Massachusetts)

The Trustees appointed a special committee to study the sensitive issue of wind energy development. The Committee recommended the following policy, which the Trustees have since adopted:

As a conservation organization, The Trustees of Reservations favors the development of clean, renewable sources of energy. However, alternative energy generation and related transmission facilities must be sited appropriately, and the analysis of environmental and other impacts should include decommissioning. Therefore, with respect to wind energy, The Trustees of Reservations calls for developing a comprehensive regulatory and permitting process for wind energy sites (including associated transformer and transmission facilities). Such a process should be structured so as to:

- * Provide a mechanism for appropriately weighing environmental, historic, and scenic impacts of the installations;*
- * Comply with state and federal environmental and land use regulations;*
- * Include provisions for the financing and environmental oversight of decommissioning wind energy facilities and restoring their sites; and*
- * Require royalty or lease payments from developers of wind energy sites in public waters or on public land.*

The Trustees will respond to wind energy proposals which potentially affect its properties by bringing relevant issues and concerns to the attention of the permitting authorities, advocating for a thorough analysis of the impact of each project, and responding to the proposed project on the basis of the results of

the impact analysis generally and on the anticipated effect of the project on The Trustees' properties.

Read more at:

http://www.thetrustees.org/pages/70_advocacy.cfm

3) Maine Land Trust Network

A program of Maine Coast Heritage Trust, the Maine Land Trust Network “strengthens the land conservation community by serving as a central hub of information. It brings conservationists together to facilitate information exchange and collaboration.” The following workshop was offered at the 2007 Maine Land Conservation Conference:

Global Warming, Wind Power and Land Conservation – Can Land Trusts Be Part of the Solution?

Panelists will discuss global warming and its effects on Maine, current wind power projects in Maine and Canada and ways land trusts can think broadly and perhaps mesh wind power projects with land conservation efforts.

The Maine Land Trust Network’s website:

<http://www.mltn.org/>

4) Evergreen Land Trust (Washington)

The Evergreen Land Trust Association holds cooperative houses, farms, and forestlands in the Puget Sound region of Washington State. It also serves as “an educational resource for people wishing to explore how to live sustainably.” As part of this function, its website provides information on renewable energy:

The threat of global warming and the steady rise in energy costs continues to drive the search for alternatives to fossil fuels. There are many options available—solar, wind, biodiesel, etc... and most importantly—energy conservation. Walker Creek [one of the Evergreen Land Trust’s conserved properties] is a great demonstration site of solar power and off-the-grid living.

Read more at:

<http://www.evergreenlandtrust.org/programs.html>

5) The Grand Canyon Trust (Arizona/Utah)

From the Trust's Air Quality & Clean Energy Program page:

Recognizing that generating electricity is not only one of the single largest sources of air pollution in the United States, but a major contributor to carbon dioxide emissions, and in fact, the 18 coal-fired plants on the Colorado Plateau produce 142 million tons of carbon dioxide every year. Consequently, in 2001, the Trust expanded its air quality program to and began supporting efforts to regulate greenhouse gases, to produce electricity from renewable sources, and to use electricity more efficiently.

As part of that effort, the Trust and its partner Western Resource Advocates (formerly the Land and Water Fund), helped lead a successful effort to convince the Arizona Corporation Commission to adopt an Environmental Portfolio Standard (EPS) as part of Arizona's electric utility deregulation program. The EPS requires that regulated utilities generate .2 percent of their total power from renewable sources by January 2001, with the percentage increasing each year until it tops out at 1.1 percent in 2007. This modest program will result in the generation of roughly 70 megawatts of electricity and provide much-needed stimulus to Arizona's fledgling solar manufacturers. In 2004, the Corporation Commission began to consider expanding the EPS, an idea that the Trust strongly supports.

Read more at:

<http://grandcanyontrust.org/programs/air/intro.php>

6) The Land Trust Alliance of British Columbia

Recently posted an RFP for a researcher to study “the mitigation of climate change through the conservation of natural areas.” The RFP also states that:

There are reasonable connections between protecting natural areas and reducing impacts of climate change because of:

- * Protection of water through conserved riparian areas and other watershed, swamp, or wetland areas*
- * Creation of oxygen and reduction of carbon through protected forests*
- * Protection of biodiversity (needed to provide refugia and migration sites)*

- * Protection of habitats (needed to provide ecosystem functioning, adaptation options)*
- * Reducing vulnerability to climate variability and extremes in weather*

Read more at:

http://www.sustainablebuildingcentre.com/forum-topic/the_land_trust_alliance_of_bc_contract_for_research_on_climate_change_and_conservation

7) The Nature Trust of British Columbia

From a 1/31/07 press release:

The Nature Trust of British Columbia is teaming up with ERA Ecosystem Restoration Associates to plant 3,250 trees at Camp Slough near Chilliwack in order to enhance habitat, improve native biodiversity, and combat climate change.

ERA will be planting with the help of the Chilliwack Field Naturalists conifers such as western red cedar, Sitka spruce, western hemlock, Douglas fir and also deciduous species such as black cottonwood on the property owned by The Nature Trust.

“The Ministry of Environment and The Nature Trust of British Columbia have worked together in the acquisition and management of conservation lands. This venture done in conjunction with ERA will have benefits to the local ecosystem while providing benefits to the overall atmosphere by removing carbon dioxide,” said Tom Blackbird, RP Bio for the Ministry of Environment.

Robert Falls, President of ERA, commented: “Restoring ecosystem functionality is a key element of our community-based climate change programming. We are delighted to be a partner in this project.”

Read more at:

<http://www.naturetrust.bc.ca/releases.php?id=54>

SECTION II: Author Commentary

A: GLOBAL/NATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

Based on a study of their websites, all of the world's largest conservation players appear to be addressing climate change in some way, though the depth and approach of these efforts vary considerably. Below, these organizations are described in descending order, from the most evidence of a committed/holistic approach to addressing climate change to the least evidence thereof.

The Nature Conservancy (TNC) appears to be leading the pack through its Global Climate Change Initiative. TNC shows its commitment by designating staff toward the management of this Initiative. It also demonstrates whole thinking by scaling the causes, impacts, and solutions of this global problem down to the level of individuals and communities. TNC empowers individuals in the following ways:

Causes:

- A carbon calculator allows people to measure their individual contribution to the problem.
- An "Ask the Conservationist" section allows readers to ask questions of TNC's "720 staff scientists." This month features extensive coverage of how human activity is the largest contributor to the record levels of greenhouse gases in Earth's atmosphere.

Impacts:

- TNC relates the impacts of climate change to "your life" and "the places you care about."
- Detailed reports are available on the anticipated impacts of climate change in seven U.S. states.

Solutions:

- TNC provides a number of climate-saving tips (bike instead of drive, teleconference instead of flying, use CFL bulbs instead of incandescent, plant native trees, eat locally, etc.)

TNC also addresses the social justice implications of climate change, explaining that the three billion people living in poverty worldwide are the least responsible for climate change, yet will suffer most from its impacts (diseases, declining crop yields, natural disasters, etc.).

The UK-based **National Trust** appears to be next behind TNC in its efforts to address climate change. The National Trust's website is particularly strong on impacts, warning its UK constituents that the problem is "here and now." This claim is backed up with measurements from the Trust's own data (over 400

separate insurance claims for flood/storm damage in past 8 years, higher property maintenance costs due the longer growing season, etc.). In a particularly creative attempt to articulate local impacts, the Trust “challenged 10 of the UK’s top photographers to answer this question by capturing climate change through the lens.” The Trust is also lobbying the UK government to “deliver a robust and targeted climate change adaptation strategy to help people and businesses reduce the risks from climate change.” Such a strategy should ensure that costs are shared equitably, the Trust argues.

The National Trust also provides the usual tips for individuals to reduce their carbon footprint and describes “microgeneration” projects that are harnessing energy from renewable sources on the Trust’s properties.

The **World Land Trust** (WLT), also based in the United Kingdom, has created a web-based platform called “Carbon Balanced,” with calculators that allow individuals and businesses to assess, reduce, and offset their carbon emissions. Offsetting is achieved through WLT projects that sequester carbon through reforestation. The WLT provides little information on the impacts of climate change and generally fails to distill the global, scientific issues into local, tangible information that could empower individuals and communities.

Conservation International’s website includes a carbon calculator and offers “land-based carbon offsets projects as investment opportunities.” CI describes the benefits of these projects primarily in traditional conservation terms (habitat restoration, biodiversity protection, etc.). While CI does acknowledge that the 1.35 billion people living in the areas with the highest biodiversity depend on ecological services such as clean air and fresh water, the website makes no specific mention of the impacts of climate change on people.

Similar to CI, the **Conservation Fund’s** website focuses on carbon footprint and offset opportunities. The Fund’s “Go Zero” calculator goes a step further than others by determining how many trees would need to be planted to offset your carbon emissions; the Fund then offers to plant that number of trees in exchange for your donation. Beyond this, however, the Fund provides little information that would empower communities to understand the local impacts of climate change or what steps they can take to solve the problem.

The other three large conservation organizations studied for this report have done very little to address climate change, at least from what is visible on their websites. The **Land Trust Alliance’s** only apparent mention of climate change is in the description of a seminar at its annual Rally. The **Trust for Public Land’s** most notable strategy to this point is a collaboration with VivaTerra, which donates \$1 of every order over \$75 to TPL’s protection of America’s forests. The **American Farmland Trust** has a single article highlighting the carbon-offsetting benefits of keeping land in agriculture.

B: REGIONAL/STATE ORGANIZATIONS

The seven regional/state conservation organizations profiled in this report should be commended for addressing climate change at all, since online research yielded no other groups giving attention to this issue. That said, none of the seven come close to rivaling The Nature Conservancy at making climate change a priority or approaching it holistically.

The most significant step being made by a smaller conservation organization appears to be the **Land Trust Alliance of British Columbia's** (LTABC) recent RFP announcement for a researcher to study "the mitigation of climate change through the conservation of natural areas." Other organizations including the **Pacific Forest Trust** and **The Nature Trust of British Columbia** recognize the carbon-offsetting benefits of their forest restoration work, but LTABC is testing this assumption by obtaining real measurements that could be of great help to the broader conservation community.

Other regional/state conservation organizations are addressing climate change through the lens of renewable energy development. The **Trustees of Reservations**, based in Massachusetts, appointed a special committee to study wind turbine siting, a particularly contentious issue within that state. This led to the organization's adoption of a resolution advocating a permitting process that takes into account a wide range of stakeholder concerns when considering wind energy proposals on the Trustees' properties. The **Grand Canyon Trust** has played an active role in lobbying agencies to regulate greenhouse gas emissions and encourage renewable energy development. The **Evergreen Land Trust** in Washington serves "as an educational resource people wishing to explore how to live sustainably." As part of this function, its website provides information on renewable energy. At a recent conference, the **Maine Land Trust Network** convened a discussion of climate change's impacts in Maine and how land trusts can use wind energy projects to mitigate the problem.