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KLT Adopts Official Standards and Practices

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In 1989, the Land Trust Alliance (LTA), the national organization of land trusts, out of a commitment to the idea that a strong land trust community depends on the credibility and effectiveness of all its members, developed the Land Trust Standards and Practices, guiding principles for the responsible operation of land trusts.

From the LTA 1993 revision of the Statement of Land Trust Standards and Practices: The LTA believes the Standards and Practices "are essential for...a land trust that operates legally, ethically, and in the public interest and that conducts a sound program of land transactions and stewardship."

During 2001, the LTA launched its "Land Trust Quality Initiative," an effort to provide greater support to land trusts to ensure that their conservation efforts will stand the test of time. To help accomplish this, LTA pledged to provide increased education and outreach to make sure that every land trust adopts the Land Trust Standards and Practices.

From its founding in 1990, the Kansas Land Trust, an LTA sponsor member, has studied and endeavored to adhere to the Land Trust Standards and Practices. In 2001, the Board of Directors agreed to conduct a comprehensive review of the fifteen standards. In some cases, practices were added or amended in order for KLT to fully comply with the standards.

And, on June 25, 2002, KLT passed a formal resolution, the final paragraph of which reads, "...the Board of Directors of the Kansas Land Trust, having reviewed its operating practices and found them to be in substantial compliance with the 1993 Statement of Land Trust Standards and Practices developed by the Land Trust Alliance, hereby adopts the Statement as henceforth guiding the practices of the organization."

The land trust standards are:

Purpose and Goals

A land trust must have a clear purpose and goals.

Board Accountability

The board of directors must assume legal responsibility and accountability for the affairs of the organization.

Conflict of Interest

The board must take care that directors, officers, and staff avoid conflicts of interest.

Basic Legal Requirements

A land trust must understand and fulfill its basic legal requirements as a nonprofit tax-exempt organization.

Fundraising

A land trust must conduct fundraising activities in an ethical and responsible manner.

Financial and Asset Management

The board of directors must be absolutely certain that the land trust manages its finances and assets in a thoroughly responsible and accountable way.

<u>Staff, Consultants, and Volunteers</u>	A land trust must have help--from volunteers, consultants, and in many cases paid staff--with appropriate skills and in sufficient numbers to carry out its programs.
<u>Selecting Projects</u>	A land trust must be selective in choosing land-saving projects.
<u>Choosing the Best Conservation Method</u>	A land trust must select the best available method for protecting each property.
<u>Examining the Property</u>	A land trust must know the property it protects.
<u>Ensuring Sound Transactions</u>	A land trust must ensure that every transaction is legally and technically sound, and take steps to avoid future legal problems.
<u>Benefits</u>	A land trust must try to assure that landowners who plan to claim a federal tax deduction for a charitable gift or bargain sale of real property interests are informed about relevant Internal Revenue Code requirements and IRS regulations, and that they obtain their own legal and tax advice regarding the gift's deductibility.
<u>Board Approval of Transactions</u>	The board is responsible for every land transaction.
<u>Conservation Easement Stewardship</u>	A land trust must carry out a program of responsible stewardship for its easements.
<u>Land Stewardship</u>	A land trust must carry out a program of responsible stewardship for its land.