

Trout Unlimited & Land Conservation

Background: At the 2006 annual meeting a Land Conservation Work Group was created by the NLC to work with TU staff to develop a proposal that would better enable TU to further habitat protection and restoration activities on important private lands. In addition, the new strategic plan contemplates an expanded role for TU in private land conservation.

The NLC and the Land Conservation Work Group have proposed amending the TU bylaws to create a TU Coldwater Land Conservancy along with an independent funding stream, and a workgroup that includes staff, an outside organization, the NLC, and the Board. As an alternative to creating a new organizational model, proposed below is another option for ensuring that TU accomplish vital land conservancy work in a manner consistent with the structure, operations, and organization of TU.

The Goals of the TU Land Conservancy program are:

1. To achieve the TU Strategic Plan commitment to “protect” key watersheds and riparian areas on private lands through technical assistance, strategic planning and funding assistance for important land conservation projects.
2. To provide opportunities for Chapters and Councils to work with land trusts and agencies to collaborate to restore and improve habitat on lands protected by land trusts, state and local agencies.

The elements of the TU Land Conservancy program will be:

- TU hires “Conservancy Coordinators” in the East and in the West to manage land conservancy work in each region, or in targeted areas of each region. NB: Nat Gillespie is already working full time to develop a land trust program for North Carolina and the Chesapeake Bay region.
- The Conservancy Coordinators will establish contact with local and regional land trusts and state agencies to determine where TU coldwater protection priorities coincide with objectives of the land trusts and agencies, and will help coordinate cooperative protection projects and endeavors.
- TU chapters, members and staff will advocate at the state and local levels and in Congress to help secure public and private funding for appropriate easements, acquisitions, and other land conservation measures.
- The Conservancy Coordinators, TU chapters and members will offer their services to land trusts, conservancies, and private land owners of protected lands to conduct, or raise resources to conduct, habitat improvements and restoration. Possible funding sources include private contributions, Farm Bill, and state restoration programs.

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- The Conservancy Coordinators and state councils and chapters will work with land trusts and public agencies to design conservation easements, and seek to include public access for fishing, monitoring, and stream improvement projects, where appropriate.
- TU will create a Coldwater Land Conservation Fund (CLCF). The CLCF will be used to 1) cover program expenses, 2) provide matching grants to support selected coldwater conservation easement projects involving willing landowners. Grantees for matching funds can include: TU Chapters, TU Councils, land trusts, and agencies. A new CLCF committee, similar to the existing Embrace-A-Stream committee, will be formed to guide the grant making decisions. The committee will consist of 1) staff, and 2) TU grassroots members appointed by the Board of Trustees. As part of its decision making process, the committee may seek input from land trusts and other similar entities on funding criteria and specific project grants, where appropriate.
- Land trust and agency partners will hold any real estate interests acquired, and TU will not hold conservation easements or any fee interests.