



2023 ACLT National Survey of Land Trusts

Final Report

January 2024

A report for the Alliance of Canadian Land Trusts and regional alliance partners



Report prepared by EG Research Consulting

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Executive Summary

This report presents the results of a national census survey of land trusts operating in Canada and affiliated with the Alliance of Canadian Land Trusts (ACLT), the Ontario Land Trust Alliance (OLTA), the Land Trust Alliance of British Columbia (LTABC), and le Réseau de milieux naturels protégés (RMN). The survey's main purpose was to describe the Canadian land trust community. An online questionnaire containing 44 questions addressing eight domains was distributed to affiliated land trusts in the fall of 2023. Eighty-six questionnaires were analyzed using descriptive statistics. The response rate was 73% and the sample was representative in terms of regional distribution.

Key Results

Habitats Conserved

Canadian land trusts conserved a wide variety of habitats, most commonly forest (88%), wetlands (81%) and lake or river shorelines (74%). Seven in 10 land trusts conserved land that is federally or provincially designated as hosting species at risk (SAR).

Characteristics of Properties Conserved

Eighty-six percent of land trusts reported owning fee-simple properties while 67% held conservation easements (including restrictive covenants and servitudes), 35% stewarded properties for others and 10% had properties under lease or license agreement.

The number of properties stewarded by land trusts varied widely (mean=34, median=11, maximum=378, minimum=1). The majority (91%) of land trusts had 100 or fewer properties in their portfolios. Just over half (53%) of all properties held or stewarded by the 86 land trusts were fee-simple while 37% were conservation easements and 11% were stewarded using other arrangements. There were differences across the three regional alliances, with fee-simple properties more prevalent among OLTA members, conservation easements more common among LTABC members, and stewardship agreements more common among RMN members.

Nearly three quarters (72%) of land trusts conserved between 1 and 1,000 hectares in total (mean=1,940 ha, median=376 ha, maximum=25,392 ha, minimum=0.5 ha). Nationally, nearly half (47%) of the area conserved by land trusts were fee-simple properties while 43% were conservation easements. The ratios differed significantly across the three regional alliances.

Collectively, the land trusts we surveyed were involved in protecting and stewarding 2,661 properties totalling 151,287 hectares. This included 1,401 properties covering 70,450 hectares held by 69 land trusts as fee-simple properties; 977 properties over 65,556 hectares of conservation easements managed by 56 land trusts; and 283 properties across 15,282 hectares stewarded by 25 land trusts for other landowners using a different arrangement than above.

Property Management

A majority of land trusts (84%) had a land management plan completed or in progress for one or more properties and 92% inspected each property in their portfolio annually. Volunteers were stewards of fee-simple properties at 64% of land trusts, followed by staff (58%) and board members (46%).

Governance and Staff

The majority of land trusts (63%) reported a governance structure made up of a board of directors and a paid executive director. Roughly nine out of 10 land trusts reported at least one employee or consultant/contractor in fiscal year 2022, with an average of 10 employees and/or consultants/contractors (median=7).

Volunteers, Members and Outreach

Volunteers appear to be an essential resource, contributing to land trusts in a variety of ways. Eighty-eight percent of land trusts reported having volunteers in fiscal year 2022, with an average of 77 (median=20). Volunteers played an important role in land stewardship at 83% of land trusts, while also being engaged in a variety of other activities, including communications, data science, fundraising and development, administration and finance. Most land trusts (89%) reported having a membership program in place. Eighty-five percent reported one or more engagement activities focused on Indigenous Peoples.

Funding

Most land trusts (93%) reported funding from individuals. Granting foundations (84%), provincial government (70%), federal government (69%), municipal/regional governments (55%) and small businesses (45%) were also significant sources of funding. Over half (53%) reported benefitting from the federal Ecological Gift Program since 2012.

Standards and Practices

Two thirds (65%) of land trusts reported having formally adopted the Centre for Land Conservation's Canadian Land Trust Standards and Practices. Respondents were generally supportive of standards and practices for the industry but lack of capacity and funding to meet standards was cited as a concern, particularly among smaller and volunteer-led organizations.

Canadian Protected and Conserved Areas Database (CPCAD)

Less than one third (31%) of land trusts reported having submitted their full or partial inventory of conserved lands to the Canadian Protected and Conserved Areas Database (CPCAD). A significant proportion of land trusts were unsure about the CPCAD's purpose and process. Concerns about publishing with CPCAD included unwanted visitation by the public and private property owners' privacy.

Preferences for Support from Alliances

Land trusts indicated that the ACLT and regional alliances can best support them by focusing on advocating for funding programs for land trusts, helping them build their capacity and grow, and supporting them with the Canadian Land Trust Standards & Practices.

Conclusion

The results of the survey provide valuable data about the Canadian land trust community as a whole while also revealing that land trusts are diverse in terms of the number and size of properties conserved, capacity and resources. The ACLT and regional alliances can use the data to describe and promote the impacts of their members to funders and the public. The survey also offers a new method for tracking changes to the eight domains measured by the questionnaire over time. To this effect, the survey will be repeated in 2025. And finally, the survey provides the ACLT and regional alliances with direction on how they can best support their members through existing and new initiatives.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Survey Purpose

This report details the results of a national census survey of land trusts operating in Canada and affiliated with the Alliance of Canadian Land Trusts (ACLT), the Ontario Land Trust Alliance (OLTA), the Land Trust Alliance of British Columbia (LTABC), and le Réseau de milieux naturels protégés (RMN). The primary intent of the survey was to collect baseline organizational and operational data in order to allow the ACLT and regional alliances to more accurately describe the Canadian land trust community as well as better support and promote their impacts to funders and the general public.

1.2 Report Structure

The report is structured into three main sections (Introduction, Results, Conclusion, References) and includes four appendices. The results are organized according to nine themes:

1. Survey participation
2. Characteristics of property portfolios
3. Property management
4. Standards and practices
5. Canadian Protected and Conserved Areas Database (CPCAD)
6. Governance and human resources
7. Finances
8. Membership and outreach
9. Preferences for support from alliances

There are three appendices:

- Appendix A: List of land trusts
- Appendix B: Results
- Appendix C: Supplemental analyses

The survey questions associated with each of the nine themes are included at the beginning of each thematic section.

The results are presented in narrative and chart forms in the Results section, and in table form in Appendix B and Appendix C. Questions are always prefaced by their number in the questionnaire for ease of cross-referencing. Questions and response options may have been shortened in chart titles due to space constraints.

For a detailed overview of the report structure, refer to the table of contents.

1.3 Acknowledgements

The ACLT would like to thank the regional alliances for their support and contributions to the survey development, and Claire Vazina for translating the report into French.

2. Method

2.1 Survey Design

Table 1 provides an overview of the key details of the survey. The units of analysis were land trusts ("organismes et fiducies de conservation", in French) operating in Canada and affiliated with the ACLT and regional alliances (LTABC, OLTA and RMN). Since the goal of the survey was to collect data from as many affiliated land trusts operating in Canada as possible, a census sampling approach was chosen (i.e., all affiliated land trusts were invited to participate in the survey). To be included in the survey, organizations had to be:

- a) a land trust operating in Canada¹
- b) affiliated with a regional land trust alliance (LTABC, OLTA, RMN)

Table 1. Survey design

Survey Method	Survey Instrument	Survey Population	Sampling Approach
Cross-sectional survey ("snapshot" in time) Questions developed by the ACLT and regional alliances	Self-administered online questionnaire English and French questionnaires Questionnaire administered using SurveyMonkey platform 44 questions	All land trusts ("organismes et fiducies de conservation") operating in Canada and affiliated with a regional land trust (LTABC, OLTA, RMN)	Census survey Sampling frame provided by client Personalized email invitations sent to executive directors or board presidents Weekly reminder emails Data collected between September and December 2023

The ACLT and regional alliances provided a list of affiliated land trusts (Appendix A).

A voluntary online survey was developed by an independent research consultant in collaboration with the ACLT and regional alliances. The English questionnaire was translated into French by the ACLT. The two surveys were administered by the consultant using the SurveyMonkey online platform (www.surveymonkey.com). The online questionnaire contained 44 mostly categorical and multiple choice questions, along with a small number of open-ended questions.

In September 2023, the confidential survey was distributed to the executive directors (or equivalents) of affiliated land trusts via a personalized email. Each land trust was provided with a unique survey link in order to track their participation status. Land trusts who had not completed the survey or opted out were automatically sent weekly reminder emails via SurveyMonkey. Emails explaining the purpose of the survey were also sent to land trusts by the ACLT and the regional alliances in order to encourage participation. Land trusts on the OLTA and LTABC contact lists received a link to the English questionnaire while land trusts on the RMN contact list received a link to the French questionnaire. Land trusts could subsequently request a questionnaire in the language of their choice. The data collection period ran from the beginning of September until early December 2023.

¹ Although affiliated with regional alliances, Nature Conservancy of Canada and Ducks Unlimited were excluded due to the size of their operations.

2.2 Data Analysis and Presentation

All data were self-reported by land trusts in the fall of 2023. Data were analyzed in Excel using descriptive statistics according to the level of measurement of the data. Responses to open-ended questions were coded thematically.

Since most of the questions did not require a response, survey respondents were able to skip questions. Therefore, the percentages provided for each question are based on the total number of responses received for the question, not the overall survey sample size (n=86). For example, if 82 people provided a response to a question (n=82) and 4 people skipped the question, the results were divided by 82, not 86. The number of responses provided by survey respondents to each question is recorded as “Total Responses” at the bottom of each table in Appendix B and Appendix C. Note that some questions were follow-up questions to the previous question. In such cases, the total number of responses to the follow-up question is limited by the responses to the previous question (e.g., 71 land trusts responded “Yes” to Question 20 which means the maximum number of responses for Question 21 was 71, not 86).

3. Results

3.1 Survey Participation

Table 2 displays the survey’s participation flow path and statistics. The initial contact list, provided by regional alliances, contained 127 affiliated organizations (Appendix A). After removing the three land trusts whose emails bounced and the six land trusts who were disqualified by answering “No” to Question 2 (“Are you a land trust?”), there remained 118 organizations eligible to complete the survey (N=118). From this group, one land trust opted out, 30 did not respond and seven questionnaires were partially completed.

Table 2. Survey participation statistics

	Total	LTABC	OLTA	RMN
Land trusts initially invited ¹	127	45	34	47
Bounced emails	3	3	0	0
Disqualified ²	6	4	0	2
Land trusts eligible for survey³	118⁴	38	34	45
Opted out	1	0	1	0
No response	30	11	5	14
Agreed to participate	93	31	28	33
Incomplete questionnaires ⁵	7	3	2	3
Completed questionnaires	80	24	27	28
Questionnaires retained (sample)	86	26	28	31
Response rates ⁵	73%	68%	82%	69%

¹ Initial contact list

² Answering “No” to Question 2 “Is your organization a land trust?” was disqualifying

³ Land trusts that met eligibility criteria *and* were able to receive an invitation

⁴ 118 includes 117 land trusts affiliated with regional alliances; American Friends of Canadian Conservation was left unaffiliated

⁵ Six incomplete questionnaires were retained in the sample

⁵ Obtained by dividing the sample (n=86) by the eligible land trusts (N=118)

After reviewing the questionnaires of the land trusts who consented to participate, 86 questionnaires were retained for analysis (80 submitted and six partially completed). This yielded a 73% response rate (CI 95%, ± 4.91).² The results are generalizable to the entire population of land trusts operating in Canada and affiliated with the ACLT and regional alliances.

When examining the distribution of the land trusts based on regional alliance affiliation (e.g., LTABC, OLTA, RMN), the participation rate of each group was similar to the overall proportions on the initial contact list with a slight overrepresentation from OLTA-affiliated land trusts due to a higher response rate for that group (see Appendix C: Table C1).

Considering the length of the questionnaire and the effort involved in collecting data in order to answer some of the questions, the decision was made to only require responses for the qualifying and identifying

² A recent review of organizational surveys completed by employees found an average response rate of 56% (Holton, Baruch, Aguinis, & Ballinger, 2022).

questions (Questions 1 to 3). This decision was made in order to increase the completion rate. The overall completion rate (questionnaires started divided by questionnaires completed) was 86%. When examining the response rates for the skippable questions, on average, 93% of survey respondents provided a response to a question. The median was also 93%. The maximum response rate was 100%, and the lowest response rate for a single question (Question 39, annual operating revenue in 2022) was 83%. The questions with the highest skipped rate were questions that required the survey respondent to collect organizational data (e.g., number of emails on a distribution list, hectares per type of property). Five questionnaires, or 6% of the sample, were incomplete beyond question 21.

3.2 Characteristics of Property Portfolios

There were nine questions about the properties for which land trusts had responsibility, either through direct ownership or a stewardship agreement:

4. What type(s) of habitat does your land trust conserve?
5. Which of the following types of properties are currently in your land trust's portfolio?
6. Thinking of all of the above properties, how many properties have official public access (e.g., maintained trails, viewing platforms)?
30. How many properties does your land trust own (fee-simple), including both donated and purchased land?
31. How many properties does your land trust steward as part of a conservation easement agreement, restrictive covenant or servitude?
32. How many properties does your land trust steward for other landowners (private, public or non-profit) using a different arrangement than in the previous question?
33. How many hectares (ha) does your land trust own (fee-simple), including both donated and purchased land?
34. How many hectares (ha) does your land trust steward as part of a conservation easement agreement, restrictive covenant or servitude?
35. How many hectares (ha) does your land trust steward for other landowners (private, public or non-profit)?

A single conservation property could include two or more land parcels. Survey respondents were asked to record the number of properties, not parcels. Properties were categorized as:

- Fee-simple ownership
 - Donated
 - Purchased
- Stewarded via a conservation easement, restrictive covenant or servitude
- Stewarded via other arrangements
 - For private landowners
 - For public or non-profit landowners
- Stewarded under license or lease arrangement

Collectively, a land trust's properties were referred to as "property portfolios".

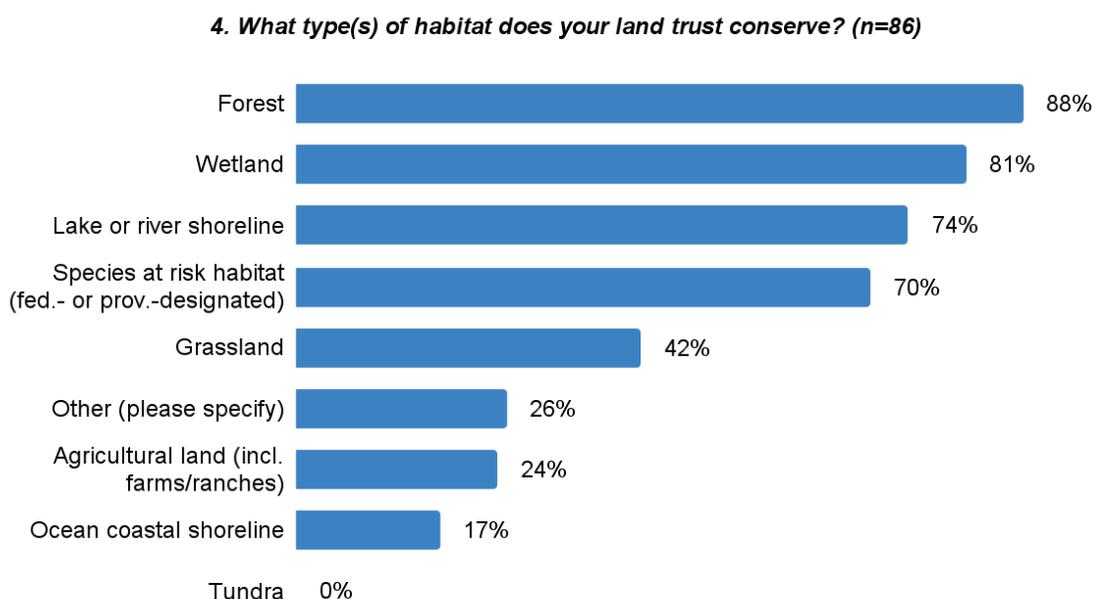
3.2.1 Types of Habitats Conserved by Land Trusts

The core purpose of a land trust is the conservation of land in order to promote biodiversity and other critical ecological functions. Therefore, the ACLT was interested in obtaining a description of the land trust properties based on ecological characteristics. The lack of an existing widely used typology in Canada

presented a challenge. A decision was made to focus on six general categories of habitats found across Canada, plus the separate “Species at risk habitat” category and an “Other” option.

Forest, wetland, and lake or river shoreline were the most commonly reported conserved habitats (Fig. 1). In addition, 70% of land trusts indicated that they conserved federally- or provincially-protected species at risk habitat. One quarter of land trusts also conserved agricultural lands. (See Appendix C: Table C2 for a regional analysis).

Figure 1. Habitat conserved by land trusts

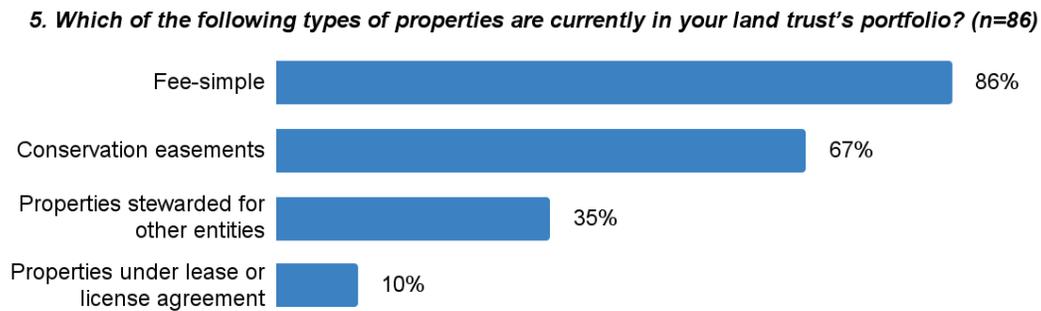


One quarter of land trusts (n=22) chose “Other (please specify)”. Two clear themes emerged: responses related to natural landscapes and responses related to social values or uses. Three quarters of responses were variations on the six habitat types (e.g., “stream shorelines”, “lake bottoms”), more specific landscapes (e.g., “alvar”, “escarpment”, “peat bog”, “ecological corridors”) or landscape conservation concepts (e.g., ecological corridor). Five responses were not conceptually linked to ecology, focusing rather on the human qualities of the properties (e.g., “urban location”, “recreational use”, “Indigenous cultural relevance”, and “patrimonial value”). The inclusion of social attributes in a question about habitat types suggests that the social characteristics of lands are highly salient to a small minority of land trusts. It may be worth exploring this concept separately from the ecological concept in future surveys.

3.2.2 Tenure Status of Properties

Land trusts were asked about the tenure (i.e., ownership) status of the properties in their portfolios (Fig. 2). The majority of land trusts reported owning one or more fee-simple properties (86%). Nearly three quarters (74%) owned fee-simple properties originally donated to the land trust to be owned and conserved in perpetuity while two thirds (67%) owned fee-simple properties that they had purchased. Two thirds (67%) had properties in conservation easements (including restrictive covenants and servitudes) while 10% held properties under lease or license agreement. Just over one third of land trusts (35%) stewarded properties on behalf of other entities. Thirty percent of land trusts stewarded properties for organizations (e.g., other land trusts, institutions and government) while 10% stewarded properties for private landowners (including corporations). (See Appendix B: Table B5 for detailed results.)

Figure 2. Types of tenure



3.2.3 Portfolio Structures

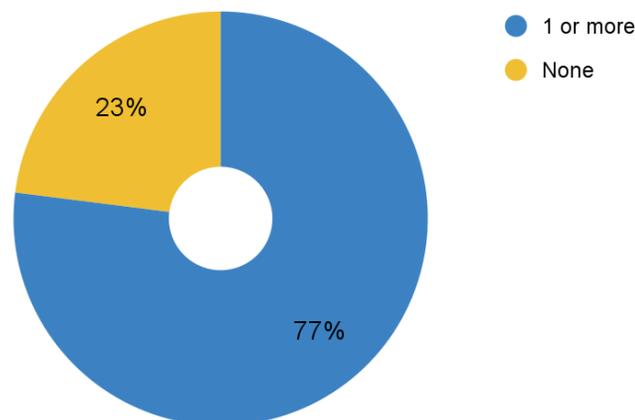
When collating the land trusts into categories based on property tenure type, the most common portfolio structure was made up of fee-simple properties and conservation easements (34% of land trusts). Twenty-one percent of land trust portfolios contained fee-simple properties only, while 14% had fee-simple, conservation easement and stewardship properties in their portfolios. One land trust did not report any properties, noting that they were a new organization and had yet to acquire properties or agree to a stewardship arrangement. Two thirds (68%) of land trusts had portfolios with two or more property tenure types (e.g., fee-simple, conservation easement and lease, conservation easement and stewardship). (See Appendix C: Table C3.)

3.2.4 Public Access to Land Trust Properties

More than three quarters (77%) of land trusts had one or more properties with official public access (e.g., maintained trails, viewing platforms) (Fig. 3). (See Appendix C: Table C4 for a regional analysis).

Figure 3. Properties with public access

6. Thinking of all of the above properties, how many properties have official public access? (n=84)

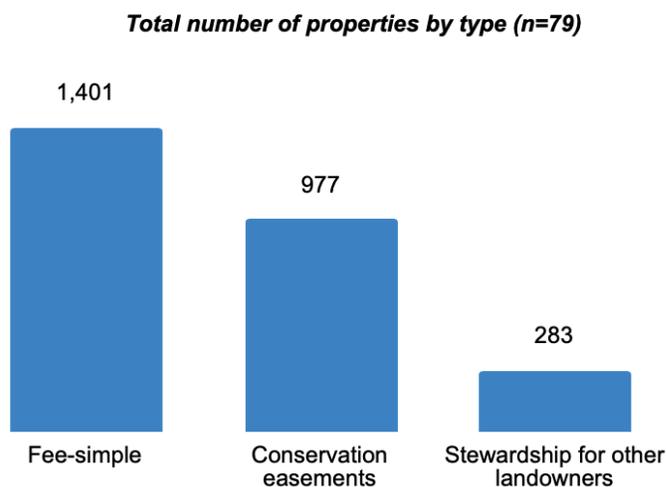


3.2.5 Number of Properties

Collectively, 79 land trusts reported protecting 2,661 properties: 1,401 fee-simple properties, 977 conservation easements (including restricted covenants and servitudes) and 283 properties stewarded for other landowners (Figure 4). The average number of fee-simple properties owned by a land trust was 18; the median was 4. The maximum number of fee-simple properties in a single portfolio was 300 and the

minimum was 4. On average, land trusts had 13 properties in conservation easement agreement, restrictive covenant or servitude (median=3, maximum=248, minimum=1). The average number of properties stewarded using a different arrangement than previously mentioned was 4 (median=0, maximum=129, minimum=1). The average number of properties in a land trust's portfolio was 34 (median=11). The maximum number of properties was 378 and the minimum was 1 (excluding a newly created land trust which reported 0 properties). (See Appendix C: Table C5, Table C7 and, for a regional analysis, Table C9.)

Figure 4. Total number of properties held or stewarded by land trusts (by tenure type)

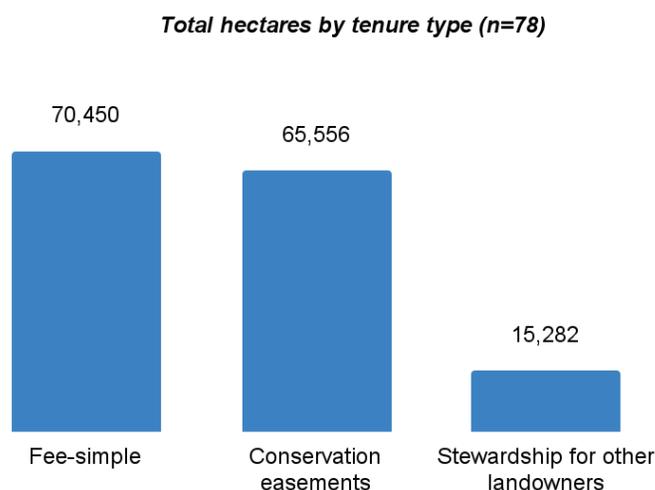


The total number of properties in a land trust's portfolio ranged widely, with a maximum of 378 and a minimum of 1 (excluding a newly created land trust which reported 0 properties). The average number of properties in a portfolio was 34 (median=11). A large majority (91%) of land trusts had 100 or fewer properties; six land trusts had between 101 and 378 properties.

3.2.6 Hectares

Collectively, 78 land trusts reported protecting 151,287 hectares: 70,450 hectares of fee-simple properties, 65,556 hectares of conservation easements and 15,282 hectares of properties stewarded for other landowners (Fig. 5). The average total area of fee-simple properties held by a land trust was 903 hectares. The median was 115 hectares. The maximum number of hectares in a single portfolio was 24,960 while the smallest holding was 2 hectares. The average total area of conservation easements per land trust was 840 hectares (median=64, max=21,850 ha, min=0.5 ha). The average total area stewarded by a land trust for other organizations was 196 ha (max=9,239 ha, min=0.5 ha). The median was 0 hectares because 68% of land trusts did not steward land for other organization. (See Appendix C: Table C6, Table C9 and, for a regional analysis, Table C10.)

Figure 5. Total number of hectares held or stewarded by land trusts (by tenure type)

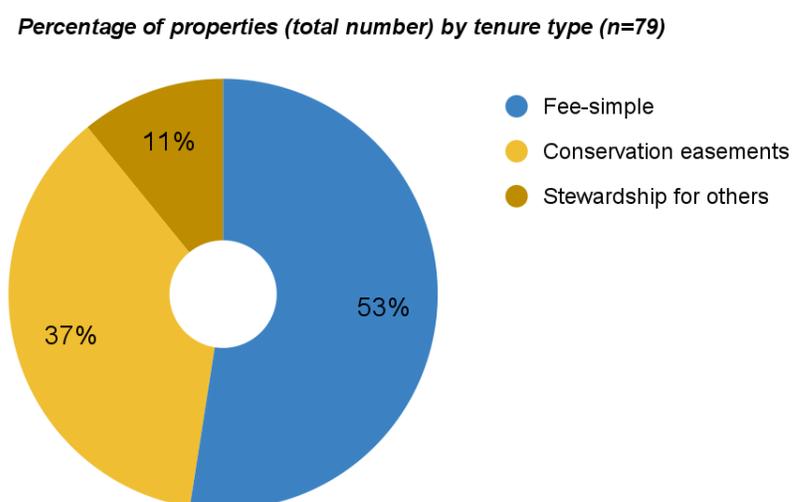


The total number of hectares in a land trust’s portfolio ranged widely, with a maximum of 378 ha and a minimum of 0.5 ha (excluding a newly created land trust which reported 0 properties). The average total number of hectares in a land trust’s property portfolio was 1,940 (median=376 ha). More than two thirds of land trusts (72%) had properties totalling an area of between 1 and 1,000 hectares and 19% had properties totalling an area of between 1,001 and 10,000 hectares. Five land trusts (6%) had holdings of between 10,000 and 26,000 hectares.

3.2.7 Tenure Types and Sizes of Land Trust Properties

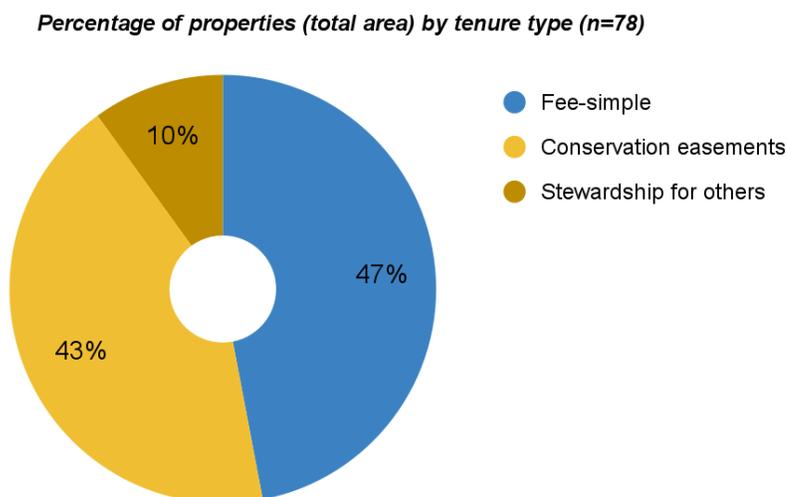
When all of the properties in the survey sample were combined and categorized by tenure type, fee-simple properties were the largest category of properties (53%), followed by conservation easements (37%) (Fig. 6). (See Appendix C: Table C7 and Table C8 for a regional analysis.)

Figure 6. Overall distribution of property types in Canadian land trust portfolios by tenure type



When all of the properties in the survey sample were combined and compared based on hectares, the fee-simple property category made up (47%) of the total area conserved by land trusts, followed closely by conservation easements (43%) (Fig. 7). (See Appendix C: Table C9 and Table C10 for a regional analysis.)

Figure 7. Overall distribution of property types in Canadian land trust portfolios by size (hectares)



3.3 Property Management

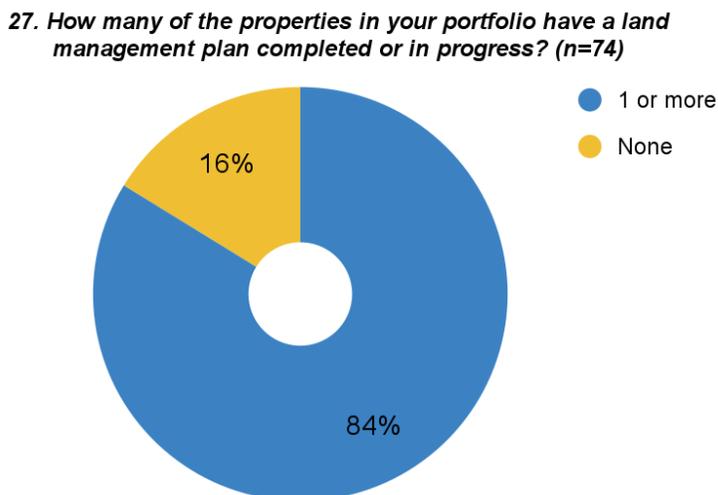
There were three questions related to the management of land trust properties:

- 27. How many of the properties in your portfolio have a land management plan completed or in progress?
- 28. Who provides stewardship of the fee-simple properties owned by your land trust?
- 29. Is each property in your land trust’s portfolio inspected at least once per year for potential management problems (e.g., hazards, invasive species, unauthorized uses)?

3.3.1 Land Management Plans

Of the 74 land trusts that provided a response, 84% had a land management plan completed or in progress for one or more properties (Fig. 8). More than one third (39%) of land trusts had a land management plan completed or in progress for all of the properties in their portfolio. (See Appendix C: Table C11 and Table C12 for a regional analysis).

Figure 8. Properties with management plans

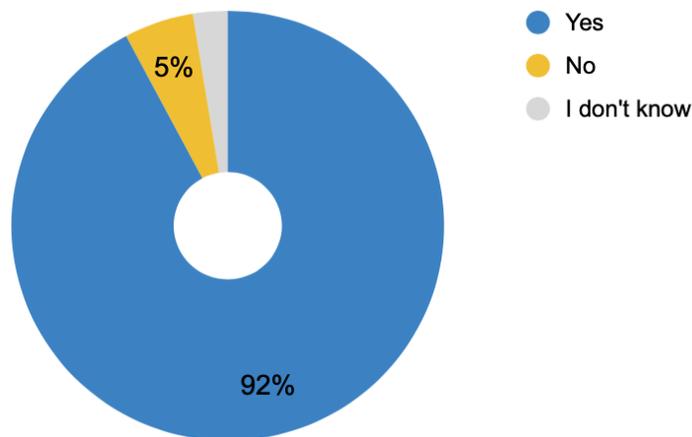


3.3.2 Annual Inspection of Land Trust Properties

A majority of land trusts (92%) indicated that each property in their portfolio is inspected at least once a year for potential management problems, such as hazards, invasive species, and unauthorized uses (Fig. 9).

Figure 9. Inspection of properties

29. Is each property in your land trust's portfolio inspected at least once per year for potential management problems? (n=77)

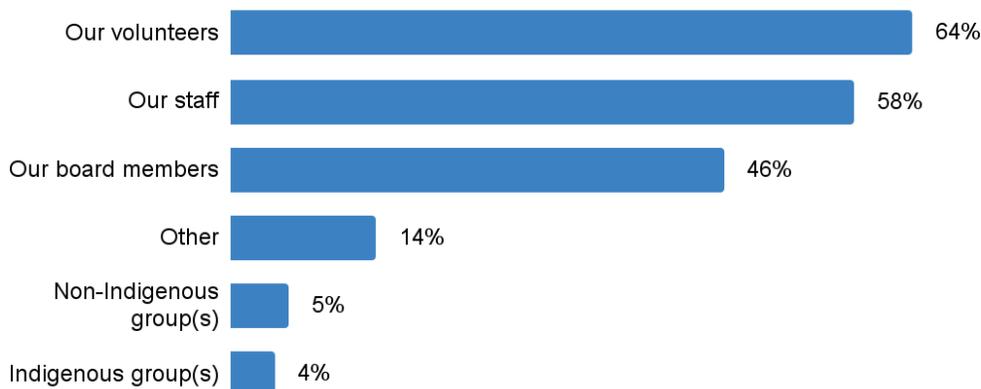


3.3.3 Stewardship of Fee-Simple Properties

Volunteers stewarded fee-simple properties at 64% of land trusts with fee-simple properties, followed by staff (58%) and board members (46%) (Fig. 10).

Figure 10. Stewardship of fee-simple properties

28. Who provides stewardship of the fee-simple properties owned by your land trust? (n=74)



3.4 Canadian Land Trust Standards and Practices

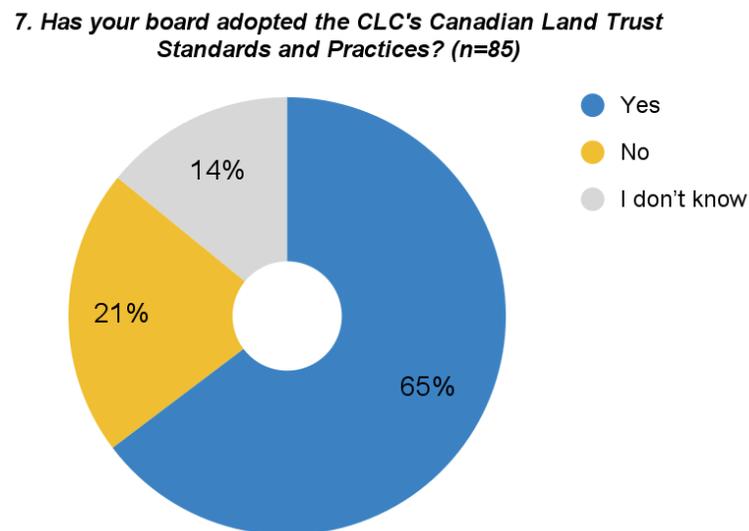
There were five questions about standards and practices:

7. Has your board adopted the CLC's Canadian Land Trust Standards and Practices?
8. The Alliance of Canadian Land Trusts (ACLT) is developing a free online self-assessment tool that land trusts can use to track their implementation of the above-mentioned standards and practices. Would you consider using this tool?
9. Would you be willing to provide feedback on a draft version of the online tool (beta testing)? (If you answer yes, we may contact you when we are ready to beta test.)
10. The Centre for Land Conservation (CLC) is exploring the development of a land trust performance assurance program based on the Canadian Land Trust Standards and Practices.
11. Is there anything you'd like to share with us about the idea of a performance assurance program for land trusts or the use of standards and practices?

3.4.1 Adoption of the CLC's Canadian Land Trust Standards and Practices

Nearly two thirds (65%) of land trusts reported having adopted the CLC's Canadian Land Trust Standards and Practices (Fig. 11). (See Appendix C: Table C13 for a regional analysis.)

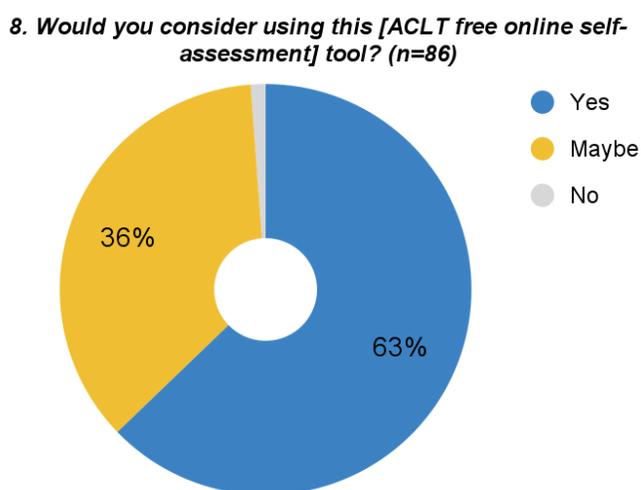
Figure 11. Adoption of CLC's Canadian Land Trust Standards and Practices



3.4.2 ACLT Free Online Self-Assessment Tool (Standards and Practices)

A majority of land trusts (63%) would definitely consider using a free online self-assessment tool designed by the ACLT in order to track their implementation of the CLC standards and practices and 36% would potentially consider it (Fig. 12). Additionally, 67% indicated they would be interested in providing feedback to the ACLT on a prototype tool. (See Appendix C: Table C14 for a regional analysis.)

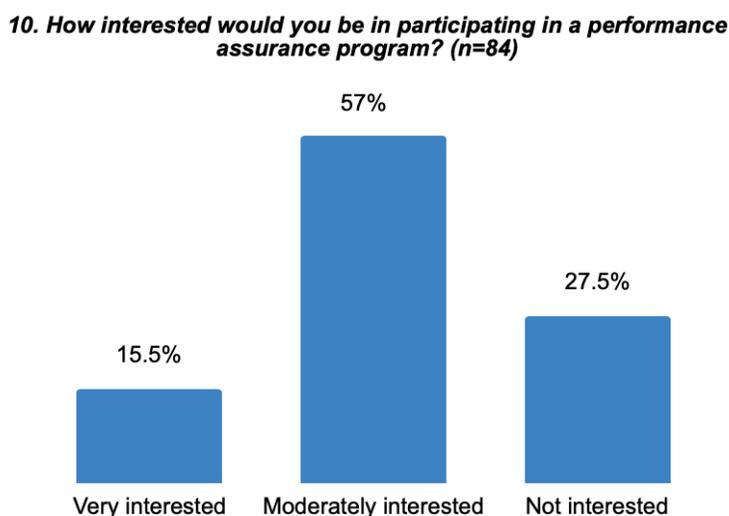
Figure 12. Use of ACLT free online self-assessment tool



3.4.3 Interest in CLC Land Trust Performance Assurance Program

When presented with a web link to the Centre for Land Conservation’s (CLC) proposed land trust performance assurance program (<https://centreforlandconservation.org/standards-and-practices>), which is based on the Canadian Land Trust Standards and Practices, a majority (72.5%) of land trusts indicated they were very or moderately interested in participating in the program. Just over one quarter (27.5%) indicated they were not interested (Fig. 13). (See Appendix C: Table C15 for a regional analysis.)

Figure 13. Interest in participating in a performance assurance program



3.4.4 Performance Assurance Program: Comments

Nearly half of survey respondents (48%, n=41) provided comments regarding the idea of a performance assurance program for land trusts or the use of standards and practices. While many land trusts expressed support for the concept, 22 responses dealt with the capacity of land trusts, particularly smaller land trusts and volunteer-run land trusts, to adhere to a performance assurance program. Suggestions for a program included providing scalable versions to account for small land trusts, building capacity first,

providing funding for participation, not linking the program to funding, and waiting until the land trust sector matures. Several noted that the program should have value and benefits (e.g., streamlined grant and Ecological Gifts Program applications), not just obligations. A handful of land trusts were not convinced of a need for a performance assurance program in light of other existing quality assurance mechanisms such as standards and practices, and grant requirements. A few questioned where the responsibility for such a program should lie, and were curious about the connection between the CLC program and the ACLT’s proposed assessment tool.

3.5 Canadian Protected and Conserved Areas Database (CPCAD)

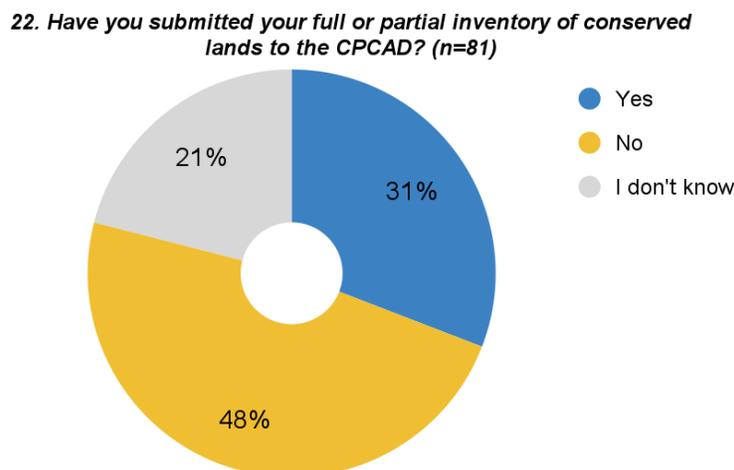
There were four questions about the Canadian Protected and Conserved Areas Database (CPCAD), including one four-item question about land trusts’ perceptions:

22. Land trusts have an opportunity to contribute to the Global Biodiversity Framework’s “30x30” target by including their conserved lands in the federal Canadian Protected and Conserved Areas Database (CPCAD). Have you submitted your full or partial inventory of conserved lands to the CPCAD?
23. Which is your preferred method for submitting your inventory of conserved lands to the CPCAD?
24. Thinking about the CPCAD, please rate your agreement with the following statements:
- The CPCAD reporting process is easy to understand.
 - The time required to prepare and submit our data to CPCAD is acceptable.
 - Adding our conservation easement properties to the CPCAD will lead to unwanted visitation by the public.
 - Our land trust has faced barriers when trying to register properties in the CPCAD.
25. Is anything preventing you from submitting your full inventory of properties to the CPCAD?
26. Do you have any suggestions for improving the CPCAD process for land trusts?

3.5.1 Submission of Land Trust Property Inventory to CPCAD

Nearly half of land trusts (48%) had not submitted their full or partial inventory of conserved lands to the Canadian Protected and Conserved Areas Database (CPCAD) at the time of the survey (Fig. 14). Thirty-one percent had submitted at least part of their inventory while 21% were unsure. (See Appendix C: Table C17 for a regional analysis.)

Figure 14. Submission of conserved lands to the CPCAD

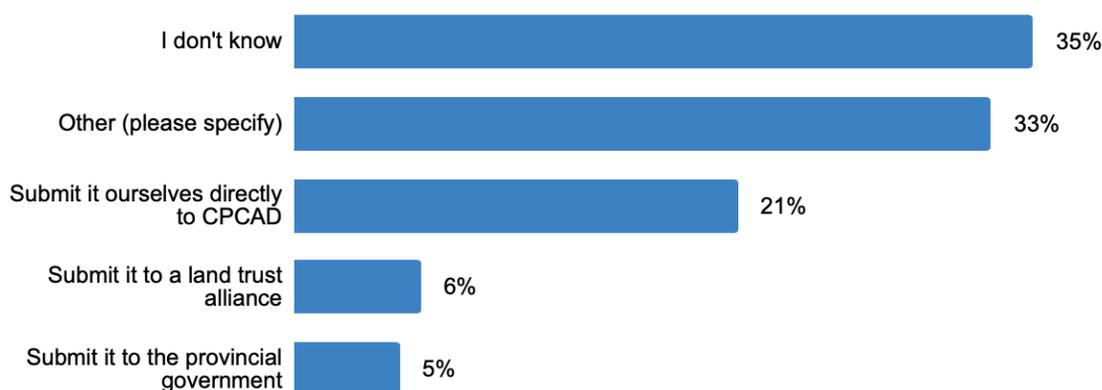


3.5.2 Preferred Method for Reporting to CPCAD

When asked for their preferred method for submitting their inventory of conserved lands to the CPCAD, a majority of land trusts did not have a preference, responding either “I don’t know” (35%) or “Other” (33%) (Fig. 15). One in five (21%) preferred to submit it themselves directly to CPCAD while 6% preferred to submit it to a land trust alliance, such as the OLTA, le RMN, the Nature Trust of British Columbia on behalf of LTABC or the ACLT. Five percent preferred to submit it to their respective provincial government. (See Appendix C: Table C18 for a regional analysis.)

Figure 15. Preferred method for submitting inventory to the CPCAD

23. Which is your preferred method for submitting your inventory of conserved lands to the CPCAD? (n=80)

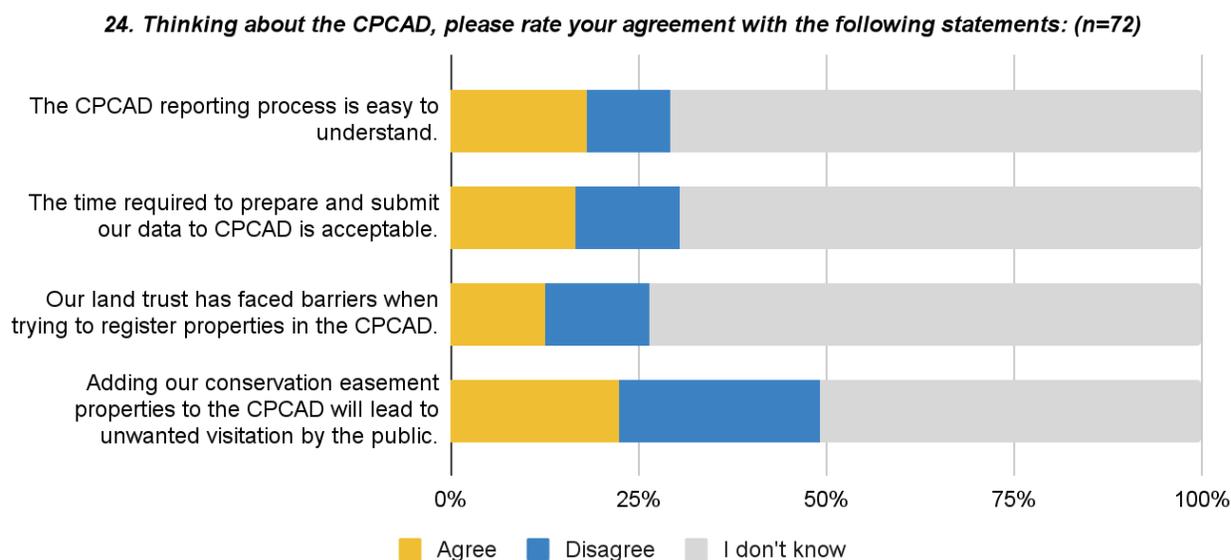


Fourteen land trusts (17%) elaborated on their preferred method for submitting their inventory to the CPCAD or added other comments about CPCAD (see Appendix B: Table B23). Over half mentioned either submitting to another organization or database, or preferring to do so. Several commenters mentioned that they submitted it to other organizations but were not sure if their data were passed on to the CPCAD. Two comments were about privacy concerns, particularly for conservation easement property owners. Two respondents noted that they did not own any land.

3.5.3 Perceptions of CPCAD Reporting Process and Sharing of Information with the Public

Land trusts were asked to provide their level of agreement with a range of statements concerning the CPCAD (for detailed results, see Appendix B: Table B24). A majority of land trusts had no opinion regarding the three statements about the reporting process (Fig. 16). This is likely because a majority of land trusts had not yet engaged with the CPCAD. Agreement rates over the time required to report data to CPCAD and the experience of perceived barriers to registering properties were evenly distributed between agree and disagree, while slightly more agreed that the CPCAD reporting process is easy to understand (18%) than disagreed (11%). Slightly more land trusts disagreed (27%) than agreed (22.5%) that adding their conservation easement properties to the CPCAD will lead to unwanted visitation by the public, with a majority responding “I don’t know”. When looking only at land trusts with conservation easements (n=58), 24% agreed, 21% disagreed, 38% chose “I don’t know” and 17% did not respond to the question.

Figure 16. Agreement with statements about the CPCAD.



3.5.4 CPCAD Reporting Barriers and Suggestions for Improving CPCAD process: Comments

Over half of land trusts (56%, n=48) provided comments when asked if anything was preventing them from submitting their full inventory of properties to the CPCAD (see Appendix B: Table B25). The most common themes were lack of capacity to report to CPCAD, lack of familiarity with the CPCAD, concerns related to making their assets public (e.g., privacy of private landowners, public visitation, vandalism) and comments about not facing barriers, in some cases because other organizations submitted their data for them. A handful of comments were about needing more information about CPCAD, and another handful noted that they either didn't own properties or that their properties did not meet the criteria to be submitted (e.g., some conservation easements).

About one quarter of land trusts left suggestions for improving the CPCAD process. The most common suggestion was to simplify the process. Other suggestions included outreach, training, relaxing the criteria in order to include more lands, and being more transparent. Two commenters suggested that the database should limit the information made public and focus on sharing data with land trusts instead.

3.6 Governance and Human Resources

There were seven questions about governance and human resources, including governance structure, board members, staff and consultants/contractors:

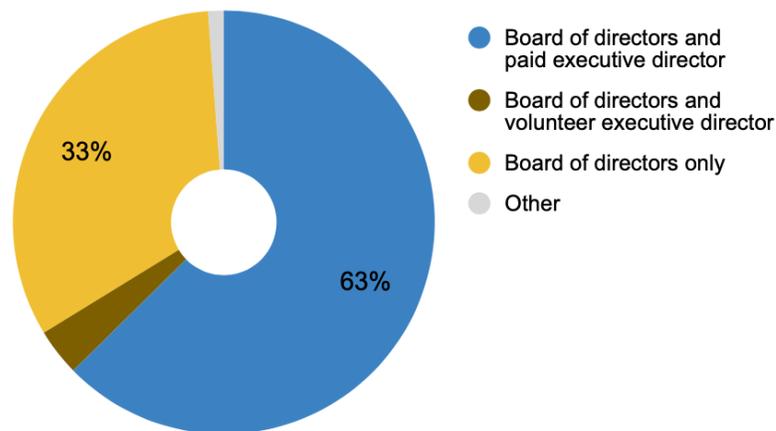
12. Which best describes the governance structure of your organization?
13. How many directors are on your board?
14. A volunteer is an individual who completes a task or provides a service without being paid for it. Not including board members, how many volunteers did you have in the last fiscal year (2022)?
15. What types of activities are your volunteers engaged in?
16. A consultant or contractor is an individual who provides a service for a fee but is not considered an employee under provincial labour laws. How many consultants or contractors in total did you hire during the last fiscal year (2022)?
17. Not including consultants and contractors, how many full-time staff are currently employed by your land trust?
18. Not including consultants and contractors, how many part-time staff are currently employed by your land trust?

3.6.1 Governance Structure

The majority of land trusts (63%) had a governance structure made up of a board of directors and a paid executive director (Fig. 17). One third (33%) had a board of directors only while 4% had a board of directors and a volunteer executive director.

Figure 17. Governance structure

12. Which best describes the governance structure of your organization? (n=83)



3.6.2 Size of Boards of Directors

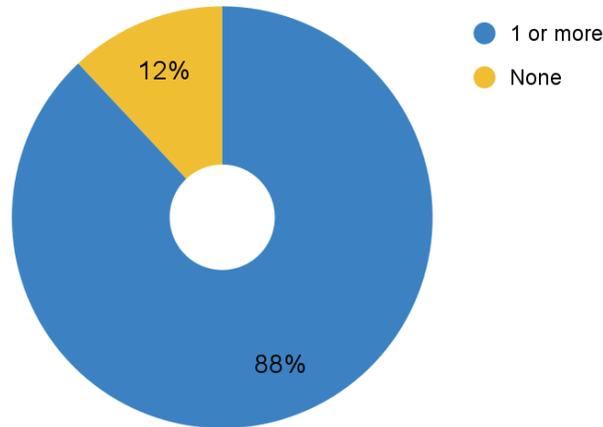
The average number of members on a board of directors was 9; the median was also 9. The largest board was made up of 19 members and the smallest board had four members.

3.6.3 Number of Volunteers

Eighty-eight percent of land trusts reported having volunteers in the fiscal year 2022 while 12% reported no volunteers (Fig. 18). Nine land trusts skipped the question. The average number of volunteers was 77 and the median was 20. The maximum number of volunteers in a land trust was 1,500 while the minimum number was 1.

Figure 18. Number of volunteers in 2022 fiscal year

14. Not including board members, how many volunteers did you have in the last fiscal year (2022)? (n=77)

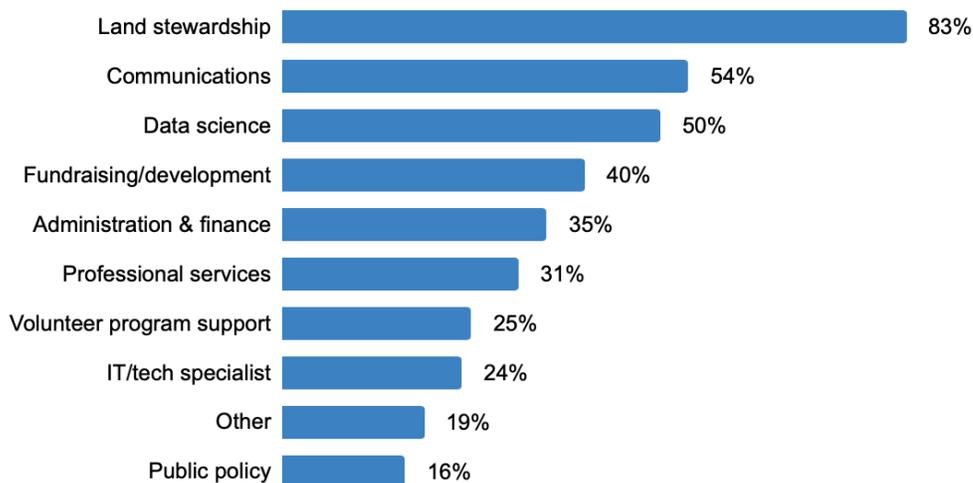


3.6.4 Volunteer Activities

Land trust volunteers were engaged in a range of activities. Volunteers were involved in land stewardship in 83% of land trusts (Fig.19). Volunteers were also involved in communications work (54%), data science (e.g., ecological monitoring) (50%), fundraising and development activities (40%), administration and finance (35%) and professional services (31%). Other volunteer activities included volunteer program support (25%), information technology (24%), public policy (16%) and other activities (19%).

Figure 19. Volunteer activities

15. What types of activities are your volunteers engaged in? (n=80)

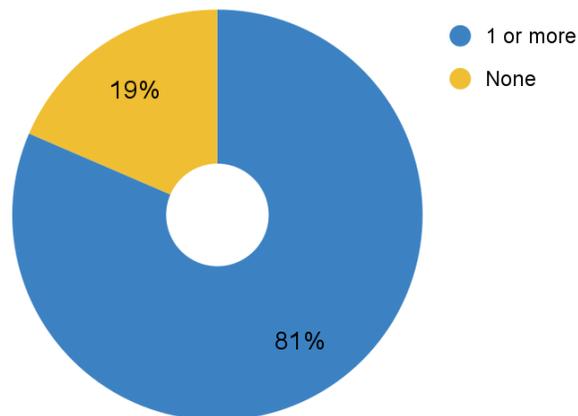


3.6.5 Use of Consultants and Contractors

A large majority of land trusts (81%) reported hiring consultants or contractors, defined as an individual who provides a service for a fee but is not considered an employee under provincial labour laws, during the fiscal year 2022 (Fig. 20). Six percent had 11 or more consultants/contractors in 2022 and 19% had none. The majority of land trusts (75%) reported hiring between one and 10 consultants/contractors. The average number of consultants/contractors was 4 and the median was 2. The maximum number of consultants/contractors hired by a land trust in fiscal year 2022 was 27 and the minimum number was 1. (See Appendix C: Table C19.)

Figure 20. Number of consultants or contractors in fiscal year 2022

16. How many consultants or contractors in total did you hire during the last fiscal year (2022)? (n=81)

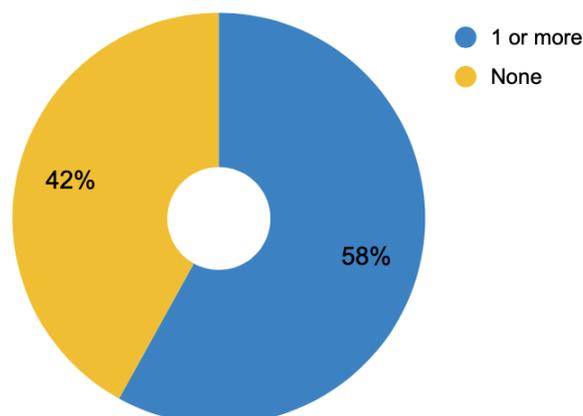


3.6.6 Number of Full-Time Staff

Over half of land trusts (58%) reported employing at least one full-time employee in the fiscal year 2022 (Fig. 21). Forty-two percent had none. (A full-time employee was not defined in the survey according to hours worked in a week but rather is a descriptive label for an employee that is considered full-time according to each land trust's human resources policies.) Eleven percent of land trusts had 11 or more full-time employees while 47% had between one and 10. The average number of full-time employees working at a land trust was 4; the median was 1. The maximum number of full-time employees was 40 and the minimum was 1. (See Appendix C: Table C20.)

Figure 21. Number of full-time staff in fiscal year 2022

17. Not including consultants and contractors, how many full-time staff are currently employed by your land trust? (n=81)

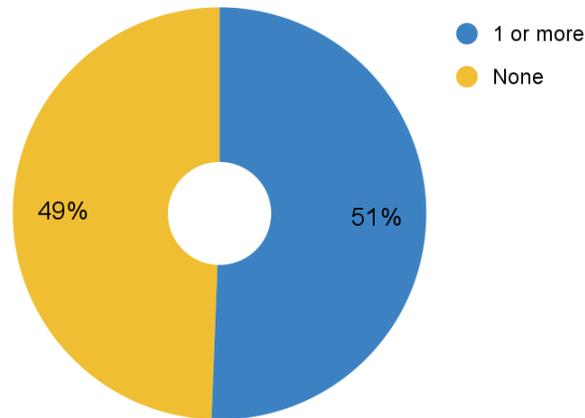


3.6.7 Number of Part-Time Staff

Just over half of land trusts (51%) employed one or more part-time employees in the fiscal year 2022 (Fig. 21). Nearly half of land trusts (49%) had no part-time employees. Just 2% employed 11 or more part-time employees. The average number of part-time employees was 2; the median was 1. The maximum number of part-time employees working at a land trust in fiscal year 2022 was 22 and the minimum was 1. (See Appendix C: Table C21.)

Figure 21. Number of part-time staff in fiscal year 2022

18. Not including consultants and contractors, how many part-time staff are currently employed by your land trust? (n=81)



3.6.8 Structure of Staff Resources

Three further analyses were used to shed light on the structure of land trust's paid human resources. All consultants/contractors, full-time and part-time staff were combined to provide the overall number of individuals hired in the fiscal year 2022. Nearly nine out of 10 land trusts reported one or more individuals working at their organization. The average was 10 individuals and the median was seven. The maximum number of individuals was 57 and the minimum was 1. (See Appendix C: Table C22.)

Figure 22 shows that the most common type of worker present at land trusts in the fiscal year 2022 were consultants and/or contractors (present at 81% of land trusts), followed by full-time staff (58% of land trusts) and part-time staff (51% of land trusts). (See Appendix B: Tables B16–B18).

Figure 22. Types of workers in fiscal year 2022

Types of workers present at land trusts in fiscal year 2022 (n=81)

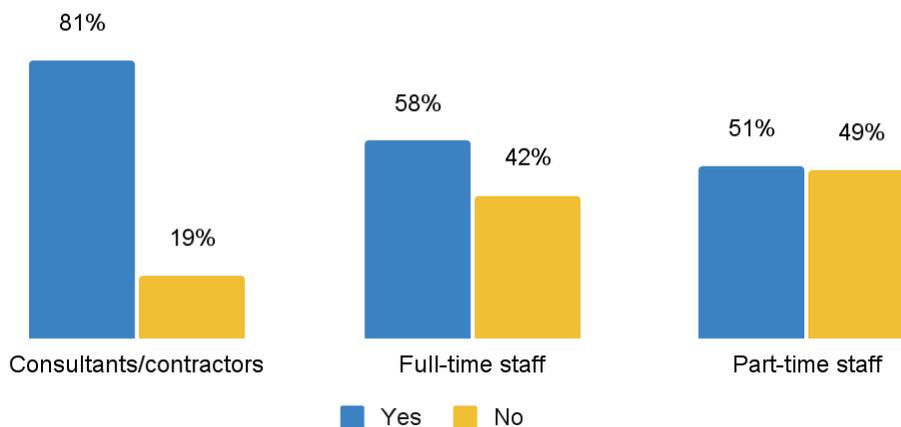
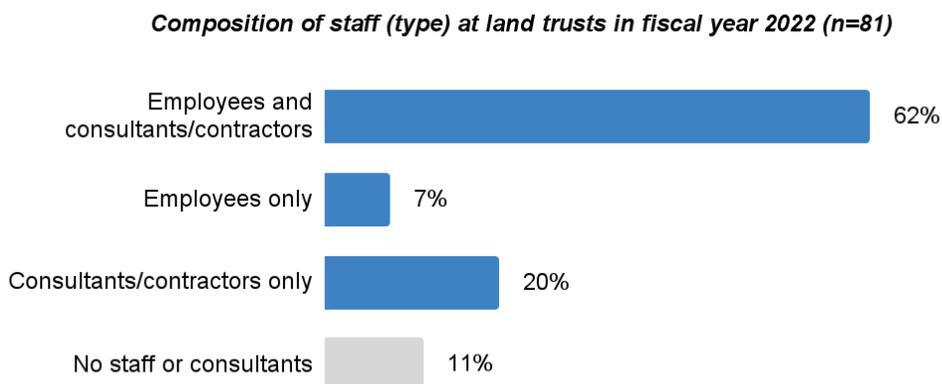


Figure 23 summarizes the composition of staff at land trusts in the fiscal year 2022 according to four categories. The majority of land trusts (62%) employed both staff and consultants/contractors while 20% relied solely on consultants/contractors only and 7% employed full-time or part-time staff only. Just over one in 10 land trusts did not employ any consultants or staff. (See Appendix C: Table C23.)

Figure 23. Composition of staff by type in fiscal year 2022



3.7 Finances

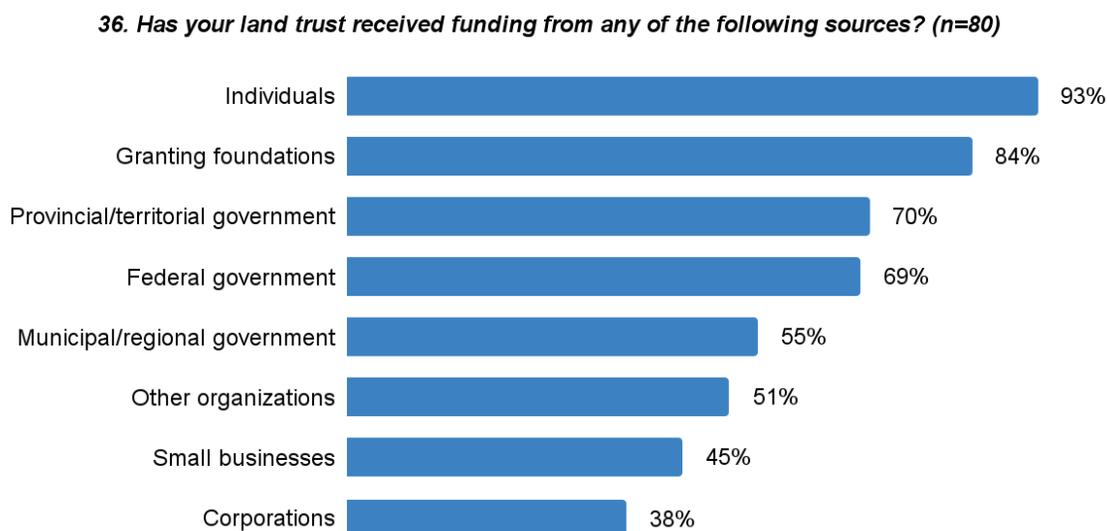
There were four questions related to land trusts' finances:

- 36. Has your land trust received funding from any of the following sources?
- 37. Since 2012, has your land trust benefitted from any of the following federal funding programs?
- 38. Does your land trust have any of the following funds?
- 39. What was your land trust's annual operating revenue minus the land value of property acquisitions in the fiscal year 2022? (e.g., if your revenue was \$1.2 million and \$700,000 was spent on an acquisition, your operating revenue was \$500,000)

3.7.1 Funding Sources

Land trusts most commonly received funding from individuals, including memberships and donations (93% of land trusts), followed by granting foundations (84%), and provincial (70%) and federal (69%) governments (Fig. 24). More than half of land trusts (55%) reported receiving funding from municipal or regional governments. Other organizations (e.g., service clubs, other environmental organizations) provided funding to 51% of land trusts, small businesses to 45% of land trusts, and corporations (over 100 employees) to 38% of land trusts. Land trusts tapped into an average of five funding sources from the list, with 24% receiving funding from one to three sources, 47% receiving funding from four to six sources, and 29% receiving funding from seven and eight sources (see Appendix C: Table C24).

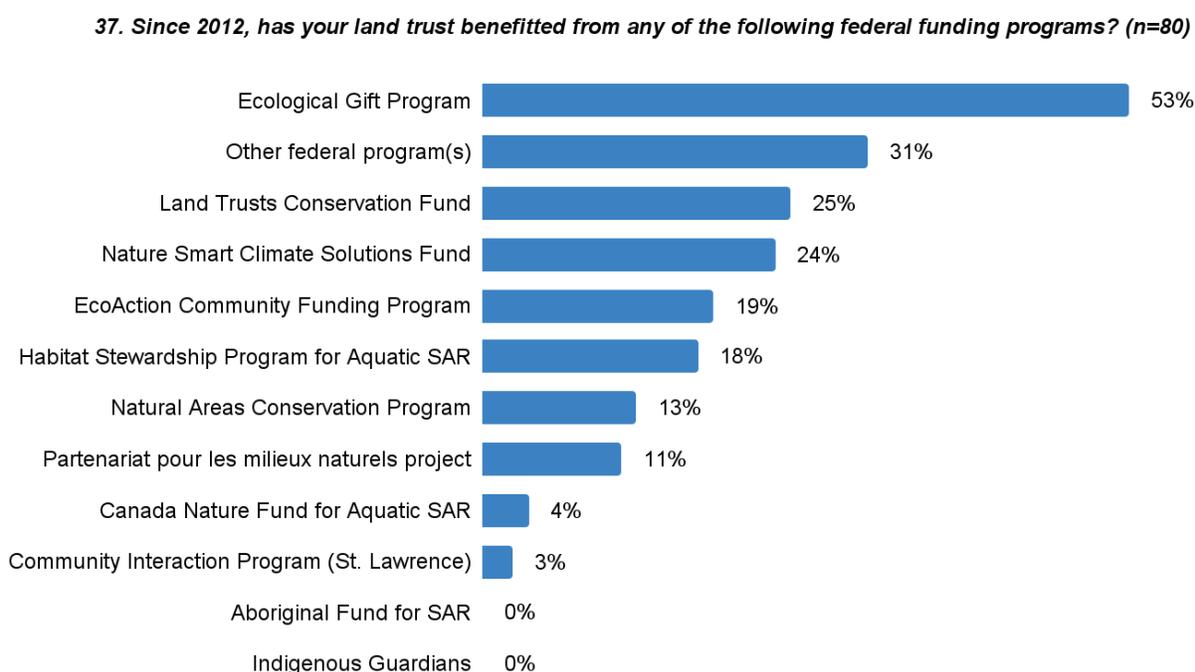
Figure 24. Funding sources by type



3.7.2 Federal Funding Programs

A number of federal programs for which land trusts are eligible to apply for funding were identified. The term “benefitted” was used to allow for situations in which a land trust’s partner received funding that was used to benefit land trust property. Excluding “Other federal program(s)” (31%), the top five programs benefiting Canadian land trusts were the Ecological Gift Program (53% of land trusts), the Land Trusts Conservation Fund (25%), Nature Smart Climate Solutions Fund (24%), the EcoAction Community Funding Program (19%) and the Habitat Stewardship Program for Aquatic Species at Risk (18%) (Fig. 25). (See Appendix C: Table C25 for a regional analysis.)

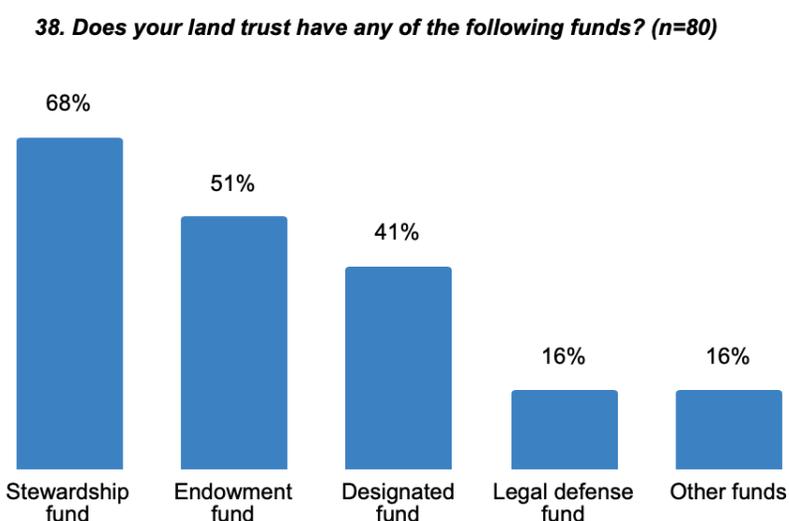
Figure 25. Federal funding sources



3.7.3 Land Trust Fund Types

Roughly two thirds of land trusts had a stewardship fund, defined as dedicated or restricted funds for long-term management of properties (Fig. 26). Just over half had an endowment fund, where interest is earmarked for general management and operations. Forty-one percent had a designated fund, defined as a dedicated or restricted special purpose fund that allows donors to support a particular project or initiative and 16% reported having a legal defence fund with dedicated or restricted funds for long-term costs of defending the land trust's land and conservation agreements. Sixteen percent reported having other types of funds. Three comments in questions 43 and 44 were related to land trust funds. Two survey respondents noted that their land trust's fund structure didn't align with the categories listed in the question, and one respondent noted they were concerned about upcoming changes to Revenue Canada regarding endowment funds.

Figure 26. Land trust funds



3.7.4 Annual Operating Revenue

Annual operating revenue (minus the land value of property acquisitions) in the fiscal year 2022 varied greatly between land trusts. The maximum value was \$4,690,000 while the minimum value was -\$6,127. The average was \$382,574 while the median was \$205,556. Two land trusts reported negative values, with one commenting "land value donated exceeded operating revenue" while one land trust reported zero dollars. Fifteen land trusts (17%) did not provide a response to the question.

3.8 Memberships and Outreach

There were five questions regarding membership, email distribution lists and engagement with Indigenous Peoples:

19. A “member” refers to any type of membership in your land trust, including individual, family and lifetime memberships. How many members do you have?
20. Do you have an email distribution list?
21. How many email addresses are on your email distribution list?
40. In what ways is your land trust learning about and/or engaging with Indigenous Peoples in the mission and work of your land trust?
41. Please feel free to elaborate on the above question.

3.8.1 Members

A “member” refers to any type of membership in the land trust, including individual, family and lifetime memberships. Nearly nine out of 10 (89%) land trusts reported having members. The maximum number of members was 13,000 while the minimum number was 4. The average was 367 and the median was 77. (See Appendix C: Table C26 for a regional analysis.)

3.8.2 Email Distribution List

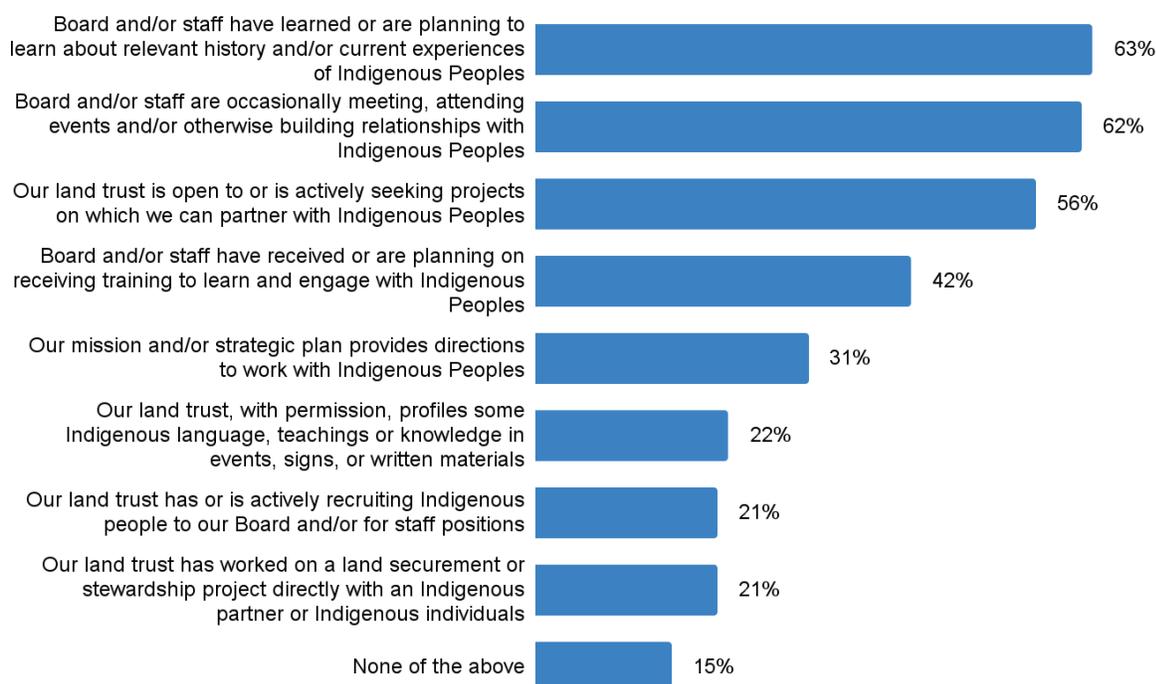
Nearly 9 out of 10 land trusts (89%) reported having an email distribution list. Eighty-five percent of the 80 land trusts with email distribution lists provided the exact or approximate number of email addresses on their list. The average number of email addresses was 1,755 and the median was 465. The maximum number of email addresses on a list was 38,000 while the minimum was 30. (See Appendix C: Table C27 for a regional analysis.)

3.8.3 Engagement with Indigenous Peoples

Land trusts were asked to indicate how they were engaging with Indigenous Peoples in the mission and work of their organization (Fig. 27). A majority of land trusts (85%) selected one or more of the eight suggested engagement activities. Sixty-three percent reported learning about relevant history and/or current experiences of Indigenous Peoples, 62% engaged directly via meetings, events or other relationship building activities, and 56% actively sought projects on which to partner with Indigenous Peoples.

Figure 27. Engagement of Indigenous Peoples

40. In what ways is your land trust learning about and/or engaging with Indigenous Peoples in the mission and work of your land trust? (n=78)



Twenty-one land trusts (24%) elaborated on the question (see Appendix B: Table B41). The majority of comments were descriptions of engagement activities, including supporting local Indigenous land trusts by sharing operational knowledge. Two mentioned challenges, such as lack of capacity. One land trust was Indigenous-led and two others noted that there were no Indigenous communities in their proximity.

3.9 Feedback for Alliances

The final three questions on the questionnaire focused on preferences for support from the alliances and on general feedback:

42. How can the alliances (ACLT, LTABC, OLTA, RMN) assist your land trust in the future? (Please rank in order of importance to your organization.)

43. Please specify (Other)

44. Is there anything else you'd like to tell us (including survey feedback)?

3.9.1 Preference for Support from the Alliances

We asked land trusts to rank six ways in which the ACLT and regional alliances might support their work. After weighing the responses, the clear preferred focus of support was “Advocacy for funding programs for land trusts” (Fig. 28). “Capacity building to help your organization grow” was the second preferred method of support followed by supporting land trusts with the “Canadian Land Trust Standards & Practices”. “Legal defence” and “Indigenous engagement” were clustered together, followed by “Volunteer engagement” and “Other”. (See Appendix C: Table C28 for a regional analysis and description of weighted analysis.)

Figure 28. Preferences for support from alliances

42. How can the alliances assist your land trust in the future? (Rank order of importance) (n=76)

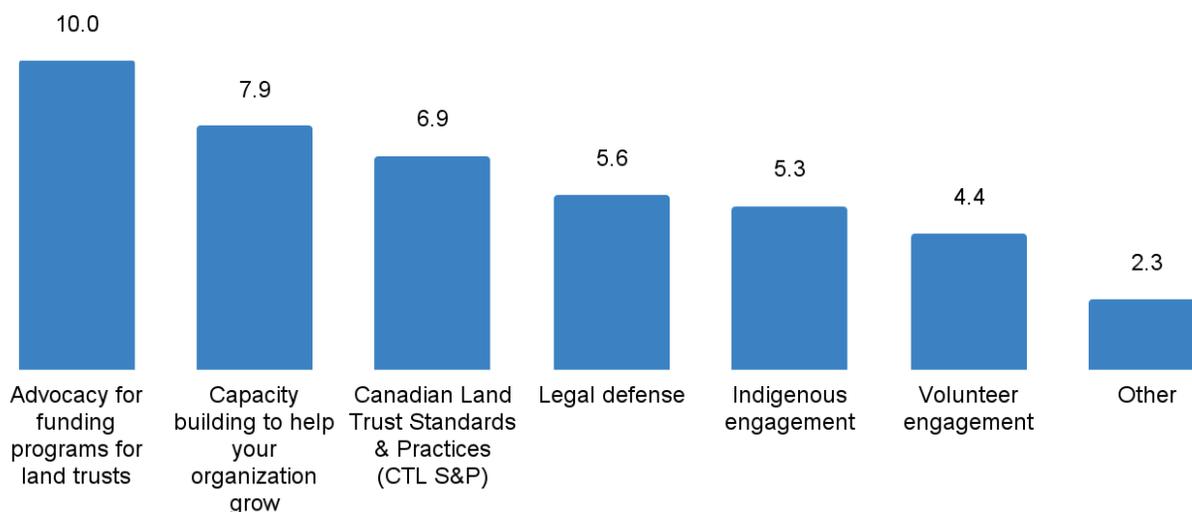


Table 3 displays the areas of focus according to percentage of votes allocated to the top three ranks. Nearly three quarters (72%) of land trusts chose “Advocacy for funding programs for land trusts” as their top ranked item. “Capacity building to help your organization grow” was chosen by 34% as their second choice while “Canadian Land Trust Standards & Practices (CLT S&P)” was chosen by 28% as their second choice. (See Appendix B: Table B42.)

Table 3. How can the alliances (ACLT, LTABC, OLTA, RMN) assist your land trust in the future?

	Rank		
	1	2	3
Advocacy for funding programs for land trusts	72%	17%	8%
Canadian Land Trust Standards & Practices	4%	28%	26%
Capacity building to help your organization grow	14%	34%	20%
Indigenous engagement	1%	7%	16%
Legal defence	5%	7%	14%
Volunteer engagement	1%	4%	12%
Other	1%	4%	4%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Total responses: 76 Skipped: 10

Nineteen (22%) land trusts elaborated on other ways in which the alliances could support them (Appendix B: Table B43). Additional actions ranged widely, including raising awareness of the role of land trusts in Canada, networking, board succession, sharing more information about how Canadian land trusts operate, creating group employee benefits program, and generally supporting conservation policies.

3.9.2 Feedback on Survey and General Comments

Final comments were provided by 20 land trusts (23%). Eight comments were about the survey and 10 comments were about a variety of other topics, including several commenters describing special circumstances faced by their land trusts (see Appendix B: B44).

4. Conclusion

4.1 Summary of Findings

The survey results describe land trusts operating in Canada and affiliated with the ACLT and regional alliances. Following are the key findings from this survey.

4.1.1 Characteristics of Properties

- Canadian land trusts conserved a wide variety of habitats, most commonly forest (88%), wetlands (81%) and lake or river shorelines (74%)
- 70% of land trusts conserved federally or provincially designated species at risk habitat
- 86% of land trusts owned fee-simple properties, 67% held conservation easements, including restrictive covenants and servitudes, and 35% stewarded properties for other organizations or private landowners; these results differed regionally
- 53% of all properties held or stewarded by land trusts were fee-simple; 37% were conservation easements and 11% were stewarded for others
- The most common portfolio structure was comprised of donated or purchased fee-simple properties and conservation easements (34% of land trusts) but there were regional differences
- The number and hectares of properties held or stewarded by land trusts varied widely
- More than three quarters (77%) of land trusts had one or more properties with official public access

4.1.2 Property Management

- Less than half (39%) of land trusts had a land management plan completed or in progress for all of their properties; 16% did not have any plans completed or in progress
- Nearly all land trusts (92%) inspect their properties at least once a year for potential management problems
- Land trusts who reported owning fee-simple properties relied on volunteers (64%), staff (58%) and board members (46%) for the stewardship of their fee-simple properties

4.1.3 Canadian Land Trust Standards and Practices

- Nearly two thirds (65%) of land trusts reported having adopted the Centre for Land Conservation (CLC) Canadian Land Trust Standards and Practices
- A majority of land trusts (63%) would consider using a free online self-assessment tool designed by the ACLT in order to track their implementation of the CLC standards
- 57% of land trusts were moderately interested in participating in the CLC's proposed land trust performance assurance program, while 15% were very interested and 27% were not interested
- While a majority of land trusts support the idea of standards and practices, a common concern was the lack of resources required to conform to requirements

4.1.4 Canadian Protected and Conserved Areas Database (CPCAD)

- 48% of land trusts had not submitted any properties to the CPCAD; 31% have submitted at least part of their inventory
- Some land trusts had not heard of the CPCAD while others were unsure of the reporting process or whether the lands they reported to another organization were included in CPCAD
- A significant minority of land trusts (22.5%) agreed that adding their conservation easement properties to the CPCAD would lead to unwanted visitation by the public

4.1.5 Governance and Human Resources

- 63% of land trusts were governed by a board of directors and a paid executive director; 33% were run by a board of directors only and 6% had an alternative structure
- 89% of land trusts reported at least one consultant/contractor, full-time or part-time staff in fiscal year 2022
- 88% of land trusts had volunteers
- Volunteers were engaged in a wide variety of activities, most notably land stewardship

4.1.6 Finances

- Land trusts received funding from a variety of sources, the most common being individuals, including memberships and donations (93% of land trusts), granting foundations (84%), and provincial (70%) and federal (69%) governments
- Land trusts have benefited from a variety of federal funding programs, most notably the Ecological Gift Program (53%), the Land Trusts Conservation Fund (25%) and the nature Smart Climate Solutions Fund (24%)
- The two most commonly reported funds were the stewardship fund (68% of land trusts) and the endowment fund (51%)
- The annual operating revenue (minus the land value of property acquisitions) in the FY2022 varied greatly between land trusts

4.1.7 Memberships and Outreach

- 89% of land trusts had a membership program
- 85% of land trusts are engaging with Indigenous Peoples

4.1.8 Preferences for Support from Alliances

- Land trusts are most interested in having the ACLT and regional alliances advocate for funding programs for land trusts, followed by helping them build capacity and supporting their engagement with the Canadian Land Trust Standards & Practices

4.2 Past and Future Surveys

A national survey of land trusts in Canada focusing on similar themes was completed in 2019 (Kalyinka, 2020). Data were collected from 70 land trusts (58% response rate) between 2016 and 2019 using a similar research design but a different questionnaire. While a direct comparison of the results cannot be

made because the research protocols and survey questions were not identical, the following insights can be drawn after reviewing the results from both surveys:

- The Ecological Gift Program continues to be an important source of federal funding for land trusts: 65% of land trusts in the 2019 survey had used the program while 53% in the 2023 survey reportedly benefited from the program.
- Roughly 85% of land trusts in the 2019 survey indicated that they protected “species at risk” while 70% of land trusts in 2023 reported conserving “federally- or provincially-designed species at risk habitat”.
- The average number of volunteers per land trust was 50 in 2019 and 77 in 2023.
- The proportion of land trusts employing staff appears to have grown significantly: 40% did not report any part-time or full-time staff in 2019 compared to only 16% (fiscal year 2022)—and 4% of the latter reported one or more consultants/contractors (data regarding consultants/contractors were not collected in the 2019 survey).
- In the 2019 survey, 70 land trusts collectively “protected” 54,562 hectares inclusive of fee-simple, conservation easements, and stewardship agreement properties. Over half reported that their holdings of fee-simple acquisitions and/or conservation easements and covenants had increased while their stewardship and management agreements had stayed the same. It would appear that land trusts have continued to increase their acquisitions and conservation easements because in 2023, 78 land trusts owned 70,450 hectares of fee-simple properties and stewarded 65,556 hectares of conservation easements (including covenants and servitudes), for a total of 136,006 hectares (excluding an additional 15,282 hectares of land stewarded for others using a different arrangement).

This survey focused on land trusts operating in Canada and affiliated with the Alliance of Canadian Land Trusts (ACLT), the Ontario Land Trust Alliance (OLTA), the Land Trust Alliance BC (LTABC), and le Réseau de milieux naturels protégés (RMN). The survey was designed to provide valid and generalizable baseline organizational and operational data to the ACLT and regional alliances in order to allow for a more accurate description of the Canadian land trust community. Periodically replicating the present survey using the same protocols and questionnaires will allow the ACLT and regional alliances to reliably track changes over time and provide updated descriptions of affiliated land trusts operating in Canada.

5. References

- Holtom, B., Baruch, Y., Aguinis, H., & Ballinger, G. (2022). Survey response rates: Trends and a validity assessment framework. *Human Relations*, 75(8), 1560-1584.
- Kalynka, K. (2020). *Private conservation in a changing landscape: A perspective on land trust organizations in Canada*. [Unpublished master's thesis]. University of Victoria.

APPENDICES

(Not included)