

# Pennsylvania Land Trust Association

## Program Report 2015

Advance Understanding and Best Practices 1  
Improve Efficiency and Effectiveness 4  
Communicate with People Working to Make a Difference 4  
Reach out to the Public 6  
Assist Organizations and Projects Directly 7  
Connect, Educate, and Inspire People 8  
Recognize and Promote Conservation Excellence 11  
Advocate for Better Public Policy 12

### Advance Understanding and Best Practices

### New Guides Published—PALTA's Collection of Wholly Original Guides Grows to 97

PALTA published nine new technical guides featuring wholly original content in 2015. All are available at [ConservationTools.org](http://ConservationTools.org). The content of each publication is briefly described below.

#### Trail Easements

A landowner may convey to another person the rights to create a trail, open it for public use and maintain it without the owner giving up ownership and enjoyment of the land through which the trail passes.

#### Nature Play

##### Nurturing Children and Strengthening Conservation through Connections to the Land

*"Your Nature Play guide is wonderful! Thank you for taking the lead in inspiring land conservation groups to connect kids to nature. This is both innovative and practical. Nice work."* – Rand Wentworth, Land Trust Alliance

Unstructured, frequent childhood play in informal outdoor settings boosts the cognitive, creative, physical, social and emotional development of children. It also engenders deep conservation values—more so than any other factor. If we want future generations to carry on the work of conservation, then we need to be paying attention to what is happening in childhood.

Part 1 of the guide provides an introduction to nature play. Part 2 describes the array of concrete actions that organizations may take to restore nature play to children's lives.



## **Property Tax Exemption for Preserves, Parks, Trails, and Other Conserved Lands**

Preserves, parks, trails, and other conserved lands in Pennsylvania are not automatically exempted from real estate taxes. If tax exemption is desired for a parcel, the charitable organization or local government must apply for exemption for that specific parcel. Exemption for one parcel does not guarantee exemption for others owned by the same entity.

## **Realty Transfer Tax**

### **Exclusions for Conservation-Related Transactions in Pennsylvania**

Many conservation-related property transactions are excluded from having to pay state and local realty transfer taxes in Pennsylvania. PALTA's guide explains which ones are and which ones aren't and how to take advantage of the exclusions.

## **Amending and Restating Grants of Conservation Easement Best Practices to Document Changes**

If a land trust intends to amend a grant of conservation easement, implementation of the changes requires careful planning and drafting. The consequences of a poor execution range from missed opportunities to improve easement stewardship to inadvertent elimination of conservation protections.

## **Restricted Gifts**

### **Issues to Consider Before Making or Taking a Gift for a Specific Purpose**

A restricted gift of cash, land, easement or other property may only be used for a particular purpose rather than an organization's general purposes. Both donor and donee need to be aware of the issues raised by limiting the use of a gift.

## **Outdoor Access and Programs**

### **Land Trusts Connecting People to Nature**

Land trusts have available to them a variety of tools and examples of how to improve public access and provide programming on their lands. By providing opportunities for outdoor experiences, land trusts help foster people's connections to nature and conservation.

## **Not a Charitable Trust**

### **The Conservation Easement in Pennsylvania**

Little evidence exists to support the notion that a donated conservation easement, in the absence of a charitable trust agreement (not to be confused with the grant of conservation easement), is a charitable trust in Pennsylvania; indeed, there is compelling evidence to the contrary. (Holder covenants, in contrast, may be used to buttress easements and do not run into the legal obstacles or suffer from the policy failings of the charitable trust hypothesis.)

## Pennsylvania Local Governments May Support Land Trusts

In Pennsylvania, local governments may give money, land and easements to land trusts. The guide lays out the facts in a single page, making it PALTA's shortest guide.

### **Eight Guides Refreshed or Rebuilt**

*To keep guidance fresh and relevant, PALTA staff revisit older guides and identify those in need of updates and improvements. In 2015, this resulted in eight guides being refreshed or rebuilt.*

#### **Public Dedication of Land and Fees-in-Lieu for Parks and Recreation: A Tool for Meeting Recreational Demands in Pennsylvania Municipalities**

Substantial parts of this guide, originally published in 2008, became obsolete with the enactment of amendments to the MPC in 2014. PALTA revised the guide and added a new section to address the changes in the law. Numerous other improvements also were made to the content.

#### **Rights of First Purchase (Offer, Negotiation and Refusal)**

The guide, first prepared in 2009, received a major overhaul in conjunction with the development of the *Model Grant of Right of First Offer* and *Model Grant of Right of First Refusal*.

#### **Gift of a Future Interest in Real Estate: Reserved Life Estates Keep Owners in Control During Their Lifetimes**

Originally titled *Reserved Life Estates*, PALTA substantially revised and expanded the 2009 guide for this new edition.

#### **Installment Agreement**

PALTA substantially revised and expanded the guide, which it first prepared in 2009 for the launch of [ConservationTools.org](http://ConservationTools.org).

#### **Authorization of Real Estate Transactions**

Originally written in 2012, the guide was modestly expanded to include information about electronic meetings, written consents, and restricted assets. The improvements were made to address a topic of discussion and some confusion during PALTA's January Accreditation call.

#### **Environmental Advisory Council**

The original 2009 guide was heavily edited and rewritten for this new edition.

#### **Promoting Walking for Wellness**

PALTA discarded the outdated contents of its 2009 *Walk for Wellness* guide and replaced it with streamlined and updated guidance under new title.

#### **Invasive Species Management Programs**

PALTA made modest updates and improvements to this 2010 guide.

## **Improve Efficiency and Effectiveness**

### **Model Document Development Sets Stage for Three Major Releases**

Responding to strong demand by conservationists, PALTA developed new model legal documents—described below—for advancing conservation projects. PALTA also reorganized its growing collection of practical model documents for easier user access at <http://conservationtools.org/model-documents>.

#### **Model Grant of Right of First Offer**

PALTA prepared and released for public review a draft [\*Model Grant of Right of First Offer\*](#), setting stage for publication of a first edition in 2016. The model provides a tool for a conservation organization to document landowners' commitment to turn first to that organization before looking elsewhere for a purchaser.

The holder of a right of first offer has the opportunity to purchase land at the landowners' asking price before any other prospective purchasers have an opportunity. An alternative configuration of the right of first offer has the holder, rather than the landowners, making the first offer.

#### **Model Grant of Right of First Refusal**

PALTA prepared and released for public review a draft [\*Model Grant of Right of First Refusal\*](#), setting stage for publication of a first edition in 2016.

If an owner intends to accept an offer for the purchase of his or her land, the holder of a right of first refusal has the opportunity to purchase the land at the price and terms offered by the prospective buyer. If the holder of the right declines to purchase on those exact terms, the owner is then free to sell to the prospective buyer.

If an owner is willing to commit to providing a right of first refusal to an organization, the model provides a tool for the organization to document and ensure the enforceability of the owner's commitment.

#### **Model Grant of Conservation Easement—new edition**

PALTA published the present (6<sup>th</sup>) edition of the [\*Model Grant of Conservation Easement\*](#) in 2011. During 2015, PALTA held listening sessions and solicited input via email and the web to provide conservationists and their legal advisors the opportunity to suggest improvements to the model and its commentary. With the resulting input, PALTA began sketching out possible changes for the model's 7<sup>th</sup> edition. Plans are to complete the new edition following rounds of public review in 2016.

## **Communicate with People Working to Make a Difference**

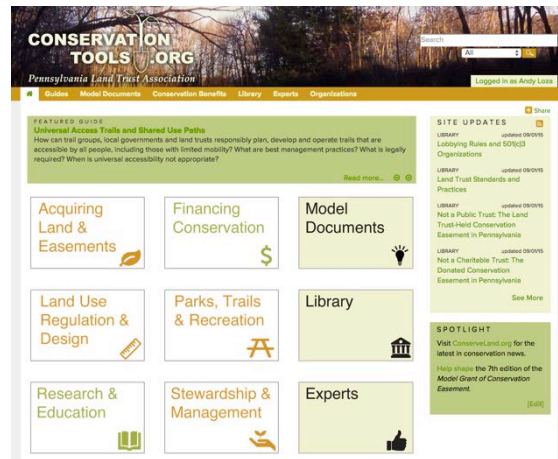
### **Make News and Resources Readily Accessible**

*"Thanks for the work and information that PALTA makes available. As a staff person of a small land trust with lots of miles of trails, I am thankful to have a resource such as*

*ConservationTools.org available. It makes a difference. Unfortunately I usually forget to let you know how I greatly appreciate this tool.” – Ron Steffey, Executive Director, Allegheny Valley Land Trust*

## ConservationTools.org Expanded and Rebuilt

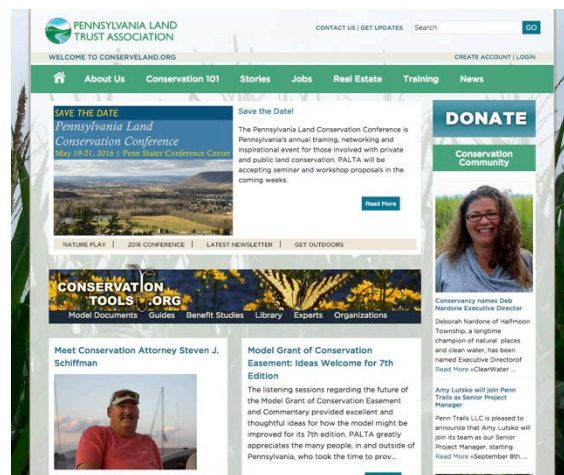
PALTA rebuilt [ConservationTools.org](http://ConservationTools.org) in 2015 to enable easy access from any digital device and better accommodate the site’s expanding wealth of content including original guides, model legal documents, highlights of reports on the economic and environmental benefits of conservation, expert listings, and conservation organization listings.



Launched in 2010, [ConservationTools.org](http://ConservationTools.org) helps local governments, land trusts, trail groups, and others easily identify and access practical land conservation, land use planning, outdoor recreation, and other guidance. It has become Pennsylvania’s central repository and gateway for such information. Much of the content is unique—specifically researched and developed to fill information gaps identified by users.

## Third Generation of ConserveLand.org Launched

PALTA rebuilt [ConserveLand.org](http://ConserveLand.org)—its 3<sup>rd</sup> generation—enabling it to work well on all screen sizes, increasing the emphasis on land conservation community news and announcements, and offloading all technical guidance to [ConservationTools.org](http://ConservationTools.org). The new site continues to provide the latest conservation news headlines from around the state updated each weekday, conservation job openings, and more.



## ConserveLand Updates

When there was significant information to report (every couple of weeks usually), PALTA emailed ConserveLand Updates to call attention to news, tools and issues impacting conservation. The audience is nonprofit leaders, staff and volunteers as well as those advancing conservation and good land use for local government.

## Exhibiting

PALTA exhibited on the resources available at [ConservationTools.org](http://ConservationTools.org) at venues including the American Planning Association’s conference in Pittsburgh and the Pennsylvania Park & Recreation Society conference in Lancaster.

# ConserveLand Newsletter

PALTA published two paper editions of the *ConserveLand* newsletter in 2015. PALTA focuses on digital platforms for its communications but recognizes that an occasional print publication is necessary for good outreach.



## Reach out to the Public

## Connect Them with the Outdoors and Conservation

# Get Outdoors PA

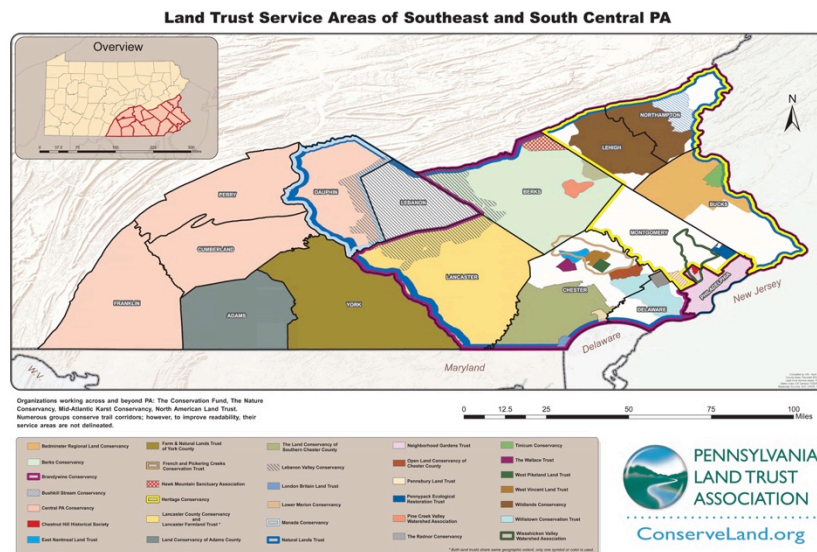
Get Outdoors PA markets to the public the outdoor recreation programs taking place across Pennsylvania. The program's mission is to connect citizens with outdoor recreation activities to increase use of parks, forests and public spaces while imparting stewardship and healthy living.



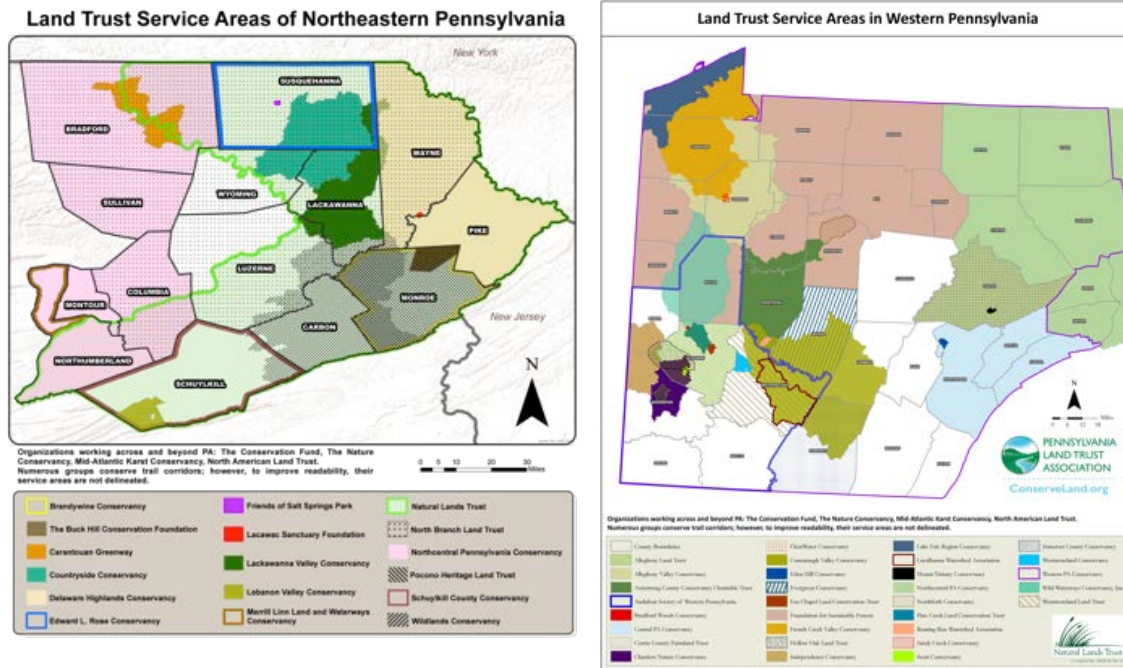
PALTA co-administers GOPA with the PA Recreation & Park Society. DCNR, the PA Fish & Boat Commission, the PA Game Commission, the PA Department of Health, and the PA Parks and Forests Foundation round out the team of Flagship Partners. Administering GOPA involves attention to many diverse tasks: preparing outreach pieces for print and web publications, organizing the first *Get Outdoors PA Regional Summit* for organizations providing outdoor programming, marketing, and much more.

# Mapping Land Trust Service Areas

PALTA developed land trust service area maps for Pennsylvania. Thanks go to volunteer Vincent Martin, who developed service area maps for northeastern and southeastern

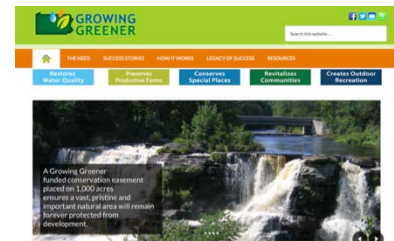


Pennsylvania. These maps were displayed at the 2015 Pennsylvania Land Conservation Conference. (PALTA plans to place digital versions of these maps online in 2016.)



## GrowingGreener.info

PALTA rebuilt the [GrowingGreener.info](http://GrowingGreener.info) educational website to better convey to readers the history, benefits and value delivered by the state's Growing Greener investments.



## Assist Organizations and Projects Directly

### One-on-One Assistance

*"PALTA is invaluable to an organization like ours with a small budget, and keeps us moving forward in terms of preservation and the rewards that come with completion of projects." – PALTA survey response*

PALTA staff helped dozens of organizations with their questions and problems via telephone and email as well as in person in 2015. Whether a matter took seconds, minutes, or days to resolve, no issue was left unaddressed.

## Conservation Easement Assistance Program

*"PALTA's Conservation Easement Assistance Program has allowed Wildlands Conservancy to preserve irreplaceable open space and natural resources." – Chris Kocher, President, Wildlands Conservancy*

The Conservation Easement Assistance Program (CEAP) seeks to increase the quantity of special places protected as well as increase the quality and long-term viability of

easements. PALTA made seven grants totaling \$32,136.54 in 2015 to provide organizations the means to use best practices in their easement projects. The grants of up to \$6,000 help organizations:

- Complete conservation, trail and fishing access easements;
- Amend and restate older easements;
- Establish or update baseline documentation;
- Install signs on eased properties (excellent for marketing, education and as a deterrent to easement violations and challenges).

CEAP made 17 grants in 2014; the year over year drop in funding requests (and thus grant awards) probably reflects fluctuations in the federal tax code, which disincentivized easement donations during most of 2015. With Congress making an enhanced tax incentive permanent in December, CEAP requests are expected to rebound strongly in 2016.

Since 2004, CEAP has helped create 217 new easements protecting 18,196 acres in 35 counties. For these projects, landowners donated \$41.7 million in easement value and land trusts secured \$1.35 million for stewardship.

## Connect, Educate, and Inspire People

### Pennsylvania Land Conservation Conference

*"I benefited from discussing common issues with other land conservancy members. The similarity of issues and concerns is enlightening. Hearing how other conservancies tackle similar problems/issues is very helpful, offers us opportunities to examine how we might implement similar solutions in our own communities."* – 2015 conference evaluation



The annual Pennsylvania Land Conservation Conference is Pennsylvania's premier training, networking and inspirational event for those involved with private and public land conservation. The three-day event brings together land trust professionals and volunteers; municipal officials; state agency staff; attorneys, planners, and other professionals from across Pennsylvania and beyond.

For 2015, PALTA worked with local partners, including the Land Conservancy of Adams County, Adams County Planning Office and Agricultural Preservation Board, Civil War Trust, and the Gettysburg Foundation, in organizing field trips, facilitating local outreach, and recruiting volunteers.



Continuing a partnership of recent years, PALTA integrated farmland preservation topics into the conference in cooperation with the Pennsylvania Farmland Preservation Association.

**Quick facts about the May 7-9, 2015 conference in Gettysburg**

- Attendees rated it a 4.5 out of 5.
- Instructors delivered 83 course hours.
- 393 attended, each participating for 1.4 days on average.
- 160 organizations were represented.
- First time attendees totaled 166.
- Attendees came from 37 Pennsylvania counties, seven states and the District of Columbia.

## Peer Networks

### Land Stewardship Network

PALTA facilitated the formation of the Land Stewardship Network—a peer group of land trust staff and volunteers involved in land stewardship—to promote the sharing of ideas, experiences, and knowledge. PALTA has provided the dozens of participants with an online platform to post questions and share resources and hosted calls to discuss specific stewardship topics.

The network has developed a half-day program for the 2016 conference that will provide stewardship professionals and volunteers the opportunity to discuss key topics and learn from others' experiences.

### Environmental Advisory Councils

PALTA completed its second year of management of the *EAC Network*. PALTA's challenge has been to reshape the EAC Network, moving it from a top-down service model to more of a peer-to-peer operation. The goal is to meaningfully support Environmental Advisory Councils and those who seek to create new EACs within the constraint of very limited funder interest in subsidizing the network.



Twenty-eight individuals participated in the 2015 EAC Network Conference, organized by PALTA and held in Gettysburg in conjunction with the 2015 Pennsylvania Land Conservation Conference. PALTA also continued to facilitate EAC communications via an online discussion group.

## Seminars, Roundtables, and Forums

PALTA organizes events both proactively and in response to expressed needs and requests. Anyone can suggest a program for a particular region. PALTA thanks the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy for hosting PALTA's Pittsburgh events in 2015.

*“Excellent, authoritative speakers, timely, universally-relevant topic, well-presented. And thank you for the spiral bound books!!!” – attendee, Liability and Accessibility for Trails, Parks & Preserves*

*“The gathering frankly exceeded my expectations. It was well structured, ran efficiently and adequately covered the issues presented/discussed.” – attendee, Western Pennsylvania Land Trust Gathering*

### **Conservation and Environmental Group Gatherings**

Responding to interests expressed by diverse organizations, PALTA volunteered to organize and host periodic gatherings of conservation and environmental groups working on state-level issues in Harrisburg. Such gatherings had occurred in the past but faded away a dozen or more years ago.

The first two of these gatherings occurred on June 24 and October 22. Three are planned for 2016.

### **Land Stewardship Roundtable & Field Visit**

Sixteen individuals from 8 organizations participated in this PALTA-organized event on October 19, rating it a 4.5 out of 5. Thanks to the Allegheny Land Trust for organizing the field component of the day.



### **The Intersection of Trails and Land Conservation: A Forum for Trail Groups, Land Trusts, and Local Governments**

Thirty-two individuals from 19 organizations participated in this PALTA-organized forum on December 4, rating it a 4.7 out of 5.

### **Liability and Accessibility for Trails, Parks & Preserves: What Every Trail Group, Municipality & Land Trust Should Know**

Thirty-three individuals from 15 organizations participated in this April 9 event. Debra Wolf Goldstein and Larry Knutson, the authors of PALTA's *Universal Access Trails* guide, presented. Attendees rated the course a 4.6 out of 5 overall.

### **Western Pennsylvania Land Trust Gathering**

Thirty-nine individuals from 16 organizations participated in this January 16 event, planned by PALTA with several of the region's land trust leaders.

### **Presentations at Events Hosted or Co-Hosted by Others**

PALTA staff also presented and co-presented webinars, workshops, and other programs at events hosted by others (with or without co-hosting by PALTA). These presentations included (but weren't limited to):

- “Easements: Securing Trail Corridors Without Owning the Land” on September 22 at the *Greenways and Trails Summit* organized by the PA Recreation and Park Society in Warren.

- “Redoing Your Website: Tips and Tricks for Success” webinar, hosted by Land Trust Alliance, on September 17.
- “Eleven Mysteries of Land Conservation” for a DCNR/DEP Brown Bag Lunch on September 16.
- “The Success of Conservation: Connecting People to Nature” for a DCNR/DEP Brown Bag Lunch on May 20.
- “Conservation: A Conversation” at Lock Haven University on April 16.
- “Conservation Easements: What Landowners Should Know” at the *2015 Private Forest Landowners Conference* in Altoona on March 21.

## Recognize and Promote Conservation Excellence

### Lifetime Leadership Award

The *Lifetime Conservation Leadership Award* honors individuals for their decades of dedication and leadership in conserving Pennsylvania's special places and landscapes. It also serves to inspire others to seize the conservation opportunities that lie before them. Each year, PALTA solicits nominations from across the Commonwealth and the awards committee reviews the submissions. In 2015, the committee selected **John Dawes**, executive director of the Foundation for Pennsylvania Watershed, as the 12<sup>th</sup> individual to receive the award. The award was presented at the Pennsylvania Land Conservation Conference. Thanks go to committee members Reneé Carey, Cynthia Carrow, and Andy Pitz for their time and effort in reviewing nominations.



From left to right: PALTA Executive Director Andy Loza, PA Senator John Eichelberger, Katie Dawes, John Dawes, and Cynthia Carrow

### Government Leadership Award

The *Government Conservation Leadership Award* honors municipalities and counties that have demonstrated leadership in conserving their special places and landscapes. The government awards committee selected **Northampton County** to receive the 2015 award, which was presented at the Pennsylvania Land Conservation Conference. Thanks go to committee members Drew Gilchrist



From left to right: PALTA President Jeffrey Marshall; PALTA Executive Director Andy Loza; Maria Bentzoni, Northampton County; Councilmember Scott Parsons, Northampton County; Bryan Cope, Northampton County; and Scott Cope, Wildlands Conservancy

of PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, Kris Kern of Heritage Conservancy, Roy Kraynyk of Allegheny Land Trust, Teddy Price of Brandywine Conservancy, Denny Puko of the PA Department of Community and Economic Development, and Jeff Swinehart of Lancaster Farmland Trust for their time and effort in reviewing nominations.

## Land Trust Accreditation

*Pennsylvania has more accredited land trusts per capita than any other state in the union. In absolute numbers, it is second only to California.*

PALTA helps land trusts interested in becoming accredited or renewing their accreditation by hosting meetings for land trusts to share lessons learned and facilitate communications on key issues. This includes conference calls and time at the Pennsylvania Land Conservation Conference. PALTA also facilitates accreditation by supporting guided organizational assessments and providing other technical assistance.

PALTA occasionally reaches out to the Accreditation Commission on behalf of land trusts to help resolve issues that individual land trusts are uncomfortable discussing directly with the Commission.

PALTA's outreach to the Commission and LTA in previous years helped spark new efforts by the Commission to create a more efficient Accreditation process. This resulted in substantial reductions in paperwork announced by the Commission in 2015.

## Advocate for Better Public Policy

PALTA staff engaged in a variety of public policy outreach and advocacy activities in 2015. Activities ranged broadly, including such items as:

- introducing land conservation activities and concerns to freshmen legislators;
- researching public policy issues and possible legislative, regulatory, and executive actions;
- strategizing and sharing information with groups having mutual interests;
- endorsing Governor-elect Wolf's proposed appointments of Cindy Dunn and John Quigley as secretaries of DCNR and DEP and identifying conservation issues relevant in the new legislative session;
- lobbying state officials on specific bills in the halls of the Capitol; and
- advocating on federal conservation issues in partnership with LTA and many others.

Some of PALTA's activities and policy positions are described in more detail below.



## Ensuring Continuation of State Conservation Investments

PALTA continued its advocacy for ongoing state conservation investments, including the Keystone Recreation, Park and Conservation Fund, in the odd state budget year of 2015. PALTA also led and participated in efforts laying groundwork for new state conservation funding initiatives, including a Growing Greener 3.

## Conserving State Forests and State Parks

PALTA has long advocated for the conservation—the responsible, well-thought-through, sustainable use—of Pennsylvania’s State Forests and State Parks, which the government holds in trust for the people of Pennsylvania. Given the huge acreage of State Forest and Park presently available for and being used for energy development and the resulting impacts, PALTA has opposed new leasing in our State Forests and Parks for energy development. This advocacy and that of many others helped stimulate Executive Order 2015-03 of January 29, 2015

(<http://conservationadvocate.org/governor-wolf-signs-executive-order-reinstating-moratorium-on-new-leases-for-oil-and-gas-development-in-state-parks-and-forests/>), in which Governor Tom Wolf states:

[T]o protect the lands of the Commonwealth that are held in trust for its citizens and for future generations, and subject to future advice and recommendations made by DCNR, no State Park and State Forest lands owned and/or managed by DCNR shall be leased for oil and gas development.

## Enhanced Tax Incentive for Conservation Easement Donations

A decade after PALTA led the initial national push to enhance the federal tax deduction for conservation easement donations, Congress made the enhanced benefit permanent! PALTA worked in partnership with LTA and many others to help make this possible. PALTA is thankful that with Pennsylvania Congressman Jim Gerlach’s retirement, Congressman Mike Kelly of Erie chose to become Congress’ lead champion for the easement incentive. (For an example of PALTA’s outreach efforts, see <http://conservationadvocate.org/federal-conservation-easement-tax-incentive-helps-owners-serve-land-for-the-public-benefit/> for a PALTA opinion piece published by Pennsylvania media outlets in December.)

## Amici Curiae Brief: PEDF v. Commonwealth

PALTA filed a brief of *amici curiae*, together with Delaware Riverkeeper Network, Sierra Club, and PennFuture, in the matter before the Pennsylvania Supreme Court of Pennsylvania Environmental Defense Foundation v. Commonwealth (the Appeal of PEDF of the Commonwealth Court’s Order of 1/7/2015). The goal of the brief is to solidify the courts’ respect for Section 27 of the Pennsylvania Constitution’s Declaration of Rights (Article I), which states:

*The people have a right to clean air, pure water, and to the preservation of the natural, scenic, historic and esthetic values of the environment. Pennsylvania’s public natural resources are the common property of all the people, including generations yet to come. As*

*trustee of these resources, the Commonwealth shall conserve and maintain them for the benefit of all the people.*

At year's end, court action is still pending.

## Realty Transfer Tax Exclusions

House Bill 859 and Senate Bill 556 of 2015 both proposed to exempt transfers of agricultural conservation easements to local governments under the Agricultural Area Security Law from realty transfer taxes. PALTA observed that House Bill 859 with some tweaking could extend the exemption to conservation easements conforming to the Conservation and Preservation Easements Act as well as trail and other public access easements. PALTA provided House staff with background information and data as well as sample implementing language. Local Government Chair Kate Harper then upgraded the bill's language to better support conservation.

The bills could be voted on anytime in 2016.

## Outdoor Recreation and Liability

PALTA continued to advocate for legislation to reduce the liability for injuries of land trusts and other landowners who open their lands to the public. PALTA's final communication of 2015 to Pennsylvania House members reads in part as follows:

On behalf of the 75 member organizations of the Pennsylvania Land Trust Association, I write to request your **support of HB 544**. The Association also asks you to **oppose amendments** that would diminish the bill's protections for public-spirited landowners....

HB 544 would amend the Recreational Use of Land and Water Act to limit the liability for personal injury or property damage of **landowners who generously open their lands to public use for hunting, bird watching, hiking and other forms of recreation**. It ensures they are not punished for allowing the public on their land at no charge.

The Association's member organizations work with landowners to conserve their land and to provide safe and responsible recreational opportunities to the public. Landowner fear of liability is often an obstacle to establishing trails and other outdoor recreational opportunities. The obstacle, to the detriment of the public, is frequently insurmountable. By providing assurance to landowners that their public-minded decisions to provide access won't be punished with undue liability, House Bill 544 will expand recreational opportunities for the public.

**Landowners and the public deserve the protections and recreational opportunities that this bill promotes.** Both of their interests would benefit from the passage of this bill....

The entire letter can be found at <http://conservationadvocate.org/support-hb-544-recreational-use-of-land-and-water-act/>.

House Bill 544 was voted out of House committee in a 17-10 vote in the fall but did not receive a vote of the full house. The bill could be voted on anytime in 2016.

## Land and Water Conservation Fund

PALTA advocated for renewal of the Land and Water Conservation Fund, which was renewed in December by Congress. (For an example of PALTA's outreach efforts, see <http://conservationadvocate.org/palta-urges-congress-renew-land-water-conservation-fund/> for a PALTA opinion piece published by Pennsylvania media outlets in December.)

## Get Out the Vote

Seeing that Pennsylvania voters for the first time in centuries would be electing, at one time, three judges to the 7-member Pennsylvania Supreme Court and that the court would be making rulings profoundly impacting land conservation and water protection, our public lands and wildlife, and other critical matters, PALTA encouraged subscribers to its email communications to vote and its member organizations to encourage people to vote.

The message, which can be viewed at <http://conservationadvocate.org/monumental-election-on-november-3rd/>, was strictly nonpartisan, in no way expressing favor for any candidate. It instead encouraged people to make their own decisions based on their own research. (Note: The Pennsylvania Land Trust Association is not permitted to endorse candidates for public office, but it, like all 501(c)(3) organizations, [may promote voting](#).)

## Leadership and Advisory Roles

PALTA staff partnered with others and helped advance conservation issues of shared interest by serving on a variety of leadership and advisory bodies including the national Land Trust Leadership Council, the State Outdoor Recreation Plan Advisory Committee, committees of the Growing Greener Coalition, and the PA Recreation & Park Society governmental affairs committee.

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The Pennsylvania Land Trust Association helps people conserve the lands needed for healthy, prosperous, and secure communities—the forests, farms, parks, urban gardens, and other green places that safeguard our drinking water, prevent flooding, protect wildlife, provide recreational and economic opportunities, and preserve scenic beauty and community treasures. The Association accomplishes this by helping nonprofits and local governments improve their effectiveness and efficiency in acquiring and stewarding land and easements, advancing sustainable land use practices, and connecting people to the outdoors; the Association also fosters public understanding of conservation, advocates for sound governmental policy, and leads state and national endeavors to achieve far-reaching advancements in conservation.

The board of directors of the Pennsylvania Land Trust Association, with the involvement of many Pennsylvania conservationists, developed a new five-year strategic plan and adopted it in December 2015. You may explore the plan at [ConserveLand.org](http://ConserveLand.org).

**Pennsylvania Land Trust Association  
Board of Directors 2015-16**

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Reneè Carey, vice president  
John Conner, treasurer  
Tom Saunders, secretary  
Paul Lumia  
Molly Morrison  
Sherri Evans-Stanton  
D. Andrew Pitz  
Kimberly Murphy  
Steven Schiffman

**Policy Advisory Committee  
(at-large members as of 12/31/2015)**

Kevin Abbey  
George Asimos  
Oliver Bass  
Chris Beichner  
Cynthia Carrow  
Jim Engel  
Dulcie Flaharty

Brian Gallagher  
Debra Wolf Goldstein  
Kathie Gonick  
Dawn Gorham  
Chris Kocher  
Dick Mountfort  
Pat Pregmon

Teddy Price  
Ronald Ramsey  
Kyle Shenk  
Jeff Swinehart  
Sally Zaino

**Staff**

Andrew M. Loza, executive director  
Nicole D. Faraguna, director of outreach & education  
Gayle Diehl, office & project administrator



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[EACnetwork.org](http://EACnetwork.org) [KeystoneFund.org](http://KeystoneFund.org) [GrowingGreener.info](http://GrowingGreener.info) [GetOutdoorsPA.org](http://GetOutdoorsPA.org) [PAlandchoices.org](http://PAlandchoices.org)