

# Municipal Advocacy Guide

ADVANCING LAND TRUST  
CONSERVATION IN BC

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### Supported in Partnership

Nature organizations are working with municipalities, land trusts, and conservation organizations to be part of the biodiversity solution.

We provide resources, experience, capacity, and partnerships to help you recognize your natural areas. We believe that municipalities are central to protecting biodiversity and habitats, while giving Canadians the chance to appreciate nature close to home.



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# Introduction

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Advancing conservation at a municipal level is a powerful tool that can bring about positive changes in your community. By engaging municipalities, you have the opportunity to influence decisions and ensure that the voices of community members are heard. This guide aims to help in the process after an issue you are passionate about has been found. In this guide, you will find tips on how to advance land conservation in your community, identify and gain the support of municipal leaders to champion your cause, identify approaches to inform them of your issue, and learn to effectively engage the community.

The federal government's goal to conserve 30% of Canada's natural landscapes and waterways by 2030 is both ambitious and essential for biodiversity and climate resilience. The collaboration between the Land Trust Alliance of British Columbia (LTABC), BC Nature, and the Alliance of Canadian Land Trusts is a significant step towards achieving this target. The Canadian Database of Protected and Conserved Areas (CPCAD) is being used to track progress towards the 30×30 goal.

LTABC and BC Nature are focusing on detailed tracking of protected lands and promoting private land conservation through tax incentives. Many landowners face financial challenges in conserving ecologically sensitive properties, often being “land rich and cash poor.” Currently, the federal Eco-gift Program offers incentives for lands meeting national conservation standards. In addition to this, LTABC is advocating for increased incentives to encourage private land conservation across British Columbia. Municipal and Regional Councils are being encouraged to engage with LTABC and the Provincial Government to legislate voluntary conservation options.

Tax incentives can motivate private landowners to conserve ecologically significant lands, wildlife habitats, and cultural sites, contributing to the 30×30 initiative. Preserving land for future generations helps maintain the natural beauty and ecological health of communities. Additionally, land conservation can boost economic activity through eco-tourism, outdoor recreation, and increased property values. This comprehensive approach not only aims to protect the environment but also supports the economic and social well-being of communities.

## Gaining support from leaders

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It is important to find a councillor that will champion your cause. Building a lasting relationship with leaders who share your values will lead to more effective advocacy. A great starting point is to visit your local government's website to see who your mayor and councillors are. It is important to find who at what level of government and what departments or ministries are responsible for the issues you are advocating for. From there, get to know where they stand on the issue at hand. This can be achieved by looking at their website, social media, articles about them and motions they've brought forward. It is also important to learn about other aspects of their lives, as the goal is to build a relationship with them. Learn about their interests, pastimes, likes and dislikes.

In this booklet, you will find tips on how to identify the correct municipal leaders to champion your cause, how to inform them of your issue, and how to effectively engage the community.

Don't just look for local leaders, but also for those who influence them. This can be community members, businesses, or organizations. Knowing where they stand is equally as important. Keep them informed of the proceedings and included in the dialogue as well. If they support your cause, their endorsement can garner both political and community support.

Attending a community meeting is another great way to learn about your local leaders. You can also learn about how laws are passed and general proceedings of local government. You will also have the chance to meet others who are passionate about community and can build relationships with them.

**Finding the right leader may take time. Be patient and open to hearing a wide range of opinions. Chances are, you will have to contact multiple leaders, requiring you to adapt your approach to each one.**

## Informing leaders

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Once you've identified who your municipal leaders and potential partners are, the next step is to inform them about the issues and solutions you are proposing. Based on previous research, you should have a good idea of your local government's priorities, so the solution should match those as much as possible. If it is in line with their interests, or does not collide with them, then it is more likely to be considered. Here are a few examples of how to get councillors informed.

### Write a letter

Writing a letter is the tried-and-true method of contacting elected officials, and an excellent place to start. Begin a letter by introducing yourself, and possibly including a personal story as well. Then, describe the issue at hand, explaining why it is important to you and the community. Follow this by providing a solution or request. Keep the message and solution clear and specific.

### Write a brief

A great way to inform your representative of the initiative is to write a brief. The goal of the brief is to outline every detail of the project. Include background information on the issue, the solution, who is affected, and details on how the solution can be implemented. Be clear and short, it should not be longer than one or two pages in length. Do some research to incorporate precise numbers and target metrics. Include it in a letter or had it out at a meeting.

## Presentation

If you are meeting with your representative in person, preparing presentation or handouts can be useful, to visualize the information and to add some personal touches. Begin by introducing who you are, the issue at hand, and why it is important. Then explain the possible solution, and all of the possible outcomes. Including graphs and data are useful to quantify the issue or solution being presented. Images can also be included to show what, where or who is being affected. Presentations can go into more detail than other options, however, try to keep it interesting, clear, and easy to understand and remember. Offering handouts is effective as information can be referenced and shared after the presentation. Be open to questions and having a dialogue during the presentation. When presenting, make sure to use the correct titles when addressing members of government, stay within the allotted time, and stay on topic. Follow-up afterwards thanking them for their time and summarizing the points and takeaways from the meeting.

Example letters and a presentation outline can be found in Appendix A & B.



# Community Involvement

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Informing municipal leaders is only one part of the process. Effective community engagement is also vital to the success of any campaign. The goal is to raise awareness, educate and inform. Get started by getting friends and family involved, before branching out. Here are some effective ways to engage the community.

## Events

Set up events to get the community involved in the issue (e.g., nature walks, clean-ups, fundraising activities etc.). This will offer different ways for the community to get involved and show how much support there is. Follow-up afterwards on how the event went and thank all those involved. This may require collecting information from all those that attend. Invite community leaders to join in as well to further build your relationship with them. Make sure to look up local regulations so that the event goes as smoothly as possible. Events are also a great way to facilitate volunteer opportunities. This will keep participants enthusiastic and motivated about the cause. Get their help to organize events, research or manage communications. Don't forget to recognize their contribution whenever possible.

## Outreach

Outreach campaigns such as door-to-door, setting up informational booths at community events, or partnering with local businesses or schools is also important. This will allow you to reach different groups in different environments.

## Letters and petitions

Letters and petitions are a useful way to inform as well as show members of government at any level how much support there is for an issue. Send them not only to councillors but community leaders, businesses, and individuals. Once again, it is key to keep the message clear and concise and including a solution to the issue. There are informal and formal petitions, so investigate local regulations regarding their use to make sure procedure is properly followed. When collecting petition signatures, also gather contact information from those who sign as they may want to receive updates and get involved further.



## Social Media

Social media is a good way to connect with the community, and has a low entry barrier for people to get involved. It is very hard to organically build a following or online community from scratch, so use existing groups and get help from organizations or people with established networks. Use social media as way to inform people about the issue, promote upcoming events, as well as a means for the community to share their stories. Diversifying communication methods will increase the reach of the movement, so it important not to rely solely on social media.

## Local Media

Local radio, print media or television networks exist to elevate community stories and voices. Use these tools to gain a broader reach. Invite the media to events, presentations or even to meetings with government members. Give them information on how listeners, readers or viewers can get involved as well. Follow-up with them on how things are going so they can run multiple stories on the project.

## Connection with local organizations

Reach out to local conservation organizations such as other land trusts or conservation groups. Chances are, they will be able to help with established connections and resources in the conservation sphere. Invite them to events or meeting as well. Getting their backing may also give access to volunteers, mailing lists and influence. Reach out to businesses as well. They may be willing to sponsor events, help spread awareness or donate items for events. Keep them up to date with newsletters or follow-ups.

As the movement grows, natural leaders will emerge. Give them space to operate and be creative. Encourage grassroots movement by encouraging groups or individuals to start their own projects and activities related to the issue. Support them with resources and advice as it is effective method to organize the community. Add a bit of your own touch to any of these and alter them to best fit what you are advocating for and to whom you are trying to engage. You can also look for past success stories in your community and leverage them to your benefit. Look up what other communities are doing for inspiration as well. Connect with them to learn or broaden your scope of reach.



## Land Trust Options

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Often newly elected councillors may not understand the work of land trusts. There are two common ways to protect private land in BC:

### Conservation Covenants

Land can be placed under a conservation covenant, which is a legal agreement between the landowner and a land trust. Though the title of the property remains with the landowner, the agreement is tied to the land and will be passed along even when the title changes. Covenants can be applied to either the entirety of the property or just parts of it.

### Donations and Land Purchases

Land trusts own and steward properties. Land can be donated to a land trust. Ownership of the land is passed to the land trust with conditions on its use and maintenance. There are many forms of donations depending on the donor's wishes and needs. There are also tax incentives for donating ecologically significant land such as the federal Ecological Gifts Program.

Land Trusts can directly purchase land. This requires large amounts of capital. Land trusts rely on donations, fundraisers, and grants to undertake direct land purchases.

## Municipal Conservation

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**Land trusts** are private, non-profit organizations that acquire land through donations, purchases, or other means. They have independent governance structures and are responsible for the long-term stewardship of the land. Their focus is on the preservation of natural habitats, wildlife corridors, cultural or historic sites, and ecologically significant areas. They rely on private donations, grants, endowments, fundraising or conservation easement sales. Land trusts have flexibility in managing their properties based on their conservation objectives and specific land agreements or restrictions. They may have their own conservation plans, restoration projects, and guidelines for public access. The scale of land acquired can vary from small parcels to vast areas.

Municipal conservation can include:

1. **Municipal parks** that are owned and operated by local governments. They are part of the public domain and are managed by municipal agencies or departments. They can emphasize conservation, but often have a broader mandate to provide recreational areas, space for community gatherings, playgrounds, and public amenities such as parking, trails, and picnic areas. Funding primarily comes from local governments and taxpayer dollars. They are subject to local government regulations and management plans, such as hours of operation, rules for park use and maintenance protocols established by the municipality.
2. Municipalities may also offer **green spaces**, which are often part of commercial developments for public use. Green spaces offer small, outdoor natural settings, but may be altered over time through Council decision.
3. **Tree cover** is also often thought to be a conservation measure. While important to climate change, tree cover is not a protected space and is subject to fire/disease/removal.





## Tax Incentives

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Many land owners are “land rich and cash poor.” Others are seeing land transferred through generations. Often land owners want to conserve the ecologically sensitive property they own, however the cost to do so is prohibitive.

Nationally, the federal Eco-gift Program offers incentives to lands that meet national conservation standards.



**The Land Trust Alliance of British Columbia supports increased incentives to encourage private land conservation across the Province. The Alliance is encouraging Municipal and Regional Councils to engage with LTABC and the Provincial Government to legislate options for Municipal consideration. All of these options, while legislated, would then be voluntary, yet available across the Province for municipalities wishing to adopt them.**

## Benefits

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Utilizing tax incentives for private land conservation can benefit communities in the following ways:

### Encourage Conservation

Incentives are a powerful motivator for private land conservation. This results in greater protection of ecologically significant land, wildlife habitats and cultural sites, getting us closer to the objective of the 30 x 30 initiative.

### Long-term Sustainability

We can ensure the preservation of land for future generation, maintaining the beauty of our communities.

### Economic Opportunities

Land conservation promotes economic activity through eco-tourism, outdoor recreation, and increased property values. Tax incentives promote these positive economic impacts.

### Community Engagement

Tax incentives create a shared commitment to conserving our natural and cultural heritage.

## Case Studies

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### Natural Areas Protection Tax Exemption

NAPTEP has been successfully implemented in the Gulf Islands for over a decade. It is a voluntary program which offers a 65% tax exemption for land that is part of a conservation covenant managed by the Islands Trust Fund. To offset the decrease in revenue for municipalities, the tax is shifted from those who participate to those who do not. This restructuring of the tax comes at a minimal cost to other properties, estimated to be a few cents per year. Costs associated with NAPTEP include:

- Tax exemptions provide landowners with a 65% reduction in property taxes on the protected portion of their land, resulting in a small loss of tax revenue for the municipality.
- Administrative costs cover the processing of applications, compliance monitoring, and program promotion.
- Application and registration costs may incur costs for landowners to survey the covenant area, prepare ecological baseline reports, and obtain independent legal and tax advice. Local governments may provide financial assistance in cases of financial hardship.

## Proposal

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**LTABC has proposed the Conservation Tax Incentive Program (CTIP) to encourage the protection of natural areas in BC with conservation covenants. Associated costs include:**

- Tax Incentives: Property owners who place conservation covenants on their land receive a reduction in property taxes. This results in a loss of tax revenue for the municipality.

### Ontario Conservation Land Tax Incentive Program

The CLTIP is a provincial program that offers a 100% property tax exemption on portions of property deemed ecologically significant. The province identifies eligible areas, and owners can then opt in. There is a minimum size restriction of 0.5 acres, and once part of the program, land use is restricted. Enrollment lasts one year, after which property owners need to apply once again. In 2020, there were 24,900 properties participating, spanning 714,600 acres.

### Victoria Heritage Tax Incentive Program

This program is a tax incentive for owners of heritage designated commercial, industrial, and institutional buildings that undergo seismic upgrading during renovation or conversion to residential use. It offers a property tax exemption for up to 10 years to offset the cost of the seismic upgrading. Lost revenue for the city is made back in the years following the tax exemption period as with the renovations, the property value and subsequent taxes increase.

#### Guide to Calculating NAPTEP:

<https://islandstrust.bc.ca/document/naptep-cost-benefits-guide/>

- Administrative Costs: These include the costs of processing applications, monitoring compliance, and promoting the program.
- Support for Landowners: There may be additional costs to support landowners in covering the expenses related to establishing conservation covenants, such as legal fees and ecological assessments.

# Appendix A

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## Sample Letters

Minister of Municipal Affairs / Minister of Water, Land  
and Resource Stewardship  
PO Box 9056 Stn Prov Govt  
Victoria, BC V8W 9E2

RE: LTABC's Conservation Tax Incentive Program

Dear Hon. Ministers,

The board of the \_\_\_\_\_ Conservancy is pleased to support the Land Trust Alliance of BC's proposal for a province-wide, voluntary Conservation Tax Incentive Program (CTIP). As a registered not-for-profit Land Trust charitable organization, the \_\_\_\_\_ Conservancy has been committed to protecting and preserving ecologically valuable land and watercourses for several decades. We achieve this through land acquisitions and covenants.

Incentives like the CTIP would be instrumental in promoting the conservation of biodiversity in our region. Frequently, covenant holders, potential land donors or buyers inquire about tax reductions for the portions of their covenanted land they cannot "use." With the region's high land values and corresponding property taxes, this question is becoming increasingly common and often influences transaction decisions.

The proposed CTIP is a voluntary initiative that would incur minimal or no cost to local governments or the province, while offering a crucial incentive for public support of natural area conservation. We strongly encourage the provincial government to enact the necessary legislative amendments to empower local governments to implement the CTIP.

Regards,

Name/Title  
cc: Land Trust Alliance of BC

Subject: Endorsement of the Conservation Tax  
Incentive Program (CTIP) for British Columbia

To Whom It May Concern,

The \_\_\_\_\_ is writing to voice enthusiastic support for the Land Trust Alliance's proposal to introduce a province-wide Conservation Tax Incentive Program.

\_\_\_\_\_ is a land trust and registered charity committed to preserving the natural environment in the region. Our vision is to see the diverse ecosystems thrive and to be protected. We believe that the proposed incentive program would be a valuable tool for conserving private lands in our area. Similar to the successful NAPTEP program in the Gulf Islands, this initiative would be completely voluntary and would impose minimal to no financial burden on local governments and the province.

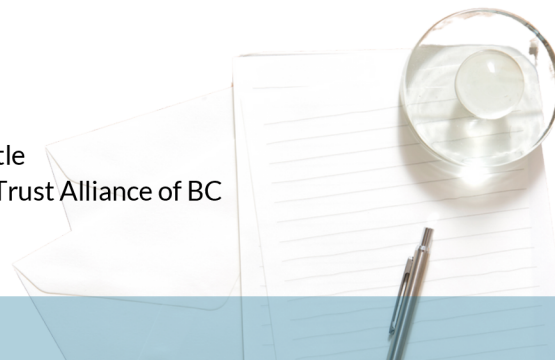
Our current Strategic Plan outlines the following objectives that strongly support the Conservation Tax Incentive Program:

1. Expanding Protected Natural Areas
  - Assist other agencies and organizations in securing land for conservation.
2. Fostering Community Partnerships
  - Collaborate on projects and support the conservation efforts of others.
  - Enhance our community's capacity for conservation and stewardship.

Our organization acknowledges the importance of this initiative and urges the Provincial Government to take the necessary legislative steps to enable local governments to implement the Conservation Tax Incentive Program (CTIP).

Sincerely,

Name/Title/Organization  
cc: Land Trust Alliance of BC



# Appendix B

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## Sample Presentation

### Introduction:

Introduce yourself and the issue you will be addressing.

### Context:

Provide background information on the issue, including statistics, historical context, or other facts that will help the audience understand the problem.

### Impact:

Present the impact on the community if the issue is not addressed.

### Solution:

Offer a practical and realistic solution or recommendation that addresses the issue. Define the benefits of the approach. If there is evidence or data, use it to support your case.

### Call to action:

Communicate what you are requesting from your municipal leaders.

### Conclusion:

Summarize key points of your presentation, and restate the importance of the issue and the need to take action.



- Include visual aids to make the slides appealing, and keep information on the slides clear and concise.
- Rehearse your presentation so you are familiar with the material, and are able to finish within the allocated time.
- During the presentation, engage with the audience.
- Leave room for questions and comments from the audience.
- Follow-up after the presentation with relevant resources, research, or reports.

# Appendix C

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## Background

### What is LTABC?

The Land Trust Alliance of British Columbia (LTABC) is the voice of the land trust community in our province. The Alliance works to support land trusts through programs, education, and awareness so they can conserve more land and protect more species at risk. As a leader in awareness, education, training, and capacity building, LTABC helps land trusts with the support they need to operate effectively. The Alliance's many resources, conferences, and webinars support the Canadian Land Trust Standards & Practices which are designed to build capacity at the regional and local level. LTABC also offers many resources to the public about private land conservation.



### What is a Land Trust?

A land trust is a non-profit, charitable organization committed to the long-term protection of natural heritage. Protected land provides habitat for flora and fauna, and serves as an important carbon sink.

In addition to land conservation, land trusts often engage in stewardship activities such as monitoring land conditions, conducting ecological restoration, promoting sustainable land management practices, and providing educational programs to raise awareness about the importance of land conservation.

### LTABC Members

American Friends of Canadian Land Trusts | Bowen Island Conservancy | Central Okanagan Land Trust | Comox Valley Land Trust | Cowichan Community Land Trust | Denman Conservancy Association | Discovery Coast Greenways Land Trust | Ducks Unlimited British Columbia | Elk Valley Regional Land Trust Society | Forest Trust for the Children of Cortes Island Society | Fraser Valley Conservancy | Friends of Cortes Island Society | Gabriola Commons Foundation | Gabriola Land & Trails Trust | Galiano Conservancy Association | Gambier Island Conservancy | Habitat Acquisition Trust | Islands Trust Conservancy | Kiyooka Land Trust Foundation | Malaspina Land Conservancy Society | Mayne Island Conservancy | Nanaimo & Area Land Trust Society | Nature Conservancy of Canada | Nature Conservancy of the North Okanagan Society | Nature Trust of British Columbia | Pender Islands Conservancy Association | Quadra Island Conservancy and Stewardship Society | Raincoast Conservation Foundation | Salt Spring Island Conservancy | Salt Spring Island Water Preservation Society | Savary Island Land Trust Society | Somenos Marsh Wildlife Society | Southern Interior Land Trust | Sunshine Coast Conservation Association | TLC The Land Conservancy | Thetis Island Nature Conservancy Society | Valdes Island Conservancy | Valhalla Foundation for Ecology

For more information on LTABC members, please visit our land trust member directory:

<https://ltabc.ca/land-trusts/directory>



## BC Land Trust Overview

Across BC there are 40 land trusts, protecting 1600 properties, covering 550,000 acres. Land trusts offer many potential economic benefits:

- Millions of people visit BC to enjoy the natural beauty. In 2022, BC's tourism industry generated \$18.5 billion in revenue.
- BC land trusts engage with 289,000 people annually.
- Over 3600 volunteers help land trusts achieve their goals.
- Land trusts in BC have preserved 550,000 acres of land.
- Land trusts receive 150,000 visitors to conservation properties and reach over 60,000 people through social media each year.
- Properties close to open spaces and parks often see increased property values.
- Protected land acts as an important carbon sink, helping in the fight against climate change.
- Protected land is important for habitat protection of local fauna and flora.
- Protecting wetlands and their surrounding land offers greater water quality and increased flood control.
- Protecting agricultural land reduces transportation costs and retains employment opportunities.



## BC Nature and MPAP

Since 1969 BC Nature has been the Province's collective voice for nature conservation. As a federation of natural history clubs and organizations throughout British Columbia, BC Nature represents more than 6,000 members. Through education, practical conservation projects and community engagement BC Nature encourages people of all ages to explore nature and get involved in outdoor activities – from birdwatching, botanizing, searching for mushrooms or insects, to hiking or just being outside exploring. These activities foster awareness, appreciation and understanding of the natural environment which leads to healthier communities and to a deeper personal involvement.

### 30 x 30

The federal government is working with provincial partners towards preserving 30% of our natural landscapes and waterways by the year 2030. The LTABC and BC Nature are partnering with the Alliance of Canadian Land Trusts to help achieve this goal. We are contributing through the detailed tracking of protected ecologically significant land, and by promoting private land conservation, including the proposal of tax incentives. The 30×30 target is being tracked on the Canadian Database of Protected and Conserved Areas (CPCAD).

To ensure the Municipal Protected Areas Program (MPAP) work is aligned across the country, BC Nature is working with local governments to assess natural areas using the nationally recognized Decision Support Tool process. The free assessment incorporates both ecological value and the policy strength of protective mechanisms. BC Nature undertakes the majority of the assessment and registration process to reduce the capacity constraints of local governments.

Local governments own and manage large amounts of important natural areas, each using different systems of protection for these spaces. As part of the MPAP we are supporting local governments to make sure these protections align with international standards. To date, provincial and federally protected land has been identified, but the amount protected by local governments is still unclear. To count towards this 30×30 goal, areas must:

- Have clearly defined geographic boundaries
- Achieve in-situ conservation of biodiversity
- Prohibit actions incompatible with conservation
- Be protected in perpetuity

Find more information  
by contacting:  
[conservation@bcnature.ca](mailto:conservation@bcnature.ca)



# Municipal Protected Areas Program

**BC's 40 land trusts –  
helping municipalities  
with tools and knowledge  
to protect nature and  
advance Canada's 30x30  
conservation target.**



The Land Trust Alliance of British Columbia  
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