

BOARD MEMBERS

Peter O. Hausmann
CHAIR

David H. Anderson
VICE CHAIR

Jean Nelson
SECRETARY

Ted Ladd
TREASURER

Mark Ackelson
Maria Elena Campisteguy
Lauren B. Dachs
Michael Dennis
Ogden Driskill
David Hartwell
Sherry Fisher Huber
Lawrence R. Kueter
Glenn Lamb
Gretchen Long
Susan Traylor Lykes
Christopher
Glenn Sawyer
Maryanne Tagney Jones
Teresa Villegas
Peter Welles

NATIONAL COUNCIL

Sue Anschutz-Rodgers
Robert A. Ayres
Robert T. Blakely
Tony Brooks
Ann Stevenson Colley
Ferdinand
Colloredo-Mansfeld
Susanna
Colloredo-Mansfeld
Robert L.V. French
Shirley French
Anthony P. Grassi
Charlotte Hanes
Philip Hanes
Charles Jordan
Henry A. Jordan, M.D.
Tony Kiser
Kathy K. Leavenworth
Mary McFadden, J.D.
Nicholas J. Moore
Caroline Niemczyk
Samuel F. Pryor, III
Tod Sedgwick
J. Rutherford Seydel
Lawrence
T.P. Stiffler, Ph.D.
Doug Walker
Douglas C. Walker
David Work
Susan Work

Going Far **Together**

The following is adapted from Rand Wentworth's address at the Welcoming Dinner of Rally 2009: The National Land Conservation Conference in Portland, Oregon, on October 12.

I would like to tell you a story about someone who is to the Columbia River Gorge what John Muir is to the High Sierras. Few have had such a profound impact on one of America's iconic landscapes as Nancy Russell has had on the Columbia Gorge.

When I first met Nancy, I was drawn to her quiet confidence, rosy cheeks, salt and pepper hair, and hopeful smile. She told me that her great loves were tennis and wildflowers. When her children were young, she would drop them at the bus stop and race to the Columbia Gorge to roam hills covered with lupines, irises, blue camases and purple shooting stars. Then she would race back home to cook dinner for her kids. Nancy seemed ordinary, but she had extraordinary vision, drive and perseverance.

Conservation leaders had been trying to gain federal protection for the Columbia River Gorge off and on since 1916, but all had failed until Nancy came along. She founded the Friends of the Columbia Gorge, hired Bowen Blair as its executive director, and set about convincing the world that the gorge needed federal protection.

Fearless in the face of power, she took on timber companies, local governments and anti-conservation groups without blinking. Four Oregon counties and all of the Washington state congressional delegation opposed the legislation to protect the gorge. And this was when James Watt, as secretary of interior, wanted to sell federal land, not protect more of it. Things

got nasty—many a pickup truck had a bumper sticker reading, "Save the Gorge from Nancy Russell."

Finally, after years of controversy, in 1986 Congress passed the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area Act.

But for Nancy, winning a level of federal protection for the gorge was just the beginning of the fight. For the next 25 years, she worked tirelessly to acquire lands within the gorge. In total, Nancy and her many partners persuaded Congress to appropriate \$90 million and acquire 38,000 acres. Nancy had fun saving land—it was the motivating joy of her life.

Nancy had fun saving land; it was the joy of her life.

When she was young, Nancy loved to hike up a huge basalt mound known as Cape Horn. In 1981, Nancy was appalled to see signs announcing the construction of Rim View Estates, a new subdivision right on top of Cape Horn. Nancy helped The Trust for Public Land buy the property, but a huge house was built before they could close the deal. For years to come, whenever Nancy would visit the gorge it bothered her that this house marred the view for miles up and down the river.

Four years ago, Nancy was diagnosed with Lou Gehrig's disease. Even as her body weakened, she continued to work for the preservation of the gorge. In the spring of 2008, the Friends of the Gorge and TPL finally were able to purchase that house on top of



KATHERINE LAMBERT

continued on page 6

continued from page 5

Cape Horn and have it “recycled.” Last September, a weakened Nancy told her nurse that she wanted to go to Cape Horn. Her nurse suggested that they wait until Nancy felt stronger, but Nancy said “No, I want to go today.” Nancy’s son Aubrey hired a private ambulance to drive them. When they got to Cape Horn, they rolled Nancy out on a stretcher and she saw the house gone and the land restored just as she had seen it on her wildflower walks 50 years ago. Aubrey says, “We sat there for a while, just taking it all in, and then I asked her, ‘Mom, where do you want to go next?’ She looked up at me smiling and replied, ‘East,’ to see the land she knew and loved.”

Nancy died a few days later.

NANCY WAS ONE OF US, an ordinary person called to do extraordinary things. The Land Trust Alliance presented Nancy with our highest award back in 2000. There is nothing we can give her now except our gratitude and our willingness to devote our lives as she did.

Today we face some daunting obstacles: a devastating recession, budget cuts and layoffs. Our hearts go out to our colleagues who have lost their jobs, but we cannot let our current problems paralyze us. Nancy persevered through four recessions while she was working to protect the gorge. We are saving places that will shape the character of our country for

Looking ahead,
we have some
great opportunities
to create a new
generation of
funding and tax
incentives for
land conservation.

centuries, and this is just a brief moment in that long journey. In spite of our economic difficulties, this is a time of breath-taking opportunity—a time to prepare for the economic recovery and to advance a bold conservation vision for America.

Never in our history have we had so much support in Congress. Thanks to your relation-

ships with Congress, last year they approved more than \$1 billion in easement funding in the Farm Bill, and we won a two-year extension of the enhanced tax incentive for donations of conservation easements.

Now we need to make this tax deduction a permanent part of the tax code before it expires on December 31. This is particularly important for conservation at a time when many government agencies are cutting back acquisition funds.

When we first introduced this bill in 2001, we were able to recruit 18 co-sponsors in the House. Thanks to your work and a remarkable coalition of sportsmen, farmers and ranchers, we now have 250 co-sponsors for H.R. 1831—with majorities of both Democrats and Republicans! You have done an extraordinary job of showing members of Congress why land conservation matters in their home districts.

Congress is also working on climate change legislation. Land conservation can reduce the impacts of climate change, and we need Congress to provide funding to help nature adapt to a changing world. In a recent survey, over 60% of the land trust respondents reported that they were already including climate change in their conservation plans. If you would like to learn more, go online to the new Alliance “Climate Change Toolbox.”

Most of us support the idea of renewable energy, but we need to remain vigilant so that our most precious natural and scenic areas are not sacrificed in the process. We are especially alarmed by utility companies that are condemning land protected by land trusts to build new transmission lines. This is often done in the name of green energy, even though most of the electricity on these lines is from coal-fired plants. The Alliance and many partners are working to add language to the Energy Bill that would require utilities to avoid conservation lands and to compensate and mitigate if an impact is unavoidable.

Looking ahead, we have some great opportunities to create a new generation of funding and tax incentives for land conservation. We understand that it is difficult to get donated easements in many parts of the country, and land trusts need funds for

Table Mountain, Columbia River Gorge





Nancy Russell

AFRICAN PROVERB:

“If you want to go quickly, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.”

Public trust also depends on our ability to defend our conservation lands against violations and legal attacks. We are all concerned about the potentially huge costs of defending a conservation easement and the risk of bad case law that could weaken all easements. The proposed defense insurance program is a low-cost way for land trusts to fulfill their obligations to defend their easements. This

service will only be feasible if land trusts enroll at least 12,000 properties. As I write this, land trusts have already enrolled 4,889 properties—40% of the goal!

With a foundation of public trust, we can present an inspiring vision for land conservation in America: A vision of great wild places, rivers, forests and farms. A vision that every child in America will grow up within 10 minutes of a park, trail or natural area. We need to communicate how conservation contributes to what people value most: clean drinking water, fresh food, healthy children, wildlife habitat and a strong and sustainable economy. Land conservation supports millions of jobs in tourism, agriculture, fisheries, and it provides ecosystem services valued in the trillions each year.

THERE IS AN OLD AFRICAN PROVERB: “If you want to go quickly, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.” If we want to go far as a land trust community, we must work together to ensure public trust through accreditation, credible appraisals and easement defense. And it is only by working together that we can build the network of congressional relationships necessary to pass major new funding and tax incentives for conservation. I am grateful to all of you who are members of the Alliance, and to our donors, faculty and friends. All of you have joined together to build a strong future for land conservation. It is our mission to help you be successful with yours.

Rand Wentworth

acquisitions. The new Secretary of the Interior, Ken Salazar, is a friend of land trusts and wants to do something big to protect America’s treasured landscapes. He has asked for our help to design new policies and funding for land conservation.

If we are asking for more in a time of less, we must have a rock-solid foundation of public trust. Taken together, our standards, training, accreditation and defense insurance provide an institutional infrastructure that will help give Congress and other funders the confidence to make big investments in land conservation.

We all remember the congressional investigation of four years ago. In spite of the progress we have made, the IRS continues to aggressively audit easement donors, causing great distress to many well-meaning landowners and land trusts. One of the biggest concerns has been exaggerated appraisals, and the Alliance has worked with the Appraisal Institute and other professional groups to launch a training and certificate program for appraisers doing conservation easements. I am pleased to report that over 900 appraisers have already been certified.

We created the Land Trust Accreditation Commission to help preserve public trust and to help those land trusts that wanted to improve their practices. This program provides the assurance of quality and permanence that the public is looking for. [Turn to page 39 to see the current list of accredited land trusts.] These groups tell us that accreditation has made them more effective at both saving land and raising money.

I know that getting accredited is a challenging process, so the Alliance has developed “Pathways to Accreditation.” Member land trusts and partners can find it along with model documents and courses on our online Learning Center. We are also working with partners and consultants around the country to coach and assist land trusts in preparing for accreditation. We are working hard to inform the IRS of our progress, and, with your help, I expect that the number of audits will decrease over time.

TO READ THE COMPLETE SPEECH,
PLEASE VISIT US ONLINE AT WWW.LTA.ORG/RALLYINREVIEW