



Southern Appalachian Highlands Conservancy



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Press Release

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The Southern Appalachian Highlands Conservancy Earns National Recognition

Accreditation Awarded by the Land Trust Accreditation Commission

Buncombe County, NC- The Southern Appalachian Highlands Conservancy (SAHC) has been awarded accredited status by the Land Trust Accreditation Commission, joining the Conservation Trust for North Carolina, Carolina Mountain Land Conservancy and Catawba Lands Conservancy as the only accredited land trusts in North Carolina.

SAHC earned accreditation this March along with 11 other land trusts across the nation. Of the 1,700 land conservation groups in the country, a total of 93 have received this important distinction since the Commission was established in 2006.

“Becoming accredited is a crucial step for SAHC in order to assure our members, the landowners with whom we work, and the public that we follow rigorous ethical and professional standards,” said SAHC Executive Director, Carl Silverstein. “SAHC has always held itself to the highest possible standards, and this is our opportunity to be recognized formally for doing so.”

Accreditation is awarded to land trusts that meet national quality standards for protecting important natural places and working lands forever. Land trusts that are given this distinction are able to display the official accreditation seal in association with their name, indicating that they meet standards for excellence in their policies and practices, uphold the public trust and ensure that their conservation efforts are permanent.

“The accreditation seal is a mark of distinction in land conservation,” said the Commission’s Executive Director, Tammara Van Ryn. “The seal lets the public know

that the accredited land trust has undergone an extensive, external review of the governance and management of its organization and the systems and policies it uses to protect land.”

Land trusts applying for accreditation submit extensive documentation and make a significant commitment of time and money to participate. In a rigorous review process, the Commission examines each application, interviews the land trust and evaluates multiple sources of information, including comments from the public.

Strong, well-managed land trusts provide local communities with effective champions and caretakers of their critical land resources, and safeguard the land through the generations. Conserving land helps ensure clean air and drinking water, food security, scenic vistas, wildlife habitat and places for people to enjoy. Across the country, local citizens and communities have come together to form land trusts to save the places they love, and have collectively conserved over 37 million acres of land.

Founded in 1974 to protect the Highlands of Roan, SAHC is one of the country’s oldest land trusts. Its mission is to conserve the unique plant and animal habitat, clean water, local farmland and scenic beauty of the mountains of North Carolina and east Tennessee for the benefit of present and future generations.

This year, with the help of its partners and members, SAHC will reach the milestone of protecting 50,000 acres throughout the mountain region, including key sites adjacent to the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, in the Sandy Mush Farming community and along the Appalachian Trail and the Blue Ridge Parkway.

The Land Trust Alliance, of which the Southern Appalachian Highlands Conservancy is a member, is a national conservation group based in Washington, D.C. that works to save the places people love by strengthening conservation throughout America. The Land Trust Accreditation Commission is an independent program of the Land Trust Alliance. More information on the accreditation program is available on the Commission’s website, www.landtrustaccreditation.org. Learn more about the Southern Appalachian Highlands Conservancy and how to become a member at www.appalachian.org.