

Practice 9G1 – Sample 1 Records Policy

[LAND TRUST] Records Management Policy

Adopted [DATE]

Revised [DATE]

Records management refers to the systematic control of information and documentation that is required in the administration and operation of an organization. By ensuring that valuable records are preserved and readily available, records management promotes economy and efficiency. Records management involves determining what records should be retained, how long those records need to be retained, who in the organization is responsible for the records, whether the records are to be retained in an office or transferred to an off-site archive, and whether the records should eventually be destroyed.

Official records constitute original text documents, photographs, recordings, faxes, emails or any form in which data are held that are created, received and used by an organization in carrying out its functions. Draft editions of records may be helpful in documenting the decision-making process, though they are generally not considered records.

The purpose of this records management policy is to ensure that authentic, reliable, complete and usable information and documentation that [LAND TRUST] generates and receives in the course of its business are properly managed and maintained in an effective and secure manner for as long as they are required. The objectives of this policy are to:

- Ensure the preservation of records of permanent value
- Maintain continued access to and readability of historic records
- Ensure that all records that have regulatory, statutory or business value are effectively stored and protected against damage, loss, tampering or unauthorized access for appropriate periods of time
- Uphold confidentiality of information pertaining to [LAND TRUST] documents and conditions on private properties

A. OFF-SITE STORAGE

The storage needs for each record type covered by this policy depend on factors such as the nature of the record, the type of media used and access requirements. [LAND TRUST]'s offices provide sufficient security and protection for most of our needs, but paper records that require longevity with a higher degree of protection from fire and environmental factors may be archived at appropriate facilities away from [LAND TRUST]'s offices. Unless otherwise indicated, the following location and procedures will be used for off-site archival storage:

LOCATION:

[FACILITY NAME]

[ADDRESS]

[PHONE NUMBER]

PROCEDURES:

- Designated manager (DM) of records at this site: [NAME], Office Manager
- Condition of stored materials is to be examined annually.
- Materials must be clearly identified with the name and title, including signature, of the creator and the date the record is created or updated.
- All material must be signed in and out with the DM. The DM will maintain a record sign-in and access sheet.
- Access to records at this site is limited to the Executive Director, Associate Director and Office Manager.

Additionally, in 2008, [LAND TRUST] implemented an on-line document storage system called [DATABASE]. The database, which is frequently backed up at an off-site location, serves as the main digital storage location for all [LAND TRUST] easement records. Those records, which require archived paper originals, will continue to be stored at [FACILITY NAME]. [LAND TRUST]'s Easement Program Director will serve as the administrator for [DATABASE]. Refer to the "[LAND TRUST] [DATABASE] Document Protocols" for details on [LAND TRUST]'s digital document storage procedures.

B. COMPUTER BACK-UP

All computers used by staff are automatically backed up every evening onto a central server housed in the annex building (with stewardship and education department offices).

C. ADMINISTRATIVE

1. Incorporation documents, bylaws, policies and other related documents
 - Final drafts of these records are maintained electronically on the [LAND TRUST] office computer network server and on [DATABASE].
 - A copy is kept on file in [LAND TRUST]'s offices.
 - These documents are scanned and stored electronically.
 - Office copies are on plain paper.
 - Access is not limited. The public must request access from the Executive or Associate Director.
2. Tax-exemption documents (application Form 1023, IRS determination letter, etc.)
 - Federal law requires that copies of these documents be held at [LAND TRUST]'s headquarters office and made available for public inspection upon request.
 - Originals of these records, on plain paper, are kept on file in [LAND TRUST]'s offices.
 - Copies are scanned and stored electronically both on [LAND TRUST]'s network and [DATABASE].
 - Access to office copies is not limited. The public must request access from the Executive or Associate Director.
3. Board meeting agendas, minutes and related documents

- The records document [LAND TRUST]'s decisions and organizational history. Pertinent records should be included, but care should be taken to retain only necessary information. The Office Manager has primary responsibility for copying these documents and maintaining records in the office.
- The current year's records are maintained in file drawers in [LAND TRUST]'s offices. At the end of the fiscal year, they are compiled and transferred to [FACILITY] and kept perpetually.
- Access is limited to staff and board members.
- The records are kept electronically on the [LAND TRUST] office server and [DATABASE].

D. EASEMENT and FEE TITLE DOCUMENTS

1. Easement and land acquisition documents

- After easement or fee title documents are signed, the title company has them recorded by the county. The county recorder returns the recorded original copy to [LAND TRUST]. Along with the easement or fee title document, title insurance policies and important documents created during pre-acquisition, such as critical correspondence, appraisals and Forms 8283 (if any), are also retained.
- When received from the county recorder, the original easement or fee title document is scanned and uploaded to [DATABASE]. The scanned file should be saved as a PDF document and should be called “(name of easement) recorded easement.pdf” or “(name of preserve) recorded preserve.pdf.”
- The original title insurance policy is also scanned and uploaded to [DATABASE].
- Critical correspondence, appraisals, Forms 8283 and other important documents created during pre-acquisition are scanned and uploaded to [DATABASE].
- The original easement or fee title document and the title insurance policy, critical correspondence, appraisals, Forms 8283 (if any) and surveys (if any) are then archived at [FACILITY]. Easement and fee-title documents include [LAND TRUST]'s address and phone number, landowner information and dates signed and recorded.
- Accessible by all staff and board members.
- Access by others requires approval from the Executive or Associate Director.

2. Other documents related to easement or land acquisitions

- Other transaction-related documents are stored in [DATABASE] in their final form so they can be used as reference materials for future transactions or to understand past easement or land transactions.
- Accessible by all staff and board members.
- Access by other requires approval from the Executive or Associate Director.

E. FINANCE

1. Source documents

- These records include items such as invoices, canceled checks and bank and investment statements. The Office Manager has primary responsibility for managing these documents.
- [LAND TRUST] files source documents for the current year alphabetically in a file cabinet drawer. At the end of each fiscal year, all source documents are put into file boxes and stored in [LAND TRUST]'s offices for at least seven years.
- These records are generally on plain paper.
- Access to these records is limited to [LAND TRUST] staff and board members.
- After seven years, the source documents will either be recycled or destroyed by the Office Manager.

2. Annual audits

- An independent accountant audits [LAND TRUST]'s finances annually. Board members receive copies of the final audit, and granting agencies are provided copies of the most recent audit on request.
- Audits are retained by the independent accountant for five to seven years, as professional standards require. [LAND TRUST] retains audits in perpetuity.
- Audits are printed on plain paper and kept in file boxes in [LAND TRUST]'s offices.
- These records are accessible to all persons, though prior communication with the Executive Director is required for access by the public.

3. Forms 990

- These forms are filed annually with the IRS. The public has a right to access portions of the forms and schedules.
- Forms for each year are filed in boxes with source documents as described in 1, above.
- Forms are printed on plain paper and will be kept for seven years.
- These records are accessible to all persons, though prior communication with the Executive Director is required for access by the public.
- After seven years, these records will either be recycled or destroyed by the Office Manager.

F. EASEMENT STEWARDSHIP

Beginning in 2014, all easement stewardship records will be uploaded to [DATABASE]. Each easement property has a set of document libraries titled "Property Records," "Monitoring Reports" and "Monitoring Photos" in which all stewardship and monitoring records will be stored. Refer to the "[LAND TRUST] [DATABASE] Document Protocols" for policies related to online easement records storage.

1. Baseline documentation

- Baseline documentation reports ("baselines") record the condition of easement properties when an easement is conveyed. They are created by the Stewardship Director or Associate, and the information should be available in perpetuity. Baselines have a standard format and include text, maps, acknowledgement of condition, aerial photographs and photographs. Baselines may play a vital role in

defending an easement in legal proceedings (see the “Easement Stewardship Handbook”).

- The landowner is given one copy. [LAND TRUST] keeps two hardcopies: one is stored in the Stewardship Director’s office for routine use, and one is archived at [FACILITY].
- The original baseline document is digitally scanned and uploaded to [DATABASE] and can be found in the Property Records library in the Primary References subdirectory for each corresponding easement site. Digital baseline documents directly uploaded to [DATABASE] may be stored as one complete document or stored in sections (main text, maps, aerial photos, photos), if necessary. Each separate section will be tagged as the baseline document for the easement.
- Prior to 2002, all copies were made on plain paper. Beginning in 2002, [LAND TRUST] copies are on acid-free, archival quality paper. Landowner copies are on plain paper.
- All baselines are labeled with standard title pages and covers, including property name and date.
- Accessible by all staff and board members. Access by others restricted without Executive Director, Associate Director or Stewardship Director approval.
- These documents should never be destroyed or altered.

2. Baseline photographs

- Photos are taken when the baseline is created and are retaken approximately every 10 years. For easements acquired prior to 2007, one set of standard 35mm photo negatives exists for each year they were taken. All negatives are archived at [FACILITY] in archival quality, acid-free sleeves. Sleeves are labeled with easement name and date.
- For easements acquired after 2007, baseline photos are taken using a digital 35mm camera and downloaded as JPEG files to the corresponding stewardship folder on the [LAND TRUST] office server.
- Digital baseline photos for each easement are embedded as JPEG files into the “Baseline Document Photo Sheet.” Descriptions of the photos and their locations are recorded on the “Baseline Document Photo Record.” Both the photo sheet and record are uploaded into the Property Records library under the Primary References subdirectory for the appropriate easement site on [DATABASE] and tagged as the Baseline Document.
- Access by Stewardship Director, Associate Director and Executive Director is allowed. Access by others is restricted without approval by one of the foregoing.
- These records should never be destroyed or altered.

3. Baseline original photographic prints

- For easements acquired prior to 2007, one set of 4x6 35mm prints exists for each year they were taken. All original prints are archived at [FACILITY] in archival quality, acid-free sleeves. Prints are labeled on the back with easement name, date taken, subject, photo location and number and photographer initials on archival quality labels.

- Photos taken between 2002 and 2007 were also scanned onto CD-R disks. CDs and an index print for photos taken are stored in binders in the Stewardship Director's office. Easement name and date are labeled directly onto the CD.
- Access by Stewardship Director, Executive Director and Associate Director is allowed. Access by others is restricted without approval by one of the foregoing.
- The prints should never be destroyed or altered.

4. Easement aerial photographs

- Prior to 2007, aerial photos were ordered from commercial aerial photography sources that maintain stock inventory for easy reordering. Many of these are large and would be awkward and expensive to store offsite. Copies of the aerial for each property, with infrastructure and pertinent information drawn on them, are included in the baseline documents stored at [FACILITY] and available for download on [DATABASE].
- Prior to 2007, original aerial photographs and all copies made are maintained in a metal, flat map file cabinet within [LAND TRUST]'s offices.
- Prior to 2007, original photographs are labeled by the aerial photograph company with its name and address. Property name, date and approximate scale are also labeled on each photograph.
- Beginning in 2007, aerial photographs are kept in digital format on the stewardship department's 250 GB external hard drive. These 400-scale Orthophotos were taken in 2004 and obtained from [COUNTY]. Aerial photo maps for each [LAND TRUST] easement property (with infrastructure and pertinent information digitally drawn on them using shape files) are created on GIS software using these Orthophotos and stored digitally on the [LAND TRUST] office server. Digital aerial maps created for reports (such as baseline and monitoring aerial maps) will be exported as a JPEG file and digitally stored on [DATABASE].
- Access is restricted to staff and board members. Original photographs do not leave [LAND TRUST]'s office and are never written on or altered.
- New aerial photographs for a given property are acquired approximately every 10 years in digital form.

5. Annual monitoring reports

- Each property encumbered by a [LAND TRUST] easement is monitored annually by the Stewardship Director or Associate. A standard paper form is used in the field to record observations, and copies of aerial photographs or maps with notations may be included. Monitoring reports may play a vital role in defending an easement in legal proceedings (see the "Easement Stewardship Handbook").
- Monitoring reports completed prior to 2009 are stored at [FACILITY] as a permanent record. Copies of reports are also stored in the stewardship office. Each monitoring report is labeled with property name, date and monitor name or initials.
- Monitoring reports (including field forms, maps, landowner letters and agency reports) completed after 2007 are digitally stored on [DATABASE] under the "Monitoring Reports" library for each corresponding easement and year. Copies of the reports are stored in the Stewardship Director's office.

- Accessible by staff and board members. Access by others restricted without Executive Director, Associate Director or Stewardship Director approval.
- Landowners are not given a copy of the monitoring report.

6. Annual monitoring photographs

- Photographs are taken during monitoring visits to document pertinent observations. Monitoring photographs may play a vital role in defending an easement in legal proceedings.
- For monitoring conducted prior to 2007, one set of original 4x6 35mm prints are stored at the stewardship office in archival quality, acid-free sleeves or file box. Each print is labeled with property name, date, subject and photographer's initials on archival quality labels.
- Pre-2007 annual monitoring negatives are stored at [FACILITY] in archival quality, acid-free sleeves in perpetuity. Sleeves are labeled with easement name and date photographs were taken.
- Photos taken between 2001 and 2007 are also scanned onto CD-R disks. CDs and an index print are stored in binders in the stewardship office for routine use. CDs are labeled with easement name and date photographs were taken. CDs are kept for their usual life. Duplicates are stored in the stewardship office.
- Beginning in 2007, annual monitoring photos are taken using a digital 35mm camera and stored on the [LAND TRUST] server under the corresponding Stewardship folder. Beginning in 2008, monitoring photos are stored on [DATABASE] under the "Monitoring Photos" library for the corresponding easement and year. All appropriate metadata for each photo will be entered into the database at time of upload. This includes the name of photo, date photo was taken, name of photographer, location of photo point, description of photo and image number.
- Accessible by staff and board members. Access by others restricted without Executive Director, Associate Director or Stewardship Director approval.
- Landowners are not given a copy of the prints.
- These materials should never be destroyed or altered.

7. Other easement stewardship records

- As described in the Easement Stewardship Handbook, the maintenance of other stewardship records for each easement property is critical to the defense of the easement over time. These documents include correspondence related to reserved rights, enforcement actions and amendments and associated documents.
- These documents are scanned and uploaded to [DATABASE].
- The originals are then archived at [FACILITY].
- Accessible by all staff and board members.
- Access by others requires approval from the Executive or Associate Director.

8. Easement Stewardship Handbook

- The handbook describes established policies and protocols for managing easements through time, including property evaluations, baseline and monitoring program guidelines and easement violation procedures. It is important to maintain the

handbook in order to establish formal, consistent practices, to document decisions regarding stewardship and to inform future staff members.

- A copy of the handbook is archived at [FACILITY]. One copy is located in the Stewardship Director's office for routine use. It is also stored digitally on [DATABASE].
- The copy at [FACILITY] is created on acid-free, archival quality paper. The office copy is on plain paper.
- The handbook is labeled with [LAND TRUST]'s name and address and title. Pages are printed with date of creation in the header.
- Access not limited.
- These documents should never be destroyed. Updated versions of the handbook will be sent to [FACILITY] as soon as practical. Older versions will be retained with the newer version.

G. FEE LAND STEWARDSHIP

Beginning in 2014, all fee property stewardship records will be uploaded to [DATABASE]. Each fee property has a set of document libraries titled "Property Records," "Monitoring Reports" and "Monitoring Photos" in which all stewardship and monitoring records will be stored. Refer to the "[LAND TRUST] [DATABASE] Document Protocols" for policies related to online fee title records storage.

1. Management plans

- Management plans for each fee property are created under the direction of the Stewardship Director or Associate, and the information should be available for the duration of the plan plus five years. Management plans may vary in format and length, but include text, maps, aerial photographs and photographs. They are critical to establish and to maintain the conservation goals of the property (see the "Fee Property Stewardship Handbook").
- [LAND TRUST] keeps two hardcopies: one is stored in the Stewardship Director's office for routine use, and one is archived at [FACILITY].
- The management plan is also digitally scanned and uploaded to [DATABASE] and can be found in the Property Records library in the Primary References subdirectory for each corresponding fee-property site. Digital management plan documents directly uploaded to [DATABASE] may be stored as one complete document or stored in sections (main text, maps, aerial photos, photos), if necessary. Each separate section will be tagged as the current management plan for the property.
- Prior to 2002, all copies were made on plain paper. Beginning in 2002, [LAND TRUST] copies are on acid-free, archival quality paper.
- All management plans are labeled with standard title pages and covers, including property name and date.
- Accessible by all staff and board members. Access by others restricted without Executive Director, Associate Director or Stewardship Director approval.
- These documents may be destroyed five years after the adoption of a new management plan or update to the existing plan.

2. Fee property inspection reports

- Each fee property is inspected annually by the Stewardship Director or Associate. A standard paper form is used in the field to record observations, and copies of aerial photographs or maps with notations may be included. Inspection reports may play a vital role in defending a fee property in legal proceedings (see the “Fee Property Stewardship Handbook”).
 - Inspection reports completed prior to 2009 are stored at [FACILITY] as a permanent record. Copies of reports are also stored in the stewardship office. Each inspection report is labeled with property name, date and monitor name or initials.
 - Inspection reports (including field forms, maps and photos) completed after 2007 are digitally stored on [DATABASE] under the “Inspection Reports” library for each corresponding fee property and year. Copies of the reports are stored in the Stewardship Director’s office.
 - Accessible by staff and board members. Access by others restricted without Executive Director, Associate Director or Stewardship Director approval.
3. Other fee land stewardship records
- As described in the Fee Property Stewardship Handbook, the maintenance of other stewardship records for each fee property may be critical to the defense of the preserve over time. These documents may include correspondence with abutters, tax and municipal records and legal defense actions.
 - These documents are scanned and uploaded to [DATABASE].
 - The originals are then archived at [FACILITY].
 - Accessible by all staff and board members.
 - Access by others requires approval from the Executive or Associate Director.
4. Fee Property Stewardship Handbook
- The handbook describes established policies and protocols for managing [LAND TRUST] fee properties through time, including property evaluations, management plan creation, inspection program guidelines and legal defense procedures. It is important to maintain the handbook in order to establish formal, consistent practices, to document decisions regarding stewardship and to inform future staff members.
 - A copy of the handbook is archived at [FACILITY]. One copy is located in the Stewardship Director’s office for routine use. It is also stored digitally on [DATABASE].
 - The copy at [FACILITY] is created on acid-free, archival quality paper. The office copy is on plain paper.
 - The handbook is labeled with [LAND TRUST]’s name and address and title. Pages are printed with date of creation in the header.
 - Access not limited.
 - These documents should never be destroyed. Updated versions of the handbook will be sent to [FACILITY] as soon as practical. Older versions will be retained with the newer version.