

Land Conservation Careers

Do you want to get into the land trust field but don't know where to start?

Here are some suggestions from numerous land trusts around the country, including Colorado Open Lands.

Careers in Land Conservation

We receive calls periodically from individuals who would like to shift into a conservation career or get more in-depth experience in land conservation techniques. We are often asked what qualifications might make a person more competitive as they prepare to make this transition. Following are some suggestions that may be helpful to you.

The nature of this field means that there is a range of skills and/or training that are used. Bear in mind, however, that no one can or should try to become an expert in all of the following!

Academic training has a great impact on how a person approaches conservation work. A solid understanding of the different ways land conservation is accomplished, and a commitment to conservation as a philosophy and a cause is also important.

Please note: The following lists are compiled from a discussion among numerous land trust representatives and, as such, are broader than what Colorado Open Lands alone might look for in a potential candidate.

One approach might be to build a solid base in one discipline and then learn political, managerial, or public relations type of skills on the job. Perhaps a better suggestion, however, is to pursue a skill set that most interests you, and look for niches in the land conservation field for that specialty. No one should load up on courses and skills they don't really enjoy just to get into a broader field of interest.

Coursework, training and skills

- Fundraising
- Public relations
- Negotiation and communication
- Grass roots organizing
- Listening
- Team building
- Creative problem-solving
- Real estate law
- Estate tax law and planning
- Conservation easement appraisals
- Accounting
- Business law
- Environmental law
- Legal research and writing
- GIS/mapping
- Site planning / land development
- Rural planning
- Landscape architecture
- Land use controls
- Political acumen
- Government relations, policy and administration
- Non-profit organization management
- Agriculture
- Conservation biology / ecology / botany
- Wetlands assessment / biology
- Forest management

Some suggested schools or programs (in alphabetical order):

- Colorado Christian University - non-profit business
- Duke University - Nicholson School of the Environment
- Lewis and Clark College - Northwestern School of Law
- Regis University - non-profit business
- University College and Sturm College of Law Denver
- University of Memphis - Business College
- University of Michigan - School of Natural Resources and Environment
- University of Oregon - Natural Resource and Environmental Law
- University of Wisconsin - Madison - Land Resources Program
- Vermont Law School
- Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies
- Yale School of Organization and Management