



*Campaign to*  
**CONSERVE, CONNECT,  
& SUSTAIN**



Western Reserve Land Conservancy

land • people • community



# Conserve. Connect. Sustain.

*A \$45 million fundraising campaign to support Western Reserve Land Conservancy.*

At Western Reserve Land Conservancy, we provide the people of our region with essential natural assets through land conservation and restoration. We envision thriving, prosperous communities nourished by vibrant natural lands, working farms, and healthy cities.

For over 35 years, we have improved landscapes and environments, turning polluted into prosperous, vacant into vibrant, fallow into fertile, threatened into thriving.

We **conserve** lands and all the benefits they provide.

We **connect** people with their environments.

We **sustain** our landscapes now and for future generations.

In 2018, to support this important work and accelerate the pace of conservation, we embarked on an ambitious effort to raise \$45 million in a comprehensive fundraising campaign to **Conserve**, **Connect**, & **Sustain**.

**We cannot do this alone. We need your support.**



*Vermilion Main Street Beach*



*Farm Preservation*



*Getting Ohioans Outside*



*Conservation Easement Landowners, 2013*



*Signature Parks and Preserves*



*Reforest Our City*



*Sherwin Preserve*



*Oberlin Preserve*



*Bringing Communities Together*



*Maintaining Cleveland Trees*





# why now?

**Northeast Ohio boasts prime soils, healthy hardwood forests, picturesque river valleys, bustling urban centers, and the Lake Erie shoreline.**

**In order to preserve these resources, we need to protect their lifeblood – the land.**

Conserving land and water is critical to addressing some of our most pressing societal challenges: climate change, improved human health, depleted natural resources, and more. Western Reserve Land Conservancy's campaign to **Conserve, Connect, & Sustain** builds on our past successes and gives us a platform to increase the pace, quality, and permanence of conservation. We are creating a healthy and secure future for the people who live in our region. With your support, the Land Conservancy will:

- Increase the rate of land conservation, in rural, suburban, and underserved urban communities.
- Address environmental inequities through green placemaking.
- Mitigate the effects of climate change through land conservation and restoration.
- Protect the natural landscapes, working farms, and green spaces in all environments.

**Western Reserve Land Conservancy – Ohio's largest land trust – is nationally accredited and a leader in land conservation.**

**Every conservation easement landowner, donor, supporter, trustee, and employee of Western Reserve Land Conservancy is part of a family of like-minded conservationists, and we hope everyone will support our Conserve, Connect, & Sustain fundraising campaign.**





Western Reserve Land Conservancy - founded in the Chagrin River Valley in 1987 - is the result of the merger of 13 conservation organizations to create Ohio's largest land trust and accelerate the pace of conservation.

858

PROPERTIES PROTECTED

525

LANDOWNERS

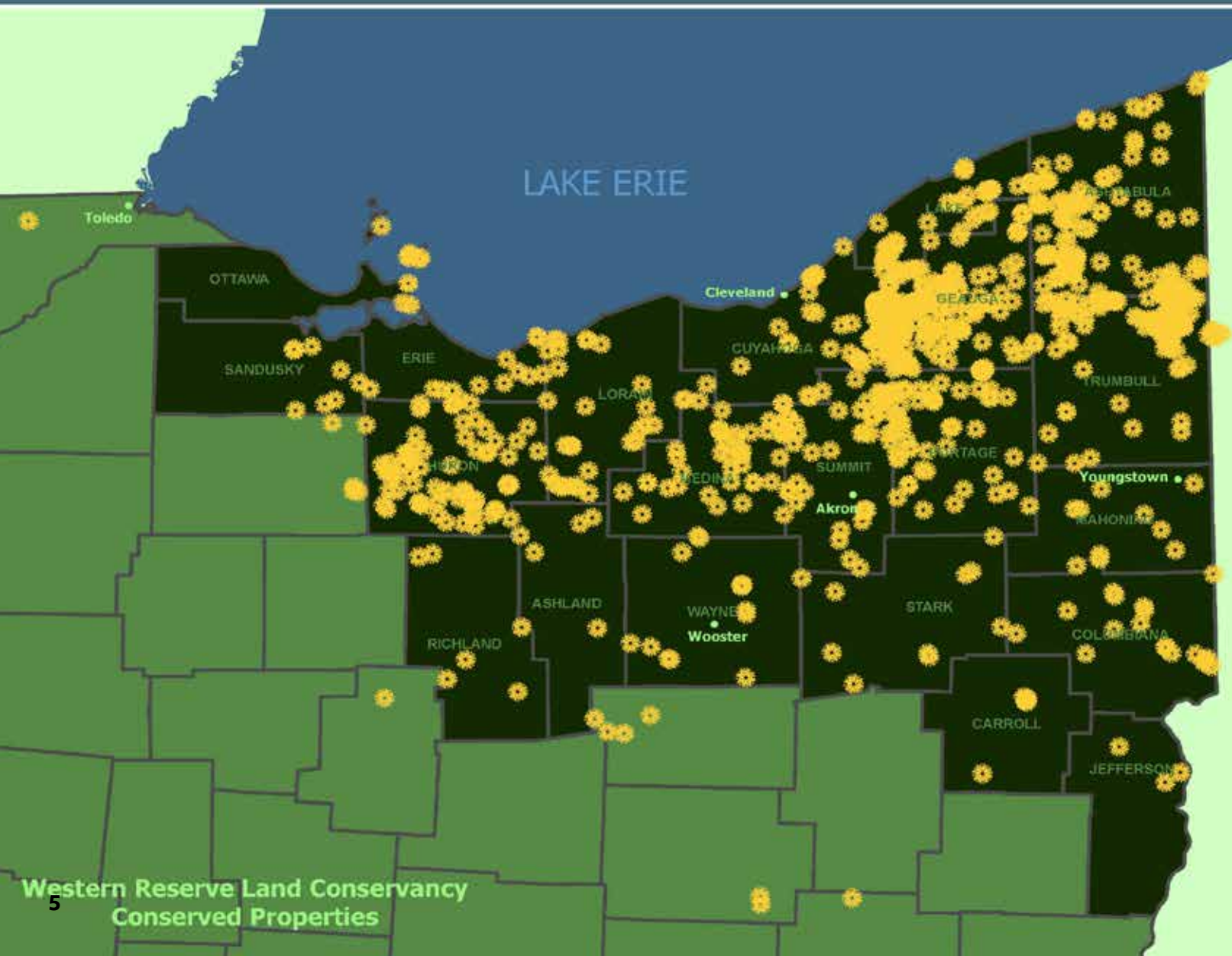
68,287

ACRES CONSERVED

28

COUNTIES WHERE WE WORK

\*as of June 2022



## Conserve

Maximize conservation and restoration through established or emergent strategic strengths.

## Connect

Connect people to nature and apply strategic strengths to new initiatives.

### Natural Areas Conservation

### Farmland Conservation

### Reforest Our City

### Parks and Preserves

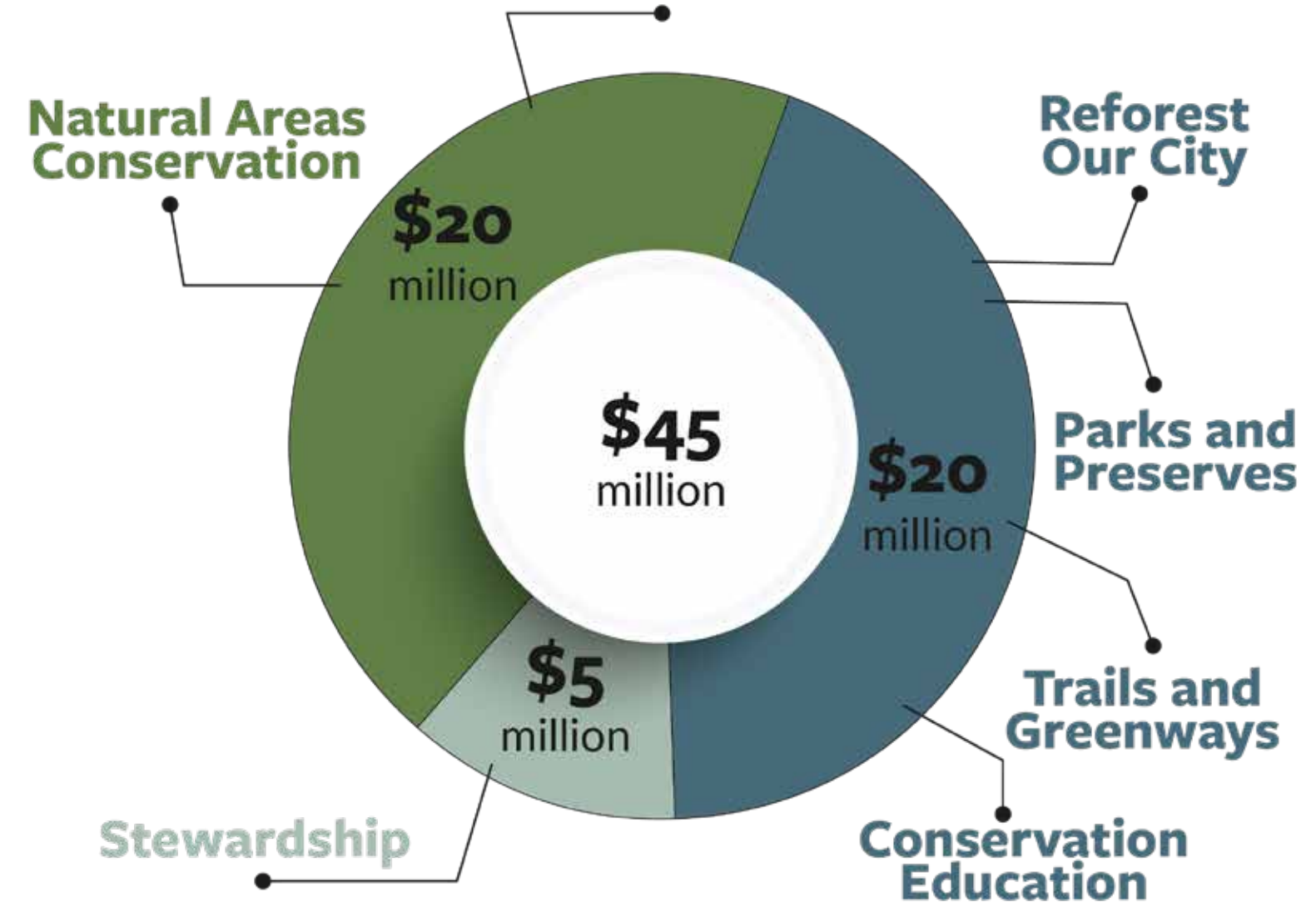
### Trails and Greenways

### Conservation Education

### Stewardship

## Sustain

Create harmony internally and externally to strengthen the organization.





# why conserve?

**Our health is intricately linked to the health of our environment.**

**Being in nature contributes to a person's physical, psychological, and emotional well-being.**

**Conserved land helps combat the effects of climate change by cleaning air and water and reducing the effects of urban heat islands.**

**We are losing a football field's worth of natural area every 30 seconds.**

**The most basic, essential, and effective way to keep nature healthy is to protect more land and water.**

**Nearly all of Ohio's farmland remains unprotected, so the rich soils on these properties could one day be underneath houses or shopping centers.**

**Our region has more than 400 unique species, including 16 federally endangered and 41 federally threatened species.**

**"The farm in Rock Creek has been in my family since 1861. Since I have no heirs to leave the property to, I wanted to find an organization to protect this special piece of land. Western Reserve Land Conservancy is that organization. The passion the staff has for the mission is extraordinary, and they have become like family to me."**

**Bill Abell**  
Conservation Easement Landowner







## *a legacy of conservation.*

First established in the late 19th century, conservation easements - voluntary legal agreements that permanently limit certain uses of the land to protect its conservation values - were not widely applied on private and public lands until the 1980s.

Because we continue to partner with the first generation of conservation easement landowners, we have a tremendous opportunity to work with the same people who originally established land protections to make a financial commitment that will continue the legacy of their conservation efforts.

Every conservation easement landowner can participate in our comprehensive fundraising campaign at some level. Prioritizing this investment will have long term benefits that will protect these lands now and for future generations.

**Will you support your conservation legacy by contributing to our Conserve, Connect, & Sustain fundraising campaign?**



# why connect?

**Healthy places lead to healthy people.**

**Trees are a vital resource in urban areas, cooling city streets, removing pollutants from the air, improving public health and safety, and boosting property values.**

**Marginalized communities deserve an equitable opportunity to experience the values of nature.**

**Scientists say we need to permanently protect at least 30 percent of our lands, rivers, and oceans by 2030 in order to address species loss, the effects of climate change, and fair access to natural areas.**

**Building strong partnerships with neighbors, local businesses, faith organizations, nonprofits, and government agencies is key to revitalizing a community.**

**Children today spend less time outdoors than any other generation, devoting only four to seven minutes to unstructured outdoor play per day.**

**“When the Land Conservancy turned a big empty lot into a park, it was a huge blessing. For one thing, it is beautiful. It added a lot to our street. It will stop a lot of dumping of garbage. And I finally have a park that I can walk to. It might even change some of my neighbors’ minds who were talking about moving away from the neighborhood and inspire everyone to improve their own properties. It is a very good sight for sore eyes.”**

**Arnita Bates**  
Cleveland resident since 1973



# thriving communities.

In 2011, the Land Conservancy founded Thriving Communities, a program designed to revitalize properties left vacant and abandoned in Cleveland. Many of the hardest hit urban neighborhoods have been historically marginalized and discriminated against. The program identified areas where urban blight was at its worst, and partnered with local, state, and federal agencies, small business owners, neighbors, and nonprofits to secure funding to repurpose abandoned properties for positive community use.

**Today, Thriving Communities strives to address urban challenges through several key strategies:**

- Identifying vacant and abandoned properties through neighborhood property surveys;
- Repurposing vacant land left behind after blight removal activities;
- Creating new parks and greenspaces to promote equitable access to nature;
- Helping residents acquire vacant land adjacent to their homes through our Side Yard program;
- Reforesting neighborhoods to enable the benefits realized by a healthy tree canopy.

To date, Western Reserve Land Conservancy has raised over \$900 million in local, state, and federal funding over the last decade to address urban blight. In Cleveland, we've helped demolish and repurpose thousands of vacant and abandoned properties that were magnets for illegal dumping and criminal activities. We've planted and distributed nearly 15,000 trees in an effort to rebuild Cleveland's urban forest. We have created new public parks and preserves in urban areas with limited access to nature and the benefits it provides.

Western Reserve Land Conservancy is unique in its ability to complete projects on natural, agricultural, and urban landscapes alike. Though our mission and programming are complex, our sophisticated and creative staff works alongside passionate and visionary partners to tackle the most pressing conservation priorities of our region. We think boldly and are willing to take risks to accomplish innovative projects that expand the definition of land protection and benefit everyone. Our Conserve, Connect, & Sustain campaign provides us with the platform to share those successes and secure the funds necessary to continue this work at an accelerated pace.



# green placemaking.

Healing and closure have come for the residents of Cleveland's Mt. Pleasant neighborhood and the families of 11 murdered women whose remains were found in a dilapidated house on Imperial Avenue.

In 2016, at the request of project partners, the local community, and the families of the deceased, Western Reserve Land Conservancy stepped in to help establish a memorial garden for the women by facilitating site acquisition of the two vacant parcels adjacent to that on which the killer's house once stood. Together, we built an everlasting memorial and community green space, a catalyst for transformation.

The Garden of Eleven Angels is a much needed investment in a community that has experienced tremendous tragedy both acutely in the form of the murders that occurred on the site, and more broadly in the systemic disinvestment and gradual depopulation of the community.

It is a great example of how our Thriving Communities program has made a difference in Cleveland's urban landscape. At multiple sites in the Mt. Pleasant, Buckeye-Shaker, Woodland Hills, and Kinsman neighborhoods of Cleveland's east side, we have built partnerships, fostered relationships, and worked collaboratively with community development corporations and other partners to revitalize the area.

The Ubuntu Gathering Place, a new community park adjacent to the East End Neighborhood House in the Buckeye-Woodhill neighborhood, will soon be open to the public. "Ubuntu" is a Nguni Bantu term meaning "humanity," sometimes best translated as "I am because we are." It symbolizes the powerful connection that can exist between people who are open to seeing each other in each other.

The Derek Owens Memorial Park commemorates the life of Cleveland Police Officer Derek Owens, who was killed in the line of duty while investigating criminal activity at a vacant house on Parkview Avenue. The Land Conservancy partnered with the Cleveland Police Foundation and others to acquire and demolish the property and build a neighborhood park for local children and their families to enjoy.

We employ our land conservation and restoration expertise in the City of Cleveland to rejuvenate communities, improve human health, and rebuild the urban forest. By supporting our Conserve, Connect, & Sustain fundraising campaign, we can ensure that this transformative work continues.




**Imperial Avenue, 2009**



**Imperial Avenue, 2022**





“The opportunity to provide trees for underserved communities in our region attracted us to the work of the Land Conservancy. We want everyone to do their part to ensure a bright future for the next 100 years by taking care of the land, water, and air that surrounds us.”

Dee Haslam

Managing and principal partner, Cleveland Browns  
Major donor, Western Reserve Land Conservancy

# reforesting our city.

In 2015, the City of Cleveland issued the Cleveland Tree Plan, a comprehensive look at Cleveland's dwindling tree canopy and what needs to be done to reforest the Forest City. The findings are concerning: Cleveland has lost 5 percent of its tree cover from 2011 to 2017. Similarly sized cities like Pittsburgh, Washington, D.C., and Cincinnati all boast a healthy urban tree canopy well above 30 percent; as of 2020, Cleveland's tree canopy coverage was only 18 percent and declining. We need to plant more than 28,000 trees each year to meet the goal of 30 percent tree coverage by 2040.

## Western Reserve Land Conservancy is a leader in this effort.

- We chair the Cleveland Tree Coalition, a collaborative group of public, private, and community stakeholders who have partnered with the City of Cleveland to rebuild our urban forest. This positions Western Reserve Land Conservancy as a key player in advocating for funding, policy changes, and broad public awareness of the benefits of trees.
- We have planted and distributed more than 15,000 trees throughout Cleveland.
- We train local Tree Stewards (more than 300 and counting), community volunteers who plant, care for, and maintain trees in and around their neighborhoods.
- We find opportunities to plant trees in areas that guarantee their best opportunity to survive and thrive.

But our work is just beginning. With the support of our **Conserve, Connect, & Sustain** campaign we will:

- Continue leading coalition partners in the planting, distributing and maintenance of more than 28,000 trees each year;
- Expand our Tree Steward training program to include more volunteers from historically marginalized communities;
- Host more tree plantings in and around Cleveland;
- Create lasting partnerships with local businesses, community development corporations, faith institutions, local and city governments, neighbors, and friends to rebuild Cleveland's depleted urban forest.



# why sustain?

Once we conserve a property, our work has only just begun.

Stewardship is critically important to our mission because it is the way we keep our promise to landowners and future generations that our conserved properties will remain protected forever.

Landowners who have conserved their land have taken the first step. We need their continued support to ensure their sacrifice and commitment last forever.

Every year, our Land Stewards visit each one of the 858 properties we have protected.

To uphold the easements in perpetuity, we need to raise enough money to sustain our stewardship and legal defense efforts.

Conservation easement stewardship fosters lasting relationships with our partners and landowners and ensures that the conserved land in our region is truly protected in perpetuity.

**Lend your support to land conservation TODAY.**







## *a message from our CEO and campaign co-chairs*

The natural landscapes that make Ohio special are permanently protected now and for future generations. On family farms stretching back generations, we supplement and sustain fertile soils. In communities plagued by blight and decay, we partner with neighbors to connect and change. At Western Reserve Land Conservancy, we describe our work in one word: Transformative.

We know these projects will not be easy or quick. We take on this work knowing that our involvement begins now, and extends far into the future. Our success depends on the trust and partnerships we build with landowners, local and state governments, business owners, nonprofits, neighbors, and donors like you.

The transformation has begun and continues today and in the future. Join us in making our vision of thriving, prosperous communities nourished by vibrant natural lands, working farms, and healthy cities a reality.



**Rich Cochran**  
President and CEO



**Ruth Swetland Eppig**  
Co-Chair, Campaign Cabinet



**Bill Mulligan**  
Co-chair, Campaign Cabinet

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Kevin Connor  
Bill Hlavin  
Betsy Juliano  
Scott Mueller  
Mitchell Schneider  
Jim Spira  
Loyal Wilson

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Land Conservancy**

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