

Land Trusts and Climate in 2019: An Assessment of Progress and Needs in Northern New England

Land trusts play a critical role in the response to climate change. In September 2019, the Land Trust Alliance and Open Space Institute surveyed 100 land trusts in northern New England to assess their level of engagement on climate change and needs going forward. 54 land trusts responded. Here, we present the major findings of that survey.

Progress Reported

How has land trusts' ability to address climate issues changed in the past three years?

In 2014, 28% of land trusts in northern New England were aware of climate datasets and only 18% had integrated climate into their land protection priorities. **In 2019, 85% of land trusts surveyed say they understand their role in climate resilience, and 60% report that strategic conservation planning has become more climate focused.**

Land trusts are saying...

"We are devoting the centerfold of our annual report on how conservation can address climate change, illustrated by our strategic conservation priority mapping and priority values related to climate."

"We partnered with the local Farmers Market to sponsor a Local Food Fair that emphasized food resiliency and energy conservation."

"We adapted climate resilience maps to become our dominant maps in town halls and libraries showcasing our work."

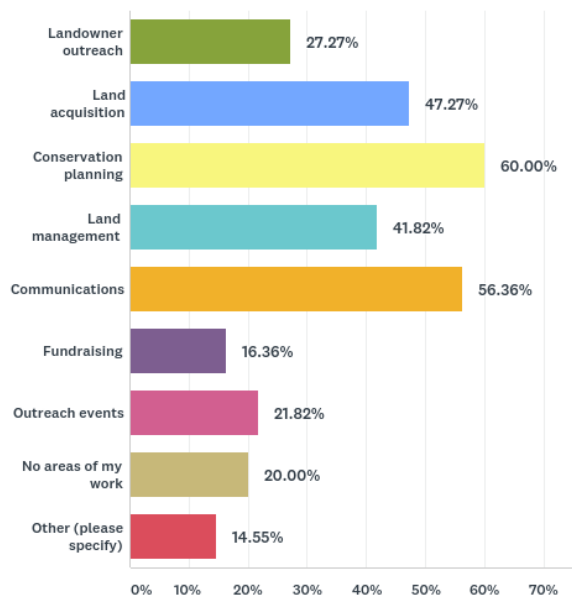
"We're pretty low on the learning curve. It's not (yet) a significant part of our focus."

"We're finding that many land-owners respond positively to the information that they own and might consider conserving climate resilient land."

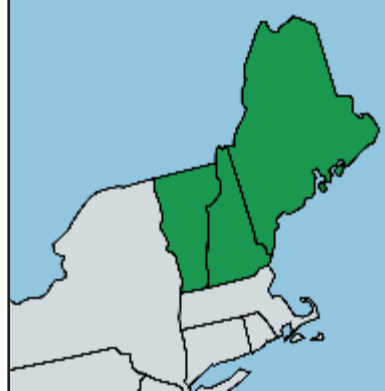
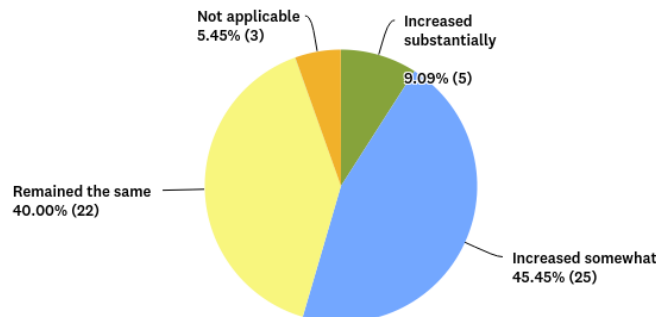
"Most of our climate change activities are focused on forest health, management, and conservation of resilient lands."

"In relation to creating wildlife corridors, we discuss both the adaptive benefits and mitigation benefits."

Which areas of your work have become more climate-focused?



How has your organization's confidence in protecting resilient areas changed?



By the numbers:
Over the last three years...

85% report that **organizational awareness and understanding** of climate change has increased.

60% report that **strategic conservation planning** is more climate focused.

75% report increased ability to **communicate with supporters and partners** about conservation and climate change.

55% report an increased ability to **protect resilient areas**.

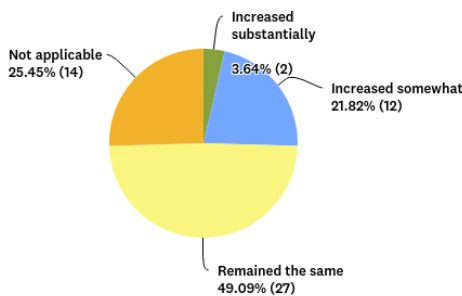
Climate Needs Reported by Land Trusts

What resources do land trusts need to better address climate change in the future?

*"All land trusts have a natural synergy with climate change adaptation, but to really mainstream adaptation within our organization's workings would require **funding**."*
- Survey Respondent

Above all else, respondents identified funding as the most needed resource, and indicated a variety of ways that additional funding would advance their climate work: acquiring climate resilient lands, implementing adaptive land management practices, integrating climate into the organization's strategic plan, and investing more in climate communications.

How has your ability to access funding sources for climate work changed?



How can climate trainings and resources be improved?

"We need more 1:1 support to use these tools effectively at our organization."

"New funding sources for resilient land conservation (public or private foundations)."

"Updates on impacts to specific species we can communicate to the public about."

"More examples of groups that incorporated climate messaging and made new donor connections to support the broader work."

Top 3 resources land trusts need to increase climate work:



Funding



Mapping Tools

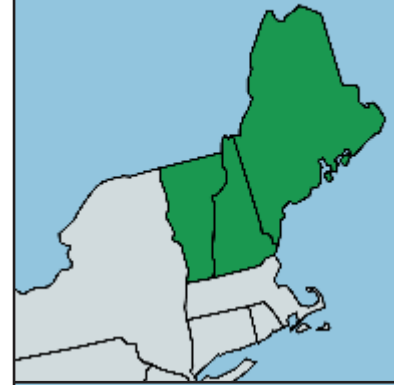


Case Studies

Top 5 climate topics of interest for land trusts

*In order of percentage of respondents who are **interested** or **very interested** in these topics:*

- 1. Plant and wildlife adaptation** (78% interested or very interested)
- 2. Stewardship for climate** (76% interested or very interested)
- 3. Climate communications** (65% interested or very interested)
- 4. Freshwater flooding** (58% interested or very interested)
- 5. Carbon mitigation** (57% interested or very interested)



There's still more work to be done...

25% reported an increased ability to access new funding sources to advance climate resilience in the last 3 years.

49% reported that this ability had remained the same.

75% of all respondents had participated in some form of **climate training** in the past three years.

Of the 54 organizations that responded to the *Climate Progress and Needs for Land Trusts in New England* survey, 50% operate in ME, 43% operate in NH, and 12% operate in VT. This survey was distributed with the help of the Maine Land Trust Network, the New Hampshire Land Trust Coalition, and the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board and generously supported by Jane's Trust Foundation.