Narrative: Land trusts work with private landowners to protect important habitat and open space. In the slides that follow, we discuss findings of a census conducted every five years by the Land Trust Alliance.
Narrative: First, let’s take a look at conservation easements: the bread and butter of land trusts. Easements permanently protect private land, but sometimes allow limited housing, water use, and other development. This map shows the location of easements around the country, but because the parcels tend to be small and scattered, it’s hard to see them on a national map.

Source: National Conservation Easement Database (Conservation Biology Institute, The Trust for Public Land, Ducks Unlimited, Defenders of Wildlife and NatureServe)

URL: http://app.databasin.org/app/pages/datasetPage.jsp?id=cfc20244ec6b4f739cce35d55da240ce

Notes: The National Conservation Easement Database (NCED) is a collaborative venture to compile easement records (both spatial and tabular) from land trusts and public agencies throughout the United States in a single, up-to-date, sustainable, GIS compatible, online source. The goal of the NCED is to provide a comprehensive picture of the privately owned conservation easement lands, recognizing their contribution to America’s natural heritage, a vibrant economy, and healthy communities. Conservation easements are legal agreements voluntarily entered into between landowners and conservation entities (agencies or land trusts) for the express purpose of protecting certain societal values such as open space or vital wildlife habitats. In some cases landowners transfer "development rights" for
direct payment or for federal and state tax benefits.
Narrative: If we zoom into a place like Colorado, the easements are easier to make out.

Source: National Conservation Easement Database (Conservation Biology Institute, The Trust for Public Land, Ducks Unlimited, Defenders of Wildlife and NatureServe)

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Narrative: And here’s Montana.

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Narrative: By the end of 2010, land trusts had conserved some 47 million acres, an area more than double the size of all the national parks in the contiguous United States. The acreage has increased by 10 million acres since 2005 and it has increased by more than 100 percent since 2000, when 23 million acres were protected.

Source: Land Trust Alliance
URL: http://www.landtrustalliance.org/land-trusts/land-trust-census
Notes: The Land Trust Alliance collected data from January to September 2011 for the 2010 Census, beginning with a survey sent to about 1,760 land conservation organizations in the United States by email and postal mail. All respondents were asked to report on their land conservation and organizational activities as of December 31, 2010. More than 950 land trusts responded directly, a 55% response rate, in line with previous Census years. To ensure consistency with past Census data, we collected additional information by email, telephone and from state land trust associations. For land trusts for which no new information was available, we carried forward data from the 2005 and 2000 Census years.
Narrative: Land trusts use a variety of methods to protect land, including buying property outright, managing conservation easements, or helping other organizations acquire properties or enact deed restrictions. This graphic shows that easements, which generally cost much less than purchases, have been making up an increasing share of the activity of state and local land trusts.

Source: Land Trust Alliance
URL: http://www.landtrustalliance.org/land-trusts/land-trust-census
Notes: Acres conserved by other means refers to land protected as a result of the activities of the land trust, but which the land trust did not directly acquire in fee or under easement. Common examples include negotiating or preparing for acquisition by other organizations or agencies, or deed restrictions.
Land trusts are found in virtually every state, but the highest concentrations are in California, the Northeast, and Upper Midwest. In the West, Colorado and Washington each have more than three dozen land trusts, but many inland states, such as Nevada, Utah, Wyoming, and New Mexico, have fewer than 10.

Source: Land Trust Alliance
URL: http://www.landtrustalliance.org/land-trusts/land-trust-census
Notes: The Land Trust Alliance collected data from January to September 2011 for the 2010 Census, beginning with a survey sent to about 1,760 land conservation organizations in the United States by email and postal mail. All respondents were asked to report on their land conservation and organizational activities as of December 31, 2010. More than 950 land trusts responded directly, a 55% response rate, in line with previous Census years. To ensure consistency with past Census data, we collected additional information by email, telephone and from state land trust associations. For land trusts for which no new information was available, we carried forward data from the 2005 and 2000 Census years.
Narrative: This map shows the change in the number of land trusts from 2000 to 2010. You can see that California was far and away the leader, with 65 new land trusts created. Arizona gained 12 in the first decade of the 21st century, while Oregon and Washington each added 8.

Source: Land Trust Alliance
URL: http://www.landtrustalliance.org/land-trusts/land-trust-census
Notes: The Land Trust Alliance collected data from January to September 2011 for the 2010 Census, beginning with a survey sent to about 1,760 land conservation organizations in the United States by email and postal mail. All respondents were asked to report on their land conservation and organizational activities as of December 31, 2010. More than 950 land trusts responded directly, a 55% response rate, in line with previous Census years. To ensure consistency with past Census data, we collected additional information by email, telephone and from state land trust associations. For land trusts for which no new information was available, we carried forward data from the 2005 and 2000 Census years.
Now let’s turn from the number of land trusts to the acres they protect. Once again, California leads the nation, with more than 2.3 million acres protected. Out West, Colorado and Montana have protected more than 1 million acres; back East, Maine, New York, and Virginia have the most acreage protected by land trusts.

Source: Land Trust Alliance
URL: http://www.landtrustalliance.org/land-trusts/land-trust-census
Notes: The Land Trust Alliance collected data from January to September 2011 for the 2010 Census, beginning with a survey sent to about 1,760 land conservation organizations in the United States by email and postal mail. All respondents were asked to report on their land conservation and organizational activities as of December 31, 2010. More than 950 land trusts responded directly, a 55% response rate, in line with previous Census years. To ensure consistency with past Census data, we collected additional information by email, telephone and from state land trust associations. For land trusts for which no new information was available, we carried forward data from the 2005 and 2000 Census years.
The figures in the preceding slide show raw acreage totals, but this map displays what percent of each state is protected by land trusts. Using this measure, many smaller Northeast states stand out. In Vermont, 10 percent of the state is protected by land trusts; in Maine, it’s 8 percent. Out West, where many states are dominated by federal land, the figures are much lower, with California and Colorado leading the way at about 2 percent.

Source: Land Trust Alliance
URL: http://www.landtrustalliance.org/land-trusts/land-trust-census
Notes: The Land Trust Alliance collected data from January to September 2011 for the 2010 Census, beginning with a survey sent to about 1,760 land conservation organizations in the United States by email and postal mail. All respondents were asked to report on their land conservation and organizational activities as of December 31, 2010. More than 950 land trusts responded directly, a 55% response rate, in line with previous Census years. To ensure consistency with past Census data, we collected additional information by email, telephone and from state land trust associations. For land trusts for which no new information was available, we carried forward data from the 2005 and 2000 Census years.
Narrative: How has the acreage protected changed over the past decade? The greatest increase was in Maine, where nearly 1.7 million acres were added. Out West, California, Colorado, and Montana saw the biggest rise.

Source: Land Trust Alliance
URL: http://www.landtrustalliance.org/land-trusts/land-trust-census
Notes: The Land Trust Alliance collected data from January to September 2011 for the 2010 Census, beginning with a survey sent to about 1,760 land conservation organizations in the United States by email and postal mail. All respondents were asked to report on their land conservation and organizational activities as of December 31, 2010. More than 950 land trusts responded directly, a 55% response rate, in line with previous Census years. To ensure consistency with past Census data, we collected additional information by email, telephone and from state land trust associations. For land trusts for which no new information was available, we carried forward data from the 2005 and 2000 Census years.
Land trusts come in all shapes and sizes, but there is a growing movement in the field to accredit the organizations so they are following best practices for finance and governance. Since 2008, more than 135 land trusts have been accredited. About two-thirds of land trusts that are eligible but haven’t yet applied for accreditation say they are planning to do so.

Source: Land Trust Alliance
URL: http://www.landtrustalliance.org/land-trusts/land-trust-census
Notes: “The Land Trust Alliance recognizes the achievements of the 135 land trusts that have earned accreditation as of September 2011. 133 of the 135 accredited land trusts responded to the 2010 Census. A look at their responses as a group demonstrates that accreditation is achievable by groups from a wide variety of backgrounds.”
This graphic shows that accredited land trusts only account for about one-eighth of the acres protected, but a current applicant for accreditation—The Nature Conservancy—makes up about one-third of the total acres.

Source: Land Trust Alliance
URL: http://www.landtrustalliance.org/land-trusts/land-trust-census
Notes: “As a group, accredited land trusts have protected more than 5 million acres of land. This represents 32% of the total acres protected by state and local land trusts, and 12% of the total acres protected by all land trusts (state, local and national). At the same time, we also recognize the hard work and dedication of the many land trusts on the accreditation path. According to the 2010 Census, 65% of eligible land trusts who have not yet applied for accreditation say that they are preparing to do so.”
Narrative: Many of the accredited land trusts are found in the West, with California, Colorado, New Mexico, and Nevada leading the way in the region.

Source: Land Trust Alliance
URL: http://www.landtrustalliance.org/land-trusts/land-trust-census
Notes: The Land Trust Alliance collected data from January to September 2011 for the 2010 Census, beginning with a survey sent to about 1,760 land conservation organizations in the United States by email and postal mail. All respondents were asked to report on their land conservation and organizational activities as of December 31, 2010. More than 950 land trusts responded directly, a 55% response rate, in line with previous Census years. To ensure consistency with past Census data, we collected additional information by email, telephone and from state land trust associations. For land trusts for which no new information was available, we carried forward data from the 2005 and 2000 Census years.