

THE DESCHUTES LAND TRUST & CHARITABLE GIVING

Vision:

- Healthy lands that support diverse native plants and wildlife.
- Communities closely engaged with the land, valuing the natural world, treating it with respect and are invested in the future.
- A region that, even as it grows, retains its natural areas forever.

Mission:

The Deschutes Land Trust works cooperatively with landowners to conserve land for wildlife, scenic views and local communities.

What we do

Conserve and protect land in Central Oregon for Central Oregonians. We've conserved more than 8,200 acres in our region for today, tomorrow and for generations to come. Our collaborative, non-regulatory approach has both enriched the quality of life for Central Oregonians, while keeping productive ranch and timberland in production, as well as reducing the pressure for new governmental regulations on landowners.

How the Land Trust conserves land:

- **Conservation Easements:** the Land Trust and the landowner work together on a voluntary, collaborative basis to craft an agreement, which allows a private landowner to retain their land and protect their land for future generations.
- **Donated land:** some landowners wish to donate their land for the enjoyment of future generations.
- **Purchase:** in some cases, the Land Trust can work to raise funds to purchase land from a willing seller, as a Community Preserve or as protected private land.

Importance of Charitable Giving

The Land Trust receives annual financial gifts from over **1,200 families and business** from here in central Oregon and beyond. During our 2011-12 fiscal year, **over 50 percent of our nearly \$1 million annual operating budget came from individual charitable contributions.** Roughly 19% came from grants, 17% from restricted gifts (both individual charitable gifts and grants) held over from previous years and 14% from a combination of special events, interest and endowment. Our annual operating budget supports a **staff of nine** and the oversight/engagement of over **200 community volunteers.** Additionally, charitable giving is an essential component in the periodic donation of land or conservation easements, which doesn't show up in our annual operating budget. While the number of properties and easements donated is small, the "donated" value and charitable deduction is an essential factor in attracting private gifts as "match" and further leverages limited public dollars available for



voluntary, private land conservation. Though it's impossible to know precisely how many gifts wouldn't be made or how much smaller the gifts would be without the charitable deduction, it is worth noting that the vast majority of our individual annual gift come in the last few weeks of the tax year.

While our revenues are diverse, charitable giving from individual families and businesses represents the bulk of our annual operating budget and the loss of deductibility would be catastrophic to our work. Central Oregon is remarkable in the level of community engagement and collaborative problem solving. Said another way, we in Central Oregon seem to find solutions where others simply fight. However, were the Land Trust and comparable natural resource organizations to disappear because of the loss of private giving (spurred by the charitable deduction), one could expect more litigation, more regulations and less collaborative communities.

Key Points

- The Deschutes Land Trust is a respected, effective charitable institution, improving the quality of life for Central Oregonians by working on a voluntary basis with private landowners.
- The Land Trust protects wildlife habitat, scenic views, recreational & educational opportunities, as well as helping to keep ranch and timberland in production.
- The protected/enhanced wildlife habitat, scenic views, trail access and educational/recreational programming provided by the Land Trust boosts local property values, health, local tourism and reduces costs incurred by local government.
- The Land Trust has broad community support from over 1,200 household and businesses.
- The Land Trust employs 9 Central Oregonians and contracts with numerous local contractors (GIS & IT technicians, foresters, loggers, biologists, hydrologists, planners, builders, etc.) and engages well over 200 volunteers.
- Over half of the Land Trust's annual operating budget comes from individual charitable gifts, with deductibility a key factor for private landowners considering the donation of their land or an easement for public benefit. Most contributions to the Land Trust come near the end of the tax year and studies from around the country confirm that tax deductibility is a major incentive in charitable giving.
- Though impossible to precisely predict, the loss of charitable deductibility would likely be catastrophic to the work of the Land Trust and would over time have a significant impact on the quality of life in Central Oregon.

