

**The Report Committee for Amy Elizabeth Combs
Certifies that this is the approved version of the following report:**

The Role of Land Trusts in Regional Sustainable Development

**APPROVED BY
SUPERVISING COMMITTEE:**

Supervisor:

Robert Paterson

Rachael Rawlins

**The Role of Land Trusts in
Regional Sustainable Development**

by

Amy Elizabeth Combs, B.A.

Report

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of

The University of Texas at Austin

in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements

for the Degree of

Master of Science in Community and Regional Planning

The University of Texas at Austin

May 2017

Abstract

The Role of Land Trusts in Regional Sustainable Development

Amy Elizabeth Combs, M.S.C.R.P.

The University of Texas at Austin, 2017

Supervisor: Robert Paterson

This professional report acknowledges the challenges in regional planning throughout the United States and particularly in states such as Texas. The report explores the role of land trust in helping to break down the barriers of planning regionally through strengthening conservancies' volunteer programs. The report aims to explore best practices and recommendations for how land trusts can strengthen their volunteer programs to build staff capacity to further the impact of their mission in the region.

Table of Contents

Background	1
Land Trusts and The Sustainable Growth Era	1
Local Land Trusts and Community Support for Conservation.....	3
Background of the Bayou Land Conservancy	7
Methods.....	8
Best Practices	11
Best Practic I	11
Best Practic II.....	13
Best Practic III	18
Best Practic IV	20
Best Practic V	23
Best Practic VI.....	29
Recomendations	34
Strengths	34
Weaknesses	35
Threats	37
Opportunities	40
Recommendations	43
References.....	49

Background

Land Trusts and the Sustainable Growth Era

Politically regional planning is difficult to address much less implement in many states. (Paterson and Rawlins, 222). In Texas, there is so much political opposition that the former governor of Texas, Rick Perry vetoed state legislation that would have created a new governmental body and inter-agency “smart growth” work group. (Rawlins and Paterson, 381). Even thinking about state and regional planning was out of the question. He commented that “[d]ecisions about the growth of communities should be made by local governments closest to the people living and working in these areas (Rawlins and Paterson, 381). Governor Perry noted that there is not a “one-size-fits-all” approach to sustainable land use in Texas. Perhaps this is true, but that does not mean that there is no role for planning at the state wide and regional level. (Chapin, 7, Godschalk 8, Smart Growth, 223 and Campbell). Statewide and regional planning are especially important for environmental planning, the goals and boundaries of which may not conform to the city limits.

Given the political opposition in states like Texas where words like “free market” and “private property rights” dominate political discourse, voluntary planning programs may be the most viable means to encourage smart growth. Local land trusts are especially intriguing potential players. Nationally, there is a variety of different organizations labeled as land trusts. For instance, the Nature Conservancy is a significant land trust that

works nationally and internationally working with governments to conserve millions of acres of land each year (Nature). Similarly, the Trust for Public Lands is a national organization working in areas such as Texas; these types of land trusts plan for instance greenprints to conserve lands and plan regionally (Trust). However, local land trusts provide the opportunity to have a focused and sustained effort in a specific region.

Local land trusts encourage private landowners to restrict development on their own land through tax incentives created through conservation easements (Lane and Stoms). Land trusts could potentially break down the silos between local private landowners and local city officials or planners who are trying to plan regionally (Downsborough, 361 and Chapin, 11). Using economic incentives, land trusts are already using financial tools to help local private landowners rethink selling land off to developers (Chapin, 14 and Schwin). Furthermore, sustainable growth advocates for public-private partnerships that look regionally. Land trusts are already working across counties with private partners. Linking cities with land trusts could build collaboration between the private, public sectors that the sustainable growth era envisions.

Smart growth advocates in states, like Texas, could further leverage the work of local land trusts by encouraging dialog and coordination with city planners. While land trusts and the sustainable growth era appear to have similar strategies and goals there is a lack of connection between land trusts, city actors, and the larger community (Stoms, 1154 and Gerber, 290). Texas is again an example of this. While land trusts have been established for decades in Texas, there is little connection between larger planning

initiatives and land trust's activities. For example, Hill Country Conservancy in Central Texas has been established for numerous years, but just recently connected their activities to regional planning goals and there does not appear to be a strong link between local plans and the conservancy's goals for the region (Hill Country). There is a tremendous opportunity to further the missions of trusts through further linking of the local community to these nonprofits.

Local Land Trusts and Community Support for Conservation

While there may be a disconnect between local land trusts and planning initiatives there is an opportunity to not only connect these organizations, but to build political support for sustainable growth initiatives through land trusts as well. Land trusts frame the issue of sustainable development in a way that both speaks to the local residents and politics. In fact, land trusts frame sustainable development through both their metric of increasing the number of areas of land protected and through their mission statements as well. In the words of former Governor Rick Perry, addressing sustainable land development in this way land trusts could be the link that brings decisions about the growth of communities "closest to the people living and working in these areas."

Land trusts' missions speak both to the importance of preserving natural lands and to the reasons why balancing undeveloped lands with development benefits the region as a whole. For instance, the Hill Country Conservancy's mission statement explains:

"The region's prosperity is inextricably tied to its natural landscape and quality of life. People – and companies – move here, and want to stay here, because it's a wonderful,

beautiful place to be; the future economic success of Central Texas and the Hill Country is tied to how well we balance our growth and the preservation of precious natural resources”

In creating an economic and social argument for preserving undeveloped lands, the conservancy is framing the issue of sustainable development as a regional issue and in a politically conservative manner. Instead of listing the various ecological benefits of preserving natural areas and increasing density, they use language such as a sense of place and a financial reasoning for why sustainable development is beneficial to the local community. These arguments are not necessarily traditional arguments for sustainable development, but meet similar goals, as described above, through speaking the local language.

Local conservancies can gain the support of local private landowners and residents through the way that many conservancies frame their mission. Through the wording of their mission and conservancies’ financial tools, such as conservation easements, land trusts attract the attention of local private landowners. In gaining the attention of private landowners, through speaking their language, land trusts can successfully meet the goals of sustainable development, balancing development with natural systems, without mentioning more politicized terms such as sustainable development.

Land trusts have of course been working with landowners for decades to preserve private lands. However, there is also a shift towards stronger volunteer programs throughout conservancies as well. Nationally, the Land Trust Alliance is advocating for

land trusts to include volunteer development in their strategic plans. The Alliance has stated that volunteer programs are “an essential strategy for land trusts to develop knowledgeable and energetic new leaders for the future” (Lane). Locally, land trusts such as Texas Hill Country or Bayou Land Conservancy in Houston are trying to build community participation through volunteer programs. For instance, Hill Country Conservancy has developed a group called EPIC. EPIC aims to bring together professionals interested in land conservation (Hill Country). Additionally, Bayou Land Conservancy has the Ambassador program; this program educates interested community members about the conservancy, land trusts, and how to help on the public lands that the conservancy manages. In allowing all community members to volunteer, Bayou Land Conservancy allows for community members to not only learn about land trusts, but also creates an opportunity to help educate community members on why conserving native areas and keeping development in check allows for a greater sense of place and meaningful development decisions (Lier, 90).

Volunteer programs may create the opportunity to introduce the larger community to the principles of sustainable land development. Researchers in Seattle, Germany, and North England found that increasing the effectiveness of volunteer or community outreach programs both improved the quality of organizations and increase the acceptance of conservation initiatives in the wider community (Stewart, Bremer, and Romolini). For example, in Germany researchers found that “the opposition to protected areas is very much a function of social identity, stereotyped images and how particular

social groups are regarded and approached” (Bremer, 489). They concluded that encouraging “contact between the national park administrations and the communities outside the protected areas can help to overcome opposition and break down communication barriers” (Bremer, 489). Volunteer programs within a Texas context can serve a similar purpose. Inviting community members to volunteer for a mission that is broad and speaks to the community can act as an opportunity for volunteers to further this mission while learning the background of why growth management is important.

In order to realize the potential role of land trusts in building rapport with the community between members, private landowners, and local governments and to advocate for sustainable land use practices in Texas, it is beneficial to explore how to strengthen volunteer programs that engage community members in land conservation. The mission of land trusts to conserve land and the sense of place for a region is consistent with the goals of sustainable development. Local participation in land trusts through volunteer programs may encourage Texans to rethink how conservation and development can work together. This paper looks specifically at how to strengthen the Bayou Land Conservancy’s volunteer program, the Ambassador program, with the aim to answer: How can the Bayou Land Conservancy improve and expand their work with local volunteers?

Background of the Bayou Land Conservancy

Bayou Land Conservancy is an accredited land trust established in Houston in 1996. Throughout the past 20 years, the Conservancy has used conservation easements to acquire and protect over 12, 500 acres of land throughout Harris and Montgomery counties. The majority of the acquired land is a part of the Conservancy's Spring Creek Greenway, which the Conservancy states is the longest-running, contiguous, urban-forested corridor in the country (Bayou Land). While conservation easements protect private land from development and allow land to stay in private hands, the majority of landowners in the Spring Creek Greenway have elected for a portion of their land to be open to the public.

The Conservancy helps to manage the public areas of the Greenway, but the staff capacity is limited compared to the amount of land that they oversee. Currently, the Conservancy employs four full-time employees an Executive Director, Conservation Director, Land Stewardship Director, and an Administrative Assistant. While the Conservancy has a small core staff, they also have ten board of directors and a volunteer program, The Spring Creek Greenway Ambassador Program. This program is the main tool that the Conservancy has established to build the staff's capacity to ensure that the public Greenway lands are safe for the public to access year round.

The idea behind the program is for the newly trained Ambassadors to participate year-round in maintaining and keeping track of the Greenway. Currently, about 175 people have completed the Ambassador training. The training for new ambassadors is

currently a once-a-year, 5-week program that teaches new volunteers about land trusts, the watershed, local invasive and native species, trail maintenance, and their no child left inside initiative. There are two tracks within the program to become an Ambassador, Eco-Stewards (who are in-charge of removing invasive species along the greenway) or a part of the Ambassador Conservation Crew (who are in charge of monitoring the Greenway through GPS). The Conservation Crew has 5 to 10 active volunteers tracking various sections of the Greenway on an annual basis.

Methods

In looking at ways to strengthen the Bayou's volunteer program, one obvious step is to explore current research on volunteer management. However, current research on volunteer programs and management is very general and contradictory. There are numerous research articles around volunteer motivation and management solutions, and case studies on successful volunteer programs (Follman, McAllum, Stewart, Bremer, and Romolini). There also are numerous articles exploring the general benefits and reasons behind successful volunteer programs, and why volunteers chose to volunteer at the same organization year-to-year (Peterson, Bowman, Curran, and Classen). These articles cite the importance of volunteers to the economy and the staggering amount of people throughout the world that chose to volunteer every year (Bowman, Dywer, Bremer, and Govekar). Additionally, authors agree that there are generally numerous methods and strategies to build and grade volunteer programs even just within the non-profit system (not taking into account public or private programs) (Samuel, Studer, and Hager).

While research suggests there are key benchmarks for successful volunteer programs whether they be corporate, non-profit, or land trust volunteer programs, there is disagreement with which benchmarks are most appropriate in which contexts. Some research suggests the benefits for the volunteers need to be met month- to-month and year-to-year in order for volunteers to find their volunteer work meaningful and keep coming back to that particular organization (Hager, 142 and Follaman). However, others disagree with tracking volunteers as though they need to be managed as employees (Studer). There are also a variety of checklists for creating successful volunteer programs including creating a paid volunteer program coordinator position, creating professional sounding titles for volunteers, holding training for new volunteers more than once a year, and providing advanced training for longtime volunteers for leadership positions within the organization, etc. (Follaman, Dwyer, and Govekar). However, other research suggests that there should not be checklists, because volunteer programs are different based on the needs of the organization (Studer).

Current research provides a breadth of information and many opportunities to explore the most effective ways to strengthen volunteer programs at conservancies. However, the nature of this research as both general and contradictory creates the need to contextualize this research with best practices at other land trusts in order to make well-informed recommendations for improving volunteer programs at conservancies specifically. This paper focus on the practices at Application Trail Conservancy and Hill Country Conservancy. Appalachian Trail Conservancy was chosen, because it is a well-

established conservancy that spreads across numerous regions. Whereas Hill Country was chosen, because it has been established for similar number of years as Bayou Land Conservancy and is based in Texas, which allows for the comparison with a conservancy that is navigating a similar political situation. Through this method this paper aims to explore questions such as:

- What specific roles does the Bayou Land Conservancy offer to the volunteers?
- Could these volunteer roles turn into staff positions given the proper funding? Why or why not?
- Is there a way to strengthen the brand of Bayou Land Conservancy in order for the name of the conservancy to be more recognizable throughout the Houston community?
- Beyond material goods, what is the Conservancy offering as benefits to joining and continuing in the Ambassador program?
- Who is currently volunteering and why?
- How would the Conservancy quantify the work done by volunteers?
- How could the Conservancy publicly acknowledge the benefit that volunteers bring to the Conservancy?

The next section explores best practices through current volunteer programs and additional research with the aim to look more specifically at what constitutes a successful volunteer program and how this could apply to the Bayou Land Conservancy.

Best Practices

There is a consensus that there are no established set of best practices for volunteer programs within the third sector (Barnes, Amsden, Studer). However, this section explores background research and the practices at two conservancies in order to gain a sense of successful programs' practices. These conservancies serve as case studies for both a well-established conservancy, the Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC), and a local and smaller conservancy, Hill Country Conservancy (HCC). Through this research, six best practices emerge. These six best practices are discussed below through a discussion of past reach, current case studies' and Bayou Land Conservancy's practices.

BEST PRACTICE I: Create a Framework at the Start for Success in the Future

Past Research

There are varieties of different opinions on volunteer management throughout the non-profit sector. Some advocate for more traditional human resources methods applied to measure volunteer programs. For example, Ramlai's seven-step framework, which includes steps such as training, performance management, and a rewards system for volunteers (Amsden, 16 and Studer). Others advocate for a less structured style that recognizes that volunteers are inherently different from paid staff. For instance, interactional volunteer management rates the quality of programs through metrics such as role clarity and exchange with other organizations (Studer). Other researchers prefer not to even use the term management when exploring volunteer programs (Barnes). While there is disagreement as to the most effective ways to manage volunteers, there is

agreement that organizations should create a plan for long-term volunteer management. Researchers have found that planning significantly relates to retention of volunteers (Studer and Cuskelly). Planning for volunteer programs means both envisioning the future of the program and working at the beginning to provide a support structure for the program's future growth.

Case Studies' Current Practices

The ATC provides an example of this best practice through toolkits uploaded on their website. These toolkits, described below, were written by ATC's staff to create a framework for their various Trail Clubs, separate volunteer based organizations to start their own clubs and train their own members.

Trail Club Toolkit

The ATC wrote a comprehensive training manual for trail clubs. This manual provides basic rules for how to build a volunteer base and retain volunteers over time. The manual also provides details on how to manage volunteers on the trail and descriptions for how to handle emergencies. Additionally, the handbook outlines the ways to engage through the variety of workshops and trainings at the ATC. In addition to this toolkit, there are a variety of different manuals including how to construct trails, environmental planning, and policies that effect trails. All of these manuals are available for download on the ATC website.

HCC's Social Networks

HCC does not have a training manual for their volunteers. Rather their volunteer programs are based on a social framework that focuses on supporting specific groups of local residents such as professionals in conservation or local business owners. This framework may also provide a foundation for the growth of the volunteer program by creating a supportive social environment where potential new volunteers may be learn about the positive experience of existing volunteers (Lane).

Bayou Land Conservancy's Current Practices

While the ATC has structures in place such as the toolkits and the HCC is focused on supporting smaller volunteer programs, the BLC does not have a current framework or tools to help build their volunteer program. They do provide a training each year as described above. However, this training simply focuses on staff training new volunteers once a year, not providing a framework encouraging the Ambassador program to grow or retain current volunteers.

BEST PRACTICE II: Target Different Types of Volunteers as the Conservancy

Matures

Past Research

Past studies suggest that brand recognition is important, and the size and age of the organization effect the roles of the volunteers and the type of volunteers that non-profits attract (Curran and Hager). For instance, volunteers at more well known non-profits such as Red Cross reported higher levels of satisfaction and impact of their service

than less well known non-profits (Curran). Research suggests that this is due to the overall strength of the brand; if the brand is well-known, volunteers are more likely to receive greater levels of positive social feedback from their social network for volunteering at these organizations. Furthermore, these larger organizations attract volunteers who are likely motivated through what past research has termed the “warm glow”; volunteers at the organizations are more likely to be motivated by feeling as though they are contributing to the social good (Dwyer).

Conversely, smaller and newer organizations may not have the same brand recognition and attract different types of volunteers. For instance, past research notes that while newer non-profits do not have the recognizable brand, they often have more smaller unique experiences that increase the interests and the skills of the volunteers. This typically attracts volunteers who are more likely to be younger and wanting to develop transferable skills (Dwyer, Curran, and Connors). Volunteer management strategies at these types of non-profits more often focus on building these unique experiences and the overall interest in the organization throughout the community (Dwyer, Mountjoy, Curran, and Connors).

The different approaches of the ATC and the HCC are consistent with best practices identified in the research. The ATC is larger and older than HCC. The Appalachian Trail is an overall more well-known brand in comparison to the Hill Country in Texas; this affects the amount of volunteers and type of volunteer that may come to the ATC versus the HCC (Hager and Curran). The Appalachian Trail

Conservancy uses the name recognition of the Appalachian Trail and the reputation that the trail has built over the past 90 years to attract volunteers. They encourage new volunteers through language of the legacy of the trail and to suggest that the volunteers will be working for a larger purpose than simply cleaning up a trail for a day- perhaps this demonstrates the warm-glow volunteer; a volunteer who is motivated by the intrinsic value of volunteering .

While ATC relies on numerous partnerships to build capacity for volunteer support, HCC has selective targeted programs such as EPIC, described below, which targets a specific group of volunteers that need to pay a membership to be a part of this group. Additionally, HCC plans special events for this group and trainings. Again, this highlights the research on smaller non-profits; smaller non-profits have fewer opportunities to volunteer, but have selective volunteer events where volunteers are often motivated by an opportunity to learn new skills or build social networks with their peers (Dwyer).

In recognizing that different types of volunteers are attracted to different types of conservancies, conservancies may want to target different types of volunteers, as they grow older and larger. HCC's and ATC's current practices described further below provide examples of specific strategies to target these volunteers.

Case Studies' Current Practices

HCC's EPIC

EPIC stands for emerging professionals in conservation. This program, established in 2008, targets professionals working or interested in conservation. These members work on specific projects throughout the HCC's land such as clearing trails. There are different levels of membership where volunteers pay more to receive more opportunities to volunteer or participate in events. Volunteers can pay between 5 dollars to 45 dollars per month depending on how involved they would like to be with the events and activities. The HCC brands this group as more of an outdoor group that occasionally volunteers mainly at the Violet Crown Trail doing basic maintenance work. This group provides members with unique adventure experiences such as spelunking and exploring protected areas with the goal to create a network of individuals who may be working in different areas across Central Texas to come together to experience the natural areas of central Texas (Hill Country).



Figure 1: Logo for Country Conservancy's professional group. (Hill Country)

This main avenue to become involved at the HCC differs from the main ways to become involved at ATC. For instance, whereas the HCC has EPIC, ATC has numerous ways to become involved at different levels of participation such as through the Trail Crews versus the Trail Clubs. Additionally, all opportunities to volunteer at the ATC are free; the closest volunteers have to pay to volunteer may be through Trail Crews where volunteers have to provide their own basic camping gear. This is not to say that ATC has a superior system. Comparing HCC to ATC provides a way to see how smaller conservancies are handling volunteers versus larger and more established conservancies have the capacity to manage and host volunteers.

ATC's Volunteer Training and Skill Workshops

Volunteer trainings and workshops are also a part of the ATC's volunteer program. Volunteer trainings can range from basic trail maintenance to chain saw training and certification. These volunteer workshops and trainings have been a part of the overall ATC programming for several decades. For instance, the chain-saw training and certification has been established since the mid 1990's (Appalachian Trail).

Bayou Land Conservancy's Current Practices

While ATC and HCC currently have strategies in place and programs directed towards a specific volunteer group, BLC does not. While BLC describes the Ambassador training as free nature training, this does not target the volunteers that the research suggests may be more willing to volunteer, young emerging professionals. Nature training is very general. BLC does not relate this back to their brand or reasons for why

the volunteers should continue past the free training and the “warm glow” effect. As research explains, BLC may not be at the stage to draw in the volunteer motivated by the intrinsic value of volunteering. Additionally, while BLC seems to be providing some transferable skill development they are not providing opportunities for individuals who want to start to further develop their skills. For instance, BLC provides advanced training for those interested in working with GIS, but the BLC’s staff mentioned that this training mainly attracts volunteers who already know GIS.

BEST PRACTICE III: Clearly Define Roles and Responsibilities

Past Research

While there is not a consensus on best practices for non-profits’ volunteer programs there are a few basic steps that research mentions is key in order to establish a successful volunteer program. Establishing full-time staff positions to hire and manage volunteers is a basic practice that many agree is a first step in creating and maintaining a successful volunteer program (Amsden, 28, Govekar and Connors, 10). Additionally, creating specific positions and titles for each position as well as having volunteers go through a hiring process has been shown to increase volunteers’ understanding of their roles within the organization and create retention of volunteers throughout the life of non-profits (Connors, 15 and Studer). The ATC provides an example of these practices.

Case Studies' Current Practices

The ATC has over 6,000 volunteers. In order to manage these volunteers the ATC has 5 full-time staff who help oversee the Trail Crews and Trail Clubs as described below. The staff also helps keep track of the rewards and training for the volunteers. In addition to keeping track of volunteers, ATC staff write and post volunteer positions on the ATC website.

Volunteer Titles

The ATC not only provides specific titles to the volunteers at the ATC, but also a selection process for volunteers; volunteers have to apply to a certain title in order to be considered for a volunteer position. For instance, the ATC is currently “hiring” an Appalachian Trail Community Ambassador. ATC’s staff post volunteer positions along with the part-time and full time jobs the ATC is hiring for. These titles come with specific tasks and roles and the time commitment laid out in the position description. These very specific roles for volunteers allows the volunteers to understand the commitment that they are making to the ATC.

In comparison, the HCC does not have “job descriptions” or titles for volunteers. HCC volunteers simply fall under EPIC members or general volunteers. General volunteers help with basic maintenance of the trail or on citywide volunteer days such as It’s My Park Day. Additionally, the HCC does not have a full-time staff member devoted to volunteer management.

Bayou Land Conservancy's Current Practices

While the BLC does have two separate tracks for volunteers, Conservation Crews and Eco-Stewards, these roles do not have a specific task beyond general maintenance of the trail. Additionally, the BLC does not currently have a full-time staff person devoted just to volunteer program development and management.

BEST PRACTICE IV: Provide Opportunities for Informal Project Development

Past Research

In addition to clear roles and titles for volunteers, research suggests trail or outside organizations may also benefit from creating opportunities for informal project development (Studer, Amsden, and Barnes). For example, one researcher explored a park organization as a case study for volunteer development best practices in recreational organizations. He found that providing loosely structured opportunities provided a strong network of volunteers to emerge who took responsibility for the park. In this case, the city encouraged a local neighborhood group to form; a strong group emerged through informal face-to-face contact, fliers in the park, and other methods. Currently, this group meets regularly to maintain the park and help program the park. Members of this group come for the social aspect of the group- networking events and potluck dinners (Barnes).

Case Studies' Current Practices

While the ATC provides opportunities for informal project development through trail clubs, described further below, the HCC has special events such as popup park days

for volunteers and the local community. Both of these examples provide an opportunity for volunteers to be in charge of specific projects or specific sections of trails.

HCC's Special Events

While the EPIC group is the main way to get connected to volunteer opportunities at the HCC there are other volunteer opportunities and special events open to the public. Many of these opportunities are a part of larger volunteer initiatives such as Its My Park Day or Its My Trail Day; these are larger volunteer opportunities where service projects are occurring around Austin at other parks and trails throughout the city. Along with these more regional events the HCC hosts special dinners and events such as popup parks that allow for people to volunteer to help set up these events. The popup parks are small areas throughout Austin that are set up on certain days. These parks include different activities such as corn hole in a parking space. These one-time volunteer opportunities provide a way for informal project development in HCC beyond trail maintenance activities.



Figure 2: Examples of Hill Country Conservancy’s popup parks. (Hill Country)

These special events also provide the opportunity for volunteers to help plan for these events providing the volunteers with a sense of ownership over the project. Additionally, these events provide for the opportunity for the staff, volunteers, and business community to come together in a casual setting to collaborate on a specific project that furthers the HCC’s overall mission.

Bayou Land Conservancy’s Current Practices

The BLC does have celebratory events for volunteers and events such as a brewery tours for community members and volunteers. However, there are no opportunities for project development within the BLC.

BEST PRACTICE V: Build a Network of Support throughout the Region

Past Research

Similar to the best practice described directly above, this best practice draws out the importance of building a network of people to support the efforts of the conservancy. Past research describes building a network of support throughout the region as an important point for all non-profits, but especially for recreation or trail-based non-profits (Studer, Amsden, and Barnes). This is because these organizations are more likely to span across the city or region, instead of a specific building or site. This best practice both includes providing support for a variety of volunteer groups throughout the region as well as providing for ways that businesses could contribute to the conservancy through other ways than direct donations.

Case Studies' Current Practices

The practices below help demonstrate how current conservancies are applying this best practice within their own organizations. As seen below ATC and HCC both have a wide variety of practices that relate to this best practice. This shows how much conservancies depend on building a network of individuals and businesses in order to further their mission.

ATC Collaborating with Other Non-profits and Organizations

The ATC was once a part of the National Parks System, but is now an independent organization. However, the ATC still collaborates with numerous organizations throughout the numerous states through which the trail runs. These partners

not only include the National Parks Service, but land trusts, city and state governments, and local non-profits. For instance, the ATC recently highlighted their partnership with the local City of Pearisburg, Virginia. The Appalachian Trail runs through Pearisburg and the ATC partners with city and local business owners to explore how the conservancy maintains the trail while benefiting the local area (Appalachian Trail). These numerous partnerships provide a network of people who act to build the capacity of the ATC's core staff. In fact, while the ATC employs less than 50 people for full-time staff positions, the various clubs, crews, other non-profits, conservancies, land trusts, and city, state and federal government partnership provide support more than the 6,000 volunteers that the ATC lists as a success. Susan Daniels the Conservation Coordinator at ATC summarized volunteer management at the ATC: "Volunteers remain strongly involved in maintaining and managing it [the trail] in a unique cooperative partnership comprising 31 volunteer-based A.T. maintaining club, federal and state agencies, and the Appalachian Trail Conservancy" (Daniels).

ATCs Trail Clubs

ATC employees five Stewardship Coordinators who oversee various groups and sections of the trail. Coordinators mainly oversee the Appalachian Trail Clubs. Trail Clubs are thirty-one separate groups of volunteers who maintain the trails day-to-day. Stewardship Coordinators help to manage the clubs and provide advice. Additionally, the ATC has written a "toolkit" for clubs that provide general guidance on building a

volunteer network (Daniels). However, the clubs are separate organizations from the ATC that are in charge of finding and maintaining a volunteer base.

For instance, the Allentown Hiking Club and the Mountain Club of Maryland have different sections of the trail that they are in charge of maintaining; the length of each section can span 100 miles of the trail. With the vast amount of land that these clubs maintain they have their own local network and hold separate workshops and large volunteer events for their section of the trail (Matc). Additionally, the ATC appoints a volunteer monitor for each sections of these trails; these monitors are in charge of ensuring the maintenance of the trail throughout the year. These separate volunteer organizations who work with the volunteer monitor are a key part of the volunteer management for the ATC.

ATC's Trail Crews

Six designated trail crews work in separate sections throughout the trails. Unlike the Trail Clubs, the ATC directly manages the Trail Crews. Additionally, crews work on larger scale projects rather than day-to-day maintenance of the trails; crews can work on rebuilding bridges to altering the route of the trail. While all crews work on larger scale projects, the crews have different levels of difficulty. For instance, The Rocky Top Trail Crew requires the least amount of experience while the Konnarock Trail Crew is for volunteers of moderate experience. The S.W.E.A.T crew is for volunteers with the most experience and focuses on the most difficult part of the trail. These teams are a more

specific time commitment than the Trail Clubs. Crews provide volunteers the opportunity to work May through October with the same group of volunteers. The ATC provides tools and food for the volunteers throughout these months- the volunteers only have to bring basic camping gear with them for these trips.

HCC's Violet Crown Trail

The Violet Crown Trail is HCC's ongoing project. The HCC envisions that this trail will eventually connect Barton Springs to the south eventually reaching Hays County. This project is in its last phase since the beginning of 2017. This trail is a core area where volunteers come for HCC's volunteer events. For instance, EPIC volunteers here as well as other volunteers for a day rather than for reoccurring opportunities. Volunteering for the Violet Crown Trail includes maintenance of the current trail to creating new sections of the trail (Hill Country).

Similar to the Appalachian Trail there is a concentrated volunteer effort around the Violet Crown Trail. While the HCC does not have the variety of support that the ATC does from Trail Clubs and Crews, the Violet Crown Trail offers the main area for volunteers to participate at the HCC. Additionally, the Violet Crown Trail allows the HCC to be closer to more communities throughout the region with this public space cutting through the region in addition to the variety of land under conservation easements throughout the Central Texas region. Perhaps in the future, this trail will act as a connection to the variety of communities along the trail as the ATC is currently collaborating with communities along its borders.

HCC's Brand Ambassadors

The HCC collaborates with businesses throughout the area through the Brand Ambassador Program. While the program centers on businesses simply donating to the HCC to have their logo on the HCC's website, there are a few opportunities for businesses to help support the volunteer activities at the HCC. For instance, through the Violet Crown Trail project Brandywine Realty Trust supports pop up parks throughout the Austin area where volunteers and staff create space for a miniature park for a few hours to a day; these mini parks provide space for live music or different events. HCC benefits through the help of the Trust with the pop-up parks. Additionally, the Trust benefits because the HCC's work helps the Trust to meet their own mission- "to ensure the overall outcome are resources to best serve Austinites" (Hill Country).

This mix of direct donation from businesses and collaborating with local businesses throughout the Austin area is similar to how the ATC builds partnerships with business owners throughout their regions as well. The ATC directly asks for donations from local businesses as well as partners with businesses in the surrounding communities such as Pearisburg, where the businesses directly benefit from the volunteers and hikers and the Conservancy seeks the businesses' input while highlighting these businesses as well on their website.

HCC Partnering with Other Local Non-profits

Throughout the Austin area there are numerous small non-profits including Shoal Creek Conservancy, Waller Creek Conservancy, and Texas Land Conservancy. All of

these non-profits come together during happy hours and invite all volunteers and staff at these different events to create a sense of partnership throughout the city. This allows volunteers to connect to different initiatives such as Generation Waller- the volunteer group at Waller Creek Conservancy. Additionally, this allows for the volunteers and staff to meet face-to-face with one another with the possibility of working out issues or collaborating on projects.

This is similar to the partnerships at the ATC, but on a smaller scale. While ATC collaborates with the federal government and dozens of local clubs and non-profits, HCC obviously has a smaller network. However, the reasoning and benefits behind these partners are similar. ATC gains staff capacity while the HCC gains a network of people that could potentially reason out issues, discuss funding, or share volunteers throughout the city and region.

Bayou Land Conservancy's Current Practices

While BLC does have a network of businesses and local community groups interested in their mission, such as the local mountain biking club, there is separation between this group and the current volunteers. Additionally, beyond the occasional happy hour event or direct donations there is not an opportunity for the larger community to participate in the BLC.

BEST PRACTICE VI: Build a Support System for Volunteers

Past Research

While past research suggests that there is a need for unstructured opportunities for volunteers and shared power between the staff and volunteers, there is still the need for a support system for volunteers (Connors, Studer and Amsden). This could include a basic hour tracking system such as voligistics or a blog that provides a means of communication and recognition to volunteers. The benefit of this best practice is that volunteers are more likely to feel engaged and continue to volunteer over a number of years (Studer and Connors).

Case Studies' Current Practices

ATC's Volunteer Recognition

The Conservancy highlights one volunteer per month in order to provide recognition of the work that volunteers are doing not only on the trail, but also throughout the ATC. The website has a picture and a brief biography of the month's volunteer; these posts include what type of work the volunteers assist with at the ATC, how long they have been with the ATC, and what motivates them to volunteer. The ATC states that these simple shout outs to volunteers provide a way for the volunteers to feel more engaged with the ATC. Additionally, the blog allows the ATC a way to check-in and see what motivates specific volunteers; this may help with overall retention of volunteers overtime. In addition to highlighting volunteers on the website, the ATC has a series of

pins and hats that volunteers can earn with the number of hours that they volunteer for. However, in speaking to the Conservation Coordinator at ATC she mentioned that “the incentives are mostly internal to the volunteer, in the sense of contributing or giving back to a national icon that was first thought of and was laid out and built on the ground for the most part by volunteers” (Daniels). This references the best practice before, and the concept of the “warm glow” volunteers.

ATC’s Volunteer Blog

In addition to volunteer recognition once a month the ATC maintains the “Register Blog”. This blog has tips for backpacking on the AT and articles on hiking generally. The blog also tries to connect the work that is happening at different trail clubs and crews- trying to highlight the best practices that clubs have implemented. For instance, the blog highlighted the AMC young member committee, which is a leadership development organization that uses the trail as a way to engage younger members (20 to 30 year olds). In this specific post, the AMC lists what their best practices are for retaining and attracting individuals in this age group; they encourage other volunteers to create a similar volunteer initiative in their own region.

ATC’s Specific Volunteer Opportunities

While trail crews and trail clubs are the main routes that potential volunteers can take to become involved with the ATC, there are also specific volunteer positions that the conservancy manages; these positions do not directly relate to trail maintenance. These volunteer positions assist with the school outreach programs or assist with current

initiatives including the Appalachian Trail Communities- described further above. The ATC advertises these positions alongside paid positions with specific time commitments and duties explained as if these positions were paid.

HCC's Blog

While the HCC does not have a specific blog for volunteers as the ATC, the HCC does have a blog that highlights the efforts of the private landowners who are receiving conservation easements. Through the stewardship blog, the HCC encourages landowners to see the benefit of conservation easements, but also encourages these owners to see what each other are accomplishing on their land, while encouraging volunteer activities such as birding competitions on the land or help with regional scale projects.

This blog is comparable to the ATC's blog. While HCC's blog is not exclusively for volunteers, the blog has the same purpose as the Register Blog; this purpose is to recognize key members of the organization either paid or not and to celebrate different projects happening at these conservancies. The blog is a tool in order to build collaboration between volunteers, private landowners and the public who may be interested in the different programs at the HCC. This practice provides an insight into how land trust could engage the private landowners, but volunteers and the public as well.

Bayou Land Conservancy's Current Practices

While HCC and ATC do have a variety of current practices that help to demonstrate this best practice BLC does not. While the BLC does have a current blog,

the blog just looks at the ecology of the trail and the importance of conserving lands for the benefit of the local ecosystem. The blog does not highlight landowners or volunteers in the region or the reasons why protecting undeveloped areas benefits the region as a whole.

Conclusion

Through exploring the current and past research on volunteer management in the non-profit, private and public systems and comparing this to current practices at a well-established conservancy and at a comparable conservancy there are clear best practices that could assist BLC in developing their own program, despite the generality and contradiction throughout past research. Through this comparison, there are key themes that appear for conservancies. These themes include providing a system of support and respect for volunteers, providing a strong foundation and structure at the very start, but flexibility as the program grows, partnering with the local community and business leaders, and acknowledging that volunteers are partners throughout the growth of the conservancy as well as furthering the mission of the conservancy.

Throughout this section, it is clear that the BLC has a variety of different topics to address including:

- Developing a framework for the growth of the volunteer program
- Targeting a specific volunteer group (such as young professionals)
- Providing transferable skill development
- Providing opportunities for informal project development

- Treating volunteers as partners within the conservancy
- Reconsidering the wording of the current mission and vision
- Developing opportunities for local businesses to connect to volunteers and conservancy staff rather than just donate to the conservancy
- Foregoing material incentives- rather provide an opportunity for volunteers to build their social network and connect with private land owners and local businesses

The next section of this paper will discuss these topics further to make recommendations for improving the current volunteer program at the BLC.

Recommendations

The case studies and past research provided an opportunity to draw out best practices and how to strengthen current practices at Bayou Land Conservancy. In exploring key strengths weaknesses, opportunities and threats this section aims to understand the current situation at BLC. Below is a discussion of how BLC can improve their current volunteer program through the framework of best practices.

STRENGTHS

Training Program for New Volunteers

BLC holds the Ambassador training over five weeks in order to focus on a different training topic each week; topics include the mission of BLC and the difference between native and invasive species. Once the volunteers complete this training, they can enter into roles as Eco-Stewards or with more training into the Conservation Crew. This training provides volunteers with an understanding of not only what their role is within the BLC, but also the importance of their volunteer work at the BLC. This reflects on the best practices from the last section. As the past section noted, it is an important first step to provide structure to new volunteers including creating titles and training for the new volunteer (Amsden and Studer).

Support from a Variety of Different Stakeholders

There are varieties of stakeholders throughout the community who are already involved with the BLC; they include current Eco-Stewards, precinct representatives, townships, higher education officials, Master Naturalist, and local community groups in the area (Stakeholder). These stakeholders are excited to improve the current volunteer program, and come with new ideas for how to both further the Ambassador program and how to further the mission of the BLC. For example, an official for the Texas Education System has a list of ways that the BLC could further outreach and focus on environmental education throughout the region. Additionally, a Master Naturalist and current volunteer have listed ways to collaborate with Exxon Mobile whose headquarters are along the greenway (Stakeholder). The strong interest and leadership behind BLC is one of the Conservancy's main strengths; current research demonstrates that similar practices to be a core part of a strong volunteer program.

WEAKNESSES

Mission Statement and Vision Statement

The BLC has tucked their current mission statement into the top of their website. Their mission states:

“Bayou Land Conservancy permanently protects wetlands and other ecologically valuable habitat through partnerships with willing landowners. We preserve land for wildlife habitat, flood mitigation, and enhanced water quality. Our programs connect the public to nature through recreation, education, and stewardship”
(Bayou Land)

This mission states what the BLC is doing and how they are trying to preserve lands. However, why they are protecting these habitats and how this benefits the region overall is not quite clear in this current mission. The mission does explain briefly the ecological benefits of protection. However, the mission and the website do not mention why these benefits are important for wildlife or the social system in the region.

In comparison, the ATC and HCC clearly link their work to benefits for the community as a whole. The HCC's mission statement explains the importance of protecting land:

“The region's prosperity is inextricably tied to its natural landscape and quality of life. People – and companies – move here, and want to stay here, because it's a wonderful, beautiful place to be; the future economic success of Central Texas and the Hill Country is tied to how well we balance our growth and the preservation of precious natural resources” (Hill Country)

In this case, the HCC links preserving land to both preserving the sense of place in Central Texas and economic development in this region as well. BLC's mission and vision may seem to be a broader topic than the volunteer management system that they want to improve. However, as seen in past research effective branding and outreach encourages more potential volunteers to connect to the work that the BLC is currently accomplishing (Curran and Brown). Additionally, effectively connecting and communicating BLC's work to strengthening the overall community provides the opportunity to connect with the business owners and other non-profits not directly related to the environment perhaps, but other issues that affect the urban and rural areas of the region.

Retention of Volunteers

While one of the main strengths of the program is the volunteer training, the main issue facing the BLC is keeping volunteers engaged after they complete the training. The BLC has over 100 community members who have taken the training, but only a handful of active Eco-Stewards and Crew members. The BLC does have two specific tracks for volunteers to fall into after training, but the BLC currently loosely defines the Eco-Stewards role. Additionally, the Conservation Crew members are volunteers that are more likely to have past experience with GIS- a tool they need to use for this volunteer role (Stakeholder). As described in the past chapter, ATC and BLC both have practices consistent with volunteer management research that keep volunteers engaged, while BLC did not have established practices in line with this past research.

THREATS

Copying Another Program Without Acknowledging Differences at BLC

While the ATC and HCC provide interesting examples of similar organization's volunteer programs, to simply cut and paste ideas from another conservancy is not the most effective way to build a program, because of the inherent difference between conservancies. The HCC has been established for a comparable amount of years and has similar initiatives such as a public trail project. However, the HCC works in a different region of Texas; this region has a different political climate for example that may create a

different strategy for volunteer outreach than perhaps the more conservative areas of Texas where the BLC works.

Additionally, while ATC has a strong volunteer management system, the ATC is nearly three-times as old as the BLC and the HCC. These clear differences should not stop other conservancies from drawing lessons from these examples, but remembering to balance these examples with research and contextualize these examples to the climate and limitations at BLC is important. The nature of past research as both contradictory and general demonstrates why this is important. One of the reasons for the nature of this research is that the majority of research states that all volunteer programs vary by the type of program, how well established the organization is, how well known the program is, and where the organization is (Aimsden and Studer).

Relying Too Heavily on an Online Volunteer Management System

A strong and well-chosen volunteer management system may both provide structure for the current and future volunteers at BLC, and help BLC's staff better manage volunteers. However, just implementing an online system may not fully address the issues of volunteer retention and communication about what the BLC is actually trying to accomplish through their mission. The case study practices described in the past chapter demonstrate another options. The HCC does not have a fulltime volunteer manager or an online system, but they do provide unique experiences to a target audience. In building relationships with this core group, HCC is building a strong foundation for future development for the program.

Asking for Donations from Corporate Sponsors Rather than Collaborating

Some current BLC stakeholders think that it might be appropriate to ask Exxon for a donation for hats or prizes for a future event. However, the Master Naturalist questioned this plan. Instead, he suggested a collaboration between Exxon and BLC. He explained that the Master Naturalist as a group provides nature classes for Exxon employees and Exxon encourages employees to volunteer for the Master Naturalist (Stakeholder). This suggestion to collaborate rather than ask for donations references current practices at ATC and HCC where local businesses are considered partners to work with rather than ask favors from. For instance, HCC's pop up parks allows for businesses, volunteers, and conservancy staff to all build a project together.

Creating Exclusive Groups While Discouraging other Potential Volunteers

While the Conservation Crew does provide the opportunity for volunteers to have a more defined role at HCC, there appears to be a concern that this group is too exclusive. One can see this theme in speaking to some of the current Ambassadors. For example, one Ambassador noted:

“The ambassador program had just become to us a very basic, environmental awareness program. It lost my husband's interest. An environmentalist and master naturalist, he found no interest or excitement to go forward. It seems the trail participants are a small exclusive group whom are called upon, and all others are not” (Stakeholder).

This is obviously one perspective of these roles; however, this concern could find ground if the BLC decides to implement a new program similar to EPIC. How to balance unique experiences with inclusivity might be a relevant theme in future conversations about how to expand the volunteer program.

Trying to Implement too Many Potential Programs at Once

While there are a variety of exciting ideas in just exploring two comparable conservancies, BLC has already expressed the concern of staff capacity with the current programs at BLC. Perhaps creating a strategic plan for how to grow the volunteer program over time- citing which programs and incentives the BLC would like to implement within the next 5 to 7 years would be beneficial. This would be more work up front, but as the ATC program demonstrates, a strong volunteer network grows staff and volunteer capacity overtime (Daniels).

OPPORTUNITIES

Systematically Build Volunteer Opportunities While Increasing Staff Capacity

There is an opportunity for the BLC to look beyond simply purchasing an online volunteer management system. If the BLC further explores where the organization's volunteer management program would ideally be within the next five to seven years, the BLC could more effectively utilize volunteers and potentially build staff capacity- as is currently seen at the ATC, with the use of training manuals, and various clubs and crews

that support the ATC. Perhaps this could be in the form of a strategic plan for the BLC specifically looking at volunteer management in the next five to eight years.

Retain Incoming Volunteers While Increasing Outreach to Potential Volunteers

There is the potential for current volunteers to fill leadership roles within the surrounding community, as advocates for the greenway and the BLC in general. As ATC has demonstrated, volunteers can both volunteer on the trail as well as within community, acting as in-between partners for both the community and the conservancy. Through advocating for the BLC within the broader community, the current volunteers could have a specific role at the conservancy while encouraging other potential volunteers to hear about the work of the BLC.

Additionally, if the BLC further defines the Eco-Stewards role to assign specific volunteers to specific areas of the trail, as they are currently exploring, they could perhaps retain more volunteers. If the BLC decides to further define volunteer roles they could provide a way for informal project development. As seen through the work at HCC and ATC, and past research, this builds a social network that grows the volunteer base overtime.

Build on Current Blog to Increase Outreach to Potential Partners and Volunteers

While the BLC does have a blog currently, it focuses on the ecological benefits of the natural systems throughout the region. There is an opportunity to expand topics of the blog to include stories from volunteers or the private landowners, or businesses that are

near the greenbelt; this may further demonstrate how protecting the natural system could positively affect people within the region. This directly references the best practices explained in the past section, and is a simple step for the BLC to take.

Increasing community understanding of the importance of the Bayou in the region as well as conservation practices generally

Although the staff at BLC has a limited capacity, focusing on efforts to increase the capacity of the volunteer program may lead to an overall increase in staff capacity. The best practices include providing a clear structure for volunteers where they think that they are partners within the organization, allowing for flexibility as the organization expands, providing meaningful experiences or transferable skills, and allowing for social networks to form. These practices would build the conservancy's reputation and impact in the area. This leads to a further connection to the local communities surrounding the conserved lands and trails. Investing in building a strong volunteer management program may be a significant time commitment upfront, but this time spent may lead to an overall stronger conservancy overtime.

Furthering the mission of Bayou Land Conservancy throughout the region

Developing a stronger volunteer management system may seem as an additional benefit for conservancies rather than a core function. However, in exploring HCC and ATC there appears to be a strong correlation between a strong volunteer management program and increased staff capacity and core functions. Additionally, past research notes that strong volunteer programs further the connection between the community, and the organization and increases the community's understanding of the importance of natural

systems; this has shown to lead to an increase in community response to environmental causes (Stewart, Dwyer, and Bremer). In time, a volunteer management system could address one of the core challenges that the BLC has:

“It is a challenge to get stakeholders to understand that the economic value of green space is immense. Not only can it protect against drought and flood, but there are benefits to water and air quality. There are recreational and health values as well as general support of regional biodiversity – Jill Boullion” (Butterfield)

Establishing a strong volunteer management system could provide the opportunity for the BLC to connect with residents, businesses owners, and city officials throughout the region in order to promote the balance between the social, environmental, and economic structures in the region; this appears to be what they are working towards.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Create Clear Roles for Volunteers

While the BLC does have specific tracks for the volunteers, there are no specific roles or ways for current volunteers to develop a project on their own or develop transferable skills. Perhaps creating a job description for each potential volunteer may be a small step forward. While the current website has a space for openings at the BLC; the page states that there are no open positions at this time. Perhaps this page could clearly list volunteer positions needed at the conservancy, making clear that these are volunteer not staff positions. These descriptions could list specific asks of each volunteer, a time commitment, and expectations. Clearly establishing expectations before the volunteer

starts their new role may lead to further retention and engagement of volunteers beyond the training. This is referencing the volunteer “job description” system that has worked well for the ATC and past research which has demonstrated the same. Once roles become established, research suggests that organizations can create an atmosphere where informal project development and transferable skill development can occur. This is where ATC’s chainsaw classes or the HCC popup parks appear.

Take Small Steps Now to Connect Current Stakeholders

Similar to ATC and HCC, the BLC may want to expand their current blog to include the perspective of volunteers, landowners, and local businesses. Perhaps the BLC could highlight these posts not only on their website, but on social media as well. As ATC demonstrates including volunteers’ perspectives as well as best practices helps to create an online community for volunteers who may be miles away from one another, but are working towards similar goals at the BLC. In encouraging an online community, community members or potential volunteers can see the benefits of the BLC’s work in connection with the more research based posts on the ecology of the area. Perhaps demonstrating these connections would encourage current volunteers to feel more engaged and peak the interests of other volunteers who may not have a direct interests in environmental issues (Stewart, Romolini, and Bremer).

Provide Unique Experiences and Leadership Roles for Volunteers and Partners

Bayou Land Conservancy perhaps should focus on unique and exclusive events and opportunities for their volunteer members. This is seen throughout the start of the ATC and is currently a part of the volunteer program at the HCC.

Again, as past research suggests creating unique experiences and “exclusive” groups attracts volunteers who are more likely to want to volunteer at smaller non-profits or conservancies. This is because these volunteers are more likely motivated by wanting to find a social group or learn new transferable skills (Classen, Hager, and Studer). The BLC does have a few special events, however creating a group that volunteers feel connected to and benefit from (from different trainings to different events) could create a more consistent retention of volunteers. This could mean offering early invites to special events or events just for current volunteers. For instance, this could mean offering volunteers an opportunity to have bird watching competitions on the lands that are not open to the public. HCC implements similar events that connect both the volunteers with a unique experience and the current landowners to more events at the HCC.

Reconsidering the Wording of the Current Mission and Vision

One of the weaknesses of the BLC is a lack of connection within their mission statement between how BLC protects land and the reasons why the BLC is wanting to preserve lands. In order to correct this, the BLC could further highlight how protecting the ecological systems benefits the social systems of the region in rethinking the mission

statement. For instance, in simply reading the mission of the conservancy one can better understand that protecting land creates a stronger natural system that protects a complete habitat for wildlife. However, a phrase that explains how protecting the natural environment benefits the larger community is not a part of this mission. The blog repeats this theme. There is an overall focus on the science of the greenway. However, how protecting the greenway or undeveloped land benefits the wider community is not discussed. This does not reflect BLC's overall perspective; in public interviews and on social media there is mention of how the protecting private lands does benefit the overall community.

Developing a Framework for the Growth of the Volunteer Program

A strategic plan is a way for the BLC to define goals and objectives for the next 5 to 7 years at the conservancy. This plan could not only state what the BLC plans to accomplish, but how various partners would contribute to this plan as well. Through the creation of the strategic plan BLC could further connections between community partners and more fully understand the needs and wants of current and potential volunteers in the community.

While again the BLC's staff capacity is limited, BLC could create mini-training guides or trail maintenance tips for groups of volunteers who want to volunteer on the trail. While this may take time at the beginning, once the PDFs of the manuals are uploaded on the website BLC could direct potential volunteers to an established volunteer group in the area and manuals for the volunteers to read; the ATC implements this

practice currently. Additionally, in the future, the BLC could explore shorter trainings for community members. More experienced volunteers could lead these trainings; this could further the connection between the communities and perhaps increase retention of volunteers as explained above.

Conclusion

Through exploring strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats there is an opportunity to apply the best practices to the current situation at the BLC. While the BLC has a strong foundation in terms of stakeholder interests and training, rephrasing the mission of BLC and viewing stakeholders and volunteers as partners rather than as an added benefit to the core organization are a few key items that need to be addressed in order to strengthen the BLC as a whole.

While this paper applies the best practices to a specific conservancy, establishing connections to research and current practices at conservancies creates a framework for conservancies to build strong volunteer programs and as advocated by the Land Trust Alliance (Lane). Overall, volunteer programs provide an interesting opportunity for conservancies to further their mission through connecting with the local community. Through connecting with this larger community, there is a further opportunity to develop advocates for balancing development with environmental and social systems. Through addressing sustainable land development in local terms and through local sustained partnerships local land trust could be the link that brings decisions about the growth of

communities closest to the people living and working in these areas as recommended by the former governor of Texas. (Rawlins and Paterson, 381).

References

- Amsden, Benoni. Best Practices for Volunteer Management within Trail Organizations. Michigan State University. 2004
- Appalachian Trail Conservancy. Appalachiantrail.org. 10 March 2017.
- Bachert, S. Acceptance of National Parks and Participation of Local People in Decision Making. *Landscape and Urban Planning* 20(1–3): 239–244. 1991.
- Barnes, Martha. Looking Beyond Traditional Volunteer Management: A Case Study of an Alternative Approach to Volunteer Engagement in Parks and Recreation. *VOLUNTAS: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations*. 2009.
- Bayou Land Conservancy. bayoulandconservancy.org. 10 March 2017.
- Berkes, F. Cooperation from the perspective of human ecology. In Berkes, F. (ed.), *Common Property Resources: Ecology and Community-Based Sustainable Development*, Belhaven, London, pp. 1–17. 1987.
- Berke, Philp, Does Sustainable Development Offer a New Direction for Planning? Challenges for the Twenty-First Century. *Journal of Planning Literature*. 17-1. 21 – 36. 2016.
- Bowman, W. The economic value of volunteers to nonprofit organizations. *Nonprofit Management and Leadership*, 2009.
- Bremer, Sina. Volunteer Management in German National Parks—from Random Action Toward a Volunteer Program. *Human Ecology*. 489–496. 2007.
- Brown, L. H. A case study of social media marketing practices related to volunteer management functions in nonprofit organizations. *Dissertations & Theses Global*. 2015.
- Butterfield, Julie. “Q&A with Jill Boullion of the Bayou Land Conservancy”. *Community Impact*. 2017. Executive director, Bayou Land Conservancy
- Campbell, Scott Green Cities, Growing Cities, Just Cities? Urban Planning and the Contradictions of Sustainable Development. *Journal of the American Planning Association*.
- Chapin, Timothy, Introduction, *Journal of the American Planning Association*, 78:1, 5-15 2012.
- Classens, M. What's In It for the Volunteers?. *Nonprofit Management and Leadership*, 2015.

- Curran, Ross. Nonprofit Brand Heritage Its Ability to Influence Volunteer Retention, Engagement, and Satisfaction. *Nonprofit and Volunteer Section Quarterly*. 2016.
- Daniels, Susan. Personal Interview. 4 March 2017.
- Downsborough, Linda, Shackleton, Charles, and Knight., Andrew. The potential for voluntary instruments to achieve conservation planning goals: the case of conservancies in South Africa. 45-3. 357-364, 2011.
- Dwyer, P. C., Bono, J. E., Snyder, M., Nov, O. and Berson, Y. Sources of Volunteer Motivation: Transformational Leadership and Personal Motives Influence Volunteer Outcomes. *Nonprofit Management and Leadership*, 24: 181–205. 2013.
- Follman, J., Cseh, M. and Brudney, J. L. Structures, Challenges, and Successes of Volunteer Programs Co-managed by Nonprofit and Public Organizations. *Nonprofit Management and Leadership* 2016.
- Forsyth, Janice. "Volunteer Management Strategies: Balancing Risk And Reward." *Nonprofit World* 17.3 (1999): 40-43. *Business Source Alumni Edition*. Web. 30 Dec. 2016.
- Gerber, Jean-David. The Difficulty of Integrating Land Trusts in land Use Planning. *Landscape and Urban Planning*. 289-298. 2011.
- Govekar, P. L. and Govekar, M. A. Using Economic Theory and Research to Better Understand Volunteer Behavior. *Nonprofit Management and Leadership*, 13: 33–48. 2002.
- Hager, M. A. and Brudney, J. L. Problems recruiting volunteers: Nature versus nurture. *Nonprofit Management and Leadership*, 22: 137–157. 2011.
- Hill Country Conservancy Here Forever. Hillcountryconservancy.org. March 10, 2017.
- Kiesecker, J. M., Comendant, T., Grandmason, T., Gray, E., Hall, C., Hilsenbeck, R., Kareiva, P., Lozier, L., Naehu, P., Rissman, A., Shaw, M. R. and Zankel, M. Conservation easements in context: a quantitative analysis of their use by The Nature Conservancy. *Frontiers in Ecology and the Environment*, 5, 2007.
- Knight, Richard L., and White, Courtney, eds. *Conservation for a New Generation: Redefining Natural Resources Management*. Washington, US: Island Press, 2012. 2017.
- Land Trust Alliance. *The Central Texas Greenprint for Growth A Regional Action Plan for Conservation and Economic Opportunity*. 2009. Print.
- Lane. "Pulling from the Ranks: Land Trusts Shape Volunteers into Leaders." *Administrator*. 19 Sept. 2014. Web. 22 Apr. 2017.
- McAllum, Kirstie. Meanings of Organizational Volunteering Diverse Volunteer Pathways. *Management Communication Quarterly*. 2014.

- Mountjoy, N.J., Seekamp, E., Davenport, M.A. et al. Environmental Management (2013) 52.
- Nature Conservancy. www.nature.org/ourinitiatives/regions. April 22 2017.
- Peterson, Dane. Recruitment Strategies for Encouraging Participation in Corporate Volunteer Programs. *Journal of Business Ethics*. 371-386. 2004.
- Rawlins, and Paterson. "Texas." *Smart Growth Policies: An Evaluation of Programs and Outcomes*. By Gregory K. Ingram. Cambridge, MA: Lincoln Institute of Land Policy, 2009. N. pag. Print.
- Rawlins, and Paterson. Sustainable Buildings and Communities: Climate Change and the Case for Federal Standards. *Cornell Journal of Law and Public Policy*, 2010.
- Redford, K., and Sanderson, S. Introduction. In Brandon, K., Redford, K., and Sanderson, S. (eds.), *Parks in Peril: People, Politics, and Protected Areas*, Island/The Nature Conservancy, Washington, DC. 1998.
- Romolini. Environmental stewardship footprint research: linking human agency and ecosystem health in the Puget Sound region. *Urban Ecosystems*. 13-32. 2011.
- Samuel, O., Wolf, P. and Schilling, A. Corporate Volunteering: Benefits and Challenges for Nonprofits. *Nonprofit Management and Leadership*, 24: 163–179. 2013.
- Schwing Ann Taylor. Conservation Land Trust Activities and Potential Impacts on Planning, *Planning & Environmental Law*, 64:3, 3-8, 2012.
- Speck, Jeff. *Walkable City: How Downtown Can save America, One Step at a Time*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2012. Print.
- “Stakeholder Meet and Greet, Bayou Land Conservancy.” Meeting. Houston. January 18 2017.
- Stewart, Evan, Gebbels, Susan, Stockill, Joanna. ‘Our Shared Responsibility’: Participation in Ecological Projects as a Means of Empowering Communities to Contribute to Coastal Management Processes. *Marine Pollution Bulletin*. 1–5, 2008.
- Stoms, David. Strategic Targeting of Conservation Easements as Growth Management Tools. *Land Use Policy*. 2009.
- Studer, Sibylle. Volunteer Management Responding to the Uniqueness of Volunteers. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*. 2015.