

**Scenic Rivers Land Trust**  
**Records Policy**  
**Adopted: September 12, 2017**

**Purpose of this policy:** This records policy is to ensure that Scenic Rivers Land Trust retains all the documents it needs to comply with legal and financial obligations, acquire and maintain Land Trust Alliance Accreditation, and uphold conservation easements and their proper stewardship. These documents also serve to guide future decisions concerning the organization.

This policy shall be reviewed and approved by Scenic Rivers Land Trust's Board of Directors no less than every three years.

There are two categories of records: 1) Corporation Records and 2) Conservation Easement and Stewardship Records.

**CORPORATION RECORDS:**

**Purposes of recordkeeping:**

- Fulfill legal, organizational and financial obligations
- Document past and current policies and procedures
- Provide guidance and reference for future board and staff members regarding decision making, positioning, and events

**A. CORPORATE AND LEGAL RECORDS:**

**Retention period:** Retain permanently. The Executive Director shall keep a copy of corporate filings and an additional copy shall be kept in the archives of the land trust. The Board President shall sign any documents that require a signature. Corporate and legal records include:

- Articles of Incorporation, By-Laws, IRS letter of 501(C)(3) status
- State Tax exempt status
- Current/Updated edition of any policy manuals
- Acquisition documents - motions, letters of agreement, legal advice
- Mortgages, loans, property sales documents
- Documents related to litigation or other legal land matters
- Strategic planning documents

**B. FINANCIAL RECORDS:**

**Retention period:** Retain in land trust office or archives for seven years, then destroy at will. The Board President or Treasurer shall sign any documents that require a signature. Financial records include:

- Federal, state, and municipal tax returns and filings
- Audits and financial statements
- Investment documents
- Insurance policies
- Annual financial reports

**C. EMPLOYEE RECORDS:**

**Retention Period:** Retain in land trust office or archives for seven years, then destroy at will. Employee records include, but are not limited to:

- Resumes
- Employee evaluations
- Terms of employment & salary changes

**D. BOARD MINUTES:**

**Retention period:** Retain permanently. Minutes of each Board of Directors meeting shall be kept in the minute book of the land trust and signed by the Secretary or Acting Secretary. It will be the responsibility of the Secretary to keep the current minute book, and provide a digital copy to the Executive Director. Older minute books shall be kept permanently in the archives of the land trust.

**E. FUNDRAISING AND COMMUNICATIONS:**

**Retention period:** Retain in land trust office or archives for the period of time indicated for each item, then destroy at will:

- Member/donor database (backup annually on paper) 7 years
- Grant applications, LOA, reports 7 years
- Solicitations 7 years
- Correspondence with donors (thank you letters) 7 years
- Pledge forms 7 years
- Fundraising documents (materials, talking points) 7 years
- Documentation of partnership activities 7 years
- Documentation of advocacy activities 7 years
- General correspondence general 7 years
- Newsletters and publications 7 years
- Website documentation \* years

- Activity records - communication, fundraising, education \* years
- Voicemails, emails, mail \* years

\* Retain as long as deemed necessary for institutional memory.

Note: The above retention schedules refer to the formal archiving of documents for the organization. Board members, committees, and staff may wish to keep copies in addition to working files. These duplicates may be destroyed when no longer needed.

## **CONSERVATION EASEMENT AND STEWARDSHIP RECORDS**

### **Purposes of recordkeeping:**

- Document the development and completion of conservation projects
- Document the management and monitoring of ongoing conservation easement obligations
- Provide guidance and reference for future board and staff members regarding the history and status of each project

**Retention period:** Retain permanently, except for duplicates in field files.

1. All files shall have copies as such:
  - a. Archived original file
  - b. Onsite hard copy
  - c. Onsite digital copy stored on a computer hard drive, and computer is regularly backed up by a cloud-based program.
  - d. Stewardship information shall have a digital copy on an online stewardship management cloud program, separate from hard drive backup program.
2. All onsite paper files remain in the office except copies designated for field use (field file)
3. All files are organized for completeness of pertinent information, ease of use and compact storage
4. Only essential information is stored. Essential information is determined by reference to our guiding philosophy and to the conservation easement or other conservation document

Each conservation easement file shall contain:

- a. Baseline documentation
  - i. Date of completion
  - ii. Adequate legal description of property

- iii. Conservation values & public benefits
- iv. Inventory of structures on the property
- v. Pictures of land condition
- vi. Description of land condition photos
- vii. Tax map
- viii. Aerial map or photo of easement location and boundaries
- ix. Signature and Date of landowner and SRLT acknowledging that both attest to the accuracy of the information contained in the report (or documented attempts to gain signature)
- b. Original deed or easement - signed by involved parties, including grantor, grantees, notary, and lawyer.
- c. Acquisition decision-making documents (checklists, etc)
- d. Acquisition documents - motions, letters of agreement, legal advice
- e. Donor instructions (if any have been received)
- f. Title Investigation, insurance or policies (required for easements after September 1, 2017 only)
- g. Surveys (if any – includes wildlife inventories, boundary surveys, environmental assessments, etc.)
- h. Appraisals if it was a purchased easement or landowner claimed tax-deduction (required for easements after September 1, 2017 only)
- i. Forms 8283 for projects when landowner claimed a federal tax deduction (original can be a copy of landowners signed original)
- j. Fees and leases relative to long-term land management activities
- k. Conservation easement, land deeds, and amendments
- l. Forest Management plans (if required by easement deed)
- m. Settlement documents and maps
- n. Critical correspondence (includes enforcement, permitting certain activities, etc)
- o. Records of ownership (includes notices of change of ownership)
- p. Stewardship file
  - i. Annual monitoring reports
    - 1. Report form - with live signature of monitor
    - 2. Photo schedule (descriptions)
    - 3. Photos
    - 4. Photo location map
    - 5. Summary of ownership and past stewardship reports
  - ii. Location maps
- q. Field File (for field use) - *Does not need any duplicates digitally or in archives, since it is a copy of the stewardship file.*
  - i. Copy of stewardship file, live signatures not required
- r. Any other important information related to the conservation easement

**STORAGE:**

All records will be maintained as paper (hard) files and/or digital (soft) files. The archives of Scenic Rivers Land Trust shall be digital, using a cloud-based program or off-site archival software. All archived records concerning conservation easements shall be kept in a way that meets the requirements of applicable federal and state law with respect to rules of evidence regarding electronic originals. For documents requiring signatures, archives shall be replicas of the signed originals with all exhibits and attachments. All archived records shall be stored in a format that cannot be altered. Onsite is considered within the office of Scenic Rivers Land Trust. All retention periods begin with the end of the activity or event.

**DESTRUCTION:**

After retention period is completed, hard copy documents containing sensitive information (nonpublic personal or organizational) shall be shredded. Otherwise they can be recycled or trashed. Soft copies may be permanently deleted. Destruction is not required immediately after the retention period is completed. The retention period is considered a minimum time of recordkeeping.