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Catawba land trust gets OK on quality

Charlotte's Catawba Lands Conservancy third in Carolinas to get national accreditation.

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The Charlotte-based Catawba Lands Conservancy has become only the second N.C. land trust to win accreditation by a national agency.

Accreditation tells the public that the local trust has undergone “an extensive, external review of the governance and management of its organization, and the systems and policies it uses to protect land,” said Tammara Van Ryn, executive director of the Land Trust Accreditation Commission.

The commission, created in 2006, is governed by a volunteer board of conservation and nonprofit management experts from around the country.

It made the Catawba conservancy one of the first in the nation to win accreditation – 53 of nearly 1,700 land trusts have been approved. Hendersonville's Carolina Mountain Land Conservancy and Upstate Forever of Greenville, S.C., were accredited last year.

The Catawba conservancy, incorporated in 1991, traces its roots to volunteers working to protect Mountain Island Lake, the primary drinking water source for Charlotte and Gastonia.

It now works in the Catawba River basin of Catawba, Gaston, Iredell, Lincoln, Mecklenburg and Union counties, where it has protected 7,568 acres. It's also the lead agency for the Carolina Thread Trail, which will connect 15 counties through a network of trails and greenways.

Contributors want to be sure their money is used effectively in bad economic times, said executive director Dave Cable. He called accreditation “a nice affirmation of the quality of our organization and our team.”



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