

Conservation Agreements in Support of Marine Protection

2005 National Land Trust Census Highlights

- 37 million acres protected
- Pace of conservation has tripled
- 1,667 land trusts (32% increase)



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Report: Conservation efforts offset land lost to sprawl

54% increase in acres protected since 2000

 By Patrick O'Driscoll
USA TODAY

DENVER — Growing efforts to save privately owned farms, ranches and forests from industrial and residential development now preserve about as much open space each year as is lost to sprawl, according to a report out today.

The National Land Trust Census, conducted every five years by an umbrella organization for land conservation groups, says private land under protective trusts and easements now total 37 million acres, a 54% increase from the last count in 2000.

Conservation of private land from 2000 to 2005 averaged 2.6 million acres a year — about half the size of New Jersey, according to the Land Trust Alliance, which represents 1,200 of the USA's 1,667 local, state and national land trusts.

This means additional land protected each year exceeds the 2.2 million acres that the Agriculture Department has estimated is converted annually to "developed land."

Most of the growth was in action by local and state trusts. Unlike larger national trusts, many of these groups are run primarily by volunteers. Yet such trusts tripled the average acreage they were able to set aside annually compared with the previous five-year census.

Protected turf

About 37 million acres of private land in the USA are protected by trusts or easements, an amount nearly the size of New England.



Source: Land Trust Alliance

By Karl Gelles, USA TODAY

The results "took my breath away," says Land Trust Alliance president Rand Wentworth. "They showed that a movement of local volunteer groups is making a huge difference in conserving places they love."

The biggest acreage is in conservation easements, legal pacts between landowners and trusts or government agencies that permanently limit the land's use. The land census says easements have risen 148% since the last count.

An easement preserves open space permanently as scenic landscape, watershed or wildlife habitat from other development. The landowner, often a rancher or farmer, receives a tax credit in exchange and can continue to graze livestock or

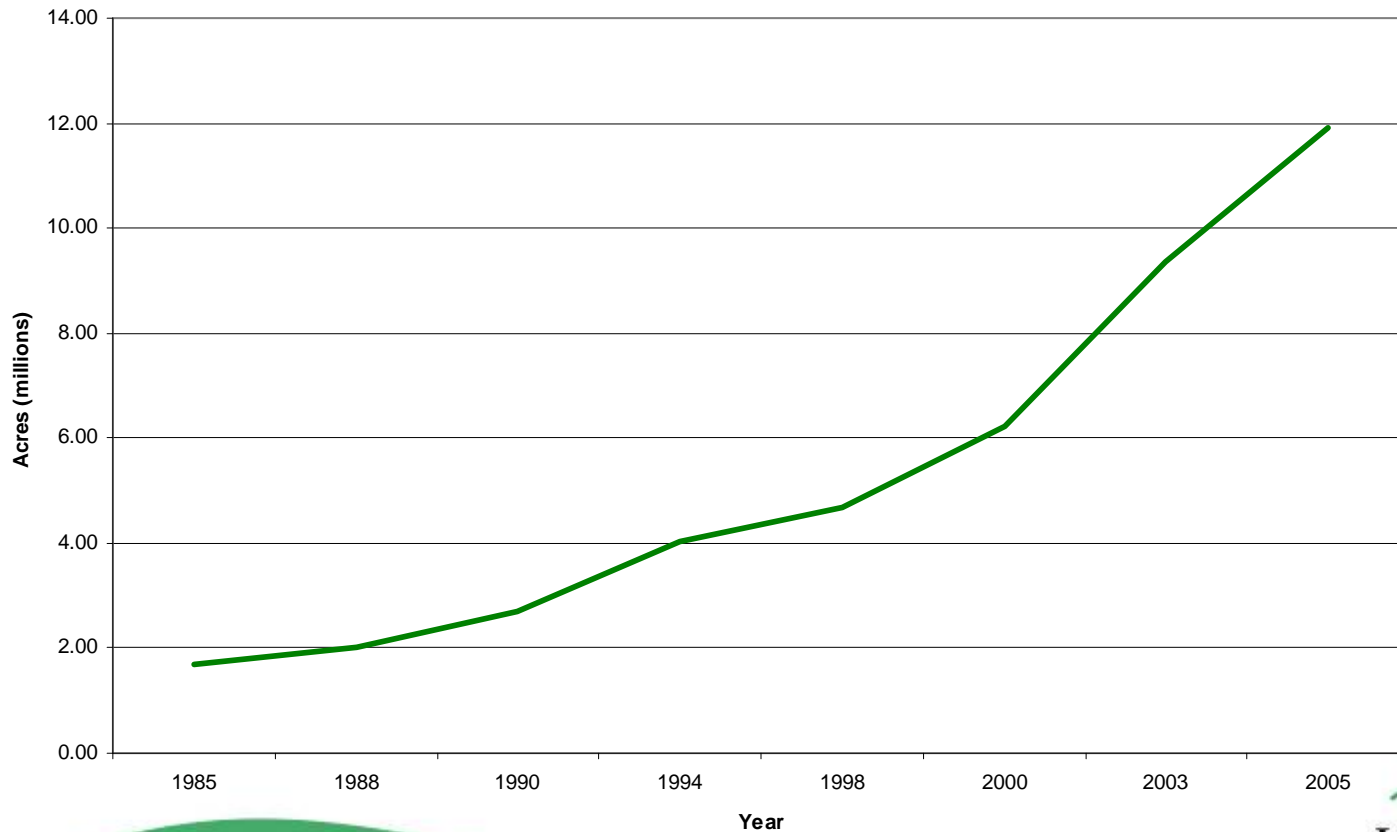
grow crops on the property.

"When you're driving through California and see all this land, you assume the government owns it and it's protected. But half of it is privately owned. The public gets the benefit of (landowners') management," says Nita Vail of the California Rangeland Trust, which promotes easements.

Land conservation increased in all regions, especially in the West, which has 43% of the private land conserved since 2000 by local and state trusts. The Northeast tallied 30% of the state and local total, largely through easements. That included the single largest conservation transaction: more than 762,000 acres in Maine's Pingree Forest in 2001.

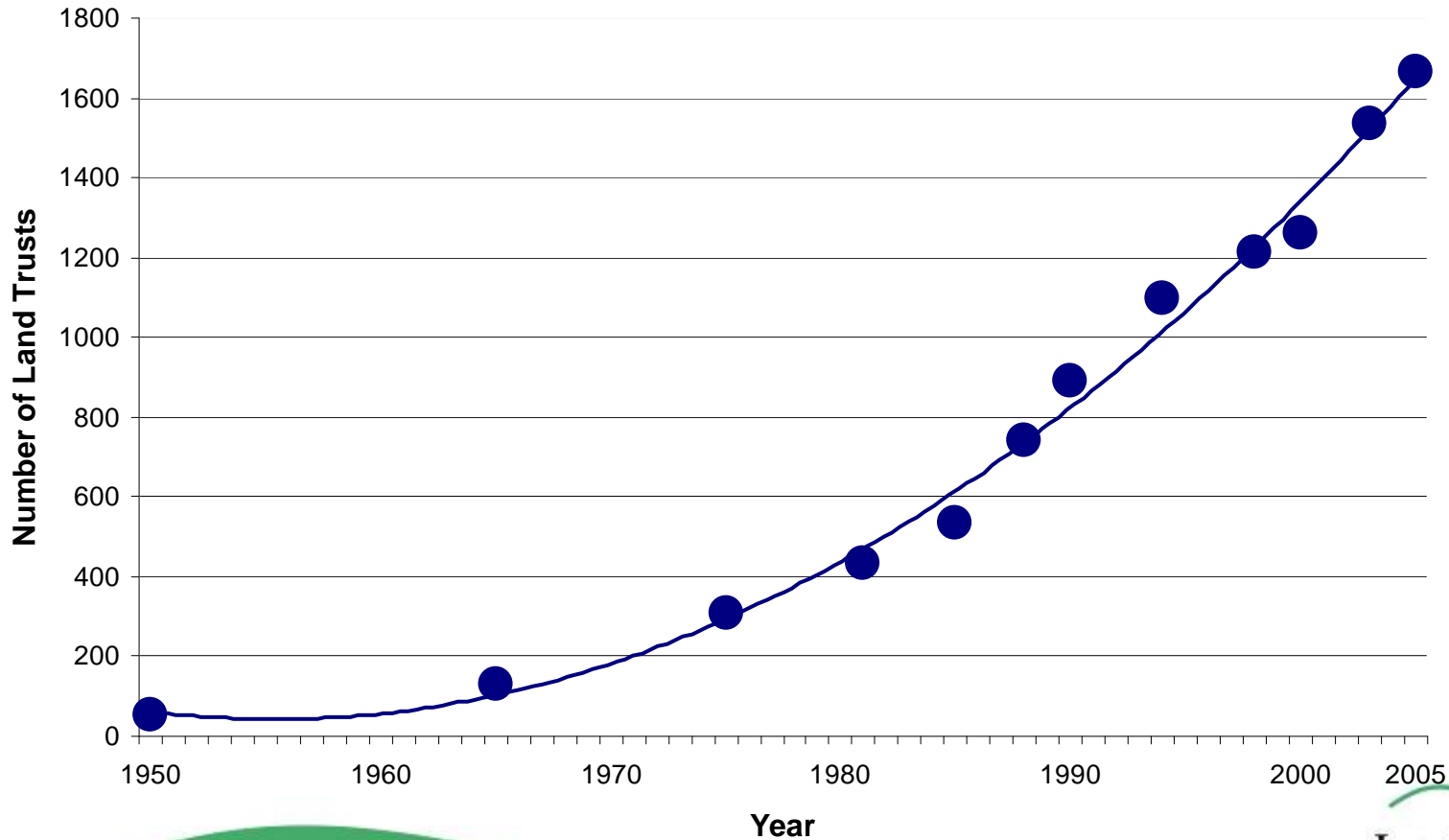
2005 National Land Trust Census

Acres Conserved (1985-2005)



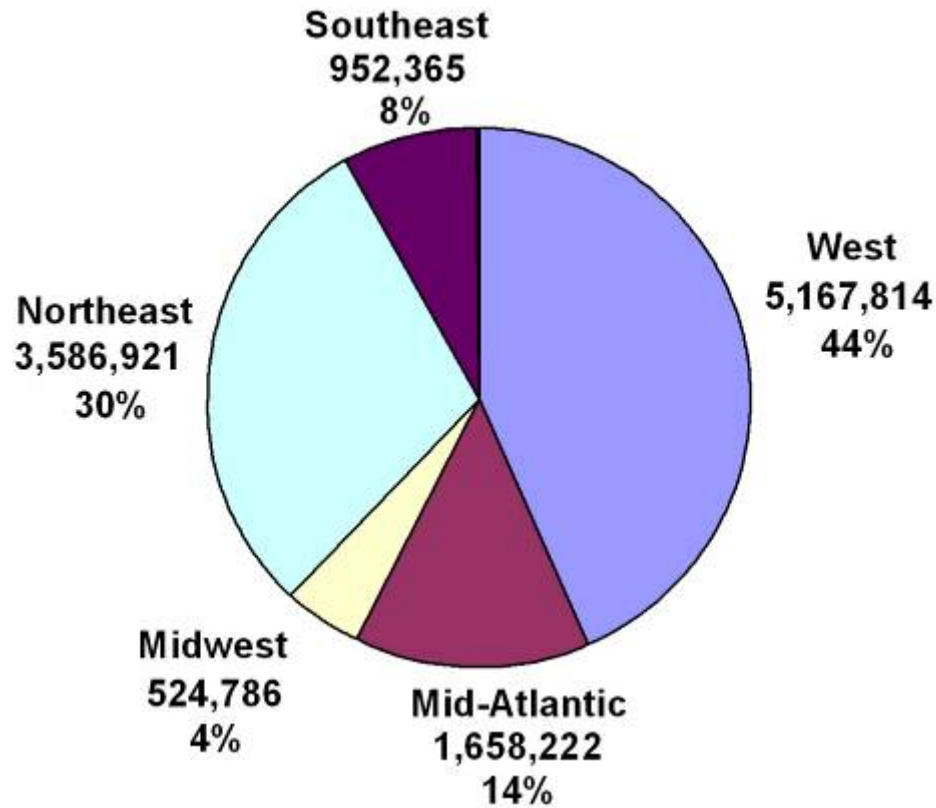
2005 National Land Trust Census

Number of Land Trusts(1950-2005)



2005 National Land Trust Census

Land Conserved by State and Local Land Trusts



2005 Acres Saved and Percentage Increase from 2000

State	Acres	Increase
Montana	442,554	88%
New Mexico	305,561	114%
South Carolina	79,080	81%
Georgia	66,155	179%
Florida	23,261	37%
Alaska	14,223	49%

Land Trust Alliance Accomplishments

- Joint Committee on Taxation
- Senate Finance Committee
- IRS Regulations
- Outreach to Land Trusts and Land Owners

Land Trust Alliance

Next Steps

- Make Tax Incentives Permanent
- IRS Collaboration
- Outreach