**Standard 9G1: Records Retention Policy**

**Sample Land Trust Records Policy (Revised)**

**Adopted \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Purpose**: The Sample Land Trust (SLT) recognizes that maintenance of consistent, complete, secure, and authentic records is essential to achievement of its mission. The SLT Records Policy is developed to ensure compliance with the intentions of its donors, including conservation easement donors, to document and sustain the conservation values of protected lands in fee ownership or under conservation easement and to secure SLT’s public charitable status. The SLT Records Policy supports and is integral to other SLT policies. All files are the property of SLT, not members of the Board of Directors or other outside parties.

This policy embodies the functional principles of SLT’s records policy. The Records Management Committee is empowered to develop and amend procedural documents as needed to implement the Records Policy.

**Records Policy**:

SLT will review this Records Policy periodically to ensure organizational compliance and to ensure that this policy continues to serve the best interests of SLT. The Archivist will regularly complete a file review to ensure that all records and backups are accurately and fully maintained; and that conservation project documentation is complete, in order, and in the right location, and to be sure that documentary evidence, including photographic records and original documentation is not deteriorating beyond the point of usefulness.

SLT recognizes the importance of protecting all of its records from fire, flood, and any other catastrophe; and also recognizes the impractically of SLT maintaining multiple sets of paper records in different locations. Therefore, SLT has chosen to store original signed documents in a bank safety deposit box with complete duplicate files held in the office under locked, controlled access in a manner that protects them from daily use and secure from damage. Back-up files are stored digitally.

**Section 1 – Property Records** It is crucial that the SLT Board of Directors have ample opportunity to review all proposed conservation projects and to maintain those that are approved and implemented. For this purpose, SLT will create and maintain files for each conservation project. SLT considers the paper files to be the original records and maintains an electronic file as the duplicate.

**Section 2 - Fundraising Records:**  As a public-supported charitable organization, SLT is committed to raising funds in an ethical and accountable manner. Quality recordkeeping of all fundraising programs will demonstrate that SLT complies with charitable solicitation laws, accurately represents its claims and intended use of funds, and uses restricted funds as specified by donors. To that end, it is the policy of SLT to maintain accurate and complete records regarding fundraising activities.

**Section 3** – **Financial Records** As a public charity and an organization responsible for easement defense in perpetuity, SLT must manage its finances and assets in a responsible and accountable manner. To that end, it is the policy of SLT to maintain complete, accurate and credible documentation of its financial management activities. SLT will follow generally accepted non-profit accounting principles to ensure clear and credible financial records. Access to these records is limited to the Board of Directors and SLT’s attorneys, accountants and other retained professionals. Specific reports that do not contain confidential information will be made available to members and volunteers as needed.

**Section 4 – Organization Records**: In order to practice sound business procedures, it is the policy of SLT to maintain records of its business activities, board meetings, operational administration, community outreach and history and to carefully maintain these records in a secure manner.

**Section 5 – Retention/Destruction Schedule**: Expired business records shall be burned or shredded to ensure the privacy of records. Prior to storage, duplicates, drafts and other unnecessary documents will be removed. The following list is not inclusive and is offered as a guide.

Indefinitely:

Property:

* Originals of facsimiles of signed recorded documents with Vol/Page stamp such as Deeds, Conservation Easements, Amendments, and other legal agreements.
* Baseline Reports including Photo Documentation and Monitoring Reports.
* Property Appraisals and Surveys.
* Title Certificate Report, Insurance Policy.
* Bills of Sale and option agreements.
* Forms 8283.
* Due diligence related to such topics as conservation value, stewardship requirements and environmental review.
* Correspondence of Enduring Value: legal and important subjects, between the Land Trust and landowners relevant to recorded properties.

Fundraising:

* Records associated with Membership and Fundraising campaigns.
* Designated gifts and endowments.
* Grants.

Financial:

* Forms 990.
* Year-end financial statements.

Organization:

* Certificates of Incorporation.
* 501(c)(3) determination.
* Bylaws and Policies with adoption date.
* Minutes.

For Seven Years:

Contracts and leases (for as long as is applicable and statute of limitations is in effect).

Reports by accountants.

Accident reports and claims for settled cases.

For Three Years:

Correspondence, except that correspondence deemed to be of enduring value.

Expired Insurance policies.

Internal reports, resource materials.