

## 2017 Wisconsin Land Trust Retreat Participant Feedback

*Inspiring, interactive, informative, empowering, and fun* are some of the ways participants in the 2017 Wisconsin Land Trust Retreat described their experience. The annual Retreat provides a unique opportunity for land trust professionals, volunteers, and partners from around the state to come together to collectively strategize and plan for the future of Wisconsin's special places.

The 2017 Retreat, held February 9 and 10 at the UW-Madison Arboretum, drew 100 land trust leaders representing 39 organizations. Over half (54) responded to a post-retreat feedback survey. The Retreat was abbreviated—1½ days rather than the typical two full days—in light of the high numbers of Wisconsin folks who traveled to Rally in Minneapolis in October, and the time and financial commitment that required.

Survey respondents expressed a high level of overall satisfaction with the Retreat and enjoyed the Arboretum setting. They **highlighted the opportunity to network** during sessions, over lunch, and at a special reception at Madison Central Library. They also **offered enthusiastic feedback on the wide range of topics covered**, from advocating for land conservation, to navigating the complexities of land deals, to funding permanent land protection through water quality programs and planned giving, to exploring the vital connection between healthy people and a healthy environment.

In terms of **intentions following the conference**, respondents most strongly believed they would share what they learned at the Retreat with other colleagues, followed by requesting information, trying something new learned at the Retreat, sending information, and building a collaboration with someone they met at the Retreat.

They suggested a variety of **topics for future Retreats**:

- Stewardship:
  - funding (asking for the donation, building up stewardship and legal defense funds)
  - ongoing administration (filing and record keeping, CCRs, correspondence)
  - tools and technology for monitoring
- Managing waypoints from multiple GPS units and linking with ArcGIS
- Ecological stewardship (restoration and management)
- Mapping individual and collective scope of land trusts' work
- How much land is enough? Predicting future needs in your area for recreation, environmental health etc.
- How to identify and prioritize community needs
- Emphasizing diversity and inclusion
- Local environmental issues
- Importance of urban land trusts
- Wisconsin land trust priorities/processes for mitigating climate change

- Legal challenges to conservation easements - nationally, regionally and in the state
- Protecting agricultural/working lands
- Partnerships
  - Building lasting partnerships
  - New/non-traditional partners
  - Engaging municipalities, urban and regional planners (zoning), landscape architects (site access and management), universities
- Human resources: career growth opportunities for small organizations, staffing models, employee benefits
- Maintaining good organization/communication: interpersonal communications skills, conflict resolution
- Board how-to's
- Advocacy
  - Legislation and regulation updates we need to know
  - Talking with decision makers - tools, scripts, and other ways to get involved

Other **overall suggestions** included:

- Continue to have interactive case study / role play sessions (like this year's Anatomy of a Land Deal) and panel discussions
- Dedicated time for round table discussions beyond lunchtime networking topics
- A mix-up session where everyone switches tables and works on something in teams to allow for even more connections and conversations
- Continue to keep sufficient time between sessions for networking
- Keep the field trip/hike during the program to get out and explore and network at the same time