

Inspiring the Next Generation of Environmental Leaders

For the past three decades, the rise of land trusts throughout the U.S. has been a remarkable movement in environmental protection and citizen engagement. Over 1,500 land trusts now operate to protect local landscapes using a variety of sophisticated tools, including purchase, easements, and agricultural preservation. To-date, these grass-roots efforts have placed more than 10 million acres of land in permanent protection.

In addition to being a Certified Master of The Leadership Challenge and a long-time member of the TLC community, I've been engaged in the environmental field for many years, including a rewarding 8 years as Director of Staff Development for the Trust for Public Land. While my work then focused on the development of the dedicated professionals currently working to protect our land and all that live on it, my passion these days is to help develop the next generation of leaders who will carry on this immensely important work. And in March of this year, I sought out a wonderful opportunity that allowed me to continue to strengthen a movement that is shaping the American landscape in significant ways and is so very important to me.

As part of a three-day conference sponsored by The California Council of Land Trusts, I had the privilege of leading a group of up-and-coming land trust leaders through The Leadership Challenge® Workshop. It was truly inspiring to help prepare these folks for the challenges they will face as they strive to make a difference in the world.

Using The Leadership Challenge® Workshop agenda as a framework (adapting it to the work environment of these young conservationists), I also incorporated the Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI). Individual LPI reports generated insight into their current leadership practice and also helped broaden our discussion around the role leaders play in land protection efforts.

All the participants expressed great appreciation for being given this opportunity to develop their leadership abilities. For Angela Hartman of the Muir Heritage Land Trust, for example, "The workshop was an eye-opener. It showed me that I DO have the capacity to make a positive impact with my work and my life. I'm now more confident in my abilities and more aware of the potential we all have to be leaders."

Any leadership class brings new insights—and this one was no different. Like Angela, I know that each of these young leaders will become more adept in leading others as a result of their Leadership Challenge experience. In fact, I gained fresh insight, too. I have a greater understanding of how to successfully engage younger people in the workshop, using examples from their own experience as well as mine. The new perspectives we all gained will allow us to see the future in a new way, and provide us with skills we'll need to navigate the uncertain waters ahead.

The Leadership Challenge: A Wiley Brand website:

<http://www.leadershipchallenge.com/home.aspx>

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When we consider the need to “inspire a shared vision” in our society, it’s hard to imagine a more essential cause than land preservation—how we understand, protect, and care for our environment. By introducing The Leadership Challenge to this group of high-potential young conservation professionals, we made one small step toward ensuring a healthier world—a sentiment perfectly captured by Sarah Pilkington of the Northcoast Regional Land Trust, who said it best: “I

have been fortunate to be both a student and facilitator of many leadership trainings in the past. This particular Leadership Challenge® Workshop was one of the more useful and impactful experiences I have had. It brought together leaders from the conservation field with shared passion, challenges, and dreams. It was validating and empowering to view leadership from this context and to see how our growth as leaders can impact the work we are currently engaged in.”

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