



Land as Solution

How Land Trusts can Fight the Effects of Climate Change and Extreme Flooding



USGS (Public Domain)

Flooding is the most common type of natural disaster in the United States, and among the most damaging to human lives and property.

As the climate changes, it's not just coastal areas at risk of serious flood impacts. Inland freshwater flooding, from extreme precipitation and river overflow, is expected to increase across much of the eastern US.

One of the most powerful and cost-effective ways to mitigate flood impacts to communities is to retain the floodplain forests and wetlands that provide natural defenses against floods. Forestland protection preserves the land's ability to slow and store flood waters, directs development away from flood-prone areas, and helps to avert future damage.

As a new report by the Open Space Institute explains, many land trusts possess skills relevant to flood hazard mitigation — from transactional expertise, to experience with ecological restoration, planning, and land management, and capacity for long-term stewardship. These areas of expertise position land trusts to be valued partners in advancing land-based approaches to flood hazard mitigation.



Photos Left to right: Michael Gaida @Pixaby, Jacob B. Reibel, Randy Fath @Pixaby

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The study found that land trusts need better tools, information, and funding to be most effective; and it highlights opportunities to support the field's ability to:

1. Maximize the flood hazard mitigation benefits of conservation projects
2. Access funding sources available for land protection that mitigates flood risk, and
3. Communicate about how their work contributes to flood resilience

Land trusts could support state and local efforts to mitigate flood hazard by partnering on projects that bolster community resilience and provide added benefits for water quality, habitat, recreation.

This report seeks to clarify the role that land protection can play in mitigating flood hazard; describes promising approaches and tools; and identifies barriers that need to be overcome to expand and support land trust involvement in this work.

This research was conducted with a grant from the Jane's Trust Foundation, as a resource for practitioners, funders, and policy makers who support and direct conservation at various scales.

[DOWNLOAD THE FULL REPORT](https://www.openspaceinstitute.org/research/harnessing-land-conservation-as-a-defense-against-climate-induced-flooding)

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