



**The Open Landscape Institute (OLI)**

# **OLI's Goals and Activity**

OLI is a professional institute dedicated to the preservation of Israel's open landscapes. OLI studies and evaluates natural and cultural resources, and develops policy and tools for sustainable development and open space preservation.

## OLI's Goals and Objectives

The Open Landscape Institute (OLI) was established in the early 1990s to cope with the severe shortage of land in Israel and to promote sustainable development in order to preserve open space and protect Israel's natural and cultural legacy.



OLI collects and analyzes data about open spaces and formulates policy principles and tools to safeguard them. The Institute's activities focus on the following: planning policy, land management policy, agriculture and the environment, economy and the environment and social aspects of open spaces. OLI's work and recommendations are disseminated among planners, decision makers, environmental organizations and the public at large. OLI's professional staff plays an active role in planning and managing open landscapes and promotes the adoption and implementation of its recommendations by government authorities.

OLI was the first body to identify Israel's severe open space crisis and was a pioneer in dealing with the preservation of open spaces. OLI's impact on Israel's land-use policy and open space preservation is respected by the planning community and by decision makers. In addition, OLI's work and recommendations have significantly affected the agenda of environmental organizations regarding the preservation of open spaces, especially that of SPNI's which has since placed this issue at the top of its priorities.

## Land Management Policy

Land management and allocation policies significantly affect the future of open spaces in Israel. OLI deals with this issue by examining land management policy, conducting applied research and formulating recommendations for policies and tools for sustainable land management and the protection of open spaces.

OLI's ongoing work and involvement in sustainable land management have led to significant results during 2009: In March 2009 the Israel Land Administration (ILA) Council adopted a motion presented by Yoav Sagi, head of OLI who serves as the representative of Israel's environmental NGOs in ILA Council, calling for the incorporation of Open Space Preservation consideration in each of the Councils and the Land Authority's decisions regarding land allocation and management (ILA Council's Resolution no 1179). Later in 2009 OLI's recommendations were presented to legislators during the Knesset debate



on land reform initiated by the government and were legally incorporated into the goals and functions of the newly enacted Israel Land Administration Law. According to the new legislation, one of the stated goals of the Israel Land Administration (ILA) is the obligation to **"... Manage Israel's land as a resource... for the benefit of the public, the environment and future generations... while keeping an appropriate balance between conservation and development needs ..."** The new legislation also directs the ILA to **"... Allocate ...and purchase land for environmental and social purposes in the needed locations and capacity..."**

In addition, the legislation establishes an **“Open Space Protection Fund”**. The Fund’s money which comes from 1% of ILA annual income is dedicated solely to providing funds for open space protection including acquisition and management of ecologically valued open areas. These changes in ILA’s goals and mandate, which are directly based on OLI’s ongoing studies and recommendations, represent a most significant achievement in the position of the State of Israel regarding preservation of open spaces.

## Planning Policy

Since its inception in the early 1990s, OLI has successfully engaged in formulating recommendations for open space preservation policy and tools to be incorporated into Israel’s national planning policy. These efforts have helped bring about a major positive change in Israel’s planning policy so that open space preservation is now a national priority.

OLI’s ongoing planning activities focus on further development of planning recommendations and on following-up on the incorporation of its recommendations within planning processes. These objectives are achieved by a variety of means. For example, OLI’s executive director and its director of planning are members in Israel’s National Council for Planning and Construction and its sub-committees, and in national outline plans (master plans) steering committees, thus taking part in national planning processes at the highest level. At the same time, OLI’s ongoing relations with environmental and planning organizations and institutions provide additional channels for incorporating its policy into planning processes. OLI also operates the “OLI Forum” - a think tank consisting of professional experts from the public, private and academic sectors, which convenes to discuss planning and land management issues. This well-attended and influential forum is especially helpful in conveying OLI messages.

## Open Space Preservation in the Agricultural and Rural Sectors



Open farmland is a major component of the scarce open space remaining in Israel. More than 56% of the total open areas in northern Israel are used for agriculture, while only 2.5% are designated protected areas. Thus, maintaining open and environmentally friendly farming is a critical challenge in the struggle to preserve Israel’s unique and endangered biodiversity and to provide ecosystem services to the country’s dense population. Open farming areas, unlike built-up areas, are also an important land reserve that can be modified for use in ecological restoration and as recreation areas. Therefore,

cooperation with the agricultural and rural sectors is essential in order to preserve the unique natural and cultural legacy of the land.

OLI is formulating and promoting policy and tools for sustainable agriculture. It is also developing cooperation with the rural and farming sectors in order to reach mutual understanding and implement agro-ecological principles.

## Applied Studies

OLI conducts professional applied studies resulting in policy recommendations for environmentally friendly planning and land management tools.

## OLI's Open Space Survey and Evaluation Unit



OLI's Survey and Evaluation Unit surveys, documents and evaluates the ecological and environmental importance and sensitivity of natural resources, landscapes and the cultural heritage value of open spaces. This information is distributed to planners and environmental and development organizations for their use in formulating sustainable land use planning and management. The goal is to survey all unprotected open spaces in Israel. Priority is determined by the extent of the threats to each area's natural resources and funding availability. The areas that have already been surveyed and the newly proposed surveys are presented on the following map.

## OLI's Geographic Information System Unit

OLI's Geographic Information Systems (GIS) Unit supplies OLI with computerized spatial analysis and mapping services that help combine and analyze environmental and planning information. OLI's GIS Unit regularly compiles and analyzes OLI surveys and other land-use data and presents them in GIS media form. The unit has become a significant tool for conservation, land use planning and monitoring for many other conservation and planning organizations.

---

For further information please visit our website

[www.deshe.org.il](http://www.deshe.org.il)

or contact us at:

2 Hanegev St., Tel Aviv 66186, Israel  
Tel: 972-3-6388700 Fax: 972-3-5374302  
sagiyoav@015.net.il

---

## OLI's Nature and Landscape Surveys

