



FIVE RIVERS CONSERVATION TRUST

Local Land Trust for the Greater Capital Region of New Hampshire

Conservation, Community, and Capacity : LOCAL CONSERVATION FOR QUALITY OF LIFE

Strategic Plan 2017 – 2021

Adopted by the Five Rivers Board of Trustees January, 2017

SUMMARY

Over our 28-year history, with dedicated staff and volunteers, Five Rivers Conservation Trust has grown to be a successful, well-managed land trust. Our mission is critical – to preserve and protect open space in the greater-capital region of New Hampshire, at the confluence of five rivers, for present and future generations.

Accomplishments include conservation of 69 properties in 15 towns, representing 4300+ acres of local farms, recreation lands, wildlife habitat, productive forests and important water resources.

Five Rivers' most recent strategic plan led it to grow its staff and become a more professional organization through the Land Trust Accreditation Program. The 2017 Strategic Plan will guide us for the next five years to take the necessary steps to expand our capacity to preserve and protect land in the Five Rivers area.

FIVE RIVERS' STRATEGIC VISION - LOCAL LAND CONSERVATION:

- Improves quality of life, and is connected to local food, health, recreation, economy, arts, and lands of ecological significance
- Creates a regional system of conserved lands
- Is effective for the long haul — making and keeping the Greater Capital Region a great place to live, work, play



FOUR STRATEGIC GOALS

A. Meeting our Mission:

Expand Protection and Care of Critical Local Lands

B. Reaching Out:

Increase Community Connections

C. Supporting Conservation:

Increase Capacity for Growth

D. Reaching In:

Update Governance and Internal Systems

SUMMARY

A. Meeting our Mission: Expand Protection and Care of Critical Local Lands

1. Develop a long-term conservation plan so that our work:
 - Meets Five Rivers' conservation priorities, including conservation of the most important land for agriculture, recreation, wildlife habitat and water resources,
 - Reflects the priorities of the communities we serve,
 - Is conducted as strategically, efficiently, and effectively as possible, and
 - Builds ongoing community awareness and support.
2. Increase Five Rivers' capacity to conserve landmark properties including farms, outdoor recreation land & key natural areas
3. Increase conserved land by 50% to 6,000 acres
4. Increase the efficiency and quality of conservation stewardship: building landowner relationships, monitoring conserved land; prevention of and response to compliance issues; and
5. Expand conservation to parts of the region that are less well served.

B. Reaching Out: Increase Community Connections

1. Engage with each town;
2. Connect with key organizations/partners and
3. Increase visibility: builds brand and image, further develop website, appropriate signage on properties, staff & Board visible ambassadors.

C. Supporting Conservation: Increase Capacity for Growth

1. Expand financial resources to meet our mission
 - Major donors – Build on Conservation Leader Society success, recruit more members, increase giving levels; emphasize cultivation
 - Members & supporters –simplify, build for long-term foundational support
 - Businesses – recruit business members and sponsors
2. Selectively Expand Staff to include a Land Conservation Specialist
3. Advance staff, Board, and volunteer training to increase proficiency

SUMMARY

4. Improve working environment - Move to new office space allowing for 3 staff, at least one private office, meeting and volunteer work space & parking for staff and volunteers with handicapped accessibility

D. Reaching In: Update Governance and Internal Systems

1. Transition from a volunteer board to a governing board:
 - Revise By-laws
 - Modify Board composition and roles
 - Expand Executive Director skills and responsibilities, emphasizing development & staff/volunteer management
2. Improve internal systems, concentrating on bookkeeping, membership and conservation data management, timely reporting and sharing of mission critical information

SPONSORS

Thank you to our Sponsors for making this 2017-21 Strategic Plan possible through their generous funding:



CLEVELAND, WATERS AND BASS, P.A.
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STRATEGIC VISION AND PLAN

Conservation, Community & Capacity: Local Conservation for Quality of Life

POISED FOR GROWTH — A TIME OF GREAT POTENTIAL

Five Rivers Conservation Trust is poised for growth in a time of great potential. In the coming three to five years, Five Rivers has the opportunity to leverage its many accomplishments and achievements, accrued over twenty-eight years, into a lasting and far-reaching contribution to the human and natural communities of the greater Capital region of New Hampshire. This strategic plan highlights the critical steps that Five Rivers will take to seize this opportunity.

COMMUNITY CONSERVATION

Open space is as important to community, family, ecological, and individual well-being as local arts, health, education, and human services organizations. The opportunity ahead is for Five Rivers to be known as the organization working for local conservation in the greater Capital region —protecting open spaces and quality of life.

Through Community Conservation, Five Rivers will work with communities to protect natural, open space, agricultural, recreational, and other lands that are important to the fabric of life. As a regional land trust, Five Rivers can look at the larger picture and make connections that cross town boundaries, just as natural resources do.

Our vision is rooted in these priorities:

- Improving quality of life through local land conservation, connected to local food, health, recreation, economy, arts, and lands of ecological significance
- Creating a regional system of conserved lands, working with landowners, communities & other partners
- Making land conservation effective for the long haul — making/keeping this a great place to live, work, play

STRATEGIC VISION AND PLAN

A. MEETING OUR MISSION: EXPAND PROTECTION AND CARE OF CRITICAL LOCAL LANDS



The mission remains the same — protecting land for future generations. In the coming years, we seek to expand our conservation work in keeping with our growing vision, visibility, and expertise.

CONSERVATION PLAN

To date, Five Rivers has operated largely responsively. In addition to responding to compelling opportunities and helping local landowners, it is time for us to undertake a strategic conservation plan to identify areas most in need of protection. Key to this plan is working with local communities and other partners to identify priorities, to tell a focused story to community leaders, donors and landowners, to help landowners know their conservation options, to raise funds for local land conservation, and to protect more land.

Our staff and Board have the expertise to develop a conservation plan, with supporting outside mapping assistance. Doing so will require commitment and yield substantial long-term benefits.

STEWARDSHIP

Stewardship is the enduring responsibility we accept each time we conserve land – monitoring activities on the land, communicating with the landowners, and taking action to keep the land conserved when necessary. As our portfolio of conserved lands grows in scale and complexity, and as the organization contemplates increasing the pace of land conservation over the coming years, the requirements of ensuring good stewardship also increase. We will increase the quality of our stewardship and our capacity to respond to inquiries and potential compliance issues with improved training and supervision for volunteers, periodic monitoring of each easement by staff, and improved staff ability to respond rapidly to compliance issues, requests for easement interpretation, notification and approvals required by conservation easements, and meetings with landowners who purchase conserved properties.

STRATEGIC VISION AND PLAN

UNDERSERVED AREAS

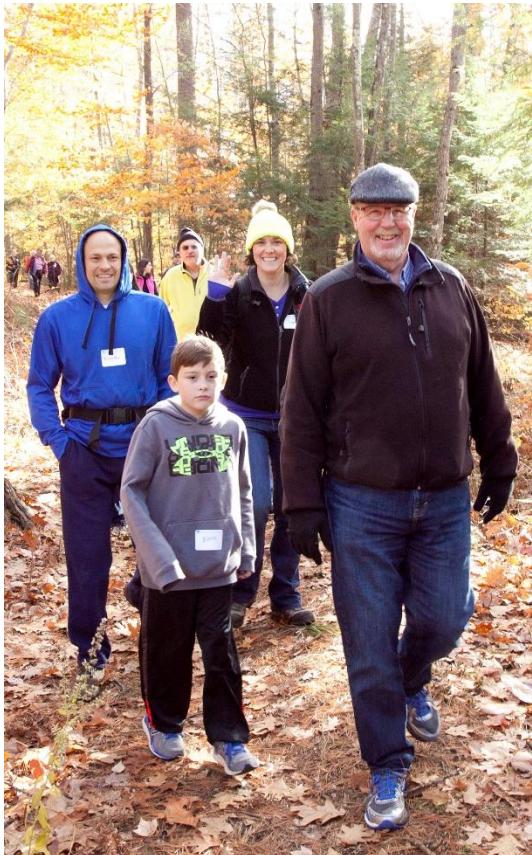
Thus far, our conservation efforts have focused mostly on a handful of towns. As we build capacity in the coming years, and especially as we seek to work with towns on a regional conservation plan, we will look for opportunities to work with communities who have less experience in conservation and to protect lands in areas where we have not focused our work previously.

IN SUMMARY, OUR LAND CONSERVATION STRATEGY IS TO:

1. Develop a long-term conservation plan so that our work:
 - Meets Five Rivers' conservation priorities, including conservation of the most important land for agriculture, recreation, wildlife habitat and water resources.
 - Reflects the priorities of the communities we serve,
 - Is conducted as strategically, efficiently, and effectively as possible, and
2. Builds ongoing community awareness and support.
3. Increase Five Rivers' capacity to conserve landmark properties including farms, outdoor recreation land, & key natural areas;
4. Increase conserved land by 50% to 6,000 acres;
5. Increase the efficiency and quality of conservation stewardship: building landowner relationships, monitoring conserved land; preventing and responding to compliance issues; and
6. Expand conservation to parts of the region that are less well served.

STRATEGIC VISION AND PLAN

B. REACHING OUT: INCREASE COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS



We will continue and expand our efforts to be more visible in the communities we serve, striving to no longer be one of the best-kept secrets in the region.

Particularly through undertaking our conservation plan, we will connect with every town in the region and engage a wider cross-section of people in considering conservation opportunities and needs.

IN SUMMARY, WE WILL:

1. Engage with each town;
2. Connect with key organizations/partners; and
3. Increase visibility: builds brand and image, further develop website, appropriate signage on properties, staff & board visible ambassadors.

STRATEGIC VISION AND PLAN

C. SUPPORTING CONSERVATION: INCREASE CAPACITY FOR GROWTH

To make this expansion of conservation possible, we must increase our capacity for growth in finance, people and space. Increased financial resources are a necessary first step toward building capacity for growth.



We will expand financial resources through major donor, member, and business support.

MAJOR DONORS

As indicated by the success of the Conservation Leaders Society (CLS) and support from NH Charitable Foundation, and following the experience of other land trusts, a pool of large donors (both individuals and foundations) is the basis for building capacity.

The Board and the Executive Director will plan and carry out a capacity-building fundraising campaign, being mindful that maintaining existing support for current operations is essential.

MEMBERS AND SUPPORTERS

The Development Committee, Board and staff have spent considerable time and energy discussing members and supporters. In keeping with the understanding that the critical strategic fundraising need is to expand major donor giving, as a first step from being a volunteer board to being a governing board, the Board will delegate the management of the membership/supporter system to the Executive Director. This change will allow consistency over time with adjustments based on the latest research on non-profit membership and development.

STRATEGIC VISION AND PLAN

The Board will charge the Executive Director with implementing a membership/supporter system that makes the most of limited staff and Board time, expands the number of member/supporters, raises as much money as possible, reduces differences between members and supporters, and minimizes internal and external confusion.

BUSINESS MEMBERS/SPONSORS

The Board and Executive Director will develop and implement a program to increase business members and sponsors, building on the core idea that land conservation is central to quality of life for employees and customers and connected to economic and other community, family, and individual well-being.

SELECTIVELY EXPAND STAFF

Conserving land and accepting responsibility for stewardship of land in perpetuity is an immense responsibility. We understand our past success now leaves us with a need for a dedicated land protection staff person (Land Conservation Specialist (LCS)) to complement the work of volunteers. Hiring a LCS requires a funding plan to support this position. To this end, a review of the development plan by an outside professional is timely.

ADVANCE STAFF AND BOARD PROFICIENCY

Five Rivers is a young organization in terms of the length of service of the average staff, volunteer or Board member. Now is an appropriate time to invest in staff & Board proficiency through knowledge and skill building exercises for staff and volunteers and involvement by Board members in annual Land Trust Alliance rallies.

MOVE TO NEW OFFICE SPACE

Our physical space has become a limiting factor in many ways. We intend to move to new office space allowing for 3 staff, at least one private office, meeting and volunteer work space and parking for staff and volunteers. Handicapped access to at least part of the office will be a goal.

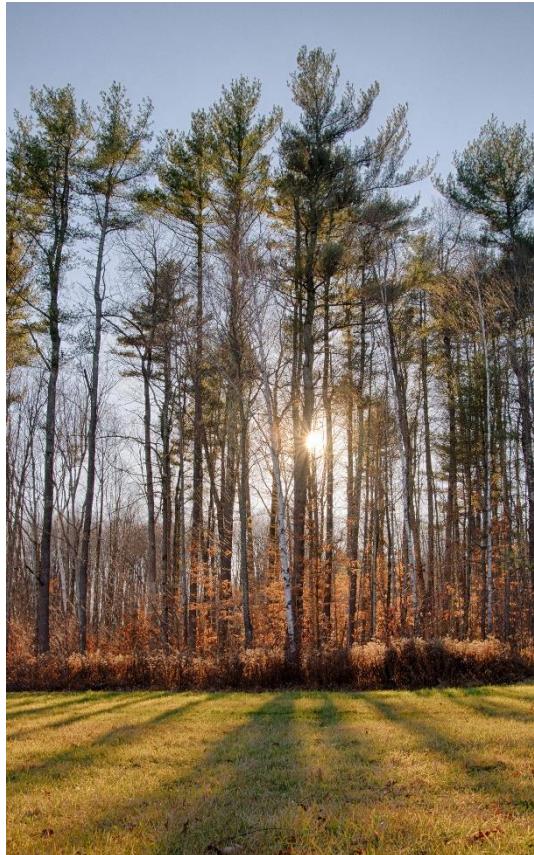
STRATEGIC VISION AND PLAN

IN SUMMARY, WE WILL INCREASE OUR CAPACITY FOR GROWTH BY:

1. Expanding Financial Resources to support our mission
 - Among individuals & foundations - Build on CLS success; recruit more members; increase giving levels; emphasize cultivation
 - Among members & supporters –Simplify the system to build a base of financial support for the long-term
 - Among businesses – recruit business members & sponsors
2. Selectively Expanding Staff to include a Land Conservation Specialist
 - Contingent on successful fundraising efforts
 - Engage outside professionals as necessary to focus development efforts
3. Advancing staff, Board, and volunteer training to increase proficiency
4. Improving working environment - Move to new office space allowing for 3 staff, at least one private office, meeting and volunteer work space & parking for staff and volunteers with handicapped accessibility

STRATEGIC VISION AND PLAN

D. REACHING IN: UPDATE GOVERNANCE AND INTERNAL SYSTEMS



Among the challenges we will tackle is updating our governance, the relationship between Board and staff, and internal systems to enable us to operate more efficiently, effectively, and strategically.

BECOMING A GOVERNING BOARD

From the time of its founding, the Board of Trustees has not only guided but has been directly responsible for the management and operation of the organization. Indeed, the current By-laws specify that the Board chair is responsible for management decisions that in other mature organizations are delegated to the staff. It is time for us to change this structure.

We will revise the By-laws to specify that the Executive Director is responsible for management decisions with associated responsibilities and authorities. As additional staff are added, the role of the Board will shift from one of volunteers to one of policy making and development.

We recognize, though, that changing the By-laws is the easy part and that changing our habits and

patterns will be more difficult. As part of this process, the Board will become more aware of when members are acting in their Board-level governance roles who provide direction to the Executive Director, and when they are act as unpaid, volunteer staff and therefore serving under the direction of the executive director. These are complex shifts, and we pledge to work collaboratively to build trust and to learn new ways for Board and staff to work together to achieve our shared vision.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

As the Executive Director more completely takes on a management role, the Board will place a priority on supporting the Executive Director in gaining the additional expertise and knowledge she needs to enable Five Rivers to succeed.

STRATEGIC VISION AND PLAN

INTERNAL SYSTEMS

Developing and maintaining adequate internal operating systems are the responsibility of the Executive Director. The Board will provide oversight, advice, and assistance but will recognize that this is the responsibility of the executive director.

IN SUMMARY, WE WILL INCREASE OUR CAPACITY FOR GROWTH BY:

1. Transition from a volunteer board to a governing board
 - Revise By-laws;
 - Modify Board composition and role; and
 - Expand Executive Director skills and responsibilities
2. Improve internal systems, concentrating on bookkeeping, membership and conservation data management, timely reporting and sharing of mission critical information

2017 – 2021 STRATEGIC GOALS

- a. Develop a long term conservation plan
- b. Increase 5RCT's capacity to conserve priority properties throughout our region
- c. Increase conserved land by 50% to 6,000 acres
- d. Improve conservation easement stewardship
- e. Engage with each town in our region
- f. Connect with key organizations / partners
- g. Increase 5RCT visibility
- h. Expand financial resources to support our mission
- i. Engage outside professional for development assistance
- j. Add a Land Conservation Specialist
- k. Advance staff & Board training and proficiency
- l. Move to larger office space
- m. Transition from volunteer to governing Board
- n. Improve internal systems

STRATEGIC VISION AND PLAN



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