

C O N N E C T I C U T

Land Conservation Council
2010 – 2014 Business Plan

Prepared for the Connecticut Land Conservation Council by Melissa Spear

Adopted by the CLCC Steering Committee October 30, 2009

The CLCC would like to thank the Land Trust Alliance, The Hartford Foundation for Public Giving and the Northeast Utilities Foundation for their generosity in providing the funding necessary to complete this plan.

Executive Summary

Despite an ambitious statutory goal to conserve 21% of its total land area and over 120 land trusts operating within its boundaries, the state of Connecticut lags well behind its neighbors in the amount of open space it has protected in both relative and absolute terms. At the same time, a sprawling pattern of development continues to convert significant areas of farm and forest to more intensive residential and commercial use resulting in significant, discernable changes to Connecticut's beloved "sense of place". As a result, there is a feeling of urgency around efforts to increase Connecticut's investment in land conservation. However, fiscal constraints and inconsistencies in the capacity of communities and local conservation organizations to navigate the complexities of land acquisition and management often prevent this urgency from being translated into needed action.

Connecticut's land trusts have played an important part in efforts to protect the state's natural and historic heritage to date, however their role can be significantly expanded through an effective statewide association of land conservation organizations focused on building capacity and sustainability, developing a unified voice to address public policy and promote a pro-conservation agenda, and engaging key constituencies regarding the benefits and need for land conservation. To this end, the Connecticut Land Conservation Coalition has embraced this vision and plan for effectively achieving its mission to increase the pace and quality of land conservation in Connecticut by ensuring the long term strength and viability of Connecticut's land conservation community.

Current Status of the CLCC

The Connecticut Land Conservation Council (CLCC) was created in 2006 by the merger of the Land Trust Service Bureau (LTSB), which provided technical support to land trusts, and the Land Conservation Coalition of Connecticut (LCCC) which served as an advocacy arm of the land conservation movement. As with any merger, the consolidation of the LTSB with the LCCC into CLCC has led to a transitional period during which CLCC has worked to define an identity, goals and objectives that realize the core missions of both LTSB and LCCC in a single, unified, and more effective approach. The mission of CLCC as stated in its Articles of Association is ***to ensure the long term strength and viability of the land conservation community of Connecticut.*** At planning retreats held in 2007 and 2008 the CLCC adopted the following long-term goals and strategies in support of its mission:

GOAL 1: INCREASE THE PACE, QUALITY AND SCALE OF LAND CONSERVATION IN CONNECTICUT

Goal 1 Strategies

- **Advocate for increased state funding** for land conservation, considering not only bonding but also other funding alternatives.
- Develop and implement a **grassroots program** designed to engage a broader base of conservation organizations as well as their constituencies in advocating for land conservation at the local, state and federal levels.
- Design and implement a **training program to improve the community leadership and partnering capacity of CT conservation organizations**, beginning with land trusts and conservation commissions and extending to other conservation organizations.
- Create and support a **statewide network of land trusts** to share knowledge and best practices in land conservation and organizational matters.
- Work with conservation organizations statewide to **encourage a more strategic approach to conservation** at the local, regional and state levels.

GOAL 2: TO ASSURE PERPETUAL, HIGH QUALITY STEWARDSHIP OF CONSERVED LANDS IN THE STATE

Goal 2 Strategies

- Secure **state funding for stewardship** of conservation lands protected by the state as well as by land trusts, municipalities and other conservation organizations.
- **Encourage land trusts to explore regional collaboration and foster mentoring within the land trust community** by convening and supporting a series of regional trainings and discussions regarding both organizational capacity issues and opportunities for local/regional land protection.
- Improve the organizational effectiveness and efficiency of land conservation organizations by **supporting implementation of organizational assessments**, using the “Assessing Your Organization” tool developed by the Land Trust Alliance, and design and execute appropriate strategies based upon the collective outcomes of the assessments.
- **Raise awareness** among land conservation organizations **regarding the critical importance of the long-term monitoring and management of conserved lands**, including such activities as baseline documentation, the creation and execution of management plans, and records maintenance. **Act as a conduit to make existing tools and training** on these topics **readily available** to CT land conservation organizations.

Led by a 19 seat Steering Committee with 11 serving members, CLCC currently engages in the following activities in support of its goals and objectives:

1. Organizing and running an annual conference or Convocation for the land conservation community in Connecticut
2. Organizing 2 to 3 day-long trainings advancing best practices for land conservation and land conservation organizations in Connecticut.
3. Running a hot-line that provides on-call technical support to land trusts, primarily through email.
4. Publishing a monthly electronic newsletter about important events, advocacy needs and land conservation success stories across the state.
5. Advocating in support of legislation that will benefit land conservation in Connecticut

In 2008 CLCC operated on a budget of approximately \$50,000 derived primarily from membership dues paid by its 90 land trust and 42 individual members (35% of revenues), conference and workshop fees (22% of revenues), and funding provided by other conservation organizations (40% of revenues), with The Nature Conservancy (TNC) being the largest of these. CLCC’s activities have been coordinated by a half-time staff person provided to CLCC by TNC. However, beginning in January of 2010 TNC will no longer provide staff support to CLCC.

CLCC’s key asset is its membership which is comprised primarily of land trusts. Based on the role they play acquiring and protecting land, Connecticut land trusts have been singled out by the Connecticut state legislature as essential to the success of the states land conservation goals. In addition, increasing awareness of the role land conservation plays in mitigating the potential impacts of climate change, growing demand for local food, and smart growth initiatives have all served to catalyze renewed public interest in land conservation. However, 80% of Connecticut’s 122 land trusts are all-volunteer, an additional 15 are supported by part-time staff, and 90% report an operating budget of less than \$50,000 per year. Clearly the capacity of Connecticut’s land trust community as a whole is limited by a lack of operating funds and staff. While CLCC land trust members have indicated they value CLCC primarily for its advocacy work and its role organizing and running the annual Convocation, they would like CLCC to do more to help them build organizational capacity. The CLCC must clearly demonstrate how it delivers impact and where it adds value within the land

conservation community in order to retain and grow its membership. CLCC is well positioned to deliver significant conservation benefit to the state of Connecticut by:

- Creating a venue for land trusts to learn from one another and advance their conservation agenda through collaboration;
- Representing the interests of land trusts before policy makers and legislators;
- Providing timely, practical and affordable opportunities for training and education that will improve organizational capacity and effectiveness;
- Offering direct, affordable assistance that will augment the capacity of land trusts to complete the work that is central to their mission

To do so, however, will require strengthening its leadership, resolving staffing issues, growing and leveraging its advocacy role and its annual conference, and developing a new suite of services designed to meet the needs of its membership.

CLCC's Value Proposition

Based on nation-wide research conducted by the Land Trust Alliance, CLCC can clearly be classified as a land trust association. In order to more clearly define its role as Connecticut's land trust association, CLCC has defined a value proposition built around the following five key roles:

1. Advocate for the land conservation community
2. Convener of the land conservation community
3. Provider of Information to the land conservation community
4. Provider of Services to the land conservation community
5. Grant Maker to the land conservation community

CLCC will strengthen its capacity to deliver value in each of these areas as follows.

Marketing

CLCC will engage in an intense outreach effort to the land conservation community intended to update them on how CLCC will deliver value going forward and to begin to build confidence in the organization. This outreach effort will be supported by the launch of a new website and a soon to be completed multi-year communication strategy.

Staffing

CLCC will hire a part-time Executive Director and a part-time Program Assistant in 2010 to focus on implementation of this plan.

Funding

CLCC will execute a revenue plan that includes the following components:

- Adoption of an enhanced membership strategy intended to increase membership revenue
- Creation of a formal Conference Sponsorship program and active recruitment of conference supporters to increase the revenue potential of the annual Convocation
- Implementation of a Major Gifts program that will seek out significant donors to CLCC

- Increased focus on building relationships with targeted Foundations to increase grant revenues
- Implementation of a robust fee-for-service program to generate consulting revenues

Steering Committee

The CLCC Steering Committee will shift focus upon hiring of new staff to assume the following key roles:

- Supporting a grants and major gifts programs
- Assisting with outreach to the land conservation community in order to build a strong membership base
- Serving as the “Grass Tops” in support of CLCC’s advocacy efforts
- Participating in CLCC grant programs as evaluator’s
- Helping develop content and providing volunteer support for the annual Convocation and Workshops
- Serving as Ambassadors by actively communicating CLCC’s value proposition to the land conservation community

In order to fulfill these roles two new Sub-Committees will be formed: a Membership Committee and a Fundraising Committee. These Committees will ensure that sufficient resources are being devoted to CLCC’s core constituencies and key sources of revenue for the organization.

Implementation

Successful implementation of this Plan will depend largely upon the hiring of an effective Executive Director early in 2010 followed shortly by the hiring of a Program Assistant. However, before committing to hiring new staff the CLCC Steering Committee must be confident that there will be sufficient revenue to cover the first two years of operation under a new Executive Director. This gives the Executive Director sufficient time to build membership and the new programs that will fund the organization going forward.

In addition to revenues expected to result from a growing membership base, additional conference and workshop fees, and fees for service, the revenue plan calls for \$45,000 in gifts and \$45,000 in grants to support operations, or a total of \$90,000 over the two year period 2010 through 2011. This is revenue the Steering Committee should have *in place or committed* prior to embarking on the hiring process. This will require the Steering Committee to embark immediately upon adoption of this plan on a concerted campaign to raise these funds. This initial fundraising effort and the hiring of a capable Executive Director will be the crux of successfully transitioning to a more effective, productive organization that is providing substantial value to the land conservation community.
