

CONNECTICUT
Land Conservation Council

Connecticut Land Conservation Council
Strategic Plan 2016-2020

Adopted by the Steering Committee

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Table of Contents

I.	Introduction.....
II.	Brief CLCC History.....
III.	Vision.....
IV.	Mission
V.	Guiding Principles
VI.	Goals.....
VII.	Summary.....

Connecticut Land Conservation Council

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I. Introduction

The Connecticut Land Conservation Council (CLCC) serves Connecticut's land trusts by representing their interests to state government, connecting them to training and guidance resources on both statewide and local levels, and providing direct assistance to help them achieve their conservation goals and ensure their long-term viability. Since its formation in 2006, CLCC has grown into one of the most effective statewide land trust service centers in the country, and its annual conference is now drawing close to 500 participants.

We believe that the challenges facing the land trust community – including everything from aging organizational infrastructures to boundary management to the re-emergence of development pressure – are broad and deep. CLCC can and must maintain its growth trajectory and momentum into the next decade and the decades that follow. Formalizing its non-profit status and attracting a new group of land trust leaders for the board are timely steps in that direction.

With this plan, we recommit ourselves to a future in which land trust organizations are strong, sustainable, and able to meet all the conservation challenges Connecticut faces. To that end, we will accelerate our work supporting the state's land trust community by focusing resources on regional support hubs, partnerships and collaborations, diversity in all its dimensions, and overall membership growth. We will continue to lead in representing land conservation interests in the State Capitol, support efforts at the Federal level, and help land trusts apply those same skills locally. We will continue to provide learning opportunities through the annual conference and regional seminars. We will also continue to test and evaluate opportunities to deliver information and skill-building more effectively directly and through third-party vendors and fee-for-service programs.

CLCC has operated to this point without formal non-profit status by partnering with the Connecticut Forest & Park Association as its fiscal agent since 2010 and governing with a Steering Committee of advisors comprised of land trust and conservation organization leaders from across the state. Within the context of this 5-year Strategic Plan, we intend to establish CLCC formally as an independent, non-profit 501 (c)3 charitable organization. In doing so, we expect to encounter many of the same governance issues and challenges experienced by all Connecticut land trusts at some point or another. Therefore, we intend to make every step along the way as transparent and open to the land conservation community as possible, that others might both provide input and learn from our process.

II. Brief CLCC History

CLCC was created in 2006 by the merger of two existing and well-known programs: the Land Trust Service Bureau (LTSB), which was organized in 1980 to provide technical support to land trusts, and the Land Conservation Coalition for Connecticut (LCCC), which was organized in 1987 to serve as the advocacy arm of the land conservation movement. The consolidation of these two organizations into CLCC provided the conservation community with an effective statewide land trust service organization that works to realize the core missions of both programs in a unified and more effective approach.

CLCC has operated as an unincorporated association overseen by a 19-person Steering Committee comprised of representatives from conservation organizations throughout the state. In 2010, the Steering Committee entered into a fiscal sponsorship agreement with the Connecticut Forest & Park Association (CFPA).

CLCC hired its first Executive Director, Amy Blaymore Paterson, in May 2010 to carry out its current activities and services and to implement strategies for becoming a more effective land trust service organization for the state's conservation community.

III. Vision Statement

CLCC's overarching vision is to effect a verifiable and quantitative change in the social, political, and economic processes that conserve land. To that end, CLCC envisions a future in which land conservation is embraced as a community value throughout the state – seen as providing essential and daily benefits to the quality of life for current and future generations.

We envision a future in which land trusts of all sizes and service territories thrive because they are well-supported and well-managed, with regular and orderly transitions of leadership; in which new land trust staff and volunteers have access to the resources they need to learn the conservation business and quickly assume their positions; and in which land trusts are not only individually sustainable, but are also inclusive and collaborative as a community, with many services shared to achieve economies of scale.

Successful land conservation is as much about the responsible stewardship and management of the land as it is about the legal protection of the land to begin with. While we will continue to work to support land trusts in their efforts to conserve priority land, we also envision having equal impact through our efforts to help them manage land under their control, to work with

private landowners of property not yet conserved (or which may never be conserved), and to engage local communities in land stewardship and enjoyment of natural resources.

As the state's land trust service center, CLCC serves the land conservation community as its voice and face in state government, as its facilitator and guide, as its convener to help solve problems and share knowledge and experience, as a service provider of technical assistance, and as a leader to ensure that conservation interests are permanently protected.

What distinguishes land trusts from other non-profits is the fact that they are created for the purpose of upholding their mission *in perpetuity*. CLCC makes sure that happens.

IV. Mission Statement

CLCC advocates for land conservation, stewardship and funding, and works to ensure the long-term strength and viability of the land conservation community in Connecticut.

V. Guiding Principles:

CLCC is committed to:

Permanence: We are dedicated to protecting land, the purpose(s) for which any land has been conserved, and strengthening the state and federal laws that support land conservation. We believe that our quality of life in Connecticut is directly linked to our ability to access the many benefits of protected land (clean water, clean air, wildlife habitat, locally-grown food, etc.). We believe that permanence is therefore not just a laudable goal, but a way to sustain our Connecticut communities today and forever.

Relevance and Trust: To be successful in the long term, protected land and easements must be valued by all parts of our communities. We have a responsibility to listen to, learn from, and engage everyone in the communities we serve. At CLCC, we believe we must not only advocate for inclusion and engagement, but also set the example ourselves.

Partnership: Everything we do is done in partnership with others. We are grateful for, and honor, the work of every organization dedicated to conservation in Connecticut. We work, and will continue to work collaboratively, leading, convening, and coordinating as appropriate and leveraging the work of all for maximum impact.

Future Generations: We mean to safeguard natural resources, beautiful places, a diversity of wildlife, opportunities for recreation and social enjoyment, and working agricultural land, and to proactively confront a changing climate. This is our legacy to those who will come after us. An

important part of this is engaging our public and specifically our youth in experiencing the many public benefits associated with these resources, because we know they will care as we do.

Diversity: We are committed to diversifying the ranks of all stakeholders. We are made more whole by fully reflecting and engaging the depth and breadth – urban, suburban and rural – of the population we serve.

Innovative Responsive Service: We will continue to serve as the state leader in delivering to land trusts and the land conservation community the tools, training, and mentoring needed to support strong and effective organizations with a clear vision of their conservation priorities. We will instigate the building of strong relationships between neighboring conservation groups and the creation and nurturing of opportunities to collaborate on conservation initiatives whenever possible.

VI. Goals

The adoption of this Strategic Plan represents a new era for CLCC. We intend to be visible, accessible, relevant, and effective in all aspects of our work, forging strong new partnerships; leading and enabling the work of other groups; strengthening our collective work with new funding and resources; and consistently working to improve conservation excellence, impact, and sustainability at the local level and the overall conservation impact at the regional and state level.

We therefore commit ourselves to the following goals and strategies:

GOAL 1. Build a strong, sustainable and diverse land conservation community and support a system that ensures permanency

Five-Year Outcomes:

- More people, and more land trust board members in particular, attending workshops, regional summits, the annual conference and other CLCC sponsored programs.
- New Connecticut land trust board members report that they had ready access to information they needed to quickly understand their new roles in the land conservation business.
- Increased use of model documents.

- Increased participation in programs such as Terrafirma and accreditation, and/or adoption of procedures and practices that demonstrate a commitment to decreasing risk and increasing land trust capacity
- Strong regional conservation partners or service hubs that help distribute assistance to smaller land trusts and coordinate larger projects.
- Land conservation organizations reflect the diversity of Connecticut’s public in their membership and governing bodies.
- Land conservation organizations are educated and understand the importance of having a contingency holder or other back-up legal mechanisms to ensure permanency.

Strategies

- Invest in the annual conference: expand offerings, continue to seek local and national expertise to fill keynote, faculty and exhibitor roles, and make it as accessible as possible for all stakeholders.
- Foster collaboration and consolidation among and between land trusts.
- Promote the use of standardized systems and processes and consolidated services such as Model Documents/Terrafirma.
- Promote the idea that every conserved property and easement held in Connecticut has a “backstop” relationship with another CT land trust or other qualified entity.

GOAL 2. Cultivate and celebrate a conservation ethic and increase the local relevance of land conservation organizations throughout Connecticut.

Five-Year Outcomes:

- Increased land trust membership growth (self-reported, collectively).
- Increased land trust partner programs with non-traditional land conservation partners (self-reported).
- Increased public awareness of
 - Protected land
 - Benefits of protected land

- What land trusts do
- CT's conservation goals

Strategies

- Encourage land trusts to embrace a commitment to diversity and inclusion by helping them to seek out a more inclusive membership, establish relationships with non-traditional partners, and recruit a representatively diverse governing body.
- Conduct a statewide CLCC public awareness campaign regarding the benefits of land conservation that allows CT land trusts to “hook” into it for local media.

GOAL 3. Strengthen the voice of the land conservation community in advocacy, policy, and land-use planning at all levels of government.

Five-Year Outcomes:

- Renewed and increased levels of public funding from the State of Connecticut that supports all facets of conservation work including, but not limited to, funding for acquisition, stewardship and land trust capacity building. (This may include a Conservation Partnership Plan similar to that created for land trusts in New York.)
- Pass a Constitutional Amendment to strengthen the protection of public lands.
- Connecticut state plans related to conservation, including but not limited to the “State’s Comprehensive Open Space Acquisition Strategy – The Green Plan”, and the “Conservation and Development Policies Plan” are valid, strong, and achievable.
- Create a Grass-roots Advocacy Ambassador Program, including an advocacy toolbox, for individuals and land conservation organizations who want to become more effective advocates.

Strategies

- Continue to engage a professional lobbyist to advocate on issues that affect the land conservation community.
- Ensure land conservation is adequately represented in state’s planning process. Participate in the state’s land use planning process.

- Build the capacity of, educate and provide tools for individuals and organizations within the land conservation community to advocate effectively at all levels of government.
- Foster opportunities for land trusts to become more involved with elected officials and the land conservation policy-making process.

GOAL 4. Connect land trusts with expert personnel and professional assistance they need.

Five-Year Outcomes:

- CLCC links land trusts to service providers and potential employees who can meet their needs.
- CLCC has explored establishing a fee-for-service program to deliver professional land conservation services.

Strategies

- Identify ways to attract and train qualified staff, volunteers, and interns to land conservation work in Connecticut, including the exploration of a “feeder program” in partnership with state colleges and universities and a “certification program” for land conservation professionals.
- Continue to build upon current mechanisms for providing technical assistance (the Connecticut Land Trust Advancement Initiative, Land Trust Challenge Fund re-granting program, direct response to land trust calls and emails, bi-annual visitation at land trust board meetings, local information and workshop sessions, and the annual conference).
- Create and maintain a more formal clearinghouse for service providers, helping connect land trusts with services they need periodically such as forestry, management planning, bookkeeping, grant-writing, meeting facilitation, and other organizational development services.
- Conduct a Feasibility Study to test the marketability of a fee-for-service program in Connecticut. If appropriate, develop a business plan and launch a pilot program.

GOAL 5. Formalize and strengthen CLCC’s position as a strong, effective, sustainable leader of the land conservation community in Connecticut.

Five-Year Outcomes:

- Seventy-five percent (75%) of land trusts in the state are members of CLCC
- CLCC is established as an independent, non-profit 501 (c)3 charity with a diverse board of directors large enough to conduct its affairs, by-laws that govern its systems and processes, and sufficient staff to carry out its programs and projects – all of which is accomplished in an exemplary manner using established best practices.
- CLCC has a set of By-Laws, policies, job descriptions, committee charters, and planning documents that are internally consistent. CLCC has systems and processes in place that periodically check on internal compliance.
- CLCC has established partner programs with at least three non-traditional land conservation partners
- CLCC has explored a shared services arrangement for administrative support.

Strategies

- Create and implement five-year Budget and five-year Communications, Fundraising and Marketing Plans.
- Create and implement a plan to hire sufficient staff to carry out the organization's programs and projects.
- Create all necessary committees to support Board of Directors including but not limited to a Membership and Development Committee.
- Establish a system for recruiting, cultivating, and maintaining an interest pool of qualified board member candidates. Periodically select new board members from the pool who commit to CLCC as one of their top three commitments.
- Establish by-laws, role & responsibility documents, system & process documentation, and organizational policies in an open and transparent sequence that positions them as models for land trusts to follow.
- File for 501 (c)3 status in 2017 with an eye toward introducing the new board to the land conservation community at the 2018 annual conference.
- Establish a formal Advisory Board to work with the staff and Board of Directors.
- Create and maintain a Succession Plan for all leadership positions.

- Create and implement a plan to enter into a shared services arrangement for administrative support with at least two conservation partners.

VII. Summary

With a strong record of achievement, a commitment to cooperation and partnership, and passionate and dedicated professional and volunteer leadership, the Connecticut Land Conservation Council is uniquely suited to collaboratively lead and serve the needs of Connecticut's land trusts and land conservation community. With the adoption and implementation of this Strategic Plan, CLCC is prepared to lead and support the land conservation community in Connecticut with confidence and conviction in the years ahead.

We wish to acknowledge the planning consulting team of Nancy Moore and David Allen, Conservation Consulting Group, for their patience, leadership, and facilitation of this process. We also acknowledge the wonderful leadership and input provided by members of our Steering Committee and staff, without whom we could not have arrived at this point:

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Alicia Sullivan, Chair (*Trust for Public Land*)
 Catherine Rawson, Vice-Chair (*Weantinoge Heritage Land Trust*)
 Tim Abbott (*Litchfield Hills Greenprint Collaborative*)
 David Bingham (*Salem Land Trust*)
 Sandy Breslin (*Bethany Inland Wetlands Commission*)
 David Brown (*Middlesex Land Trust*)
 Margot Burns (*Lower CT River & Coastal Region Land Trust Exchange*)
 Kevin Case (*Land Trust Alliance*)
 Eric Hammerling (*Connecticut Forest & Park Association*)
 Stewart Hudson (*Audubon Connecticut*)
 Michael Hveem (*Joshua's Tract Conservation and Historic Trust*)
 Connie Manes (*Kent Land Trust*)
 Elisabeth Moore (*Connecticut Farmland Trust*)
 Shirley Nichols (*Darien Land Trust*)
 David Sutherland (*The Nature Conservancy*)
 Humphrey Tyler (*Connecticut River Watershed Council*)
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