

COASTAL MOUNTAINS LAND TRUST



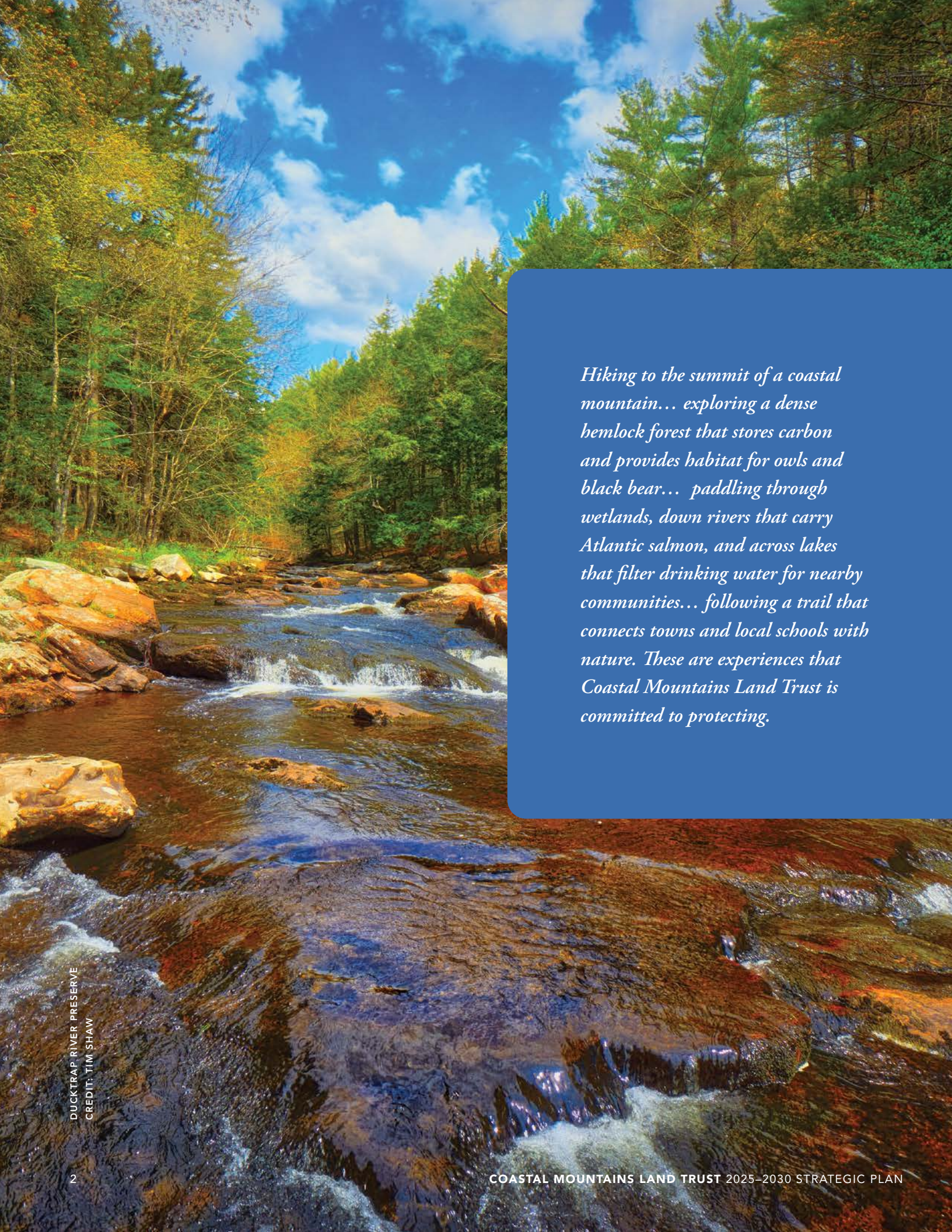
Protecting land for the community, *forever*.

STRATEGIC PLAN

2025 – 2030



RAGGED MOUNTAIN
CREDIT: SEBASTIAN BOYINGTON



Hiking to the summit of a coastal mountain... exploring a dense hemlock forest that stores carbon and provides habitat for owls and black bear... paddling through wetlands, down rivers that carry Atlantic salmon, and across lakes that filter drinking water for nearby communities... following a trail that connects towns and local schools with nature. These are experiences that Coastal Mountains Land Trust is committed to protecting.

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT & EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

As we approach our 40th anniversary, Coastal Mountains Land Trust is proud to celebrate our success, rooted in a common story of people coming together to protect the special places that make experiencing nature possible. Today, from Beech Hill in Rockport to Mt. Tuck in Prospect, the Land Trust manages a system of conservation lands that protects over 13,500 acres of open space and offers more than 55 miles of trail for the public to enjoy.

Our Accomplishments

It is remarkable to reflect upon the accomplishments of the last five years, which were guided by our last strategic plan and enabled by the loyal support of our members. Since 2020, we conserved over 3,000 acres and built 6.5 miles of the Round the Mountain Trail in the Bald and Ragged Mountains area, protected vital wetland and forested habitats around Hurds Pond and Mt. Tuck, opened the first nature preserves in the towns of Waldo and Knox, created our Learning Landscapes program to connect students and nature on a regular basis, and helped our community through a pandemic by welcoming more people to our preserves than ever before.

Our Strategic Plan

As we look ahead, our passion and enthusiasm for our mission are stronger than ever and our solid foundation sets the stage for us to plan new and ambitious goals.

We are thrilled to share the following 2025–2030 strategic plan which sets forth a bold framework to further the Land Trust's core work and presents new, innovative ways to support our community. We are at an important inflection point, and to move forward, we will carefully prioritize our work, expand our capacity, and raise the resources needed to sustain and fulfill our ambitions.

In this plan you will read about our goals to conserve and care for land at a large landscape-scale for habitat and natural resource protection, as well as to target smaller individual parcels that protect places important to our community. It describes how we plan to expand Learning Landscapes into more schools, have a greater presence in the towns we serve, and work with partner organizations to help address our communities' greatest needs.

Together, we can accomplish all this and more. We are excited and optimistic about our future and look forward to partnering with you—our past, present, and future members—to put this plan into action!



Gianne Conard

Gianne Conard
Board President



Ian Stewart

Ian Stewart
Executive Director



INTRODUCTION

The Land Trust's 2025–2030 strategic plan is a result of a year-long planning process by Coastal Mountains Land Trust Board and Staff with the facilitation of *Solid Ground Consulting*. This work could not have been accomplished without the critical input gathered from more than 20 stakeholders and community listening sessions that included over 300 people. This plan will guide our work over the next five years to conserve thousands of additional acres in support of wildlife, climate resilience, and recreation, welcome more people to enjoy the outdoors and the benefits of nature, steward lands and trails through a time of continuing change, sustain a strong culture that values people and represents the community, and strengthen our capacity to act boldly *now*.

VISION

We imagine a future with healthy, diverse, resilient ecosystems and vibrant communities that come together to protect and share in the natural places we love.

MISSION

Coastal Mountains Land Trust permanently conserves land and connects people with nature in the Western Penobscot Bay region.

CORE COMMITMENTS

Permanent land conservation: We will continue to proactively identify and permanently conserve areas of high natural and community significance throughout the Western Penobscot Bay region.

Sustainable land stewardship: We will care for the natural resources and community values of our preserves, easements and trails.

Community engagement: We will work with the communities we serve to connect them with and ensure they benefit from the lands we protect.

KEY PRIORITIES



Supporting Nature's Resilience

We will continue to support biodiversity, wildlife habitat and water quality through our land conservation, management, and stewardship work. We will learn from other conservation organizations and partners, and through our education programs we will share what we have learned about natural systems and climate in our community.



Balancing Efforts across Western Penobscot Bay Region

We will serve and represent all 16 towns in which we work. We are a multi-local organization that balances its efforts across our geography through board and volunteer recruitment, hosting free events, and conserving lands that connect diverse populations with nature across our service region.



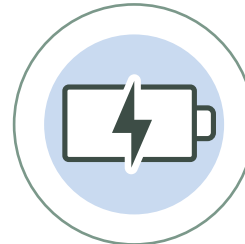
Promoting Access and Inclusion

We will ensure that the benefits of land conservation are accessible to everyone in our community. We will expand public recreation opportunities by making our preserves, trails, and programs more accessible, enhance communication and signage, and collaborate with other local organizations to welcome new and multi-generational audiences within our community.



Supporting Community Needs

We will bring our skills and strengths as a Land Trust to partnerships with schools and other community organizations to support projects that address community health and wellness, beyond the benefits of traditional conservation work.



Building Organizational Strength and Capacity

We will ensure capacity to fulfill our mission with a strong board and staff, systems and facilities, and necessary financial resources.

HIGHLIGHTS OF WHAT'S NEW



Updated Mission Statement. The Land Trust mission statement was updated to include “connects people with nature,” to emphasize our commitment to both land conservation and community engagement.

Geographic Expansion. The Town of Monroe was added to our service region, expanding our service region from 15 to 16 towns.

New Conservation Focus Areas. The Land Trust will select several new landscape-scale priority conservation focus areas in which to proactively conserve land over the next five years.

Community Access Focused Conservation Project. The Land Trust will seek to conserve a property in the greater Belfast area that is easily accessible and well-suited for hosting large-scale community engagement events.

Increased Partnerships with Schools. Our Learning Landscapes program will secure access to land for more schools throughout our service region and assist with the development of infrastructure needed for outdoor learning.

Collaboration with Community Organizations. The Land Trust will collaborate with community partner organizations to engage underserved populations in our conservation work and conserve land in association with other community benefit projects.

Climate-Change Adaptive Forestry and Land Management. The Land Trust will investigate and test new and evolving practices intended to manage forests and natural areas in response to changes brought about by climate change.

Advisory Council. A group will be created to provide strategic guidance and strengthen community relationships.

Capacity-Building. The Land Trust will build the necessary capacity to meet the goals of this plan including growing our staff, enhancing systems, and expanding our office space.



YELLOW RUMPED WARBLER
CREDIT: TIM SHAW

“*Maybe future generations will be grateful that someone found a small quiet corner of the world worthy of preservation, and did it without expectations of reward. Maybe others will be similarly inspired.*”

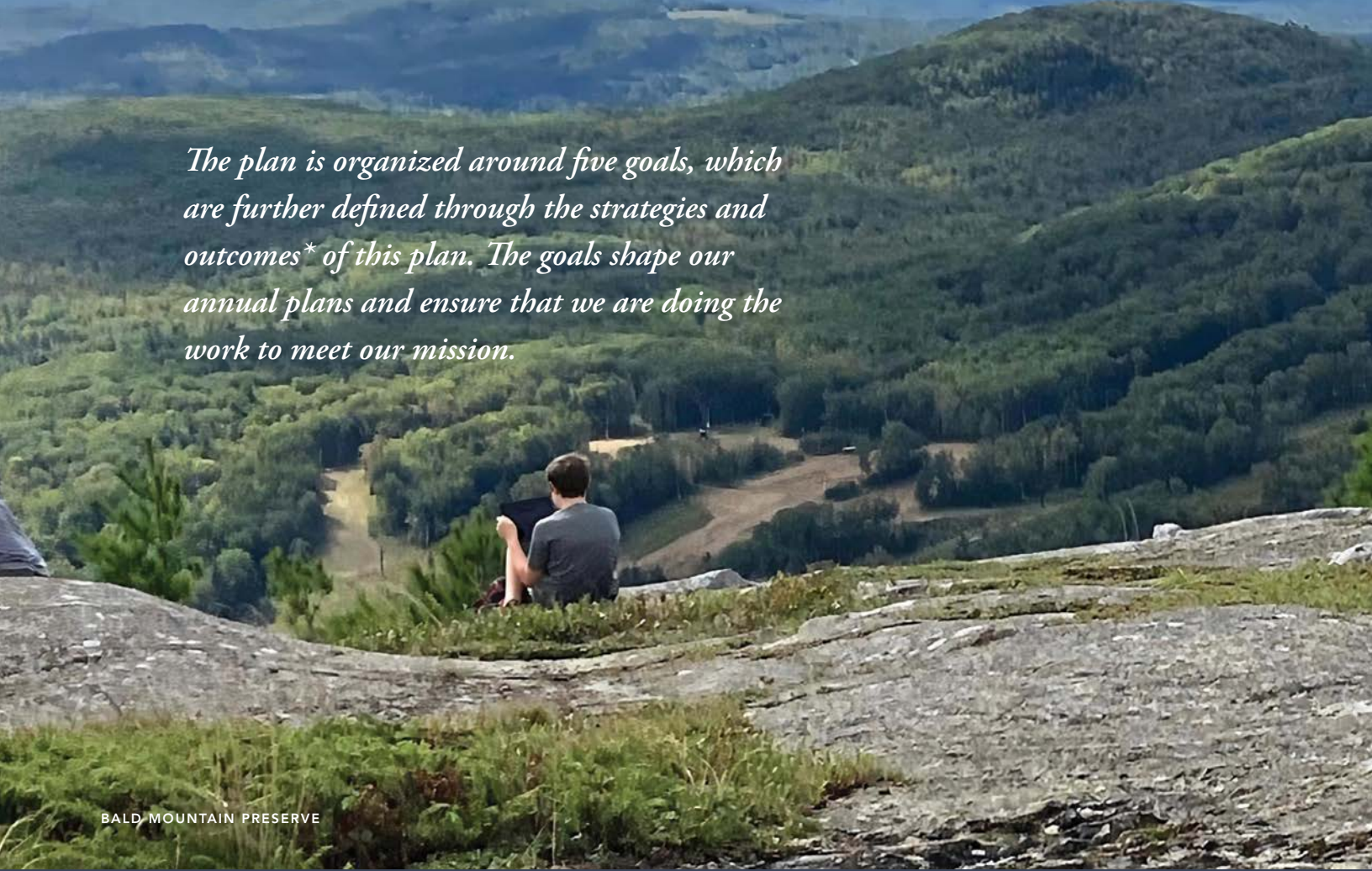
JAMES R. BABB

adapted from “Legacy,” *Gray’s Sporting Journal*, May 2025

Jim and Linda Babb donated the 29-acre Mill Brook Preserve in Searsport in 2021. It is home to a vibrant trout stream, peepers, fiddlehead ferns, majestic white pines, steep valleys, and a permanent outdoor classroom for students at Searsport Schools—paving the way for Coastal Mountains Land Trust’s work in supporting outdoor education.

A decorative topographic map overlay with blue contour lines is positioned in the upper right corner of the page, partially overlapping the 'STRATEGIC GOALS' header.

STRATEGIC GOALS

A large photograph of a mountain landscape serves as the background for the middle section. It shows a person sitting on a rocky ridge, looking out over a vast, forested valley. The sky is blue with scattered white clouds.

The plan is organized around five goals, which are further defined through the strategies and outcomes of this plan. The goals shape our annual plans and ensure that we are doing the work to meet our mission.*

BALD MOUNTAIN PRESERVE

GOAL 1

CONSERVE MORE LAND

Acquire land that sustains healthy, diverse, and resilient ecosystems where people can connect with nature.

Strategy 1A: Proactively complete projects in ecologically significant, landscape-scale, priority focus areas identified in the Land Trust's strategic conservation plan.

Strategy 1B: Proactively conserve parcels that connect people with nature.

Strategy 1C: Respond to conservation project opportunities outside focus areas as funding (or land donations) and capacity are available.



GOAL 2

CONNECT PEOPLE AND NATURE

Connect people throughout our communities with nature for the benefit of people and the environment.

Strategy 2A: Provide inclusive, free programming that builds community across our service region.

Strategy 2B: Expand nature-based learning with children and schools.

Strategy 2C: Communicate our mission, projects, and programs to engage existing and new audiences.

Strategy 2D: Foster relationships with organizations that address basic human needs in our community. As partnership opportunities arise, the Land Trust will use its expertise to assist with the acquisition of land in support of these needs.



GOAL 3

STEWARDSHIP CONSERVATION LAND

Care for the Land Trust's preserves and easements to nurture the land's ecological health while providing people with access to nature.

Strategy 3A: Care for preserves in accordance with best practices, meeting all requirements to sustain the Land Trust's accredited status.

Strategy 3B: Nurture partnerships with landowners to care for the health of conservation easement lands, meeting all requirements for accredited land trusts.

Strategy 3C: Enhance the ecological resilience and health of the Land Trust's preserves.

Strategy 3D: Manage and improve public access and trails to provide welcoming and thoughtfully maintained access to nature.



ARTS ON THE HILL, BEECH HILL PRESERVE
CREDIT: JONMIKEL BERRY PARDO

GOAL 4

SUPPORT THE ORGANIZATION'S CULTURE AND PEOPLE

Foster a collaborative and inclusive culture with the board, staff, volunteers, and the community, and ensure the necessary systems, spaces, and equipment to support an effective and efficient organization are in place.

Strategy 4A: Strengthen and retain a passionate, effective, and diverse volunteer Board of Directors that is committed to fulfilling our mission.

Strategy 4B: Cultivate and support a skilled, engaged, collaborative staff that drives programs forward and sustains an effective organization.

Strategy 4C: Build and sustain a robust volunteer engagement program that supports all departments and strengthens the Land Trust's capacity to fulfill its mission.

Strategy 4D: Ensure the staff has appropriate systems, space, and equipment to effectively and efficiently fulfill their work.

Strategy 4E: Explore collaborations with other non-profit organizations to enhance the impact of our organization.



GOAL 5

ENSURE FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

To fulfill our mission now and in the future, the Land Trust will expand its philanthropic relationships, increase revenues from grants and invested assets, and build our financial reserves.

Strategy 5A: Initiate and complete a capacity-building campaign to support organizational needs.

Strategy 5B: Grow annual operating revenue sources by building relationships with people in and beyond our community.

Strategy 5C: Strengthen the Land Trust's planned giving program to increase documented commitments to our reserves.

Strategy 5D: Raise and steward capital funds needed to support the goals of this plan.

CORE VALUES

We commit to bringing the following values to our work:

ADAPTABILITY

Being agile, creative and curious makes our organization more effective, better at solving problems and more resilient in the face of unexpected challenges. We seek to be innovative in accomplishing our goals, always open to new tools and methods.

LAND ETHIC

Our commitment to community includes not only humans, but all other parts of the Earth as well: soils, waters, plants, and animals—the land. We believe that the well-being of people and the land are deeply intertwined.

AUTHENTICITY

Genuine relationships are built upon honesty, integrity, and transparency. We aim to be accountable; we own our mistakes and acknowledge our blind spots. We communicate openly, empathetically, and compassionately.

INCLUSION

Nature is stronger through diversity, and so are we. We listen to and incorporate a wide variety of voices, perspectives, and experiences in our work. We commit to treating all people equitably and to creating an inclusive community connected to the land.

COLLABORATION

Partnerships are integral to effective work. They enable us to share and learn in ways that enhance all of our strengths, elevate capacity in support of community needs, create solutions, and achieve mutual goals.

JOY

We find joy in the pursuit of our mission and the hope this work generates.

INTENTIONALITY

Successful outcomes are based upon research and careful planning. We are pragmatic and use a strategic approach to accomplish our mission.



CREDIT: TIM SHAW

COMMUNITY INPUT



What We Heard

Throughout our community conversations, we heard balanced feedback from participants that the Land Trust needs to prioritize its focus on mission critical work—conservation, community engagement, and land stewardship while also carefully exploring ways to creatively bring the skills and the strengths of our conservation work to partnerships that benefit broader community needs.

We heard about the many evolving challenges faced by our communities in a post-pandemic period characterized by an inflationary real estate market, a changing climate, increasing political polarization, social inequality, and increasing stresses upon the community's physical and mental health. Further, we heard about the increased pressures of residential development on local

open space, forests stressed by invasive pathogens, and local infrastructure being impacted by increased storm damage due to climate change.

We heard about the importance of preserving land to support clean water, biodiversity, and habitat, while also facilitating public access for people to explore and enjoy the outdoors. There were discussions about what types of recreation we should support and how many trails we should build. We heard about the value of our work as it relates to health and wellness. Many felt that a top priority should be educating our community about how our work addresses climate change issues. We were asked what we could do to address affordable housing, transportation, and food insecurity. Additionally, we heard about the

need to support under-resourced communities and members of the Wabanaki community. There was universal support for continuing to engage kids and schools and encouragement to create more educational opportunities for youth and adults, all the while recognizing that our work is driven by a commitment to land protection.

These listening sessions reinforced the value of our work and reminded us of how many ways the Land Trust and our staff engage with and touch our community. We were honored to hear that we are respected members of the community and were often asked if we could do more. This plan helps to define what that might mean in relation to our mission and our capacity as a multi-local land trust.



BARRED OWL
CREDIT: ALISON DIBBLE

Who We Heard From

The Land Trust engaged over 300 people through more than 20 community listening sessions that included representatives from the following organizations:

Bangor Savings Bank
Belfast Bay Watershed Coalition
Belfast Soup Kitchen
Blue Hill Heritage Trust
Camden Hills State Park
Camden-Rockport Elementary School
Camden Snow Bowl
Captain Albert Stevens School
Town of Camden
Coastal Opportunities
Georges River Land Trust
The Green Store
Homeworthy
Hurricane Island Outward Bound
Knox Clinic
Maine Coast Heritage Trust
Maine Community Foundation
Maine Farmland Trust
Maine Public Health
Maine Sea Grant
McNEMBA
Megunticook Watershed Association
Midcoast Conservancy
Midcoast Maine Green Burial
Midcoast Regional Housing Trust
Niweskok
Oryx Works Yoga
Penquis
Prospect Planning Board
Rockland Public Library
Searsport District Middle and High Schools
Stewardship Education Alliance
TRoMM
Volunteers of America
Waldo County Bounty
Waldo County Conservation Initiative
Waldo CAP Maine Health
Waldo YMCA
Waterfall Arts



coastalmountains.org

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