



STRATEGIC PLAN 2016-2020

Mission

Capitol Land Trust's mission is to further collaborative and strategic conservation of southwest Washington's essential natural areas and working lands.







Introduction

Vision for the Future

We envision a future for southwest Washington where people, animals, and natural habitats thrive because the community — private citizens, businesses, nonprofit organizations, and government agencies — has invested in conservation of our natural places and resources, in concert with our mission.

Through our conservation work we will help to ensure that our South Puget Sound region is a place with clean water to drink and clean air to breathe; a place with healthy populations of native fish and wildlife; a place where the economy is robust, sustainable, and stronger because people want to live and work here; a place where the natural environment inspires curiosity and hope for the people who live here; a place where a diverse coalition of conservationists, landowners, funders, and public officials work together on issues — using methods that increase trust and collaboration; a place that retains its distinctive natural features; and a place where thriving urban areas and a healthy rural landscape exist side by side.

But, we can't do this work alone. Our long history in this region has proven that we can only do this effectively when we work with partners. Capitol Land Trust is widely known for our ability to bring together political parties and groups that normally might not sit at the same table — in order to identify and achieve shared goals. We will continue to pursue these types of partnerships, ensuring that our work meets the needs of our diverse community.



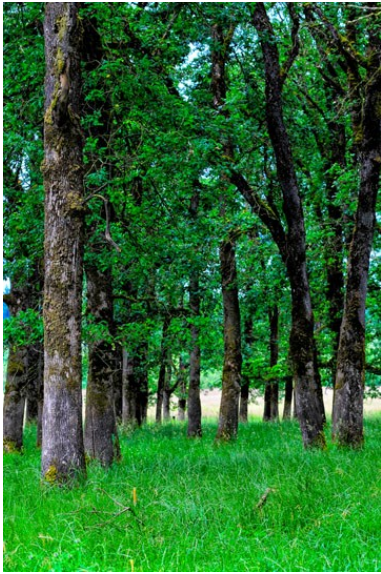
Values

Recognizing and respecting diverse values and interests, we identify common ground and shared community goals, leverage limited funding, emphasize non-regulatory techniques and build partnerships that accomplish these goals. Our work adheres to the high standards indicated by our national accreditation by the Land Trust Alliance, and we will continually strive to maintain and improve professionalism, effectiveness, efficiency and accountability.

We will maximize financial and staff resources by prioritizing conservation projects that:

- are consistent with our distinctive mission and conservation goals;
- are identified as priorities in one or more conservation or recovery plans;
- are supported by a coalition of stakeholders and partners;
- conserve or restore biological diversity and functioning ecological systems, giving high consideration to intact habitat and adequate size;
- are contiguous with, or in proximity to, already conserved lands;
- provide community value as working lands;
- face imminent threat of ecological degradation, typically from land use change; and
- offer distinctive management opportunities to advance community engagement and financial goals in concert with conservation.





GOAL 1

Use targeted property transactions and stewardship to pursue a long-term, collaborative, regional vision for the conservation of networks of essential natural areas and working lands, especially where at risk of loss.

We live in one of the fastest-growing regions of the United States, and changes to the landscape are rapidly taking place that will affect our quality of life forever. A closing window of opportunity demands a sense of urgency in our work. We must make choices now to ensure the future that we want, and the character of the region that we want to live in. Capitol Land Trust's primary goal is to protect the lands, waters and habitats that sustain us all. We prioritize protection of three major habitat types in our region: marine shorelines and estuaries; rivers, wetlands, and the forests around them; and oak woodlands and prairies. We will protect these lands and waters not only for the habitat they provide fish and wildlife, but also the ecological functions they support, such as water purification, flood control, and climate regulation, as well as their cultural benefits. We also seek to conserve working farms, ranches, and forests that provide wildlife habitat, watershed protection, and open space. Most importantly, we commit to caring for all conserved lands under our management for generations to come. As part of each strategy we will pursue public funding from local, state, and federal sources and work with partners to secure new sources for conservation funding. We also will leverage opportunities such as the Steamboat Conservation Partnership between Capitol Land Trust and the Griffin Neighborhood Association to advance our conservation strategies particularly around marine shorelines and rivers and their connected upland forests.

Strategy 1. Working with partners, develop a multi-generational vision for conserving southwest Washington's natural areas and working lands, and a conservation action plan for Capitol Land Trust's role in achieving that vision

Desired outcomes

- A multi-generational vision statement for conserving southwest Washington's natural resources has been created, reflecting the shared goals of local citizens, conservation organizations, natural resource agencies, and businesses in the region.



- A long-term Conservation Plan illustrating Capitol Land Trust’s specific conservation goals is complete, with strategies to achieve the multi-generational vision.
- Capitol Land Trust’s priority geographic areas are identified in key watersheds of Thurston, Mason, Lewis and Grays Harbor Counties for various forms of conservation investment, including fee and easement acquisition and land restoration.

Strategy 2. Conserve Marine Shorelines and Estuaries

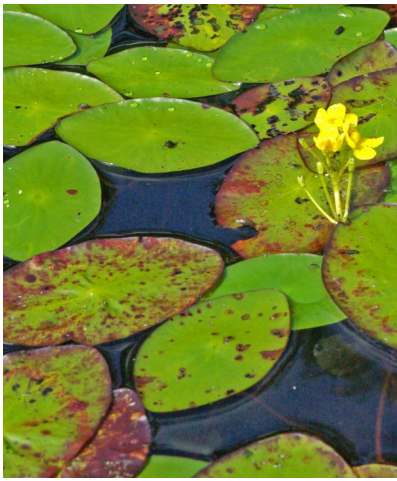
Puget Sound is the second largest estuarine system in the United States. The South Sound’s estuaries are transition zones where freshwater rivers and streams mix with salt water. Estuaries filter pollutants and improve water quality. Acre for acre, estuaries are among the most biologically productive ecosystems on earth. Many species of birds, mammals, fish, and other animals and plants rely on estuarine habitats to live, feed, and reproduce. Marine shorelines support a dynamic system of sediment and wood debris transport and deposition, as well as kelp and eelgrass beds and habitat for diverse communities of animals. They also support commercial and recreational shellfish production, and provide an essential aspect of South Sound’s iconic natural beauty.



Desired Outcomes

- Capitol Land Trust’s priority geographic areas in the marine waters of southern Puget Sound are identified, such as Oakland Bay, Eld Inlet, Henderson Inlet, and others where we already have made significant investments, as well as potentially identifying new priority areas.
- Capitol Land Trust has participated in and coordinated projects (with Puget Sound Partnership, Washington Association of Land Trusts’ Shorelines Conservation Collaborative, and Puget Sound Lead Entities and other key marine conservation partners) to protect the marine waters of Southern Puget Sound, in concert with the multi-generational vision for conservation in our area.
- An additional five properties containing significant marine shoreline and estuary values have been conserved and protected in identified Capitol Land Trust priority geographic areas, or where outstanding opportunities arise.





Strategy 3. Conserve Wetlands, Riparian Areas, and Associated Upland Forests

Wetlands provide habitat for hundreds of species of waterfowl and many other migratory and resident birds, as well as for fish, amphibians, mammals, insects, and an array of plant species. Wetlands reduce the impacts of flooding and erosion by slowing and absorbing storm-water runoff. Wetlands also can filter out sediments and pollutants and help provide clean water to streams and aquifers.

Riparian areas form strips of land that border creeks and rivers. Healthy, functioning riparian areas and associated upland forests stabilize soils, filter out sediment and pollution, reduce runoff, improve water quality and reduce stream temperatures. They also provide habitat and food for many riparian-dependent and other birds, fish, mammals, and other animals, and support distinctive plant communities. These areas therefore provide benefits to watersheds and shorelines.

Desired Outcomes

- An additional two or three properties containing significant riparian and associated buffering and connecting forest and wetlands have been conserved within the following priority watersheds:
 - ❑ Middle Chehalis River watershed, including its major tributaries such as the Black River (coordinating with Creekside Conservancy and Chehalis River Basin Land Trust on mainstem Chehalis River projects)
 - ❑ Goldsborough Creek watershed
 - ❑ Deschutes River watershed
- Additional significant riparian and associated buffering and connecting forest and wetlands have been conserved on South Puget Sound’s points and peninsulas (Steamboat Island peninsula; Budd to Henderson corridor), and where other outstanding opportunities arise, in concert with our multi-generational vision for conservation in our area.



Strategy 4. Conserve Prairies and Oak Woodlands

Ten- to-fifteen thousand years ago, retreating glaciers helped form an expanse of prairie and oak savannahs across a significant area of the southern Puget Sound lowland region. Prairie plants and flowers sustained Native Americans who occupied the area for centuries before settlers arrived. Home to many unique plant and wildlife species, native prairies are among the most endangered



ecological communities in North America, and in southern Puget Sound only 2 or 3 percent of the original prairies and oak woodlands remain. Remaining prairie and oak woodlands not only must be protected from conversion (i.e., to industrial or residential development), but they also necessitate a high-level of active management to maintain their characteristics.

Desired Outcomes

- Capitol Land Trust has worked with key partners and stakeholders, including developers, to conserve an additional three properties hosting prairie and oak woodland habitat in the Deschutes, Black River, or Scatter Creek watersheds, to support recovery of the Mazama pocket gopher and other threatened prairie plant and animal species.
- Working with partners, we have established long-term management solutions for prairie lands conserved by Capitol Land Trust, which effectively address invasive species control and other management issues.
- New target areas are identified in Mason and Thurston Counties for future conservation of prairies and oak woodlands, consistent with the multi-generational vision for conservation in our area.

Strategy 5. Conserve Working Lands

The south Puget Sound region's extensive farms, ranches, and timberlands provide important economic and conservation benefits. These working lands contribute millions of dollars to local economies by producing commodities and providing jobs and a sustained income base. In addition, working lands often contain important wildlife habitat and other conservation values. They also may buffer and provide connectivity between more-pristine protected lands nearby. Often it is more beneficial for working lands to stay in production rather than be converted to other uses — a key concern in the face of economic pressure for more intensive development. By working cooperatively with private landowners to place conservation easements on working lands, we help keep those lands productive and viable; support local business and the rural character of our region; and protect wildlife habitat, watershed functions and open space.

Desired Outcomes

- Two or three additional farms and ranches in the Chehalis, Black and/or Deschutes River watersheds have been protected, to achieve outcomes in Strategies 3 and 4, or to contribute to the multi-generational vision for conservation in our area.



- Working with forestry companies, small forest owners, and organizations promoting sustainable forestry, we have protected one or two working forests to achieve outcomes in Strategies 3 and 4, or where retention of working forests at high risk of fragmentation and development will help protect significant wildlife habitat, watershed functions, and open space, in concert with our multi-generational vision for conservation in our area.
- Additional funding sources for farmland conservation have been secured through our work with partners, which will help achieve habitat protection and other goals of this plan.
- We have collaborated with South of the Sound Community Farmland Trust on projects of mutual interest.

Strategy 6. Steward Conserved Lands in Perpetuity

Conserving important lands is only the beginning of Capitol Land Trust’s responsibilities to those lands. A core aspect of our mission is a long-term commitment to restoring, maintaining, and managing lands owned by Capitol Land Trust, and actively protecting conservation values on properties protected with easements. To meet these responsibilities, Capitol Land Trust works with landowners and other supporters to maintain, expand, and responsibly manage a “stewardship fund.” Specific fund sources are sought for this purpose. Capitol Land Trust continues its Volunteer Land Steward program and works with community partners to strengthen our stewardship capability.

Legal Defense

Capitol Land Trust ensures that each conserved property has baseline documentation or a management plan, regular monitoring reports, and photographs and other records that meet or exceed Land Trust Accreditation Commission standards. Staff and/or volunteer land stewards monitor all properties at least annually to ensure compliance with signed agreements and check for property encroachment. The Land Trust takes prompt action to address easement and other property violations.

Desired Outcomes

- Capitol Land Trust meets its legal requirements and best management practices as guided by the IRS and Land Trust Alliance Accreditation to annually monitor conservation lands and easements 100 percent of the time.
- CLT staff responds promptly to observed encroachments and easement violations, in a manner that avoids legal action when possible and appropriate.



Restoration

In some cases, priority properties are conserved that need minor or significant restoration work to re-establish, over time, the natural processes and desired ecological values. Such restoration can occur on Capitol Land Trust-owned properties, and on conservation easements with the permission and in partnership with the landowner. Restoration can include a range of treatments, e.g., removing invasive species or noxious weeds, planting native species, removing human structures, re-establishing natural water flow patterns, adding large woody debris to streams, or creating more structural diversity in over-crowded young forests. Ecological restoration and enhancement can provide opportunities to engage the community on our lands and educate the public on the importance of natural systems to our way of life.

Desired Outcomes

- On new conservation properties requiring restoration work, funding is secure and projects are implemented within three years of acquisition.
- Riparian buffer plantings are completed at Twin Rivers Ranch and Mima Creek.
- Major restoration projects are completed at Bayshore Preserve, including removing the 1,400-foot tidal dike, naturalizing Johns Creek, and improving salt marsh habitat, and establishing a process for ongoing scientific monitoring.

Management

Capitol Land Trust develops management plans for each of its fee properties in order to maintain the long-term health of the conservation values. Management plans and conservation easements also take into account potential access for educational and restoration purposes, watershed and other tangible environmental benefits to the adjacent community, farming or forestry and other activities within a broadening spectrum of conservation opportunities.

Desired outcomes

- All (100 %) of Capitol Land Trust properties have a completed management plan, which are updated as changing conditions indicate, or a baseline inventory for conservation easements.
- All (100 %) of Capitol Land Trust fee properties are evaluated for potential uses (including public access) that are compatible with the protection of their conservation values and funding requirements, and all compatible uses are addressed in the properties' management plans.
- Routine maintenance, such as invasive species removal, is implemented as directed in the management plan for each fee property.





GOAL 2

Engage a broader range of the South Puget Sound and Chehalis River Basin communities in our conservation efforts, and enhance community members' feeling of connection to the lands we conserve.

Across the nation, conservation organizations are concerned with developing the next generation of conservation leaders, and continuing to ensure that conservation is relevant and “front and center” in the minds of the communities in which we work. While Capitol Land Trust has benefitted our communities and developed a strong base of dedicated supporters, we still have a great opportunity to include a broader spectrum of the public in realizing the importance of conserved lands to our health, economies, and way of life, and simultaneously build awareness for the organization.

In the past, Capitol Land Trust has pursued its conservation goals primarily by actively developing conservation easements with landowners and purchasing critical lands. Now we own outstanding properties that offer opportunities for community members to directly experience the beauty and value of these conserved places. The places themselves, and stewardship activities, such as ecological restoration on selected properties, offer a new opportunity to bring the community together on the lands that we all love.

Along with traditional outreach and communication, showcase properties, high-profile events and restoration projects can be particularly valuable in fostering awareness, active involvement, and support. An increased emphasis on engagement will provide new opportunities to work strategically with an array of partners with related missions to achieve shared outcomes. This is a new focus for Capitol Land Trust, and a critical one for our long-term sustainability. Implementing the strategies below will require additional financial, staff, and volunteer resources. It also will require us to strengthen and develop new partnerships with organizations which can mobilize students and the public, and deploy modern technologies and social media.





Strategy 1. Increase community connection and support through hands-on engagement with Capitol Land Trust properties and activities

By offering a variety of opportunities for direct public engagement, including on-site education, appropriate recreational access to conserved properties for hiking, nature viewing, and kayaking/canoeing, and participation in scientific and restoration projects, Capitol Land Trust will further increase conservation benefits and support at a grass-roots level. We seek to provide benefits to the community and receive support from diverse age groups, professional sectors, and community leaders.

Desired Outcomes

- Opportunities for public access at selected sites, such as the Oakland Bay properties in Mason County (e.g. Bayshore Preserve; Oakland Bay Park; Twin Rivers Ranch), are developed according to a five-year prioritized plan and implemented in a phased approach — in which they are financially supported, connected with appropriate partners, and include capacity for monitoring and maintenance. As an early example, public access at Bayshore Preserve will be augmented by an interpretive trail for educating the public on the natural and cultural history of the site.
- Levels of public use that occur at each property with established public access opportunities are monitored and evaluated.
- Public use activities do not damage the conservation values of the properties.
- Information from representative participants generally indicates that the education and awareness goals of providing access are being met.



- Membership increases by five percent per year and overall membership includes an increasing percentage from targeted categories of diversity, in part as a result of implementing this strategy.
- From 14-to-20 property tours/volunteer work parties are conducted each year.

Strategy 2. Partner with and encourage schools and other education and youth organizations to bring young people to CLT lands where appropriate for environmental education, field trips, work parties and scientific exploration

As we think ahead over multiple generations — anticipating community support for conserving our critical lands and waters — it is clear that we need to develop the next generation of conservation leaders. There is an incredible opportunity to engage students (K-12) on our preserves not only to introduce them to the natural world, but also to provide them with hands-on learning opportunities in the Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) curriculum. There is also opportunity to work with college and graduate level students to inspire and advance careers in conservation. Working with education experts, we will develop learning experiences that inspire youth and young adults while also helping us meet our science and stewardship needs.

Desired Outcomes

- A prioritized plan for education outreach engagement is developed in conjunction with Strategy 1.
- Committed partnerships are developed, collaborative agreements are formalized, selected sites are prepared, and funding is secured for educational opportunities in Mason and Thurston County, including supporting the STEM curriculum. As examples, progress is made with partners in identifying and securing an appropriate site in Thurston County to establish the “Inspiring Kids and Families Preserve,” and in establishing an educational program setting at Bayshore Preserve.
- Between 6 and 10 school events, field trips/scientific explorations/volunteer work parties are conducted per year.
- By 2020, Capitol Land Trust is serving at least 400 students per year, with a preference for multiple grade levels in multiple schools.





Strategy 3. Strengthen partnerships that bring new and complementary skills and resources to help achieve Capitol Land Trust's mission

By fostering partnerships and opportunities for collaboration, and learning through complementary roles, Capitol Land Trust and its partners most effectively achieve shared long-term goals. For example, by partnering with other conservation organizations, we will develop effective long-term management and restoration plans for the Bayshore and Twin Rivers Ranch properties.

Desired Outcomes

- New or existing partnerships are identified and developed or strengthened, to support conservation, access, and outreach activities on selected properties. Partnerships address funding, maintaining, publicizing, and monitoring activities on those properties.
- Collaborating scientists are involved with at least three restoration and monitoring projects.
- Specific success stories are documented related to tangible benefits resulting from collaboration with partners on our properties.

Strategy 4. Engage diverse audiences in meaningful dialog to foster a connection to Capitol Land Trust's mission

Engaging diverse communities to better understand how our work benefits people, and effectively communicating Capitol Land Trust's mission and values will increase support for conservation in our regional community. In particular, we seek to increase engagement with younger generations, young families, and the business community.

Desired Outcomes

- Compelling stories, using new media and technology, are created that are tailored to identified audiences' diverse interests.
- Identified audiences, such as targeted professional sectors (finance, real estate, etc.), receive tailored messages multiple times per year.
- From 12-to-20 speaking engagements occur each year, such as to civic clubs, businesses, and community organizations, to expose CLT's work to other communities of interest.





GOAL 3

Ensure long-term organizational and financial sustainability

Community financial support for conservation actions, outcomes, and organizations like Capitol Land Trust is an expression of the importance of local land conservation to the priorities of the community in which we live today, and for the legacy we seek to leave to our descendants. We translate the diverse financial intentions and commitments of donors into tailored on-the-ground conservation actions and results that express those intentions. As community engagement broadens and deepens, so will financial support opportunities for the organization, leading to greater long-term sustainability for our mission.

Capitol Land Trust envisions future funding that continues to include prioritized use of government grants as well as increased contributions from private foundations, businesses, and individuals. Funding will range from more generic to more targeted, and may include mini-“campaigns” aimed at specific properties or activities. Innovative funding methods such as crowd-sourcing may play a role. In certain cases, property management for primary conservation and restoration purposes may generate supplemental income to be used in support of Capitol Land Trust’s mission.

Future financial sustainability should include capabilities to maintain a healthy and stable operating reserve, a well-endowed stewardship fund, and provide for rapid-response to prevent critical opportunities from being missed. Board members, staff, volunteers, organizational members, major donors, sponsors, and community partners can take on appropriate and effective roles in securing financial sustainability, acquiring and/or exercising suitable skills matched to interests. Organizational capacity for core conservation work will also strengthen, and quality conservation results will inspire increased community support.

Strategy 1: Strengthen and diversify fundraising efforts and sources to match our mission

Over its history, Capitol Land Trust has relied on federal, state, and local grants, member donations, sponsorships, and estate gifts to fund its conservation work. These sources will continue to play a major role for land and conservation easement acquisition, and we work with partners to secure



new public conservation funding sources. In addition, other opportunities exist to help support our work. Like Capitol Land Trust, many foundations and charitable institutions exist with a kindred purpose of conservation, education, and access to the nature. These sources, place-based fund-raising, and perhaps “crowd sourcing,” are expected to increase in importance and relevance in support of our conservation efforts.

Desired Outcomes

- A 5-to-10 percent increase is realized in available non-acquisition funding by year, or forecast annual budget needs to implement the Strategic Plan are achieved.
- \$30,000 in corporate or private foundation giving is committed per year other than event sponsorships.
- Four (4) planned giving pledges are made per year.
- Sponsorship revenue increases to 40-to-60 percent of the revenue goals for key events.
- From 10-to-20 new major donors commit \$25,000-to-\$75,000 in gifts by 2020.
- From 1-to-3 suitable projects are identified for crowd sourcing and/or targeted campaigns, including “proof of concept” pilots, and 1-to-2 campaigns or crowd-sourcing efforts are successfully completed.
- Members are enthusiastic about and committed to our future, evidenced by 85 percent or higher retention rates and periodic surveys.

Strategy 2. Manage financial assets prudently according to their specific purposes

The Endowment, Stewardship, and Rapid Response funds are important assets that respectively contribute to our operating fund, ensure that our easements can be managed into perpetuity, and provide financial support for land/easement transactions. These assets will be prudently managed following the recommendations outlined in the Investment and Fund policies, and will be grown to meet our new goals for conservation.

Desired Outcomes

- The Endowment Fund grows at 5 percent per year.
- Stewardship donations, at a level needed to cover stewardship costs, are received for conserved properties. The overall Stewardship Fund level is maintained at or above the level calculated by the Stewardship Fund



formula, and these funds are invested in a moderate-risk investment portfolio according to the Fund Policy.

- A six-month operating reserve is built by December 2017 and managed to allow resiliency in the face of major unanticipated revenue shortfalls, costs, or losses.

Strategy 3. Ensure a high level of safety for staff, volunteers, and visitors in all Capitol Land Trust activities

The safety of our employees, volunteers, and contractors is always a top priority. Safety is paramount in the field as well as in the office. And as more people visit Capitol Land Trust's conserved properties, we must pay careful attention to the safety of our visitors.

Desired Outcomes

- Safety is readily understood by everyone involved with Capitol Land Trust as a major organizational objective.
- Safety is routinely discussed at events, work parties, projects and staff meetings.
- Our safety policy and procedures are followed.
- Staff and volunteers with responsibilities for leading groups on our properties have up-to-date first aid training.
- Job Safety Analyses (JSA) are completed and followed for all tasks where there are recognizable risks that should be managed.
- All safety incidents and close-calls are reported in a timely manner and corrective actions taken.
- No major incidents occur, involving serious injury or fatality.

Strategy 4. Maintain a high quality work environment for employees, and retain an excellent staff that is proficient in using modern conservation management tools to meet our organizational objectives

Our updated strategic plan will require additional revenues, staff capacity, partnerships, cost-sharing measures, and a commitment to efficiency if we are to meet our expanded conservation and outreach goals. We also want to continue to build Capitol Land Trust's reputation as an excellent place to work.



Desired Outcomes

- Staff training in conservation leadership and technologies has been conducted that can improve efficiency and productivity (e.g., data management and analysis, GIS systems), with targeted funding secured.
- An up-to-date training and succession/contingency plan is in place for all staff positions.
- Employment benefits for staff are maintained, or improved if needed, to be at a competitive level.
- Annual staff evaluations indicate high job satisfaction.
- Additional volunteers/hours are secured to add staff capacity and help maintain low overhead for outreach, event planning, GIS analysis, stewardship, legal analysis, fund raising, etc.
- Partnerships for sharing specific, identified operational costs, which may include certain scientific, legal, and/or administrative costs, are explored by 2017, and put in place where feasible and effective.

Strategy 5. Ensure strong and functional leadership by the Board of Directors to meet our five-year strategic goals

No organization succeeds without visionary and dedicated leadership. CLT's Board of Directors plays a key role in making sure that we carry out the vision of the organization, which we maintain and live by the values that have been the hallmark of the organization, and that the organization is on a sound sustainable financial footing.

Desired Outcomes

- A plan for Board member succession is in place and followed, such that a large pool of committed and qualified candidates has been recruited in advance and is available for Board vacancies, thereby meeting identified needs for significant gains in diversity in gender, education, employment background, skills, community connection, and age.
- New Board member and officer candidates identified are skilled and visionary leaders, are initially recruited six months in advance of position turnover, and plans are in place for smooth leadership transitions.
- The Board never drops below 12 members.
- In concert with Goal 2/Strategy 2 relating to youth outreach, specific steps and methods are employed to give interested youth and young adults a



meaningful voice in Capitol Land Trust affairs, in addition to Board membership, such as through special advisory bodies or functions.

- Board members receive timely and relevant orientation and training in conservation trends and tools, nonprofit fiscal management, and fundraising.
- Board members have ample opportunities for field visits to existing and prospective conserved properties and major projects.
- Board members have a deep knowledge of our conservation work, and create a welcoming atmosphere for members, partners, each other, and staff.
- The Board ensures that the integrity of the organization is never compromised and that the organization is on a sound financial footing.



Strategy 6. Maintain Land Trust Alliance Accreditation

Desired Outcomes

- Re-accreditation in 2018 is achieved on schedule, based on alignment of all CLT activities with applicable criteria.
- Internal operations are reviewed on a continual basis by the Executive Director and Executive Committee and reported regularly to the Board.



