



CONNECTING PEOPLE,
CONSERVING LAND.

Capitol Land Trust 2026-2030 Strategic Plan

Introduction

We operate in the junction of two great water systems: the Puget Sound Estuary and the Chehalis Basin Watershed. Together they form one of the most ecologically significant landscapes in Washington State. This is a region of profound natural beauty that supports a unique and varied array of life. But it is also a region of economic vitality. These two elements create conditions for ongoing changes to local ecosystems that affect the health of native plants, fish and wildlife and the quality of life for people in our communities.

Long the home of Salish peoples, we work collaboratively with local Tribes to protect and steward natural areas in this region, not only for the habitat they provide for fish and wildlife, but also for the ecological functions they support, such as water purification, flood mitigation, and climate regulation, as well as for their cultural and community values. By safeguarding the lands and waters that are important for so many species—including us— we will help create a future in which people and nature thrive together.

We know that when people have meaningful access to nature, it can create lifelong love of the natural world. Our public access preserves offer places of belonging—where people can explore, heal, learn about conservation, deepen family bonds, and connect with the land. By making nature more accessible, inclusive, and engaging, we will cultivate new conservationists and strengthen community support for local land conservation.

Our continued commitment to taking long-term, collaborative and regionally focused conservation action will ensure that our conserved lands remain bastions of hope that benefit wild and human communities alike for generations to come.

Mission and Vision

Mission:

To conserve and forever care for the lands and waters of the South Puget Sound and Chehalis Basin watersheds.

Vision:

A future in which local land conservation is valued and prioritized, and people work together to preserve our region's vital natural landscapes and ecosystems.

With a changing climate and rapidly growing communities, our vision for the future becomes more than an ideal; it becomes an imperative. Our vision calls for our region to remain a place that supports thriving populations of native fish, plants, and wildlife, where there is clean water to drink, clean air to breathe, and an abundance of the natural open spaces that define the culture and character of our communities.

Only humans can conserve land. Therefore, achieving our vision concerns all who live in our communities. We will work to create a future in which we provide opportunities for people to learn about conservation, experience the transformative power of nature, and engage in our mission.

In our future, land conservation is a unifying purpose that ignites a movement of passionate supporters within all segments of our communities and ensures ongoing support for our mission for years to come.

Values

Our values are foundational to the core of who we are as an organization. They guide how we behave when interacting with others in the course of our work and they inform decisions we make at both the operational and strategic levels. We strive to live and conduct ourselves with the following values:

Integrity

We act with honesty, responsibility, fairness and courage in all aspects of our operations.

Collaboration

We actively seek collaborations with others to ensure inclusive perspectives and amplify the effectiveness of our mission.

Respect

We respect and recognize diverse values and interests to identify common ground and shared community goals.

Passion

We are united by our passion for conservation and recognize that this is how we make a difference in our community and the world.

Goal 1 – More efficiently and effectively conserve and steward key lands and waters within the South Puget Sound and Chehalis Basin watersheds

Build on our experience and expertise by adopting innovative technologies, methodologies and practices to conserve and steward ever more natural areas and working lands.

Strategy 1: Prioritize protection of at-risk natural areas and working lands that provide environmental, economic, and community benefits

Focus conservation efforts on properties hosting estuaries, marine shorelines, wetlands, rivers, riparian areas and valuable working lands and forests because of the crucial role they play in our regional landscape.

Over our 39-year history, we have conserved more than 100 properties. In the decades ahead, we are committed to ensuring that every new property we conserve delivers the greatest impact possible for the health and well-being of the land itself and for the wildlife and human populations that call this region home. Prioritizing properties with the highest conservation values will maximize the positive impacts of our work. We will continue to adhere to a strategic property evaluation and selection process that uses sound science and incorporates traditional and ecological knowledge. We will increase staff proficiency and capability to facilitate more effective land acquisitions. And we will focus on properties and partnerships that enhance our ability to connect conserved landscapes, thereby creating larger contiguous tracts of conserved land.

Desired Outcomes:

1. Conservation portfolio expanded with newly acquired properties in key sub-basin watersheds that:
 - a) Link biologically diverse and interconnected habitats to maximize support for viable populations of our region's keystone species
 - b) Provide contiguous blocks of land for wildlife passage, biological diversity, and climate resilience
 - c) Leverage partnerships to protect our area's working farms, timberlands, and ranches

Strategy 2: Strengthen our stewardship program to ensure conserved lands are cared for in perpetuity

Expand and enhance our stewardship program—from funding streams to capacity—to ensure that we continue to excel in maintaining the conservation integrity of our conserved lands in perpetuity.

Every property we conserve comes with a long-term stewardship commitment. This commitment reflects our responsibility to ensure that conservation values are protected forever and that the land is cared for in perpetuity. As our conservation portfolio grows, so too will the need for us to grow our ability to steward these lands. By examining and growing our stewardship program, we will fulfill our long-term commitment to managing, maintaining and restoring lands owned by Capitol Land Trust, and actively protecting conservation values on properties protected with conservation easements. We will raise the level of Stewardship staff proficiency and technical expertise to effectively and efficiently steward our conserved lands. We will manage our public access preserves and design and implement infrastructure improvements at our two Ambassador Preserves in ways that support public use by a diverse population while maintaining the conservation values for which these preserves were originally acquired. And we will continue to follow or exceed the Land Trust Alliance's standards and best practices for land stewardship.

Desired Outcomes:

1. Conservation team expanded to include necessary stewardship staff as more land is conserved
2. Conservation values and habitat features maintained to high standards and nurtured using sound practices, with fewer active interventions over time
3. Planned infrastructure improvements completed at our two Ambassador Preserves that do not compromise their conservation values

Strategy 3: Selectively enhance and restore habitat on our conserved lands

Collaborate with others to promote the re-establishment of natural processes or desired ecological values, including habitat for rare and endangered species or climate resiliency, on conserved lands.

We regularly engage in land **enhancement** activities on our conserved lands to improve existing functions or characteristics of a habitat or natural resource, like soil health or water quality. At times, we also perform more extensive **restoration** activities that focus on addressing negative changes while aiming to return, or 'restore' the existing habitat or resource to a previous, functional state. Both require the involvement and assistance of others to perform this work. By leveraging our community of partners and supporters, we will promote effective, equitable, and sustainable land management by reflecting local interests, building commitment, and improving outcomes. Over the next five years we will actively collaborate with partner organizations and experts to help us accomplish specific enhancement or restoration objectives. And we will work with conservation easement landowners to identify, promote, or implement enhancement or restoration activities that maintain their property's conservation values.

Desired Outcomes

1. All restoration and land enhancement projects incorporate features to promote ecological resilience to more frequent periods of prolonged drought, increase in high-precipitation events, and rising average annual temperatures
2. Design and implementation of all significant restoration and enhancement projects incorporate input from local experts, Tribes, and community members to incorporate best practices based on available science, engineering, and traditional perspectives
3. Maintenance plans developed following initial enhancement or restoration actions to guide long-term maintenance needs
4. System created to monitor restoration activities for effectiveness against planned outcomes and key findings documented to inform future project design

Goal 2 - Connect People to Conservation

Foster deeper, lasting connections between people and the natural world through transformative outdoor experiences, trusted partnerships, and powerful storytelling—building broad-based support for local land conservation.

Strategy 1: Activate public access preserves as gateways to engagement

Elevate our public access preserves as powerful platforms for connection—places where people experience the transformative power of nature, discover our mission, and grow into lasting supporters of conservation.

Our public access preserves offer more than recreation. They are welcoming places where people of all backgrounds can experience nature as a source of wellness, learning, cultural connection, and belonging. By seeking input from diverse segments of our communities, and then intentionally designing these spaces to be inclusive and inviting, we will deepen public connection to the land and build a broader, more representative community of conservation supporters.

To fully realize the potential of our public access preserves to foster new and lasting relationships with individuals and communities that care about nature and are supportive of our mission, we will invest in physical and programmatic infrastructure that make key preserves welcoming and accessible. And we will offer a broad range of self-guided and facilitated experiences that reflect diverse ways of connecting with the land from scientific exploration and creative expression to spiritual reflection and stewardship action.

Desired Outcomes:

1. A docent program model developed and tested for public access preserves
2. A year-round suite of inspiring, self-guided and staff/docent-led experiences developed and made available at our public access preserves
3. Public access preserves offer multilingual, multimodal, and multisensory experiences that invite engagement across a spectrum of abilities and backgrounds
4. Repeat engagement grows across priority audiences, leading to long-term relationships and broader community investment in our work
5. Growth in number of public visitors to our public access preserves and participation in guided experiences and public-facing events

Strategy 2: Steward, celebrate and grow our community of supporters

Ensure the continued commitment of our supporters through opportunities to meaningfully engage with our organization and thoughtful acknowledgement of their contributions.

The strength and resilience of our organization is rooted in the generosity and commitment of our supporters. We recognize that support takes many forms—including financial contributions, volunteer service, and shared enthusiasm for the natural world—and we are committed to creating inclusive opportunities that invite deeper connection with our mission.

By offering meaningful ways to engage and thoughtfully acknowledging both individual and collective contributions, we will help supporters feel valued and integral to our shared success. We will re-imagine events, volunteer programs, and outreach efforts as powerful points of connection that strengthen relationships, encourage continued involvement, and build a vibrant community united by care for the land and for one another.

Desired Outcomes:

1. Suite of regularly occurring outreach and service engagement volunteer opportunities (aligned to organizational goals and the values and interests of our supporters) created to provide powerful forms of engagement and connection
2. Strengthened relationships with existing and new supporters, as evidenced by new, continued or increased giving, and growth in event and volunteer participation

Strategy 3: Cultivate strategic, outcomes-focused partnerships

Invest in building mutually beneficial partnerships that connect more people to conservation, enrich the experiences we offer, and deepen our impact.

Strong partnerships expand our ability to reach new communities, strengthen programming, and deepen the impact of our mission. Over time, we have built trusted relationships with organizations, schools, Tribes, businesses, agencies, and community

groups that help people connect with nature and understand the local relevance of local land conservation.

In the years ahead, we will focus on cultivating relationships that are both strategic and reciprocal—centered on mutual goals, shared values, and tangible outcomes. We will prioritize partnerships that bring new perspectives to our work—particularly Tribes, people of color, LGBTQ+ communities, people with disabilities, and others who have been historically marginalized in environmental spaces. We will pursue collaborations that strengthen our programs and mission impact, especially those that support youth education, community stewardship, cultural connection, and conservation storytelling. And we will ensure partnerships are mutually beneficial, by identifying how we can support our partners’ goals, offer co-promotional opportunities, and create experiences that serve both missions.

Desired Outcomes:

1. Clear partnership criteria are established and applied to assess and guide new and existing collaborations
2. Our network of partners grows in both quality and strategic alignment, resulting in stronger, more effective programming and greater engagement from the education, public/non-profit and business sectors
3. Increased preserve visits, programs and events by partner organizations

Strategy 4: Broaden organizational awareness and brand recognition within our operating area

Expand community awareness of who we are and the importance of our work—to their lives, cultures, and communities—through public outreach activities and compelling and inclusive storytelling.

Positive sentiment and public trust are essential to our success. Much of our conservation work happens behind the scenes, and many of the lands we protect are not visible or accessible to the public. This makes it even more important to intentionally share our story and demonstrate the relevance of our work to people's lives and communities.

Through a strategic mix of public-facing activities and communications channels, we will increase awareness among both general and conservation-engaged audiences. Our storytelling will amplify diverse voices and experiences, illustrating how local land conservation supports personal well-being, a sense of belonging, and resilient communities and ecosystems.

Over the next five years, we will use a coordinated mix of digital and in-person communications to extend our reach and deepen engagement. We will strengthen our content with brand-aligned visuals, compelling photography, and engaging video, and

share stories in multiple languages and accessible formats whenever possible to better connect with people across cultures, languages, and abilities.

Desired Outcomes:

1. Brand awareness strategy and accompanying tactical plan developed and executed
2. Across our channels, stories and messages reflect the cultural, geographic, and generational diversity of the communities we serve, including those currently excluded from environmental narratives
3. Develop metrics to track and gain actionable insights to maximize the reach and impact of our communications

Goal 3 – Strengthen Our Organization in Service to Our Mission

Enhance our internal systems, processes, relationships, and culture to build a more resilient and well-resourced organization grounded in equity, accountability, and care.

Strategy 1: Diversify and manage revenue streams

Build and manage a diverse suite of revenue sources to maintain the strong financial position needed to steward lands in perpetuity and respond nimbly to emerging opportunities and challenges.

To sustainably support our mission in perpetuity, we will build a wide range of revenue sources, derived from and available to all operations, will make the organization resilient to quickly changing economies, unanticipated revenue shortfalls, costs, or losses. We will assess our current business model for opportunities to identify new and innovative sources of revenue, and we will benchmark against other land trust development models and update our development strategy to reflect current fundraising best practices.

Desired Outcomes:

1. Stewardship fund balance is maintained at a level sufficient to support stewardship activities in perpetuity
2. A 12-month operating reserve established that supports staff stability and organizational growth
3. Development strategy updated annually
4. New revenue streams are actively sought, researched, and tested for effectiveness and incorporated into regular business practices

Strategy 2: Establish and sustain a comprehensive risk management program

Manage risk in a way that protects people, assets, and organizational integrity through a risk management program purpose-built for our unique operational needs.

As an organization that conserves and stewards land in perpetuity, offers public access and experiential programming, and manages complex legal, financial, and operational responsibilities, we face a wide and evolving range of risks. To address these effectively, we will implement an organization-wide risk management program that identifies, assesses, prioritizes and responds to risk in a consistent and disciplined manner.

This program will address key risk areas including land stewardship and public access, staff and volunteer safety, financial and legal compliance, climate-related impacts, information technology and data security, succession planning, and organization reputation. We will focus resources on the highest-priority risks and regularly update our approach as conditions change.

Desired Outcomes:

1. Organizational risk management assessment conducted
2. Comprehensive risk management program developed
3. Clear processes and strategies created for identifying, mitigating, and responding to priority risk areas
4. A business continuity plan established for critical staff roles

Strategy 3: Foster a more supportive, equitable, and connected workplace

Recruit and retain an exceptional, mission-driven team by nurturing a workplace culture grounded in equity, wellbeing, professional growth, and belonging.

We are committed to creating an environment where staff feel valued, supported, and connected—to the land, the mission, one another, and the communities we serve. This includes investing in fair compensation, flexible and compassionate work practices, and culturally responsive leadership that supports people as whole human beings. A supportive workplace culture will strengthen retention, preserve institutional knowledge, and drive long-term success.

Desired Outcomes:

1. A compensation philosophy created and implemented with pay ranges for each position benchmarked to similar roles within the land trust sector
2. Professional development budget increased to 1% of annual operating revenue
3. Regular employee self-evaluation or performance evaluations and feedback processes instituted

Strategy 4: Ensure strong, sustainable leadership by the Board of Directors

Invest in strategic recruitment of Directors from diverse backgrounds with commitments to leadership and fundraising.

Our ability to achieve our mission is predicated on visionary, collaborative, and well-supported leadership that is connected to the communities we serve. The Board of Directors plays a critical role in upholding the organization's values, advancing its strategic goals, and ensuring long-term fiscal and operational health. Strong board governance requires thoughtful recruitment, clear expectations, ongoing development, and a culture of continuous improvement. Over the next five years, we will continue to actively seek new Board members with diverse perspectives, skills, and community representation. We will develop policies that guide how we plan for Board member turnover. And we will make available leadership training, mentorship, and development opportunities.

Desired Outcomes:

1. Continue to evaluate and recruit for Board diversity
2. Succession plan created for officer and committee chair positions
3. Participation in a variety of leadership and development training opportunities
4. Board self-evaluation conducted at least every 3 years.

Strategy 5: Maintain the highest standard of excellence for land trusts

Operate with a level of ethical governance, financial transparency and organizational accountability that ensures the lasting stewardship and conservation of lands.

As an accredited land trust, our effectiveness depends on the trust of our partners, funders, and communities. We uphold that trust through ethical governance, financial transparency, and strong organizational accountability that ensure the permanent protection and stewardship of conserved lands."

Over the next five years, we will maintain rigorous internal controls, conduct independent audits, and provide clear, accessible financial reporting. We will foster a culture of accountability by clearly defining roles, responsibilities, and expectations across staff, board, committees, and volunteers. And we will maintain comprehensive, well-documented records of land protection, stewardship actions, and legal obligations to safeguard conservation outcomes in perpetuity.

Desired Outcomes:

1. Re-accreditation by the Land Trust Accreditation Commission
2. Audit results demonstrate exceptional governance, systems, and processes
3. All funding/grant requirements met