

WESTERN VIRGINIA LAND TRUST
Strategic Plan 2006/2007

MISSION STATEMENT

*Promoting the conservation of western Virginia's natural resources - -
farms, forests, waterways and rural landscapes.*

GOALS

- To educate landowners and professionals about conservation easements
- To promote, through sound estate planning, the retention of family lands critical to preserving our rural landscapes
- To assist local, state and federal partners in the preservation of critical conservation lands
- To encourage land use planning which recognizes the importance of preserving our rural landscapes
- To encourage land development which minimizes impacts on the environment and creates sustainable communities
- To promote best management practices for forestry and agriculture

SERVICE REGION

Bedford, Botetourt, Carroll, Craig, Floyd, Franklin, Henry, Montgomery, Patrick,
and Roanoke Counties and adjacent cities and towns

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

The Western Virginia Land Trust is governed by a Board of Trustees (Board) that provides strategic direction and oversight. Through the efforts of seven standing committees, the Board offers leadership and assistance in carrying out special projects and tasks. Office management, day-to-day operations, public outreach, education and conservation projects are largely done by an adequate staff which includes an executive director.

The Board strives to promote the sustainable growth of the land trust as an organization capable of carrying out its stated mission and goals. The Board is

responsible for ensuring that WVLT is financially self-sufficient, supported by a mix of membership dues, foundation and government grants, and corporate and major donor gifts.

CONSERVATION GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

TO EDUCATE LANDOWNERS AND PROFESSIONALS ABOUT CONSERVATION EASEMENTS

- Identify landowners who may qualify for an easement by using existing tools such as GIS and county records
- Contact the owners of significant conservation properties through special mailings and provide workshops to explain the benefits of easements
- Increase percentage of acres protected in each locality
- Maximize media coverage and other publicity tools
- Provide continuing education programs for attorneys, estate planners, financial advisors, and CPAs on conservation easements
- Offer presentations to civic and community groups

TO PROMOTE, THROUGH SOUND ESTATE PLANNING, THE RETENTION OF FAMILY LANDS CRITICAL TO PRESERVING OUR RURAL LANDSCAPES

- Educate estate planners by providing workshops and distributing literature when appropriate
- Emphasize sound estate planning as a way to preserve family land when contacting landowners

TO ASSIST LOCAL, STATE AND FEDERAL PARTNERS IN THE PRESERVATION OF CRITICAL CONSERVATION LANDS

- Work closely with governments, agencies and groups such as the Roanoke Valley Greenways Commission, Appalachian Trail Conservancy, Blue Ridge Parkway Partners, and Virginia Outdoors Foundation
- Maintain a connection with partners through emails, conference calls and other means
- Seek funding opportunities when appropriate and help partners secure grants
- Partner with organizations to help promote natural resource conservation
- Propose land conservation projects to partners for assistance and funding

TO ENCOURAGE LAND USE PLANNING WHICH REGOGNIZES THE IMPORTANCE OF PRESERVING OUR RURAL LANDSCAPES

- Educate public and elected officials about the benefits of good land use planning

- Publicly recognize successful land use planning as well as good local government planning efforts which preserve rural landscapes

TO ENCOURAGE LAND DEVELOPMENT WHICH MINIMIZES IMPACTS ON THE ENVIRONMENT AND CREATES SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES

- Encourage the use of conservation easements by developers as a technique to keep portions of developments natural and undisturbed and to protect critical conservation resources found there
- Encourage conservation of lands by using design ideas such as clustering, low impact development and buffers

TO PROMOTE BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES FOR FORESTRY AND AGRICULTURE

- Partner with Soil and Water Conservation districts, Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) and Extension offices to promote conservation practices to protect soil and water
- Promote best management practices in conjunction with conservation easement outreach to landowners

INTERNAL ORGANIZATIONAL OBJECTIVES

- Ensure compliance with Land Trust Alliance (LTA) Standards and Practices (adopted February 2005) this year in anticipation of seeking LTA accreditation in 2008
- Complete and adopt strategic plan before our ten-year anniversary in October 2006
- Encourage committees to take an active role in partnership with staff to achieve organizational goals
- Maintain a positive working environment for staff to encourage retention and high performance

COMMITTEE GOALS AND INITIATIVES

Executive Committee: Makes decisions for the Board except for specific decisions required by the by-laws to be addressed only by a quorum of the full Board of Trustees. A special human resources sub-committee made up of the officers and additional members as required will deal with personnel issues and provide staff performance reviews.

Current initiatives:

- Provide annual staff reviews and personnel policy decisions to best serve the goals of the organization (annually in May)
- Encourage board member and committee participation to achieve organizational goals
- Re-address the strategic plan and monitor progress toward the established goals at each meeting

Future initiatives:

- Develop a written conflict of interest policy (by Mar 2007)
- Develop a written records policy (by Mar 2007)

Education and Public Relations Committee: Responsible for constituent relations, publications, public education, public relations and the promotion of the Trust and enhancement of its image, including creation and review of all educational, public relations and development materials, press releases and the quarterly newsletter *Land Protection News*.

Current initiatives:

- Publicize completed conservation projects with press releases and announcements
- Develop new membership recruitment letters and mailing packages
- Completion of Carilion Foundation grant including Museum Kiosk
- Creation of a 30-minute informational DVD for landowners on conservation easement and Best Management Practices
- Public Service Announcement development
- Presentations to civic groups and other organizations
- Develop, give and publicize annual conservation award

Future initiatives:

- Direct mail of 5,000 landowner DVD packages
- Reprint copies of conservation easement guide with updates
- Landowner workshops in each county in 2007
- Semi-annual professional education events
- Submit two or more newspaper op-ed pieces per year
- Staff and/or Board appearances on two or more TV and/or radio shows per year
- Redesign of *Land Protection News* in a color format
- WVLT display tables at four or more major public events (Earth Day, Pigg River Ramble, Festival in the Park, etc.)
- Sponsor nationally-known conservation speaker at regional event (Stephen Small, Ed McMahon, Cece Andrus, Bruce Babbitt, etc.)
- Develop and distribute “Blue Ridge Parkway Neighbor Guide”
- Annual invitations to key media people to lunch with Committee members and staff
- Redesign and regularly update website
- Expand email list and email news alerts

Finance Committee: Tasked with the preparation of an annual budget, preparation of tax filings, annual audits and day-to-day fiscal operations of the Trust. Duties include making recommendations for compensation of staff, including fringe benefits, to executive committee.

Current initiatives:

- Preparation of annual operating budget (for review at June Board meeting each year)
- Oversight of annual audit (to be completed by December each year)

Development Committee: Tasked with planning for and execution of fundraising, recruitment and membership growth to meet annual operating needs of the Trust. Achieve sufficient annual revenue from membership to achieve long-term financial sustainability.

Current initiatives:

- Development of more effective membership campaign
- Increase membership from 750 to 1000 by June 2008
- Redouble effort in large donor and corporate fundraising (10 new personal solicitations each year)
- Second membership appeal to new names contributed by Board (Nov 2006)
- Stress to board members the importance of their participation in fundraising

Future initiatives:

- Request meetings with chief administration officials from every locality within service area to solicit funds (by Jul 2007)
- Develop strategies to engage all Board members in fundraising process (by Mar 2007)
- Send direct mail membership appeal
- Evaluate use of membership premium or premiums (umbrella, tote-bag, t-shirt, etc); possible Fitzpatrick print for \$500 and up donors
- Evaluate potential email funding strategies

Nominating Committee: Tasked with interviewing and soliciting new board members, based on availability and board makeup and presenting their recommendations to the Board prior to the annual meeting. (Under by-laws, nominating committee members must be board members.)

Current initiatives:

- New member recruitment with regional, ethnic and cultural diversity in mind.
- Creating a balance of professional, civic and landowning board members
- Monitoring individual board member performance
- Investigating opportunities to streamline board by growing advisory council in proportion to board members

Planning Committee: Responsible for long-range planning to fulfill the Trust's purpose and for the preparation periodically of recommended plans to implement its recommendations. Also tasked with review and providing technical review with respect to the solicitation and acceptance of monetary grants to the Trust.

Current Initiatives:

- Completion of Strategic Plan prior to Oct. 2006 ten-year celebration
- Review, modify and adopt strategic plan annually (Apr each year)

Future Initiatives:

- Develop new 12-month grants calendar to track applications, reports, etc. (by July 2007)
- Identify priority projects for land acquisition and/or conservation easement purchases and submit grant proposals to Virginia Land Preservation Trust Fund, Virginia Land Conservation Foundation, Forest Legacy, Aquatic Restoration Trust Fund, etc.

Stewardship Committee: Responsible for all real estate related actions of WVLT including easements, acquisitions, sales and gifts of property. Responsible for planning, developing and implementing annual easement monitoring and appropriate stewardship of any owned lands.

Current Initiatives:

- Review of all existing easement baseline documentation (by Dec 2006)
- Setting monitoring schedule for committee members (by Dec 2006)
- Contacting easement landowners and make site visits (by Apr 2007)

Future Initiatives:

- Bring documentation up to LTA standards (by Jul 2007)
- Develop and review core stewardship competencies on which WVLT scored "red" and develop plans to address these
- Monitor every WVLT easement and property annually
- Offer to post free conservation easement signs during every monitoring visit
- Review all future easements to confirm conservation values
- Develop baseline documentation prior to accepting easements

Events Committee: Focus on logistics and planning for celebrations and social events to promote the Land Trust's efforts.

Current Initiatives:

- Hosting October 2006 Ten-Year Celebration

Future Initiatives:

- Plan fundraising dinner to celebrate opening of Watershed Gallery in partnership with Science Museum of Western Virginia (by Mar 2007)
- Develop a schedule of events that coordinate with WVLT calendar
- Develop budget for each event and make sure that expenses for events are not greater than revenue
- Develop a timeline for each event
- Plan fiscal year's events before June and get them in annual budget

Governmental Relations Committee: Responsible for maintaining active and open relations with governmental bodies at the local, state and federal levels for the purpose of furthering land conservation causes; also responsible for finding ways to keep WVLT members (Board and general) aware of how they can assist in lobbying initiatives.

Current Initiatives:

- Put in place a process whereby Board or general membership can easily access their legislative representatives via email in order to express opinions about pertinent issues (by Dec 06)
- Determine which governmental bodies can affect land conservation issues (for example, city councils, planning commissions, state legislature, etc.) (by Dec 06)
- Decide which methods are most effective for contact with these legislative bodies – newsletter, special mailings, personal letters or direct contact by individual (by Dec 06)
- Review legislation related to land conservation issues and report to Board on those issues
- Determine which issues or legislation should be supported or opposed by the WVLT and make recommendations to the Board on those issues