

**WESTERN VIRGINIA LAND TRUST**  
**Strategic Plan 2010/2011**

Adopted - October 6, 2010

**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 hold and be good stewards of 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

**PRIORITY PLACES**

- Family farms
- Rivers and streams
- Blue Ridge Parkway viewsheds
- Ridgetops and mountainsides
- Greenways and trails, including the Appalachian Trail

**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 nine 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 and a project manager.

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 HOLD AND BE GOOD STEWARDS OF CONSERVATION EASEMENTS**

- Hold easements that are consistent with the goals, mission statement and objectives of WVLT
- Hold easements that are consistent with the comprehensive plans of the communities where the easements are located
- Draft easements that represent good conservation, meet 170 (h) standards and are defensible
- Only hold easements where we have the capacity to properly monitor and defend the easements

### **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, attending and hosting meetings 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 that 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) in anticipation of receiving LTA accreditation in 2010
- Annually update and then officially readopt strategic plan
- 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. The Executive Committee deals with personnel issues and provides performance review of the Executive Director.

### **Current initiatives:**

- Provide annual staff review and personnel policy decisions to best serve the goals of the organization (annually in May/June)
- Encourage board member and committee participation to achieve organizational goals
- Re-address the strategic plan and monitor progress toward the established goals on a periodic basis

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

### **Current initiatives:**

- Publicize completed conservation projects with press releases and announcements (on going)
- Develop new membership recruitment letters and mailing packages (twice per year)
- Develop Public Service Announcements (on going)
- Make presentations to civic groups and other organizations (on going)
- Publicize annual conservation award (on going)
- Update website regularly (on going)
- Host semi-annual professional education events (on going)

### **Future initiatives:**

- Reprint copies of conservation easement guide with updates
- Reformat landowner workshops in our region in 2011
- Host semi-annual professional education events
- Submit two or more newspaper op-ed pieces per year (ongoing)

- Have staff or Board appearances on two or more TV and/or radio shows per year
- Have 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” in cooperation with Parkway 75, Inc. efforts
- Invite key media people to lunch with Committee members and staff annually
- 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 Land Trust. Achieve sufficient annual revenue from membership to achieve long-term financial sustainability. Provide technical review of all monetary grant opportunities to keep WVLT on mission.

**Current initiatives:**

- Host planned giving event for board and friends of WVLT
- Develop more effective membership campaign including membership incentives
- Implement planned giving program for Western Virginia Land Conservation Land Conservation Fund
- Increase effort in large donor and corporate fundraising (10 new personal solicitations each year)
- Encourage board member participation in fundraising
- Create and continually update grant calendar
- Regularly review and update board/member matches for personal solicitation opportunities

**Future initiatives:**

- Request meetings with chief administration officials from every locality within service area to solicit funds (by Jul 2008)
- Develop strategies to engage all Board members in fundraising process
- Evaluate success of direct mailing campaigns
- 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:**

- Recruit new members with regional, ethnic and cultural diversity in mind.
- Create a balance of professional, civic and landowner board members
- Monitor individual board member performance

**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.

**Current and Future Initiatives:**

- Review, modify and adopt strategic plan annually

**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:**

- Establish monitoring protocol for Carvins Cove
- Meet with past easement donors to discuss BMPs and Forestry management plan options

**On-going Initiatives:**

- Review all conservation land transactions and make recommendation to the full board
- Ensure monitoring of every WVLT easement and property annually
- Ensure adequate stewardship funding prior to acceptance of any easement
- Offer to post free conservation easement signs during monitoring visits
- Develop baseline documentation prior to recording easements
- Review the Stewardship fee schedule annually

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

**Current Initiatives:**

- Host September 2010 Annual Conservation Celebration
- Plan and carry out Race for Open Space in June 2011
- Host and carry out annual member meeting in winter 2010-11

**Future Initiatives:**

- Develop a schedule of events that coordinates 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 consistent with WVLT's mission; also responsible for finding ways to keep WVLT members (Board and general) aware of how they can assist in advocacy initiatives.

**Current Initiatives:**

- 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
- Meet with key legislators to further relationship and promote legislation
- Promote passage of House and Senate bills supporting extension of federal tax deductions for easement donations