



Georges River Land Trust Strategic Plan

MISSION

Adopted by Board 7/26/11

The Georges River Land Trust's mission is to conserve the ecosystems and traditional heritage of the Georges River watershed region through permanent land protection, stewardship, education, and outdoor experiences.

VALUES

Adopted by Board 9/27/07

WE value the diverse and vital connections among land, water and people in the Georges River watershed from Montville and Liberty to Port Clyde and Cushing, and we strive to maintain a strategic balance between natural lands and waterways, working landscapes and human communities.

WE respect local conservation priorities, and we are dedicated to working in partnership with communities to achieve lasting conservation and stewardship results in the watershed.

WE recognize the high concentration of exemplary plant and animal communities, as well as the occurrence of rare and endangered species, large habitat blocks and significant wetlands and we prioritize their conservation.

WE recognize that natural resource-based economies such as farming, forestry and fishing are essential to the traditional character and economic vitality of the region, and we prioritize conservation action that helps ensure their sustainability.

WE are committed to voluntary land conservation with willing landowners, using donations of conservation easements as our preferred tool and responding to increasing development threats using purchase of fee title or easements with willing landowners.

WE are dedicated to responsible stewardship of conserved lands as a primary obligation both now and in the future. We monitor and defend properties, as well as develop lasting relationships with easement property owners, to ensure adherence to the protected values.

WE seek to engage with communities to nurture a conservation ethic by connecting people with the natural world, and we provide experiential and educational opportunities to inspire volunteer land protection and long-term stewardship.

WE believe in working collaboratively with board, staff, donors and landowners to achieve conservation goals and we partner with other local, regional, state and national organizations to define shared conservation objectives and leverage results.

WE are dedicated to high ethical and professional standards that earn us respect and trust among all our constituents, including donors, landowners, communities and partners throughout the watershed.

Discover the River. Care for the land.

***WE celebrate the support we receive from individuals, foundations and corporations** and fully embrace standard fundraising ethics including confidentiality, acknowledgment and proper use of restricted gifts.*

VISION FOR THE FUTURE—2018

This vision, presented as a future retrospective, accompanies the GRLT Strategic Priorities 2013-2018 table and summarizes all GRLT hopes to achieve by 2018...

The Georges River Land Trust recently celebrated its 30th anniversary and is more successful than ever. We have expanded our presence in the watershed, attracted more and younger members, and succeeded in bringing consistent financial stability to the organization. We have a strong, committed Board and a dedicated, talented staff who no longer have to make financial sacrifices to keep our goals in place and our organization financially sound. We worked together to find innovative, workable, sustainable solutions to the financial struggles we faced as a result of the recession ten years ago, which forced us to ask some challenging questions about who we are, how we operate, and what we want to become. We have figured out how to make the best use of our resources in order to fulfill our mission— and are working our way to meeting our conserved-acre target of 15,000 acres.

Our new mission statement, expanded in 2011 to include protecting the “ecosystems and traditional heritage” of the river and the watershed region, has been well received. The two priorities of *water quality* and *public access*, selected as part of our “focus on the future” effort, have helped us funnel our resources and make a meaningful difference in both areas.

We continue to be a leader in conservation in our watershed and our region. GRLT has invested time and energy envisioning the long-term future of the organization, focusing on a realistic picture of its ultimate size and scope. The GRLT Board and committees looked to the future and identified creative yet realistic strategies to maintain and build upon our organizational success over the long term, but it is a work in progress.

Land Protection

GRLT, with backing from its partners, has protected 4,000+ acres throughout the watershed, including some of the most important and at-risk landscapes in priority conservation focus areas along the St. George River corridor and in the Weskeag Marsh. Through grant funding and generous donations, we have protected several important properties in South Thomaston, helping us complete the Bridging Two Rivers project. In the upper watershed, we played an important role by accepting conservation easements from private landowners who want to leave a legacy of forestland and riverside conservation. We are supporting local agriculture by holding easements on important farmland, helping farmers reduce their costs and allowing a critical mass of farms to thrive in our region, while protecting water quality with important buffers.

Stewardship

GRLT’s approach to stewardship continues to be based on a belief that local community involvement and individual commitment to caring for the land and water are essential to the long-term sustainability of the region. With the steady increase in lands conserved, the Land Trust continues to develop its professional and robust stewardship program and meet its stewardship responsibilities for all existing and new conservation properties. Our stewards

Discover the River. Care for the land.

program has grown to a corps of 50 volunteers to match our expanding conservation portfolio. Importantly, we have exceeded our stewardship reserve fundraising goal and have raised \$150,000 for the Property Reserve Fund.

The timber harvest on the Appleton Preserve was a new leap for us in stewardship, involving the community throughout and demonstrating long-term sustainable management. We have reviewed all our preserves and identified other opportunities for sustainable returns.

Partnerships

We have forged new partnerships with our neighboring land trusts and share staff and resources in ways not thought possible ten years ago. We are a founding member of the 12 Rivers Conservation Initiative and have protected key properties with funding that was secured only through broad thinking and collaboration for landscape level conservation. We continue to work closely with organizations such as the Georges River Tidewater Association and Trout Unlimited and have expanded water quality monitoring to include the entire St. George and Weskeag rivers.

Public Access and Education

GRLT has improved its existing access points and created several new outdoor opportunities, including the long awaited River Trail. We have expanded our conservation trails program with the addition of the three-mile Thomaston Village Trail and new segments of the Georges Highland Path in St. George and Warren. We have completed three miles of the Ridge to River path, and we have added four new miles of trails on the Gibson, Appleton, and Pleasant Point Preserves. We have added interpretive stops at the Appleton Preserve and organized many expert-led learning events. Our four Quests have grown in popularity and offer an opportunity for families and youngsters to get out in the watershed. Through our annual Revelry events, we have made much progress in *ensuring the future of conservation by broadening the public's appreciation of GRLT's relevance to their lives.*

Governance and Financial Stability

The GRLT Board and committees are fully constituted with talented, resourceful and committed participants representing the broad array of communities, interests, and skills within the GRLT region. We have successfully implemented the Succession Plan adopted by the Board in 2012, and enjoy the continuity of excellent leadership at all levels. The Board and staff dedicated substantial time and energy to complying with the national Land Trust Alliance's Standards and Practices, and GRLT was accredited in 2014.

The hard work of the Board and staff over the past five years has left GRLT financially stable and much more fiscally sound. The measures taken in 2013 to reduce expenses improved stability during a difficult period, but the worst is behind us as the major donor program has grown considerably since then. The full Board embraced its fundraising responsibility and worked with staff to reach GRLT financial goals. The Land Trust's supporters are engaged as partners, and the Board and staff have a personal relationship with all major donors. Grants remain a primary strategy for land acquisition. And we continue to increase membership.

Our White Oak Society and Watershed Society programs have grown significantly. We predict that by 2020 we will have received over \$1,000,000 in planned gifts and have made a substantial start on a general endowment fund, with the ultimate goal of providing for the bulk of our operational funding through its income.

We continue to look for new ways to conduct our work so we may better foster the health of the entire ecosystem and engage people more deeply in the value of conservation.

Discover the River. Care for the land.