



Wildlands Conservancy

STRATEGIC PLAN

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY 2011-2015

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A lot is said today about conservation and sustainability.

Since 1973 Wildlands Conservancy has been at the forefront, on the ground acting locally, playing a vital role in what is now a complex global effort.



What started at the grassroots, emerging from the efforts of a handful of visionary citizens nearly 40 years ago, has grown to become a well-respected non-profit conservation organization. To-date Wildlands Conservancy has provided environmental education for more than 300,000 children and adults in our community, has protected 48,000 acres of land in the region, improved hundreds of stream miles along reaches of rivers and creeks of the Lehigh River watershed, and developed significant trail systems so that people can enjoy our region's natural environment. Firm in our mission we are positioned to honor this legacy and build upon it for the future.

We achieve our mission by employing time-honored land preservation techniques, fostering environmental stewardship, establishing partnerships, and using science-informed standards and project methods for water quality and ecological restoration. As an organization with regional reach, we work with local municipalities to help guide community planning to achieve comprehensive, environmentally proactive results, knitting together natural areas because they are not confined within municipal borders.

Every five years Wildlands Conservancy establishes a Strategic Plan; we evaluate past performance and collaborate on ways to continue moving forward. The Strategic Plan for 2011-2015 was overseen by a Strategic Planning Committee consisting of current Board of Directors and members of our senior staff. Extensive background data about the organization were collected and analyzed, key stakeholders contributed important insights during a series of roundtable meetings, and the Wildlands community provided invaluable input through a survey. The Board of Directors and staff met during a two-day strategic planning session. The Strategic Planning Committee then synthesized all of this information – data, analysis, and insights – to prepare this Strategic Plan, which was approved by the Board in December 2010.

To set our goals for the next five years, we looked introspectively at the capacity to achieve organizational sustainability. It has become clear that we need to grow Wildlands Conservancy's endowment and overall philanthropic support

in order to maintain long-term financial health. This will ensure that Wildlands continues to be a mission-driven conservation organization that is responsive to the needs of our region, and not necessarily a project-driven operation, competing for dwindling public funds, merely striving to survive to make its impact. We also foresee the opportunity to attain Wildlands Conservancy's full leadership potential as the region's foremost authority on conservation and environmental education issues. To carryout these initiatives, we aim to broaden and deepen our relationship with the community.

We acknowledge the perpetuity of our work and set goals for the next five years to ensure that Wildlands Conservancy continues pursuing our vision.

Wildlands Conservancy understands the value of the region's green infrastructure and how a healthy environment resonates through our quality of life and place. Our conservation work will focus on projects and activities with the highest conservation value as we continue to **Protect High Priority Land and Water Resources.**

Wildlands Conservancy understands that it is important for our whole community to embrace conservation. Connecting people to our world, exposing them to its natural wonders inspires stewardship of our irreplaceable natural resources. We will continue to **Provide Educational Opportunities to the Community to Foster a Conservation Ethic.**

Wildlands Conservancy understands that our capacity to perform our mission and bring about our vision is directly dependant on broad, deep philanthropic commitments. It is essential to follow an effective development strategy so that the organization is able to **Increase Philanthropic Support.**

Wildlands Conservancy understands the perpetual nature of its mission. To sustain the organization we must implement best practices to function at the highest standards, and invest in our people, facilities, and properties. Doing so will **Ensure Long-Term Sustainability of Wildlands Conservancy.**



CORE VALUES OF WILDLANDS CONSERVANCY

These beliefs reflect Wildlands Conservancy's perspective on the world and guide its day-to-day activities:

1. We value all life on earth and appreciate its inherent worth, beauty, and inspiration.
2. Stewardship of the earth sustains life, our economy, and our sense of being and place. It is our responsibility and legacy to future generations and the source of great enjoyment.
3. Connecting people to land fosters good stewardship and a sense of community. An educated and informed citizenry will be better stewards of the environment.
4. We respect the inherent diversity and interrelatedness of human beings and nature. What affects one affects all.
5. The prosperity and health of our economy, citizenry, and environment are directly linked to each other. To make progress in any one area, we must strive for simultaneous, sustained excellence in all.
6. Positive conservation action requires change, innovation, and creativity.
7. Transparency and accountability are fundamental to earning public trust and aligning people to achieve effective conservation success.
8. It is necessary for local leadership to drive sustained conservation success.
9. We maintain our credibility by being objective, responsive, and practical.
10. We provide our employees a safe and enjoyable place to work and strive to keep valuable employees involved with the organization.
11. Conservation success depends upon cultivating and sustaining organizational relationships and partnerships. Different people bring different gifts and perspectives to a team. A strong team is founded on diversity.

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VISION

A Lehigh Valley and Lehigh River Watershed that contain expansive natural areas, connected green spaces, healthy waterways and an enlightened community where people embrace conservation and sustainability.

MISSION

Protect and restore critical natural areas and waterways, and educate the community to create a legacy of a healthy, sustainable environment for future generations.

GOAL 1 – PROTECT HIGH PRIORITY LAND AND WATER RESOURCES

STRATEGIES

1.1 Create and maintain inventories and maps of land with high conservation value.

Actions

- 1.1.1 Create and continually update maps of land protected by the organization.
- 1.1.2 Create our comprehensive work plan and map with our land protection strategy.
- 1.1.3 Complete comprehensive open space plans and open space bond referenda that support conservation of land resources.

1.2 Protect high conservation-value lands through fee-simple acquisition or conservation easements.

Actions

- 1.2.1 Develop and implement land protection criteria.
- 1.2.2 Promote and implement regional land planning initiatives for open space protection and creation of greenways.
- 1.2.3 Pursue private and public grants, partnerships, and contracts to enable land protection.

1.3 Implement key water resource recommendations in the Lehigh River Watershed Conservation Management Plan.

Actions

- 1.3.1 Remediate abandoned mine drainage impacts in the Lehigh River.
- 1.3.2 Remove dams on the Lehigh River and key tributaries.
- 1.3.3 Complete aquatic/riparian habitat restoration projects on degraded streamside properties.

1.4 Steward the natural resources under our control.

Actions

- 1.4.1 Develop and implement natural resource management plans for property owned by the organization.
- 1.4.2 Conduct annual monitoring of all property owned and eased by the organization.
- 1.4.3 Properly manage and install signage on our preserves and easements.

GOAL 2– PROVIDE EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES TO THE COMMUNITY TO FOSTER A CONSERVATION ETHIC

STRATEGIES

2.1 Align all Wildlands Conservancy’s K-12 educational programming to the Environment and Ecology Goal of the Pennsylvania Academic Standards.

Actions

- 2.1.1 Evaluate current program offerings to ensure alignment.
- 2.1.2 Discontinue or modify programs which are not aligned.
- 2.1.3 Develop Wildlands Conservancy curriculum.
- 2.1.4 Meet with School District leaders to discuss their needs and services.

2.2 Provide quality educational programming to school-age children based on the Environment and Ecology Goal of the Pennsylvania Academic Standards.

Actions

- 2.2.1 Focus educational programming on water, land, wildlife, and human impacts.
- 2.2.2 Utilize Pool Wildlife Sanctuary, other Wildlands Conservancy preserves, and other designated natural areas as locations for educational programming.
- 2.2.3 Develop in-school programming aligned with the Environment and Ecology Goal.
- 2.2.4 Provide qualified instructors that are well-trained, professional, and passionate.
- 2.2.5 Create pre- and post-educational materials for school programs.
- 2.2.6 Conduct nature-based recreational educational programming.
- 2.2.7 Conduct educational events at the Pool Wildlife Sanctuary.

2.3 Become the recognized source for teachers to become proficient in the Environment and Ecology Goal of the Pennsylvania Academic Standards.

Actions

- 2.3.1 Design and conduct professional development programs for K-12 teachers.
- 2.3.2 Develop partnerships with area Colleges and Universities with Education Master programs.
- 2.3.3 Develop and promote curriculum support for teachers as they prepare students for PSSA science and environmental tests.

2.4 Provide educational opportunities for the general public that connects them to nature and the work of Wildlands Conservancy.

Actions

- 2.4.1 Conduct family-based educational programming.
- 2.4.2 Conduct educational tours and field trips to our Preserves and natural areas.
- 2.4.3 Determine feasibility of opening the Watershed Museum on weekends.
- 2.4.4 Host seminars and conferences on environmental topics tied to the mission.
- 2.4.5 Conduct summer camp programs.
- 2.4.6 Conduct a conservation camp.
- 2.4.7 Utilize stewardship projects (tree plantings, clean-ups, etc.) to connect the public to our conservation work.
- 2.4.8 Educate municipal officials, community and business leaders, area legislators, and government agency officials on the importance of conservation.
- 2.4.9 Educate streamside property owners and large landowners on environmental best management practices and conservation opportunities.

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2.5 Provide high quality education programming and excellent customer service to enable us to be recognized as the leader in the community for environmental and conservation education.

Actions

- 2.5.1 Adjust curriculum to reflect results of pre- and post-testing of programs.
- 2.5.2 Align all educational programming to fully support the mission of Wildlands Conservancy.
- 2.5.3 Evaluate staffing structure to meet administrative and customer support needs.
- 2.5.4 Develop effective tools and matrixes to evaluate programs and customer satisfaction.
- 2.5.5 Develop needed policies and procedures to ensure consistent business practices.
- 2.5.6 Update web site to improve on-line registration and procure software that integrates with Raisers Edge.

**GOAL 3 – INCREASE PHILANTHROPIC SUPPORT
OF WILDLANDS CONSERVANCY**

STRATEGIES

3.1 Identify and prioritize funding needs to be met by philanthropic support.

Actions

- 3.1.1 Determine revenue amounts from philanthropic support for the next five years.
- 3.1.2 Establish planned giving program to increase endowment.
- 3.1.3 Identify capital, endowment and other fundraising needs.
- 3.1.4 Determine fundraising feasibility of capital, endowment and other major gift fundraising.

3.2 Increase awareness of mission and how to support it.

Actions

- 3.2.1 Define the organizations brand and invest in message development.
- 3.2.2 Develop, fund, and implement an effective communication strategy.
- 3.2.3 Create Case for Support and needed fundraising materials.

3.3 Strengthen development program infrastructure.

Actions

- 3.3.1 Provide needed resources to meet goals and objectives.
- 3.3.2 Enable and increase Board, staff and volunteer involvement in process of philanthropy and fund development.
- 3.3.3 Formalize internal and external policies and procedures.

3.4 Build Community of Donors.

Actions

- 3.4.1 Create needed giving clubs and recognition programs for constituents.
- 3.4.2 Formalize cultivation and stewardship plan and program.
- 3.4.3 Identify and rate current & potential donors.
- 3.4.4 Identify need and role for volunteers.
- 3.4.5 Increase and expand donor information.
- 3.4.6 Continue to invest time and resources in Moves Management program.

GOAL 4 – ENSURE LONG-TERM SUSTAINABILITY OF WILDLANDS CONSERVANCY

STRATEGIES

4.1 Achieve and maintain accreditation as a land trust.

Actions

- 4.1.1 Develop Work Plans and Budget Information for Each Service Area.
- 4.1.2 Develop and Enhance Policies and Procedures required for accreditation and effective management.
- 4.1.3 Conduct Annual Monitoring of Conservation Easements and Property Owned Fee-Simple.
- 4.1.4 Prepare for Five-Year Renewal of Land Trust Accreditation.

4.2 Recruit and retain quality staff.

Actions

- 4.2.1 Provide ongoing professional development.
- 4.2.2 Continue to provide competitive benefits package.
- 4.2.3 Conduct employee reviews semi-annually.
- 4.2.4 Complete organizational policy manual.

4.3 Enhance the organization's financial health and long-term sustainability.

Actions

- 4.3.1 Increase the organization's endowment through board-designation of all bequests.
- 4.3.2 Increase the organization's easement stewardship fund through transfer of property and donor restricted gifts.
- 4.3.3 Create a capital fund.
- 4.3.4 Develop ways to provide resources to the property stewardship fund.
- 4.3.5 Develop a long-term investment plan for Conservancy funds.
- 4.3.6 Evaluate possible merger with, or acquisition, of other conservation organizations.

4.4 Ensure that Wildlands Conservancy's activities are mission appropriate and supportive of the organization's long-term sustainability.

Actions

- 4.4.1 Integrate all program participants into the organization.
- 4.4.2 Develop criteria to evaluate effectiveness and impact of programs.
- 4.4.3 Incorporate Strategic Plan into the culture of the organization.
- 4.4.4 Utilize Strategic Plan to align with the organizational mission.
- 4.4.5 Allocate and prioritize organizational resources to achieve Mission.
- 4.4.6 Evaluate current staffing and job descriptions to match goals and objectives.
- 4.4.7 Develop and implement a marketing plan and strategies to enhance community participation in Wildlands Conservancy's mission.

4.5 Ensure a professional and safe work environment and proper management of organizational facilities and buildings.

Actions

- 4.5.1 Implement recommendations listed in the organizational energy audit.
- 4.5.2 Evaluate needs of current office space and determine cost-effective alternatives.
- 4.5.3 Develop replacement and enhancement plan for all organization facilities.



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