

# Mahoosuc Land Trust

## 5-Year Strategic Plan

From 2015 to 2020



Larry Elly Photo

**Mahoosuc Land Trust's mission is to conserve natural areas to benefit the communities of the Mahoosuc Region.**

**Our vision is a vibrant future where people of the Mahoosuc Region enjoy clean rivers, lakes and streams, abundant wildlife, inspiring vistas, and sustainable forests and farming.**

## **Connectivity and Special Places**

**Goal 1: Expand conservation of large connected areas, wildlife corridors, special places, and land that support sustainable, economically productive use.**

- **Conduct ongoing acquisition activities related to identified conservation projects that are being considered or actively pursued.**
- **Expand public education and landowner outreach regarding land conservation options, benefits and opportunities to work with the Land Trust.**
- **Consider parcels that have been identified by Beginning with Habitat, Maine Natural Areas Program, National Wetlands Inventory, and the New Hampshire Wildlife Action Plan.**
- **Work with towns, water districts, adjacent land trusts and others to identify conservation targets that protect clean water supplies.**
- **Continue outreach to identify iconic and “special places” which the public holds dear.**
- **Continue participation in the Androscoggin/High Peaks/Mahoosuc Initiative which identifies priorities for large-scale conservation in the region.**

### **Land Conservation Priority Attributes**

- Land that abuts other conservation or public lands which enhances environmental integrity by creating a larger landscape-scale contiguous area or corridor.
- “Forever wild” lands that contain a significant portion of high quality native terrestrial or aquatic ecosystem, significant wildlife habitat or rare, endangered or threatened species, based on current conditions and projected impacts of climate change.
- Parcels that directly impact water quality in Mahoosuc Land Trust's region: the Upper Androscoggin, Upper Crooked River watersheds and others.
- Working farms, forests and parcels that contain prime farmland soils.
- Parcels considered iconic, “special places” and parcels that engage communities through education, recreation and other outdoor experiences, or serve as a model for sustainable long-term land management.

## Care for Protected Lands

**Goal 2: Practice exemplary stewardship of conserved lands that sets an example for long-term management and public benefit.**

- **Maintain volunteer leadership of the Stewardship Committee which creates active management plans for Land Trust properties and conducts annual easement monitoring, following best standards and practices.**
- **Lead the development and implementation of new projects which may include trail networks, roads, access ramps or stairs, signage, kiosks, parking areas and other features.**
- **Create stewardship subcommittees to oversee and administer the stewardship of each Land Trust Preserve.**
- **Engage a strong group of stewardship volunteers who participate regularly in stewardship activities and coordinate work crews from Outward Bound, Maine Appalachian Mountain Club, local schools, and others.**
- **Establish an orientation and ongoing training program for members of the volunteer corps of regular volunteers as well as members of work crews.**

### **Stewardship of Conserved Lands**

Stewardship is the process by which the land trust, in perpetuity, cares for the properties under its protection – either via a **conservation easement** or by *direct ownership of **fee properties*** when land is donated to or purchased by the land trust. Sustainable long-term management and maximum public benefit guide all stewardship decisions.

- **Easement stewardship** entails annual monitoring, keeping good relationships with land owners, detailed documentation and preparation to defend the easement against legal challenges that may arise over time.
- **Fee property stewardship** entails total responsibility for the land, which may require minimal upkeep for wild lands or significant care of properties used by the public.

## Nurture A Love of Land

**Goal 3: Connect more people to the land and the Land Trust's mission, increase awareness of the benefits of balanced growth, provide recreational opportunities, and promote a conservation ethic.**

- Provide 6-8 guided hikes and walks each year, consider additional group activities and increase participation among current and new audiences.
- Sponsor an annual speaker series with themes related to balanced growth and a conservation ethic.
- Take an active role as members of the Bethel and Rumford Chambers of Commerce, Androscoggin River Watershed Council, and other regional organizations as determined.
- Explore opportunities to deepen strategic alliances with Mahoosuc Pathways, Shelburne Trails Club, area snowmobile clubs and others.
- Develop a pattern of communications that are friendly, meaningful and timely using story-telling to inspire and connect people.
- Enhance and increase online communications.



## Create Conservation Areas for Communities

**Goal 4: Develop new educational initiatives with children and youth and demonstrate environmentally sustainable practices throughout Mahoosuc Land Trust work.**

- Create an “educational resource inventory” and increase capacity to respond to requests for use of Land Trust lands by area schools, camps and others.
- Convene an ad hoc Committee to research and create a signature youth program with area K-12 children and youth.
- Develop the capacity to manage one or more woodlots and harvest timber in order to demonstrate sustainable forestry and produce earned income.
- Explore the potential of establishing an experiential learning center, possibly to include working with farmlands.
- Implement a sustainability checklist and make improvements and changes to daily operations and events.
- Determine the best location for the Land Trust office when the U.S. Forest Service determines an alternate use for the current site.



## **Build Capacity to Create Positive Change**

**Goal 5: Build Mahoosuc Land Trust's capacity to advance the mission and achieve its strategic goals.**

### **Governance:**

- **Maintain an effective board composition attending to socio-economic and geographic diversity.**
- **Continue ongoing board education in the areas of philanthropy, committee participation, fiscal oversight and ambassadorship.**

### **Staff and Volunteers:**

- **Create a new Associate Executive Director position.**
- **Include a focus on major and planned gifts for current staff.**
- **Enhance and formalize volunteer opportunities and engagement.**

### **Fundraising:**

- **Scale-up grants research and submissions that support the Land trust's expanded goals.**
- **Develop and implement plans for planned giving and major gifts.**

### **Finance:**

- **Increase operating reserves from 25% to 50% of the annual operating budget by 2020.**
- **Assure sufficient revenue to fully provide regular and periodic land stewardship costs by doubling invested stewardship and endowment funds.**