



LAKE PLACID
LAND CONSERVANCY

STRATEGIC PLAN 2016 to 2020

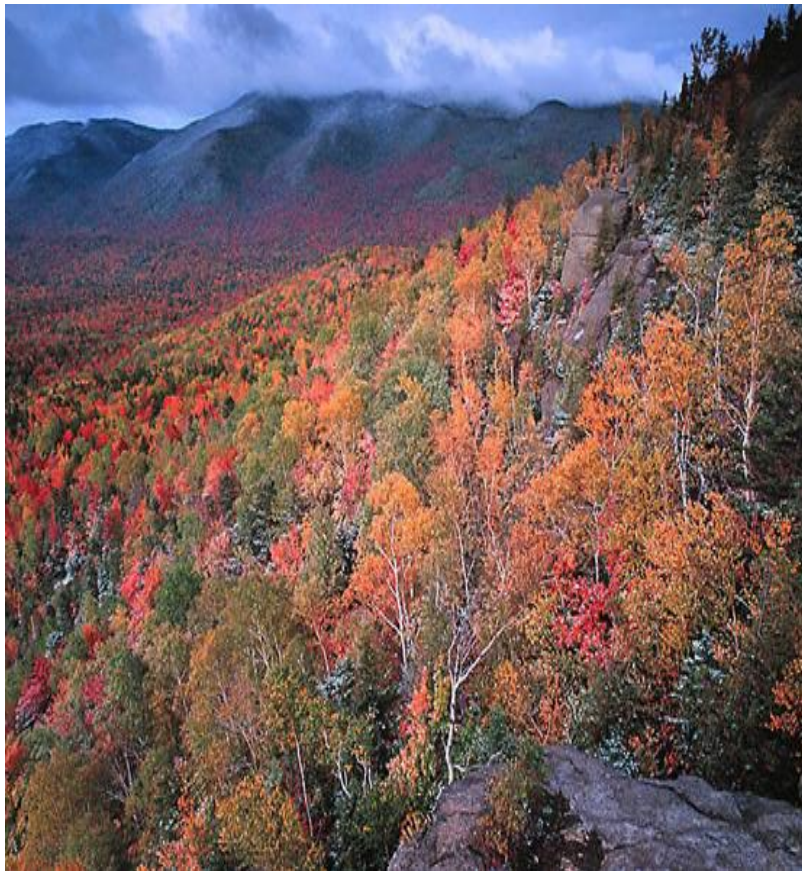




Photo: Patti Hopkinson

Introduction

The Adirondack Park encompasses approximately six million acres of public and private lands. These lands are a natural wonder of scenic mountains, pristine lakes, abundant forests and rich wildlife habitat, and include permanently protected public lands as well as working forests, farms, and economically diverse communities. Together these lands create the Adirondacks' unique natural and cultural character.

While more than two million acres of public land within the "blue line" delineating the Adirondack Park are protected as "forever wild," almost half of the park is privately owned and could be subject to development in the future. The Lake Placid Land Conservancy (LPLC) plays an important role in ensuring the continued conservation of lands in the Ausable and Saranac River basins in the Adirondack Park by protecting important open spaces, views, wildlife habitats, and water resources, as well as recreational lands that create opportunities for people to enjoy the region's natural beauty.

Who We Are

LPLC was founded in 2013 through a merger of the Placid Lake Foundation and the North Elba Land Conservancy. The merger created a new land trust that is financially strong and sustainable. It also launched an organization that can lead and support conservation programs throughout the northeastern Adirondacks.

Adirondack residents and visitors alike support LPLC. Our board of directors—whose members have deep roots in the Adirondacks, Lake Placid, and the High Peaks region—guide our conservation efforts.

Why We Are Needed

A wide variety of plants and animals flourish in the Adirondacks, including moose, black bear, fishers, otters, bald eagles, rare ram's-head lady slippers, spotted salamanders, and heritage-strain brook trout. The natural world and scenic

beauty of the Adirondacks remains unusually vibrant because of its extensive public land holdings.

Today, however, almost half of the Adirondack Park remains in private ownership. Continued protection of critical open space and wildlife habitats is still needed, especially along lakes and river valley bottoms where development could have particularly severe impacts on scenery and wildlife, and also contribute to flooding, and pollution in lakes, rivers and streams.

LPLC was created because of a strong and steady demand for continued land conservation in the Adirondacks. We see continued conservation of local landscapes as a fundamental component of broader efforts to maintain the region's distinctive character.



Many residents and visitors do not realize that almost half of the Adirondack Park is private and potentially subject to development.

Our Mission

“Conserving land and water in Lake Placid and the Ausable and Saranac River watersheds.”

How We Work

LPLC is a land trust that works locally, building personal connections with landowners and communities to help them protect the lands they value most. Four broad principles define our approach:

- We work with landowners and communities to protect local landscapes. These may be small or large, but they represent places valued by the community.
- We are an expert resource that supports landowners and communities by providing information and expertise on conservation options, opportunities, challenges, and benefits.
- We build strong relationships with landowners and community leaders through outreach, and support efforts that are based on an understanding of local needs and concerns.
- We use conservation to connect communities to the landscape and to help communities and landowners reap the benefits of natural and well-stewarded landscapes in perpetuity.

Further, while LPLC undertakes project-based conservation on a place-by-place basis, each project is advanced in the context of broader, landscape-scale conservation challenges and opportunities. As such, LPLC’s work not only benefits individual properties, it supports natural resources and economies at the regional scale. It also allows LPLC to tailor its local conservation efforts to best support water quality,

wildlife habitats, and other values that transcend individual properties.

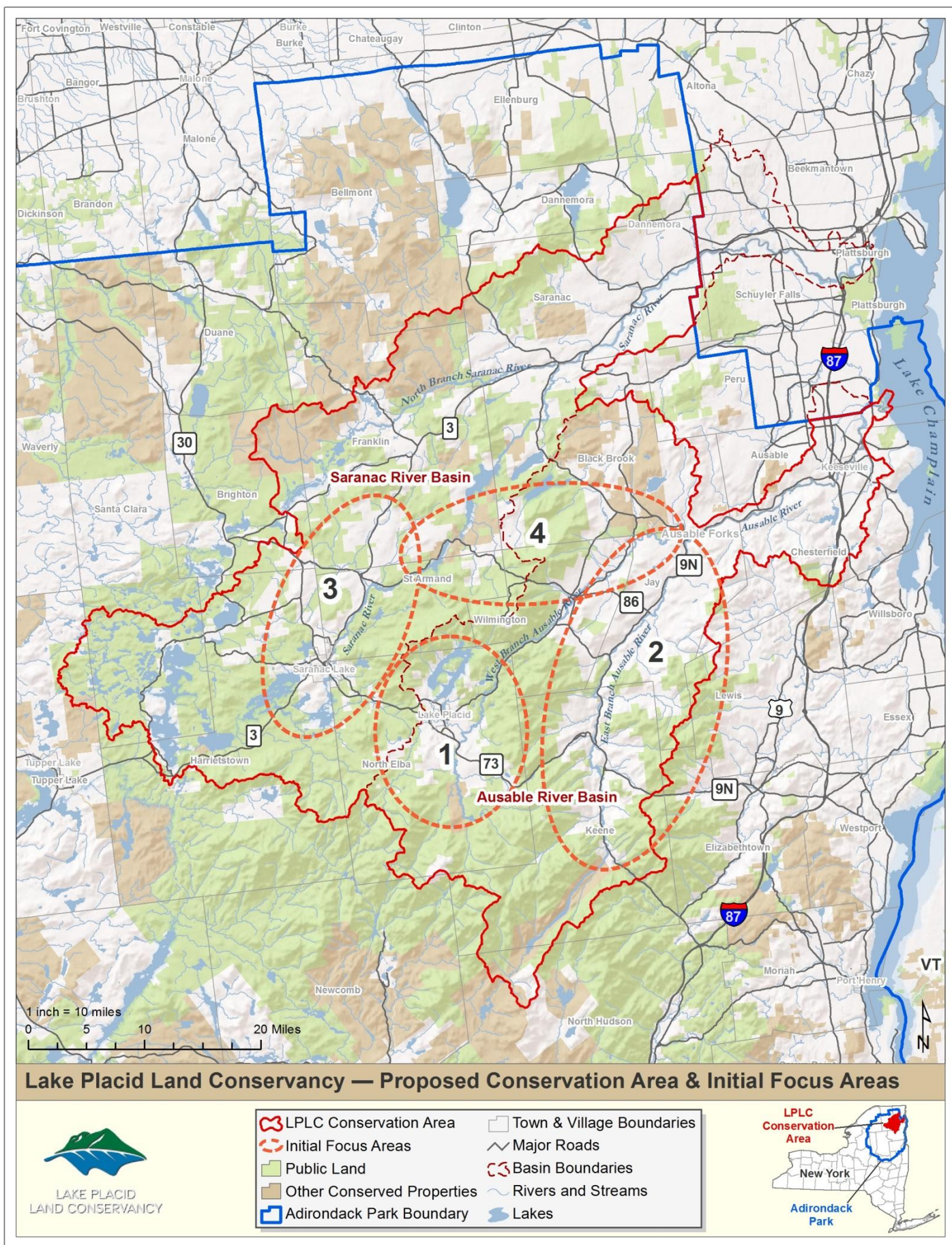
Where We Work

Recognizing that Lake Placid is part of a regional landscape and a regional economy, LPLC is committed to advancing conservation around Lake Placid and in neighboring communities. This broad vision enables us to fill a conservation need in the region and to better support communities and conservation of their natural resources.

LPLC works throughout the Ausable and Saranac River watersheds within the “blue line” that delineates the Adirondack Park. These large watershed basins support an array of economically diverse communities, scenic landscapes, wildlife habitats, farmlands, working forests, and wilderness. All are connected by the flow of water through the watershed basins’ streams, rivers, ponds, and lakes, which ultimately flow into Lake Champlain.

Within this large conservation area, LPLC concentrates its efforts within four focus areas:

- Lake Placid—around Lake Placid and the upper West Branch of the Ausable River
- East Branch of the Ausable River—the East Branch River Valley including the Route 9N travel corridor between Keene, Jay, and Ausable Forks, and also the Route 73 travel corridor from Keene Valley to Keene
- Saranac Lakes and Saranac River watershed—Saranac Lake north to Gabriels and Bloomingdale, including the Saranac River valley and the Route 86 and Route 3 travel corridors
- Wilmington West to Franklin Falls/Vermontville—along the Route 18A corridor and the Saranac River Valley to Franklin Falls



The watershed basins of the Ausable River (east and west branches) and the Saranac River compose LPLC's area of conservation interest (outlined in red). Private landowners own approximately 136,643 acres within the focus areas (white areas outlined by orange dashed lines). Green and brown areas depict existing, conserved lands.

Strategic Plan Highlights

Our strategic plan is composed of four interdependent goals that collectively allow LPLC to be a positive, successful conservation resource in the Adirondack Park. The four goals clarify our vision for the organization's future and provide guidance that will help us make strategic decisions as opportunities and challenges arise.

Goal 1—Conserve Land

As a land trust, LPLC's work is centered on land conservation. Yet conservation is more than just protecting the views, habitats, and water of local landscapes. Our long-term success requires building strong connections and local support within communities throughout the watershed basins of the Ausable and Saranac Rivers.

Goal 2—Engage Communities

Outreach, whether through personal interactions, events and programs, or social media, is vital to LPLC's efforts to connect with landowners, community leaders, partners and supporters throughout the region. These connections allow LPLC to build its visibility and credibility, and to help communities conserve local landscapes. Outreach is also

important for building our member base and further strengthening LPLC's financial foundation.

Goal 3—Raise Resources for Conservation

LPLC's budget draws from three broad revenue streams: foundation and government grants, major donors (including board members), and other individual donors. These donors are critical to our success; continuing to expand our donor base not only allows us to conserve more land, it helps ensure that our work contributes positively to local communities.

Goal 4—Operate Efficiently and Effectively

LPLC conducts its business operations in accordance with nonprofit laws and in a manner consistent with the standards and practices of the Land Trust Alliance (LTA). Our strong board ensures that we meet these high standards by overseeing our operations, connecting us with landowners, community leaders, and interested residents, and more. To most effectively lead LPLC, the board is a blend of seasonal and year-round Adirondack residents from throughout the conservation area.

Our four interrelated goals support vibrant Adirondack landscapes and communities.



Strategic Plan through 2020

Conserving Land and Water Resources and Engaging Communities

Goal 1 Conserve lands and waters that contribute to the Adirondacks' distinctive sense of place and provide valuable community services.

Land conservation is the heart of LPLC's mission and the focus of our efforts. In addition to protecting land, water, scenery, and habitats, LPLC's land conservation work is vital to connecting landowners, communities, and donors to important local landscapes. The intent of LPLC's work is both to conserve land and to ensure that communities benefit from our efforts.

The first step in protecting lands is building strong relationships with landowners, often in areas with particularly high natural resource or scenic values. LPLC supports and partners with landowners by serving as an expert resource that provides technical insights into conservation options, challenges, and opportunities, and helps landowners make informed decisions about how to conserve their properties. Additionally, LPLC builds strong working relationships with local leaders and decision makers to learn and understand interests and concerns about land conservation in their communities.

LPLC collaborates with other organizations and research institutions to understand the distinctive natural resource and conservation values of our projects. These partnerships help ensure that our conservation efforts support natural resources regionally as well as locally.

Finally, stewarding properties is expensive. LPLC continues to strive to build its financial resources to ensure that properties are well managed in perpetuity.

Objective 1.1 Pursue conservation of land and water resources in LPLC's four focus areas.

Strategy A Initially protect land through donated conservation easements and the acquisition of fee lands that will be transferred to other entities, but allow for other conservation approaches as well, if resources are available.



Photo: Carl Heilman II

LPLC is committed to conserving land and ensuring that Adirondack communities benefit from our efforts.

Strategy B Focus conservation efforts on open space (including agriculture and forest lands), wildlife habitat, and public recreation resources.

Strategy C Develop distinct conservation plans for each focus area (based on input obtained through strategies outlined below under objectives 1.2 through 1.4).

Strategy D Concentrate initial conservation efforts in the Lake Placid focus area.

Benchmarks

- An average of at least two fee or easement projects are closed each year through 2018, with at least one in the Lake Placid focus area.
- Through collective land conservation and outreach efforts, LPLC staff has connected with enough landowners interested in exploring conservation options to support LPLC's annual land conservation objectives.
- Distinct conservation plans are developed for two focus areas by 2018.

Objective 1.2 Build relationships with landowners and provide support and expertise to help them protect their properties through easements or fee acquisition.

Strategy A Through actions by members of the board, engage and refer landowners to LPLC staff.

Strategy B Host periodic landowner workshops around existing conservation projects.

Strategy C Identify priority properties in the Lake Placid and East Branch of the Ausable River focus areas.

Strategy D Build positive relationships with landowners of priority properties.

Benchmarks

- Through actions by members of the board, LPLC has connected to one to three landowners each year.
- At least one landowner workshop about an LPLC project is held annually.
- Priority parcels are identified in two focus areas by 2018.
- Starting annually in 2018, at least five owners of priority parcels are helped to understand their conservation options.

Objective 1.3 Work with partner organizations to identify conservation projects that will yield strong regional benefits.

Strategy A Collaborate with partners to obtain and interpret regional natural resource information to guide LPLC's local conservation projects.

Strategy B Work with partners to identify potential LPLC conservation projects in the context of existing regional initiatives.

Benchmarks

- Regular meetings occur with The Nature Conservancy, Wildlife Conservation Society, Ausable River Association, Bark Eaters Trail Alliance, NYS Department of Environmental Conservation, Adirondack Park Agency, and appropriate research institutions to obtain and discuss new environmental data and insights for the Adirondack region.
- LPLC participates regularly in meetings of the DEC Region 5 Open Space Committee.
- LPLC regularly attends meetings of the Lake Champlain Basin Commission.

CONSERVING LAND AND WATER RESOURCES AND ENGAGING COMMUNITIES

Objective 1.4 Serve as an expert resource to support community land and water conservation decisions.

Strategy A Build strong working relationships with local leaders and decision makers, particularly in LPLC's four focus areas, to learn and understand local community interests and concerns about land conservation.

Strategy B Provide support services and expertise to help community leaders make decisions that foster protection of important natural areas and water resources.

Strategy C Showcase the values that conservation delivers to communities in language and terms that resonate with community leaders and residents.

Strategy D Obtain and interpret natural resource information to guide LPLC decisions and to help community leaders make fully informed decisions on land use issues.

Strategy E Identify critical natural resources in communities for potential conservation projects.

Benchmarks

- Working with board members and well-respected partner organizations, have face-to-face meetings each year with 10 to 20 Adirondack community leaders or community organizations (e.g., town elected officials, real estate attorneys, financial advisors, etc.).
- Conduct annual community values workshops for community leaders in two to three focus areas.

Objective 1.5 Protect water, habitats, and other natural resources on new LPLC projects.

Strategy A Work with partners to assess natural resources on new LPLC conservation projects.

Strategy B Craft legal instruments and policies that will help protect appropriate natural resource categories, including water quality and quantity on lands conserved by LPLC.

Benchmarks

- Partner organizations and research institutions participate in the assessment of one to two new LPLC projects each year.
- Natural resource information from partner organizations and research institutions is integrated into LPLC conservation decisions.
- Legal instruments necessary for protecting natural resources on fee and easement projects are in place by 2016 and support LTA accreditation requirements.
- Policies and processes necessary for evaluating and developing projects for potential fee and easement protection are in place and consistently used by 2016, and support LTA accreditation requirements.

Objective 1.6 Monitor all easements annually, document findings, and enforce restrictions.

Strategy A Help easement owners avoid violating easement conditions by maintaining positive relationships and providing expertise and advice on land use decisions.

Strategy B Monitor easements annually and work with landowners to resolve violations.

Strategy C Ensure sufficient resources are obtained to steward new conservation easements and fee parcels.

Benchmarks

- Monitoring results for all easements are documented annually.
- Easement violations are resolved as soon as possible.
- Easement owners understand their obligations and consider LPLC to be a partner and a resource that supports them.
- Stewardship polices are in place by 2017.

Goal 2 Grow public appreciation for conservation by connecting residents and visitors to natural areas, open spaces, and LPLC's conservation efforts.

In addition to helping landowners protect local landscapes in perpetuity, LPLC works within communities to connect residents and businesses to these lands, and to showcase the benefits that protected lands provide.

LPLC's outreach efforts take place through (a) one-on-one interactions, (b) one-time events, (c) communications such as electronic newsletters, social media, and web sites, and (d) more complex long-term programs. Until LPLC expands its staff capacity, the primary opportunities for current and potential supporters to interact with the organization will be through one-on-one interactions, electronic communications, traditional media outlets, and a limited number of events. One-on-one meetings will always be crucial to the organization's land conservation projects. Collectively, these outreach efforts are vital for meeting landowners, garnering community support, and building a strong donor base.

Most events and communications will likely have strong educational components, including informing potential supporters about LPLC projects and describing regional

conservation issues. As a 12-month organization, events and communications will be tailored to resonate with different audiences throughout the conservation area and at different times of the year.

LPLC's outreach will be defined collaboratively by staff and the education and outreach committee. These efforts will complement, and be coordinated with, fundraising efforts that are led by a development committee, whose focus will be on major donors.



Community engagement and support are critical to successful land conservation in the Adirondacks.

CONSERVING LAND AND WATER RESOURCES AND ENGAGING COMMUNITIES

Objective 2.1 Introduce residents and visitors to LPLC, and build the visibility and credibility of the organization throughout the conservation area, particularly in the four focus areas.

Strategy A Host annual educational events for community members (particularly potential donors and local supporters) to build a base of support for and connect residents to conservation projects, with an initial focus on the Lake Placid focus area and the East Branch of the Ausable River focus area.

Strategy B Work with traditional media outlets (particularly area newspapers and public radio) to increase the organization's visibility in the region and, in turn, to bolster its credibility.

Strategy C Use social and other electronic media (including a web site, email, and Facebook) to connect with supporters and provide an avenue for interested landowners and visitors to learn more about the organization.

Benchmarks

- At least one community event is held each year to cultivate local support for LPLC projects.
- "Conservation Minute" electronic newsletters are sent by email monthly and include articles prepared by board members, partner organizations, and research institutions.
- The LPLC email list has at least 500 working addresses by 2018.
- A Facebook page, and possibly other social media forums that help advance advocacy

for Adirondack land and water conservation, is in place by the end of 2016.

- LPLC receives favorable coverage at least four times annually in area media outlets, particularly public radio and newspapers.

Objective 2.2 Help communities think about land conservation in new ways and connect towns and people to water and places.

Strategy A Develop outreach efforts for individual land conservation projects that include engaging adjacent landowners and key community leaders.

Strategy B Conduct a series of community values workshops to (a) foster discussion of local conservation interests and concerns and (b) identify ways that LPLC can best support local values through conservation projects.

Strategy C Selectively work with local partner organizations on community-based projects such as trail maintenance projects, invasive species control projects, and natural history hikes.

Strategy D Develop outreach materials that draw people to locally important natural areas and showcase their benefits to communities.

Strategy E Develop an outreach program that enrolls interested landowners in a conservation program that helps lead them to serious consideration of permanent conservation measures on their properties.

Benchmarks

- A second staff member is hired by the end of 2017 to assist with community outreach efforts

- LPLC leads or participates in at least one community based conservation project each year.
- LPLC leads or organizes at least one workshop annually that explores local conservation issues, interests, needs, and concerns.
- LPLC leads or participates in at least one hike, fishing event, or other outdoor experience that brings people to conserved natural areas and showcases the value of conservation.
- LPLC has implemented a new outreach program by 2017 that enrolls landowners.

Operating Effectively and Professionally

Goal 3 Raise sufficient funds to advance and sustain LPLC's land conservation and community engagement efforts.

The core resources supporting LPLC's operations will continue to be, at least through 2018, major donors and grants from foundations and government agencies. Government and foundation grants will be particularly important for supporting new land conservation projects, especially outside the immediate Lake Placid region, while private donations will remain critical for both projects and operations.

LPLC will continue to build its base of individual donors. Beyond their financial generosity, donor involvement is very important for strengthening municipal support for project initiatives and fee land transfers to the state (and associated repayment by the state for these lands) and bolstering the organization's local visibility and credibility.

LPLC began in the Lake Placid area and continues to have a strong commitment to land and natural-resource

conservation there. Our work extends throughout the conservation area, however; projects in Lake Placid will continue to serve as pilots for projects in other communities.

LPLC's will fundraise through collaborative efforts of the board, a development committee, and staff. These efforts will complement, and be coordinated with, community engagement activities that are led by the education and outreach committee, whose focus is on increasing general donors and strengthening relationships with communities.

Objective 3.1: Raise sufficient funds to cover annual operating, stewardship, and land conservation expenses.

Strategy A Maintain the major donor base through personal contacts and materials that showcase the organization's vitality and effectiveness.

Strategy B Bring new major donors through collaboration of LPLC staff and board members.

Strategy C Create a dedicated development committee that meets regularly and leads fundraising activities with the executive director.

Strategy D Increase annual revenues to fund an additional staff person for outreach efforts.

Strategy E Secure contributions from major donors to build the revolving fund through collaborative efforts of LPLC staff and board members

Benchmarks

- Operating budget revenues meet or exceed expenditures each year.
- Annual operating revenues are doubled to \$200,000 by 2017

OPERATING EFFECTIVELY AND PROFESSIONALLY



The generous support of private donors is a core strength of LPLC. LPLC holds an easement on Intervale Lowland on the West Branch of the Ausable River, donated by a private landowner.

- The revolving fund doubles by the end of 2018 to \$300,000.
- The donor list increases from 100 to 500 by 2020.
- 100 percent of board members make financial contributions each year.
- LPLC staff and board members collaborate to hold at least one dedicated fundraising event each year to cultivate relationships with major donors and potential land donors.
- A development committee that works closely with the education and outreach

committee is created after a second staff person is hired.

- The organization has cash on hand to cover expenses 12 to 15 months out.

Objective 3.2 Actively pursue grants from foundations and government agencies to support land conservation and community outreach projects.

Strategy A Submit grant proposals to foundations and government agencies.

Benchmarks

- LPLC is awarded new grants each year consistent with programmatic and

organizational goals and objectives of the strategic plan.

operating budget, with clear details about which revenue sources will fund them.

Objective 3.3 Foster a sense of inclusion among supporters that bolsters their commitment to LPLC.

Strategy A Assess the legal requirements and benefits of different membership structures.

Strategy B Become a formal membership organization or institute an alternative structure.

Strategy C Acknowledge the contributions and consistent support of regular donors.

Benchmarks

- By 2017, LPLC has adopted a membership or alternative structure.
- All donors are thanked, preferably by a board member, within one month of their contribution being received, and acknowledgements for tax purposes are sent promptly.

Objective 3.4 Ensure financial planning and reporting tools allow for prudent financial management and decision making.

Strategy A Develop specific budgets for each land conservation project so the projects do not negatively affect operating revenues.

Strategy B Develop annual work plans and budgets for each program area and cost center.

Strategy C Annually develop a fiscal year budget and 5-year plan.

Benchmarks

- All land conservation projects have budgets developed and funded separately from the

- The board passes an annual budget prior to the beginning of a new fiscal year.
- The board annually passes a 5-year plan prior to the beginning of each fiscal year.
- Quarterly financial reports are prepared.

Objective 3.5 Increase the stewardship endowment fund and create a stewardship legal defense fund with sufficient returns to cover the costs, in perpetuity, of annual monitoring, annual insurance, and any needed legal defense of conservation easements.

Strategy A Work with respective landowners to establish a stewardship endowment fund for each new conservation easement with returns sufficient to service annual monitoring costs and legal defense insurance premiums.

Strategy B Work with respective landowners to establish a stewardship legal defense fund for each new conservation easement with returns sufficient to cover the costs of legal defense.

Benchmarks

- Policy is in place to determine the cost of individual conservation easements endowments by 2017.
- Policy is in place detailing the development of a legal defense fund by 2017.

OPERATING EFFECTIVELY AND PROFESSIONALLY

Goal 4 Operate effectively and professionally in accordance with the highest standards.

As a nonprofit organization whose work is made possible by the generosity of supporters, LPLC operates with the highest professional standards—including those required by the IRS and for accreditation by the LTA. Our board of directors ensures that LPLC meets these high standards. In addition to generously supporting the organization through their work, financial support, and wisdom, board members bring LPLC a diversity of experiences, perspectives, and professional acumen that are critical for building a successful land trust.

As the LPLC grows and becomes an established conservation resource in the region, the board of directors will be composed of a blend of seasonal and year-round Adirondack residents who reside throughout the conservation area. This broad representation will help LPLC effectively work in and support local communities and build its base of local support.

In addition to governing the organization, board members play an important role in connecting LPLC to landowners to advance land conservation efforts, to community leaders to build support for the organization, and to interested residents to bolster the organization's visibility and credibility.

Objective 4.1 Govern the organization, ensuring due diligence and good decision making, through active board member participation in full board meetings, committee meetings, and other organizational activities.

Strategy A Explore telecommunication options that will help board members participate productively in meetings that they cannot attend in person.

Strategy B Structure committees and committee meetings so they capture the interest of board members and deliver needed services to the organization.

Benchmarks

- All board members consider their involvement to be meaningful and productive.
- Board meetings have at least 80 percent participation.

Objective 4.2 Board members open doors to potential land donors, major donors, and communities throughout the conservation area.

Strategy A Actively identify and engage potential new board members who can represent a variety of interests and perspectives from the full conservation area, particularly communities within the four focus areas.

Benchmarks

- A board recruiting and retention plan is implemented by the end of 2016.
- Board members are a mixture of seasonal residents and full-time residents who live in Lake Placid and other communities in the region, including public officials, community leaders, and persons elected by broad membership of the community.

Objective 4.3 Achieve national accreditation from the LTA.

Strategy A Hire a consultant in 2017 to assist with the accreditation process.

Strategy B Prepare required documentation through board and committee meetings.

Benchmarks

- Application for LTA accreditation is submitted by 2018.



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*Photos on pages 1, 4, and 8 - David VanLuven, VanLuven Environmental
Cover photos and page 5 photo – Carl Heilman II*