



LOON ECHO LAND TRUST

2022-2026 STRATEGIC PLAN



**APPROVED
6/15/22**

**REAPPROVED
6/18/25**



MISSION STATEMENT

Loon Echo Land Trust protects land in the northern Sebago Lake region of Maine to conserve its natural resources and character for future generations.

Adopted in 2009

INTRODUCTION

Land conservation is a powerful tool that influences both natural and human built environments and systems. Now in its 35th year, Loon Echo Land Trust (LELT) manages 8,000 acres of land, 32 miles of recreational trails, and accommodates over 60,000 annual visitors. These lands and trails support a range of ecological and economic services including carbon sequestration, habitat for wildlife, and drinking water protection.

Since 1987, LELT has helped communities overcome land-use challenges at a local level. Indeed, LELT's conservation work has been made possible by grassroots, community-supported efforts to protect and secure access to this region's most beloved natural resources. **But we are now learning, and witnessing, that local conservation efforts can influence how communities grow, adapt, and respond to threats and needs at a regional and global scale.**



INTRODUCTION (CONTINUED)

Land trusts are uniquely positioned to operate across this local-global spectrum. To accomplish our land conservation mission in this context, LElt will incorporate science-based, emerging models for environmental and community well-being. To do this, we will focus the outcomes of our conservation work on four core concepts:

- Responding to climate change mitigation and adaptation;
- Improving access and relationships;
- Seeking and facilitating collaboration;
- Demonstrating leadership through learning and organizational development/change.

While our organization has access to financial and technical resources to forge ahead, we must not do so unilaterally. Like any tool, conservation can cause damage if not implemented with sensitivity to the many moving parts of human and natural systems.

To build and sustain organizational sensitivity, **LElt will strengthen relationships through reciprocity, collaboration, and accountability by listening to and learning from a diversity of local, regional, and global voices and perspectives.** In this way, we intend to escalate the pace of land conservation in Maine while at the same time limiting [unintentional consequences](#) that can cause harm and alienation.

Lastly, LElt believes that in order to build a foundation for the next 35 years of conservation work, **we must sustain an organizational culture that supports our professional staff, develops equitable practices, learns and responds to inequities, embraces change, and promotes innovation and emerging trends in land conservation.** In doing so, we intend to fortify an already strong foundation in preparation for new challenges, opportunities, and solutions.



STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

1. Provide access to land that sustains communities, individuals, and economic & ecological functions, for the benefit of all Mainers, visitors, and global citizens.

- Pursue [climate change mitigation](#) and natural resource resilience as a lens through which to prioritize land protection and management strategies.
- Support and facilitate forward-thinking and [emerging land-use planning and community development strategies](#) by providing resources, materials, and access to information and land.
- Increase access to conservation lands and programs for all people, regardless of ability, economic or social situation, through the development of programs that broadly and specifically respond to infrastructure upgrades, transportation needs, workforce development and housing.
- Build relationships with and be responsive to [Black, Indigenous, People of Color, and economically disadvantaged communities](#) who have historically lacked access to conservation and its benefits.

2. Expand the impact of our work by investing in strategic partnerships, collaborative programs, and organizational mergers.

- Pursue [collaborative models for funding](#) and investment in conservation and communities.
- Leverage partnerships, collaborative programs, and [organizational mergers](#) to build the structural capacity needed to achieve key strategies and success metrics.
- Align organizational and staffing structure to maximize our impact, ensure effective governance, and attract and retain highly qualified professionals.
- Pursue funding of and investment in this strategic vision.

3. Cultivate and repair relationships between conservation work, the land, and the people and communities that benefit from it and who have historically not benefited from it.

- Improve conservation outcomes by identifying and connecting with allies and mentors who can help build, repair, and nurture relationships that expand the community of conservation practitioners.
- Be a vocal advocate for public policies that support equitable access to land and natural resources.
- Develop collaborative programs across thematic and geographic priority areas to achieve greater awareness and visibility for conservation outcomes.
- Consider how our composition, network, and those engaged in our work align with the demographics of the region as a whole.
- Represent organizational values in marketing, promotion, and communications about our work. Ensure accessibility of our programs and communications by incorporating evolving and emerging best practices.

4. Support staff, Board members, other organizations, and individuals with good equity practice to build a community that can respond to the values and needs of current and future generations of Mainers and global citizens.

- Provide access to the process and structure of our work by maintaining and expanding the Board, committees & advisory groups, and creating opportunities for community input.
- Incorporate equity practice as both a process and outcome in our land protection and management work, as well as in our governance, leadership, and staffing structures.
- Strengthen the capacity to meaningfully engage with organizational equity topics by prioritizing learning and understanding over agreement and consensus.
- Challenge assumptions about conservation and non-profit governance.