



NORTHCOAST REGIONAL LAND TRUST

Strategic Plan 2021-2025

Vision:

A sustainable community with a vibrant economy, resilient and productive landscapes and clean, abundant water.

Mission:

The Northcoast Regional Land Trust is dedicated to the protection and economic viability of working landscapes, farms, forests, and grazing lands, and to the preservation and protection of land for its natural, educational, scenic and historic values. We work with landowners on a voluntary basis to promote stewardship of Northern California's healthy and productive resource base, natural systems and quality of life.



Introduction

The Northcoast Regional Land Trust represents a community that cares about its land, water, and quality of life. With a geographic focus in Humboldt, Trinity, and Del Norte Counties, our organization is committed to the conservation and responsible stewardship of land in northwestern California, including the protection and restoration of healthy wildlife habitats, water quality, and biodiversity. We support not only the long-term economic vitality of our communities, our working lands, and our agricultural producers, but also an increasing reliance on local resources and the production of healthy local food. We promote a land ethic that involves people caring for land and water, respects long-term relationships to the land, and supports land-based livelihoods.

Inherent in our work is a spirit of collaboration; we lead by bringing diverse community members together to work towards a sustainable future for our region. By seeking common ground, understanding shared goals, and acting on points of agreement, we maintain valuable relationships and reach out to build new partnerships to preserve the places and the livelihoods our community values so deeply.



This strategic plan is an update of a five-year plan originally developed in 2010 and updated in 2015. It considers progress made towards our original goals and objectives, lessons learned in the process, and our current understanding of the challenges and opportunities before us. Each section of the document includes themes, goals, and activities. Themes are overarching, goals are the results we are hoping to achieve, and activities are the means by which we hope to achieve those goals.

Our mission is supported by work in three areas comprising our programmatic and organizational priorities. This document is organized accordingly based on these three themes:

- 1) Leading in Land Conservation and Stewardship in the Region**
- 2) Building Community for Conservation**
- 3) Increasing Organizational and Financial Sustainability**

This Strategic Plan is intended for use by the Northcoast Regional Land Trust, our conservation partners, our supporters, and others interested in the work of the organization.

Theme 1 - Leading in Land Conservation and Stewardship in the Region

Goal 1.A: Continue to build a network of conserved farmlands, rangelands, and forestlands that support the long-term ecological and economic functionality of the region.

Activities:

1. Initiate conservation planning, policy advocacy, and landscape-level coordination of project work towards achieving NRLT's mission and vision.
2. Complete at least three conservation easement projects that protect wild and working landscapes in northwestern California.
3. Consider the strategic acquisition of properties that represent both ecological and working land values, and develop a comprehensive management plan for any acquisition, along with plans for possible divestment.



Goal 1.B: Protect, preserve, enhance and/or restore unique habitats and biological resources comprising important elements of the region's natural diversity.

Activities:

1. Complete conservation easement and fee acquisition projects that protect unique plant and wildlife habitats.
2. Develop a conservation easement for and strategically divest of NRLT's Martin Slough property.
3. Support conservation easement development and strategic divestment of NRLT's McNamara Dairy property, ideally as part of a Redwood Creek estuary restoration project.

4. Engage in habitat restoration, groundwater recharge, and/or streamflow enhancement projects.



Goal 1.C: Build partnerships, broaden networks, and steward existing relationships with individuals, agencies, and organizations in order to leverage resources and attain shared conservation goals.

Activities:

1. Seek input from other organizations, government agencies or individuals with expertise that will benefit the projects and programs we work on.
2. Collaboratively develop projects that model innovative forms of land management and integrate ecological and production goals such as fuels reduction, carbon sequestration, water conservation, oak woodland rehabilitation, and restoration of land and watersheds degraded by cannabis cultivation.
3. Collaborate with local partners to plan responses to long-term ecological challenges such as sea level rise, fire, drought, climate change, and related impacts.
4. Support local land trusts and other community organizations, especially to those without paid staff or with limited resources, by providing information and other pertinent resources.
5. Seek opportunities to engage with tribal groups and a broad cross-section of community organizations on conservation and restoration projects.

Goal 1.D: Engage in policy and support initiatives relevant to NRLT's mission.

Activities:

1. Contribute to discussions about policy and planning in our region that relate to our mission or may impact the conservation values we seek to protect.
2. Write letters of support for relevant funding mechanisms and programs.

Theme 2 - Building Community for Conservation

Goal 2.A: Build credibility, recognition, and broad support for NRLT's mission and programmatic priorities.

Activities:

1. Provide regular media communications that inform and educate the community about conservation, stewardship, and noteworthy NRLT activities and accomplishments.
2. Implement regular outreach activities and services that convey the economic, environmental and social benefits of NRLT's work.
3. Develop compelling narratives, images, and experiences that articulate both the scope and significance of NRLT's work.
4. Maintain a professional and engaging social media and online presence.

Goal 2.B: Create information sharing opportunities among landowners and local community members of the ecological and social benefits of wild and working landscapes.

Activities:

1. Develop, maintain, and provide informational material for landowners and other community partners interested in conservation easements.
2. Provide workshops tailored to the needs and interests of landowners including topics such as conservation, stewardship, and financial and estate planning options.
3. Provide workshop and other outreach activities throughout the entire three-counties region, taking into consideration areas not typically served.
4. Consult with interested landowners about conservation options with NRLT and with NRLT project partners.
5. Provide volunteer opportunities for individuals and groups to participate in land stewardship and biological monitoring activities.
6. Provide opportunities for members of our community to connect with the land including educational field trips, interpretive walks, and on-the-water experiences.



7. Link private landowners to information, programs and services that can help them conserve and steward their land and water.
8. Strategically engage in and, as funding allows, seek opportunities to conduct landowner and community engagement processes similar to the North Coast Dialogues project (2008).

Goal 2.C: Continue to improve Freshwater Farms Reserve to make it a place where all visitors feel welcome and can connect with a wild and working landscape.

Activities:

1. Continue to invest in Freshwater Farms Reserve as an ambassador landscape to help connect people to our mission, broaden communities served, demonstrate the compatibility of agriculture and habitat restoration, and raise support for the organization's overall work.



2. Continue to work with key partners such as diverse community groups, agencies, and lessees to further develop the property as a welcoming and inclusive community resource that demonstrates the compatibility of agriculture, wildlife habitat, and public use.
3. Utilize Freshwater Farms Reserve as a research location and learning site for all ages, providing a range of educational experiences including the topics of land management, habitat restoration, and sea level rise around Humboldt Bay.
4. Utilize Freshwater Farms Reserve and its wet weather classroom for environmental education field trips for local school age youth.
5. Continue to improve and maintain physical infrastructure so that the property is safe, secure, and can otherwise support the multiple uses envisioned.
6. Generate revenue through facility and pasture rental and continue to build revenue generation from activities and uses compatible with NRLT's mission towards the goal of being, at a minimum, revenue neutral.

Goal 2.D: Broaden NRLT’s community of support.

Activities:

1. Engage the diverse communities we serve by providing varied and accessible educational, recreational, and volunteer opportunities.
2. Develop educational materials that reflect local cultural values, practices, and traditions.
3. Participate in land trust consortia such as California Northern Region Council of Land Trusts (NRC), California Council of Land Trusts, and Land Trust Alliance.



Goal 2.E: Foster a climate of diversity, equity, and inclusion within the organization and in NRLT’s engagement with the community.

Activities:

1. Consider diversity, equity, and inclusion in NRLT projects and programs.
2. Provide training opportunities for staff, board members, and advisors focused on bias and privilege.
3. Lay the groundwork for a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Plan using resources from the Northern Region Council and other land trusts.

Theme 3 - Increasing Organizational and Financial Sustainability

Goal 3.A: Support and maintain an engaged, capable Board of Directors and organizational Advisors.

Activities:

1. Annually review and maintain a board of directors and organizational advisors that represent a balance of diverse perspectives from throughout the region.
2. Recruit community leaders with desired expertise and interests as new and potential board members, advisors, and committee members.

3. Educate and inspire board members and advisors through regular opportunities to learn about NRLT's work.
4. Establish internal mechanisms that support board members and allow them to be actively involved and achieve their commitments.
5. Provide regular training opportunities to the board of directors, advisors, and committee members to increase their overall knowledge of NRLT activities, build governance and fundraising skills, and keep current on working land conservation tools, trends, and funding opportunities.



Goal 3.B: Support, retain, and recruit a high-quality professional staff.

Activities:

1. Maintain detailed position descriptions and work plans.
2. Provide staff with opportunities to be creative within their respective work plans.
3. Maintain open communication and foster ongoing opportunities for dialogue between the Executive Director and staff related to performance, workload, and project tasks, including through monthly staff meetings and annual evaluations.
4. Annually assess and provide competitive wages, benefit packages, and reward staff for their positive contributions.
5. Empower staff to move programs forward and provide timely review and decisions for program implementation.



6. Assess staffing levels and capacity on a regular basis (e.g. quarterly) in order to maintain realistic workloads and expectations of staff.
7. Assess staff training needs annually and provide staff members with professional development opportunities.
8. Establish and maintain clear policy directives for staff.

Goal 3.C: Maintain internal processes that foster organizational focus, effectiveness, and stability.

Activities:

1. Update NRLT's Strategic Plan in conjunction with the Regional Action Plan and Fund Development Plan at least every five years and review annually to ensure that NRLT programs are well-coordinated, mutually complementary and effective in meeting specific program goals as well as the overarching goals of the organization.
2. Develop an annual Work Plan consistent with goals set forth in NRLT's Strategic Plan, Regional Action Plan, and Fund Development Plan.
3. Maintain Land Trust Alliance (LTA) accreditation; ensure alignment among NRLT Standards & Practices, Land Trust Alliance Standards & Practices, and Land Trust Accreditation Requirements annually; and implement the required policies, practices, protocols, and documentation.
4. Review bylaws and governing documents annually.
5. Develop and maintain strong internal controls to support adequate financial management procedures and policies.
6. Maintain institutional memory through thoughtful recruitment and maintenance of NRLT's board of directors and advisors.



Goal 3.D: Increase financial capacity to support the organization and its programmatic priorities.

Activities:

1. Maintain diverse funding sources (e.g., individual donations, government grants, private foundations, and fee for service contracts) so as not to become overly reliant on one revenue source.

2. Update NRLT Fund Development Plan every five years in conjunction with the Strategic Plan and review annually.
3. Annually assess NRLT's fee for service rate and structure.
4. Emphasize fund development as a core staff and board activity.
5. Develop the capabilities of, and a culture of fundraising in, the board of directors and staff to lead major fundraising efforts.
6. Emphasize long-term relationships in all efforts to raise funds.
7. Achieve 100% board giving with each board member annually contributing a personally significant cash gift to NRLT.
8. Conduct financial planning and secure resources as needed to provide for the long-term stewardship and legal defense of each NRLT conservation easement or land acquisition project.
9. Maintain and improve the necessary facilities, infrastructure, and resources for staff to implement programs in a professional manner.