



**Kennebec Land Trust
2019 Strategic Plan Update
Approved by KLT Board of Directors ~ September 11, 2019**

Overview of Past Accomplishments and Future Directions

In 2019 the Kennebec Land Trust (KLT) celebrated its thirty-first year of conservation work in the Kennebec River and Lakes Region. Thanks to the generous contributions and support of more than 1,100 household members and business partners, dedicated volunteers, board members, and staff, we have experienced three decades of significant growth and have developed a reputation as a conservation leader in our 412,000 acre service region. We have received state-wide and regional recognition and awards for our dedication to conserve land for its many community benefits including public use and recreation. KLT has always been, and always will be, committed to taking care of the lands we conserve.

KLT achieved national recognition from the Land Trust Alliance Commission in 2018, joining a network of over 400 land trusts across the country to be accredited for demonstrating their commitment to professional excellence, to maintaining the public's trust, and to profiling the many community and public health benefits of land conservation.



View from the Mount Pisgah Fire Tower to the NW,
Berry Pond & western Maine Mountains
Photograph: Brian Kent

Permanent land conservation and promoting land stewardship is at the center of KLT's mission. Since 1988, we have partnered with landowners and conservation partners in nineteen communities to protect more than 6,600 acres on over seventy properties through land donations, fee purchases, and conservation easements, and have constructed fifty miles of trails on KLT lands. We have developed and implemented management plans for each property that we own and have written baseline documents for every conservation easement. All of our conservation properties are monitored annually.

Our land conservation program is informed by a Strategic Conservation Plan which was developed in 2013 with support from the Center for Community GIS in Farmington, Maine. This science-based assessment, which is updated every seven years, guides the Trust's conservation planning work and provides valuable planning data to the twenty-one communities in our service area.

With a service area that is dominated by forestland, farmland, and the Kennebec River and its tributaries, we have also initiated partnership-based conservation strategies that link forestland conservation, sustainable natural resource-based economies, and climate change mitigation. In 2009, KLT was a founder, along with the Maine Forest Service (MFS), of the Kennebec Woodland Partnership (KWP), a regional conservation initiative with thirteen governmental and non-governmental organizations that promotes private and public woodland conservation and stewardship. This innovative, landscape-level initiative aims to keep forests as forests and to encourage long-term land stewardship and conservation in Kennebec County.



KLT President,
Kim Vandermeulen
Eastern River Preserve
Dedication May, 2019

In 2013, KLT, KWP, and three statewide partners (Coastal Enterprises, Inc., Maine Coast Heritage Trust, and GrowSmart Maine) launched Local Wood WORKS (LWW) with a mission to advance forest-based local economies and support the long-term conservation and sustainability of Maine's woodlands. The Nature Conservancy and the Northern Forest Center joined as partners in 2015. The LWW Partnership is committed to promoting greater use of locally-sourced wood and lumber as an efficient heating alternative to fossil fuels, a light-weight and strong construction alternative to energy-intensive concrete and steel, and a means to sustain a diverse and ecologically-rich forested landscape. The LWW Partnership has been supported by the Elmina B. Sewall Foundation since its inception.



Local Wood WORKS Partnership Meeting
CEI, Topsham, June, 2017

KLT offers many informative programs and publications that encourage visitors to learn about and enjoy Kennebec County's natural landscape. Since 2003, we have held an annual conservation lecture series (KLT Lyceum), during three consecutive weeks in March. On average, three hundred people have attended these programs and associated field trips each year. In 2009, KLT initiated a sustainable forestry education program for school students and the general public. This day-long workshop is held at KLT's 360-acre

Curtis Homestead Conservation Area, and has reached over 1,000 students, focusing on sustainable forestry, careers in forestry, land conservation, and wildlife and local history.

In addition to community outreach, the Trust offers a summer internship program for young emerging conservation leaders. Twenty-nine interns from nineteen colleges and universities have interned with the Trust since 2005. During their eight-week internship, the interns learn about trail building and maintenance; invasive species control; educational programming for school-aged children and property visitors; writing grant proposals; and conducting research focused on important conservation topics.

Nineteen volunteer board members, an advisory board of community and regional leaders, sixty volunteer land and office stewards, and four staff members support our operations. As of August, 2019, the Trust's staff includes a full-time executive director, one full time and one half time stewardship staff, and a full time membership and program director. A bookkeeper is on contract several hours a week. The Trust purchased a permanent home in 2013, moving

from a small rented space to an office with high visibility on Main Street in Winthrop.



Cabin Masters "Reveal"
Wakefield Wildlife Sanctuary October, 2018
Photograph: Sarah Fuller

Over the past ten years, in addition to on-going land conservation and stewardship projects, outreach and membership programs, and an ambitious 25th Anniversary Capital Campaign, KLT focused resources on three noteworthy projects:

- After an ambitious and lengthy \$1.2 million fundraising campaign, in 2017, we transferred the 164-acre Howard Hill property in Augusta to the City of Augusta; the City granted a conservation easement to KLT, ensuring that the property will be conserved in perpetuity for the benefit of Maine's people and wildlife. This transaction successfully completed an eight-year process undertaken by KLT designed to preserve forever, as open space, the wooded backdrop to the state's Capitol. 136 individuals, eight private and public foundations, and fifteen Maine businesses and non-profits donated to the Howard Hill Campaign. This permanently protected landmark is a unique natural, historic, and scenic forest of statewide significance. Howard Hill's immediate proximity to the Capital complex further enhances its public values and accessibility. This highly visible landscape will provide many opportunities to profile the community benefits of land conservation and sustainable forestry. This conservation property also offers many opportunities for year-round recreation including hiking, picnicking, cross-country skiing, nature observation, and hunting.



Howard Hill and Maine State House
Photograph; Norm Rodrigue ~



KLT Staff – 331 Main Street July, 2019
with Chase Morrill, Cabin Masters
Photograph: Tyler Keniston

- In 2017, with the bequest of the 120-acre Wakefield Wildlife Sanctuary from Kendra Wakefield, KLT acquired four historic cabins (circa 1895) and 4000 feet of frontage on Cobbossee Stream. Two of the four cabins were restored in 2018 by the Maine Cabin Masters and are now available to the public for rentals (first rental season, 2019). The cabins may be eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

- In 2019, after several years of project development, the research contributions of two summer interns (2016- Josh Caldwell and 2018-Jack Daly), and a generous \$150,000 donation from members Paul Kuehnert and Judith Graber, KLT purchased land for an eight-acre Conservation Burial Ground. KLT's Baldwin Hill Conservation Burial Ground in Fayette will be a natural cemetery that upholds best practices of conservation burial (as defined by the Green Burial Council). The Trust's cemetery will be part of a larger 90-acre KLT conservation property and is contiguous with 340 acres of KLT easement land. In developing this initiative, the Trust sought technical support and guidance from Maine State Soil Scientist Dave Rocque, funeral home businesses, the Green Burial Council, and community members. The KLT board of Directors will be establishing a 501c(13) Baldwin Hill Conservation Burial Ground entity that will oversee cemetery finances and manage a perpetual care fund. KLT will have full responsibility for the long-term care and management of the cemetery land and the surrounding conservation property.



View from Baldwin Hill Conservation Burial Ground
Photograph: Norm Rodrigue ~ October, 2019

Key Priorities, Capacity, Sustainability - Summary Points - 2019 Strategic Plan

KLT's directors, advisors, members and staff are proud of our past conservation and stewardship work, and in line with the vision of long-term growth laid out in our previous Strategic Plan, we are committed to increasing the organization's impacts on our region's environmental, economic, and cultural well-being.

- As we continue to acquire additional lands, at a pace that does not seem to be slowing, it is critical that KLT address stewardship capacity.
- The Trust's legal services and key areas of financial reporting and oversight are provided pro-bono. KLT needs to plan ahead for a time when future legal and CPA services may not be provided by volunteers; this will be a major change for the organization.
- KLT is addressing local and global climate change challenges through our land conservation program, forestland conservation and Local Wood WORKS partnerships, and through public outreach and education programs, it is critical that we continue to devote organizational resources to this issue.
- In evaluating new land acquisition projects we should consider lands that will build the financial and community capacity of the organization as well as protect important natural resources and community assets (for example Howard Hill, Surry Hill, and Baldwin Hill projects).
- Relationships with current and new members will continue to be one of the highest organizational priorities. The Development Committee, Theresa, Kirsten, Jean-Luc and Tyler and the Board are focused on this priority.
- If managing and renting the Wakefield Wildlife Sanctuary cabins is sustainable, this project has the potential to provide income for the Trust in the future.
- The Baldwin Hill Conservation Burial Ground will not in itself provide additional income for Trust operations, beyond covering the stewardship and operations costs of the land. However, the property, which will also feature KLT's first ADA accessible trail, will provide many opportunities to deepen our relationships with our members and our service area communities.
- Theresa Kerchner, KLT's long-time Executive Director, plans to retire sometime in the next five or six years. This leadership transition will provide opportunities for the Trust and possibly a few challenges.
- KLT should anticipate and be prepared to respond to inquiries about proposed uses of existing KLT conservation lands as well as future conservation properties, including some of the following uses: solar panel installations, community housing, community gardens, and



2019 KENNEBEC LAND TRUST STRATEGIC PLAN (SP)

September, 2019

Committee: Kim Vandermeulen, Chair;

Bob Marvinney, Matt Mullen, Janet Sawyer, and Theresa

Executive Committee (EX); Development Committee (DC); Board Stewardship Volunteers (BSV); Lands Committee (LC); Financial Oversight Committee (FC); Board: (B), President (P), Treasurer (T); Staff: (ED, SD, DM &P; SA, CA, Interns); Stewards (ST); Interns (I); Contractor (C).

KLT's Strategic Plans 2008-2014

- The original KLT strategic plan, (See Appendix 1) was adopted in 2008. This plan set goals and established an implementation process to guide KLT's work through 2012.
- The 2008 plan was reviewed and updated in 2014.

KLT's Mission Statement

- Originally adopted 1989 and revised in 2011: *The Kennebec Land Trust (KLT) works cooperatively with landowners and communities to conserve the forests, shorelands, fields, and wildlife that define central Maine. KLT protects land permanently, offers opportunities for people to learn about and enjoy the natural world, and works with partners to support sustainable forestry and farming.*

KLT Ethics Statement

Kennebec Land Trust Ethics Statement Approved by KLT Board of Directors February 10, 2016 We, as members of Kennebec Land Trust, dedicate ourselves to the protection of local, regional and statewide natural resources which contribute to the ecological, social and economic well-being of our communities. Our goals are established and our actions are taken with a long term vision for resource conservation. As private, non-profit organization, we have an obligation to provide a public benefit and therefore strive to avoid any conflict of interest or provide any private benefit to any of our Board members, members, or other individuals. We pledge to conduct our land protection and organizational activities under the highest professional standards and in accordance with the Land Trust Alliance's Standards and Practices. We acknowledge the trust placed upon us by our donors, landowner partners and the public by being fiscally responsible and by always considering our long term responsibility to the lands we protect. In addition, we pledge to foster open and productive relationships with our members, landowners, our conservation partners and the general public. We strive to undertake only those actions which enhance the reputation and credibility of the land trust community. We are committed to retaining an engaged and growing membership and a highly qualified staff and board. We work cooperatively with other land trusts, municipalities, governmental agencies, the business community, and other non-profit organizations to accomplish high quality, lasting conservation of important natural resources. In recognition of these ideas, our organization resolves to adopt this Statement of Principles as a guide to our continuing conservation work.

Introduction

KLT's Strategic planning is an ongoing process. We build on the past to plan for the future. KLT's long term success is measured by the following goals and objectives:

- KLT is a financially stable organization.
- KLT has an engaged and growing membership.
- KLT strives to conserve high value lands.
- KLT makes conserved land accessible to the public.
- KLT offers natural history and conservation education programs for all ages.
- KLT's land stewardship serves as a model in our communities.
- KLT partners with others to achieve shared conservation goals.
- KLT is highly regarded in our service area communities and in Maine.
- KLT retains a highly qualified and engaged staff and board.

The following Board Committees work to attain these goals:

1. Stewardship (Stewardship Committee)
2. Governance and Board Development (Executive Committee and Nominating Committee)
3. Land Conservation (Lands Committee)
4. Financial Sustainability (Development Committee and Financial Oversight Committee)
5. Staff Development and Human Resource Support (Ex. Committee)

GOAL 1:

Stewardship. Our staff, board, members, and our communities are committed to caring for the lands we conserve.

Measures of Success:

Stewardship staff and volunteers take care of KLT properties according to individual management plans.

STRATEGY 1-1: (SD, SA, SC, DM&P)

Our staff, stewards and volunteers care for our lands.

Actions:

1-1 A. We actively recruit, engage and retain volunteer stewards. **Ongoing action.**

1-1 B. A management plan for each property is developed and made available to stewards. Stewardship Director and Stewardship Assistant establish goals and objectives annually for each property, and work with stewards to achieve those goals and objectives. **Ongoing action.**

1-1 C. Stewardship workshops are held annually. Evaluation of the effectiveness of the current format is undertaken. New training opportunities are considered. **Ongoing action.**

1-1 D. Director of Membership and Programming works with SD to develop volunteer report with updated hours. Database of volunteers is maintained. **Ongoing action.**

1-1 E. Board stewardship volunteers provide professional support to staff (legal, forestry, education). When feasible and needed, board volunteers assist with stewardship projects, visit properties with volunteer stewards. **Ongoing action.**

GOAL 2:

Education. Our conservation and education programs align with our mission and build a community centered on appreciation of the natural world and open space.

Measures of Success:

We strive to offer relevant natural history, conservation, place-based learning, and outdoor recreation programs on KLT conservation properties for all demographics and KLT service area towns. Our education programs reach schools and other communities as well as our base of members. Participants will expand their knowledge, build skills and change their behaviors to positively engage with the natural world.

STRATEGY 2-1: (S)

The DMP develops education programs that are aligned with KLT's mission and strategic plan.

Actions:

2-1 A. Staff develops and evaluates education programs; Board members and volunteers assist with program implementation. **Annual action.**

2-1 B. Our mission is continually communicated to our members and our communities through a variety of media. **Ongoing action.**

2-1 C. DMP continues to offer and enhance sustainable forestry education programs such as school- based programs, Local Wood WORKS initiatives and workshops for forestland owners. **Ongoing action.**

2-1 D. We continually update the KLT website and other electronic and printed materials. **Ongoing action.**

2-1 E. Staff develops communication plan based on an assessment of the frequency, types and format of communications. **Annual action.**

GOAL 3:

Governance and Board Development. KLT has a responsive governing structure that efficiently attends to the needs and future of KLT. The structure of the Board allows for full engagement with the governance work. KLT follows LTA's accounting and financial standards and practices.

Measures of Success:

Board recruits high-quality members and effectively and efficiently provides leadership and governance to staff and membership in achieving KLT vision and sustainable growth. The Board has a broad range of representation and skills. The Executive Committee oversees Board education, nominations and policy review. The Board structure, composition and process allow it to focus on policy issues and fund-raising as well as improvement of the overall structure and processes of the Board. KLT conducts regular financial reviews.

STRATEGY 3-1: (EX)

The board recruits diverse, qualified and committed Directors.

Actions:

3-1 A. Executive and Nominating Committee establish nominating needs and procedures and bring recommendations to the Board. **Ongoing action.**

STRATEGY 3-2: (EX)

Board organizational structure supports governance and board development.

Actions:

3-2 A. The Executive Committee reviews existing by-laws and policies and makes recommendations to the Board for any needed amendment. **Annual action.**

3-2 B. Board members engage in bi-annual self-assessment led by the Executive Committee (Timeline: January-February of first year of incoming president). The Board uses these results to set annual goals and build its effectiveness. This information guides policy development and the solicitation of new Board members. **Bi-annual action.**

3-2 C. The Executive Committee takes responsibility for keeping the Board focused on governance and building the capacity of the Board. **Ongoing action.**

3-2 D. All Board members regularly participate in training programs-workshops on roles and responsibilities of nonprofit board members. Executive Committee monitors and identifies educational opportunities for Board members. **Ongoing action.**

STRATEGY 3-3: (FC)

KLT follows LTA's accounting and financial standards and practices.

Actions:

3-3 A. Board implements LTA Standards and Practice for Financial Management. **Ongoing action.**

STRATEGY 3-4: (ED, B)

The Board and staff prepare for Land Trust Alliance Commission national re-accreditation.

Actions:

3-4 A. Board and staff are familiar with Land Trust Accreditation Commission Standards and Practices. **On-going action.**

Note: KLT was accredited for the first time on August 1, 2018. Board and staff will work toward re-accreditation. The due date for the pre-application is September 2022.

GOAL 4:

Strategic Land Conservation. KLT has a strategic land conservation assessment that is updated at least every seven years.

Measure of Success:

The strategic land conservation assessment guides identification and assessment of all potential land and easement acquisitions.

STRATEGY 4-1: (LC, ED)

An organizational process is in place that implements the Strategic Conservation Assessment to maximize effectiveness of achieving KLT conservation objectives.

Actions:

4-1 A. Complete a GIS analysis of KLT's service area. Identify large (~ 200+ acre, (100 acre benchmark in some towns)) undeveloped parcels in the KLT service area. **Winter 2020.**

Note: In towns without GIS parcel data, this will take longer to complete.

4-2 C. Acquisitions are aligned with KLT Conservation Assessment. Staff and board use the Strategic Conservation data, maps and overall information to evaluate acquisitions and consider the alignment of acquisitions to municipal comprehensive plans.

Ongoing action.

guides t

STRATEGY 4-2: (LC, DMP, ED)

KLT identifies strategic partners for successful implementation of KLT Strategic Conservation Assessment and continues to participate in successful partnerships, including Local Wood WORKS.

Actions:

4-2 A. Staff and Board develop partnerships and identify potential partners and key contacts and keep a current list. **On-going action.**

4-2 B. KLT ED and DMP are actively engaged with the Local Wood WORKS partnership, an innovative statewide partnership that promotes forestland conservation and supports Maine's forest economy by strengthening regional markets and incentives for climate-friendly local wood products. **On-going action.**

4-2 C. To promote voluntary conservation activities by service area land owners, KLT will explore new opportunities for a land-owner stewardship and conservation recognition program. **On-going action.**

4-2 D. The DMP will encourage "municipalities and other entities to initiate community land conservation recognition programs." **On-going action.**

STRATEGY 4-3: (LC, S, ED)

KLT's Strategic Conservation Assessment (SCA) is evaluated and updated on a regular schedule.

Actions:

4-3 A. KLT Board re-evaluates Conservation Goals on a regular basis.

Every Seven Years.

4-3 B. KLT Staff and Lands Committee re-evaluate and revise KLT's SCA.

Every Seven years.

GOAL 5:

Financial Sustainability. KLT has a solid base of financial support that is diverse and meets our needs today and our vision for the future. KLT monitors and plans on a three-year cycle to ensure continued financial viability.

Measures of Success:

KLT, by way of its Treasurer and Executive Director, prepares each year a rolling three-year budget. This process allows KLT to have a comprehensive long term view of its financial performance.

STRATEGY 5-1: (DC, ED, C)

KLT has, and continues to develop, a diverse revenue stream.

Actions:

5-1 A. With annual KLT budget preparation, maintain a three year budget projection that lays the foundation for defining overall long term resource requirements, anticipated sources of revenue (dues, annual appeals, community partnerships, legacy gifts, endowment campaign, etc.) and the uses to which revenues will be applied: land acquisition, stewardship, education, membership development. **Ongoing action.**

5-1 B KLT will explore/develop additional revenue sources such as the Wakefield Wildlife Sanctuary cabins. **Ongoing action.**

5-1 C. KLT will continue working to fully fund its endowment. The initial ten-year plan, now in its fifth year, is to raise \$1,000,000. Upon completion of this goal by 2024, further goals will be establish to ultimately bring the fund to \$4,000,000. **Ongoing action.**

GOAL 6:

Human Resources. KLT attracts and retains skilled and dedicated staff and volunteers who reflect the values of the organization and can carry out the work of our mission.

Measures of Success:

All positions have explicit job descriptions and performance targets. It is critical that develop a reliable revenue source for our Stewardship Assistant position (currently half time, should be full time) and explore staff needed for administration of the Wakefield cabins and Conservation Burial Ground.

STRATEGY 6-1: (EX)

KLT attracts and retains qualified staff. HR functions are performed by the Executive Committee with assistance from others as needed.

Actions:

6-1 A. A job description for the Executive Director is in place and updated as needed. **Ongoing action.**

6-1 B. Executive Committee oversees annual review of Executive Director. **Annual action.**

6-1 C. Executive Director oversees annual review of all staff. **Annual action.**

STRATEGY 6-2: (EX, ED, DC, S)

Maintain a staffing plan that matches KLT needs and vision.

Actions:

6-2 A. The Executive Committee reviews staff and Board roles to determine appropriate assignment of responsibilities and tasks. It also researches staffing patterns in similar size-scope land trusts. **Ongoing action**

6-2 B. Executive Director, Stewardship Director, and Stewardship Assistant **discuss** proposed land conservation projects and assess additional stewardship responsibilities. Executive Director reports to President and full board annually and more often if needed. **Annual action.**

6-2 C. Update job descriptions and evaluation methods for current positions and develop job descriptions for new positions. **Ongoing action.**

STRATEGY 6-3: (S, B)

Volunteers have an important role at KLT in that volunteering develops loyalty and commitment to KLT, and in that the services provided by volunteers assist in both stewardship and office functions.

Actions:

6-3 A. Staff trains, supports and supervises volunteers. **Ongoing action.**

6-3 C. Volunteers are recognized annually. **Ongoing for stewards and some volunteers.**