



2025 – 2027 Strategic Plan

Who We Are

Since 2008, the Washington Association of Land Trusts (WALT) has been a unified hub for Washington's land conservation organizations. Our members are community-based, nonprofit organizations dedicated to the permanent protection and stewardship of land for the public good. Across the state, land trusts are at the forefront of work to safeguard a diverse and connected natural world, support a vibrant working-lands economy, broaden access to the outdoors, and foster an ethic of engagement with the landscapes that sustain communities. To date, our members have conserved well over a million acres of vital landscapes, and represent a community of staff, board members, supporters, and volunteers over 60,000 strong.

WALT unites these diverse champions as a collective voice for the private land conservation movement in Washington. We foster a thriving community of practice that amplifies our members' efforts - enhancing their collective scale, impact, and relevance.

Our Mission

The Washington Association of Land Trusts (WALT) increases the collective strength and excellence of the land trust community in Washington.

Our Vision

Washington's land trusts work together to ensure that vital landscapes are protected, restored, and cherished for future generations, and where people and nature thrive together.

Our Values

WALT is committed to the following values:

- Elevating a culture of integrity, quality, respect, and transparency
- Promoting a deep, collaborative, and responsive connection among our membership
- Pursuing ongoing self-reflection, candor, and learning about justice, equity, diversity and inclusivity in our work
- Developing effective partnerships across traditional boundaries to solve complex natural resource issues and provide new ways of thinking
- Promoting excellence and permanence in the protection and stewardship of conservation values



Our Opportunity

The need for collective action among Washington's land trusts is greater than ever before. In Washington, we must find ways to harness opportunities and momentum to achieve our long-term vision. We represent a hopeful solution to:

- Increasing conversion of keystone open spaces;
- Habitat degradation, wildlife shifts, and increasing fire and flood events in the face of climate change;
- Politics creating uncertainty for state funding for natural resource conservation efforts with the need for investment greater than ever due to rising cost of land and increased recreational use;
- Structural inequities in open space access and public health outcomes based on factors such as race, geography, and socio-economic status;
- Legal challenges to conservation easements resulting from individual ownership transitions and federal efforts that erode established statutes;

We have the skills and the momentum to overcome these challenges through bringing land trusts, other conservation partners, and communities together. Together we can:

- Capitalize on new tools available for fee simple conservation and meet greater demand for conservation easements;
- Give individuals and institutions a meaningful way to act on climate change;
- Build on the growing interest in conservation work and outdoor recreation;
- Advance efforts to make conservation work in WA more just, equitable, diverse, and inclusive;
- Use land trusts' unique way of bridging political divides to protect places that matter and generate greater support for long-term funding to care for lands;



Our Programmatic Strategy

In order to accomplish our mission and make progress towards our vision, the following four strategies and their supporting programs and projects will guide WALT's programmatic efforts on behalf of its member land trusts:

1. **Advocacy and Policy:** Serve as a strong collective voice on policies and programs that impact our state's lands and waters in the face of change.
 - a. Elevate WALT's profile, effectiveness, and impact as a leader in advocacy for conservation and as a trusted voice that influences agencies on policy implementation.
 - b. Sustain dedicated lobbying capacity to advance new state legislative policy and expand federal efforts to support and defend key conservation policies.
 - c. Develop new state funding programs to meet land trust needs and maintain stable funding for existing sources.
 - d. Cultivate more legislative and congressional champions for conservation through relationship-building with both state and federal elected officials.
 - e. Increase engagement of WALT member organizations in the legislative process and facilitate greater connections to key state agencies.
2. **Networking and Education:** Support a more dynamic, innovative, and diverse community of practice.
 - a. Facilitate opportunities for peer-to-peer engagement and learning with Land Camp 2026, trainings, regional meetings, and cohorts.
 - b. Provide consistent programming and affinity groups to help WALT and its members incorporate issues of justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion into organizational culture and practices, guided by WALT's JEDI Roadmap.
 - c. Support more partnership building between land trusts to set shared goals, support joint funding, and effectively address regional challenges.
 - d. Organize opportunities for land trusts to be at the ground floor of policy development through working groups and roundtables.
 - e. Help develop a pipeline of more diverse conservation staff and leaders through training, job board, and exploring collaborations with neighboring land trust state associations.



3. **Resources and Capacity:** Leverage new tools for members to build organizational capacity and impact.
 - a. Scale Pro Bono Legal pilot into a sustained program and advance work to secure specialized legal counsel for member organizations, including exploring ways to train the next generation of land trust lawyers.
 - b. Provide new shared services for common member needs (such as shared HR, IT, health insurance, planned giving, vendor directory, salary survey, etc.)
 - c. Empower land trust executive leaders with the support to succeed, including mentorship, training, coaching, and organizational management resources.
 - d. Develop a DEIJ Leadership Committee to guide prioritization of the roadmap and cultivate trained advocates within WALT member organizations.
 - e. Work with LTA to share about the power of WA land trusts' work with foundations and philanthropists, unlocking capital for all our members.
4. **Communications and Outreach:** Elevate the private land conservation movement by informing, engaging, and illustrating the key role land trusts play in a brighter future.
 - a. Increase reach of annual State of the Lands report *Groundswell* and other outreach materials to help demonstrate the public benefits of land trust work to decision-makers through storytelling.
 - b. Support the development of new statewide messaging tools that land trusts can easily adapt for their local needs.
 - c. Expand and deepen WALT's relationships with Tribal governments and organizations, environmental justice groups, and other conservation groups.
 - d. Invest in technology improvements to support communications goals and engage a broader audience of grassroots supporters.



Our Operational Strategy

In order to maintain a strong organizational capacity that continues to deliver value and respond to members, the following two strategies and their supporting programs and projects will guide WALT's operational efforts:

1. **Governance:** Build and strengthen an effective, collaborative, and inclusive organization.
 - a. Develop a clearer nominating and succession planning process for the WALT board that also prioritizes including a diversity of lived experience.
 - b. Maintain sufficient and sustainable staffing to achieve priorities and ensure WALT remains a fulfilling place to work and volunteer.
 - c. Develop processes that keep WALT's governance grounded in member needs and accountable to strategic goals.
 - d. Revisit expanded membership options (such as affiliate for non-land trusts) and sustain existing coalition membership.
2. **Financial Health:** Maintain and improve the financial health and sustainability of the organization through continued implementation of a strong business model that supports stable growth.
 - a. Maintain financially sound financial policies and fiduciary oversight.
 - b. Create a dedicated major donor program with help from board leaders.
 - c. Conduct strategic prospect research to identify unexplored foundations, individual donors, or other funders aligned with WALT's work.
 - d. Market WALT for long-term support from larger institutional funders and corporate sponsors.