



5-Year Plan Review

Note: For the purposes of updating the Plan, accomplishments since adoption have been inserted after each Strategy and list of Actions and are shown in blue.



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction – Page 3

**ACLT Mission Statement, Vision for ACLT in 2023, & ACLT's Vision for
Calvert County in 2023 – Page 4**

Management of ACLT Operations – Page 5

Land Acquisition & Preservation – Page 9

Land Management – Page 10

Science Committee – Page 14

Outreach & Membership – Page 17

ACLT FIVE YEAR PLAN
2019 – 2023
INTRODUCTION

This new Five-Year Strategic Plan, the sixth, builds on past plans to enhance ACLT's ability to achieve its mission.

ACLT and its partners have preserved 4,572 acres of forest, wetlands and fields to create the largest natural area in Calvert County. The Parkers Creek Preserve is visited by thousands of people annually and the popularity of our hiking trails continues to grow throughout the mid-Atlantic area. Researchers utilize the Preserve to determine baseline conditions given that it is the most undeveloped watershed on the western shore of the Chesapeake Bay in Maryland.

Through its implementation of the 2014-2018 Plan, ACLT has developed a larger presence in the Parkers Creek and Governor's Run watersheds and in the County at large:

- With the purchase of Holly Hill, ACLT and its partners have preserved 60% of the Parkers Creek watershed further assuring the protection of the watershed in the future.
- The creation of the Sustainable Calvert Network (SCN), of which ACLT is a member, could not have come at a more critical time. SCN has been working to increase funding for land preservation programs and to end the moratorium on new agricultural preservation districts. It has been proactive commenting on the new County Comprehensive Plan draft which will have a significant impact on land preservation programs. SCN also held a Rural Lands Forum and two Candidates Forums as a means to raise awareness of the importance of rural lands.
- The addition of the Science Committee has enhanced ACLT's stewardship by using research and testing to influence policy and management decisions in the face of impacts from invasive species, climate change, and humans.
- The Watershed Awareness Program promises to be an effective tool in increasing the appreciation for, and advocacy for, watersheds throughout the County and the region.

This Five-Year Plan calls for ACLT to embrace a leadership role in the long term conservation and stewardship of watersheds not only in Calvert County but all of Southern Maryland. This parallels the direction of our national member organization, the Land Trust Alliance. The mission of the Land Trust Alliance is "to save the places people need and love by strengthening land conservation across America". There are many places in our region that need to be conserved. By example, by leadership, and by collaboration, ACLT has the opportunity to help maintain fishable/swimmable waterways throughout our region, to provide good habitats for wildlife, to provide opportunities for young people of all ages to get access to wildlands and waterways, and to reduce the impact of climate change in Southern Maryland.

A summary of key new features in the Five-Year Plan are as follows:

- Embrace a leadership role in the long-term conservation and stewardship of watersheds in Calvert and Southern Maryland

- Address long term budget issues and staffing needs
- Advocate for re-institution of land preservation tools and increase Rural Legacy Areas
- Continue managing our preserved properties to maintain diverse and healthy ecosystems and evaluate long-term sustainability
- Inform land management practices with science conducted here and elsewhere
- Embrace and support our volunteers
- Connect more people (of all backgrounds) to the land and instill a conservation ethic.

ACLT Mission Statement

We promote land conservation and preservation throughout Southern Maryland. We preserve and conserve the natural and cultural resources of the Parkers Creek and Governors Run watersheds for the benefit of this and future generations. We provide environmentally sustainable public access to managed properties for educational, scientific, recreational and cultural purposes.

Vision for ACLT in 2023

ACLT is rooted in all aspects of land conservation and preservation¹ and connecting people to the land in Calvert County. It serves as an advocate for land conservation and preservation throughout Southern Maryland. It is a regional center for rural lands research and wildlife observation, appreciation, and protection. Aficionados value the well-marked, well-maintained deep woods trails. Robust and financially secure, the land trust and its members are able to convey the passion for land preservation and active land management, through art, music, verse, and sweat to build a conservation ethic. We are attentive stewards for the watersheds, serving as a catalyst for effective land conservation and preservation by means of alliances and partnerships with other nonprofit organizations, governmental entities, businesses, and a broad segment of the community. We represent the diversity (age, race, gender, and ethnicity) of our community in our membership and on our Board. We are proactive in welcoming everyone to be a part of ACLT.

ACLT's Vision for Calvert County in 2023

In 2023 our landscape continues to be characterized by forests, fields and farms and well-planned and diverse communities, surrounded by a healthy Patuxent River and Chesapeake Bay. Additionally, citizens are educated and active stewards of the land in all of the watersheds of Calvert County and their daily living is enhanced by the abundance of natural areas. More watersheds in Calvert County have a community of “friends” similar to that which made the effort to preserve Parkers Creek such a success. Seeds are sown to do the same throughout Southern Maryland.

¹ Land preservation is the reduction or elimination of the development potential of a property. Land conservation is related to the proper use of nature through active land management.

MANAGEMENT OF ACLT OPERATIONS

Goal: *To retain an effective and efficient operation, guided by the Standards and Practices set by the Land Trust Alliance, with adequate operating and capital funding resources, to carry out the mission and to achieve the vision of the ACLT.*

Strategy:

- **Provide adequate human resources, both volunteer and staff, for the organization.**

Actions:

- Before undertaking major new actions, determine whether adequate human resources and funding for same exist. If not, develop a plan to raise the necessary resources through the operating budget, a grant, volunteers or other means to ensure the resource is available to enable success.
 - *As ACLT has increased land ownership, the Board has expanded its capacity with volunteers buoyed by graduates of its Master Naturalist classes. Through 2019, it has also benefitted from a full-time member of the Chesapeake Conservation Corps (CCC). In 2020, ACLT added one more CCC member by contributing funding for the appointment. It is a very affordable way to secure more capacity for the organization.*
 - *The acquisition of a Capacity Grant in 2021 has enabled the ACLT to provide the resources needed for additional land stewardship, leadership in the Southern Maryland Conservation Alliance, exploration of new region-wide land uses (e.g., biking and water trails as well as expansion of the ACLT trail system), and fund-raising activities.¹*
- As the land under management increases, increase our human resource capacity accordingly.
 - *In 2021, the Board expanded its capital fundraising efforts to include stewardship funding for future staffing support. Stewardship funding is now a component of all land acquisition funding calculations.*
- As we commit more resources to outreach, increase our human resource capacity accordingly.
 - *As ACLT's outreach efforts have grown, so has its Outreach and Membership Committee. That has helped the Community Relations Coordinator expand our outreach to members and the community.*
 - *In 2022, a Donor Relations Coordinator position was created to provide support to the ACLT fundraising activities and relieve the Community Relations Coordinator of some of those responsibilities.. However, this staff resource can also provide assistance at special events as needed.*
- Conduct a review and analysis of current staffing vs. current and foreseeable needs to determine whether our existing paid staff and volunteers are sufficient to ensure operational and strategic success.



¹ The Capacity Grant is a 5-year matching grant sponsored by an anonymous donor. If ACLT raises \$100,000 in donations, the grantor will match those funds. The grant stipulates that the money be for used for increasing membership/member support, supporting the work of the Southern Maryland Conservation Alliance, expanding ACLT's capacity to address climate change on its lands, and connecting protected lands and communities throughout with accessways (hiking and biking trails and wildlife corridors).

- *In 2022, the Board and Executive Director looked at the most pressing staffing needs, recognizing the important role of conserving lands throughout Southern Maryland and the stewardship challenges brought on by climate change. It has implemented a plan which entailed hiring two new full-time employees which are funded by the Capacity Grant to address these needs. The addition of the part-time Donor Relations Coordinator has expanded our ability to solicit more funding support for our programs.*
- Implement a succession plan for the Executive Director and key staff and volunteer roles.
 - *In establishing a training program to build knowledge and capacity of the organization for Board members and staff, ACLT has implemented a succession plan for the smooth transition of leadership.*

Strategy:

- **Optimize our facilities to support our land management and outreach activities.**

Actions:

- Implement other facilities and interpretive recommendations of the Master Facilities Plan, as resources become available.
 - *During the Plan's implementation, the Board affirmed that our trail system was our most important form of infrastructure and resources have been allocated accordingly.*
 - *With the phased implementation of the Parker's Creek Heritage Trail (beginning with the Holly Hill barn), ACLT will be adding both interpretative panels along the trail and a dedicated section on its web site to tell more stories of the land, its people, and its wildlife.*
 - *In 2022, ACLT initiated a project to upgrade the visitor experience at the Double Oak and Southside barns by adding more educational materials (particularly for children) and information addressing climate change. The general appearance and functionality of the porches were also enhanced.*
 - *Also in 2022, ACLT initiated a project to upgrade its onsite communications with the installation of kiosks at both the North and South Side trail heads. The kiosks not only provide information about ACLT, but also education about ACLT's activities and nature. They also provide a more welcoming appearance at the trail heads.*
- Plan any capital fundraising efforts as needed to finance major facility changes approved by the Board such as a new or renovated office, a new pavilion at Double Oak or Holly Hill, a new entrance and parking area at Holly Hill, a Memorial area, major capital improvements to new trails or others.
 - *In 2021, the Board decided to expand its capital fundraising efforts to include stewardship funding. The Land and Stewardship Campaign addressed specific projects or needs so donors would know how their funds would be used and be encouraged to support these efforts. It seems to be a good model to follow for future facility projects as well.*
- Ensure that any needed major renovations to facilities are properly financed.
 - *During the past four years, the Board has been able to fund major projects with grants and donations, allowing them to be successfully completed. The Holly Hill Barn is a good example.*
 - *In 2022, a general upgrade of the exterior of the ACLT office at Double Oak was begun by volunteers using donated siding. This project will be completed in 2023.*

Strategy:

- **Maintain and enhance good governance practices.**

Actions:

- Include individuals with diverse backgrounds (e.g., race, gender, occupation, sex, age, geographic location, and long-standing members of the Calvert County community) in the pool of potential nominees for board vacancies.
 - *ACLT's Nomination Committee Charter was revised to prioritize diversity in its potential Board nominee pool. This action has yielded positive, ongoing results for the Board's composition.*
- Annually review the five-year plan and ACLT policies and make adjustments, as necessary.
 - *In compliance with ACLT's Governance Committee Charter, the Five-Year Plan and ACLT's policies have been reviewed and adjustments made (e.g., the revision to the Nominating Committee charter).*
 - *Further, Committees review their component of the Five-Year Plan annually to determine implementation status as well as changes in their operating procedures or recommendations for policy changes to the Board.*
- Operate the ACLT in accordance with LTA Standards & Practices with the goal to achieve and maintain national accreditation.
 - *This is an ongoing responsibility of the Governance Committee.*

Strategy:

- **Maintain adequate revenue sources and continually cultivate new sources.**

Actions:

- Limit growth of budget to no more than inflation plus 5% per year. Ensure that any budget proposed with growth in excess of this amount is thoroughly justified and discussed by the Board prior to approval.
 - *Taking into account the 16.9% inflation rate between 2019 and now, the growth of the ACLT budget has been modest – 19.3% over that period. Projects not anticipated in the budget have generally been covered by additional grant funding.*
- A decline in general operating grant income is anticipated during the time frame of this five-year plan. This issue will require significant Board attention. Adopt a Strategic Plan for Future Fundraising in 2019 and review and adjust it annually.
 - *Guided by an annual review and adjustment of operating budget needs, fundraising appeals have raised adequate resources to meet yearly operating costs.*
- Consider an action to seek grants, or a campaign for a permanent grant to endow a specific position or internship.
 - *Increased grant funding and the new Capacity Grant should provide adequate funding for the next four years. We have not been able to identify permanent grant funding; grants generally expire or have funding deadlines which preclude permanent (aka unlimited) timeframes for coverage.*
- Continue the goal of one new grant source per year, or a combination of new grant sources, in the amount of \$10,000 per year with assistance from board members in identifying potential foundation grant sources.
 - *This goal has been met but continues to be a challenge. In 2021/2022, ACLT's Land Manager has been successful in working with the Soil Conservation District to obtain grant funding under its jurisdiction.*

Strategy:

- **Derive 1/3 of total income from the endowment, 1/3 from foundations (or other alternative funding sources) and 1/3 from membership.**

Income Derivation:

For the four years 2019-2022, ACLT's sources of income have been as follows:

- *25% from endowment*
- *22% from grants/foundations*
- *47% from membership (appeals, memberships, events, and events)*
- *6% from other sources.*

The 5-year \$100,000/year Capacity Grant operates independent of the budget to allow ACLT to scale up to address bigger issues.

Actions:

- Consider opportunities for additional funding in conjunction with any potential new state acquisitions that would be managed by the ACLT.
 - *No recent efforts by the State to purchase land in ACLT's watershed have created funding opportunities for land management.*
- Publicize the Memorial Bench and Planned Giving Programs on the website and in the newsletter to meet Strategic Plan goals.
 - *Information about the Planned Giving Programs is on the ACLT web site and included periodically in the Watershed Observer newsletters. The hiring of the Donor Relations Coordinator will enable ACLT to further enhance communications about these programs to its members and the general public.*
- Continue to monitor and revise the Land Management Endowment goal, as needed, to fully fund land management obligations.
 - *ACLT includes stewardship funding for land management and overall ACLT operations in all land acquisition efforts involving a funding campaign,*
 - *The annual budget review process includes an assessment of funding available from the Land Management Endowment for these obligations and is a component in determining the stewardship component of land acquisition projects.*
- Initiate a capital fundraising effort to increase the Friends Forever Endowment to approximately \$2 million over the next 10 years.
 - *The Donor Relations Committee continues to look at options designed to increase the funding of this endowment. These efforts will now have the dedicated resources of the Donor Relations Coordinator. The current market poses challenges to investments as well as fundraising.*
 - *We note that each year that we do not have to draw allocations of endowment funds for the operating budget is like raising new money. Both help to reach the goal. For two of the past four years, ACLT did not withdraw all of the allocated money from the endowment funds. However, the stock market decline in 2022 eliminated the gains. A rebound in the market will, of course, reverse those notional losses.*

LAND ACQUISITION AND PRESERVATION

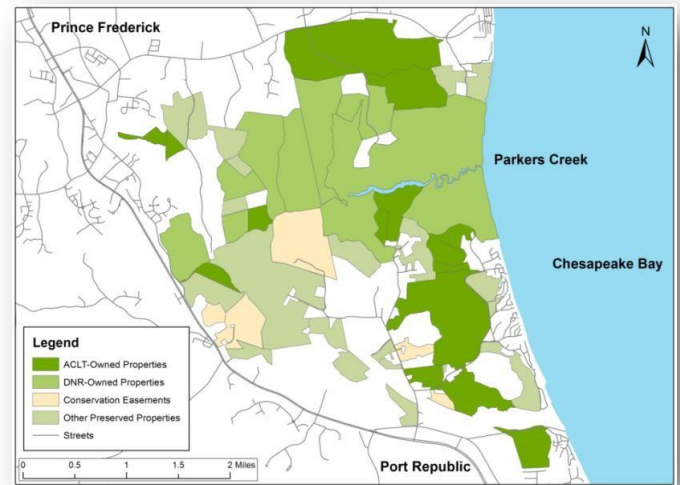
Goal: *To preserve land, according to our mission, in Calvert County through acquisition, easements and partnerships.*

Strategy:

- **Complete, wherever possible, preservation of remaining priority properties in the Parkers Creek and Governors Run watersheds.**

Actions:

- Utilize all available preservation programs such as the State's Program Open Space and Rural Legacy programs and the Calvert County Agricultural Preservation Program.
 - *The Land Acquisition and Preservation Committee continues to use all available tools to protect the remaining priority properties as they come available.*
- Continue to work with existing partners and seek new partnerships to preserve targeted properties.
 - *The Committee continues to work with existing partners. The hope is that the County Land Preservation will become active again in 2023 and there will be more options than just the Rural Legacy Program.*



Strategy:

- **Facilitate partnerships to support continued preservation in the county**

Actions:

- Work with county and state government and landowners to establish a greenway connection between the Parkers Creek and Battle Creek watersheds. Consider establishing a greenway connection to the Hunting Creek and St. Leonard Creek Watersheds.
 - *In 2022, ACLT began working on this action, in concert with climate change actions and with the help of the Capacity Grant.*
- Work with the Sustainable Calvert Network to develop a vision for preserved land in the county and to seek opportunities for joint efforts.
 - *In two Rural Lands forums, ACLT worked with other members of the Sustainable Calvert Network to establish this vision. This effort is now being enhanced by the work of the Southern Maryland Conservation Alliance to “re-envision” the region’s economy toward a green economy that includes ecotourism, fisheries, agri-tourism, and heritage tourism.*
- Inform landowners of remaining non-priority parcels of options for managing and preserving their land.
 - *ACLT staff will be reaching out to non-priority parcel owners in 2023.*
- Continue to work with the Sustainable Calvert Network and regional organizations to increase advocacy for land conservation in Southern Maryland and increase our presence in the region.
 - *ACLT is working with all land trusts and affiliate environmental groups to increase advocacy for land conservation in Southern Maryland.*

- Utilize the Watershed Awareness Program to increase the affection for, and advocacy for, specific watersheds.
 - *During this five-year period, ACLT has formed “friends” groups in Hunting Creek, St. Leonard Creek, and Mill Creek and we plan to host at least one more in 2023.*
- Advocate for re-institution of Calvert County land preservation tools and increase Rural Legacy Areas
 - *ACLT has continued to advocate for the re-institution of all county land preservation tools. Some were opened up in 2022 and we hope for the rest to open in 2023. Rural Legacy Areas were increased in 2022.*

LAND MANAGEMENT

Goal: *Manage all of the lands, structures, and waters for which we are responsible in an environmentally sustainable manner by which their natural and cultural resources are preserved, sustained, and enhanced to the maximum extent possible.*

Strategy:

- **Be effective stewards of ACLT owned and managed lands within the Parkers Creek and Governors Run watersheds, protecting both the natural and cultural resources of these lands and waterways for the benefit of current and future generations.**

Actions:

- Within one year of each new fee simple acquisition, ACLT inventories the natural and cultural features, develops an individual written land management plan that describes the resources in need of protection, identifies ACLT’s objectives for the property, and describes a process to implement the management activities recommended in the plan.
- ACLT maintains adequately marked boundary lines for its fee simple properties, regularly monitors (at least annually) each fee simple property for potential management problems, keeps a permanent record of its monitoring reports, and promptly takes action to rectify management problems discovered during regular monitoring visits.
- ACLT maintains an ongoing prioritized wish list of projects relating to invasive control, habitat restoration, trail maintenance, and cultural structure stabilization that can be performed by volunteers.
- ACLT requests boundary surveys during the acquisition process for future DNR acquisitions to be managed by ACLT.
- For each new conservation easement, a baseline documentation report is prepared prior to closing and signed by the landowner at closing to document the important conservation values and condition of the property at the time of acquisition.
- ACLT regularly monitors (at least annually) each property for which it holds a conservation easement, keeps a permanent record of its monitoring reports, and promptly takes appropriate enforcement steps in the event of any violation of the easement.
- Continue to reassess, document, and stabilize (slow the rate of deterioration) or restore the cultural resources on ACLT owned and managed lands in accordance with priorities that are established and periodically updated by the Land Management Committee.
- Maintain an Invasive Species Control and Containment Plan, including development of priorities and timelines, for both ACLT fee simple properties and DNR-owned properties managed by ACLT. Work cooperatively with DNR to implement the plan. As time allows, map invasives in order to assess priorities.

- Implement individual forest stewardship plans on ACLT-owned properties and work with DNR forestry and heritage officials to revise individual plans as they expire with watershed-wide ecosystem management policies in mind.
- Review management and enforcement issues on all DNR-owned properties with DNR on a regular basis.
- Land Management staff will utilize data collected from hunter sign-in sheets and any other data sources available to gauge the deer population and update the deer herd management program protocols as necessary.
 - *Completed annual monitoring visits for all 18 fee simple properties to look for potential management problems, completed a monitoring report for each and permanently filed them, and promptly took action to rectify management problems discovered during regular monitoring visits.*
 - *Completed annual monitoring visits on all 5 properties on which ACLT holds conservation easements, ensured easement values and restrictions were being upheld, completed monitoring reports for each visit and permanently filed reports in addition to sending them to the appropriate easement co-holders.*
 - *Maintained a prioritized list of tasks relating to invasive control, habitat restoration, trail maintenance, and cultural structure stabilization and coordinated the staff and volunteers to accomplish them.*
 - *Continued to control invasive species on ACLT owned and managed land, particularly the new invader wavyleaf basketgrass. Hired a contractor to spray herbicide and dedicated many staff and volunteer hours to hand pulling and cutting wavyleaf basketgrass spread over 20 acres on the Double Oak property. Also hired a contractor to spray herbicide on affected areas within DNR's Goldstein property.*
 - *Purchased the 162-acre Yoe property and worked with Soil Conservation District to apply for funding to stabilize an eroded stream channel on the property.*
 - *Implemented stewardship tasks outlined in the Forest Stewardship Plan for each property as needed.*
 - *Used data from hunter sign-in sheets and information from a Department of Natural Resources (DNR) infrared deer survey to gauge the impact of Epizootic Hemorrhagic Disease (Bluetongue) on the deer population.*
 - *Continued ACLT's phragmites removal efforts using the solarization technique in the marsh surrounding Parkers Creek with funding from an Aquatic Invasive Species Control grant.*
 - *Marked the boundary of the Yowell and Yoe properties.*
 - *Developed Land Management Plans for the Yowell and Yoe properties.*
 - *Maintained the wood duck, bluebird, screech and barn owl, and prothonotary warbler box monitoring programs.*
 - *Signed a Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) contract through NRCS to receive funding for implementing and maintaining conservation practices.*

- **Strategy:** Encourage environmentally sustainable public access to ACLT managed lands by maintaining and enhancing the ACLT trail system.

Actions:

- Periodically redo the blazes on the trails as needed.
- Continue to maintain trails with two annual Trail Maintenance work days, two weekly volunteer workdays, and special crews on an “as-needed” basis.
- Maintain a “Trail Steward” volunteer program.
- Proactively address potential trail issues from bigger storm events that will increase in frequency and intensity due to climate change.
- Consider climate change effects when planning new trails and assessing current trail conditions and recognize the costs associated with major projects.
- Consider limited canoe/kayak access from the Russell tract provided that the environmental impact and view from the creek can be minimized.
 - *Continued to maintain ACLT's 24 miles of trails and utilized volunteers through two weekly volunteer workdays and other special workdays as needed. Upheld ACLT's reputation of having the most well-maintained and best-marked trails in the area.*
 - *Maintained the Trail Steward Program in which volunteers assigned to a trail walk it and report issues such as flooding, downed trees, and overgrown vegetation. Coordinated additional volunteers to address issues as needed.*
 - *Proactively addressed potential trail issues from bigger storm events that will increase in frequency and intensity due to climate change. Completed a major reroute on Parkers Creek Road Trail to mitigate erosion issues.*
 - *Began designing a new trail on the YOWELL and Kenwood properties. Applied for and received grant funding for the 4 bridges that will be needed for this trail.*



Strategy:

- **Focus agricultural efforts on Holly Hill and Double Oak Farm. Continue to seek out ways to reduce the environmental impact of agriculture through sustainable agricultural practices.**

Actions:

- Continue to maintain and support the Agriculture to Support Community Program on Double Oak Farm; continue to support volunteer leadership on various portions of the farm. Continue to use regenerative practices.
- Consider leasing farmland on Double Oak farm to beginning vegetable farmers using organic practices, so long as the total land in agricultural use on Double Oak Farm does not exceed approximately 2.5 acres.
- Consider leasing a portion of the land currently being farmed on Holly Hill to beginning vegetable farmers using organic practices, so long as conventional grain farming continues on the property. The total acreage in agriculture must remain at 60 acres, as mandated in the conservation easement for the property.
- Continue to press for more sustainable farming practices on leased farmland.

- Work with Calvert County Soil Conservation District to monitor the erosion around the Holly Hill farm fields and implement measures to minimize erosion when possible.
 - *Continued the Agriculture Supporting the Community program on Double Oak Farm and used regenerative practices to provide food to the St. John Vianney Inter-Faith food pantry; continued to support volunteer leadership on various portions of the farm.*
 - *Researched the benefits of Beaver Dam Analogs and designed a project to install 22 along the tributary immediately downstream of the “Grand Canyon” on Holly Hill to trap sediment and nutrients and slow streambed erosion; submitted a permit for the project to Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE).*

Strategy:

- **Recognize and focus on the importance of meadows for the wide variety of species which are threatened by the disappearance of meadows which has occurred over the last century.**

Actions:

- Establish permanent meadows on the Southside fields (approximately 5.25 acres) and actively manage for native herbaceous vegetation.
- Establish approximately 7.10 acres of permanent meadow habitat on the Northside fields on the Double Oak property and actively manage for native herbaceous vegetation.
- Work with BGE to establish and maintain meadows in the powerline right-of-way across the Parkers Creek Preserve.
- Consider creating a meadow walking trail around Double Oak Farm.
- Enhance meadow and early successional habitat opportunities for pollinators and other wildlife.
 - *Continued to not mow any meadows during the growing season unless absolutely critical to prevent invasive Chinese lespedeza seed set. This allowed the vegetation to grow taller and provided better wildlife habitat. It will eventually enable wildflowers to naturally grow in these areas, though invasive species are still a significant problem and should be addressed.*
 - *Mowed all meadows in early spring to prevent forest succession and maintain meadow habitat.*
 - *Began clearing trees from the meadows on the newly-acquired Yoe property in preparation for mowing in spring of 2023.*
 - *Completed a controlled burn on the 5-acre meadow at the South Side trailhead to clear thatch and spur the germination of lespedeza seeds in the seed bank; hired a contractor to apply herbicide to regrowth.*
 - *Hired a contractor to apply herbicide to the 2-acre north meadow at Double Oak to continue prepping the site for a 2023 planting.*
 - *Monitored vegetation regrowth in the test plots that were covered with plastic in the largest meadow at Double Oak. Chinese lespedeza was still present, and other non-native invasive plants such as foxtail and jimsonweed became more common.*
 - *Planted the 4th and final meadow buffer around the fields at Holly Hill with NRCS EQIP funding.*
 - *Graded a 0.25-acre area around the historic barn at Holly Hill in preparation for planting it as a demonstration meadow by the trail and barn.*



- *Continued to communicate with BGE to implement Integrated Vegetation Management in their powerline ROW by Scientists Cliffs Road to preserve approximately 35 acres of high value meadow habitat. Also continued to communicate with DNR to implement meadow management practices on DNR's Hance property.*

Strategy:

- **Lead by example in environmental stewardship whenever possible.**

Actions:

- Strive to use innovative and best management practices.
- Inform land management practices with science conducted here and elsewhere.
 - *Worked to improve the health and diversity of the ecosystems we manage through invasive species management, planting a diversity of native plants, and working to minimize the impacts of agriculture and trail use on the ecosystem.*
 - *Continued to work with scientists at ACLT and elsewhere to inform management decisions.*
 - *Transitioned some equipment to electric to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.*

Strategy:

- **Continue to work to increase and diversify land management volunteers.**

Actions:

- Work with scouts to complete projects when possible.
- Continue hosting the Maryland Master Naturalist program at ACLT.
- The Land Manager will continue to oversee the deer herd management program and work with the ACLT hunters to complete land management tasks.
 - *Worked with scouts and school groups to complete various land management projects.*
 - *Hosted annual MD Master Naturalist program at ACLT and trained new volunteers.*
 - *Continued to partner with the hunters in the Parkers Creek Conservation Society to coordinate work on various land management tasks.*

SCIENCE COMMITTEE

Goal: *To conserve, protect, and restore, the natural resources of the Parkers Creek and Governors Run watersheds and identify threats to their ecological integrity.*

Strategy:

- **Provide advice to ACLT Staff, the ACLT Board, and the Land Management Committee on steps required to maintain Parkers Creek and Governors Run watersheds as dynamic and well-functioning systems that: support and provide suitable habitat for diverse plant and animal communities dominated by viable populations of native species; have good water quality, maintain ecological processes and evolutionary potential, and are resilient to natural disturbances, low-impact human use, and well-managed agriculture at designated sites. Generate and identify information that can be used to inform conservation and management.**

Actions:

- Help initiate and sustain monitoring programs to determine the status and trends of natural resources under ACLT Management.
 - *The Committee has helped to initiate and/or continue programs for many aspects of the lands it manages, as outlined below.*
- Train staff, help with analysis and interpretation of data, and may participate in monitoring activities.
 - *Committee members have trained and worked with staff and volunteers in many monitoring activities.*
- Help to identify experts on particular issues that are not well-represented by committee members.
 - *Committee scientists have sought out experts who matched our needs and interests and some have joined the Committee.*
- Facilitate continuation of monitoring programs that have been established, including: (1) tree abundance, species composition and health (detection and action, where possible, to minimize effects of pathogens), (2) nitrogen concentration and other water quality parameters in Parkers Creek, Governors Run, and their tributaries, (3) benthic and fish abundance and species composition of Parkers Creek and its tributaries, (4) *Phragmites australis* location and control, and (4) bird abundance and species composition.
 - *ACLT now has monitoring programs for (1) tree abundance, species composition and health, (2) nitrogen concentration and other water quality parameters in Parkers Creek, Governors Run, and their tributaries, (3) benthic macroinvertebrate abundance and species composition, and fish species composition in a portion of the Parkers Creek watershed, (4) *Phragmites australis* location and control in the tidal portion of Parkers Creek, and (5) bird abundance and species composition;*
- Identify additional monitoring targets and develop appropriate monitoring methods. These additional targets may include, but are not limited to: sea level rise, amphibians, understory, herbaceous and wetland vegetation, native bees, pathogens and other taxa and habitats for which expertise can be identified, plus items of geological, and paleontological importance as resources are available.
 - *The Committee and/or its scientists have developed programs to monitor relative sea level change and amphibians. It plans to pursue other programs over time, including monitoring the size of the deer herd on ACLT owned and managed lands.*
- A goal is to have a comprehensive monitoring program for biota and habitat developed by the end of the 5-year period covered by this plan
- Establish conditions and detect trends with emphasis on potential drivers (i.e., land use, climate change, overpopulation of deer herds, invasive species) and ecosystem components that respond to those drivers or are otherwise deemed valuable. A goal is to be able to establish baselines and track changes in forests, fields, marshes, meadows, wildlife and pathogens. This will be facilitated by increasing use, accessibility and analyses of current and past data collected on ACLT managed land, mapping spatial extents and locations, and archiving of reports in easily accessible digital or hard-copy formats.
 - *The Committee has helped to develop criteria for a report card for the Parkers Creek Watershed. It has also prepared mapping and other monitoring systems to track potential drivers (i.e., land use, impervious surfaces, forest cover, stream buffers, climate change, over-population of deer herds, invasive species, etc.*



- Encourage the use of ACLT owned and managed lands for scientific research and, where possible, make protocols compatible with those used and accepted by others in the science community to facilitate comparisons with other research sites and studies. One strategy the committee will employ is to establish relations with college groups to promote the potential of the Parkers Creek Preserve as a site for graduate student projects.
 - *The Committee continues to encourage the use of ACLT owned and managed lands to scientific research. Currently, scientists from the Smithsonian Environmental Research Center and the Chesapeake Biological Lab are conducting grant-funded work in our watershed. The Committee has also worked with watershed “friends” groups to expand the research into other watersheds.*
- Develop, in collaboration with ACLT staff, an ongoing prioritized wish list of scientific projects for ACLT owned and managed lands that can be performed by volunteers or others as resources permit.
 - *Every year, the Committee meets to develop a wish list for scientific projects.*
- Work cooperatively with the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and other regional research organizations to ensure that ACLT has access to research that can inform sound management of both ACLT-owned land and land that ACLT manages for DNR.
 - *Staff periodically meets with DNR staff to coordinate the management of invasive species.*
- Identify information on techniques to meet ACLT conservation and management goals such as enhancing meadow and early successional habitat opportunities for wildlife and pollinators, managing deer herds, and creating quality habitat for other native species.
 - *The Committee actively collaborates with the Land Management Committee on conservation issues such as those mentioned, including monitoring the deer herd and controlling invasive species.*

Strategy:

- Communication

Actions:

- Provide science-based guidance on the magnitude of threats, the likelihood of potential benefits of various management options, and the magnitude of action required to achieve those benefits.
 - *Scientists regularly contribute to or prepare articles or other information on threats to the watersheds especially water quality assessments.*
- Inform ACLT staff, Board and relevant committees of findings published in the scientific literature that may be of help in managing and protecting ACLT managed lands.
 - *Committee scientists regularly provide this service to the Board and staff.*
- Provide updates on results of monitoring and research activities conducted on ACLT-managed land.
 - *The Committee chair or fellow scientists regularly make presentations to the Board concerning Committee research.*
- Participate in outreach to the broader Calvert County community on issues that may improve protection and management of natural resources.
 - *Member scientists are regularly participating in outreach to the broader Calvert Community including testimony to the Board of County Commissioners or at public hearings.*
- Help organize and interpret ACLT scientific data and present to the Board, the membership and the general public. A goal is providing brief updates at each Board meeting.
 - *The Committee is currently working on an analysis of over 20 years of water-quality data on the main stem of Parkers Creek. It meets twice a year to review the science conducted during the year plan for the next year.*

Strategy:

- Staff and volunteer training

Actions:

- Continue to engage regional scientists in staff and volunteer training.
 - *Staff have been trained by members of the science Committee on sampling for macroinvertebrates and fish, monitoring forests and herps, replanting native marsh grasses after removal of phragmites, and on factors for preparing a watershed report card.*
- Identify opportunities for staff training, participation in regional peer science groups and attendance at relevant scientific meetings.
 - *With the help of Committee members, staff is kept informed about training and education opportunities and they are encouraged to participate.*
- Support funding for staff memberships in science groups and participation in workshops and conferences.
 - *Staff has participated in numerous science webinars on issues relating to stewardship of land and water. Funding is available.*

OUTREACH AND MEMBERSHIP

Goal: *Optimize our outreach programs to serve the ACLT mission throughout Southern Maryland; encourage and support strong growth in ACLT's membership and volunteer programs through enhanced communications, programs and activities.*

Strategy:

- **Increase Local Awareness of ACLT and its Mission.** Utilize a variety of tools to increase awareness of ACLT and its mission in Southern Maryland, and especially within Calvert County.

Actions:

- Maintain clear and consistent messaging about ACLT.
 - *A Baseline has been established and review is ongoing. The accomplishments listed below include those that impact visitors' impressions of ACLT which reinforces the organization's presence.*
 - *Selected annual messaging theme each year.*
 - *Reviewed the website language for updates (this is an ongoing project)*
 - *Implemented the signage project on the Northside and installed the new kiosks at both Northside and Southside Trailheads. Began developing the posters for the kiosks (Fall migration was the first.)*
 - *Updated and refreshed the Northside barn porches with children's activities, including a lending library, "what's this" board, and artifacts that can be handled by children and adults. Added significant messaging about climate change and ACLT actions*
 - *Updated and refreshed the Natural Play Space for children.*
 - *Provided the Monarch display during the summer on the Northside barn.*



- Maintain materials and tools about ACLT and make it available to board members, staff and others to tell the ACLT story by making presentations to a wide variety of groups and organizations.
 - *Materials are available for both on- and off-site events (e.g., Sunflower Festival, Insectival, PRAD,,) which are run by ACLT Master Naturalists and volunteers.*
 - *Updated materials as appropriate with new information (trail map)*
 - *Developed materials specific to the events (e.g., crossword and word search puzzles, coloring pages, artifacts) to engage and educate both adults and children.*
 - *Incorporated new tablet games for adults and children to play at events*
 - *Developed materials for the 2022 Upper Marlboro History Festival; presented by two Board members.*
- Ensure the ACLT message receives broad attention by preparing press releases about ACLT events and accomplishments and developing and maintaining relationships with local press.
 - *Press releases/web-based press kits are used as often as possible and as appropriate for each event, in addition to social media and e-mail blasts.*
 - *Identified issues/accomplishments to send to press.*
 - *For each event, determined if press release/page is appropriate.*
 - *Reported press coverage to the Board in the Board's package for each bi-monthly meeting.*
- Expand social media and general online presence as a method to connect to a broader audience.
 - *Social Media posts are frequent and relevant to engage a larger audience.*
 - *Facebook and website were updated as events occurred to keep them fresh and engaging. The Hiking Challenge group was key in keeping its members updated by individual posts.*
 - *Introduced the ongoing series of insect and bird blogs. Continuing to encourage other submissions by staff and volunteers.*
 - *Expanded use of You-Tube for videos accessible by members and the public (e.g., the annual meeting, major donor briefings).*

Strategy:

- **Develop Strategic Partnerships.** Maintain lasting partnerships within the Sustainable Calvert Network and with other local nonprofit organizations focusing on environmental stewardship, education, community service and other common interests between ACLT and the nonprofit community at large. Maintain effective partnerships with local, state and federal agencies.

Actions:

- Continue to participate in the Sustainable Calvert Network and with other regional organizations that focus on issues pertaining to the health of our economy, our society and our environment where we can learn from each other, find common interests and work for our mutual support and advancement.
 - *Continually looking for ways to build our relationships with the other organizations by sharing their events/news and getting them to share ours.*
- Build relationships with local education communities and youth organizations about collaborative opportunities and projects.
 - *Continued our relationship with the Scouts.*
 - *The informal "Moms' Groups" that use the Northside Natural Play Space continued to meet. The Northside barn porch has also become a popular place for families to stop after hikes.*
 - *Hosted a day-long camp session for the Calvert County 4-H organization. ACLT volunteers supported this effort. Anticipate that the University of Maryland Extension Office will request to come again.*

- *Continued our relationship with Huntingtown Elementary to teach children about sustainable farming.*
- *Track teams from nearby Calvert High continue to practice on our trails.*
- Encourage ACLT members to be active on appropriate county boards and advisory commissions. Give one presentation to the County Commissioners annually on a land use or conservation issue.
 - *We continue to encourage ACLT members to be active participants in the county's governance. Members have testified before the County Commissioners on the proposed planning changes for the Prince Frederick Town Center as well as other issues.*
 - *ACLT has also established an excellent working relationship with the new Director of Economic Development and is engaged with that Department on issues such as eco-tourism and new bike/hiking trails.*
- Reach out to neighbors and neighboring communities and seek their involvement.
 - *Joined numerous community groups on Facebook for the purpose of sharing ACLT news and events.*
 - *Continued the Adopt-A-Highway Program on Main Street and Dares Beach Road.*

Strategy:

- **Sponsor Educational, Stewardship and Social Events and Activities.** Sponsor annual educational, land stewardship, social and fundraising events bringing together existing and potential ACLT members, supporters, and volunteers.

Actions:

- Maintain a canoe program, including guided trips as well as facilities and equipment useful to provide access to Parkers Creek.
 - *Continued the canoe program every year.*
 - *Scheduled a Hispanic Heritage canoe trip but it was cancelled.*
 - *Conducted a special trip for DC High Schoolers in 2021 and 2022.*
 - *Renovated the Doctor's office to make it more appealing to canoers.*
- Host at least one public event annually on a conservation or environmental topic of concern to the community reflective of the ACLT mission.
 - *The majority of our events are related to our mission and are held for the purpose of spreading our message. Held or participated in 7 major events to get the ACLT message out. Even the children's activities (like the Leprechaun Hunt) had environmental messaging.*
- Host regular public events annually on ACLT property to encourage public awareness and enjoyment of ACLT's land and mission.
 - *Six events and four guided hikes are held annually onsite at the North or Southside trailheads.*
 - *Continued the Weekend Welcome Program on the Southside.*
- Conduct trail runs and other athletic events as staffing allows
 - *12 hikes in '22 challenge – continues to be a very popular program*
 - *Earth Day 5K – cancelled due to lack of registration*
 - *Parkers Creek Challenge – cancelled due to weather; rescheduled for May 2023*
- Consider holding orienteering and other events that go “off-trail” on a limited basis, respectful of the times that will least impact the flora and fauna.
 - *ACLT is still looking for a proposal that would meet this requirement.*
- Ensure that the ACLT annual meeting is both an informative and social event.
 - *The Outreach and Membership Committee provided support to the Executive Director and staff every year.*



Strategy:

- Maintain a Dynamic and Diverse Membership and Volunteer Corps. Expand the individual and corporate memberships each year through personal contact, outreach programs and partnership events. Maintain a communication program aimed at increasing the ACLT profile in the community and attracting new individual and corporate members and volunteers to the ACLT. Maintain regular and informative member and volunteer communications, including the quarterly newsletter, web site, social media and emails, event publicity, and fundraising appeals.

Actions:

- Adopt an updated Development and Engagement Plan to enhance the engagement of all of ACLT's current and potential constituencies and provide additional staff capacity to implement it.
 - *Although there are a lot of good ideas in the draft 2014 Development and Engagement Plan, it is overwhelming and very resource heavy. The recommendation for 2022 was to develop a plan using the 2014 plan as a foundation. Realistic expectations regarding implementation and resources need to be set. The resources to tackle this project were not available in 2022. It was moved to 2023.*
- Train all staff and volunteers to actively encourage visitors to become members.
 - *Updated the Volunteer, Weekend Welcome Program, and hiking guide training materials; held sessions in the spring*
- Develop an enhanced volunteer program which includes orientations, advanced training, and regular appreciation activities.
 - *The annual Volunteer Dinner was held and a great success. Additional steps are planned for 2023 to meet this action item.*
- Engage interns through local colleges and Chesapeake Conservation Corps.
 - *Sponsored two Chesapeake Conservation Corps interns for the 2022-2023 session. One is working with the Land Manager and the other is serving as the Farm Manager.*

Strategy:

- **Reach out to underserved populations**

Actions:

- Pursue engagement of underrepresented communities including students, minority communities, young families, scouts, etc., for the purpose of broader diversity.
 - *The formation of a diversity and equity subcommittee of the Outreach and Membership Committee in 2023 will address these issues.*
- Expand participation in events and activities sponsored by diverse community populations.
 - *The Outreach and Membership Committee (O&MC) continues to look for events attracting underserved populations.*
 - *We plan to attend the Children's Day and African American Family Day at the Farm at Jefferson Patterson Park and Museum and Youth Day at the Fair in 2023.*
- Expand committee representation to include underrepresented communities.
 - *The O&MC has expanded accordingly and plan to do more.*