



American Chestnut Land Trust
...Connecting people with the land

Five-Year Strategic Plan

2024-2028

American Chestnut Land Trust Board of Directors
1/20/2024



Aerial of Parkers Creek from Blue Ridge Outdoors Magazine-Oct 2023

ACLT's Land Acknowledgement Statement & Pledge

Adopted November 18, 2023

ACLT acknowledges that the land it stewards, including the Parkers Creek and Governors Run watersheds, is the ancestral home of the Peoples of the Piscataway Confederacy and other Indigenous People. Further, we recognize the people of African descent, enslaved and free, who once worked on or owned the farms, the land of which is now stewarded by ACLT. We recognize the contributions made by these displaced and enslaved peoples in the face of injustice and inequity and acknowledge our obligation to maintain the land and educate the public in such a way that their spirit and heritage are not forgotten.

Accordingly, ACLT pledges to continue its fundamental mission of connecting all people to the land by providing equitable and inclusive access to the lands we steward, through ongoing research and education about the land's inhabitants and their history, and through outreach to all, particularly those most affected by societal inequities. As a leader in land conservation and preservation, we strive by example to foster a feeling of belonging to this region and at ACLT for all its diverse communities with the hope of a more equitable and sustainable future in Nature for all.

ACLT FIVE-YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN

2024-2028

INTRODUCTION

This updated Five-Year Strategic Plan, the seventh, builds on past plans to enhance the ability of the American Chestnut Land Trust (ACLT) to achieve its mission.

ACLT and its partners have preserved 4,821 acres of forest, wetlands, and fields to create the largest natural area in Calvert County. The foundation of ACLT, the Parkers Creek Preserve, is visited by thousands of people annually and researchers utilize the Preserve to determine baseline conditions given that it is the least developed watershed on the Western Shore of the Chesapeake Bay in Maryland. The popularity of ACLT's hiking trails which extend throughout the ACLT-owned and managed land continues to grow throughout the Mid-Atlantic area.

Through its implementation of the 2019-2023 Plan, ACLT has developed a larger presence in the Parkers Creek and Governors Run Watersheds and in the Southern Maryland region.

Accomplishments include the following:

- Established a five-mile band of protected land along the Western Shore of the Bay with the purchase of the Yowell property.
- Protected the fourth corner of the Preserve with the purchase of the Yoe property, further assuring the protection of the two core watersheds in the future.
- Helped form the Southern Maryland Conservation Alliance (SMCA) and led the Alliance through two very productive years, including the mapping of critical wildlife areas throughout the Southern Maryland regions and the revival of efforts to establish a new US Fish & Wildlife refuge in Southern Maryland.
- Successfully advocated for funding of the Calvert County land preservation programs and expansion of the Rural Legacy Areas with the help of the Sustainable Calvert Network (SCN).
- Scaled up ACLT's stewardship role by addressing stormwater management damage with both conventional design tools provided by the Calvert County Soil Conservation District and a new technique known as "Beaver Dam Analogs." Also, ACLT has continued to aggressively remove invasive plant species using a variety of techniques.
- Expanded access to ACLT-owned and managed properties with the addition of a new trail on the Holly Hill property as well as continuing to improve the existing trail system using best practice techniques.
- Enhanced ACLT's science programs under the direction of the Science Committee using research and testing best practices to influence policy and management decisions in the face of impacts from invasive species, climate change, and human disruption of the environment. As a result of partnerships with a number of organizations, ACLT's water quality blitz is now being used in four Southern Maryland counties.
- Scaled up ACLT's education, outreach, and membership efforts using social media, blogs and other written materials on scientific research conducted at ACLT as well as general educational pieces designed for public consumption. The Outreach and Membership Committee has increased memberships and member donations. It has connected with

many conservation organizations and hikers throughout the region, vastly increasing trail visits.

- Formed a new Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee to identify ways and means to increase the diversity of ACLT's memberships and visitors and to foster a sense of belonging by all who visit ACLT.
- Created a new Facilities Committee to address the management of buildings on all ACLT properties. The Committee oversaw the upgrades to the ACLT office, providing a more welcoming venue for visitors.

This Five-Year Strategic Plan calls for ACLT to maintain a leadership role in the long-term conservation and stewardship of watersheds not only in Calvert County but all of Southern Maryland. It parallels the direction of our national member organization, the Land Trust Alliance (LTA). 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. Through example, education, leadership, and collaboration, ACLT has the opportunity to help protect fishable and swimmable waterways throughout our region, to provide good habitats for wildlife, to provide opportunities for all people regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, or age to access wildlands and waterways, and to reduce the impact of climate change in Southern Maryland.

A summary of key features in this Updated Five-Year Strategic Plan is as follows:

- Focus on protecting the remaining properties in the Parkers Creek and Governors Run Watersheds.
- Strive for diversity, equity, and inclusion in all we do so that all visitors, members, and volunteers feel like they are welcomed and belong at ACLT.
- Continue to "be the change" needed to address climate change in Southern Maryland.
- Identify ways to maintain current staffing to ensure ACLT's ability to support regional and state conservation efforts.
- Expand the network of Watershed Friends Groups to include all major watersheds in Southern Maryland.
- Pursue "active transportation" approaches (such as hiking, biking, and paddling) to strengthen the region's economy, to further reduce the reliance on fossil fuels, and to improve the health of residents.
- Close the loop, building new trail segments that will allow hikers to walk from St. John Vianney to the Yoe property and from there to the Gravatt property.

ACLT Mission Statement

The American Chestnut Land Trust (ACLT) preserves and conserves 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. We promote land conservation and preservation throughout Southern Maryland.

Vision for ACLT in 2028

ACLT is a recognized leader and advocate for land conservation and preservation. It has expanded the land it owns and manages in the Parkers Creek and Governors Run Watersheds, where it employs best management practices to conserve, protect and restore healthy, resilient ecosystems. ACLT connects people to the land by providing public access to its well-maintained trail system and through its broad range of recreational, educational, cultural, and agricultural activities. ACLT strives for diversity, equity, and inclusion in all that it does.

ACLT is a strong advocate for land preservation and conservation in Calvert County and Southern Maryland. It is a model for other land trusts. Robust and financially secure, it serves as a regional center for rural lands stewardship, research, and wildlife observation, appreciation, and protection. ACLT is a catalyst in forming alliances and partnerships with other nonprofit organizations, governmental entities, businesses, and the broader community to build a large network of permanently preserved land and to foster a strong and positive land ethic throughout the region.

Vision for Calvert County in 2028

Our Calvert County 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. Calvert County has embraced the state goal of preserving 40% of the state by 2040 by adopting the same goal at the county level. Citizens are educated and active stewards of the land in all the watersheds of Calvert County and their daily living is enhanced by the abundance of natural areas. More watersheds in the county have a community of “friends” similar to that which made the effort to preserve Parkers Creek such a success.

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 conduct the mission and to achieve the vision of ACLT.*

Strategies:

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

Actions: (assigned groups in parentheses)

- Before undertaking major new actions, determine whether adequate human resources and funding for the project exist. If not, develop a plan to raise the necessary resources through the operating budget, a grant, volunteers, or other means to ensure the resources are available to enable success. (Board of Directors)
- As the land under management increases, increase our human resource capacity accordingly. (Board of Directors)
- As we commit more resources to outreach and advocacy, increase our human resource capacity accordingly. (Board of Directors)
- Implement a succession plan for the Executive Director and key staff and volunteer roles. (Personnel and Board of Directors)



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

Actions: (assigned groups in parentheses)

- Update the Master Plan for Facilities and Interpretation. (Facilities)
- Develop a maintenance program for all houses, offices, and ACLT barns. (Facilities)
- 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. (Donor Relations)
- Ensure that any needed major renovations to facilities are properly financed. (Budget and Finance)

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

Actions: (assigned groups in parentheses)

- 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. (Nominations)
- Annually review the Five-Year Strategic Plan and ACLT policies and adjust, as necessary. (Governance and Board of Directors)

- Operate ACLT in accordance with Land Trust Alliance Standards & Practices with the goal of maintaining national accreditation. (Governance and Board of Directors)

➤ **Maintain adequate revenue sources and continually cultivate new sources of funding.**

Actions: (assigned groups in parentheses)

- 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. (Budget and Finance and Board of Directors).
- Adopt a Strategic Plan for Future Fundraising in 2024 and review and adjust it annually. (Donor Relations)
- Consider an action to seek grants or a campaign for a permanent grant to endow a specific position or internship. (Board of Directors)
- 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. (Executive Director and Board of Directors)

➤ **Derive total income from the endowments, from foundations (or other alternative funding sources), and from memberships and donations.**

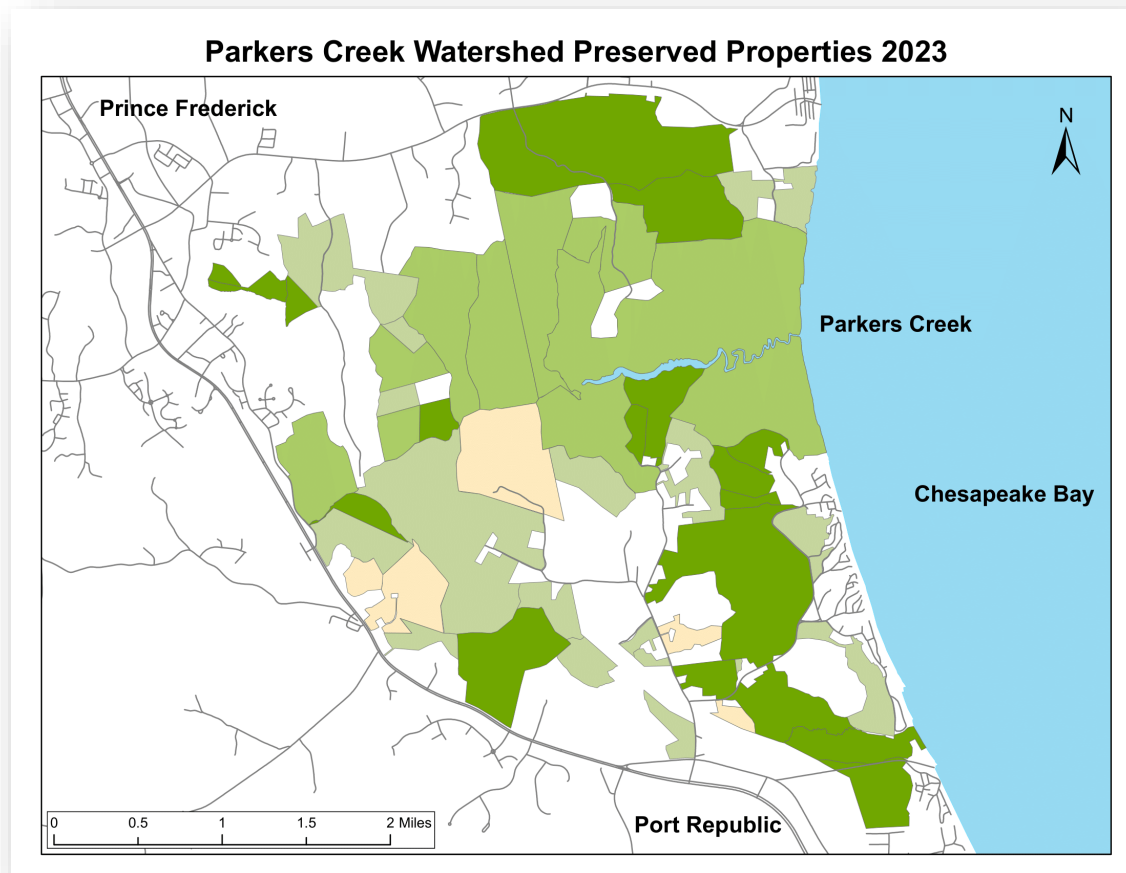
Actions: (assigned groups in parentheses)

- Consider opportunities for additional funding in conjunction with any potential new state land acquisitions that would be managed by ACLT. (Land Acquisition and Preservation Committee and Board of Directors)
- Consider green burials on properties as permitted by county and state regulations. (Land Management, Donor Relations, and Board of Directors)
- To meet Strategic Plan goals, publicize the Memorial Bench and Planned Giving Programs on the ACLT website and in the newsletter for the benefit of the Friends Forever Endowment Fund. (Donor Relations)
- Continue to monitor and revise the Land Management Endowment goal, as needed, to fully fund land management obligations. (Budget and Finance)
- Initiate fundraising efforts to increase the Friends Forever Endowment Fund to approximately \$2 million over the next 10 years by directing the following funds to the Friends Forever Endowment Fund:
 - All undesignated bequeaths.
 - Surplus funds from any land appeal; and
 - Funds from the Buy It-Preserve It-Sell-It program after the Land Preservation fund is replenished.
- Include language in future land campaigns about the cost of stewardship and that any extra funds raised could be directed into the Friends Forever Endowment.
- Continue the estate planning workshops and encouraging members to become ACLT Friends Forever. (Donor Relations)

LAND ACQUISITION AND PRESERVATION

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

Responsibility: Land Acquisition and Preservation Committee and Board of Directors



Strategies:

- **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.
 - Continue to collaborate with existing partners and seek new partnerships to preserve targeted properties.
- **Facilitate partnerships and consider ACLT land purchase, conservation, and resale of parcels 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.
- Work with the Sustainable Calvert Network to develop a vision for preserved land in the county and to seek opportunities for joint efforts.
- Educate landowners of non-priority parcels about options for managing and preserving their land.

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.*

Responsibility: Land Management Committee

Strategies:

- **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, inventory the natural and cultural features, develop an individual written land management plan that describes the resources in need of protection, identify ACLT's objectives for the property, and describe a process to implement the management activities recommended in the plan.
- Maintain adequately marked boundary lines for ACLT's fee simple properties, regularly monitor (at least annually) each fee simple property for potential management problems, keep a permanent record of monitoring reports, and promptly take action to rectify management problems discovered during regular monitoring visits.
- Request boundary surveys during the acquisition process for future Department of Natural Resources (DNR) acquisitions to be managed by ACLT.
- For each new conservation easement, prepare a baseline documentation report prior to closing to be signed by the landowner at closing to document the important conservation values and condition of the property at the time of acquisition.
- Regularly monitor (at least annually) each property for which ACLT holds a conservation easement, keeping a permanent record of the monitoring reports, and promptly taking appropriate enforcement steps in the event of any violation of the easement in accordance with ACLT's Easement Violation Policy.
- Monitor properties managed for DNR; identify a lead volunteer coordinator; conduct training; identify property monitoring volunteers.
- 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. Coordinate such efforts with the Facilities Committee, as necessary.
- Maintain an Invasive Species Control and Containment Plan 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 invasive species in order to assess priorities.

- Complete tasks listed in ACLT's current and future Conservation Stewardship Program and Environmental Quality Incentives Program contracts to utilize these cost share programs while also accomplishing ACLT's ecosystem management goals of controlling invasive species and increasing native plant diversity.
- Prioritize wavyleaf basketgrass and *Phragmites australis* removal as these are two invasive species that are currently relatively isolated but have the potential to spread rapidly over a large area. Have a goal of solarizing 10,000 square feet of phragmites each year.
- Install Beaver Dam Analogs in the headwaters of the Horse Swamp tributary and work with the Science Committee to determine their effectiveness at improving water quality and stream conditions.
- Implement individual Forest Stewardship Plans on ACLT-owned properties and work with the DNR Forest Service staff 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.
- 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.

➤ **Encourage environmentally sustainable public access to ACLT managed lands by maintaining and enhancing ACLT's trail system.**

Actions:

- Periodically repaint the blazes on the trails as needed.
- Continue to maintain trails with two weekly volunteer workdays and special crews on an "as-needed" basis.
- Maintain a "Trail Steward" volunteer program.
- Proactively address potential trail issues from major storm events that are expected to increase in frequency and intensity due to climate change.
- Consider climate change's effects when planning new trails and assessing current trail conditions and recognize the costs associated with major projects.
- Design and begin Yoe trail implementation based on Yoe property alone but keeping in mind the potential for a future connector trail to other properties.

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

Actions:

- Maintain the Agriculture Supporting the Community Program at Double Oak Farm and the Food Forest. Continue to support volunteer leadership on various portions of the farm. Continue to use regenerative farming practices.

- Consider leasing a portion of the land currently being farmed on Holly Hill and/or the Yoe property to vegetable farmers using organic practices, so long as conventional grain farming continues on the properties.
- Continue to press for more sustainable farming practices on leased farmland.
- Work with the Calvert County Soil Conservation District to monitor the erosion around the Holly Hill and Yoe farm fields and implement measures to minimize erosion when possible.



- **Recognize and focus on the importance of meadows for the wide variety of species 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 them for native herbaceous vegetation.
- Establish approximately 2 acres of permanent meadow habitat on the Northside fields of the Double Oak property and actively manage for native herbaceous vegetation.
- Actively manage the meadows on the Yoe property (approximately 13 acres) and establish additional meadow habitat on areas around the barn and house that are not needed for trailhead parking.
- Work with Baltimore Gas & Electric to establish and maintain meadows in the powerline right-of-way running through the Parkers Creek Preserve.
- Enhance meadow and early successional habitat opportunities for pollinators and other wildlife.

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

Actions:

- Strive to use innovative and best management practices.
- Inform land management practices with science conducted at ACLT and elsewhere.

- **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.
- Continue working with the ACLT hunters to complete land management tasks.

SCIENCE

Goal: *Serve as an advisory committee to the ACLT Board of Directors, Land Management Committee, and ACLT staff providing science-based recommendations for the best management of the Parkers Creek and Governors Run Watershed ecosystems as well as advocacy positions for Southern Maryland environmental issues.*

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

Responsibility: Science Committee

Strategies:

- **Provide advice to ACLT staff, the ACLT Board, and the Land Management Committee on steps required to maintain the 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 provide information that will help ACLT take an ecosystem-based approach to all lands and waters under its management.**
- **Provide advice to the ACLT Board, the Land Management Committee, and the ACLT staff on issues relevant to ACLT activities beyond the Parkers Creek and Governors Run Watersheds.**



Actions:

- Generate and identify information that can be used to inform conservation and management of ACLT-owned and managed lands.
- Help initiate and sustain monitoring programs to determine the status and trends of natural resources under ACLT management. Activities are as follows:
 - Train staff, help with analysis and interpretation of data, and may participate in monitoring activities.
 - Help to identify experts on particular issues who are not well-represented by committee members.
 - Facilitate continuation of monitoring programs, as appropriate, that have been established, including:
 - tree abundance, species composition and health (detection and action, where possible, to minimize effects of pathogens),
 - nitrogen concentration and other water quality parameters in Parkers Creek, Governors Run, and their tributaries,
 - aquatic fauna in vernal pools, and Parkers Creek and its tributaries,

- *Phragmites australis* location and control, and
 - bird abundance and species composition.
- Identify additional monitoring targets and develop appropriate monitoring methods. These additional targets may include but are not limited to:
 - terrestrial stages of amphibians, reptiles, and mammals
 - understory, herbaceous and wetland vegetation
 - native bees
 - pathogens
 - other taxa and habitats for which expertise can be identified,
 - items of geological and paleontological importance as resources are available.
- Work collaboratively with researchers with external funding who are monitoring important features of ACLT-owned and managed lands such as invasive *Phragmites* distribution and sea level rise.
- Develop a comprehensive monitoring plan for biota and habitat to be completed 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. Establish baselines and track changes in streams, 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.
- 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. Continue to work with college groups to promote the potential of the Parkers Creek Preserve as a site for graduate student projects.
- Develop, in collaboration with ACLT staff and the Land Management Committee, an ongoing prioritized list of scientific projects for ACLT-owned and managed lands that can be performed by volunteers or others as resources permit.
- Work cooperatively with DNR and other regional government agencies and 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.
- Identify information on techniques to meet ACLT conservation and management goals such as improving stream habitat, managing deer herds, and creating quality habitat for other native species.
- 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.
- Work with ACLT staff to annually update and continue development of the Parkers Creek Report Card.
- Provide assistance to ACLT staff and Board in communicating science issues and Science Committee activities through newsletter articles, blogs, and other media.

OUTREACH AND MEMBERSHIP

Goal: *Optimize our outreach programs to serve ACLT's mission throughout Southern Maryland; encourage and support strong growth in ACLT's membership, supporter, and volunteer programs through enhanced communications, programs and activities; and elevate our efforts to reach underserved and underrepresented populations, particularly those impacted by societal inequities or those which have not traditionally been engaged in nature.*

Responsibility: Outreach and Membership Committee

Strategies:

- **Utilize a number of tools to increase local awareness of ACLT and its mission in Southern Maryland, and especially within Calvert County.**

Actions: (primarily assigned to the Outreach and Membership Committee)

- Maintain clear and consistent messaging about ACLT, its programs, and regional advocacy.
- Maintain materials and tools about ACLT and its partnership programs (e.g., the Watershed Friends Groups). Provide materials to Board members, staff, and others to tell the ACLT story when making presentations or representing ACLT to a wide variety of groups and organizations.
- Ensure the ACLT message receives broad attention by preparing press releases about ACLT events and accomplishments and developing and maintaining relationships with local press.
- Enhance the ACLT website and expand ACLT's social media and general online presence as methods to connect to a broader, more diverse, and inclusive audience.



- **Develop and enhance community connections.**

Actions:

- Reach out to neighbors and neighboring communities to encourage their involvement in ACLT activities and land conservation issues as a whole.
- Strengthen ties to local and regional businesses willing to support ACLT and its programs as well as its other strategic partners.
- Continue to build relationships with local education communities and youth organizations about collaborative opportunities and projects.

- **Sponsor educational, land stewardship, and social events and fundraising activities.**

Actions:

- Maintain programs designed to educate and engage visitors while providing access to ACLT. Includes a program of guided hikes on ACLT's trails and a canoe program of guided trips providing access to Parkers Creek. Maintain facilities and equipment needed for the program.
- Host at least one public event annually on a conservation or environmental topic of concern to the community reflective of the ACLT mission.
- Host regular public events annually on ACLT property to encourage public awareness, support, and enjoyment of ACLT's land and its mission. Seek to engage non-traditional partners in conservation efforts to broaden participation.
- Conduct trail runs and other athletic events as staffing allows.
- 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.
- Ensure that the ACLT annual meeting is both an informative and social event.



➤ Maintain a dynamic and diverse membership and volunteer corps.

Actions:

- Expand the individual and corporate memberships and support each year through personal contact, outreach programs, and partnership events.
- Maintain a communication program aimed at increasing ACLT's profile in the community and region and attracting new individual and corporate members, supporters, and volunteers to ACLT.
- Maintain regular and informative member and volunteer communications, including the quarterly newsletter, website, social media, emails, event publicity, and fundraising appeals.
- Train all staff and volunteers to actively encourage visitors to become members or active supporters/donors.
- Continue enhancing the volunteer program which includes orientations, advanced training, and regular appreciation activities.
- Engage interns through local colleges and Chesapeake Conservation and Climate Corps.
- Enhance our understanding of our membership and develop targeted programs to encourage participation and donations.
- Adopt a new Development and Engagement Plan to enhance the engagement of all of ACLT's current and potential constituencies and to provide additional staff capacity to implement it.

➤ Reach out to underserved populations, particularly those impacted by societal inequities or those which have not traditionally been engaged in nature, by promoting and implementing ideas, programs, and projects designed to welcome these populations and increase their awareness of and access to ACLT.

Actions:

- Pursue engagement of underserved and underrepresented communities, including students, minority communities, young families, scouts, seniors, etc., for the purpose of broader diversity. Identify barriers these groups may encounter in engaging with ACLT as well as programs that would reinforce their acceptance as visitors and members.
- Expand participation in events and activities sponsored by diverse community populations. To the extent possible, tailor participation to be reflective of the interests and possible needs of the event's targeted population(s).
- Working with Committee chairs, the Nominating Committee, and the Board of Directors, expand committee and Board representation to include underrepresented and underserved communities.
- Ensure that communications, programs, and ACLT representatives convey an inclusive welcoming message to these populations and that communications and programs reflect aspects of nature, conservation, recreation, etc., that would be of interest to them (e.g., the Parkers Creek Heritage Trail project).

ADVOCACY

Goal: *To position ACLT as a leader and educator in land preservation and conservation throughout Southern Maryland in order to develop and strengthen partnerships at all levels of government and with like-minded organizations, encourage unified approaches to environmental challenges within the region, and promote the adoption of innovative and best practices in promoting environmental stewardship for the well-being of all.*

Responsibility: Board of Directors, Board Staff, and the SMCA Coordinator

Strategies:

- **Develop and enhance partnerships throughout the Southern Maryland environmental community.**

Actions:

- Continue to work with the Sustainable Calvert Network and the Southern Maryland Conservation Alliance to increase advocacy for land conservation in Southern Maryland and increase our presence in the region.
- Continue to participate in the Sustainable Calvert Network, the Southern Maryland Conservation Alliance, 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.
- Maintain lasting partnerships within the Sustainable Calvert Network and The Southern Maryland Conservation Alliance, and other local and regional nonprofit organizations focusing on environmental stewardship, education, community service and other common interests between ACLT and the nonprofit community at large.
- Establish working relationships with the Southern Maryland nonprofit community in order to pursue projects of common interest (e.g., eco-tourism). Maintain effective partnerships with local, state, and federal agencies.
- Provide recommendations to the SMCA etc.
- Represent ACLT at conferences, forums, and other venues to educate attendees about ACLT and its programs as well as best practices for land stewardship, conservation, and preservation.
- Utilize the Watershed Friends Groups approach to increase the affection for and advocacy of specific watersheds in Calvert County and throughout the Southern Maryland region.



- **Develop and foster relationships with governmental entities enabling ACLT to educate them on environmental issues and best practice approaches to their resolution.**

Actions:

- Advocate for the Calvert County land preservation tools and increase Rural Legacy Areas.
- Give one presentation to the County Commissioners annually on a land use, conservation, or related issue (e.g., eco-tourism).
- Encourage ACLT members to be active on appropriate county boards and advisory commissions.