



“Vision 2020”
Woodstock Land Conservancy
Strategic Plan 2012 – 2020

Woodstock Land Conservancy Strategic Plan 2012 - 2020

It is the places we love most that bring us together as a community. Everyone benefits from conservation of the forests, fields, wetlands, and streams that keep the air and water clean, that support farming, logging, and tourism, and are home to diverse wildlife.

The Core Mission of WLC is:

- To protect and steward key lands in our service area in Woodstock and neighboring communities and in the Eastern Catskills;
- To connect people, especially children, to nature and the land through education, outreach, and communication;
- To model sustainability in our operations, our stewardship, and our communities, including intelligent adaptation to and mitigation of the effects of climate change.



Woodstock Land Conservancy Strategic Plan 2012 - 2020

Core Mission Goal 1

Protect and Steward Key Lands in Woodstock and the Surrounding Eastern Catskills

The Challenge

We are losing biodiversity and open space, including scenic viewsheds, vital wildlife habitats and corridors, agricultural land, and critical forests and working woodlands. Global climate change and other environmental stresses exacerbate these challenges. These are grave losses to us right now, but an even sadder legacy for future generations.

Our Response

Bring together WLC's land protection resources with those of our supporters, partners, and the Eastern Catskill community to conserve our natural heritage.

Since 1988, WLC and its partners have identified and protected more than 1,000 acres of ecologically significant land, like Zena Cornfield, Sloan Gorge Preserve, the Comeau property, California Quarry, Magic Meadow and others. Continuing this work protects plants and animals and allows people to experience the land, and educates and inspires them take action to protect and celebrate the land and nature. We will work to permanently protect a diversity of habitats sufficient to sustain the ecological integrity of our region.

Actions

- Work collaboratively with our partners to acquire key lands for wildlife habitat and human use.
- Utilize science-based land conservation planning to focus on connectivity between key habitats and conserved land.
- Deepen our understanding of the role of climate change and its impacts on biodiversity, people, and lands and begin to identify and prioritize land and resources with the greatest value and predicted viability over time.
- Effectively monitor the conservation easements we hold and manage the lands we own.



Core Mission Goal 2

Connect People and the Land

The Challenge

In a tech-driven world, people -- and especially children -- are increasingly disconnected from nature. Lack of an outdoor lifestyle can lead to harmful effects on health and quality of life, as well as long-term economic costs to families, communities, and government.

Our Response

Engage the community in learning about nature. Offer compelling ways to get people, and especially children, outdoors, and inspire, challenge, and motivate them to join with us to protect the natural heritage of the Eastern Catskills.

Our hikes, birding walks, school field trips, trail and road cycling events, lectures, films, nature appreciation presentations, and other events forge connections between WLC and the community, building the trust and authentic relationships needed for the permanent protection and stewardship of our natural heritage.

Actions

- Develop signature projects that get people out on the land, protect or enhance biodiversity, promote a land ethic, and use working lands more sustainably, including outdoor activities and sporting events connected to conserved lands and conservation themes.
- Create activities and communications that expand our visibility and build trust and relationships with community members, especially young people.
- Collaborate with sister organizations to help the community and our lands, and further our mutual goals.



Core Mission Goal 3

Adapt to Climate Change and Create Sustainable Communities

The Challenge

Local climate change models predict significant warming, frequent damaging storms and floods, potential drought, and disruption of plant and animal species -- all requiring new thinking about which lands to protect. Climate change, along with concerns about air and water quality, soil health and waste disposal, will impact our economies, our communities, and our health.

Our Response

Adapt to climate change and learn to live sustainably. Support local communities through outreach and education, local policy initiatives, and by operating by example.

WLC can use a land conservation lens in addressing climate change and community sustainability, creating demonstration sites for local agriculture, exploring use of renewable energy, and tracking changes in biodiversity on our lands. With programs and projects that move the needle locally, we build awareness and initiate action while modeling sustainability in our operations.

Actions

- Partner with other organizations to identify and implement projects that respond to climate change and promote community sustainability.
- Help people develop sustainable behaviors and create new community infrastructures for land use, energy, water, waste, and biodiversity.
- Monitor laws and regulations for their response to climate change and sustainability, and engage constituents where appropriate.
- Operate WLC with a small carbon footprint and sustainable best practices.



Vision 2020

Moving out from our Core Mission, WLC envisions two innovative initiatives that use our skills and resources to make the Eastern Catskills a great place to raise our children and grandchildren. The land, the people, and a culture of sustainability make these goals possible.

Vision 2020 Trails: Connecting People and Places Goal 1

The Challenge

Walking, hiking, and biking trails help us access nature and history. From old woods roads to hiking trails to railroad right-of-ways -- many have fallen into disuse, become overgrown, and forgotten. Few of them on non-state land enjoy protection, and when we lose them, a piece of our past goes with them, along with the opportunities for people to experience nature firsthand and live healthier lives.

Tourism is a significant sector of our economy and the growth of ecotourism can support sustainable economic development. Creating and promoting trails in wild and scenic areas, especially when connected to larger networks -- like the Hurley and Wallkill Valley Rail Trails for example -- can drive economic growth, even as it builds support for conserving key lands and habitat.

Our Response

Engage our supporters, partners, and the Eastern Catskill's community in creating trails and trail networks for walking, hiking and biking.

WLC seeks to partner with a diverse set of stakeholders, including the private sector and government, in creating the local portion of a network of trails from the Walkway Over the Hudson north through Ulster County to the Catskills. WLC will offer to help steward trails owned by other land trusts and organizations, seek to acquire lands with the potential for creating public trails, and use its outreach and communications tools to build enthusiasm and support for their creation and use.

It is critical to replace or supplement declining winter recreational ski economies in the Catskills due to warmer winters and less reliable snowpack. Creating new high quality recreational opportunities is a key priority, as recreational tourism is a major economic driver for many Catskill communities and businesses.

Actions

- Collaborate with neighboring land trusts and other organizations to foster a trail system through Ulster County and the Eastern Catskills.
- Use the trail system to raise community awareness of the interconnected benefits of land conservation linked to non-motorized transportation and healthy communities.



Vision 2020 Goal 2

Build a Vibrant Local Food System

The Challenge

As climate change and other ecological stresses impact our food system, people want to know where their food comes from. They are rediscovering the critical importance of local agriculture and asking how they can get involved. Meanwhile, community land use decisions rarely focus on opportunities for economic growth through sustainable agriculture.

Our Response

Protect working landscapes so they will be available for the local and regional food system of the future. Keep the importance of land use for local sustainable agriculture in front of the public and decision-makers.

Developing local food systems is an emerging component of a sustainable economy for our region. Land conservation initiatives focused on local agriculture and “farm to table” projects are growing rapidly throughout the Hudson Valley. WLC can support this movement through strategic conservation of agricultural lands and support of local farming initiatives in northern Ulster and southern Greene County.

We can promote local agriculture by creating community gardens, pairing young farmers with landowners, and partnering with agriculture and sustainability organizations in creating new infrastructure. We may also explore using our own lands for demonstration projects on local food systems. Through our events and communications we will educate people about local food system issues and how land use planning can support local food, and guide them toward getting involved both as producers and consumers of local agricultural products.

Actions

- Explore creating an innovative local food system education project on WLC land that engages people and builds the vibrancy of our local food system.
- Collaborate with other organizations and agencies to help identify, develop, and implement strategic conservation plans for areas with the greatest concentration and quality of agricultural lands in WLC’s extended service area as well as in service gap areas.
- Link people to information on opportunities to participate in local food systems.
- Monitor land use laws and regulations for their compatibility with developing local food systems and engage constituents.



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WLC Contact Information

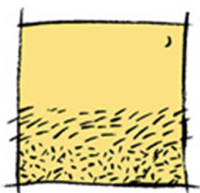
Mailing Address:

PO Box 864
Woodstock, NY 12498

845-679-6481

info@woodstocklandconservancy.org (email)

www.woodstocklandconservancy.org (website)



WOODSTOCK LAND CONSERVANCY