



Lancaster County
Conservancy

SAVING NATURE

STRATEGIC PLAN

2014-2016

Mission

The Lancaster County Conservancy exists because clean air, fresh water, and wild places are vital to every generation.

Vision

We are committed to creating a strong and lasting relationship between our community and the natural environment resulting in protection, conservation and education.

We are dedicated to promoting a culture where the protection and good stewardship of our natural resources are in balance with the communities they sustain while educating and inspiring current and future generations to explore, respect, and protect nature.

Challenges and Opportunities

The Lancaster County Conservancy's role is to protect our natural resources proactively for the benefit of our whole community. The Conservancy continues to evolve from a small, quiet local organization to a highly visible, respected county wide institution. This affords us the opportunity to build relationships with people and groups to effectively pursue a land protection agenda for the health of Lancaster County. Although we continue to be grassroots, our responsibility - as owners of natural land open to the public, as a community resource, as a partner in matters of planning and environmental impact grows. With the help of the residents and businesses in the county, we remain steadfast in our role as guardian of our land and water. But we need to increase our influence and engagement in the process of creating these opportunities and highlighting their values to the public.

The Role of Conservation in our Strategic Plan

- To responsibly care for and protect the natural landscapes and waterways of Lancaster County and those lands held in York County for the benefit of all people. To develop and provide educational services to increase public awareness and action to protect our natural resources
- To expand our role in addressing urban and suburban issues, including green infrastructure, zoning, subdivision and land development, water resources, and storm water management.
- To optimize the use of our natural lands, water resources, and facilities to advance the mission
- To enhance opportunities for residents' use of protected properties for recreation, fitness, education, awareness and appreciation of nature

The Role of Process in our Strategic Plan

- To increase our collective influence on public policy with an emphasis on protecting and expanding government funding for conservation
- To develop and implement a business model that relies less on grants and generates more unrestricted income from donations and earned income
- To build brand recognition and community support by positioning the Conservancy as an expert on land conservation, environmental education, water resources and green infrastructure
- To ensure continuity and plan for growth by strengthening board and staff

The Role of Education in our Strategic Plan

- To connect children /adults with nature
- To create consistent and meaningful experiences in nature
- To support the development of an environmental ethic
- To engage schools, families, and community
- To provide direct programming
- To serve as a catalyst to motivate and support others

Strategic Goal 1: Protect

Protect and steward native habitats (or ecosystems) that protect and enhance water resources, properties and landscapes.

Objectives	2014	2015	2016	Benchmark – Date Completed
1. Refine our existing list of strategies and priorities for native habitat and water resource protection.	X	X	X	
2. Review, update, and implement comprehensive management plans that protect all owned properties including evaluation of potential revenue generation options that benefit the nature preserve and public use.	X	X	X	
3. Monitor easements annually and educate landowners to protect LCC interests in conservation values.	X	X		
4. Expand volunteer monitoring of preserves and easements through well-managed volunteer recruitment, training / education and support programs.	X	X	X	
5. Lead and participate in efforts to protect and improve the Susquehanna Riverlands and Highlands through partnerships with agencies and organizations.	X	X	X	
6. Develop stewardship and education initiatives with reinforcement of an environmental ethic. The protection of nature is the result of an understanding, appreciation, and love of nature.	X	X	X	

Protect – Benchmarks / Targets

1. Provide informal and formal engagement opportunities to promote both the LCC and the development of an environmental ethic in our community through land acquisition, stewardship, fund raising, and education.
2. Develop and utilize a stewardship model to guide strategic land protection and land acquisition.
3. Optimize the use of our facilities and properties to advance the mission. Incorporate training and education for our volunteer land stewards and general volunteers.
4. Reevaluate criteria for land conservation projects to ensure cost-effectiveness.
5. Ensure the protection of existing conservation easements through good communication, organization, and education. Involve the stewardship staff and committee.
6. Develop a list of strategies for land protection, including fee, easements, and partnering with other agencies.

Strategic Goal 2: Sustain

Create strategic clarity and develop steps necessary to focus on priorities based on our mission.

Objectives	2014	2015	2016	Benchmark – Date Completed
1. Develop a strategy and model to establish and maintain a balanced budget.	X	X	X	
2. Strengthen our base of support so we are a more sound and stable organization with a focus on long term member, donor and partner relationships.	X	X	X	
3. Establish a marketing plan to promote our organization and mission, create awareness, and strengthen community support.		X	X	
4. Identify additional funding sources for land acquisition and stewardship projects.	X	X	X	
5. Develop and implement a funding model for educational programs, including some combination of grants, corporate sponsorships, and fee for service.	X	X	X	
6. Ensure continuity and plan for growth by strengthening board and staff.	X	X	X	

Sustain – Benchmarks/Targets

1. Develop a balanced budget in the short term including regular income and controlled spending.
2. Develop and implement a model that relies less on grants and generates more unrestricted income from donations and earned income.
3. Expand annual fund revenue through focused effort managed by development director and focused on increasing major donor support.
4. Create a marketing plan focused on a desired image and actively promote with advertising, website, social media communications, speeches, and regular media outlets.
5. Ensure a simple, transparent accounting model available to board, staff and partners.
6. Position our organization as expert in selected areas and then market for possible fee-for-service opportunities.
7. Consider capital campaign to raise endowment for acquisitions, stewardship capital projects, etc.
8. Expand partnership grant applications with other organizations.
9. Secure grant revenue that supports annual budgeted programs and operations.

10. Develop a plan for increasing fee-for-service income for planning/mapping, stewardship and educational program delivery by staff and volunteers.
11. Develop succession plan for Board leadership. Build a leadership pipeline with good board candidates available at all times.
12. Develop and implement training program for board members.
13. Create succession plan for all staff members, including cross training.
14. Year by year, consider new projects based on available finances, staffing, and organization capacity.
15. Increase membership by 10% per year.
16. Staff
 - A. Update job descriptions.
 - B. Conduct annual staff reviews.
 - C. Manage across programs, using a holistic approach, with a focus on coordination among programs.
 - D. Pay better-than-competitive salaries.
 - E. Develop a succession plan for all employees, especially senior staff, including cross-training.
17. Board
 - A. Review and update bylaws.
 - B. Clarify terms of board service, including term limits.
 - C. Create a reciprocal board job description that specifies what board members are expected to do, and what they can expect in return.
 - D. Create a succession plan for the board by engaging the committees and building a leadership “pipeline” with good board candidates available at all times.
 - E. Review the role and composition of committees, especially the executive and governance committees.
 - F. Build a diverse board that represents the community served.

Strategic Goal 3: Engage

Renew and expand the critical relationship between people and our natural environment to significantly improve the public awareness of and action on environmental issues and protection of natural resources.

Objectives	2014	2015	2016	Benchmark - Date Completed
1. Create the ability to communicate to our community our mission, programs, events and the potential to connect with nature.	X	X	X	
2. Optimize the use of our preserves and facilities to support our engagement and impact.	X	X	X	
3. Develop the case for LCC's role in education: what we can do to significantly impact the public's awareness of environmental issues and protection of natural resources: A.. Direct programming B. Catalyst to engage and inspire other educators and institutions.	X	X	X	
4. Identify audiences for educational programming and partner with organizations to effectively engage those audiences.	X	X	X	
5. Provide educational programming to schools and youth groups to increase nature awareness.		X	X	
6. Expand our engagement by creating advisory committees for community outreach, education and urban issues.	X	X	X	

Engage – Benchmarks / Targets

1. Provide informal and formal engagement opportunities to promote LCC through stewardship, land acquisition, development, and education of our properties and the development of an environmental ethic in our community.
2. Target critical youth support groups including Headstart, Lancaster Recreation Commission, private schools and other youth programs.
3. Promote collaboration and partnerships with other service providers, community groups and schools.
4. Develop programs for pre-school, K-12, college level, and the general public.
5. Increase our constituency of urban, suburban, and rural residents.
6. Hold regular meetings in urban areas regarding urban issues which pertain to our mission.
7. Develop Advisory Committees; Community leaders, educators, providers, health care and business organizations to advise and support our mission.

Strategic Goal 4: Advocate

Create awareness and action planning emanating from our organization to ensure the success of our mission.

Objectives	2014	2015	2016	Benchmark – Date Completed
1. Increase LCC influence to successfully advocate for programs and funding that support the long term protection of natural resources in the county and surrounding areas affecting county natural resources.	X	X	X	
2. Promote and expand involvement in urban and suburban environmental issues, including green infrastructure and storm water management. Include rural involvement as appropriate and requested.	X	X	X	
3. Continue participation in regional organizations (including Chesapeake Bay organizations), and state, and national land trust organizations, and work with urban, suburban, and rural municipalities advocating for funding and protection projects.	X	X	X	
4. Become a recognizable brand, well known for our unique role and expertise in land conservation, environmental education, green infrastructure and helping individuals and communities improve places where we live, work and play.	X	X	X	

Advocate – Benchmarks / Targets

1. Build a stronger advocacy profile, with an emphasis on improving policies, programs and protecting/expanding government funding for conservation.
2. Create a network of advocates that can be called upon to write letters and attend meetings, as advocates for nature and the organization.
3. Create an Advocacy Committee.
4. Use the committee to help create a citizen support network to back our advocacy efforts.
5. At the state level, look beyond DCNR for project funding. Stronger outreach to legislators.