



# Strategic Plan

2019 - 2023



# FROM OUR BOARD

APRIL 2019

It has always been in KELT's DNA to be strong, structured, and thoughtful. It has always been KELT's vision to conserve the natural spaces for future generations. It has always been KELT's practice to understand and serve the desires of the towns we serve; of collaborating with other conservation organizations; of inviting volunteers to join us in our work; of being fiscally responsible while stretching our efforts well beyond what seems possible.

Our current challenge is to lean on and strengthen these foundations as land conservation changes. With this new strategic plan we strive to be better prepared for whatever the uncertain future holds.

At 30 years old, we need to bring in people with new energy, skills, and passion. Our plan is to increase our volunteer corps and the number of citizen scientists who participate in our programs. We know that even these people will someday be replaced by another generation (and another after that) so we plan to redoubled our education efforts to ensure that there are young adults and children who - like our founders - revel in their time outside and understand the importance of the wildlife and plants that call this place home.

Support for land conservation can ebb and flow depending on who is elected to office, the ups and downs of tax revenues, and changing development pressures. As a hedge against fiscal uncertainty, we are building our financial reserves. By 2023 we plan to have stand-alone, restricted funds for land protection, stewardship, education and operations. We will also step-up our budgeting and planning to have a longer-term view of our needs and opportunities.

Our collaboration and community-minded spirit leads us into new projects - from fish ladders to community gardens, from clams to pollinators. Who knows what will be next? We need to be ready for just about anything, so we are focused on building our ability to tap into local volunteers who are passionate about community conservation.

Our vision for the Kennebec Estuary is a thriving, sustainable and resilient landscape. We hold the same vision for KELT. Over the next five years we will strengthen our foundations, expand our impact, and seed the future generations to carry on our work.

With deep gratitude for the people who put in place the DNA that guides us, and for those in current and future generations who will continue conserving the Kennebec Estuary in perpetuity - and that's a really long time!

**Sue McLeod**, President, Bath  
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**Eloise Vitelli**, Arrowsic  
**Jack Witham**, Arrowsic  
**Travis Wolfel**, Bath

# OUR MISSION

**Conserve, restore and instill appreciation of the land and water resources of the Kennebec Estuary to benefit today's communities and future generations.**

**The following elements further define the desired future state of the Kennebec Estuary.**



A network of protected ecologically important parcels, working landscapes and recreational areas.



Resilient wildlife habitat, high water quality and use that sustains productive fishing, hunting, agriculture, and forestry.



Many public access points for enjoyment, wellness, education and economic uses.



A strong volunteer stewardship ethic dedicated to restoring and protecting the land and water resources of the estuary in perpetuity.



*Volunteers are the backbone of KELT. A lot of hard work is involved in maintaining our trails and preserves. People like this crew of 5th grade students from West Bath School make it possible.*



*The Kennebec Estuary features prime waterfowl habitat and rare freshwater tidal conditions. It is one of the four places in the world where two major rivers converge to form an enclosed delta.*

Heather Perry Photo

## OUR VALUES

### **As a nationally accredited land trust:**

#### *Integrity*

We value transparency in our transactions and are accountable to our members and communities.

#### *Respect*

We respect the many generations that have settled and loved this region. We respect the wide diversity of people in our region and their varied relationship with the land. We learn from the many communities with whom we work.

#### *Community*

We collaborate with partners and communities to achieve common goals that positively contribute to the environmental and economic vitality of our region, and to the quality of our places.

#### *Generational Responsibility*

We respect the many generations that have settled and loved this region. We respect the wide diversity of people in our region and their varied relationship with the land. We learn from the many communities with whom we work.

#### *Organizational Excellence*

We strive for excellence in building relationships and conserving lands, and in practicing sound management and fiscal responsibility.

# GOAL ONE

## Land Protection

*Increase conserved lands in high priority areas throughout the Kennebec Estuary.*

KELT's Land Acquisition work creates a network of protected lands as one of the ways we promote the restoration of the historic natural abundance of the Kennebec Estuary. Our land conservation efforts are designed with the entire estuary in mind. We work to keep natural systems intact and functioning. We work with communities and other partner groups to protect areas and resources of importance to these communities. In all cases, we strive to balance the needs of people and nature. We treasure the unique places and natural resources of the Kennebec Estuary.

### Operational Land Objectives

We use a formalized process of identifying land conservation opportunities and working with funders and partner organizations to acquire land or place conservation easements on parcels of high ecological value.

This process includes:

- » Project priorities based on the KELT Regional Conservation Plan.
- » Partnership with municipal, state and federal agencies and other organizations on projects that benefit our common goals.
- » Engagement with landowners on priority parcels to create new opportunities for conservation.



### Aspirational Land Objectives

- » By 2022, we will create an ecosystem scale vision and co-management master plan in a coordinated effort with our regional land conservation partners.



## GOAL TWO

# Stewardship

*Take care of KELT's conserved lands and act as a steward of the greater land and water resources of the Estuary.*

KELT's stewardship work ensures we meet our commitment to caring for our preserves and monitoring conservation easements in perpetuity. KELT's ongoing stewardship goals and obligations are to balance habitat protection, recreation and education opportunities for our communities.

### Operational Stewardship Objectives

We manage our properties according to the requirements in the property management plans and to the standards of LTA, including:

- » Conducting annual monitoring of all easements and inspections of owned land.
- » Creating, maintaining and following up-to-date management plans for all properties.
- » Ensuring easement violations are addressed and remedied in a timely manner.
- » Having experienced staff and volunteers for short- and long-term stewardship projects.

We participate in local restoration projects that benefit the land, water, and wildlife in the Kennebec Estuary.

We conduct Citizen Science programs with a high level of scientific rigor and reporting, and engage community members and other partners to participate in these programs. These programs increase our understanding of our coastal waters, birds, bees, anadromous fish, vernal pools, and invasive species.

### Aspirational Stewardship Objectives

- » By 2021, advise and work with landowners on the control and mitigation of invasive species. Explore fee based program opportunities for landowners. Work with partners regionally to expand invasive information through education opportunities to expand knowledge base.
- » By 2020, new land acquisitions will be evaluated for any regional trail development in consideration of habitat and multi-users.



## GOAL THREE

# Education & Engagement

*Help people of all ages discover the wonders of the Kennebec Estuary, inspire the next generation of conservationists, and build meaningful collaborations with allies across the Kennebec Estuary region.*

Our Environmental Education program positions KELT to be a champion in the communities we serve providing reliable, consistent, conservation-based programs to people of all ages.

Our goal is to engage and teach people to understand, respect and protect our delicate resources but also to have fun and enjoy the outdoors. Our staff and volunteers have much needed expertise and we work across diverse constituencies to make these vital programs happen. Our communication strategies ensure that members and stakeholders receive timely, engaging information that enhances our reputation as the go-to organization of the estuary's natural resources.

### Operational Education and Engagement Objectives

We engage adults, families and children throughout KELT's region in our nature-based education and events. These include programs delivered in schools, on our preserves, and with our partners.

We collaborate with our community, including beneficiaries and partners, on projects that enhance the understanding, appreciation, and use of conserved land, including helping to promote local food, wellness and the natural sciences.

Our communication and outreach activities invite a wide range of people to participate in our projects, programs, and events.



### Aspirational Education and Engagement Objectives

» By 2021, we will determine the feasibility of establishing a Kennebec Estuary Science Center & Headquarters.



# GOAL FOUR

## Organization Sustainability

*Build financial and organizational capacity to meet the goals of the strategic plan and sustain the mission for the long term.*

KELT continues to build organizational capacity to support the tremendous growth we are experiencing. Our continued success depends on our ability to meet expectations and challenges that this wonderful region offers us. Our focus is on building KELT's capacity for a sustainable dynamic future.

### Operational Organization Sustainability Objectives

As a nationally accredited land trust, we conduct business in a professional and careful manner and in compliance with land trust standards and practices.

We maintain a strong staff, Board, and volunteer corps with diverse people, skill sets, and geographic representation.

We consistently use Strategic Planning, operational planning, and budgeting to assess needs for staff, facilities, funds and other resources.

### Aspirational Organization Sustainability Objectives

We are celebrating our 30th anniversary in 2019. After three decades of successful and valuable service to our community, we understand the need to be more pro-active and future-focused, building foundations to sustain our responsibilities and programs for generations to come. To that end, we are embarking on multi-year planning and budgeting, and setting ambitious goals to strengthen our community engagement and support, and build sustainable financial reserves.





# GOAL FOUR

## Aspirational Organization Sustainability Objectives continued

### ***Multi-year Planning and Budgeting***

» Develop and implement a multi-year Financial Plan that includes Annual, Capital, Stewardship and Operating Reserve Funds.

» Create a multi-year fundraising plan that supports the Financial Plan goals, and identifies diverse revenue streams, encourages broad based support and has a realistic mix of goals for grants, annual gifts from individuals, business support, planned giving, and special events.

### ***Broader Community Engagement***

» Increase stewardship volunteers by 30%, and volunteer hours by 10% across all of KELT's programs.

» Educate residents and elected officials, about the KELT Regional Conservation Plan in the nine communities we serve.

» Expand by 30% the number of people involved in our Citizen Science projects and community programs.

» Have an engaged fundraising committee with at least five volunteers and a three-year schedule of fundraising events, campaigns, and programs

### ***Financial Sustainability within five years***

» Establish an Education Fund and grow its value to \$200,000 to ensure that our school-based programs continue to be provided for free to all area schools and support public educational programming.

» Increase our Stewardship Fund by \$300,000 to work towards generating sufficient annual income to cover stewardship operation costs.

» Increase our Land Fund by \$200,000 to have adequate cash available for transaction costs for land projects.

» Increase our Operating Reserves by \$100,000 to establish six months of cash on hand for operational costs.

***That land is a community is the basic concept of ecology, but that land is to be loved and respected is an extension of ethics.***

**-Aldo Leopold**