



## Mendocino Land Trust Strategic Plan 2022 – 2025

### Vision

Mendocino Land Trust leads in inspiring a vision in which conserved land in Mendocino County is abundant, focusing on public access as well as the protection of agricultural lands, wildlife habitat, healthy watersheds, and forests. Its work champions the County’s natural assets and their critical role in moderating climate change.

MLT has inspired and marshalled the region’s diverse populace in their work, sparking innovative action to protect the water, air and lands that sustain us all. MLT envisions strong working relationships with municipalities and agencies, and partnerships with land trusts and other organizations that share a related mission, that greatly increases MLT’s ability to protect land, conserve resources, and expand appreciation of our natural world.

### Guiding Principles

***Commitment to the Whole County:*** MLT will focus on the whole County in protecting the irreplaceable and boundless gift of natural, rural, and working landscapes which deserve protection in perpetuity.

***Nature Sustains Us:*** Individual physical, intellectual and spiritual well-being and the well-being of communities are nurtured by access to and experiences in beautiful, natural and rural landscapes. The connection to nature is intrinsically valuable.

***Commitment to Future Generations:*** MLT accepts responsibility as a caretaker of the County’s natural and rural assets for its current inhabitants and future generations.

***Building Trust and Awareness:*** It is MLT’s responsibility to listen, learn, engage and provide many of the tools and experiences necessary to build awareness of the value of healthy landscapes and water and ensure that the results of our work are honored in perpetuity.

***Climate Urgency:*** The region is experiencing extreme natural disasters as a result of a warming planet. The natural assets we need to survive, that contribute to resilience, and which draw many to the County, are in jeopardy. It is our duty to act swiftly and smartly to protect them before it is too late.

***Inclusion:*** MLT is only one custodian of the County’s natural resources, in a County that is as rich demographically as it is biologically. We are committed to involving, empowering and/or partnering with *all* within the County in fostering an appreciation for, and the protection of, the resources which nurture us all.

## Goals

### Goal #1:

**Expand the focus of MLT’s conservation work to address the needs of the whole of Mendocino County, inclusive of working farms and forests.**

### Three-year Outcomes:

- Conservation of an additional 30,000 acres of forestland by 2025, with at least 10,000 acres of that newly conserved forestland not coastal.
- Conservation of an additional 7,500 acres of agricultural land by 2025.
- Completion of a MLT Strategic Conservation Plan.

### Strategies:

1. Create and execute a MLT Strategic Conservation Plan which prioritizes not only public access, but the conservation of biologically important lands and waters, climate mitigation, and working farms and forests. The plan will explicitly include identification and mapping of high priority conservation areas and updated selection criteria for projects. This strategy will produce arguably the single most important outcome of this entire Strategic Plan because it will drive much of what we do, where, and when for the next three to five years.
2. Increase MLT’s visibility and presence throughout the County through expansion of the staff/volunteers, projects, activities, and offices.
3. Further develop MLT’s GIS capacity to support conservation planning, management, stewardship, and acquisition.

4. Identify and cultivate volunteer leadership throughout the County to serve as valued local experts and advisors.
5. Cultivate partnerships with other land trusts, organizations, and agencies where synergies are identified that facilitate and/or leverage MLT's work.
6. Expand outreach to the cities of Fort Bragg, Willits, Point Arena, and Ukiah to partner on new municipal public access projects.

**Goal #2:  
Increase the pace of land conservation.**

**Three-year Outcomes:**

- Completion of at least three conservation easements, totaling at least a combined minimum of 5,000 acres, annually.
- Completion of at least one public access project in or near Mendocino County's highest population areas of Fort Bragg/Mendocino, Willits, Point Arena, Ukiah, or the south coast.
- Implementation of one landscape-level conservation project.

**Strategies:**

1. Simplify/streamline the conservation easement process.
2. Pursue public access projects near land conservation/population center focal areas, to mitigate development pressures and build energy, engagement, visibility, and donors.
3. Build strong partnerships that create economies of scale, generate landscape-level projects, and/or build staff specialization. Landscape-level initiatives are efforts which are focused on larger, interconnected areas of recognized conservation value, sensitivity and/or threat.
4. Collaborate with Mendocino County and other entities in the creation of a County-wide Conservation Plan.

**Goal #3:  
Preserve biologically important lands, open space and waters within the County.**

**Three-year Outcomes:**

- Implement a proactive landowner outreach program.
- At least 33% of acres conserved annually have a high biological/ecological value.

### Strategies:

1. Include an emphasis on land, waters and open space that is of high ecological value in the new MLT Strategic Conservation Plan.
2. Identify and systematically cultivate owners of biologically high-value lands and introduce MLT as an organization which meets their habitat conservation needs.
3. Include preservation where appropriate in protection work, including easements.
4. Create a series of eco-stories highlighting the scientific and preservation value of high-value acreage preserved.

### **Goal #4:**

**Significantly increase forest conservation and other carbon sequestration strategies while integrating climate resiliency and adaptation into our work.**

### Three-year Outcomes:

- Conserve an additional 30,000 acres of forestland by 2025.
- A minimum of one forest carbon sequestration project, or another carbon sequestration opportunity has been completed (or leveraged) each year to achieve the greatest potential carbon sequestration impact.
- Board and staff can speak comfortably and knowledgeably about the role of conservation and MLT's work in climate change and adaptation.
- The impact of climate change and MLT's role in addressing it is regularly integrated into outreach and communications materials and initiatives.

### Strategies:

1. Develop a series of educational sessions to educate Board and staff and empower them to speak on MLT's climate impact.
2. Pursue opportunities to work with landowners to facilitate and coordinate carbon sequestration funding to help pay for land protection project development costs.
3. Seek out, evaluate, and pursue all potential carbon sequestration opportunities where MLT can achieve the most impact, even opportunities not related to land protection.
4. Conduct research into how other land trusts, the Land Trust Alliance and other related organizations are addressing climate change and resiliency in their work (e.g. communications, projects, forest management, mitigation, water management).
5. Include an emphasis on climate in MLT's Strategic Conservation Plan.
6. Reduce MLT's carbon footprint.

7. Systematically integrate MLT's impact on climate change into outreach and communications (e.g. materials, website, events).

#### **Goal #5:**

**Engage, involve and support the empowerment of all segments of the County's population in this work and increase everyone's access to the area's extraordinary natural resources.**

#### **Three-year Outcomes:**

- Increase diversity of staff, Board and volunteers.
- Maintain at least one ongoing or completed project each year in collaboration with a local tribal nation or community organization.
- Measured increase in the number of under-represented residents leading and participating in MLT's programs and mission.

#### **Strategies:**

1. Work to advance our collective understanding of the historical roots and current challenges regarding diversity, equity, justice and inclusion (DEJI) and their relationship to land and water conservation.
2. Adopt internal policies and procedures and expand external communications demonstrative of MLT's commitment to both reflect and serve our diverse populace.
3. Create system to account for and track MLT's DEI-related progress.
4. Identify, cultivate and recruit more diverse leadership for MLT's staff, Board, Committees, and volunteer ranks.
5. Engage in long-term relationship building with a diverse array of organizations. Seek collaboration and partnerships that have mutual benefit.
6. Expand MLT's outdoor access, experiential opportunities, events and projects to benefit diverse communities.
7. Build MLT's outreach and engagement with local tribes, their leaders and members, supporting their conservation interests.

**Goal #6:**  
**Strengthen MLT's human resources (Board and staff) and capacity to serve the whole County and deliver on its goals and programs as designed.**

**Three-year Outcomes:**

- Board of Trustees has diversified and grown to 15 members.
- A diversified project staff which includes expanded expertise for MLT.
- A satellite office and conservation staff inland.

**Strategies:**

1. Identify, cultivate and recruit new Board members who are ethnically, generationally, vocationally and geographically diverse.
2. Build MLT's capabilities in agriculture, forestry management/ownership, and the ecological sciences to execute the strategies articulated in this Plan.
3. Raise the profile of MLT and its ability to serve all of the County through satellite offices and/or staff.
4. Expand MLT's donor development capacity through hire or contract.

**Goal #7:**  
**Ensure MLT's financial sustainability.**

**Three-year Outcomes:**

- A three-year fundraising plan.
- Increased earned revenues from 20% to 25% of our budget annually.
- Increased the number of MLT annual donors by 10% each year and increase the average donation size by 15% per year.

**Strategies:**

1. Create a three-year business plan for earned revenues.
2. Develop a three-year fundraising plan with expectations for growth to:
  - meet operating goals;
  - secure stewardship reserve funds;
  - strengthen operating reserves;
  - establish a project exploration fund; and

- fund in support of the acquisition (in fee or by easement) of high biologically valuable areas.
3. Expand MLT's Planned Giving/Legacy Program.
  4. MLT's financial policies have been reviewed and adjusted as appropriate as various funds are anticipated to grow.
  5. Provide annual fundraising training for the Board and staff and actively engage them in generating new funds for MLT.