



OUR VISION OF THE FUTURE

MOUNT GRACE LAND CONSERVATION TRUST

3-Year Strategic Plan
2024

INTO THE FUTURE



Emma G. Ellsworth
Executive Director

The country, and Massachusetts, have set ambitious conservation goals, recognizing that they are critical to address climate impacts, protect our biodiversity and keep our planet thriving for the next generation.

The Mount Grace region:

- boasts some of the state's most intact contiguous undeveloped land.
- features extraordinary biodiversity, yet remains relatively affordable.
- Is filled with conservation-minded neighbors who want their farms and forests protected, forever.

This is a great opportunity. It is also a responsibility. Today, post-pandemic migration, large-scale energy projects, and the generational transfer of land all remind us time is not on our side. Mount Grace must rise to this challenge, right now.

This plan responds to this urgent need. Together we must build our capacity to protect our farms and forests in time. Our wildlife needs us to act fast. The communities we serve need us to act now!



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MISSION

Mount Grace conserves and cares for our forests, farms, and waterways to promote healthy communities in climate-resilient, biodiverse landscapes.





Our Reason for Being

Mount Grace nurtures the interdependence of people and the land by developing community-based solutions to climate change and loss of habitat and biodiversity. To achieve this goal, conservation must engage with all who depend on forests, farms, and access to nature for livelihoods, peace of mind, and health. Sustainable conservation works to rebuild climate-resilient landscapes that provide clean air and water, healthy food, and biodiversity. The strategies in this plan advance this ethic of sustainability and reflect four themes raised by stakeholders.

Protecting and stewarding the land: Our region is blessed with unfragmented landscapes. These critical landscapes require strategic land protection to sustain the resilient corridors that can buffer our ecosystem from escalating climate change impacts and threats to biodiversity. Our landscape-scale conservation and stewardship are informed by science, Indigenous knowledge, and the needs of the community.

Supporting working landscapes: Working farms and forests are central to the survival of open land and our rural economy. Our programs foster robust food systems to ensure local food remains available for all and protected farmland stays in production despite increasing threats from development. Our conservation work supports both sustainably managed woodlands and forests where natural processes prevail.

Sharing knowledge: The impacts of our work are magnified by collaboration and sharing knowledge. Through our innovative stewardship we demonstrate the value of working lands and traditional ecological knowledge and facilitate our partners' efforts to engage in thoughtful land management. We are nationally recognized for supporting our partners with knowledge rooted in science and rich programmatic experience.

Sharing the land: The natural world should be both accessible and welcoming for all people. By centering land justice in our work, we further our commitment to reconnect more people to the land. As we continue to strengthen relationships with traditional partners, our new collaborations with people of color and Indigenous partners provide opportunities to expand past land trust practices to address unmet community needs in both rural and urban areas.

Our Vision of the Future

In collaboration with the entire Mount Grace community, we work toward a healthy future that will provide:



Contiguous, connected, resilient natural areas – to give us clean water and air, provide sustainable forest products, buffer the impacts of climate change, and protect the habitat wildlife needs to survive.



Thriving local food systems – from sustainable farmers to local sellers to informed buyers – to ensure people have access to healthy, nourishing food.



Healthier, happier, longer lives for all thanks to equitable access to the natural world that sustains us.



To support that future, Mount Grace must continue to take a lead role among land trusts in developing new programs and collaborations in order to evolve as the partner our community needs. To implement this vision, Mount Grace commits to:

- Address the threat of climate change to our environment and our communities by prioritizing new projects with high potential to mitigate climate change and by improving climate resilience on the lands we steward.
- Strengthen relationships with farmers and foresters to better understand the challenges they face and to design projects that sustain a future in which local forestry and farming contribute to the rural economy and improve local food security.
- Work with Indigenous partners to broaden the traditional definitions of what conservation is and who it serves, to ensure the fullest possible expression of community and land access.
- Build relationships with community members to understand how conservation can better incorporate the knowledge, and meet the needs of, the increasingly diverse communities in the region.
- Take on bold and ambitious conservation projects to protect what we love about this place – the wildlife, the forests, the farms, the clean air and water, and the connections we have with the land.



Mount Grace Strategic Priorities

The following priorities define the focus of this plan over the next three years.



Dramatically strengthen both the capacity and impacts of our conservation work.

Mount Grace envisions a broader notion of conservation that focuses on community needs and the very real crises of climate change and biodiversity loss. We face a unique, urgent moment where both opportunity and resources offer potential for greater conservation impact in our region. And we commit to growing our capacity as an organization to seize the opportunity of this moment.



Embrace land justice in conservation.

Mount Grace has taken the lead in southern New England in partnering with Nipmuc stakeholders to increase Tribal access to land, land stewardship, and new partnerships acknowledging Indigenous land rights. This commitment extends to land access for all, including other Tribes and communities of color, underserved communities, and those often left out of the benefits of land conservation.





Connect people to each other and to the land.

Mount Grace will engage the full breadth of the community—including traditional conservationists, youth and their families, hunters and fishers, farmers and woodlands owners, Black, Indigenous, and other communities of color, town leaders, and all those seeking a connection to nature. This broader coalition of conservation advocates can empower and learn from each other and build greater shared capacity to address our community needs. To help broaden community ownership of and benefits from conservation, we will work to make sure all feel welcome as members and supporters of Mount Grace and feel connected to the special places we protect.

Advance conservation as a critical natural solution to climate change and loss of biodiversity.


Our conservation focus will reflect our region's essential role in the state's commitment to resilience, biodiversity, and addressing habitat loss by enhancing landscape connectivity and strategic land protection. Our conservation programs will lead innovative efforts to support federal 30% by 2030 objectives; our stewardship work will demonstrate habitat restoration and protect threatened natural communities.



Emphasize protection of working lands

These lands are critical drivers for local economies and providers of local food. When well managed, farms and woodlands also offer essential harbors for wildlife and serve to mitigate climate change. Ensuring the viability of the working landscape requires that farms remain affordable for farmers and that farming and forestry remain sustainable despite the challenges. Mount Grace will support conservation-focused landowners and provide leadership and support as a credible resource for, and practitioner of, science-based land stewardship that incorporates Indigenous ecological knowledge.





Scientists, government leaders, and society at large all increasingly recognize that land conservation—protecting our farms, forests, waters, and precious open spaces—is critical to address and mitigate climate impacts, secure our threatened biodiversity, and keep our planet thriving for the next generation.

Mount Grace is uniquely positioned to meet these urgent needs. To rise to this challenge, we are undertaking our largest staff capacity expansion since 2007 to increase our conservation and stewardship impacts over the course of this strategic plan.

Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust Organizational Growth Plan

*New positions in green



Leadership

Executive Director

Deputy Director

Finance & Administration

Finance & Administration Manager

Finance Consultant

Development

Major Gifts & Grants Manager

Membership & Administration Associate

Communications & Engagement Associate

Community Outreach Associate

Conservation

Conservation Director

Project Manager

Project Manager

Project Manager

Land Justice

Climate & Land Justice Director

Cultural Steward (subcontract)

Cultural Steward Intern (subcontract)

Stewardship

Stewardship Director

Stewardship Manager

Stewardship Associate

Trails & Facilities Associate

Strategy 1: Manage collaborative conservation projects that protect priority lands and landscapes

FY25	FY26	FY27	Outcomes
Further develop metrics for identifying priority lands and landscapes.	Utilize and refine as needed.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fully trained and effective team of at least three project managers.
Refine decision-making processes to enable pursuing the most meaningful projects.	Utilize process and practice being more discerning.	Evaluate process.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Two completed collaborative, landscape-scale initiatives.
Simultaneously design and implement landscape-scale projects focused on highest impacts for biodiversity, resilience, equity, and community.			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Timely and effective in-house project transition from land protection to stewardship.
Build and sustain a flexible, highly competent land protection team.			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conserve 3,000+ acres prioritized by connectivity, climate resiliency, other metrics.
Develop strategy for building bandwidth to respond to urgent high impact opportunities.	Implement strategy. Capture and share lessons learned to jumpstart organization's ability to respond to future similar opportunities.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Secure one Conservation Area (CA) with significant potential to demonstrate sustainable forestry.
Complete projects in accordance with Land Trust Alliance (LTA) standards; celebrate closings and thank partners.			
Revisit concept of "signature" projects to share stories of most compelling projects.	If utilizing, create a cohesive, organizational-wide development process.	If utilizing, implement the process.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Publicly celebrate at least one project with an in-person, community-centered event.







Strategy 2: Develop, deepen and sustain relationships with deed holders and partners with the capacity and potential to protect priority lands and landscapes

FY25	FY26	FY27	Outcomes
Develop nuanced outreach strategies to deed holders stewarding priority lands.	Implement strategies.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relationships initiated in at least three key communities based on strategic planning priorities. Deepen relationships with at least two partners through projects Maintain and deepen existing relationships with Nipmuc stakeholders and Native Land Conservancy.
Develop metrics for quickly determining whether new tools or partners will yield outcomes that are worth the capacity.	Utilize metrics. Pursue opportunities that meet them and decline invitations that don't.		
Develop and deepen relationships with Indigenous partners (including Tribal governance) to ensure durability of collaborations.			
Evaluate landscape of existing and potential partners and their respective strengths and levels of activity.	Prioritize outreach and relationship-building with partners with greatest potential to help us protect priority lands and landscapes.		
Cultivate deed holder ambassadors and transition relationships to stewardship staff.			

Strategy 3: Understand community needs and prioritize developing and implementing the most compelling projects

FY25	FY26	FY27	Outcomes
Fully utilize Strategic Conservation Map, adapting to reflect refined project metrics, partner/community needs, and most tangible development threats.	Adapt Strategic Conservation Map as needed to integrate feedback from partners engaged in conserving priority lands and landscapes.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At least one new funding source utilized to advance a project. • Relationships strengthened in at least five communities.
Maintain robust understanding of the full suite of conservation funding options and leverage this knowledge to meet the needs of deed holders and complement the strengths of partners.			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Co-create at least one conservation project with a municipality.
Identify farms in transition and communicate to our BIPOC farming partners.	Work with BIPOC partners to transfer farms to BIPOC farmers.	Provide technical assistance and community support for these farmers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secure one new Conservation Area primarily focused on community recreation/open space needs and accessible to people of all incomes
	Evaluate current models of farm affordability and improve and expand to address evolving housing needs.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase number of farms stewarded by BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and other people of color) farmers.





SCOTT FOSTER
PHOTOGRAPHY

Strategy 4: Expand our conservation approach to include Land Return and support for long-term Indigenous land stewardship

FY25	FY26	FY27	Outcomes
<p>Develop clear understanding of the land-based goals of Indigenous partners and spectrum of support Mount Grace can provide.</p>	<p>Co-create projects and pursue land protection opportunities that address goals of Indigenous partners.</p>	<p>Assess process, tweak as needed, and support sharing of lessons learned.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indigenous access language included in all Conservation Restrictions (CRs).
<p>Pursue opportunities that result in permanent Indigenous land access, tenure, or stewardship (including CAs).</p>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One Land Return project completed.
<p>Integrate Nipmuc Land Steward and Nipmuc Land Stewardship Intern position (10 hours/month each) in operating budget to advance Indigenous land-based projects.</p>	<p>Retain positions, add additional intern if able.</p>	<p>Retain positions, add additional intern if able.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At least one project in development that will result in permanent Indigenous land access, tenure, or stewardship. • Nipmuc collaboration expanded to include Nipmuc Tribal Governance. • At least one project completed with Native land Conservancy.

Strategy 5: Leverage Mount Grace's conservation impact through deep, durable collaborations

FY25	FY26	FY27	Outcomes
<p>Continue coordinating and fiscally sponsoring the North Quabbin Regional Landscape Partnership (NQRLP), the second-oldest regional conservation partnership in the country.</p>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At least three NQRLP meetings annually.
<p>Utilize NQRLP as a platform for building our region's collective capacity to work with Indigenous partners.</p>	<p>Expand upon Catalyst Fund work with other partners within and beyond the NQRLP and amplify the lessons learned by land trust partners.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At least six additional partners engaged in building capacity to work with Indigenous partners. • At least \$30,000 of funding awarded to communities in MA through UMass-Amherst pass-through funds.
<p>Collaborate with UMass-Amherst to support conservation-based estate planning and municipal outreach via the Working Forest Initiative.</p>			
<p>Evaluate current composition of the NQRLP and identify strengths, weaknesses, and blind spots to enhance its overall effectiveness and relevance.</p>	<p>Address weaknesses and blind spots, including through thoughtful programming and relationship-building.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage Mass Land Trust Coalition, and at least two state agencies, in work patterned on the FY24 Catalyst Fund initiative.



Since 1986, Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust has helped protect more than 39,000 acres.



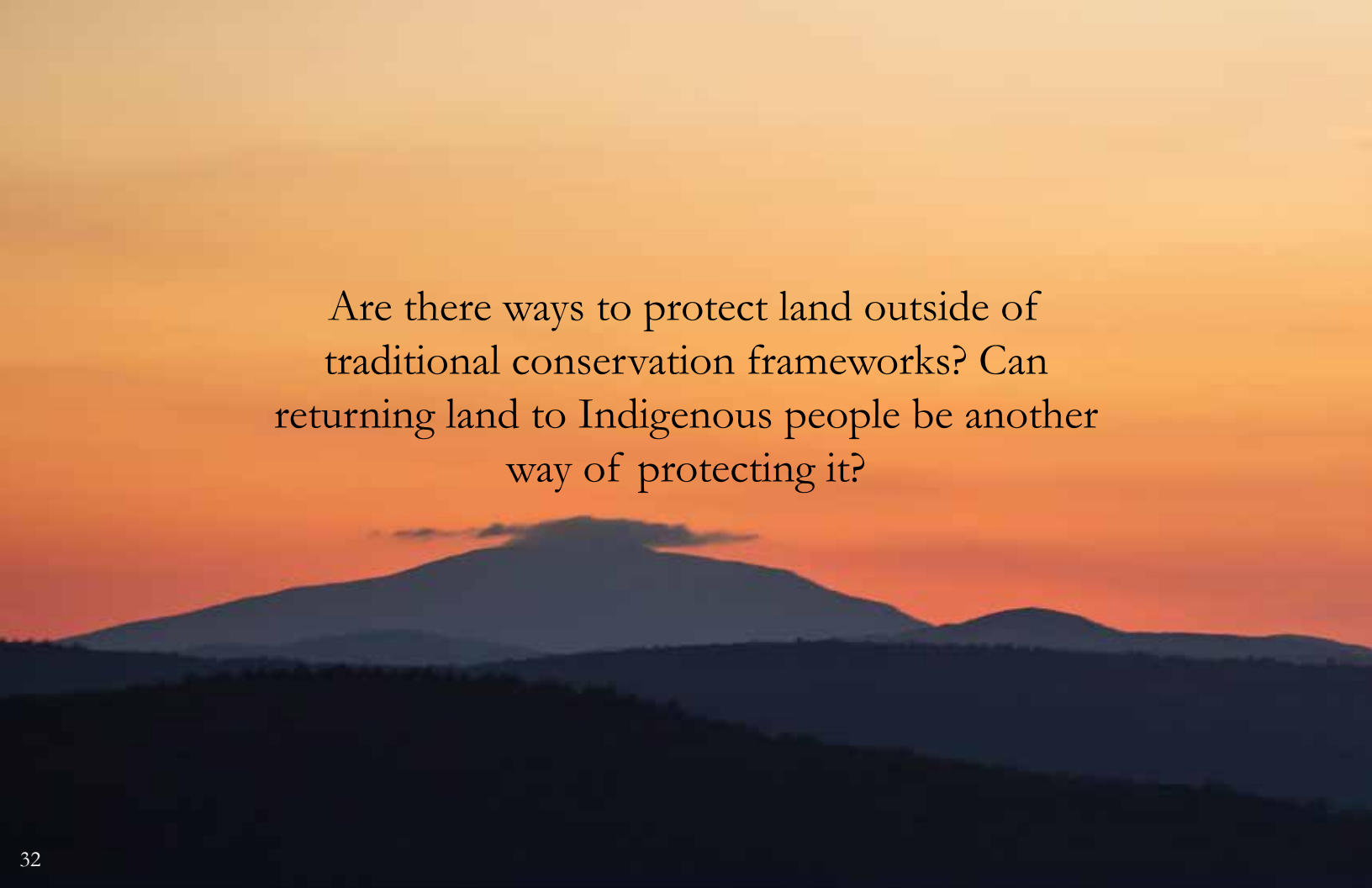
Strategy 6: Practice, demonstrate, and promote exemplary land management on protected properties

FY25	FY26	FY27	Outcomes
Maintain LTA stewardship standards (annual monitoring, Terrafirma insurance, management plans, boundary markings, etc).			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All CAs monitored annually and have current well-informed management plans with partner input.
Maintain forest management plans, Chapter 61 paperwork, stewardship information databases (including the Trail Infrastructure Survey).			
Host at least seven workdays at CAs.	Host 10+ CA workdays, with improvements to trail infrastructure, control of invasive species, and collection of ecological data as priorities.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved trail infrastructure/ experience for all trails. Invasive species on CAs decrease, invasive control at CAs with current projects continues.
Working with scientists and foresters and based off professional development trainings, implement diverse projects/management techniques, including forest management, tailored to each parcel.			
At least four climate change-related external professional development trainings and internal discussions/year to understand how our stewardship actions, and the implementation of new methods and technology, can build resilience across the lands we steward.			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage the public at least six times/year in workdays & educational events.
Share best management practices (soil health, backyard biodiversity, dam removal, stream/wetland restoration, climate smart forestry, etc.) that highlight CA and partner projects (through conferences, trainings, publications, etc.) at least four times a year.			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete one or more forestry projects addressing resiliency/ habitat diversity. 80% of management plans updated w/Indigenous input. Stewardship team attends at least four professional trainings per year.

Strategy 7: Fulfill our commitment to steward conserved land in partnership with deed holders in perpetuity

FY25	FY26	FY27	Outcomes
Conversation with every landholder around the yearly CR monitoring visit. Meet new deedholders and help all deedholders identify ecological issues and climate change impacts on their lands. Share resources on how to address climate change land challenges.			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All CRs, including assists, are monitored every year. Contact with all CR deed holders and strengthened relationships with at least 75% of CR deed holders. Walk the land with the majority of new CR deed holders. Assist 20+ CR landholders with grant information or proposals. Share stewardship resources through enews quarterly. Increase in deedholders reaching out for assistance to the Stewardship Team.
Maintain LTA standards for CR stewardship with updates and evaluations of protocols.			
Write baseline reports per year as needed.			
Streamline project transfer to Stewardship.	Continue working with project managers, reevaluating procedure when needed.		
Assist landholders with grants, management plans, and grant resources	Offer continued help and create webpages for deedholder resources.		
	Send specialized/personalized information to landholders on grants, and topics of interest.		
Get deedholder feedback on needs	CR “office hours,” or CR focused talks or enews.		





Are there ways to protect land outside of traditional conservation frameworks? Can returning land to Indigenous people be another way of protecting it?

Strategy 8: Broaden data driven stewardship practices, informed by climate science and in collaboration with Indigenous practitioners

FY25	FY26	FY27	Outcomes
Develop protocols for measuring outcomes of management activities on current CA projects.	Collect data and develop plans to use data to inform future management plans. Plan for communication of findings in FY27.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All large stewardship projects reviewed internally each year, evaluated for the capacity to track changes over time. Lessons learned are shared with partners. • Create protocol on building relationships between foresters and Indigenous stewards and best practices to acknowledge and support Indigenous stewardship in land management plans. • Develop two or more co-stewardship plans with Indigenous land stewards. • Write two or more cultural easements with Indigenous partners. • 80% of management plans updated with Indigenous input. • All new/updated management plans consider climate change threats and possible solutions.
Continue using remote monitoring vegetation layers to track long term CA health and develop a plan to analyze data in relation to weather patterns.			
Work with Nipmuc Land Stewards to develop plan(s) at one or more CA to monitor/restore important plants.	Implement restoration plan(s), monitoring what grows naturally and what needs facilitation.	Continue restoration activities and develop a long-term co-stewardship plan.	
Finalize protocols to include Indigenous input on all forest management plans.	Implement protocols and plans. Facilitate relationships between foresters and Indigenous partners.	Share protocols with peers.	
Write Cultural Easements for at least two CAs.	Draft co-stewardship plans centering Indigenous priorities.	Implement co-Stewardship plans.	
Collaborate with partners to share Indigenous projects with the public.			

Strategy 9: Engage with volunteers, experts, and other partners to steward the land

FY25	FY26	FY27	Outcomes
Improved volunteer webpage with detailed, sortable intake information.	Continue improving website with feedback. Allow public to submit CA land management concerns on-line. Add volunteer enews.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Four volunteer workdays/year. • Increased youth engagement in volunteer events.
At least four volunteer workdays/year for school, business, community groups.			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respond to community feedback regarding trail conditions promptly.
Review/update school programming, get teacher feedback.	Evaluate the effectiveness of in-school educational programming.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Infrastructure built or repaired on at least three CAs each year.
One to two events with local afterschool, library, homeschool groups.	Two to four afterschool events each year, add storybook trails in FY27.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meet with two or more experts on any major stewardship project.
Develop Alderbrook Indigenous signage with Kim Toney.	Work with Kim to include Indigenous narratives on another CA each year.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One or more Indigenous narratives added to signage each year.
Supervise one Land Stewardship Coordinator TerraCorps supporter. Add a seasonal stewardship staff member in FY26.			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pilot increasing staff capacity through a seasonal employee.
Maintain/expand Trail Steward, Chainsaw Volunteer, and Friend's Groups, and Citizen Science programs at our CAs. Assess need for other types of volunteers/conduct outreach as needed.			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At least three youth education events with community partners.
Meet with the Stewardship Advisory Committee, local nature clubs, and environmental professionals for input on CA management and outreach.			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase youth comfort in and care of nature, and knowledge of Mount Grace.





Strategy 10: Intentionally manage properties and opportunities to remove barriers for all people to access nature on conserved land

FY25	FY26	FY27	Outcomes
Build partnerships with outdoor recreation providers to broaden range of people using our CAs.	Work to make programs more affordable. Add new partnerships—Latino Outdoors, councils on aging, etc.	Integrate this work into local 3rd-party programming for youth involving schools, Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deepen at least two relationships with groups that can provide access to nature for all people. • Connect with at least three underserved populations through events and CA trail improvements • Improve maps and trail guides across all CAs. • Stories on major new Stewardship projects shared with the public. • Advance plans for a third accessible trail.
Improve trail maps, and trail descriptions, and hiking webpages so people feel more confident using our trails.	Assess improvements for increasing accessibility for kiosks, parking areas, and other recreational infrastructure and experiences.	Plan an event that brings nature to those who cannot make it out there.	
Evaluate accessibility of Alderbrook Meadows and Eagle Reserve trails and improve as needed.	Identify a CA to install a third accessible trail and apply for grant funding.	Install new accessible trail.	

Strategy 11: Host a diverse and evolving set of events that strengthen relationships between Mount Grace and our members and help to recruit new members

FY25	FY26	FY27	Outcomes
Create larger “y’all come” events with broader outreach.	Evaluate effectiveness of broad outreach strategy for new support and implement changes for more diverse community attendance.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 50% increase in supporters through increased public profile, additional outreach, and more staff capacity for focus on retention. • 50% of supporters increase their giving. • 100% increase in funds raised through PubScience and Trivia events on days of giving. • Eight recurring business sponsors for events & publications. • Four businesses partnering on volunteer days.
Incorporate business sponsorship opportunities in all event planning, beginning with large events in FY25 and expanding to as many events as practicable.			
Work with Adventure East to host invite-only events for mid-level givers.	Host two events with Adventure East, craft follow up strategies for attendees.	Evaluate effectiveness of events for increasing support for and connection to Mount Grace.	
Evaluate PubScience/Trivia online giving day events for effectiveness increasing support.	Implement changes in strategy for these events to increase new support.	Continue to refine strategy for hosting in-person events in conjunction with online giving days.	
Engage with chambers of commerce to recruit new partners. Work with Stewardship Team to publicize regular volunteer events for local businesses.			
Focus new staff capacity on increased supporter outreach & retention.			
Continue to build relationships with Nipmuc partners to expand cohosted events with Nipmuc focus or benefit.			
Schedule social events with and without alcohol. Use new space in conservation barn to hold seasonal community events.			

Strategy 12: Co-host community events that engage the full diversity of the community and opens people's lives to nature

FY25	FY26	FY27	Outcomes
Evaluate current partnerships, previous outcomes, usefulness, capacity?	Develop partner outreach plan, ID current supporters with links to other groups.	Implement outreach plan, engage new partners in events connected to affinities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Repeatable annual events partnered with BIPOC community groups. • Build relationships with six new organizational partners. • Established framework for seasonal co-hosted event coordination between Mount Grace, Adventure East, and public libraries. • Establish an Anchor Event: community focused, annually repeated, 1,000+ turnout, providing new support each year.
Co-host events with other climate groups, focus on engaging younger people.	Partner with libraries on events. Create new materials for younger demographics, e.g. monthly giving.	Evaluate effectiveness of events and materials to engage new supporters.	
Repeat Stone Cow concert partnership.	Continue annual concert, increase size in collaboration with Stone Cow.		
Work with Adventure East to provide guided events for diverse communities.	Make events more accessible by offering transportation.	Evaluate effectiveness of these events to engage new supporters.	
Co-create land justice content for website.	Expand partnerships to platform additional land justice articles each year.		
Develop relationships with BIPOC groups to find new presenters.	Co-host programming that appeals to a diverse audience.	Focus outreach to increase diversity of support.	

Strategy 13: Raise visibility and understanding among our constituents and audiences about Mount Grace’s climate and other conservation impacts

FY25	FY26	FY27	Outcomes
Add design/marketing skills via staff or contractor. Draft brand redesign plan.	Implement plan and evaluate effectiveness at communicating climate message.	ID strategies to improve/ complement plan.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage <35s on social media. • Add climate-related posts and videos—double cumulative average monthly reach & interactions across platforms. • Engage at least four new diverse partners to share articles through social media and connect shared resources through websites. • 50% increase of supporters (with strategy 11). • New marketing/brand kit depicting Mount Grace as a future-oriented, climate-focused organization.
Expand program-based mail outreach. Test cards versus letters.	Use new space in conservation barn to hold educational events with partners.		
Communicate stewardship outcomes through articles, events.	Use new space in conservation barn to hold educational events with partners.	Work with DCR on interpretive signage for Lawton Forest & Skyfields, Co-host events.	
Design digital media plan adding more videos, partnerships, connections to climate.	Create six climate-related educational short video posts/year. Engage at least four diverse partners to share articles written on social media.		
Add Climate educational content to website.	Add landholder resources to website that appeal to diverse groups.	Outreach to partners to connect our shared messaging and resources on climate.	



A photograph of a large, two-story red wooden barn with a black roof. A white vent is visible on the upper level. In the foreground, a cow with white and black patches is partially visible. The barn is situated in a wooded area with a large tree trunk on the left.

"While land conservation is Mount Grace's core mission, education and outreach are vital to reach the next generation."

Strategy 14: Expand our partnerships to include more diverse voices and experiences with nature

FY25	FY26	FY27	Outcomes
Collaborate with local hospitals/health orgs to showcase health effects of nature and activity.			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diverse partners, including BIPOC organizations, engaged in sharing articles and reciprocal posts. • Build relationships with BIPOC led orgs connecting people to nature. Support heir efforts to expand.
Fund an event budget to support BIPOC presenters & experts.			
Offer our new conservation barn as anchor site for community events.			
Identify and reach out to four or more media outlets with diverse voices.	Collaborate with these outlets to mutually raise each other’s profiles.	Host contributing writers from partner organizations in our media.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wider visibility in BIPOC communities. • Social media partnerships cross-post, 50% increase in tags. • Schools help Mount Grace connect to new partner organizations.
Establish reciprocal relationships with 12 social media accounts representing diverse organizations.	Build relationship with social media network, incentivize cross-posts during giving days & online campaigns.	Maintain regular contact with social media partners through cross-posting	
Integrate plans for outreach/ events with schools into communication plan.	Structure an accessible plan to share student experiences publicly.	Integrate student voices from outreach activities into regular media features.	

Strategy 15: Make long-term relationship building a priority in individual giving, building in resilient networks of personal connections

FY25	FY26	FY27	Outcomes
Build to 14 major donor events/year.			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 200 top donors have ongoing relationships with Board, Strategic Revenue Committee (SRC), or staff. Full Board/SRC participation in relationship building. All Board members attend three major donor events/year. SRC participates in appeals and other fundraising solo as needed.
Improve systems for Board/staff donor stewardship. Develop individual outreach strategies for key new major supporters as they join.			
At least four personal communications/year for all our top 100 supporters.	At least four personal communications/year for top 150 major donors.	At least four personal communications/year for top 200 major donors.	
Create individual plans for all Board/SRC and participating staff utilizing database.	Revise and update plans based on participant feedback. Create plans for new participants. Provide Board with a menu of opportunities including hosting & support roles.		
Hire Deputy Director to add capacity.	Deputy Director responsible for 25 key donors.	Deputy Director responsible for 50 key donors.	
SRC/staff join Director for appeal and campaign asks.	SRC/staff make appeal and campaign asks with Director support.	SRC/staff make solo appeal and campaign asks as needed.	
Deepen current relationships in support of near-term priorities, including: Outreach, Equity, Stewardship, Conservation Programs, Climate Change & Organizational Growth.			

Strategy 16: Build the people capacity of Mount Grace to meet its full fundraising potential

FY25	FY26	FY27	Outcomes
Strategic Revenue Committee meets to review Appeals process.	Transition emeritus Board members w/relevant skills to SRC.	SRC participates in anniversary campaign.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All participating Board/ staff are trained in fundraising
Clarify Board fundraising roles. Add Board members with fundraising experience.	SRC & Board provide leadership in setting goals for Anniversary campaign.	Board participates in anniversary campaign (tailored participation opportunities).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advisory Committee introduces multiple new funders to Mount Grace.
Add development staff with fundraising experience or comfort.	Support staff to work with portfolios of major & cusp donors.	Staff supports anniversary campaign.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quadruple monthly givers by end of plan.
Launch Branded Monthly Donor Society.	Focus on online outreach to double monthly givers annually.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build a culture of participation among Board & staff.
Fundraising trainings for SRC, development staff, Board, and other staff as needed.			
Create/recruit Advisory Council to support Director.	Work with advisors to build connections with foundations & critical individual donors.		

Strategy 17: Prepare for the next set of campaigns

FY25	FY26	FY27	Outcomes
<p>Create and test searchable capacity and affinity tags in database for top 100 donors. Expand to all donors after testing.</p>	<p>Search all new supporters from outreach mailers and other sources. Match donors/interests to relevant campaigns.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 40th anniversary mini-campaign incorporates new supporters, new Margaret Power Biggs (MPB) Society members, new high-impact giving.
<p>Create outreach plans for 20 “undergiving” supporters based on connections in community.</p>	<p>Recruit connected supporters for volunteer & leadership roles.</p>	<p>Match connected supporters with key donors.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Full participation by SRC in asks.
<p>Use outreach mailers (online and paper) to test mailing styles.</p>	<p>Coordinate programmatic outreach mailers with press and social media campaigns to grow supportership.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 100% Board participation as campaign volunteers for anniversary campaign.
<p>Raise profile across all four subregions + Boston/Worcester/Valley (with outreach strategies 12 & 13).</p>			
<p>Development staff/ volunteers test best practices for asks, build portfolios of donors.</p>	<p>Set goals & begin quiet phase for small 40th anniversary campaign.</p>	<p>Begin public phase.</p>	



Strategy 18: Create effective processes for asking, thanking, and connecting with supporters

FY25	FY26	FY27	Outcomes
Continue to meet LTA/IRS standards on recordkeeping & acknowledgement of tax-deductible gifts.			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New database used by all development staff & understood by all staff & Board.
Continue to create and send biannual appeals, project-based appeals, and regular renewal letters to supporters.			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All donors thanked in a timely manner with a hand-signed letter compliant with relevant regulations and standards (electronic versions for online givers with no listed address).
Schedule thank you letters at least two times/week. Update text monthly with events and bimonthly with current projects.			
Share event info & rsvps, as well as engagement tips and plans with all relevant Board, Staff, and others before events.			
Provide weekly giving reports to each Board or staff donor steward.	Review donor feedback dissemination in advance of 40th campaign.	Use donor feedback to guide 40th campaign.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All lapsing donors invited to rejoin. • All donors contacted for spring and annual appeal unless opting out.
Staff coordinates meetings of Strategic Revenue Committee and supports Board President in check ins with Board members.			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board reaching out to major donors independently of staff.
Add portfolio review to Development Team meetings, get feedback from each donor steward.	Establish monthly review for all participating donor stewards, incorporate feedback as needed.	Streamline monthly review based on feedback from Board, staff, volunteers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 100% Board participation as thankers and ambassadors.

Strategy 19: Develop greater awareness of and involvement in legacy giving

FY25	FY26	FY27	Outcomes
Update planned giving materials.	Place materials with participating experts and develop annual mailing schedule for long-time donors. Include materials in existing mailings as appropriate.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Total number of known bequests doubles. • 50% of legacy givers have attended an event with their families. • Build capacity to host planned giving event in east, west, or south region with at least four partners. • Annual planned giving workshops with multiple locations and online options. • Annual recognition event held in person.
Hold planned giving and financial planning workshops for long term supporters.	Continue workshops and add more experts/advisers to workshop panels.		
Publicize Legacy Society supporters via newsletter profiles and other media, collect and publish new legacy stories adding to current list. Focus on Gardner and Greenfield areas, as well as metro Boston, to build out from current focus on central region.			
Create and manage Legacy Society event (land-focused event at sites with significant legacy story).	Host year two event adapted based on supporter feedback.	Host year three event.	





Strategy 20: Access public funding to leverage private support for regional conservation

FY25	FY26	FY27	Outcomes
Submit & secure grants to advance landscape-scale projects. Centralize & manage grant proposals.			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding for landscape-scale conservation increases by 50% from FY25 baseline. • Six staff with experience writing \$25k+ grants—50% more proposals submitted. • LOIs (letters of inquiry, introducing programs to new funders) updated annually for all programs. • Six new foundation funders identified and stewarded by staff—focus on program funding.
Increase # of staff with grantwriting experience.	Increase # of staff writing grants for \$25k+ each year.		
Create Program-based LOIs for Landscape, Stewardship, Land Justice, Climate, Outreach, Community, and support of Indigenous Stewards Program.	Continue foundation outreach using annually updated LOIs and connections via Board, advisers.		
Submit & secure capacity building grants to expand program staff.	Submit & secure seed grants for quiet phase of 40th anniversary campaign.	Submit & secure grants for public phase of 40th anniversary campaign.	

Strategy 21: Cultivate diverse Board and committee leadership to effectively guide and promote the organization

FY25	FY26	FY27	Outcomes
Create a stipended BIPOC Leadership Committee to give feedback to Board.	Continue to fund the BIPOC Leadership Committee and increase members as needed.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our organization is guided by a diverse set of voices that have not been historically included. • Leadership Committee and Land Justice subcommittee created. • Board composition transitions to better reflect demographics of our towns.
Create a Land Justice subcommittee. Offer stipends as needed to support diverse participation.	Subcommittee meets quarterly and provides input to guide Land Justice Program, community outreach work, and other programmatic priorities.		
Implement recommendations of both Committees.			
	Recruit new committee members with BIPOC Leadership Committee guidance to ensure committees increasingly reflect demographics of our service area and partners.		
	Recruit new Board members with BIPOC Leadership Committee guidance to ensure Board reflects demographics of our service area and partners.		



Strategy 22: Strengthen the full potential and professional impact of land trust staff

FY25	FY26	FY27	Outcomes
Complete construction of new office space and rehouse staff.	Continue to update physical plant in line with best practices of peer land trusts.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff has capacity for increased conservation impacts.
Maintain commitment to 36-hour week and sabbatical program, support staff in keeping work/life balance.			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff hours worked reflects contracts.
Hire Deputy Director and new staff per capacity expansion plan.	Add program staff as needed, review impacts.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff participates in strategic exploration of new collaborations.
Support staff ability to receive trainings via Land Trust Alliance, Massachusetts Land Trust Coalition, Regional Conservation Partnerships, etc. Build staff capacity to provide trainings at these fora where appropriate.			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mount Grace has multiple employees capable of stepping up to cover leadership roles.
Explore collaborative opportunities with peer land trusts.	Choose collaborative options and partners that offer the best likelihood of accelerating conservation impacts.		

Strategy 23: Strengthen the full potential and professional impact of land trust staff
Embrace diversity, equity, and inclusion throughout every part of our work

FY25	FY26	FY27	Outcomes
Provide racial equity/cultural sensitivity/diversity trainings and discussions for the Board twice annually through Board meetings or scheduled separately (via Land Justice subcommittee presentation or other BIPOC-led forum).			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular, repeated staff and Board trainings on racial equity/cultural sensitivity. • Regular staff trainings on DEIJ (diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice). • Change our hiring policy so that we are actively diversifying candidates for positions. • Ensure Board and staff culture welcomes BIPOC and diverse participation.
	Include racial equity/cultural sensitivity training with an external trainer in Board orientations. Have returning Board members attend at the beginning of new terms.		
Adapt hiring policies and procedures to remove roadblocks limiting BIPOC candidates/participation.	Continue to use and refine new hiring policies based on best practices and committee guidance.		
Keep jobs posted until we have diverse candidates in our pool of applications. Adapt posting systems to focus on reaching more diverse applicants.			
Biannual Staff Retreats include half day focus on a DEIJ topics.			
Quarterly staff meetings focus on topics related to DEIJ in conservation.			

Strategy 24: Maintain excellence in internal systems, planning, project management, and protocols

FY25	FY26	FY27	Outcomes
Create and disseminate request for proposals for auditors and hire new firm for annual audit.	Work with new auditors to ensure ongoing compliance with all relevant regulations.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meet all Federal and State regulatory standards. • Meet all LTA standards for accreditation. • Meet goals of strategic plan. • New strategic plan published for FY28.
Refine systems for reconciling Quickbooks and Little Green Light database and tracking project funding/expenses.	Continue to track all income/expenses and update systems as needed.		
Track progress on strategic plan.			
		Create request for proposals for new strategic plan. Hire new partner to support planning. Begin planning process.	

PHOTOGRAPHY

DJ Glisson: Cover photo, 3, 6-7, 8-9, 11, 15, 18-19, 30-31, 32-33, 48-49

Karen Bulbuk: 14

Ernie LeBlanc: 20-21

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A Message from our Board President



David Spackman
President, Board of Directors

This strategic plan was informed by a series of meetings with community members, many of which I was honored to participate in. What struck me from those conversations was the passion and commitment our community voiced for Mount Grace and our collective endeavors to address climate change, biodiversity, recreational and economic opportunities of our farms and forests, and contributions and knowledge of Indigenous peoples.

These issues are universal, daunting, and can leave us feeling powerless to effect change, but Mount Grace provides the opportunity to address them here, in our backyard. We can be a model for efforts here and elsewhere.

Thank you for reading our strategic plan. I encourage you to provide ideas, to ask questions, and be ambassadors. Everything Mount Grace has accomplished is because of the support of our community. We look forward to your continuing support and participation in the journey before us.