



STRATEGIC PLAN 2021-24



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Message from Chair and Executive Director

Despite recent challenges across the world and close to home, land trusts, OLTA's other conservation partners are continuing to inspire action, and work with us, to protect more important lands, and the life that is supported by them.

This plan lays the foundation for where we want to be as an organization, and how we will realize our shared vision - *a landscape rich with connected and protected spaces, supported by a thriving conservation community.*

This strategic plan will guide our actions for the next three years.

The role land trusts play is essential to all our future. Our focus will continue to be on elevating and empowering land trusts and promoting organizational excellence.

Tackling climate change and biodiversity protection is more critical than ever. The importance of connected landscapes is key to the health of the lands and waters and to our own health. OLTA will grow, deliver, support and share research and action opportunities to increase our impact.

OLTA will work in an ethical space, and listen, learn and share opportunities to grow equity, inclusion and diversity in all our work.

We are proud of our almost 20-year history, working with members, associates, partners, and rights holders to support land conservation across Ontario.

This strategic plan was developed by the board of governors with assistance from the Strategic Planning Committee and OLTA staff, with input from rights holders, partners and community members. The contributions of many, too numerous to mention, have made this a better plan – one that will set the tone for the next three years, and have lasting benefits for decades to come.

Yours in conservation,



Gayle Wood
Chair, of the OLTA Board of Governors



Alison Howson
Executive Director, OLTA

About OLTA

Through all its work Ontario Land Trust Alliance acknowledges and is grateful to all the original stewards of the land. For thousands of years, Indigenous Peoples have inhabited, cared for and used these lands and waters, applying original instructions, Indigenous knowledge systems and laws. Ontario Land Trust Alliance also acknowledges those Indigenous Peoples, and other peoples who currently live, work, play and learn on the lands around us.

Ontario Land Trust Alliance (OLTA) is a registered charity focused on providing community, knowledge sharing and support to land trusts and other groups committed to land conservation across Ontario.

By strategically protecting land, we contribute essential solutions to biodiversity loss and climate change. Restoring and protecting forests, wetlands, grasslands and farmland are nature-based climate solutions. Nature absorbs carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and stores carbon in plants and soil. Nature also shields against storm surges, absorbs the worst effects of flooding and protects biodiversity.

Nature does the heavy lifting for us. All we have to do is protect it.

Our members and partners work from Rainy Lake in the west, to Windsor in the south, and Cornwall in the east, in 50 connected charities and communities. Ontario Land Trust Alliance's local land trust members collectively own and care for over 100,000 acres across Ontario, engaging the support of thousands of volunteers and supporters annually.

OLTA connects the land conservation community by sharing knowledge and best practices, reducing financial barriers to land conservation, promoting organizational excellence, sharing access to current research and Indigenous knowledge systems and acting as a voice for land trusts among the public, governments and other rights holders and partners.

We believe that, as a community, we need to learn about, engage and uphold our role within treaties, settler's obligations and responsibilities, and natural law in order to honour our ongoing commitment to meaningful reconciliation with all Indigenous Peoples on whose treaty and ancestral territories we live and work. We are mindful of broken covenants and the need to reconcile with all our relations.

OLTA is committed to providing an ethical space, valuing differences, and learning how to foster equity, diversity, and inclusion in all of its work.

Ethical space can be explained as a place where traditional oral practices and western written practices are paralleled, leveraging the strengths of the respective processes to co-create a safe place to design, develop, validate and work together

in harmony, bridging the gap between cultures and activating meaningful reconciliation.

Together, may we strengthen and sustain our care for this land and each other, drawing on the strength of our mutual history of nation building through peace and friendship, and being mindful of generations past, present and yet to come.

OLTA History

OLTA was established in 1997 as a committee of the Federation of Ontario Naturalists (Ontario Nature) known as the Ontario Nature Trust Alliance with 14 founding members. In July 2002, with a membership of 23 land trusts, it was decided to incorporate as a new independent organization named the Ontario Land Trust Alliance.

Context for this Strategic Plan

This Strategic Plan replaces OLTA's Strategic Plan for 2017-20. It was developed through extensive consultation and engagement with our staff, Board of Governors, member land trusts and associates, and with rights holders, stakeholders and the wider community. It is also mindful of the 2019 updated Canadian Land Trust Standards and Practices.

This document provides a framework to guide our strategic direction and operational planning. It ensures we remain accountable to our members, partners, donors, and our entire community.

This Strategic Plan was approved by the OLTA Board of Governors on February 16, 2021.

Vision

A landscape rich with connected and protected spaces, supported by a thriving conservation community.

Mission

Empowering a vibrant and enduring land trust community in Ontario.

Values

Our values guide our actions and they represent who we are as an organization and community. They influence our actions and decision making.

Collaboration	You add value. Together we strengthen the land trust community by sharing knowledge and ideas.
Equity	You are included. We are a continually learning organization that embraces a variety of perspectives and actively seeks to engage with people of all cultures and backgrounds.
Respect	We will listen. We care about your opinion and will operate with kindness and compassion.
Integrity	We will earn your trust. We are committed to being transparent, accessible and responsible, and using best available knowledge.
Leadership	We will raise the bar. We will set an example for ethical decision making and best practices in land conservation.
Resiliency	We will endure. We are committed to protecting the land you love forever.
Reconciliation	We will learn. We will work with Indigenous Peoples in the spirit and practice of reconciliation, honouring Indigenous interests, responsibilities, rights, Treaties, protocols and Knowledge Systems.

Priorities, Goals and Outcomes

Priority 1 Promote land trust organizational excellence

Context/Background: Our intention is that land trusts will be better supported, more stable and have sufficient resources available. OLTA will become the go-to resource for land trusts based largely on the premise that a high tide floats all boats.

This fundamental core activity for OLTA will empower and elevate other land trusts to be the very best at what they do.

Goals	Outcomes (What does success look like?)
<p>Elevate the knowledge base of the land trust community</p>	<p>Canadian Land Trust Standards & Practices inform and guide land trust operations and decision making <i>100% of OLTA members move towards adherence to S&Ps, and show improved operations, risk management and decision making.</i></p> <p>Topical education and training are available to the community <i>At least three projects underway with research collaborations aligned with OLTA priority issues e.g. S&Ps, biodiversity targets, climate action, Indigenous perspectives, diversity.</i></p> <p>Community is provided with up to date information and resources <i>Two or three published reports/guideline documents for land trusts developed or updated.</i></p>
<p>Reduce financial barriers to land conservation</p>	<p>Funding instruments and incentives are available <i>At least \$1M in funding per year available for OLTA members for securement and stewardship.</i></p> <p>Resource support is available to help land trusts</p>

Priority 2 Increase influence and visibility of community land conservation

Context/Background: OLTA needs to be louder to raise the profile of land conservation. OLTA boldly moves forward. Together we need to make sure that others know this work is happening and are invited to become a part of it. By “making a bigger pie” we can amplify local voices in the land trust community. As well as encouraging society at large to understand and support the important role land trusts play in the conservation landscape.

Goals	Outcomes (What does success look like?)
Increase public awareness of the importance of protecting land	<p>More engagement between the public and the land trust community</p> <p><i>Communications tools developed and available for OLTA and member land trust use.</i></p> <p><i>Number of OLTA members and associates grows by 10%.</i></p> <p>Increased visibility across all media channels</p> <p><i>Social media and newsletter followers increased by 20%. At least 3 media releases per year.</i></p>
Be recognized as a key influencer on land trust issues	<p>Meaningful dialogue with government agencies, decision makers and influencers positively affecting policies that impact land trusts</p> <p><i>Multiple calls made or actively supported each year on federal, provincial and local government to support policies that positively impact land conservation.</i></p> <p><i>Responses made to all government proposals/activities that could impact the land trust community.</i></p>

Priority 3 Provide leadership to advance diversity and inclusion in all land trust practices

Context/Background: Through learning, listening and meaningful dialogue, we improve our understanding of discrimination and systemic racism in society, actively breaking down barriers. We learn how to welcome and meaningfully engage people of all abilities and backgrounds to the land trust community. We acknowledge the wrongs of the past and continuing in the present, and build new relationships as we learn what land conservation means, as part of an inclusive and diverse society. OLTA has an opportunity to demonstrate a new kind of inclusive leadership where we all belong. We believe that we need to be comfortable having uncomfortable conversations in the hope for a more inclusive and diverse future.

Goals	Outcomes (What does success look like?)
Advance recommendations in <i>The Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s Final Report</i>	Have informed and constructive dialogue on the role of OLTA and its members in truth and reconciliation <i>Supporting guidance developed and shared to ensure dialogue is possible within an accountable and ethical space for Indigenous participants.</i> Increase engagement among Indigenous communities, OLTA and member land trusts <i>Resources shared (webpage created and maintained) and at least 2 direct engagement opportunities developed per year to assist land trusts in being more supportive and collaborative with Indigenous communities, to build sense and sensibilities.</i>
Provide opportunities for nature and land conservation to be more accessible	Facilitate increased participation for people of different abilities and backgrounds <i>Programming developed to engage new communities.</i>
Model equity, diversity and inclusion to be more reflective of the people of Ontario	The land trust community is supported to implement equity, diversity and inclusion practices <i>OLTA policies and plans reviewed, created and implemented to maximize opportunities to be more inclusive across all areas of OLTA’s and members’ work.</i>

Priority 4 Grow organizational capacity to continue to serve the land trust community

Context/Background: People are the heartbeat of the charitable sector and culture can make or break an organization. Growth and sustainable revenue is the downstream product to healthy activities upstream, the result of which is financially sustainable organizations across the land conservation community. Working as a team we can lift each other up and remove barriers to success.

A big part of this work will be to take care of OLTA’s people (our staff and volunteers) and move toward an abundance mindset. This is what we will do to safeguard the future and be as prepared as possible for the impact of external threats.

Goals	Outcomes (What does success look like?)
Advance a culture of philanthropy across all aspects of the organization	Staff and volunteers understand the importance of philanthropy and are champions for it
Diversify revenue streams and build sustainable funding	<p>Increased circle of support <i>Diversity of growing funding streams.</i></p> <p>New revenue streams in place <i>Legacy gift program developed and growing.</i></p> <p>Sufficiently staffed fundraising department</p>
Take care of our people	<p>Ensure a healthy, caring and mentally fit workplace</p> <p>Stable, engaged and empowered staff and volunteers <i>Low staff and volunteer turnover.</i></p> <p>Succession planning is in place</p>

Thank You

This strategic plan is ambitious and we can't do it alone. We are counting on the support of our friends and the community to help us achieve our goals.

Please visit our website to keep up to date on various projects and ways that you can get involved, to help us protect and restore biodiversity and grow nature-based climate solutions across Ontario.

Contact us:

Ontario Land Trust Alliance Inc.

Toronto Office: 416-588-6582

Email: admin@olta.ca

www.olta.ca

Photo credits:

Front page clockwise from top left – Bruce Kennedy, Jeff Driscoll, David Agro at Long Point Basin Land Trust and David Coulson

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