



Nisqually Land Trust



Strategic Direction

2009 - 2011





*Nisqually Land Trust
Strategic Direction 2009 - 2011*

*Adopted by
the Nisqually Land Trust Board of Directors
January 21, 2009*

*George Walter, President
William Kogut, Vice President*

*Patricia Brady
Cathie Butler
Steve Craig
Mary Foster
Linda Hoffman
David Troutt*

*Joe Kane
Executive Director*



Contents

Part I: Strategic Direction

Executive Summary *Page 1*

Acknowledgments *Page 3*

Letter from the Director *Page 4*

Vision, Mission, Values *Page 6*

Goals and Strategies *Page 8*

Benchmarks *Page 9*

Part II: Three-Year Plans *Page 15*



Annual Float Trip 2005



Executive Summary

Nisqually Land Trust

STRATEGIC PLAN

2009-2011

Executive Summary

THE CHALLENGE

The Nisqually River watershed remains one of Washington's most pristine river habitats despite being located in a landscape that is extensively and increasingly urbanized. Since its founding 20 years ago, the Nisqually Land Trust has permanently protected some 2000 acres of superior wildlife habitat and some 10.5 miles of salmon-producing shoreline. Over the last four years, we have grown exponentially – we have tripled the amount of land under our permanent protection, doubled our staff and our operating budget, and created a thriving stewardship program. But the Nisqually watershed has been – and will continue to be – one of the most rapidly developing regions of Puget Sound, and the need for smart conservation has become only more urgent.

OUR RESPONSE

In response to this increasing challenge, in 2008 the board of the Nisqually Land Trust launched a planning process to help increase both the quality and pace of our land conservation work and to create a road map for our organizational growth in 2009-2011. The result is this strategic plan. We thank the many individuals and organizations that helped as advisors in developing it.

Our vision is to protect, restore, and manage the natural and essentially wild aspects of the Nisqually River basin while cooperating with watershed communities to support an ecologically sustainable way of life. Our mission is to acquire and manage critical lands to permanently protect the water, wildlife, natural areas, and scenic vistas of the Nisqually River watershed.

To guide our work and to respond to the urgent challenges facing us, the Land Trust will structure its conservation services to meet four goals:

- 1. Permanently protect critical lands in the Nisqually Watershed.** The Land Trust will accelerate its permanent protection of critical lands by developing a new conservation strategy, increasing its funding partnerships, and establishing a strong conservation-easement program to complement its fee-ownership program.



- 2. Restore and maintain the conservation and scenic values of protected lands.**
The Land Trust will make land stewardship a primary function of the organization and move aggressively to maintain and promote the ecosystem health of its lands.
- 3. Engage the public in private conservation and the mission of the Land Trust.**
The Land Trust will expand its collaborative work with local communities and develop new and innovative ways to get people out on its lands and involved in permanent protection of critical lands.
- 4. Grow the capacity of the Land Trust.** The Land Trust will grow its organization to the next level of effectiveness by increasing board leadership, staff capacity, and support for the Land Trust's work.

The detailed plans for fulfilling these goals follow in the pages of this strategic plan. In addition, annual plans and a long-term fundraising plan will guide the implementation of our work and assure that we have the pieces in place and resources in hand to meet the commitments we make here.



*Boxcar Canyon
Mashel River, 2006*



Gold Acquisition, Nisqually River, 1992



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Land Trust extends its deepest thanks to Rick and Cathy Williams, the Hugh and Jane Ferguson Foundation, and the Burning Foundation. Our strategic planning process would not have been possible without their support. Our thanks also to Marc Smiley for his guidance throughout the project.

We would like to thank Ann Cooke, Priscilla Terry and Prime Locations, The Rants Group, and Wellspring Spa at Mt. Rainier for their help in staging our retreats and focus groups. As well, our thanks to the many community members and conservation partners who participated in our focus groups and interviews:

Kathleen Ackley
Shelley Badger
David Burger
Doug Bloom
Cathie Butler
Rich Carlson
Steve Chamberlain
Margaret Clapp
Sandy Desner
Jeanette Dorner
Dr. Greg Ettl

Ruta Fanning
J.W. Foster
Kimberly Freeman
Grant Griffin
Jim Haley
Justin Hall
Jon Halvorsen
Kirk Hanson
Linda Hoffman
Steve Klein
Greg Moore
Tom Nelson

Steve Pruitt
Sandra Romero
Steve Saunders
Tom Smallwood
Pene Speaks
Joanne Stellini
Jan Strong
Jean Takekawa
Priscilla Terry
Jack Ward
Jim Wilcox



View from 2009 Mashel River Acquisition



Letter from the Director

Clean water, abundant wildlife, inspiring vistas, healthy habitats for people, plants, and animals: the Nisqually River watershed has it all, and perhaps more of it than any watershed in Puget Sound. But how can we assure that these precious natural treasures will be passed along to the next generation, and the generations after that?

In early 2008, to help answer this question – and to better respond to the rapid pace of development we saw around us – the Land Trust kicked off an ambitious strategic planning process. We convened focus groups in local communities, conducted individual interviews with key stakeholders, and staged a series of facilitated and intensely focused retreats and study sessions for board and staff.

On a positive note, we learned that people throughout the region value the Land Trust because we achieve concrete results – we protect habitat, and we protect it forever. We won particular praise for our approach to conservation: voluntary, cooperative, private. *“We’ve reached the limits of what we can achieve through regulation.”*

We heard also that we must step up our work. Poorly planned development is proceeding too rapidly. The watershed is losing its most treasured natural places at a frightening pace, and *“people are growing more distant from the land.”*



We were also given a challenge: The Land Trust must lead, and we must engage even more closely with watershed communities and develop a broad array of partnerships and innovative strategies: *“The Land Trust is the vehicle to carry out community goals of preservation, conservation and growth management.”*

And we heard that we should be careful to take care of ourselves, because our work is long-haul, marathon work: Build our capacity, train our staff, and secure long-term support.

This document is the result of that long and intense process. Actually, it’s two documents. The first, “Strategic Direction 2009-2011,” shows where we intend to go over the next three years. It defines our mission, values, and goals, and the benchmarks by which we will measure success.

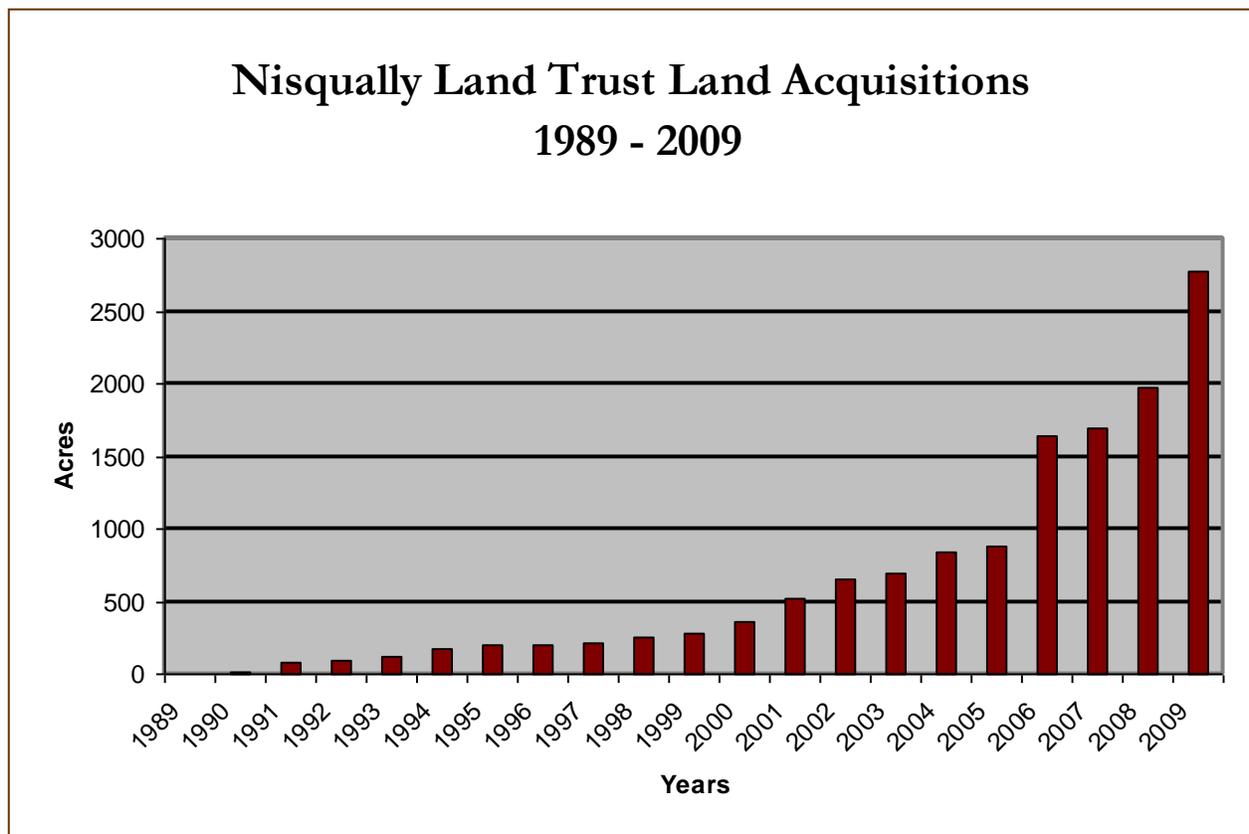


The second document, “Three-Year Plans,” tells how we’re going to get there. Year by year, goal by goal, it maps the steps we will take to meet the challenges of our times and grow the Land Trust to the next level of effectiveness.

In short: We are going to protect more land, we are going to restore and steward that land to even higher standards, and we are going to engage our partners and supporters in ever deeper ways.

We’re looking forward to it, and we hope you are, too

—Joe Kane, Executive Director





Vision Statement

The Nisqually River watershed remains one of Washington's most pristine river habitats despite being located in a landscape that is extensively and increasingly urbanized. Our vision is to protect, restore, and manage the natural and essentially wild aspects of this river basin while cooperating with watershed communities to support an ecologically sustainable way of life. We envision:

- Clean and abundant drinking water;
- Self-sustaining wildlife populations;
- Abundant stocks of wild salmon;
- Diverse native ecosystems;
- Sustainable working forests and agricultural lands;
- Inspiring scenic vistas; and
- A human population that is healthy, whole, and committed to good stewardship of the land and water that supports us all.

To meet this challenge, we envision for the Land Trust:

- Broad membership and community support;
- A wide range of proactive and mutually beneficial partnerships;
- A diverse board of directors committed to conservation leadership;
- A professional staff with the capacity to fulfill the board's vision; and
- A stable, sustainable organization that can make the long-term security of the Nisqually's clean water, scenic beauty, and native plant and animal populations a legacy to future generations



Mission Statement

The Nisqually Land Trust acquires and manages critical lands to permanently protect the water, wildlife, natural areas, and scenic vistas of the Nisqually River watershed.

Values

Cooperation: We collaborate with individuals and communities to identify challenges, devise workable solutions and achieve mutual goals.

Sustainability: We practice conservation that supports productive economies, a healthy natural environment, and vibrant cultures.

Stewardship: We steward our lands to protect their conservation values and viability now and forever.

Organizational Integrity: We practice sound management. We are honest, effective, efficient, and fiscally responsible.

Conservation Leadership: We are a conservation leader and have a responsibility to pursue bold and innovative conservation strategies.

Respect: We base all of our relationships—within our organization, with our conservation partners, with individuals, businesses, communities and the land itself—on respect, trust, and tolerance.



**Mount Rainier Gateway
Phase II, 2009**



Goals and Strategies

PROGRAM GOALS

1. Permanently protect critical lands in the Nisqually River watershed.
 - a. Identify and prioritize the most strategic lands for protection.
 - b. Proactively implement permanent protection for high-priority lands.
 - c. Respond to exceptional opportunities to protect lands outside high-priority areas.
 - d. Cultivate and expand partnerships that support permanent land protection.
2. Restore and maintain the conservation and scenic values of protected lands.
 - a. Maintain the conservation and scenic values of all lands acquired by the Land Trust.
 - b. Where appropriate, restore the ecosystem health of Land Trust properties to its full potential.
 - c. Cultivate and expand partnerships that support restoration and management of Land Trust properties.
3. Engage the public in private conservation and the mission of the Land Trust.
 - a. Educate *regional* residents about the Nisqually watershed and the role they can play in supporting the Land Trust.
 - b. Engage *watershed* residents in opportunities for voluntary conservation and stewardship of their lands.
 - c. Proactively engage with local communities to understand their needs and achieve mutual goals.
 - d. Provide access opportunities for the public to learn about the Land Trust through its lands.

ORGANIZATIONAL GOALS

4. Grow the capacity of the Land Trust.
 - a. Recruit and support a diverse group of volunteer leaders.
 - b. Build, support, and retain a professional staff capable of fully executing the policies and practices adopted by the board of directors.
 - c. Increase philanthropic support of the Land Trust.
 - d. Develop revenue streams from Land Trust assets.
 - e. Manage Land Trust operations efficiently, effectively and accountably.



Benchmarks

Driven by our strategic plan, the Land Trust will use the following benchmarks to evaluate our performance.

1. LAND PROTECTION

1a. Land-Protection Planning—long-term outcome:

The Land Trust has identified and prioritized conservation and scenic-vista properties in the watershed and planned for their permanent protection.

Three-Year Benchmarks

- Develop a matrix for identifying and ranking the conservation and scenic values of properties
- Develop a strategic-conservation plan that prioritizes properties for proactive protection, defines areas outside the high-priority zone for opportunistic protection, and sets a timetable for implementation
- Establish a revolving capital fund of at least \$100,000

1b. Strategic land protection—long-term outcome:

The Land Trust has permanently protected high-priority conservation and scenic-vista properties in the watershed.

Three-Year Benchmarks

- Increase by 300 acres (to 1635 acres) the amount of high-priority lands in the Lower Nisqually Valley protected through fee ownership or conservation easement
- Increase by 500 acres (to 1104 acres) the amount of high-priority lands in the Upper Nisqually Valley protected through fee ownership or conservation easement
- Obtain conservation easements on 3 high-priority properties
- Contact all landowners with high-priority properties at least once per year.



1c. Responsive land protection—long-term outcome:

The Land Trust has responded appropriately to conservation opportunities outside of high-priority areas.

Three-Year Benchmarks

- A formal prioritization and screening process that provides for consistent response to opportunities outside high-priority areas.
- The funding and organizational capacity to respond to such opportunities.

1d. Protection partnerships—long-term outcome:

The Land Trust has cultivated partnerships of a quantity and quality sufficient to meet its land-protection goals.

Three-Year Benchmarks

- Substantive relationships established with six potential funding partners who have not participated in previous Land Trust acquisitions
- Three contacts per year with past funding partners
- Six acquisition projects underway or completed

2. STEWARDSHIP

2a. Maintenance of conservation values—long-term outcome:

The Land Trust has maintained the conservation values of its properties.

Three-Year Benchmarks

- Management plans written for all nine habitat-management units
- Immediate stewardship needs identified, prioritized, and addressed
- Stewardship assessments completed for all new acquisitions prior to acquisition

2b. Stewardship and restoration—long-term outcome:

The Land Trust has implemented stewardship plans to restore native ecosystems on all of its properties where restoration is appropriate.

Three-Year Benchmarks

- Three restoration projects completed or underway
- Funding secured for three new restoration projects
- Permanent stewardship fund of at least \$125,000 established



2c. Stewardship partnerships—long-term outcome:

The Land Trust has cultivated new partnerships for land stewardship and expanded existing partnerships.

Three-Year Benchmarks

- Substantive relationships established with three potential partners who have not participated in previous Land Trust stewardship projects
- At least one meeting each year with three groups doing similar stewardship work in the watershed
- One project underway with a new partner or partners

3. OUTREACH

3a. Regional recognition and support – long-term outcome:

The majority of conservation-minded residents in the region surrounding the Nisqually watershed knows who the Land Trust is and supports its work philosophically.

Three-Year Benchmarks

- One newsletter published every quarter
- Two regional focus groups convened with community leaders every year
- At least four public forums or events participated in per year

3b. Voluntary Conservation in the Watershed – long-term outcome:

Priority landowners and their advisors (landowners with property that has an influence on Land Trust property) understand the benefits of private land conservation and how the Land Trust can help.

Three-Year Benchmarks

- The Land Trust participates in at least three workshops per year for landowners
- Ten landowners per year initiate discussions with the Land Trust
- Landowner and advisor outreach tools have been created and used to reach audiences effectively



3c. Engagement and Collaboration with Local Communities – long-term outcome:

The Land Trust understands the needs of local communities and collaborates with them to achieve mutual goals.

Three-Year Benchmarks

- At least one meeting per year with officials or community leaders from Lacey, Yelm, and Eatonville; the Nisqually Tribe; the Ashford community; and Thurston and Pierce counties.
- Three projects completed or underway in partnership with local communities

3d. Community Access – long-term outcome:

The public learns about the Land Trust through its lands.

Three-Year Benchmarks

- One marquee property being developed for public access
- Tour program offers at least three property tours annually by third year
- More than 300 students per year use Land Trust properties for environmental education

4. ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY AND SUPPORT

4a. Voluntary Leadership and Participation—long-term outcome:

The Land Trust has built and supported a diverse and committed board and strong volunteer participation at the program level.

Three-Year Benchmarks

- Board membership increased to twelve (from nine)
- Committee structure established
- Each board member has attended at least one training or conference seminar specific to board duties
- Trustee program established with at least eight members



4b. Staff capacity and support—long-term outcome:

The Land Trust has built and supported a professional staff that can meet the goals and vision of the board and fulfill its strategic plan.

Three-Year Benchmarks

- Staffing increased to the level and expertise necessary to achieve the goals of the three-year strategic plan
- Each staff member attends at least one position-appropriate training each year
- Programmatic grants underwrite a significant level of staff salaries.

4c. Organizational effectiveness—long-term outcome:

The Land Trust's programs, systems, and plans build and maintain its efficiency, effectiveness, and accountability.

Three-Year Benchmarks

- Land Trust Alliance organizational self-assessment completed
- Annual work and fundraising plans written each year as part of budget process
- Facilities and equipment assessed and updated annually to meet organizational needs

4d. Philanthropic support—long-term outcome:

Funding for the Land Trust has met the operations and program requirements of the strategic plan, funded an endowment, and created adequate reserves.

Three-Year Benchmarks

- Membership (individuals who contribute to the Land Trust at least once in a twelve-month period) exceeds 500
- The Land Trust has at least ten new major donors (\$1,000+)
- Board drive raises \$10,000 in cash or services annually by third year
- 100 percent of board members participate in fund- or friend-raising activities
- Six capacity-building proposals of at least \$30,000 each have been submitted to potential funders

4e. Market-Based Revenue—long-term outcomes:

The Land Trust has created new revenue streams.

Three-Year Benchmarks

- \$50,000 generated each year from conversion of appropriate Land Trust resource assets, including environmental services, sustainable timber, and property interests.