



Orleans Conservation Trust Strategic Plan for 2023–2027

Summary for OCT Members

Introduction

OCT's last five-year strategic plan was completed in 2016. In early 2022 a small task force was established to update the plan. A series of in-depth interviews were conducted with a broad range of constituents, including, donors/members, town officials, peer organizations (Mass Audubon, Orleans Conservation Commission, Compact of Cape Cod Conservation Trusts, etc.), current and former trustees, and OCT staff. A summary of those interviews was organized into Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT). Staff and trustees conducted two off-site meetings with an outside facilitator to develop the new strategic plan, and the final 2023 – 2027 Strategic Plan was approved by the Board of Trustees on May 24, 2022. Importantly, the Trust also updated our mission statement to better communicate our work.

Mission Statement

The Orleans Conservation Trust protects and restores natural lands — for people and wildlife, the health of our waters, and the character of our community.

A private nonprofit organization, the Trust acquires and manages land to enhance habitat, provides opportunities for learning and for enjoying nature, promotes sound conservation practices, and works with landowners who wish to conserve property.

Summary of OCT's Key Priorities 2023 – 2027

Five key priorities were identified that align with OCT committee and organizational structure:

- 1. Education**
- 2. Land Acquisition**
- 3. Land Management**
- 4. Membership and Fundraising**
- 5. Organizational Identity and Capacity**

Key Priority Details

1. Education

Education has been an element of the Trust's mission since OCT's founding. To expand and deepen our impact, the Trust is placing a renewed focus on our educational efforts.

Educate the public regarding the benefits of conservation, the fostering of climate resilience, the improvement of water quality, habitat restoration, and environmentally friendly land management.

- a. Conduct more educational activities designed for children, youth, and families
- b. Encourage the use of environmentally sound land stewardship activities on lands not owned by OCT
- c. Improve the educational potential of our properties and the effectiveness of our educational activities

2. Land Acquisition

The Trust has been successfully acquiring and protecting land for decades. There was consensus that this remains a top priority, despite a decreasing number of opportunities and increasing complexity of acquisition projects.

Acquire and protect land that meets OCT's identified priorities for conservation (i.e., education and passive recreation value, water access and protection, connections with existing conservation properties, scenic views, natural resources, and habitat protection)

- a. Improve the processes and transparency for prioritizing and acquiring properties

3. Land Management

OCT has increased our investment in land management activities consistently over the last several years, including the creation of a full-time land management position in 2020. We continue to believe that our members value this work and that we can leverage our lands to provide more benefits "for people and wildlife, the health of our waters, and the character of our community."

Manage OCT properties to preserve and restore their natural resources and habitat; provide opportunities for appropriate public use that fosters appreciation and understanding of the importance of those natural resources.

- a. Develop and implement a framework to improve the consistency and effectiveness of OCT's land management practices
- b. Increase land management capacity and capabilities

4. Membership and Fundraising

We have enjoyed membership growth over the last several years, and we have successfully raised funds for several land protection projects in recent years, while simultaneously growing the Trust's operating budget. As our land management and educational programs expand, we will need to continue to grow our fundraising capacity.

Consistently raise sufficient funding to accomplish OCT's near-term priorities and enable it to fulfill its long-term stewardship responsibilities.

- a. Retain and expand membership and increase donations
- b. Further develop a successful planned giving program

5. Organizational Identity and Capacity

While many in the community are acquainted with OCT and what the Trust represents, there is still confusion about OCT's landholding, our private nonprofit status, and how we differ from the Town's Conservation Commission. Further, we believe that even many of our supporters aren't familiar with

certain elements of OCT's work. We have made great progress in recent years in our visibility in the community, but much work remains to be done to deepen the public's understanding of and appreciation for our mission.

Promote OCT's identity and build organizational capacity to more effectively carry out OCT's mission.

- a. Expand capacity and organizational resiliency through staffing, volunteers, and collaboration with other organizations
- b. Refine and proactively project OCT's identity and messaging in the community
- c. Provide continuing education opportunities for staff and Board members

For each of these priorities, an OCT committee will take primary responsibility, and manage work according to established timeframes. Regular progress reports on these priorities will be made to the Board of Trustees, and as appropriate, to our membership.