Land Protection Plan 2010

(Update to the Whidbey Camano Land Trust’s 2004 Land Protection Plan)
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Introduction

The mission of the Whidbey Camano Land Trust is to protect the most important natural habitats, scenic vistas and working farms and forests on Whidbey and Camano Islands in partnership with landowners and our island communities. The mission was updated in the 2009-2012 Strategic Plan. The Land Trust's territory is Island County, Washington; it does not work outside Island County boundaries.

The Land Trust has been protecting lands and water since 1984 by working with private landowners, community groups and public agencies. The Land Trust protects lands and waters forever by purchasing and accepting donations of fee lands and conservation easements from private landowners. Lands that are protected by the Land Trust may end up being owned either by the Land Trust, public agencies or other appropriate organizations. The determining factor in ownership is typically which entity is the most appropriate owner of fee land or is the most appropriate holder of a conservation easement. This decision is generally made at the beginning of a project after conferring with all partners and the affected landowners.

As of June 2010, the Land Trust had protected over 6,200 acres of land, some of which is now owned by Island County, State Parks and the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife. The Land Trust holds over 3,500 acres of fee land (this includes 3,160 acres of tidelands at Livingston Bay) and conservation easements on over 1,050 acres in 22 properties. The Land Trust is working to protect thousands of additional acres.

The Land Trust adopted its first Land Protection Plan in 2004. This document is an update of the 2004 Plan. A further update will occur following completion of the Island County Parks and Habitat Conservation Plan. A final plan is due to be adopted by the end of 2010.
Planning

Generally: The Whidbey Camano Land Trust has relied on developing and implementing plans to direct its work. Every three years, the Land Trust develops a new Strategic Plan (see Exhibit A). Every year, staff and committees develop annual work plans that implement the Strategic Plan. A stewardship management plan is developed for fee lands owned by the Land Trust. In addition, if applicable, restoration plans are also developed for fee owned properties. For example, for the Naas Natural Area Preserve, a recovery and restoration plan was developed for the golden paintbrush and prairie restoration efforts. This plan was approved by the federal golden paintbrush advisory committee. In addition, a management plan was developed for the larger site. The Land Trust has a monitoring plan which requires every conservation easement be monitored for compliance every year.

The Land Trust also developed a Land Protection Plan in 2004 with the main guidance being a Land Protection Priorities Area map showing the key landscapes that are of the highest priority to proactively protect. The current plan is an update of the 2004 plan. In addition, this update will be updated in the early part of 2011 to reflect the information being gathered for Island County’s Park and Habitat Conservation Plan. The Land Trust is partnering with the County on this plan and intended to use the information gathered as part of the 2010 update to its Land Protection Plan. However, the County schedule could not meet the Recreation and Conservation Office’s planning deadline for June 2010. This plan is due to be completed and adopted by Island County Commissioners in December 2010.

2004 Land Protection Plan: For its first 19 years, from 1984 through 2002, the Land Trust was an all-volunteer organization that had protected 400 acres of land in eight projects. The Board of Directors recognized that if it were to protect important island lands and waters, it would need to hire professional staff, which it did in 2003.

The need to ensure that its land protection efforts resulted in protecting the islands’ most threatened and important lands compelled the Land Trust to develop a land protection plan. One of the Land Trust’s primary goals was to ensure it was being proactive most of the time rather than reactive. To accomplish these goals required that the islands’ highest protection priorities be identified in a credible and scientifically-based manner and displayed spatially on a map.

Therefore, in 2003 and 2004, the Land Trust compiled natural resource and scientific data from credible agencies and organizations, sought critical input from natural resource experts, and garnered public input to create a multi-layered geographic information systems (GIS) map. From public input, the top four types of lands that were of the highest protection priority were wildlife habitat, farmland, wetlands and streams, and coastal lands. The resulting GIS map showed what island properties and landscapes were the most important to protect and formed the basis of the Land Trust’s first Land Protection Plan. The plan was adopted by the Board of Directors in 2004.
The focus of land protection efforts identified in the Plan was to protect the most significant and threatened lands that enhance the health and connectivity of the islands’ natural systems and retain its agricultural and rural character. In addition, the plan gave preference to lands and waters that add significant value to the protection of healthy, ecologically viable landscapes that provide the full complement of native species and ecological functions and processes or, with minimal restoration, accomplish the same. Emphasis was placed on protecting larger land parcels or lands adjacent to or providing a corridor to larger blocks of protected lands.

Discussions during the Land Trust’s most recent strategic planning process revealed that the 2004 Land Protection Plan is still valid and the Land Trust’s focus and emphasis has not changed.

**2010 Land Protection Plan Update:** Many lands and waters in Island County continue to be worthy of permanent protection—far more than the Land Trust has the capacity to handle at any one time. To ensure it is responding most effectively to this continuing situation, the Land Trust updated its Land Protection Plan primarily by refining its Land Protection Priority Map and expanding and improving its land evaluation process, both resulting in determining the strategic priorities for land protection. As with the first plan, the goal of the update is to ensure that the Land Trust’s efforts result in permanent protection of the most important and irreplaceable lands and waters on Camano and Whidbey Islands.

Over the course of about a year, the Land Trust has been updating its “Land Protection Priorities Map” as the first step in updating its Land Protection Plan. The new map incorporates new resource data from agencies and organizations and more detailed information to help the Land Trust make informed and strategic decisions.

Starting in 2009, the Land Trust began discussions with Island County to encourage it to develop a Park and Habitat Plan. The County’s previous plan addressed only parks and recreation and it was out of compliance with Washington
Recreation and Conservation Office’s (RCO) planning eligibility rules. One of the Land Trust’s goals was to work cooperatively with the County on this plan and use much of the data for its own Land Protection Plan update. The County and the Land Trust did partner on this plan, however, the County was unable to accelerate the process and meet the RCO’s deadline for 2010 grant eligibility. That resulted in the Land Trust proceeding with its work to ensure it was eligible for the Riparian grant category. However, the Land Trust intends to revise the 2010 Land Protection Plan based on information and public input from the County plan.

Other Land Trust Plans: Since 2003, when the first Land Trust employee was hired, the Land Trust has developed and adopted a three-year strategic plan. The strategic plan guides the Land Trust’s actions in achieving its mission and long-term goals by providing focus, direction, objectives and actions. Each strategic plan addresses land protection, stewardship, financial management, organizational elements, and community outreach. The Land Protection Plan helps implement the broader goals set in the strategic plan by identifying more specific strategies, goals and objectives to protect the islands’ most critical and irreplaceable lands and waters.

Each year, the Land Trust also develops and implements an annual plan that adheres to and implements the broader Strategic Plan and Land Protection Plan. The Annual Plan provides greater detail and includes the year’s work plans for each employee and all of the committees (committees include: Financial Management, Land Project Evaluation, Stewardship, Audit, Investment, Accreditation, and Executive).

Island County Parks and Habitat Conservation Plan: As mentioned earlier, Island County is currently updating its Parks and Habitat Conservation Plan to help direct acquisition and management of county-owned lands, including parks, recreation facilities, habitat areas, and trails. The Land Trust is partnering with the County and contributed $30,000 to help pay for the planning consultants. The Land Trust is part of the County’s steering committee for the plan and is actively involved in all aspects. As indicated above, as a major player in the County’s plan, the Land Trust will adjust its Land Protection Plan as appropriate.

The Land Trust provided the information that was included in the County’s Request for Proposal. This information detailed what was required to be addressed and included in the planning process and the final planning document. This information is as follows:

County Plan Overview: Island County requires an updated and expanded parks plan to address all county-owned lands that provide parks, recreation and habitat conservation benefits. County-owned lands, such as administrative buildings and public work lands (borrow areas and rights-of-ways), will not be included in the updated plan. However, lands that are under county tax foreclosure status will be included. The Parks
and Habitat Conservation Plan will be hereafter referred to in this document as the “Parks Plan”. The Parks Plan will provide direction for the identification, development, and management of parks, recreation, open space and habitat lands for 2010 to 2017.

To guide the next seven years and beyond, the Parks Program, under the jurisdiction of the Public Works Department, desires a new plan that captures and responds to the needs and wants of county residents, identifies exchange, disposal and acquisition opportunities, and establishes a practical, inspiring, sustainable, long-term vision for the parks and habitat conservation habitat lands of the County.

Currently, county-owned lands to be addressed in the Parks Plan are classified in a variety of ways. The Parks Plan will create a classification system (e.g., parks, natural areas, conservation lands, active recreation, trails, etc) for county lands that is easier for the public to understand and the county to manage, is appropriate to the attributes of each property, is consistent with the legal requirements in effect when each property was acquired (such as title, grant or deed restrictions), and, for each land category, identifies the primary management objectives and permitted and prohibited uses.

County Plan Objectives: A revised and updated Island County Parks Plan must meet all requirements set forth by the Washington State Recreation and Conservation Office ("RCO") and qualify the County for eligibility in the following RCO grant programs: Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program; Land and Water Conservation; and Aquatic Lands Enhancement Account. Further the Parks Plan must set strategic direction for the County. The completed Parks Plan is required to accomplish the following:

1. Identify a clear, sustainable, and common vision for county-owned lands and county-wide goals, objectives, and policies for existing and future parks, habitat conservation and recreation lands;

2. Assess the need and demand for parks, habitat conservation and recreation lands through a public involvement process;

3. Identify the major issues, obstacles, opportunities and priorities through a public involvement process;

4. Address whether Island County should be involved in owning and managing lands for active recreation, such as campgrounds and athletic fields;

5. Address whether Island County should be involved in owning and renting out buildings for community functions, and if so, under what conditions;

6. Recommend updates or revisions to the Island County Trails Plan to ensure consistency and compatibility with the Parks Plan;
7. Provide a thorough inventory of existing county-owned lands and potential lands that would enhance county ownership, including shoreline access sites, trails, wildlife corridors and open spaces;

8. Update the Natural Lands element of the Comprehensive Plan with critical areas information gathered by the County as part of its compliance with Growth Management Act rules. This element can serve as the beginning point for the habitat element of the Parks Plan;

9. Identify lands that should be transferred out of county ownership and the recommended recipients of such lands;

10. Identify lands that should be brought into county ownership;

11. Develop a six-year capital improvement program that includes land acquisition, land disposal or exchange, development, and renovation projects;

12. Evaluate partnership opportunities and funding options for parks, habitat conservation and recreation lands; and

13. Develop a clear action plan that includes short and long-term actions required to meet the community’s goals and vision for parks and habitat conservation lands.
Public Input

The Land Trust’s operational work is largely funded by private donors. Acquisition work is generally funded by private land donations, government and foundation grants and private donations. In order to better serve the community, the Land Trust seeks to involve its constituents in protection planning efforts. Below are some of the activities the Land Trust has sponsored over the past seven years in order to learn about the public’s interest in land protection and help shape the Land Protection Plan. The information gathered at all these events has been incorporated into the updated Plan.

Land Trust Stakeholder Interviews – 2003: When the Land Trust developed its 2003-2007 Strategic Plan, it interviewed a number of community stakeholders to gather their opinions on the organization’s role in the community, how the organization can be most effective, and what lands the Land Trust should prioritize for protection efforts. The input collected from the interviews helped the Land Trust identify its core values and competencies and helped shape the Strategic Plan’s vision and supporting goals.

Land Trust Public Open Houses – 2004: The Land Trust held four open houses in the spring and fall of 2004 (three on Whidbey Island and one on Camano Island). These meetings were advertised in the local newspapers. At the open houses, the public was presented with educational materials and a GIS map with draft Protection Priority Areas identified. Attendees were then asked to vote on their top five land Conservation Targets (among a list of a dozen) and to identify, in a private and anonymous way, areas they believed were the most important lands needing permanent protection. The Land Trust wanted to find out what Conservation Targets and specific lands and waters mattered most to the public and which ones they believed were critical to protect for future generations.

More than 80 people participated in the open houses. Many others voted by email and some visited the Land Trust’s office and voted. As a result, the Land Trust learned that the top four Conservation Targets for participants were wildlife habitat, wetlands and streams, coastal areas, and working farmlands. The top four Conservation Targets received a significantly higher number of votes than the other target values. Both the number of votes and the priority conservation targets were also consistent between the open houses. The Land Trust collected over 100 comment cards that identified specific places attendees believed were especially important to protect. Nearly all of these lands matched the draft Priority Areas on the GIS map.
Land Trust Stakeholder Focus Groups – 2008: As part of Land Trust’s planning process for its 2008-2011 Strategic Plan, the Land Trust began by asking whether its Conservation Targets and priorities were still the right ones. The planning process began with three focus group meetings consisting of Land Trust stakeholders, including members, community leaders, partners, and agency and organization representatives. The input received from these discussions was brought into staff and board planning discussions and incorporated into the final strategic plan, including the goals and objectives related to land protection. Focus groups confirmed that coastal lands, wetlands and streams, wildlife habitat, and working farmlands should continue to be the Land Trust’s focus.

Island County Parks and Habitat Conservation Plan – 2010: In the spring of 2010, Island County launched a planning effort to develop a Parks and Habitat Conservation Plan. The Land Trust has contributed $30,000 to this effort and will use the information in the final plan. The Plan will be completed by the end of 2010, and will include a capital needs assessment, cost modeling, an action plan and grant writing priorities. The County, working with consultants, is now (May-June 2010) collecting public input. They are using stakeholder interviews, focus groups, on-line surveys, discussions and displays at community events, and community forums. The online surveys are being used to gauge community preferences, priorities and future needs for county parks, facilities, trails, and habitat areas. The survey is open to people age 10 and older. In its spring newsletter, the Land Trust included a special insert inviting approximately 1,100 individuals and households to participate. As of June 11, nearly 700 people have completed the survey. The Land Trust intends to use these survey results in its own planning efforts as well.

Additional Input: During the summer and fall of 2010, the Land Trust will return to the public to reevaluate the revised plan’s findings. The Land Trust has already secured a $750 grant from Puget Sound Energy to underwrite three public open houses on Whidbey Island. The Land Trust will geographically distribute these meetings so one is held on the north, central, south parts of the Island. It will also host a separate open house on Camano Island. The open houses will include brief presentations and interactive display stations.

As social media and digital communications become increasingly popular, this is a new venue for the Land Trust to solicit public participation. In 2009, the Land Trust created a fan page on Facebook. At more than 450 “fans”, the Land Trust has a virtual forum in which to advertise its open houses as well as encourage dialog online. The Land Trust will also use its website, blog, newsletters, and email lists to disseminate information about the Land Protection Plan, the Land Trust’s priorities, and use these mediums to solicit input.
Inventory

**Generally:** Island County is comprised of five islands: Whidbey, Camano, Ben Ure, Smith, and Baby Islands. Island County lies approximately 27-30 miles north of Seattle and about 50 miles south of the Canadian border. Located in Puget Sound, Whidbey Island stretches 45 miles in length and has 148 miles of shoreline, making it the longest island in the continental United States. Whidbey Island is connected to the mainland on the north by Deception Pass Bridge and by state ferries at Clinton on the south and at Keystone near Coupeville in the central part of the island. Camano Island also stretches into Puget Sound and is connected to the mainland by a 2-lane bridge. Island County has a total population of 71,558 (2000). Summer residents (May-September) make up another 10-20%.

According to the U.S. Census, Island County ranks 14th in population and 4th in population density within Washington State. There has been a population increase of 19% from 1990 to the present, similar to Washington State (21%) which is also one of the top ten fastest growing states. Growth has led to increased stress on the pristine environment of Whidbey and Camano Islands. In addition, Whidbey and Camano Island are tourist destinations whose infrastructures are impacted greatly by the increasing number of visitors. Both residential growth and the tourist industries have had a large impact on areas of ground water, sewage, land use, and recreational areas.

Growth is encouraged in the three cities, Oak Harbor, Langley and Coupeville, and also in two additional community areas, Freeland and Clinton. As part of the Washington State Growth Management compliance, Island County zoned a majority of the islands, not already in subdivisions, as Rural 5 – which means subdivision is allowed in minimum five acre sizes. This encourages rural sprawl and impacts wildlife and human corridors. Although lands are zoned for forest and farmland, these areas are relatively small and primarily affect lands already in public ownership – be it fee or conservation easement.

**Island Areas:** Whidbey Island is made up of three distinct areas: north, central, and south.

**North Whidbey** is the most populous with 40,100 people in the greater Oak Harbor area. The Deception Pass Bridge connects this region to adjoining Skagit County. It is home to Naval Air Station (NAS) Whidbey Island, which employs over 10,000 military personnel and civilians. In addition, there are over 12,300 family members and 10,000 navy retirees making their home on Whidbey Island. In 2009, the base commander, Captain Gerral David, estimated that NAS Whidbey brought about $692 million to Island County.

**Central Whidbey** has a population of 10,600 and includes the town of Coupeville, the county seat, and the small-unincorporated town of Greenbank. Coupeville, founded by 19th century sea captains, is a historic farming community.
Central Whidbey contains Ebey’s Landing National Historical Reserve ("Ebey’s Landing"), a unit of the National Park Service. Ebey’s Landing is the nation’s first historical reserve, created in 1978 to protect a rural working landscape and community. The reserve contains 17,500 acres, including Penn Cove, 18 working farms, 400 historical structures, native prairies, two state parks, miles of shoreline, a network of trails and the second oldest town in Washington. The Reserve is managed by a nine member Trust Board.

South Whidbey is the third geographic area on Whidbey Island. Made up of the small towns of Freeland and Clinton, and the city of Langley, it has a total population of 14,000. A significant number of South Whidbey residents commute by ferry to jobs at the Boeing Company in Everett or to other businesses on the mainland.

Due to its unique geographic location and its size, Camano Island is primarily residential with little commercial or industrial uses. It is 16 miles long and has 52 miles of shoreline. Camano has a population of 12,800 residents. Camano Island is about a 90-minute drive from the county seat of Coupeville. There is no public or private ferry service between the two islands. The nearest town to Camano is Stanwood and often Camano Islanders relate more to Snohomish County because of its geographical position.

Natural Systems: A birds-eye view reveals that Whidbey and Camano Islands sit prominently in Puget Sound as part of a complex living system, where the saltwater of the ocean meets the freshwater flowing from the major rivers of the Skagit, Stillaguamish, Skykomish and Snohomish Rivers.

Spread out along the two islands are over 200 miles of shoreline, coastal bluffs, and 15 major bays and coves that provide estuarine habitat for birds and marine life, and nurseries for forage fish and salmon. Between the hilltops and this coastline are 118 watersheds with wetlands, streams, forests and fields providing wildlife and plant habitat, clean
water, clean air and aquifer recharge. A closer view reveals farms, trails, and the spectacular vistas that define and enrich the islands’ community life, and draws visitors from afar.

Whidbey and Camano Islands have outstanding natural attributes, including clean air, clean water, rolling hillsides, mature conifer forests, outstanding scenic views, coastal shoreline with beaches, working farmland and native wildlife – all surrounded by the waters of Puget Sound. Please refer to Map 1 for the natural features of Whidbey and Camano Islands.

Whidbey and Camano Islands are surrounded by some of the most awesome scenery in the nation. To the east, are the Cascade Mountains and to the west are the Olympic Mountains. Some of these peaks stretch up to 14,000 feet. The central and northern part of Whidbey Island is located in what is called the rain shadow of the Olympic Mountains. This means that precipitation is much lower than in nearby surrounding areas.

As part of the Puget Sound lowlands, Island County was formed through a process of glaciation. Advances and retreats of glaciers have left deposits of glacial material that are characterized by deep deposits of outwash sands intermingled with layers of compacted sediments known as till. The permeable sands and gravels tend to accumulate water that serves as the drinking water source for the majority of the population. Camano Island and those areas of Whidbey Island outside of the City of Oak Harbor are solely reliant upon groundwater for a source of potable water. Approximately 72% of the county’s population use groundwater as a source of potable water. Because of this reliance, EPA, at the request of Island County, designated both Camano and Whidbey Islands a Sole Source Aquifer in 1982. This is important because aquifer and drinking water protection is of the utmost concern to island residents.

Protected Lands: Despite its small area, Island County has a significant number of protected lands held by federal, state, local and non-profit conservancy organizations. The state highways on Whidbey Island (Highway 525 and Highway 20) are designated by Washington State as a Scenic Byway and are referred to as “Whidbey Island’s Scenic Isle Way”.

Protected Lands:
Important protected lands include Ebey’s Landing National Historic Reserve, which is primarily in private ownership with conservation easements and fee ownership held on key properties by the National Park Service, State Parks, Whidbey Camano Land Trust, Island County, The Nature Conservancy and the town of Coupeville. Greenbank Farm and forest in central Whidbey is protected by Island County and the Port of Coupeville. Island County holds hundreds of acres of mostly undeveloped forest lands but also beach access and local parks, including Double Bluff Beach, Putney Woods, Saratoga Woods and Rhododendron Park.

There are seven (7) State Parks on Whidbey Island including: Possession Point, South Whidbey, Fort Casey, Fort Ebey, Dugualla, Joseph Whidbey and Deception Pass Camano, and Deception Pass State Parks. There are two (2) State Parks on Camano Island – Cama Beach and Camano. Deception Pass State Park is the most frequented State Park in all of Washington State and rivals Yosemite National Park in the number of visitors that it attracts each year.

The Naval Air Station (NAS) Whidbey Island is composed of three geographically separate facilities located on the northern third of Whidbey Island. Total acreage under Navy ownership is about 7,755 acres. The Outlying Field (OLF) is located in the southern part of Ebey’s Landing National Historical Reserve, south of Coupeville, contains 680 acres, and is used for “touch and go” landings by naval jets. The OLF is mainly open field with a forest fringe and is part of the historic Smith Prairie. The Navy owns significant coastal shoreline along Admiralty Inlet on the west part of Whidbey Island, just south of Deception Pass State Park and north of Joseph Whidbey State Park. It also owns most of the Crescent Harbor shoreline east of Oak Harbor. Although some of this is developed with naval facilities, including housing, much of the land remains wild and undeveloped.

Please refer to Map 2 for the lands that are currently protected lands in Island County. This map will be updated after the Island County Parks and Habitat Plan is completed.
Map 2
Land Protection Plan
Protected Properties

Legend
- Land Trust Conservation Easement
- Land Trust Owned Lands
- Other Land Trust Protected Lands
- Navy
- Other Protected Parcels
- City Limits

0 1 2 4 6 Miles
Needs Assessment

The needs assessment portion of the plan flows directly from the Land Trust’s mission – to protect the Islands’ most important natural habitats, scenic vistas and working farms and forests in partnership with landowners and our island communities. This mission comes from the Land Trust’s federal designation as a 501(c) 3 nature conservancy organization and its state and federal designation as a nonprofit charitable organization. The purpose of nature conservancy organizations is to protect lands and waters that are of great benefit to the public. Therefore, the Land Trust’s needs assessment is narrowly construed as to what lands and waters in Island County are important to protect to benefit citizens, visitors and other living organisms. We do not work to protect public recreational opportunities that are intense, such as ball fields, swimming pools, tennis courts or that are inside buildings, such as recreation centers, etc.

The Land Trust reviewed numerous documents and public testimony about land protection to determine what Conservation Targets are most important and what landscapes in Island County are critical to protect. Included were dozens of federal, state and local government plans, surveys and other information as well as information from other Island County organizations. This information was ground-truthed in public open houses and from Land Trust members. The result was that the public wanted, above all else, to see wildlife habitat protected. They also specifically identified wetlands and streams, coastal shoreline features and farmlands as the most important types of land to protect. All of these latter Conservation Targets overlap with wildlife habitat protection. Of lesser importance were working forests, trails, historic sites, scenic vistas, rare species, and community open space. One attendee summed it up best when he said that if we protect wildlife habitat, we will protect all the other values as well. Review of public surveys by various Island County entities also revealed that the public was most interested in protecting large natural areas. The consultant for the Island County Parks and Open Space Plan put together a survey posted on the county website to ask citizens questions about what they want to see in terms of parks and habitat. There were questions about habitat as well as the Land Trust. As of June 11, 2010, nearly 700 surveys were completed. When this county plan is completed, the Land Trust will use all of the information documented by the consultant to verify its own land protection direction and, if needed, revise the plan accordingly.

Conservation Targets

The Conservation Targets are described below:

Coastal Shoreline: Tidally-influenced land (200’ from high water mark), including tidelands, eelgrass beds, estuarine habitat, beach, bluffs, and coastal forests. Island County includes 221 miles of coastline. Coastal lands provide critical habitat for species that have biological and economic value, including an impressive array of salmonid species and other fishes, birds, and marine mammals. High preference is to estuaries or historic estuaries that can be relatively easily
restored, public beach access, tidelands adjacent to public tidelands and other ownerships, intact feeder bluffs, and forage fish habitat.

**Freshwater Wetlands and Streams:** Freshwater lakes, wetlands, streams and riparian corridors. Wetlands recharge aquifers; act as filtration systems, protecting and improving water quality; and retain excess water during flood events. They also provide habitat for numerous plant and animal species from microorganisms and insects to amphibians, birds and mammals. High preference is given to year around water, a high degree of healthy, native riparian vegetation, unimpeded flows and habitat for salmon and rare species.

**Forests:** Areas managed for timber, wildlife habitat, and other special features. Working forests are compatible with conservation efforts when well managed. Forests offer watershed protection, clean air, carbon sequestration, natural beauty, wildlife habitat and places for personal reflection and recreation, in addition to timber products. High preference is given to mature, diverse forest cover (or with minimal restoration can become this way), large tracts of intact forest, and forests with a diversity of edge conditions (estuarine, freshwater, field) and with rare species or communities.

**Working Farmland:** Land used for non-industrial, agricultural purposes, such as growing crops or raising animals. Habitat, open space, and local food production are lost forever when farmland is replaced by development. Farmland is vital to our islands’ heritage; protecting it ensures that open space and livable communities will exist in the future. Large blocks of farmland also provides habitat for native species such as raptors and small mammals. High preference is given to prime soils and soils of statewide importance and location within blocks of agricultural lands.

**Critical Habitat:** Includes habitat for rare species and communities, high quality plant and animal communities, and important watersheds. Local, state and federal agencies have identified certain flora and fauna species and communities as important, sensitive, vulnerable, and declining or threatened with extinction. These habitats are susceptible to changing landscape uses, invasive plants and climate changes. High priority is given to large contiguous areas with few owners, connection to protected lands, and presence of the rare species or communities.

**Community Open Space:** Open space near population centers, neighborhood trails, and scenic views. Community open spaces add to the quality of life for island residents and visitors. These areas are used for low-impact recreation, providing access to local natural areas, walking trails, bird watching and scenic vistas. High preference is given to active involvement and financial commitment by the local community.
Land Protection Priority Areas

Background: The Land Trust, as described in a prior section, developed its Land Protection Priority Areas Map over a number of years. This map was developed with data from government agencies. It was then refined with direct input from natural resource experts in order to determine the highest protection priorities based on federal, state and local needs assessments. For example, five fisheries biologists from the northwest regional office of the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife sat down with the Land Trust’s executive director and discussed where we should focus our efforts to benefit fisheries and marine life. They each had different specialties but in the end, the all agreed on where the most important nearshore and upland areas were that would result in the greatest benefit for forage fish, salmon and other water dependent species. From the GIS data and expert input, draft protection priority areas were drawn and the map taken out to gain input from our public meetings and Land Trust member meetings. The areas chosen through the natural resource and expert inventory effort were all verified by the public as the key places to protect.

The Land Trust has updated the Land Protection Priorities Area Map with new information produced primarily from state and local agencies. The map has been taken to dozens of public venues and feedback has been positive. No identified areas were challenged nor were new ones recommended. It seems as if the identified Priority Areas ring true with most people. Most of these areas have been previously identified in government or nature conservancy type of organizations as important. For example, Penn Cove, Crocket Lake, Cultus Bay, Useless Bay/Deer Lagoon, and Crescent Harbor have all been identified as important bird areas. Federal soils maps and Island County through its Comprehensive Plan have identified all of the Priority Areas with working farmland as one of the Conservation Targets. Salmon recovery plans have identified Dugualla Bay, Chapman Creek, Livingston Bay, Kristoferon Creek, Deer Lagoon, Glendale Creek, Maxwellton Creek and several other Priority Areas as critical for salmon recovery and water quality. None of the Priority Areas appeared to be a surprise to anyone, not even landowners lying inside the boundaries. It is made clear to landowners in the boundaries that there is absolutely no regulatory control with this designation and that all it means is that it is a priority of the Land Trust to protect but only with landowners who are willing and interested in working with it.

Criteria for Priority Areas: The Whidbey Camano Land Trust focuses its land protection efforts on landscapes that have high quality and high priority coastal shoreline, freshwater wetlands and streams, working farms and forests, and/or lands with species, habitats or ecosystems of significance (hereafter referred to as “Conservation Targets” or “Targets”). The landscape areas designated as “Land Protection Priority Areas” were specifically identified using a number of methods,
including use of scientific and natural resource data, information from natural resource experts, and public input.

Analysis then took into account the following conditions:

1. Lands and waters possessing high-quality Conservation Targets or, with minimal restoration, can provide the same.

2. Lands and waters with high-quality Conservation Targets that are threatened with conversion to incompatible land uses.

3. Lands and waters that will provide or significantly enhance protection of healthy, ecologically viable and functioning natural system(s) or, with minimal restoration, can accomplish the same.

4. Lands and waters that add important habitat buffers or connectivity to already protected areas and/or provide a corridor between protected lands and waters. High preference is given to protected areas under federal, state, local or Land Trust ownership.

5. Landscapes that will help protect the special character of Whidbey and Camano Islands, including agricultural and rural character, quality of life, scenic vistas and outdoor opportunities.

6. Lands and waters meeting the above criteria in large ownership acreages or within large blocks of farmland, forestland or natural areas.

The Land Protection Priorities Map (Map 3) shows the location and extent of the Land Trust’s Priority Areas. The Priority Areas are further described and correspond by name and number to Map 3 and the following inset maps.
Conservation Target Legend

- Coastal Shoreline
- Freshwater Wetlands and Streams
- Working Farmlands
- Species, Habitats, and Ecosystems of Importance
- Forest
- Community Open Space
North Whidbey Priority Areas

1. Cranberry Lake (245 acres)
   Targets:

   **Description:** These Priority Area wetlands are directly south of Deception Pass State Park and drain into Cranberry Lake. This freshwater wetland near the shoreline has significance due to its size, quality and proximity to estuarine waters. Although the area has been subdivided into many small parcels, the parcels are owned by a few landowners, increasing the feasibility of a project here.

2. Dugualla Bay (1500 acres)
   Targets:

   **Description:** The Priority Area runs from Skagit Bay on the east to the Naval Air Station Whidbey on the west. Much of the land in this Priority Area is diked farmland. The Land Trust owns (in fee and conservation easement) about 150 acres, including diked farmlands, tidelands, and a historic estuarine lagoon. The east side of this Priority Area is one of highest ranked areas for potential salmon recovery in WRIA 6 in part because its tidelands and eelgrass beds are important feeding grounds for salmon migrating from the Skagit Delta. Development pressure is anticipated from both Skagit County to the north and Oak Harbor...
North Whidbey Priority Areas

to the south. Restoration opportunities exist to improve estuarine and freshwater habitat and restore tidal flow for salmon recovery efforts. There are also a many partners including landowners, public agencies and conservation organizations.

3. **Swantown (1100 acres)**

**Targets:**

**Description:** Encompassing the lower reaches of a 3,793-acre watershed, this Priority Area functions as an important filtration system for runoff originating in Oak Harbor. The area includes important prime and historic farmland, mature forests and freshwater streams draining into Swantown Lake and Puget Sound. The diversity of habitats, including freshwater and estuarine habitats, is important for fish and wildlife. The area is very scenic with farmland, lake, marine waters and the Olympic Mountains in the viewshed. Protected lands in the area include a large portion of Swantown Lake, Joseph Whidbey State Park, and 40 acres of forestland owned by Island County. The threat of subdivision and development is much greater than most other island areas due to its proximity to the City of Oak Harbor.

4. **Crescent Harbor (625 acres)**

**Targets:**

**Description:** The stream in the center of this Priority Area flows into Crescent Harbor. In 2009, the U.S. Navy breached the dike south of here to restore salt marsh habitat, re-opening salmon access to the stream. Protection of the identified upland area would offer significant salmon and riparian habitat benefits. The area also includes prime farmland soils and farmland soils of state importance. Development pressure is relatively high given its proximity to the city of Oak Harbor and Navy housing developments. The area includes large undivided tracts of land.

5. **Strawberry Point (1210 acres)**

**Targets:**

**Description:** Strawberry Point has shoreline, forested shoreline bluffs, and farm land. It has been identified as a high priority site for the protection of juvenile salmon and protection of forage fish. The Land Trust owns a conservation easement on 16 acres of waterfront and helped protect 12 acres of forested, high-bluff property that is now owned by Island County.
North Whidbey Priority Areas

6. **North Penn Cove (1730 acres)**

**Targets:**

![Image]

**Description:** The farmland in this Priority Area is the northern gateway to Ebey’s Landing National Historical Reserve. In addition to its working farmlands and scenic targets, the area includes the northern Penn Cove shoreline. Woodlots scattered throughout the area provide benefits to wildlife, including places of refuge for wildlife and perching areas for raptors. The National Park Service holds a scenic conservation easement on Grasser’s Hill which protects the scenic views but not the habitat targets. The Land Trust has identified a number of funding partners and landowners willing to place conservation easements on their properties to preserve farmland and scenic views.

7. **Monroe Landing Farmland (2730 acres)**

**Targets:**

![Image]

**Description:** Although a portion of this Priority Area is within Ebey’s Landing National Historical Reserve, this productive farmland has not benefitted from the protection efforts in the main part of the Reserve (Ebey’s, Crockett and Smith Prairies). The farmland northeast of Penn Cove is well suited for farming due to its prime agricultural soils and agricultural soils of state importance. The southern edge of the Priority Area includes Blower’s Bluff, where Peregrine Falcons and Pigeon Guillemot nest. The Land Trust has identified landowners interested in and willing to protect their land as well as partnership and grant funding opportunities. There is a real threat of development due to the proximity to Oak Harbor.
Central Whidbey Priority Areas

8. Ebey’s Reserve Farmland (2420 acres)

Targets:

Description: Ebey’s Landing National Historical Reserve was created in 1978 as a unit of the National Park Service to help keep a historic, agricultural landscape intact. Farms in this Priority Area have been cultivated for over 150 years and most have prime soils and are designated as farmlands of statewide significance. The Land Trust has completed seven projects in this Priority Area and, combined with other entities’ protection efforts, 46% has been protected through fee simple ownership or conservation easements. Farmland protection provides for current and future local food production. Protecting “holes” in the middle of protected farmland areas helps retain connectivity and keep agriculture economically viable. In addition, these farmlands provide critical wildlife habitat, especially for raptors. They lie between Penn Cove and Crockett Lake, both areas designated as Audubon Important Bird Areas and as critical habitat by local, state and federal agencies and conservation groups.

9. Smith Prairie (960 acres)

Targets:

Description: The Smith Prairie Priority Area includes a small
Central Whidbey Priority Areas

native prairie remnant. Some of the land is used for agricultural purposes, including two conifer seed orchards. The Land Trust has identified a number of grant sources and partners willing and able to help protect and maintain the area’s open space for farming and habitat purposes. As the southern gateway to Ebey’s Landing National Historical Reserve, protection of the farmland and open space would help maintain historic integrity of the landscape.

10. Crockett Lake (1328 acres)

Description: The Crockett Lake Priority Area includes several habitat types, including the lake itself, surrounding freshwater and estuarine wetlands, and mature riparian forest as well as two prairie remnants, coastal bluffs and an old-growth forest in the adjacent uplands. This area is an Audubon Important Bird Area and provides feeding grounds for shorebirds, waterfowl, and raptors. One of the remnant prairies now undergoing restoration and expansion is on the Land Trust’s Naas Natural Area Preserve (aka Admiralty Inlet). The Naas Preserve, Fort Casey State Park and an unprotected coastal bluff in-between the park and preserve contain one of the 12 natural remaining populations of the federally threatened and state endangered golden paintbrush plant. There are several willing landowners, large land ownerships, and many partnership and grant funding opportunities.

11. Greenbank (530 acres)

Targets:

Description: Land in and around this Priority Area is primarily under public ownership and includes Lake Hancock, owned by the U.S. Navy; Lake Hancock wetland and forest buffer owned by The Nature Conservancy, forestland owned by Island County, and Greenbank Farm, owned by the Port of Coupeville. The area provides significant benefits to wildlife and provides public recreational opportunities. Within the Priority Area are public walking trails, public beach access, forest land, and open pastures. Additional land protection would add critical forest buffer to Island County’s ownership.
12. Mutiny Bay (360 acres)
Targets:

Description: This Priority Area encompasses a portion of the Mutiny Bay watershed. Protection is a priority because of the mature forest stands and the importance of stream headwaters and wetlands. Located just south of South Whidbey State Park is the largest piece of land in private ownership. The Priority Area includes connectivity to wetlands and proximity to coastal shorelines. The property is threatened with subdivision and development of homes.

13. Freeland (470 acres)
Targets:

Description: Located north of Freeland, this Priority Area is a mosaic of forest, farmland, and wetlands. Of particular significance is a sphagnum bog – a rare wetland type. Because of the area’s proximity to Freeland, the pressure for growth and spread of development is higher than in many other places on Whidbey Island. There are, however, large undeveloped tracts of land here. There are also possibilities for partnerships to help protect land in the area.
South Whidbey Priority Areas

14. South Whidbey Forest (5000 acres)

Targets:

Description: The South Whidbey Forest Priority Area is predominantly in forestland held in private and public ownership. The Land Trust owns a working forest conservation easement on 176 acres and holds conservation easements on 128 acres at Saratoga Woods. The Land Trust helped protect another 157 acres of mature forest land and the 604-acre Putney Woods, all owned by Island County. Sections of the Putney Woods forest are classified as natural heritage element occurrences. Large acreages in single ownerships exist but these are threatened with residential subdivision and development. The goal of this Priority Area is to protect a large forest system with functional stream systems and relatively intact wildlife habitat.

15. Double Bluff (1100 acres)

Targets:

Description: This Priority Area includes feeder bluffs, forests, and freshwater wetlands, streams and lake. There are small pockets of farmland. Excellent opportunities exist for low-impact trails to connect to existing protected areas, including Deer Lagoon to the east, Double Bluff Beach, and the Wahl Road Forest, all owned by Island County. There are willing landowners within the Priority Area and large landownership blocks.

16. Useless Bay (790 acres)

Targets:

Description: The Useless Bay Priority Area includes a valuable combination of freshwater wetlands, coastal estuarine habitat, forest, and farmland with forest edges. The diked farmland has prime farmland soils and farmland soils of state significance. Deer Lagoon, which lies adjacent to the Priority Area, has been identified as an Audubon Important Bird Area. Shorebirds and waterfowl congregate here, attracted to the wetlands, rich estuaries and farmland within and around the Priority Area. The area includes 54 acres protected by an agricultural conservation easement held by the Land Trust and 500 acres of land at Deer Lagoon owned primarily by Island County but with some acreage owned by State Parks. There are several landowners with significant holdings that may be willing to protect their land for agricultural and wildlife purposes.

17. Upper Maxwelton (1800 acres)

Targets:
South Whidbey Priority Areas

**Description:** Located in the upper reaches of the Maxwelton Watershed, the largest watershed on Whidbey Island, this Priority Area includes extensive wetlands, forests, riparian habitat and Maxwelton Creek, one of just a few salmon-bearing streams on Whidbey Island. Land already protected in the Priority Area includes the Land Trust’s Maxwelton Preserve and the 205-acre forest property recently protected due to Land Trust efforts that is now owned by the South Whidbey Parks and Recreation District. Protecting land in this area is a priority because of its importance to salmon and water quality.

18. **Lower Maxwelton (275 acres)**

**Targets:**

**Description:** This Priority Area includes most of the wetlands in the lower reaches of Maxwelton Creek – one of two salmon-bearing streams on Whidbey Island and the county’s largest watershed. Protecting land in this area will help maintain and enhance ecological Targets and riparian function. Some farmlands provide an “edge effect” for wildlife, increasing habitat diversity and food sources. There are a number of large land ownerships in this area.

19. **Swede Hill (690 acres)**

**Targets:**

**Description:** While some farmland soils of statewide importance are found in this Priority Area, the primary conservation Targets include forests with old-growth characteristics and high bluffs along the Cultus Bay/Possession Point shoreline. One of the biggest threats to the mature forests along the shoreline is timber harvest because of the size and quality of the trees. There are many viable protection options with a number of large land ownerships.

20. **Cultus Bay (990 acres)**

**Targets:**

**Description:** Located in the lower part of the Cultus Bay watershed, this Priority Area includes large forest and estuarine wetland tracts, including waterbird habitat, potential salmon habitat, feeder bluffs, and eelgrass beds. Existing protected land in the area includes a small recreation site owned by the Washington Department of Natural Resources, the Land Trust’s 9.5 acre Hammons Preserve and a 40-acre mature forest protected by the Land Trust and now owned by Island County. Further protection efforts could result in large areas of forest and
South Whidbey Priority Areas

wetland. The majority of the property is held in large ownership blocks and grant funding opportunities may be available.

21. Glendale Creek (720 acres)

Targets:

Description: This Priority Area encompasses most of the Glendale Creek watershed. Glendale Creek is one of the few salmon-spawning streams on Whidbey Island. Because of its importance to salmon and other wildlife species, protecting the riparian area is crucial to the health of the creek and quality of salmon habitat. The headwaters of the creek are within the Priority Area and include a large wetland complex. The Land Trust has identified a number of willing landowners and partners interested in protecting land in the area. A 28-acre conservation easement held by the Land Trust protects the northern portion of the Priority Area.
22. **Sunset Wetlands (180 acres)**

**Targets:**

![Map symbols]

**Description:** The streams along the lower reaches of Island County Watershed #48 flow into this Priority Area. Wetlands, streams, ponds and forests all help maintain a healthy, functioning watershed and serve as an aquifer recharge area. Protecting this land is important for water quality. The coastal shoreline includes feeder bluffs important to forage fish and salmon. Expansion of nearby development is a threat, and the Land Trust knows of willing landowners in the area.

23. **North Camano Farmland (1040 acres)**

**Targets:**

![Map symbols]

**Description:** Comprised of prime farmland soils and farmland soils of state importance, this Priority Area is the largest continuous stretch of farmland on Camano Island. In addition to being a source for local food production, it offers scenic views along Highway 526 – the only route onto and off of Camano Island. None of the land within the area is protected nor is it adjacent to any protected land. No large farmlands have been protected on Camano Island. This area is threatened by subdivision and development due to its proximity to Stanwood.
Camano Priority Areas
and easy commuting access to the Interstate 5 Highway.

24. **English Boom (700 acres)**

**Targets:**

**Description:** Located along the Pacific Flyway, this Priority Area provides critical habitat for fish, birds, and other wildlife. Along the shoreline, eelgrass beds provide habitat for forage fish, which in turn provide food for salmonid species migrating from the nearby Skagit and Stillaguamish Rivers as well as herons from the adjacent Davis Slough Heronry (65 acres protected by the Land Trust). Protecting additional land in this area would provide more opportunities for habitat enhancement. The Land Trust has identified multiple partners willing to help protect and restore land in this Priority Area.

25. **Kristoferson Creek (1840 acres)**

**Targets:**

**Description:** Kristoferson Creek is currently the only salmon-bearing stream on Camano Island. This Priority Area includes a large working farm, a freshwater pond, extensive stream and riparian areas and Triangle Cove, a large estuarine ecosystem. Protection within the Priority Area will benefit salmon and other wildlife, protect water quality, and provide scenic vistas and trail opportunities to the public. Threats include light-industrial land uses, residential subdivision and development, and roads and culverts blocking fish passage. The Land Trust, in partnership with Island County, has protected 10 acres at the mouth of Kristoferson Creek and the healthy mature forest on Island County’s Camano Ridge property. Several landowners within the Priority Area have expressed interest in land protection efforts. There are many opportunities for partnership and grant funding.

26. **Livingston Bay (3130 acres)**

**Targets:**

**Description:** The Livingston Bay Priority Area covers the western half of Port Susan Bay from Camano shoreline to the Snohomish County line. It also includes diked agricultural land and forested uplands. This area is a federally-recognized important bird area as it is a critical stopover point for shorebirds and waterfowl migrating along the Pacific Flyway. The tidelands are important as feeding grounds for salmon and other marine life. The Priority Area abuts The Nature Conservancy’s Port Susan Bay Preserve to the east and the Skagit Wildlife Area, owned by Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, to the northeast. The Land Trust has protected nearly 3,200 acres of tidelands in the Priority Area. There are opportunities to protect and restore estuarine habitat.
Camano Priority Areas

27. Chapman Creek (600 acres)

Targets:

Description: The Chapman Creek Priority Area covers about half of the watershed and encompasses the creek’s riparian area from its headwaters to Saratoga Passage. Land protection in this area will help maintain and improve watershed functions and allow for future salmon passage up the creek. Protection opportunities include large, undivided tracts of land, willing landowners, and salmon habitat recovery. The greatest threats are residential development and non-sustainable timber harvesting.

28. Elger Bay (350 acres)

Targets:

Description: Protecting land within this Priority Area would provide opportunities to restore estuary habitat and maintain current forest and shoreline conditions. The area is near Cama Beach State Park, Camano State Park, and Elger Bay County Park.

29. South Camano (1240 acres)

Targets:

Description: The forest of the South Camano Island Priority Area contains a rare maple forest-fringe cup plant community that is listed as a natural heritage element occurrence by the Washington State Natural Heritage Program. This Priority Area also includes Camano Head, a feeder bluff that is crucial to migrating salmon heading to and from the Skagit and Stillaguamish Rivers. There is a wetland in the central part of the area. The Land Trust has identified the highest priority lands for protection purposes.
Project Selection

Project Selection Process: The Land Trust has adopted a policy for evaluating, selecting and approving conservation projects finding that:

“A well-defined process and established criteria for selecting projects allows the Land Trust to find a balance between being strategic and being opportunistic. By focusing on its strategic priorities, the Land Trust can protect more significant lands. The project selection, evaluation and approval process serves to produce information that guides and focuses the Board’s deliberations on the important issues, including public benefit and project risks. This process is used when considering which projects to undertake.”

When a landowner or interested party inquires as to the Land Trust’s interest in a property or project area, the first thing that occurs is a discussion on the phone with the person and a preliminary review of maps and other available information. If the project appears to meet Land Trust objectives, conservation staff will arrange a field visit with the landowner. If the field visit indicates that the property is of interest to the Land Trust, conservation staff gathers information on the project, puts together maps and a project prospectus and brings the Project Evaluation Committee out to the site. The Project Evaluation Committee, using the Land Trust’s Project Selection Criteria (refer to Exhibit B), ranks the project and submits its recommendation to the Board of Directors for approval.

Project Selection Criteria: Selection criteria are the Land Trust’s written description of the characteristics or minimum standards that qualify conservation projects to be considered for protection. Criteria establish whether a project is eligible for the Land Trust’s consideration, but do not guarantee that the Land Trust will take on the project. These criteria are used to screen projects offered to the Land Trust and target properties to pursue. In both cases, the criteria provide a critical tool for determining which transactions are appropriate and worthwhile for the Land Trust to undertake and which are not.

1. Conservation or working land significance – the Land Trust will give priority to properties that:
   - Possess high quality ecological values and function or can relatively easily be restored to such a condition. If working land, provide the best conditions for long-term resource use.
   - Have significant or unique property characteristics recognized by local, state or federal agencies or credible natural resource organizations.
   - Possess important fish and/or wildlife habitat.
   - Are located within a Protection Priority Area or form an important ecological connection to a Priority Area(s).
• Contribute to landscape integrity, including ecological systems and migratory or connectivity corridors or, for working lands, are adjacent to other protected working lands.

2. **Immediacy of threat** – the Land Trust will give priority to properties with:
   • Unique or inherent physical characteristics and conservation values are imminently threatened by development pressure and irreversible conversion of the property.

3. **Stewardship** – the Land Trust will give priority to properties that:
   • Can be effectively and efficiently managed in the long-term with volunteer support, funding, and/or future grants.

4. **Cost efficiencies** – the Land Trust will give priority to properties with:
   • Minimal resource cost (time and money) incurred by the Land Trust.

5. **Public benefits** – the Land Trust will give priority to properties that:
   • Provide appropriate public use opportunities for low-impact public recreation and/or educational opportunities without damaging conservation or resource values.
   • Meet multiple Land Trust objectives, including appropriately raising our profile (to attract new members, increase giving levels, or increase our credibility) and involve partnerships and/or unique collaborations.
Goals and Objectives

Mission: The Whidbey Camano Land Trust protects the Islands’ most important natural habitats, scenic vistas, and working farms and forests in partnership with landowners and our island communities.

Strategic Focus: Land protection and responsible stewardship require the community’s long-term commitment to an enduring land legacy for Island County. We recognize the importance of community support, established priorities, strategic partnerships, financial sustainability, and a strong organization.

Strategic Goals:

Land Protection – High priority lands are protected in perpetuity.

Goal 1: Acquire and protect the most important lands in defined priority areas.

Goal 2: Advocate for public policies and funding programs that expand land protection and stewardship.

Stewardship – Land Trust properties and easements are responsibly managed in perpetuity.

Goal 3: Manage all Land Trust fee lands according to approved stewardship plans.

Goal 4: Collaborate with conservation easement landowners to ensure compliance.

Objectives:

Objective 1: Keep Land Protection Priorities Area Map updated with current resource information and changes in land use.

Objective 2: Using project selection criteria, determine the highest priority lands for protection, identify possible fund sources, and initiate conversations with landowners.
Objective 3: Complete, over a 5-year period, 30-50 transactions that protect high priority lands with a mix of Conservation Targets on Whidbey and Camano Islands.

Objective 4: Develop and complete stewardship plans for all fee owned land within one-year of acquisition and implement the plans.

Objective 5: Monitor all conservation easements annually for compliance and maintain positive relationships with owners of these lands.

Objective 6: Partner with community organizations, public agencies and private individuals to protect high priority lands.

Objective 7: Keep project selection criteria current and apply to all potential projects to ensure that preference is given to projects:

(a) that add significant value to the protection of healthy, ecologically viable landscapes;

(b) where the conservation values are threatened with loss or damage;

(c) that do not require significant stewardship efforts, unless adequate funding is provided and any stewardship and restoration efforts will lead to significant ecological benefit;

(d) that achieve more conservation with less direct resource cost to the Land Trust; and

(e) that protect multiple conservation targets.
Capital Improvements Plan

Planning Tiers
The Land Trust uses a tier system to help manage its workload and focus. The projects listed in the capital improvements plan are ranked by the following tiers:

Tier 1 Projects
Most active, highest priority projects. All have willing landowners, impending deadlines, and secured or partially secured funding. For projects which are donations, or funding is only partially secured, deadlines are based on threat of loss of landowner interest, or restoration planning is underway.

Tiers 3A and 3B
High priority, non-active projects. The Land Trust has made at least initial contact with landowners of Tier 3A projects; Tier 3B projects need relationship establishment and building. Funding has not been secured for these projects and there are no immediate deadlines.

Tier 2 Projects
High priority, moderately active projects. All have willing landowners and funding has been partially secured and/or a likely funding source has been identified with an upcoming grant application deadline.

Tiers 4A and 4B
Lower priority, non-active projects. The Land Trust has made at least initial contact with landowners of Tier 4A projects; Tier 4B projects still need relationship establishment and building. Funding has not been secured for these projects and there are no immediate deadlines.
**Funding Sources Legend**

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<th>Abbreviation</th>
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<td>Includes: Farmland Preservation, Riparian Protection, Critical Habitat, and Natural Areas</td>
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**Project Types**

**Fee Acquisition** – The Land Trust will acquire the property in its entirety and retain full ownership.

**CE Acquisition** – The Land Trust will acquire development rights the property and hold a restrictive conservation easement.

**Transfer** – The Land Trust is on the chain of title for a property and will transfer its rights to another agency, such as State Parks or Island County. Often, the Land Trust will retain a conservation easement on the property prior to the transfer.

**Cooperative** – The Land Trust is working with another agency to help protect land and will not have rights to the property or be listed on the chain of title.

**Restoration** – Restoration efforts that will lead to significant ecological benefits and are important to the protection of the conservation values of a site.
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<td>Naas Natural Area Preserve</td>
<td>USFWS, NRCS</td>
<td>Restoration</td>
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<td>Heritage Forest</td>
<td>USFWS, WWRP</td>
<td>Fee &amp; Rest.</td>
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<td>Ebey’s Farmland Phase 4A</td>
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<td>CE Acquisitions</td>
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<td>Ebey’s Farmland Phase 4B</td>
<td>NRCS, WWRP</td>
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<td>Mutiny Bay</td>
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<td>South Whidbey Forest</td>
<td>Private, CFF</td>
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<td>Tier 4B</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Sunset Wetlands</td>
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<td>Useless Bay – Phase 3</td>
<td>WWRP, NCWC, CFF</td>
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Exhibit A: Whidbey Camano Land Trust Strategic Plan 2009-2011

Mission
The Whidbey Camano Land Trust protects the islands’ most important natural habitats, scenic vistas and working farms and forests in partnership with landowners and our island communities.

Core Targets

Integrity
• We do our work competently, consistently, honestly, and ethically.

Strategic Action
• We are mission-focused, disciplined, and thoughtful in long-range planning and use of resources.
• We use scientific information to make the best decisions regarding land protection and stewardship.
• We create opportunities for people to join in protecting land and natural habitat.

Partnership
• We work with key partners, landowners, donors, and volunteers to support our mission.
• We are open, responsive and supportive to our members and the public.
• We leverage our strengths and resources with others to achieve more together than we can separately.

Optimism
• We are passionately dedicated to our mission.
• We believe that our actions make a difference.
• We know that today is the best opportunity to create a better tomorrow.
Core Strengths

We are an established local land trust and have specific strengths that are at the core of our success. These are:

Dynamic Organization
We are energized and focused in pursuing our mission. We grow, learn and adapt to meet the changing needs of land protection and stewardship.

Credible Leadership
We evoke confidence and trust by being mission-focused and maintaining a positive outlook. We have a disciplined process that produces optimal results.

Land-Protection Expertise
We protect and steward land by:

• Communicating effectively with landowners, the community, government agencies and other supporting organizations.
• Using legal review in land-protection agreements.
• Using science in conservation, restoration, and stewardship decisions.
• Using sound financial practices.

Relationship Building
Our effectiveness is based on our strong relationships with landowners, the community, and public officials.

Strategic Focus Areas and Goals
Land protection and responsible stewardship require the community’s long-term commitment to an enduring land legacy for Island County. We recognize the importance of community support, established priorities, strategic partnerships, financial sustainability, and a strong organization.
LAND PROTECTION – High priority lands are protected in perpetuity.

Goal 1: Acquire and protect the most important lands in defined priority areas.
Goal 2: Advocate for public policies and funding programs that expand land protection and stewardship.

STEWARDSHIP – Land Trust properties and easements are responsibly managed in perpetuity.

Goal 3: Manage all Land Trust fee lands according to approved stewardship plans.
Goal 4: Collaborate with conservation easement landowners to ensure compliance.

STRATEGIC ALLIANCES – Partnerships increase the capacity to achieve our mission.

Goal 5: Build relationships that advance our mission.

OUTREACH & ENGAGEMENT – The community is committed to land protection and stewardship.

Goal 6: Increase community awareness of the public benefits provided by the Land Trust.
Goal 7: Attract more members and encourage existing members to increase their level of support.

FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY – Strong financial systems and expanded funding support Land Trust operations into the future.

Goal 8: Manage the financial systems and provide oversight to keep pace with the growth and complexity of the organization.
Goal 9: Increase operational and capital funding.

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY – Strong internal systems and board/staff expertise enable us to achieve our land-protection goals.

Goal 10: Meet national standards and practices for land trust excellence.
Goal 11: Increase staff and board expertise to meet the organization’s changing needs.
### Exhibit B: Project Selection Scoring Criteria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONSERVATION OR WORKING LAND SIGNIFICANCE</th>
<th>Total Possible Points: 40</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>For all properties:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Whether the property will enhance the conservation or resource values of nearby or adjoining protected lands.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Are viable over the long-term, in terms of property size and surrounding uses.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Are located in or adjacent to a Protection Priority Area or part of a crucial corridor connection.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Will protect critical water sources, quality and quantity.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>For habitat lands:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• The significance of ecosystem processes and functions for Island County, including: habitat quality, diversity and richness; rarity of species or communities; provision of critical habitat or biological function(s) for native fish and wildlife species and/or plant populations or communities.</td>
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<td><strong>For working farmland or forestland:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• The significance of the working land for Island County, including: soil quality and significance (state, regional, local).</td>
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<tr>
<td>• The productivity of the property.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• The significance for fish and wildlife habitat.</td>
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</table>

| 31-40 Extremely Significant and Rare: The property is located in a critical part of a Land Trust Protection Priority Area or forms a critical ecological or resource connection to a Protection Priority area. For habitat, the ecological processes and functions are in good to excellent condition, with over 80% of the habitat intact and healthy. If ecological restoration is required, the outcome will be extremely critical for fish or wildlife habitat. For working lands, one of the best opportunities to protect a working farm or forest. The resource values are important on a state or federal level (species, soils, water, etc.). The property has very good to excellent integrity and viability over the long-term. | |
| 19-30 Significant: The property is located in or near a Land Trust Protection Priority Area, connects to a Protection Priority area or is of county-wide importance. For habitat, the ecological processes and functions are in good condition, with over 60% of the habitat intact and healthy. If ecological restoration is required, the outcome will be very important for fish and wildlife habitat. For working lands, it is a good opportunity to protect a working farm or forest. The resource values are important on a regional level (species, soils, water, etc.). The property has good to very good viability and integrity over the long-term. | |
| 4-18 Average importance: The property is identified as important to a local community. For habitat, the ecological processes and functions are in average condition but will require considerable restoration to become an intact and healthy area important for fish and wildlife habitat. For working lands, protecting a working farm or forest brings needed open space to the area. The resource values are important on an Island level (species, soils, water, etc.). The property has fair to good viability and integrity over the long-term. | |
| 0-3 Not Significant: This kind of conservation or working land still remains in plentiful supply. The resource values are of no special importance. | |
### IMMEDIACY OF THREAT

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Total Possible Points: 20</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• The magnitude and immediacy of the threats to the property’s conservation and resource values including ecological threats, human threats, zoning, surrounding use, and likelihood for use conversion.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• For donations of fee interest or conservation easement, evaluate the property as if it is owned by a person who has no donative intent.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-20 <strong>Extremely Threatened</strong>: Imminent threats are documented (within 1 – 2 years). This is the only opportunity, or one of the few opportunities, to acquire a property with these physical characteristics and conservation values.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8-15 <strong>Significantly threatened</strong>: Significant threats are documented (within 3-4 years). Significant property with limited opportunities to acquire property with these physical characteristics and conservation values.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-7 <strong>Slightly threatened</strong>: Threats are documented (within 5-6 years). There are other opportunities to acquire property with these physical characteristics and conservation values.</td>
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<tr>
<td>0 <strong>Not threatened</strong>: Ample opportunities to acquire a property of this kind and threats are minimal.</td>
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### STEWARDSHIP

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<th>Total Possible Points: 15</th>
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<tr>
<td>• <strong>On-going stewardship costs (in terms of time, money and opportunity costs):</strong></td>
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<td>including, to what degree the on-going stewardship plan will need to address long-term control of noxious weeds, invasive plants, inappropriate public use and facilities maintenance.</td>
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<td>• <strong>Long-term stewardship:</strong></td>
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<td>including, in its existing state, will the property require increasing stewardship efforts in the future; if restoration is needed, can it be accomplished to minimize long-term stewardship needs; and what is happening across the landscape that may affect negatively impact stewardship of the site and can these impacts be mitigated in a cost- and resource-effective way.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• <strong>Risk Abatement:</strong></td>
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<td>including identifying the possible risks and whether these risks can be effectively abated or minimized in a cost-effective way.</td>
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<tr>
<td>11-15 <strong>Very Low to Low Stewardship Costs</strong>: The property can be easily managed to protect the property’s conservation or resource values with very low or low costs and will remain viable long into the future.</td>
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</table>
### Low to Moderate Stewardship Costs: 6-10
The property can be managed to protect the conservation or working lands values of the property with low to moderate costs and will remain viable into the future.

### Moderate to High Stewardship Costs: 1-5
The property may be difficult to manage in order to protect the conservation or working lands values of the property and the cost will be moderate to high in order for the property to remain somewhat viable in the future.

### Very High Stewardship Costs: 0
The property will be difficult to manage and will be very costly and may not be viable in the future.

#### COST EFFICIENCIES

<table>
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<th>Total Possible Points: 15</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>• Who is the best owner and manager of the property?</strong> If it is the Land Trust, is it acquiring the minimum interest in the property needed to adequately protect it in perpetuity?</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>• Whether fee interest or a conservation easement will be donated by the landowner.</strong></td>
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<td><strong>• Whether adequate stewardship funding will be provided.</strong></td>
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<td><strong>• Whether the property is highly competitive for available grants.</strong></td>
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<td><strong>• Whether there are donors ready to fund the project.</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>• Whether the property will be owned and managed by another organization with no or little support needed from the Land Trust.</strong></td>
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<td><strong>• Whether the neighborhood or other organizations are likely to provide on-the-ground stewardship and other assistance.</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>• Whether there are any liabilities that will incur significant costs, e.g., buildings, clean-up, long-term restoration, especially that not covered with grant funding.</strong></td>
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<p>| 11-15 | <strong>Excellent cost-efficiencies:</strong> Cost efficiencies are high. The property interest is being: (a) donated with a stewardship contribution and (b) the property is attractive to multiple grant programs and is highly competitive. Costs of “doing the deal” will be covered by grants and/or fee for services payment from seller/donor. |
| 6-10  | <strong>Good cost-efficiencies:</strong> Cost-efficiencies are good. The property interest is being donated without a stewardship contribution but there are good opportunities to secure the funding from private sources. The Land Trust will bear most or all of the costs of “doing the deal.” |
| 1-5   | <strong>Slight cost-efficiencies:</strong> There are a few cost-efficiencies, mainly provided by volunteers, in-kind services and/or stewardship by others. This project will impact Land Trust resources. |
| 0     | <strong>Limited or no cost-efficiencies:</strong> This project will have a significant impact on Land Trust resources. |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PUBLIC BENEFITS</th>
<th>Total Possible Points: 10</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Public support for the project, locally, statewide, and nationally.</td>
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<td>• Whether the project is consistent with adopted plans.</td>
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<td>• Whether appropriate public use and/or educational or scientific opportunities can be efficiently (cost and time) provided and managed.</td>
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<td>• Whether beach access is provided and/or significant scenic vistas will be protected.</td>
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<td>• Whether historic sites, if present, can they be efficiently (cost and time) protected and managed.</td>
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<td>• Whether there are other unique public benefits that will be provided.</td>
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</table>

8-10 **Outstanding**: The project has very strong and widespread public support, is consistent with adopted plans, and site uses are entirely appropriate to maintaining the conservation and resource values of the property. The project meets the standards of IRS Code 170 by providing significant benefit to fish and wildlife habitat, particularly species of concern on a state or federal level. The public benefits include special features that are unusual, relatively rare, or very significant to Island County residents.

5-7 **Good**: The project has good public support, is generally consistent with adopted plans, and site uses are appropriate to maintaining the conservation and resource values of the property. The project meets the standards of IRS Code 170. There are other public benefits, such as local food production, aquifer protection, etc.

1-4 **Slight**: The project has some local support, is not inconsistent with adopted plans, and site uses are generally appropriate to maintaining the conservation and resource values of the property. There are few other public benefits.

0 **None**: The project has little support, and/or is not consistent with adopted plans, and/or uses are inappropriate to protecting the conservation and resource values of the property.