



**Close to nature.
Close to home.**

The Bruce Trail Conservancy

Strategic Plan

2007 to 2010

Strategic Plan Outline

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Introduction

The Bruce Trail Conservancy (BTC, formerly *Bruce Trail Association*) is a membership-based, volunteer, non-profit organization that was established by letters patent in 1963; four years of hard work led to the opening of the Bruce Trail in 1967. More than 40 years later, the BTC plays a major role in securing and stewarding land along the Niagara Escarpment.

In 2000 the BTC developed a Strategic Plan with the primary goal of securing the Trail by 2015. The Plan called for the provision of staff support to primary program areas, including Marketing, Fundraising, Volunteer Management and Land Securement, and an overall restructuring of the Committees to support the goals of the BTC. The 2000 Strategic Plan was an important tool that enhanced the BTC's work in fundraising and securing land, and raised the profile of the BTC in the eyes of the public and with government agencies.

In December 2005 the BTC revised its mission statement to reflect more closely its core belief in conserving Escarpment land. The BTC Board has given priority to updating the BTC's Strategic Plan to guide the strategic allocation of volunteer, financial and staff resources.

In revising the Strategic Plan, the Steering and Strategic Planning Committee (SSPC) first examined the achievements of the 2000 Strategic Plan and concluded that, five years later, many of the tasks identified in the Plan had been successfully carried out. The SSPC then reviewed each of the four goals that must be met to achieve the BTC's Mission.

First and foremost is the goal to secure and steward a permanent conservation corridor along the Niagara Escarpment that contains the Bruce Trail. The optimal way to achieve this is to secure land on the Escarpment through fee simple purchase and donations. However, it is recognized that complete Securement of the Trail may take two decades or more, and will depend on the will of the landowners and the availability of financial resources, currently expected to be the equivalent of \$50 million. Until total securement is achieved, the BTC must continually strive to keep the trail on the optimum route and off roads by fostering good relations with private landowners along the Trail. Ultimately, such good relations can lead to donations or sale of land to the BTC in the future. Finally, the BTC must steward the land in its care, to enhance and/or preserve the ecological integrity of the Niagara Escarpment.

The second goal relates to the need of the BTC to have the necessary financial resources in place to carry out its Mission. The BTC must strive to have the right tools and partnerships in place. We must continue to identify new sources of funds so as to broaden and expand our fundraising program, and we must continue to fundraise actively from all available sources if we are to meet our financial needs for securing the Trail.

The third goal is the requirement of the BTC to be a healthy, vibrant organization structured effectively to support our aggressive land acquisition and fundraising programs and to achieve our Mission. Each volunteer and staff member must understand their roles and responsibilities within the BTC, so that their hard work is most effectively supporting the BTC's Mission. We not only need to retain existing volunteers; we also need the capability to attract new volunteers so that there is continuity in the BTC programs.

The fourth goal is the critical importance of achieving a high public profile so that our stakeholders and the general public know about us and the good work we do in protecting the Niagara Escarpment. This means effective marketing and outreach to the public, the government and the media. We also need to develop effective ways of attracting new members to our organization, and of retaining members through meeting their needs. Increasing and retaining members means a larger donor base and more potential volunteers to support our vital programs.

This Strategic Plan is intended to guide the BTC Board's activities and decision-making from 2007 to 2010, and beyond. The strategies and objectives presented in this Plan are intended to be sufficiently specific to guide the program areas towards achievement of the Mission, but sufficiently broad to allow flexibility of operations and activities within each program area to achieve the Goals.

Subsidiary Implementation Plans with measurable outcomes and monitoring of the outcomes will be developed for specific program areas.

To keep on track with the Plan and remain responsive to the changing financial and government environments, the SSPC will monitor progress and present a formal report to the BTC Board every June, including recommendations on any necessary adjustments that need to be made.

Mission, Vision and Values

Mission

The Bruce Trail Conservancy is a charitable organization committed to establishing a conservation corridor containing a public footpath along the Niagara Escarpment, in order to protect its natural ecosystems and to promote environmentally responsible public access to this UNESCO World Biosphere Reserve.

Vision

The Bruce Trail Conservancy and its partners will secure a conservation corridor along the entire Niagara Escarpment that contains the Bruce Trail. Our steadfast commitment to responsible land stewardship will significantly contribute to the preservation and enhancement of the Escarpment ecosystem.

Values

The Bruce Trail Conservancy Values:

- Our public and private landholders who partner with us to offer public access to the conservation corridor.
- Our dedicated regional Bruce Trail Conservancy Clubs who maintain the trails and manage the lands under our care.
- The donors, landowners and public agencies who partner with us to continually expand the conserved lands along the Niagara Escarpment.
- The dedication, time and support of our large base of volunteers and members, and of our staff.
- The restoration and stewardship of the lands under our care.
- The responsible use of the trails for public safety and for minimal environmental impact.
- Our role in providing educational resources and opportunities about the Niagara Escarpment.
- Our role in providing national and international expertise in land stewardship and trail management.
- Our role in Niagara Escarpment ecosystem management and research.
- Our collaboration with like-minded BTC partners which produces measurable benefits toward the achievement of our mission and vision.

Goal 1 Secure and Steward a Permanent Conservation Corridor along the Niagara Escarpment that contains the Bruce Trail

Strategy 1.1 Land Securement

Develop an integrated approach for identifying, targeting and securing lands with the objective of securing a conservation corridor along the optimum route.

- Objective 1.1.1 Develop and implement a process for identifying the Optimum Route (OR) for the Bruce Trail within a conservation corridor on the Niagara Escarpment
- Objective 1.1.2 Develop and implement a range of land securement strategies to identify, prioritize and finalize the securement in perpetuity of properties within the conservation corridor that contains the OR. (e.g., land ownership, land donations, permanent easements)
- Objective 1.1.3 Secure OR lands at the earliest possible time after they become available, subject to funding availability and established prioritization criteria
- Objective 1.1.4 Maintain up-to-date property and real estate data to inform and facilitate decision-making on securement matters.
- Objective 1.1.5 Identify partnering opportunities and strategic alliances that will facilitate attainment of the optimum Bruce Trail route in perpetuity
- Objective 1.1.6 Prepare information packages for volunteers and potential landowner donors/vendors, outlining the range of options for securing the OR, including donation or sale of land

Strategy 1.2 Landowner Relations

Maintain and enhance landowner relations so that Trail on private land continues to be accessible to the public in the long term

- Objective 1.2.1 Implement processes to obtain up-to-date information on landowners and to update the landowner database to assist with landowner relations and land securement needs
- Objective 1.2.2 Maintain and enhance landowner relations through regular contact with landowners on the Optimum Route or on land that is not Optimum Route where the trail currently crosses
- Objective 1.2.3 Identify and address landowner concerns that may be barriers to securing handshake agreements or eventual donations or sales of land

Strategy 1.3 Land Stewardship

Steward lands in the care of the BTC in an environmentally responsible and sustainable manner

- Objective 1.3.1 Review and enhance methods of stewardship monitoring on BTC-managed lands
- Objective 1.3.2 Implement a process for monitoring the status of management plan recommendations
- Objective 1.3.3 Review the effectiveness of the management plans for lands under the management of the BTC, in a five-year cycle

Goal 2 Secure Adequate Resources to Support the Mission of the BTC

Strategy 2.1 Infrastructure

Develop infrastructure and resources to carry out a fundraising program

- Objective 2.1.1 Identify and put in place the necessary resources to support the fundraising program, including a Fundraising Committee comprised of volunteers and dedicated professional Fundraising and Marketing Staff
- Objective 2.1.2 Cultivate linkages between the Clubs and the BTC to support acquisition of resources
- Objective 2.1.3 Develop fundraising materials and branding that support the BTC's goals of encouraging donations

Strategy 2.2 Sources of Support

Identify and cultivate sources of financial and other resource support to the BTC Land Acquisition and Land Conservation Programs

- Objective 2.2.1 Identify sources and obtain funds from corporations, foundations, private donors, and government agencies to support BTC Land Acquisition and Land Conservation programs
- Objective 2.2.2 Identify and promote other means of BTC support (e.g., tax incentives for donations)
- Objective 2.2.3 Carry out a donor recognition program to honour donors and cultivate long-term support
- Objective 2.2.4 Create alliances with other environmental/conservation organizations

Strategy 2.3 Fundraising Campaigns

Actively solicit financial support from BTC members, donors and the general public, for the BTC Land Acquisition and Conservation Programs

- Objective 2.3.1 Conduct campaigns aimed at securing identified resources
- Objective 2.3.2 Target land donations as an integral part of the fundraising campaign
- Objective 2.3.3 Solicit member donations via BTC marketing and communication pieces
- Objective 2.3.4 Collaborate with Clubs to identify local sources of donations
- Objective 2.3.5 Collaborate with Clubs to conduct events-based fundraising

Goal 3 Cultivate a Healthy BTC Organization that is Aligned with its Mission

Strategy 3.1 Organizational Structure

Develop an organizational structure to support the Mission of the BTC

- Objective 3.1.1 Promote a close and synergistic working relationship between volunteers and staff to carry out BTC programs
- Objective 3.1.2 Provide the Clubs with the necessary tools, information and guidance to support them in their efforts to achieve the BTC Mission
- Objective 3.1.3 Provide for succession planning to create continuity in BTC and Club volunteer roles
- Objective 3.1.4 Maintain good communications and business relations within the BTC

Strategy 3.2 Volunteer Management

Attract, retain and coordinate satisfied volunteers

- Objective 3.2.1 Build on the existing Volunteer Database and continue the program of tracking volunteer information and communication
- Objective 3.2.2 Implement an orientation and training program for volunteers with an annual program evaluation
- Objective 3.2.3 Encourage the recognition of BTC and Club volunteers
- Objective 3.2.4 Develop Club infrastructure with support from Staff, via the Volunteer Workgroup
- Objective 3.2.5 Expand the BTC's volunteer base

Goal 4 Increase Awareness and Support for the BTC

Strategy 4.1 Marketing

To increase the public's and other key stakeholders' awareness & recognition the Mission of the BTC to heighten the BTC's reputation and create effective increases in donations, government funding, members & volunteers

Objective 4.1.1 Review the efficacy of the current BTC brand image and update as necessary

Objective 4.1.2 Monitor that the approved BTC brand image is consistently used throughout the BTC

Objective 4.1.3 Develop collaborative links with recreation, conservation & commercial organizations to participate in joint promotional activities

Strategy 4.2 Government and Media Outreach

Make direct contact with all levels of government and the media to advance the BTC's Mission

Objective 4.2.1 Monitor all levels of government for opportunities for support (financial, regulatory, tax, policy, lands availability)

Objective 4.2.2 Approach all levels of government to make them aware of the Bruce Trail, its economic benefits, its goals of escarpment preservation and trail securement, and its need for support

Objective 4.2.3 Collaborate with the Niagara Escarpment Commission, conservation authorities and federal and provincial park authorities to identify and achieve mutual goals

Objective 4.2.4 Make contact with Municipal Politicians to raise awareness of the Bruce Trail in their area, provide input to municipal Master Plans, identify areas of collaboration for land securement, and highlight the economic impact of the Trail

Objective 4.2.5 Communicate the BTC's Mission, activities, and achievements in the print media, radio, internet and television

Strategy 4.3 Membership Attraction and Retention

To enhance and expand the Bruce Trail experience by both members and the public to increase the BTC membership base

Objective 4.3.1 Assess membership trends on a regular basis and prepare plans as necessary to address issues identified

Objective 4.3.2 Provide personal follow-up with new and lapsed members, and recognize long-standing members

Objective 4.3.3 Create niche opportunities to attract and retain membership

Objective 4.3.4 Develop strategies to encourage non-member Bruce Trail users to become members

Objective 4.3.5 Carry out educational programs to promote the Bruce Trail and the Niagara Escarpment to members and non-members