



**Bruce Trail**  
**CONSERVANCY**

# **Strategic Plan**

**2015-2018**

**BTC Board Approved April 11, 2015**

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## Introduction

This Bruce Trail Conservancy (BTC) Strategic Plan presents the strategic goals of the organization for 2015 to 2018, and represents an update of the 2011 to 2015 Strategic Plan. The four strategic goals are of equal importance to the successful achievement of the BTC's mission.

**The first goal is 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. Complete securement of the Trail will take several decades, and will depend on the will of the landowners and the availability of financial resources. Until total securement is achieved, the BTC must continually strive to keep the trail on the optimum route by fostering good relations with private landowners along the Trail. Such good relations may lead to donations or sale of land to the BTC in the future. The BTC must maintain a safe Trail through maintaining up to date information on the current Trail route, performing regular Trail audits, and providing training to Trail volunteers. The BTC must also steward the land in its care, to enhance and/or preserve the ecological integrity of the Niagara Escarpment.

**The second goal is 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 a conservation corridor on the Niagara Escarpment that contains the Bruce Trail.

**The third goal is to be a dynamic organization which is able to support its aggressive land acquisition and fundraising programs, to be able to fulfill the Mission.** Key to this goal is having processes in place to ensure a vibrant, growing membership. All volunteers and staff members must understand their roles and responsibilities within the BTC, so that their hard work will most effectively support the BTC's Mission. We must develop effective ways of attracting new members to our organization, including those in diverse communities, and of retaining members by meeting their expectations. Increasing and retaining members means a larger donor base and more potential volunteers to support our vital programs. The good working relationships between the volunteers and staff of the BTC must also be fostered.

**The fourth goal is to achieve 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 carrying out effective marketing and outreach to the public, the government and the media.

This Strategic Plan is intended to guide the activities and decisions of the Board of Directors, Committees and staff of the BTC from 2015 to 2018. 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.

The Strategic Plan is supported by subsidiary Implementation Plans with measurable outcomes and monitoring of the outcomes; these have been developed or are under development for specific program areas.

To keep on track with the Plan and remain responsive to the changing financial and government environments, the Steering and Strategic Planning Committee (SSPC) will monitor progress and present a formal report to the BTC Board of Directors in October of each year, including recommendations on any necessary adjustments that need to be made to the Plan.

## 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 Document and implement land securement strategies that identify, prioritize and finalize the securement in perpetuity of properties within the conservation corridor that contains the Optimum Route (OR) (e.g., land ownership, land donations, permanent easements)
- Objective 1.1.2 Refine the location of the OR for the Bruce Trail within a conservation corridor on the Niagara Escarpment, where required
- Objective 1.1.3 Secure OR lands in a timely manner 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 Maintain and circulate information packages for volunteers and potential landowner donors/vendors, outlining the range of options for securing the OR

### 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 Maintain a database of current landowners to assist with landowner relations and land securement needs
- Objective 1.2.2 Cultivate and maintain 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 Trail Development and Maintenance

*Develop and maintain a continuous route for the Bruce Trail*

- Objective 1.3.1 Maintain a Trail that meets design and maintenance standards established by the BTC
- Objective 1.3.2 Work to establish Trail on the Optimum Route where possible
- Objective 1.3.3 Enhance processes to maintain up to date information on the current Trail route
- Objective 1.3.4 Perform regular audits of the Trail and create processes to follow up on the implementation of audit recommendations
- Objective 1.3.5 Provide training to volunteers on how to work in a safe manner

**Strategy 1.4 Land Stewardship**  
*Steward lands in the care of the BTC in an environmentally responsible and sustainable manner*

- Objective 1.4.1 Complete management plans for BTC-managed properties within 1.5 years of acquisition
- Objective 1.4.2 Review and enhance methods of stewardship monitoring on BTC-managed lands
- Objective 1.4.3 Review and enhance processes for monitoring and reporting on the status of management plan recommendations
- Objective 1.4.4 Conduct and report on 10 audits of OHT lands, and update 5 management plans, annually

**Goal 2 Secure and Manage Resources to Support the Mission of the BTC**

**Strategy 2.1 Sources of Support**  
*Identify and develop sources of financial and other resource support to the BTC Land Acquisition and Land Conservation Programs*

- Objective 2.1.1 Identify and develop sources of funding from corporations, foundations, private donors, and government agencies to support BTC Land Acquisition and Land Conservation programs
- Objective 2.1.2 Recognize donors to cultivate long-term support
- Objective 2.1.3 Develop and/or enhance alliances with other environmental/conservation organizations where appropriate
- Objective 2.1.4 Identify and promote non-financial initiatives that support the BTC

**Strategy 2.2 Fundraising**  
*Solicit financial support from BTC members, donors, government agencies and the general public, for the BTC Land Acquisition and Conservation Programs*

- Objective 2.2.1 Carry out fundraising activities to secure funds from identified resources
- Objective 2.2.2 Target land donations as an integral part of fundraising
- Objective 2.2.3 Solicit member donations via BTC marketing and communication pieces
- Objective 2.2.4 Collaborate with Clubs to identify local sources of donations and conduct events-based fundraising to support the BTC Land Acquisition and Conservation Programs

**Strategy 2.3 Management of Financial Resources**

- Objective 2.3.1 Develop a plan to balance long-term financial stability objectives with near-term requirements
- Objective 2.3.2 Establish long-term financial resources targets, including guidelines for their achievement and maintenance

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

### Strategy 3.1 Membership

*Enhance and expand the Bruce Trail Conservancy experience by both members and the public to increase the BTC membership base*

- Objective 3.1.1 Develop processes to improve membership retention and attraction at the BTC level, and work with Clubs to improve membership retention and attraction at the Club level
- Objective 3.1.2 Create theme-based hiking opportunities and other initiatives that will heighten awareness of our conservation mission and attract and retain a diverse membership
- Objective 3.1.3 Implement effective processes to follow up with lapsed members
- Objective 3.1.4 Enhance processes to recognize long-standing members
- Objective 3.1.5 Assess internal membership trends and external demographic trends, and prepare plans as necessary to address issues and opportunities identified
- Objective 3.1.6 Implement effective strategies to encourage non-member users of the Trail to become members
- Objective 3.1.7 Carry out educational programs to promote the Bruce Trail and the Niagara Escarpment

### Strategy 3.2 Volunteers

*Attract and retain volunteers to support the Mission of the BTC*

- Objective 3.2.1 Build on the existing Volunteer Database and continue the program of tracking volunteer information and communication
- Objective 3.2.2 Provide orientation and training programs and resources for BTC volunteers
- Objective 3.2.3 Support the Clubs with their volunteer management programs
- Objective 3.2.4 Honour volunteers at the BTC level and encourage the Clubs to honour Club volunteers
- Objective 3.2.5 Implement effective processes to encourage succession planning in BTC and Club volunteer roles
- Objective 3.2.6 Expand the BTC volunteer base to aid succession planning

### Strategy 3.3 Organizational Relations

*Promote positive working relations within the organization to support the Mission of the BTC*

- Objective 3.3.1 Maintain good communications and professional relations within the BTC including the BTC, Clubs, volunteers and Staff
- Objective 3.3.2 Provide the Clubs with tools and guidance to support their activities and encourage consistency in financial and other reporting
- Objective 3.3.3 Develop processes that improve communication and collaboration among volunteers in comparable roles
- Objective 3.3.4 Maintain an effective Staff structure and provide resources for Staff to perform their duties

## Goal 4 Increase Awareness and Support for the BTC

### Strategy 4.1 Marketing and Communications

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

- Objective 4.1.1 Carry out marketing initiatives to increase awareness of the BTC
- Objective 4.1.2 Communicate the BTC's Mission, activities, and achievements in the communication media
- Objective 4.1.3 Identify, develop and expand corporate alliances and sponsorships
- Objective 4.1.4 Develop, enhance and expand collaborative links with tourism, recreation, conservation and commercial/business organizations to participate in joint promotional activities
- Objective 4.1.5 Identify areas near the Escarpment that are under-serviced by the BTC and its Clubs, and create a strategy for engagement

### Strategy 4.2 Government and External Relations

*Foster relations with external groups and all levels of government to advance the BTC's Mission*

- Objective 4.2.1 Monitor all levels of government for opportunities for support (financial, regulatory, tax, policy, land availability)
- Objective 4.2.2 Make municipal, provincial and federal staff and politicians aware of the Bruce Trail, its economic benefits, its goals of escarpment preservation and trail securement, and its need for financial, political and legislative support
- Objective 4.2.3 Collaborate with the Niagara Escarpment Commission, conservation authorities, federal and provincial park authorities, and other conservation groups to identify and achieve mutual goals, and to maintain and enhance the regulatory framework within which we operate
- Objective 4.2.4 Liaise with municipal politicians and staff regarding inclusion of the Bruce Trail in the Official Plan and processes for conservation lot creation
- Objective 4.2.5 Identify, develop and expand alliances with external groups and organizations, including community groups, that can provide strategic benefit to the BTC