



# 50th Anniversary Milestones Project

## Planning for our Future, from the Inside Out

The 2015 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Milestones year is all about *Planning for Our Future*. In the last issue of the Bruce Trail Magazine we navigated the legislative landscape, examining the role of the Bruce Trail Conservancy in not just following but also influencing key planning legislation such as the Niagara Escarpment Plan. Just as important as the external planning forces that impact our organization's activities are the internal forces that shape our successes and keep us moving towards our goal of a fully secured Conservation Corridor along the Niagara Escarpment that contains the Bruce Trail.

There's a saying "if you don't know where you're going, any path will take you there". We at the BTC know all about paths – how to scout them, build them, maintain them and show them off to the public.

But what about the Bruce Trail Conservancy itself? What plans do we need to put in place internally to make the best use of our limited resources – financial resources, volunteers and staff – and still advance our goals?

**Hikers look to maps to guide them. Businesses and organizations look to their Mission Statement and Strategic Plan.**

Our mission is clear: we want a permanently protected Conservation Corridor along the Niagara Escarpment that contains the Bruce Trail. But how to get there? The most important tool to plan activities around achieving our mission is the BTC's *Strategic Plan*. This planning document provides the general framework – goals, strategies and objectives – over a three to five year timeframe. The goals are high level, fundamental but eminently recognizable: preserving and conserving the land, funding our work, cultivating a healthy organization, and getting the word out about the important work we do. Throughout 2014 an updated draft of the Strategic Plan was reviewed by Clubs and the BTC Board, and the final Plan, covering 2015 to 2018, was approved by the BTC Board in 2015.

### MISSION STATEMENT:

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 ecosystem and to promote environmentally responsible public access to this UNESCO World Biosphere Reserve.

While the Strategic Plan provides overall guidance to staff and volunteers, the details on what should take place in the different program areas (for example, Land Securement, Trail Development and Maintenance, Marketing, Membership, etc.) are outlined in *Implementation Plans*. These Plans give more detailed guidance on activities to undertaken in support of the Strategic Plan, and thus the BTC's Mission. In 2015 updated Implementation Plans were prepared for Marketing, Membership and Fundraising.

*The planning doesn't stop there.* Activities in each of the major program areas proceed according to their own planning framework. BTC staff ecologists prepared Management

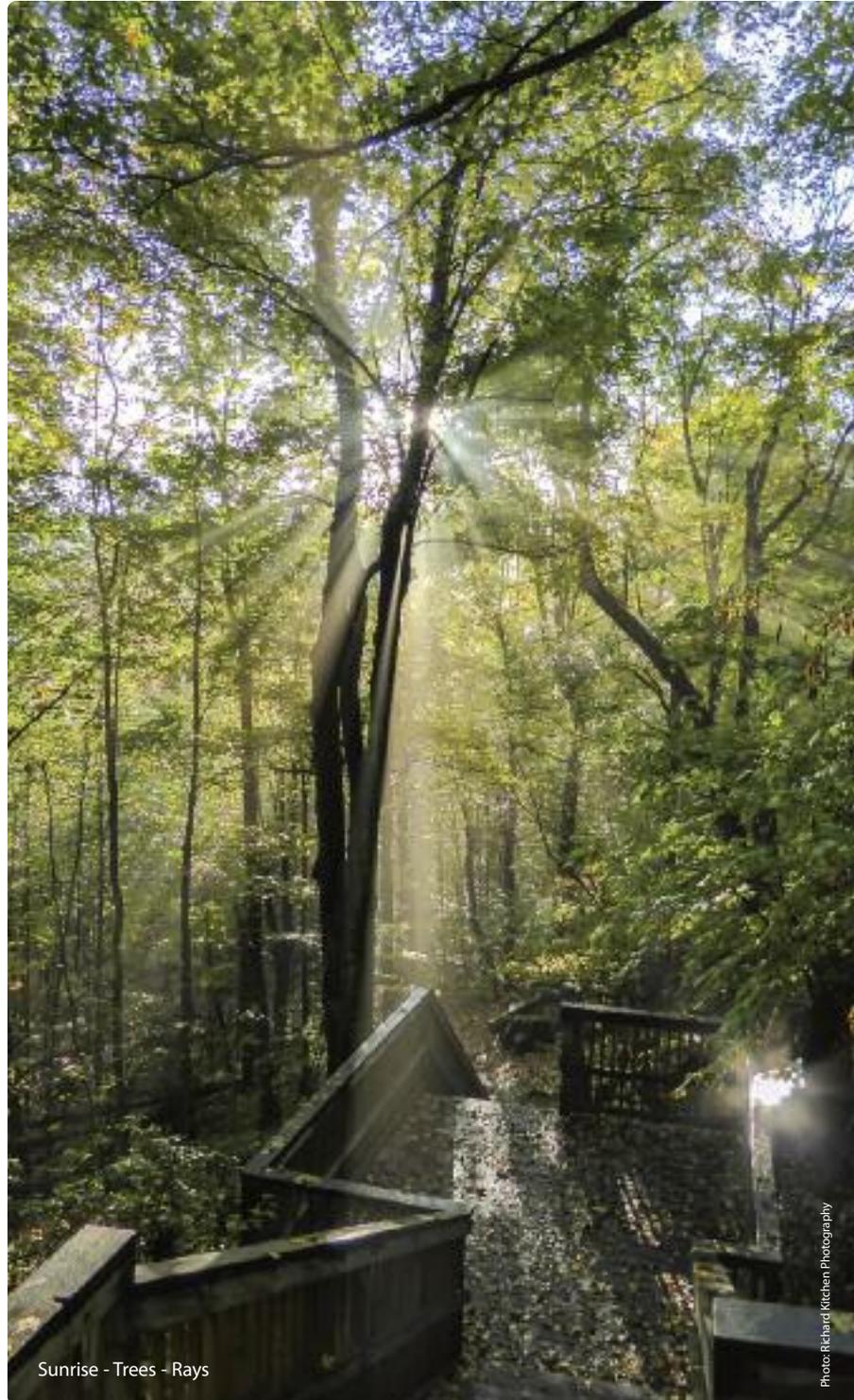


Plans (also called Stewardship Plans) for each property acquired by the BTC. These comprehensive documents detail the environmental conditions of each property, with full ecological inventories and mapping, and note any special activities or monitoring programs that need to be undertaken to maintain or achieve ecological health for the property. Land Securement staff and volunteers plan acquisitions around the Optimum Route of the Bruce Trail, constantly on the lookout for properties along the route, as well as focussing on key areas for acquisition. Trail development and maintenance volunteers undertake their important work keeping the Bruce Trail safe for the public according to the *Guide for Trail Workers* and other guidance documents.

In addition to the “on the ground” planning, this year a Financial Strategic Plan was prepared to guide how our funds should be managed, including the amount to be set aside for stewardship of land in the future, amount and access to funds set aside in case of a crisis, investment. Work also began on a Risk Management Plan, thanks to valuable input gained from volunteers and staff.

Yes, there’s a lot of planning going on at the BTC! And so there should be. As one of the largest land trusts in the Province, with a 900 km long footpath that is internationally renowned, 9,000 members, more than 1,400 volunteers, thousands of acres of land to manage and an annual budget of more than \$3 million, we need careful planning and execution to keep the magnificent engine of the BTC and its Clubs moving forward to achieve our goals. Otherwise, they’re just wishes. •

***A goal without a plan is just a wish.***  
– Antoine de Saint-Exupéry



Sunrise - Trees - Rays

Photo: Richard Kitchen Photography