

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Monmouth Conservation Foundation is engaged in a strategic planning process to address the questions:

- What is the future we most desire for MCF?
- What are the gaps between the current state of MCF and our organizational goals for the next three years?

The strategic planning activity included a comprehensive survey of all board members and key supporters, eliciting specific information about growing MCF's mission and relevance and expanding its effectiveness as a leading land trust.

The survey data and subsequent board discussions about the future led to the formation of six major strategic goals to be pursued over a three-year period:

- Develop a High-Performing Governance Structure
- Expand Preservation and Conservation Opportunities to Advance Mission and Relevancy
- Broaden Public Relations and Marketing Efforts to Improve MCF's Profile in Serving the Public
- Expand Youth Preservation and Conservation Education Programs
- Increase Revenue Capacity to Provide Funds to Meet Preservation and Conservation Goals and Obligations that Support Annual Operations
- Formulate a Three-Year Mission-Relevant Capital Campaign Program

The MCF administration and board of trustees will uphold its commitment to preservation and conservation and will continue to prepare for the future. The new strategic plan will include action plans, as well as strategies to define MCF's mission and core values and descriptions of the key performance measurement indicators.

Most importantly, the strategic plan underscores MCF's commitment to preservation and conversation, serving current and future generations.

No one knows better than members of the MCF community that the goals of preserving and conserving land and wildlife habitat, as well as protecting air and water quality, are the answer to so many problems that threaten our quality of life. Our land trust champions an attitude to these goals premised on individual initiative, community empowerment and charity. MCF remains fully committed to defending these goals, assuring that they are achieved – for our wellbeing, for our children, for their children, forever.

Holly Boylan Flego
President, Board of Trustees

William D. Kastning, AICP
Executive Director

NOTE:

Preservation means to protect from loss — such as keeping woodlands which provide a rich habitat for wildlife, healthy and intact.

Conservation involves preventing the wasteful use of resources — such as ensuring agricultural lands are not turned into commercial or housing developments.

HISTORY

MCF serves as Monmouth County's only nonprofit land trust (accredited in 2014). As a part of its mission, MCF actively works to preserve and conserve land throughout Monmouth County. Land is preserved through fee-simple acquisition or through the purchase of an easement to restrict development and conserve the natural resources found on the land. MCF also fills the important role of upholding the restrictions of the easement after conservation, thereby ensuring the land remains viable as intended for future generations.

MCF was established in 1977 by change-makers, Michael Huber and Judith Stanley Coleman. The founders and visionaries initiated the land trust as the best way to save farmland and open space from being completely overcome by over-development and suburban sprawl, while concurrently protecting wildlife, the natural habitat and our water supply. MCF has held a close partnership with the County of Monmouth since its founding and continues to work closely and strategically to facilitate targeted open space and farmland preservation goals in coordination with the Monmouth County Park System and Monmouth County Farmland Preservation Program. Additionally, MCF has long partnered with the State of New Jersey preservation funding programs to maximize preservation resources.

PURPOSE

As more farmland and open space are developed into residential communities or commercial properties, the unique character and rural history of Monmouth County becomes compromised. This is where MCF comes in, forming crucial beneficial partnerships and serving as a facilitator among public and private entities. MCF, through all appropriate means of preservation and conservation to maintain a high quality of life available to all residents, will protect from loss our open spaces and working farms, and prevent the wasteful use of our natural areas. Additionally, as the landscape of the County continues to develop, the importance of urban parks is increasingly critical to serve the needs of residents living in an urban environment. MCF strives to preserve and conserve a diverse mix of landscapes that meets the diverse outdoor recreation and environmental protection needs of our county.



ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Saving Land: MCF, in partnership with state and local governments and environmental agencies, has saved thousands of acres of open space, woodlands, and wetlands. Much of this has been carried out through strategic park expansions with state and local government funding partners, including, most recently, the acquisition of the McDowell Tract to expand Allaire State Park in Wall Township.

Creating Parks: MCF has been an integral part of creating parks in a diverse range of communities, benefitting children and families, including Springwood Avenue Park (Asbury Park), Sgt. George Ashby Memorial Park (Allentown), Freneau Woods Park (Aberdeen), and Swimming River Park (Middletown).

Educating about Preservation and Conservation: The Kids for Conservation STEM Enrichment Program reaches children in urban, suburban and underserved communities.

Preserving Farmland and the Farmer: MCF has preserved thousands of acres of farmland through the purchase of agricultural easements. Notable projects include the preservation of the former Princeton Nurseries property (Upper Freehold), and countless projects in the western part of the county. Through the Field to Farm Project, MCF has brought farmers and landowners together to ensure farms remain a vital part of our community.

Conducting Advocacy Work: As one of the leading members of the Keep It Green Coalition, MCF assisted in securing a stable source of income for state open space acquisitions, as well as farmland and historic preservation funding. Likewise, MCF ran the VOTE YES and education campaign for the successful Monmouth County Open Space Trust referendum (2017).

GOAL 1: Develop a High-Performing Governance Structure

OBJECTIVES

Performance Accountability

- Recognize the value of effective governance as a fundamental quality of high performing boards
- Develop a deliberate strategic mindset with high level fiduciary oversight and stewardship of cash assets, as well as reputational, intellectual, social and political assets

Procedural Accountability

- Construct the board's yearly goals at an annual retreat
- Strengthen committee communications, delivering more effective reporting and greater transparency for important decision-making

GOAL 2: Expand Preservation and Conservation Opportunities to Advance Mission and Relevancy

OBJECTIVES

- Facilitate the preservation of remaining undeveloped land for the benefit of the community and environment
- Strive for diverse projects in terms of geographic location, socioeconomic factors, community served and type of land (open space, farmland, environmental qualities, community conservation)
- Steward easements to ensure deed compliance and perpetual natural resource protection

GOAL 3: Broaden Public Relations and Marketing to Improve MCF's Profile in Serving the Public

OBJECTIVES

- Demonstrate significance and relevance as a community land trust through consistent Public Relations
- Enhance MCF's brand through communication strategies (social media platforms, magazine, emails, and other marketing materials) to ensure the community is keenly aware of its people, programs and progress
- Broadening MCF's mission to be more intentionally focused on addressing climate change challenges with its potential threat to human health, agriculture, water supply, ecosystems as well as to the recreational economy

GOAL 4: Expand Youth Preservation and Conservation Profile in Education Programs

OBJECTIVES

- Continue to expand education programs to educate youth about the critical role that land conservation and preservation plays in sustainability and health
- Ensure relevancy by relating land conservation to the critical issue of Climate Change and the important role that land conservation plays in mitigating the effects
- Continue to grow relationships with schools across the county to ensure that program participants reflect the diversity of background found in the county

GOAL 5: Increase Revenue Capacity to Provide Funds to Meet Preservation & Conservation Goals that Support Annual Operations

OBJECTIVES

- Increase the total revenue and ensure overall stability to meet mission-related goals, moving toward financial stability
- Review annual fundraising events in terms of return on investment and effectiveness for engaging new community contacts
- Ensure adequate financial resources to attract and retain additional staff to support strategic planning goals

GOAL 6: Formulate a Three-Year Mission-Relevant Capital Campaign

OBJECTIVES

- Develop a campaign program with the help of an expert consultant to result in significant financial support for MCF's mission-focused projects
- Generate necessary capital to expand educational program
- Secure additional funding to grow the endowment, providing future financial stability