



Virginia's United Land Trusts (VaULT)

Strategic Plan

July 2025 - June 2028

MISSION – We support Virginia's diverse conservation community to magnify and amplify land conservation efforts and achieve widespread protection of the Commonwealth's natural, cultural, and scenic resources, ensuring their long term benefits for all Virginians.

VISION – VaULT strives to be a unifying and effective voice for Virginia's conservation community and advocate for conservation throughout the Commonwealth.

VALUES

- Conservation of natural, cultural, and scenic resources support ecological, economic, and social prosperity in Virginia. All communities in Virginia are deserving of nearby conserved land to provide recreation, a stable food supply, clean water, and a connection to the land.
- All voices within VaULT are important. Diversity ensures the conservation community will thrive. We are an organization that is inclusive of participation from those of different viewpoints, missions and backgrounds to help us protect Virginia's important lands. We value each other as equal partners and celebrate successes as a community.
- Members of VaULT have a responsibility to collaborate for the good of conservation in the Commonwealth. We are helpful and supportive of one another, demonstrating mutual trust and respect for each other.
- We collectively benefit and are made stronger by the free exchange of ideas and sharing of information between members. Success can only be achieved through open and honest communication and transparency between and among members.

VaULT Board of Directors – Ebonie Alexander | Heather Barrar | Becky Gwynn | Kerry Hutcherson | Mike Kane | Martha Little | Jen Perkins | David Perry | Hali Plourde-Rogers | Alan Rowsome | Nikki Rovner | Natasha Skelton

VaULT Executive Director – Ellen Shepard

VaULT Nonprofit Member Organizations – 500-Year Forest Foundation | American Battlefield Trust | American Farmland Trust | Black Family Land Trust | Broadwater Innovations | Capital Region Land Conservancy | Chesapeake Conservancy | Coastal Virginia Conservancy | The Conservation Fund | EverGreen Team | Friends of the Lower Appomattox River | Historic Virginia Land Conservancy | Land Savers United | Land Trust of Virginia | The Nature Conservancy | New River Conservancy | New River Land Trust | Northern Neck Land Conservancy | Northern Virginia Conservation Trust | Old Dominion Land Conservancy | Piedmont Environmental Council | Potomac Conservancy | Shenandoah Valley Battlefields Foundation | Shenandoah Valley Conservancy | Trust for Public Land | Virginia Eastern Shore Land Trust | The Wildlife Foundation of Virginia

VaULT Agency Partners – Department of Conservation & Recreation, Department of Forestry, Department of Historic Resources, Department of Wildlife Resources, Virginia Outdoors Foundation, and Natural Resources Conservation Service

Approved by VaULT Board November 2025.

Complete Green – Fully implemented at least one project/policy that addresses the strategy. This does not mean that work has ended. Almost every strategy is ongoing.

In Progress Yellow – Begun to address but has not yet completed.

Future - Blue – Work has not started.

Who is responsible? Board members, staff, or someone else.

Goal 1: Support a strong and effective conservation community to achieve widespread protection and stewardship of important lands throughout the Commonwealth.

VaULT is the primary convenor of the land conservation community to develop consensus and help the community speak with a magnified voice.

Strategies	Action Items
1.1: Support increased capacity of the conservation community, and particularly member organizations, to effect and sustain meaningful, lasting conservation throughout the Commonwealth, especially in historically disadvantaged or underserved communities.	1.1A - Administer the VOF-VaULT Capacity Grant. 1.1B - Convene Easement Authority Workgroup in coordination with American Farmland Trust. 1.1C - Work with partners to build land trust capacity in SWVA--Buchanan, Dickenson, Lee, Russell, Scott, Smyth, Tazewell, Washington, and Wise Counties.
1.2: Empower the land conservation community by providing continuing education and training opportunities for members to ensure we collectively have the knowledge and skills to achieve conservation excellence.	1.2A - Support Stewardship Workgroup led by Steward Workgroup Coordinator. 1.2B - Sponsor Land Conservation & Greenways Conference with Program Coordinator and Planning Committee. 1.2C - Provide continuing education for professional partners.
1.3: Provide an inclusive environment that allows for open dialogue. Ensure communication effectively provides for input and feedback.	1.3A - Host three in-person events annually with networking opportunities. 1.3B - Host multiple listservs. 1.3C - Convene members around pressing issues.
1.4: Cultivate external partnerships to promote conservation with a focus on engaging new partners from diverse and underserved communities.	1.4A - Coordinate with the Indigenous Conservation Council to identify community of practice/partnership opportunities. 1.4B - Explore new potential partnerships including wildlife, community land trusts, and health organizations.



VaULT Partner Retreat, Charlottesville, October 2024

VaULT Board at Annual Meeting, Richmond, January 2025

VaULT Members at LTA Advocacy Days, Washington, DC, May 2025

Approved by VaULT Board November 2025.

Goal 2: Champion State Conservation Policy.

VaULT will be a convener of those involved in the practice of land conservation across Virginia, to create and maintain strong state policy supporting the protection of the Commonwealth's important lands.

Strategies	Action Items
2.1: Work with the land conservation community in articulating cohesive, proactive messaging to increase the pace and improve the quality of land conservation tools in Virginia.	2.1A - Host Communications Workgroup led by Our Virginia Outdoors Manager. 2.1B - Coordinate with agency communications staff on celebrating milestones. 2.1C - Release Collective Impact Report in 2027 (10 years as a nonprofit).
2.2: Increase the conservation community's readiness to act on relevant state policy and legislative issues.	2.2A - Update land trust service area and legislative district map (2026). TNC 2.2B - Offer Building Relationships with Policymakers session at the 2026 conference. 2.2C - Work with three to five land trusts a year to build relationships with legislators (10-15 over three years).
2.3: Provide leadership and consistent representation with coalitions working on relevant state policy, legislative, and funding issues that advances conservation in the Commonwealth.	2.3A - Coordinate VCN-VaULT Workgroup with VCN Land & Water staffer. 2.3B - Meet weekly with Our Virginia Outdoors Manager and serve on OVO Steering Committee. 2.3C - Attend Virginiaforever budget calls. 2.3D - Identify VaULT representation on Chesapeake Bay Lands Workgroup. 2.3E - Join Potomac & Tidewater Sentinel Landscape calls. 2.3F - Coordinate with Chesapeake Conservation Partnership on Bay related policy. 2.3G - Coordinate with the Land Trust Alliance to provide federal policy updates.



Thomas Mitchell and members of VaULT Heirs Property Workgroup, Lynchburg, April 2025

Conference Field Trip on the James River, Lynchburg, April 2025

VaULT Stewardship Workgroup networking dinner, Lynchburg, April 2025

Goal 3: Ensure Sustainability and Solvency of VaULT.

The strength of VaULT lies in our ability to be relevant to and serve our members. This is accomplished by maintaining a strong and viable organization that is valued by our members and the greater conservation community.

Strategies	Action Items
3.1: Create and execute a financial plan with a diversity of revenue sources to ensure a steady flow of funds that support the VaULT mission, and are sufficient to maintain our staff and sustain program activities.	3.1A - Maintain strong relationships with current foundations through quarterly communications and invitations to events. 3.1B - Adjust conference registration rates to cover annual increase of costs. 3.1C - Work with VOF to support the Capacity Grant. 3.1D - Establish a board investment policy (Spring 2026). 3.1E - Meet annually with the bank/financial advisor to ensure the best return on our funds (VaULT treasurer and executive director). 3.1F - Review our dues structure compared to other state associations. Make a recommendation for 2026 dues.
3.2: Develop a shared sense of purpose among member organizations by hosting diverse, effective, and engaging opportunities that meet the current or anticipated needs of member organizations and partners.	3.2A - Three in-person meetings. 3.2B - VaULT-VCN workgroup. 3.2C - Partner Retreat. 3.2D - Learn from other state associations about the services they provide.
3.3: Maintain a strong and engaged working Board of Directors through succession planning, energetic board development, and training for future leaders.	3.3A - Hold an annual in-person board retreat and three quarterly board calls. 3.3B - Update VaULT Board Center quarterly. 3.3C - Provide new board member orientation (Board chair and staff). 3.3D - Nominating committee chair and members meet 2-3 times a year to update board matrix and identify skills needed on the board. 3.3E - Identify leadership opportunities such as conference program coordinator & conference field trip coordinator
3.4: Continuously improve organizational efficiencies and effectiveness and ensure that we have the necessary resources, leadership, and training to carry out the mission.	3.4A - Work with accounting firm on efficient coding and reporting process. 3.4B - Set up Little Green Light online forms for all events and payments such as dues and sponsorships. 3.4C - Review VaULT governance documents annually.
3.5: Broaden outreach and collaboration to generate support for VaULT and its mission, and diversify participation by those in the broader conservation community.	3.5A - Develop regional outreach lists for every conference. 3.5B - Outreach to easement authorities and PDR programs. 3.5C - Relaunch Professional Partners (2026).

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