

# Wallowa Land Trust

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2020-2025 STRATEGIC PLAN



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In early 2020 Wallowa Land Trust (WLT) board and staff undertook a comprehensive process to update the organization's strategic plan. The planning process was an opportunity for the board and staff to reflect on WLT past successes, including the campaign to protect the East Moraine, and contemplate its future role in conserving land in Oregon's iconic Northeastern corner. With the unprecedented events of 2020 unfolding as a backdrop to the planning process, WLT considered a wide range of issues, from social justice to climate change, and charted a path that seeks to unite a diverse community to protect the land that they all love.

The planning process drew from a variety of points of view and data sources including local community members, regional stakeholders, and peer land trusts. The planning process included the following steps:

**INTERVIEWS WITH 13 LOCAL AND REGIONAL STAKEHOLDERS**

**INTERVIEWS WITH 4 PEER LAND TRUSTS**

**A SURVEY OF 78 MEMBERS/DONORS**

**A SURVEY OF 84 COMMUNITY MEMBERS**

The resulting strategic plan emphasizes collaboration and working with the numerous stakeholders who have connections to Wallowa County to establish a shared conservation ethic. The plan continues WLT's conservation focus on protecting a variety of lands that support the natural resource economy and native flora and fauna as well as connect people to the outdoors. Finally, the plan elevates the importance of long-term stewardship of conserved land as well as the organization and the community it serves.

*Cover & Sunflower  
Photos by Leon Werdinger*

*We honor  
people and their  
relationships with  
the land, and we  
learn from others.*

# MISSION, VISION

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## OUR MISSION

Protecting the rural nature of Wallowa County by working cooperatively with private landowners, Indigenous people, local communities and governmental entities to conserve land.

## OUR VISION

Wallowa Land Trust works with our community to preserve our unique landscape, which is intrinsic to our values and way of life. Together we create a future where:

Our diverse communities respect and honor one another and are united over a shared land ethic.

Natural ecosystems together with farms, ranches, and working forests flourish and support a healthy population of humans, plants, fish, and wildlife.

Our lands and organization are healthy, resilient, and managed to meet diverse needs.

## GUIDING PRINCIPLES

### Integrity

In all interactions, both inside and outside the Land Trust, we are honest, trustworthy, principled, and kind. We hold ourselves accountable to our organization, our constituents, and the people of our region. Our internal and external communications are transparent.

### Excellence in All We Do

We expect high standards in managing our organization and in the partnerships we maintain to conserve and steward land.

### Commitment

We persevere through challenges with our mission and vision in mind.

### Collaboration

We work cooperatively with partners to achieve common goals that contribute to the environmental and economic vitality of our community.

### Respect the Past, Plan For the Future

We work with past and future generations in mind. We respect and honor those who came before us while seeking to ensure a legacy of conserved lands for those who come after.

# OUR PAST



Wallowa County is remarkable, filled with a diversity of landscapes, people and wildlife. From the peaks of the Wallowa Mountains to the depths of Hells Canyon and all the ridgetops and watersheds in between, this dynamic, beautiful landscape has sustained human populations for at least 16,000 years.

These lands are the original home of the Wal'wáama (Wallowa) Band of Nimiípuu (Nez Perce), who travelled with the seasons across this terrain to harvest and steward an abundance of resources central to the lifeways (nimiípuu) of their people. Since the 1860s, Wallowa County has also been home to immigrants of European descent who have developed a robust natural resource economy based largely on timber, ranching and farming over the last 160 years. In the post-World War II era, the area has increasingly become a destination for vacationers and part-time homeowners who enjoy the unparalleled beauty and outdoor opportunities this area offers.

Regardless of our personal histories and perspectives, everyone in this community shares a deep and profound love of this land. It is the place that sustains us, the place where we built our families and communities, and where we found, or rekindled, our connection to nature.

But our community is at risk of losing that connection. As agricultural properties pass from one generation to the next and as the Wallowa Valley becomes a more and more desirable place to live, the pace of development, and the landscape fragmentation that development brings, has increased. Overdevelopment threatens not only our open spaces and natural settings, but also the way of life beloved by residents and visitors alike.

*East Moraine*  
Photo by Rick McEwan



Fox

*Photo by Leon Werdinger*

Since our founding in 2004, Wallowa Land Trust has worked to mitigate the impacts of development and to sustain the lands our community depends on for its resilience and wellbeing. In that time, we have partnered with landowners in Wallowa County to protect the extraordinary geography and exceptional beauty central to our identity, our history, and our economy. We engage a wide cross-section of collaborators to deliver our mission, including private landowners, community members, local and state agencies and elected officials, Indian tribes, foundations, and other nonprofits. Through these collaborations we permanently protect open space, wildlife habitat, working farms and ranches, culturally important areas and the diverse natural lands unique to Wallowa County.

The nine conservation projects we have completed total more than 3,000 acres. Guided by our strategic conservation plan, we have permanently protected working farms and ranches, forests, native prairie, riparian areas and critical wildlife habitat. This includes permanent protection of more than 80% of the iconic East Moraine of Wallowa Lake. The Moraine is sacred to Nez Perce people, and is treasured by residents and visitors alike. Its protection not only ensures it will remain a vital cultural resource and undeveloped scenic wonder, it will remain a working landscape that provides wildlife habitat and a place for the public to experience an ancient glacial landscape.

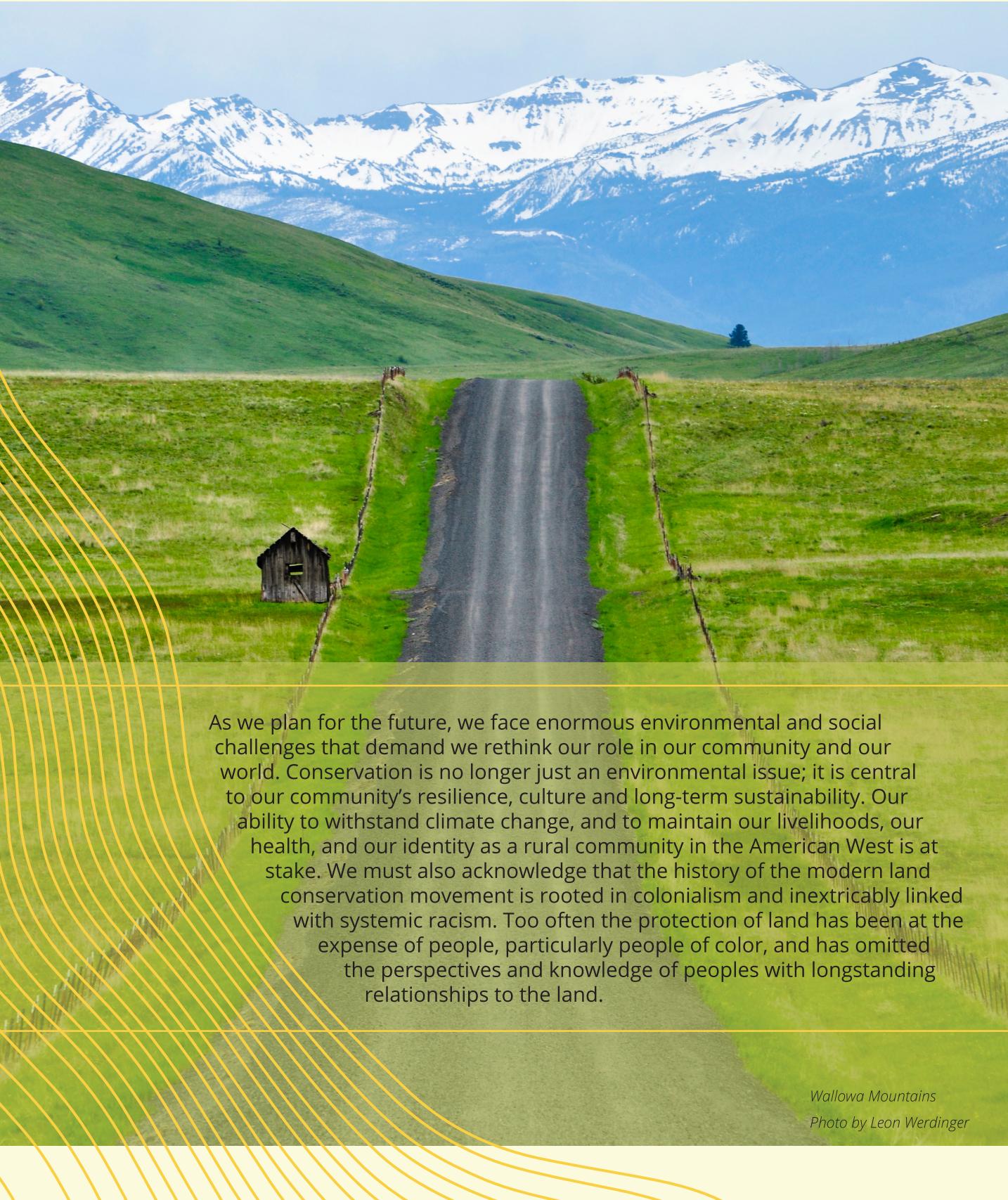
Acres Completed in  
Conservation Projects:

**3,022**

East Moraine  
Acres Protected:

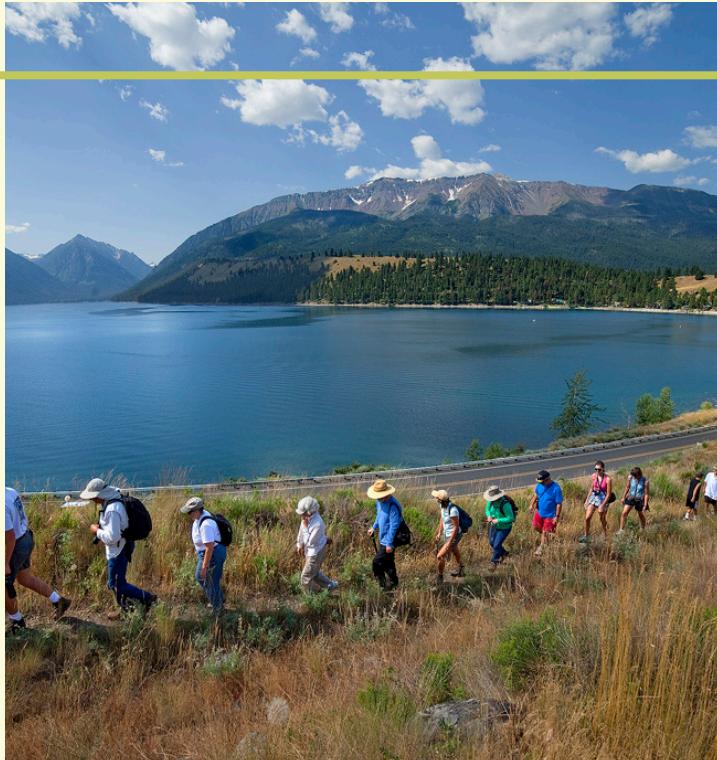
**2,480**

# OUR FUTURE



## AS WE CHART OUR FUTURE, OUR BOARD AND STAFF HAVE GRAPPLED WITH MANY COMPLEX QUESTIONS, INCLUDING:

- What legacy do we want Wallowa Land Trust to leave and what are the concrete steps we can take to make that legacy a reality?
- Who are the members of our community, not just today but throughout time, and what do they value?
- What values do we all share and how are these values shaped by our connection to the lands and waters of Wallowa County?
- What is equity in Wallowa County, and how does our work help realize it?
- How do we work with our partners to preserve what is unique about Wallowa County while also being adaptive to the change we know is coming?



As an organization, Wallowa Land Trust is determined to be bold and pursue conservation strategies that are holistic, expansive and resilient; to be empathetic and informed; and to be resolute and unshakable in our vision and our work. To make the systemic change we desire, we must understand our work in the context of our community, and promote and champion those values which will sustain the lands, waters, and ways of life that make Wallowa lands our home.

*Geology field trip on the East Moraine.  
Photo by David Jensen*

# 5-YEAR GOALS & STRATEGIES

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*Wallowa Mountains*  
Photo by Rick McEwan

# GOAL 1: COLLABORATE



*Observing Spalding's catchfly on the East Moraine.*

*Photo by Eric Greenwell*

**Our diverse communities respect and honor one another and are united over a shared land ethic.**

Wallowa County is home to a diverse population with many different relationships to the land. To effectively deliver our mission we need the people who love Wallowa County to embrace a shared vision for conservation. Over the next five years we will invest in developing a shared conservation ethic within our community to support and inform our work. We will specifically focus on strengthening our relationships with Indigenous people, Indian tribes, and owners and operators of working lands to integrate their perspectives more deeply into our work.

## Strategies:

1

Build a shared vision for conservation within our community.

2

Continue to work with Nez Perce dispersed descendants and Indian tribes.

3

Support landowners in improving management practices and overcoming challenges that prevent them from meeting ecological goals.



## GOAL 2: CONSERVE

American Goldfinch (*Carduelis tristis*)  
Photo by Rick McEwan

Natural ecosystems together with farms, ranches and working forests flourish and support a healthy population of humans, plants, fish and wildlife.

Our conservation efforts span a variety of lands that support both humans and wildlife. Wallowa County contains an incredible array of species, from the delicate and rare Macfarlane's four-o'clock to the charismatic, yet elusive, wolverine. Wallowa lands are also home to farms, ranches and private timberlands that have operated for generations. In the next five years we will continue to conserve high-priority working lands and wildlife habitat, with an emphasis on connecting contiguous parcels to mitigate the impact of climate change. We will work with tribes, agencies and community partners to leverage resources for conservation and we will engage a wide range of landowners to amplify conservation impact.

### Strategies:

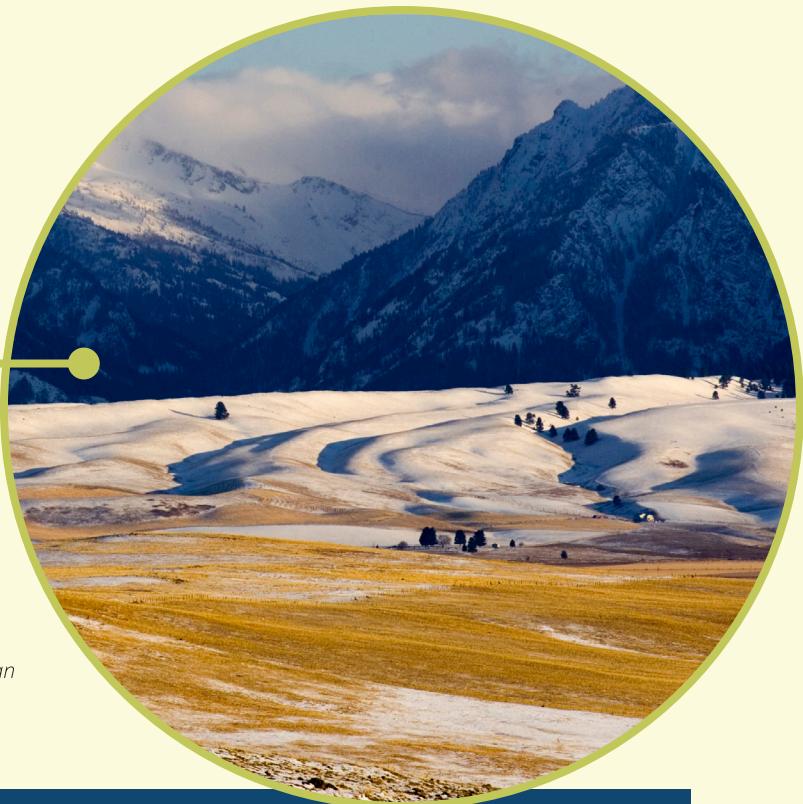
1

Pursue relevant conservation transactions and projects that meet the priorities of our conservation plan.

2

Work with the community to create a mosaic of connected habitats, both large and small, across Wallowa County.

# GOAL 3: SUSTAIN



*East Moraine*  
Photo by Rick McEwan

**Our lands and organization are healthy, resilient, and managed to meet diverse needs.**

Wallowa County has sustained wildlife and human populations for thousands of years. In our work we strive to enhance the magnificent world around us. This means that we must build a resilient organization that can weather great changes as well as support healthy natural ecosystems and human communities. Over the next five years we will work to strengthen our organization, partner with others to steward lands for long-term sustainability, and ensure that conserved lands meet community needs.

## Strategies:

1

Increase organizational capacity to accomplish goals and withstand significant disruptions.

2

Steward land for long-term sustainability.

3

Manage conserved land to meet community needs.

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Wallowa Valley  
Photo by Ellen Morris Bishop

**KEEP IT RURAL!**