



2024-2027 STRATEGIC PLAN





MISSION

Scenic Rivers Land Trust conserves the special forests, farms, wetlands and natural areas that sustain Anne Arundel County.



VISION

We envision a landscape that supports and sustains thriving communities of wildlife and people.



VALUES

INTEGRITY. We ethically pursue our mission and uphold our easements to keep our promise to the public and retain their trust.

CARE. We care for our lands and communities by conserving and stewarding our most precious natural resources.

CONNECTION. We use land conservation to connect wildlife habitats and connect people to the landscape and the joy of nature.

EQUITY. We engage under-resourced communities to participate and belong in conservation.

STRATEGIC. We strategically and thoughtfully use our resources to achieve the highest conservation impact.

COLLABORATION. We collaborate with our partners to accomplish goals that benefit our lands, waters, and communities.



Photo credit: S. Wolfe

Dear Friends,

For 35 years, Scenic Rivers Land Trust has been conserving the vital lands of Anne Arundel County—a mosaic of forests, wetlands, meadows, and farmlands that not only define our region but also sustain the very fabric of our community. These lands are more than just beautiful open spaces, they provide clean air, fresh water, local food, recreation, and vital habitats for wildlife. Some are even keepers of our past, historical sites holding the roots and memories of our cultures.

Our journey began as an all-volunteer group focused on the Severn River watershed, and over the decades, thanks to a generous community of supporters, we've grown to encompass so much more.

In the last five years alone, we've launched the Healthy Forests Program, expanded our service area, and identified the most crucial lands to conserve (including our "Top 100" list).

Now, with our 2024-2027 Strategic Plan, we're ready to build on our success and do more. With you on our team, we're ready to tackle today's biggest conservation challenges—habitat and farmland loss, the climate crisis, and biodiversity loss. We're also committed to expanding our efforts in the more densely developed areas of the county, ensuring that our conservation work reaches every corner of our community.

With input from our partners, board of directors, landowners, and long-time supporters, we've crafted a plan with clear goals to guide, inspire, and elevate our work and advance our mission in the crucial years to come.

And speaking of our mission, the collaborative process of creating this plan showed us it was time for a refresh. While the heart of our work remains the same, you'll notice that our new Mission and Vision statements have a fresh simplicity. But don't be misled—there's so much more on the horizon for Scenic Rivers.

We're excited to continue this journey with you and we're grateful for your ongoing support. Together, we're making a lasting impact on the lands we cherish. Let's move forward with hope and determination, confident that the work we do today not only protects our landscapes for future generations but also addresses the urgent needs of our community right now.



With gratitude,

Sarah Knebel
Executive Director



GOAL 1: INCREASE ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY TO SUPPORT GROWTH, AGILITY, AND IMPACT.

Scenic Rivers has met the highest standards of accreditation, creating a solid foundation for us to accelerate the pace of land conservation, increase stewardship, and ensure organizational longevity. By increasing our capacity, including staffing, reserves, endowments, outreach, and communications, we will be more agile, increase our impact, and reach more communities.

To support this goal, we will:

1. Diversify and increase sources of funding to fully fund programs and ensure long-term financial health.
2. Raise the visibility and awareness of Scenic Rivers through a well-resourced and targeted communication and outreach plan.
3. Increase staffing to meet evolving needs of the organization.
4. Maintain effectiveness and efficiency of the easement monitoring program.



GOAL 2: ACCELERATE LAND CONSERVATION IN THE COUNTY THROUGH EQUITABLE AND VARIED MEANS.

To reach the state's 40x40 goal, the county's green infrastructure goals, and our own aspirations of conserving our Top 100 properties, we need to conserve land at a faster pace. To increase the speed of conservation and include more communities, we will expand our conservation toolset, such as fee simple acquisitions. Land conservation is intertwined with the development pattern of the county. Unsustainable development patterns guarantee more lands are lost at a faster rate. To have thriving communities, we need conserved lands adjoining a connected network of multi-modal transportation and thoughtfully planned development that allows people of all income levels to access nature, transportation, housing, and employment. We will join land conservation organizations around the state to promote policies that enable and encourage sustainable growth patterns.

To support this goal, we will:

1. Collaborate with partners and funders to use a variety of tools to conserve Scenic Rivers' Top 100 Properties and other critical properties, some of which are accessible to the public.
2. Engage with under-represented and under-resourced communities to meet their conservation needs, beginning with North County. Work with these communities to implement creative conservation solutions such as community gardens or pocket parks.
3. Encourage equitable and sustainable growth policies at a local, state, and systems level.



GOAL 3: PROMOTE AND ADVANCE FOREST HEALTH ON CONSERVED LANDS.

Beyond annual monitoring, conserved lands now need a higher level of human care. The method of “preserve and forget” rarely works anymore. Invasive species, especially invasive plants, are a growing problem that could unravel our 35 years of work if left unchecked. Invasive plant control is among the most essential actions we can take to care for our conserved lands. Our Healthy Forests Program is growing steadily, and we will continue to build on its momentum by increasing funding and volunteer participation to protect forest biodiversity and engage the public.

To support this goal, we will:

1. Strengthen the resilience of the Bacon Ridge Natural Area through increased funding for the Healthy Forests Program, including funds for contractors, supplies, and staff capacity to engage and educate volunteers.
2. Expand our Healthy Forests Program to other conserved properties.
3. Collaborate with partners to support policies and initiatives to remove invasive species across the landscape.



BE A PART OF WHAT COMES NEXT: SCENIC RIVERS NEEDS YOU



To date, Scenic Rivers holds 80 conservation easements on over 3,800 acres of land throughout Anne Arundel County. Each acre we protect is a commitment to the future—a promise that the natural beauty and ecological integrity of our county will endure for generations.

Without continued conservation efforts, we will lose the very land that sustains Anne Arundel County and keeps our community thriving.

Now, more than ever, we need your support. We invite you to:

- ✔ Make a financial gift (or many!) to strengthen our work
- ✔ Spread the word of our work to your friends and family
- ✔ Place a conservation easement on your land to ensure its protection
- ✔ Become an annual corporate sponsor to demonstrate your commitment to a sustainable future
- ✔ Volunteer with our Healthy Forests or Land Steward Programs to make a hands-on difference
- ✔ Attend one of our upcoming events to learn, connect, or get involved
- ✔ Plan a legacy gift



Let's work together to create an Anne Arundel County landscape where the places we need and love are protected and our community thrives.



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