

CEDAR LAKES CONSERVATION FOUNDATION, INC.

2024-2028 STRATEGIC PLAN



Adopted by

**Cedar Lakes Conservation Foundation, Inc.
Board of Directors**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Cedar Lakes Conservation Foundation (CLCF) is one of the oldest land trusts in Wisconsin. Established in 1974, CLCF has conserved over 2,700 acres in over 70 properties and continues to protect a landscape that development would change irreparably.

CLCF's work focuses on the ecosystem health of Washington County's Cedar Lakes region. This area includes the headwaters of Cedar Creek, which flows southeast to the Milwaukee River and ultimately to Lake Michigan.

CLCF permanently protects this vital resource through fee simple purchases, conservation easements and deed restrictions. Our success is the result of the hard work and dedication of many people, including CLCF's founders, Board of Directors, staff, the community, private donors, and partner organizations.

However, CLCF's work is far from complete. While over 20% of our mission area has been protected, there are significant additional acres to preserve in order to maintain the rural character and natural beauty of the Cedar Lakes region. Protected natural and agricultural lands also improve water and air quality and provide wildlife habitat and recreation opportunities.

As we continue to conserve additional land, our responsibility to care for that land increases. Each year, CLCF needs more resources to manage, monitor, and care for its properties--the important duty we call stewardship.

To accomplish our land protection and stewardship goals, CLCF must be a strong organization with excellent leadership, skilled management, and sustainable funding. We believe CLCF should be engaged in the community by providing opportunities for learning, collaboration, and interaction. By engaging the community, we can better understand community interests, meet community needs, and be more efficient. To guide our work and respond to the challenges before us, this Strategic Plan articulates five specific goals:

- **LAND PROTECTION:** Protect the highest priority lands in CLCF's mission area using a diverse array of conservation tools and funding sources.
- **LAND STEWARDSHIP:** Maintain an active stewardship program to permanently protect the conservation values of CLCF's properties and to provide opportunities for the community to use and enjoy the land.

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Sophie Gosetti, Conservation Manager
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- **DEVELOPMENT AND FINANCE:** Maintain a diversified funding plan to meet CLCF’s land protection goals, fulfill stewardship obligations, and support annual operations.
- **ORGANIZATIONAL SUSTAINABILITY:** Engage effective people and systems throughout the organization in order to provide direction, resources, and follow-through for the implementation of CLCF’s mission.
- **COMMUNITY RELATIONS:** Engage and connect individuals of all ages to the land and CLCF while also encouraging a culture of appreciation and inclusion.

This plan details the strategies to achieve our goals and is supported by a five-year action plan. It also defines the mission, vision, core values, and goals that guide us in implementing the plan. Most importantly, the plan clarifies our commitment to land protection and stewardship in the Cedar Lakes region.

It is our hope that this Strategic Plan sets us on the path to securing—for current and future generations—all the benefits, wonderment, and inspiration provided by permanent land protection and active, ongoing land stewardship.

MISSION

To conserve the natural environment of the Cedar Lakes region.

VISION

Since 1974, our vision has been to sustain the abundant natural beauty, clean water, and biodiversity of the Cedar Lakes region for generations to come.

At the heart of our vision is a vital land trust—one that is an important resource and works hand-in-hand with the community as well as with local, regional, and national conservation partners to protect and care for the natural aspects of our region. We envision:

- Diverse natural ecosystems
- Sustainable working farms
- Healthy watersheds
- Recreational opportunities for community enjoyment
- Educational programming
- Scenic vistas

CORE VALUES

CLCF’s core values encompass:

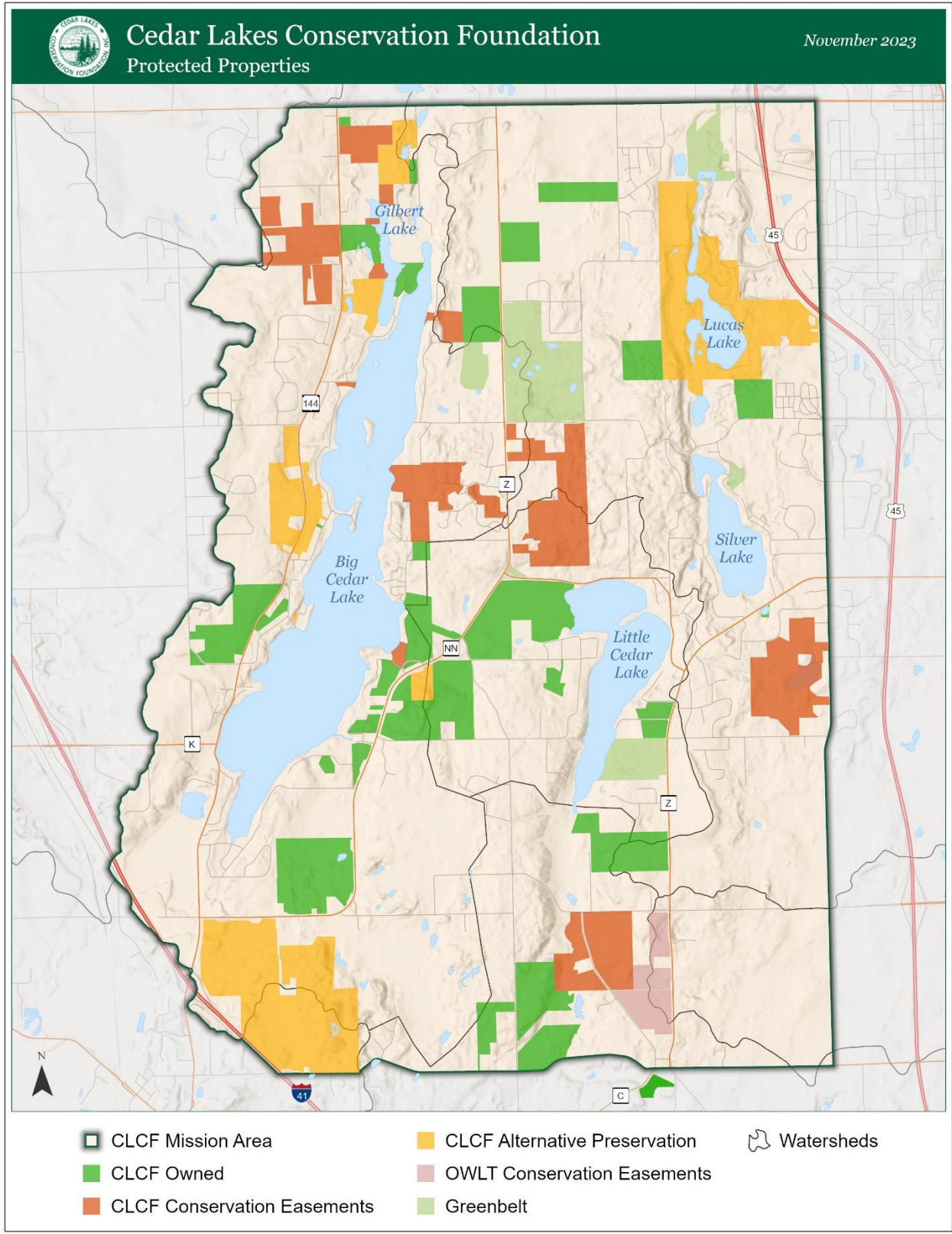
- **Respect for the Environment:** We promote the protection and sustainable management of CLCF’s protected land, the flora and fauna, and the geological and geographical formations for the benefit and enjoyment of future generations.

- **Integrity:** We are respectful, transparent, and trustworthy in all our interactions and transactions and will always put public benefit before private gain. We are committed to protecting and conserving land using science-based standards and best practices.
- **Collaboration:** We strive to work collaboratively with volunteers, donors, staff, partners, and community members to support our mission and achieve our vision. We value collaboration and partnerships that are built on trust, respect, and accountability.
- **Fiscal Responsibility:** We commit to be fiscally responsible, transparent and ethical in all that we do.
- **Inclusion and Public Benefit:** We value inclusion of diverse partner organizations and community members. We are committed to providing benefits to the community and to future generations through our land protection efforts.
- **Passion for our Mission:** We are devoted to conserving the natural environment of the Cedar Lakes region. We bring that energy to all that we do.

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

CLCF properties are located on the ancestral homelands of those who came before us. We acknowledge the Indigenous Communities, Peoples and Nations for their stewardship of the land and vow to care and respect the land we have conserved.

WHAT WE PROTECT



GOALS AND STRATEGIES

LAND PROTECTION

GOAL: Protect the highest priority lands in CLCF's mission area using a diverse array of conservation tools and funding sources.

Strategy 1: Grow CLCF's protected land by an additional 600 acres by 2028 through fee simple purchases, conservation easements and alternative preservation opportunities.

Strategy 2: Refine the process for prioritizing future land conservation projects in order to respond to land protection opportunities that meet the criteria for permanent conservation.

Strategy 3: Maintain and expand collaborative partnerships with landowners and government and other agencies that support permanent land protection.

Strategy 4: Develop a proactive action plan for each of CLCF's target properties.

Strategy 5: Resolve conservation easement and fee simple violations and access issues to protect the integrity of conservation values.

LAND STEWARDSHIP

GOAL: Maintain an active stewardship program to permanently protect the conservation values of CLCF's properties and to provide opportunities for the community to use and enjoy the land.

Strategy 1: Maintain, and, as appropriate, restore and enhance conservation values on fee owned land while promoting and supporting science-based land management activities.

Strategy 2: Ensure that long-term conservation easement obligations are met.

Strategy 3: Establish and maintain stewardship best practices according to Land Trust Alliance (LTA) Standards and Practices, including letter agreements.

Strategy 4: Form a broad range of volunteer Stew Crew activities that create engaging, positive, and educational opportunities while increasing volunteer capacity.

Strategy 5: Define a strategy regarding buildings, CLCF Nordic, and stewardship equipment.

DEVELOPMENT AND FINANCE

GOAL: Maintain a diversified funding plan to meet CLCF's land protection goals, fulfill stewardship obligations, and support annual operations.

Strategy 1: Raise sufficient Strategic Funds to achieve land protection goals.

Strategy 2: Achieve financial targets for the Founders Fund, an endowment fund intended to fund future operating expenses, in order for CLCF to operate in perpetuity.

Strategy 3: Increase the total amount and overall stability of revenues as necessary to meet program goals.

Strategy 4: Continue to develop CLCF's Legacy Circle Planned Giving Program.

Strategy 5: Establish and maintain financial best practices according to Land Trust Alliance Standards and Practices.

ORGANIZATIONAL SUSTAINABILITY

GOAL: Engage effective people and systems throughout the organization in order to provide direction, resources, and follow-through for the implementation of CLCF's mission.

Strategy 1: Maintain an active and engaged Board of Directors of sufficient size, skills, backgrounds, and experiences to conduct the CLCF's work effectively.

Strategy 2: Maintain an active group of committee members, staff, partners, and volunteers to achieve CLCF's strategic goals and to carry out its programs.

Strategy 3: Create succession and recruitment plans for Board and staff roles.

Strategy 4: Continue to implement LTA Standards and Practices to achieve organizational excellence.

Strategy 5: Develop and implement a strategic information technology plan.

Strategy 6: Evaluate the need for storage and gathering space at the Joan M. Pick Nature Preserve

COMMUNITY RELATIONS

GOAL: Engage and connect individuals of all ages to the land and CLCF while also encouraging a culture of appreciation and inclusion.

Strategy 1: Communicate CLCF's work, services, and impact in a manner that resonates with and engages the community.

Strategy 2: Develop and cultivate the next generation of conservationists.

Strategy 3: Improve the community's understanding of and engagement with CLCF and its mission.

Strategy 4: Identify new key target audiences and best ways to reach them through marketing, social media, and events.