

Thames Talbot Land Trust

THE CORRIDOR

Grow

Blossoming to New Heights

Some strategic plans sit on shelves and gather dust, neglected and forgotten shortly after the excitement of writing them. At TTLT, our strategic plans drive our mission, focus our daily work, and are the metrics for our collective success. They are the digital equivalent of “dog-eared”, “underlined”, and “stained” from frequent use.

You are likely familiar with our pillars of Protect, Restore, Nurture, and Grow – these are the pillars of our 2020 to 2025 strategic plan, and our impact and outcomes are communicated under each of these pillars. This last 5-year strategic plan was completed in 2025 – surpassing many of our targets. From land protection to land care to community engagement, we exceeded our expectations thanks to your support.

We are now ready for a bold new vision to ensure more land protection, enhanced care of the lands, and a growing community connected to our mission. The new strategic plan is launching in 2026. The pillars remain the same, but the goals are bigger and the strategies more innovative and collaborative. Your support is helping signal a new chapter of growth and maturity for TTLT, and the new strategic plan reflects the ambitions we have for the future.



Skye Martineau

2020-2025 Goals	Results
Protect 700 acres	<u>810 acres</u>
Complete 10 Property Management Plans	<u>12 PMPs</u>
Offer 20 nature ed. events for the general public and youth annually	<u>41 per year on average</u>
Recruit 25 new donors annually	<u>75 per year on average</u>

What's new in this plan?

- Accelerated conservation rates with ambitious goals – doubling our rate of conservation
- Expansion of TTLT's focal area to cover additional areas in need of protection
- More partnerships for all aspects of our work
- Braiding Indigenous and settler knowledge into our work
- Create and promote TTLT signature sites and public trails as part of Nature Nearby
- Update branding for consistency and modernity
- Grow our sphere of influence through relationship building to advocate for policies and programs that support land conservation across the region

By Daria Koscinski

Nurture

Naturalized: Relationships, Roots, & Kinship

Relationships grow with the passage of time, expanding with continued effort and strengthening with mutual respect and trust. As a non-profit organization, community is central to the work we do at TTLT. Our impact can be directly attributed to our ever-growing network of volunteers, supporters, community partners, staff, and the interpersonal relationships that connect us all. Our collective appreciation for nature links us as we work together to care for the land, restore ecosystem health, and nurture a collaborative organizational culture that often results in the development of friendships.

However, how can we build a friendship on a shaky foundation? This question is at the centre of TTLT's ongoing efforts to grow and strengthen our relationships with local Indigenous Nations and Community members.

Despite a vision of a healthy, connected landscape that benefits all species, modern conservation is rooted in an inherently colonial system of land ownership that can perpetuate harm, regardless of good intentions. Often practices are based on the European concept of wilderness, which separates humans from nature and has resulted in the forced removal of Indigenous Peoples from their territories. This legacy demonstrates the importance of learning the truth about Canadian history and taking accountability through intentional efforts to broaden our perspectives and adjust our practices.

Repairing harm and building trust takes significant effort. As an organization, we have worked hard over the years to implement changes that reflect the growth in our understanding and make TTLT a safer space for Indigenous relationships. The foundational work towards furthering the goal of reconciliation began in 2018 when we committed to becoming a Habitat Partner in the Deshkan Zibi Conservation Impact Bond. In this first of its kind financing model, Carolinian Canada facilitated introductions between Chippewas of the Thames First Nation (COTTEN) and TTLT to engage in projects that focused on reconciling peoples and ecosystems.

This was a pivotal moment for our organization that initiated a journey of learning for staff that extended beyond the workplace into our personal lives. Over the years, we attended various workshops, conferences, and webinars that accompanied independent reading, online courses, and vulnerable discussions — each of us profoundly impacted and intent on change. Reparations involve showing up to listen and learn and applying that knowledge. Seemingly small actions, like shifting away from colonial language, combine to form a meaningful impact. As stated by Anishinaabeg knowledge-holders Carolyne Crawley and Joseph Pitawamakwat, language is the root of our interconnections, our words charged with energy that can either bring us together or push us apart. It's these small intentional shifts in practice that set the foundation for growth and create a framework for transformative action. It is only then that we can cultivate a friendship based on shared values, mutual respect, and reciprocity.



Meaningful relationship building prioritizes connection over metrics. Although our relationship with COTTEN began with a

project in the 2018 Conservation Impact Bond, our most valued outcome is the sense of community gained through our continued collaboration over the years. We engage in this partnership without an expectation of anything in return, providing ecological knowledge, as requested, where it aligns with the goals of the First Nation. Our relationship continues to grow as we visit the First Nation each year to search for rare and at-risk species, laughing and connecting on the land. These cherished field days provide us with the chance to marvel at the efficacy of land stewardship rooted in a kinship system. With each visit, we reflect on the reality that we have so much more to learn from Indigenous-led conservation and are thankful for this gift of an opportunity.

By Payton Landsborough

Protect

Teamwork Makes the Dream Work

Over 25 years, TTLT has built partnerships with many organizations to collaborate on mutual conservation goals. Some examples include corporate partners supporting stewardship work through employee field days with the TTLT team, working with the Southern Ontario Reptiles at Risk Program to rescue turtle eggs and return hatchlings to their habitats, and joint outreach events like the Hawk Cliff Woods Migration Weekend. More recently, TTLT has formed a number of partnerships to further land protection goals in our communities.

Bradshaw Conservation Lands is located in St. Clair Township – which is outside of TTLT’s traditional focal area for conservation – but when Roberta Buchanan of Lambton Wildlife Inc. reached out to share that there were 100 acres in need of protection, intrigue was sparked. Given the site’s location and adjacency to St. Clair Region Conservation Authority lands, both organizations connected to discuss the possibility of protecting and stewarding this site together. There were many meetings and phone calls between staff and committees, but also numerous calls to our lawyers, and with funders, to determine if a project like this was even possible. The result is that this beautiful site full of Carolinian species is now protected in partnership with St. Clair Region Conservation Foundation. St. Clair Region Conservation Authority will play the lead role in land stewardship given the



Lily Vuong

proximity to other lands in their care. Bradshaw Conservation Lands is TTLT’s first co-owned nature reserve, a model that may work in the future to support other conservation groups, and expand TTLT’s capacity to protect lands across the region.

Further, the protection of Sycamore Valley in Oxford County was completed under a new partnership model to ensure that any Scouts Canada lands considered for sale remain as conservation lands in perpetuity. Ontario Conservation Accelerator is working with Scouts Canada to transition their holdings to land trust partners, which will ensure that green spaces continue to nurture generations of outdoor adventurers and nature guardians. TTLT’s Sycamore



Avery Vojvodin

Valley (formerly Camp Shegadaynou) was the first project under this new partnership – strengthening climate resilience, biodiversity, and community connection to nature. TTLT is working with local Scouts groups (and other partners) to develop a site plan which would include trails and other experiences for this beloved site.

“Camp Shegadaynou has been a place of outdoor adventure, learning, and connection for generations of Scouts and the community... By working with trusted conservation partners, we can safeguard this land for generations and make sure it remains a place where youth can connect with nature, build skills, and develop a lifelong respect for the outdoors.”

– Liam Burns, CEO, Scouts Canada



These projects reflect the kind of collaboration TTLT values most: multiple perspectives and shared effort coming together to make an impact for nature. They mark the beginning of a much broader network of partnerships that TTLT aims to develop in the coming years, expanding its capacity to protect land across the region.

By Daria Koscinski

Restore

Burn, Prairie, Burn!

Located between Rodney and West Lorne, Tanager Tract is a 100-acre nature reserve of primarily forest-swamp mosaic with three small-but-mighty meadows. Totalling only 1.52 acres, these meadows were created for logging landings in 1872. Once logging ceased in 1927, these sections slowly transformed into their present-day meadow habitats.



Payton Landsborough

The largest of the three meadows features prairie indicator species, such as Showy Tick-trefoil, Round-headed Bush Clover, and Pale-leaved Woodland Sunflower. Due to its important flora features, it was this meadow to which TTLT decided to apply a prescribed burn in 2026.

Before colonization, fire played a vital role in shaping the landscape – specifically prairies, savannahs, and oak woodlands. Fire acts as a reset button for the landscape, letting light reach the ground and giving native plants the ability to grow and regenerate. Over time, a relationship was created between native species and fire, and many species now rely on fire for successful survival. Indigenous Peoples understood this relationship, often burning lands for cultural practices while also promoting biodiversity and creating wildlife habitat. You may be wondering, how do prairie plants survive fire? Well, many prairie plants have specific growing points called “meristems”, which grow below the ground. The previous year’s above-ground vegetation provides fuel for the fire, while the growing points remain cool and unharmed below-ground.

However, to protect infrastructure and human health and safety, fire suppression activities largely removed fire from the southern Ontario landscape. In the absence of fire, ecosystems change over time, from meadows and prairies to shrub thickets then dense forests.

In an effort to prevent this successional transformation, TTLT has implemented prescribed fire as a management tool for the meadows at Tanager Tract. Tanager Tract’s first prescribed burn was in April 2021, and exactly five years later, TTLT contracted a controlled, low intensity burn in the meadow. This April’s burn will help remove invasive species and shrub and tree seedlings, as well as add nutrients back into the soil and create sunlight canopy gaps for important prairie species. Over the coming years, TTLT is excited to monitor the meadow and observe its transformation!



Wildfire Specialists Inc.

Funding for this project is provided by the Government of Ontario’s Species Conservation Program grant, which was awarded to TTLT in 2026.

By Ellise Proctor

Play

Pollinator Pathways

Within the grid, connect the Pollinators to their host species located in the same-coloured square. All squares in the grid must be filled and no pollinator’s paths can cross.

