

Bainbridge Island Land Trust

Conservation Plan Executive Summary – March 27, 2012

The Bainbridge Island Land Trust (BILT) is a non-profit land trust that serves the people and wildlife of Bainbridge Island, Washington. Over the last 23 years, BILT has protected some of the most special places on Bainbridge Island, including forestlands, wetlands, shorelines, streams and riparian corridors, agricultural lands, recreational lands and trails, open spaces, and scenic vistas. BILT protects natural and working lands with high conservation values largely through land acquisition and conservation easements. BILT works cooperatively with willing landowners, other conservation organizations, and governmental entities to accomplish its mission. Since its inception in 1989, BILT has helped preserve more than 1200 acres on Bainbridge Island, with over 920 of those acres being open to the public.

Recognizing that the supply of conservation lands on Bainbridge Island is diminishing due to the continued press of development, and that the financial resources of BILT will always be constrained, BILT began developing its first comprehensive conservation plan in 2011. The purpose of the Conservation Plan is to bring more strategic focus to BILT's conservation efforts, and to identify BILT's potential conservation priorities for the next five to ten years. The Conservation Plan also identifies strategies for advancing BILT's priorities. While not a stand-alone decision document, the Plan is intended to provide additional direction and guidance for BILT's Board and staff to help ensure that we utilize our limited financial and human resources to achieve the greatest possible conservation gains for our Island.

Conservation initiatives contained in a 2011 draft plan were reviewed by the BILT board. In early 2012, Bainbridge Island Land Trust members, partner agencies and stakeholders, and the community were invited to provide feedback on the draft conservation plan by completing an on-line survey, submitting comments directly to the BILT, or by participating in a stakeholder meeting.

Interactions with our constituents, weighed with habitat trend data, past BILT successes, and community needs, led us to identify two priority ecological systems worthy of our increased attention and action:

Wildlife Networks: Systems of large ecologically functioning habitat blocks and connecting wildlife corridors that support sustainable populations of diverse and abundant wildlife species and provide opportunities for wildlife to move between large habitat blocks. These areas contain valuable critical habitats, including forests, wetlands, streams, and riparian areas. These networks provide some watershed protection and can provide public access, when compatible with conservation objectives, via well planned trails and other amenities.

Shorelines: Dynamic habitat systems that contain highly valuable critical habitats, including tidelands, estuaries, lagoons, nearshore, marine riparian and adjoining upland areas, important

to a high diversity of aquatic and terrestrial species. Shorelines can provide public access, when compatible with conservation objectives, via well planned trails and other amenities. We recognize the Island's 58 miles of shoreline are integral to the larger Puget Sound ecosystem which gives added significance and importance to our shoreline conservation efforts.

The Conservation Plan is divided into a number of key sections. The opening sections lay out the mission and vision of BILT and review the history of BILT's conservation efforts to date. The next section describes the status and trends of various habitat and landscape types on Bainbridge Island. The Plan then identifies strategic conservation priorities and implementation actions. The Plan briefly describes the tools available for implementing preservation efforts, along with potential next steps (including potential partners). Going forward, BILT will evaluate and prioritize specific projects using the Conservation Plan along with the tools it has developed and assistance from various partners. The Plan concludes with a set of references, a glossary of terms & acronyms, and a list of contributors and acknowledgments. Appendices include maps, supplemental figures and tables, summary of BILT's historic capacity to undertake various types of projects, and summaries of the comments received on the draft plan.