



**OPEN SPACE
INSTITUTE**



Strategic Plan

2026-2030



Letter from the CEO

Dear Friends, Supporters, and Partners:

I am delighted to share the Open Space Institute’s five-year strategic plan. OSI is well-positioned to take advantage of the ample opportunities available to us to achieve profound land conservation victories in the eastern United States. This is the moment to recommit to, and strengthen, our time-proven approach.

But don’t mistake steadiness for satisfaction. **We must do more: save more land, provide deeper experiences, build more partnerships, and lift the conservation field higher.**

I am awed by the range of settings, communities, and biodiversity that define the East’s outdoor treasures. **From the Appalachians to the Atlantic, from Georgia to Maine, OSI’s diverse skills and expertise equip us like no other group to navigate our region’s complexity with agility and intelligence, permanently improving the East’s environmental and cultural health.**

Focusing on connections between people and the land is near to my heart and is a priority in this plan. These connections strengthen families and communities while planting the seeds for successful land conservation in the future.

Our challenging times make unprecedented demands for strong leadership and action. OSI is rising to respond. Our confidence is rooted in your commitment and the goodwill we share with partners at every level—assets that we rely on and will never take for granted. On behalf of OSI’s board and staff, thank you! Let’s work together to make this plan a reality.

Sincerely,

Erik Kulleseid
President & CEO

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Who We Are

At OSI, land is at the heart of everything we do.

We envision a future where the rich natural vitality of the eastern United States thrives and endures, forever safeguarded for the benefit of both nature and people.

Since 1974, OSI has protected 2.5 million acres of some of the most precious and wild places in the East. We combine the focus and commitment of a regional land trust with the reach and expertise of a national organization. OSI creates, expands, and improves public parks and trails; conserves habitat; awards capital grants to support outstanding deals; safeguards clean water; uses science and data to help mitigate the devastating effects of climate change; makes open spaces more welcoming and accessible; supports emerging environmental grassroots organizations; and strengthens communities.

OSI strengthens conservation at every level. Our team is fully integrated across geographies and functions, and we are stronger and more effective as a result. To its baseline expertise, OSI adds an appetite for informed risk, passion, flexibility, creativity, and accountability, creating a potent formula for smart conservation that ensures the land, water, and ecosystems that support life in the eastern United States are cared for, now and in the future.

OSI'S MISSION

OSI protects land to sustain communities, wildlife, and the planet, ensuring the natural vitality of the eastern United States thrives forever for the benefit of people and nature.



Our Values



Collaboration

We build strong partnerships grounded in trust and shared purpose. By working together, we amplify our collective impact for people and the land.



Adaptability

We stay agile in an ever-changing world. We learn, evolve, and respond to emerging environmental needs, and approach conservation challenges with an open mind.



Innovation

We are thought leaders who navigate complexity and embrace innovation. By fostering a culture of creativity and bold leadership, we remain at the forefront of conservation.



Inclusion

We believe that conservation must be by and for all people. By embedding inclusivity in our policies, partnerships, and programs, we strengthen our understanding of the landscapes we protect and ensure our work creates belonging and benefits everyone.



Effectiveness

We set clear goals and hold ourselves accountable to create lasting change.

OSI's 2026-2030 Goals

The urgency for land conservation shapes all of OSI's work. In this plan, OSI has set strong and decisive goals to deliver our mission and meaningfully address the fundamental needs that people and natural communities have for open space and connection with nature. We will deploy the know-how and energy of OSI's full team – program, operations, executive, and board – to achieve these new and critical goals.

Our organization-wide goals provide the framework for OSI's activities for the next five years. **In the coming years, OSI will build and champion:**

Permanently conserved and connected landscapes in the eastern United States, with lands, parks, and trails that strengthen habitat, water resources, recreation, communities, and climate resilience.

Open spaces, parks, and trails that foster **meaningful outdoor experiences** and inspire and invite all people to enjoy, explore, and build belonging and connections with nature and each other.

A **locally responsive approach** that elevates community expertise, strengthens partnerships, and develops future leaders to achieve lasting outcomes.

A **thriving conservation field** that aligns priorities, mobilizes resources, and provides the science and capacity to tackle urgent issues effectively.

Strengthening Our Impact

To achieve our 2026-2030 goals, OSI will increase the pace and scale of conservation – our core work – and ensure that we reach human and natural communities where it means the most.

Achieving these goals will require OSI to escalate our investments of time, talent, and capital in seven strategic focus areas. **Specifically, we will: save at-risk landscapes; expand our geography; deepen community engagement; embrace field and policy leadership; increase OSI's organizational capacity; tell our story; and strengthen governance.**

OSI's 2026-2030 Priorities



Save At-Risk Landscapes

OSI will tap our creative and strategic talents to explore new capital funding sources and deal structures to assure the protection of land, despite increasing competition and financial headwinds.



Expand Our Geography

OSI will strategically expand into new areas where our tools and partnerships can advance outstanding conservation opportunities and drive landscape-scale impact.



Deepen Community Engagement

We will develop a plan to prioritize and formalize our community engagement processes and subsequently secure and allocate the required resources to move this vital conservation component to the fore.



Embrace Field and Policy Leadership

OSI will work to protect, increase, and improve funding (both public and private) and policy at the federal, state, and local levels. OSI will promote and encourage opportunities for our expert staff to more fully participate as leaders in the field and amplify our science and data.



Internal Focus Areas

Three internal strategic focus areas complement the four public-facing strategies described above: Increase OSI's Organizational Capacity, Tell Our Story, and Strengthen Governance. To increase capacity, OSI will ensure its operations and program teams are properly staffed to fulfill our mission with maximal impact and efficiency; to attract new partners and create new opportunities, we will elevate and sharpen OSI's place in the public imagination; and to make the most of the OSI board's vision and leadership, we will improve and streamline governance practices.

Meeting the Moment



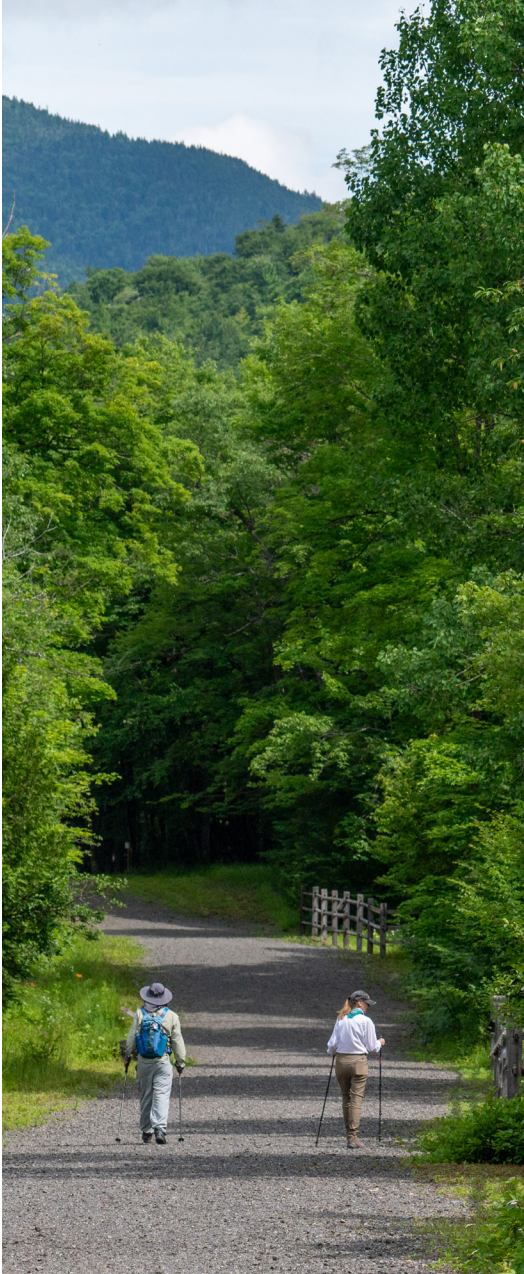
Conservation is faced with enormous hurdles and unknowns, and the need to protect land – a finite resource and the best defense for the well-being of all living things – has never been more urgent. This field is politically vulnerable, stressed by constrained public funding and policies in many places. Land costs continue to rise, and there is increasing development pressure. Climate change impacts are gaining in frequency and intensity. Market volatility and more competition for philanthropic dollars strain the non-profit community.

Our work to make land more welcoming for all people is complicated by entrenched cultural and systemic forces. These realities make OSI's work more urgent and more essential than ever.

OSI is built for this moment. We are agile, lean, and have an entrepreneurial spirit that can adapt to political, financial, and ecological conditions while staying grounded in science, community needs, and regional priorities. We bring funding and staff that can move quickly, fill gaps, and make the difference between a missed opportunity and a permanently protected landscape.

As we look to the next five years and beyond, OSI will apply our strengths – our expertise, capital, partnerships, and entrepreneurial mindset – to all the goals outlined in this plan.

Above all, OSI remains bold, nimble, innovative, and focused on achieving effective and lasting conservation for all.



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