



INTERIM STRATEGIC PLAN- 2026

As CFPA prepares to welcome a new Executive Director, our staff and Board seized the opportunity to refresh our Strategic Plan—ensuring we stay focused, mission-driven, and poised to deliver impactful programs well into the future. We’re excited to share this Interim Strategic Plan Update with our donors, supporters, and partners—highlighting our momentum and the path ahead.

Below, you’ll find featured program accomplishments from 2023–2025, updates on strategic priorities already in motion, and a forward-looking vision for a comprehensive five-year plan to be shaped by our incoming Executive Director, staff, and Board in the near future.

2023-2025 Featured Accomplishments

Advocacy: Trail Protection, Climate Resilience, and Equitable Access

- Achieved passage of Public Act 23-207, a tax abatement that protects access to State-Designated Greenways on private lands by incentivizing permanent conservation easements.
- Collaborated with other National Park Service–administered trails to secure “unit status” for the New England Trail, achieving parity across the national trails system.
- Defended the Passport to the Parks program, preventing the diversion of funds from State lands.

Education: Extend Statewide Capacity and Impact

- Expanded Master Woodland Manager (MWM) and Goodwin Master Naturalist programs to record participation levels.
- Launched school partnerships with Milner Middle School and Community First School in Hartford to provide students field-based learning experiences in Keney Park.
- Led pilot series of public programs on the Blue-Blazed Hiking Trails to expand community engagement in outdoor learning and stewardship.
- Hired new Education Assistant to expand capacity and program impact.

Trails: Protect, Steward, and Welcome New Users

- Expanded CT Woodlands Conservation Corps (CWCC) to two seasonal crews and secured AmeriCorps Education Awards for members.
- Inventoried indigenous sites and stories on the NET with a contract archaeologist.
- Diversified Connecticut Trails Day with new adaptive and accessibility-focused events to urban forest and cultural history walks.
- Adopted the RIMS app for data collection on the NET and contributed over 400 miles of trail data to CT Trail Finder to reach new audiences.
- Developed new GIS tools to prioritize vulnerable private parcels, map trail protection priorities, and track relationships with private trail hosts.
- Secured 4-acre ridgeline property in Southington, creating a future campsite opportunity for long-distance NET hikers.

Cross Program Priorities: Deepen Impact & Sustainability of Programs

- Amplified mission and messaging by investing in new Communications Coordinator position.
- Engaged new and underserved communities statewide through CT Trails Day and the Master Woodland Manager programs.

- Utilized Connecticut Woodlands magazine to feature diverse writers, conservation topics and uplift new voices.
- Provided introductory hiking kits to Outdoor Afro members to expand access to Connecticut's forests and trails.
- Partnered with Wesleyan University class and native elders to construct a wetu (native lodge) at Field Forest Preserve to highlight cultural connections to the land.

2026 Strategic Updates & Actions

The Canopy: Increase the Impact of Our Conservation Programs

Advocacy:

- Implement CFPA's ambitious [2026 Conservation Agenda](#).

Education:

- More fully integrate urban forestry concepts into Master Woodland Manager and Master Naturalist programming.
- Seek funding to bring additional programming to Hartford schools, connecting diverse students, teachers, and families with nature while fostering environmental literacy, stewardship, and equitable access to green spaces.
- Grow Forest Education volunteer team and opportunities.
- Initiate hiking series, a volunteer-led hiking club, invasive plant management workshops, and themed public programs at CFPA properties.
- Partner with DEEP to deliver forest-based programs to school groups at Goodwin Conservation Center and explore expansion opportunities to deepen hands-on forest education and stewardship statewide.

Trails:

- Enhance trail project tracking, inventory and improve GIS systems and mapping.
- Focus Connecticut Trails Day on events for families, the Blue-Blazed Hiking Trails and connecting with new communities.
- Improve trail experience by reducing roadwalks through negotiations with partners and landowners.
- Partner with land trusts, municipalities and private landowners to secure long-term trail protection.
- Expand overnight opportunities and on the New England Trail.

Land Conservation:

- Streamline property reporting, review policies and records for updating.
- Feature climate smart forestry practices and develop a comprehensive Forest Management Plan for Field Forest.
- Develop baseline documentation for new donated properties and update website resources.
- Advance tax abatement with municipalities to institute trail protection incentives.

The Trunk: Invest in Our Staff, Board of Directors, and Volunteers

- Invest in CFPA Staff through enhanced benefits, workplace infrastructure, and ongoing professional development.
- Initiate meetings between CFPA's new Executive Director and key stakeholders, volunteers and donors.
- Improve volunteer engagement through additional specialized trainings and opportunities.
- Strengthen the Board of Directors with targeted recruitment, succession planning, member training, and updated bylaws and committee charters.

The Roots: Improve Our Organizational/Financial Stability

- Continue investment in infrastructure and technology at CFPA Headquarters and implement Community Meeting Room improvements.
- Develop a Case Statement for donor support.
- Expand Winslow Society membership, increase monthly giving, and encourage legacy gifts.
- Publish an annual report highlighting progress and achievements toward meeting Strategic Plan milestones.
- Establish new Capital Sinking Fund for future building enhancements.
- Enhance donor, volunteer and partner communications with an eye toward development of a comprehensive Communications Plan.

5-Year Strategic Plan Objectives

In 2026, the Board committed to extending CFPA's strategic horizon from three to five years, with annual reviews and a formal update at the three-year mark. Guided by our incoming Executive Director, the new plan will build on the successes of our 2023–2025 Strategic Plan and this interim update, while addressing additional priorities identified by the Board and staff to position CFPA for even greater impact.

The Canopy: Increase the Impact of Our Conservation Programs

- Advance equity, diversity, and inclusion in CFPA programs, trails, and access to outdoor resources.
- Advocate for healthy forests and public lands through science-based stewardship, well-managed parks, connected trails, climate resiliency, and inclusive outdoor access.
- Protect and promote the Blue-Blazed Trails through landowner partnerships, innovative incentives, and long-term stewardship.
- Support policy and conservation with science by identifying research needs and funding sources.
- Develop, articulate and make available CFPA's policy position on forest management, climate change, energy, and core forest conservation.
- Encourage increased engagement with the New England Trail through enhanced trail information, amenities, and hiker resources, including resources facilitating multi-day and thru-hike opportunities.
- Promote outdoor recreation and tourism in partnership with communities, highlighting forest conservation and trail networks.
- Expand urban access to trails and outdoor education, bringing CFPA programs to major cities and connecting urban communities to nature.

The Trunk: Invest in Our Staff, Board of Directors, and Volunteers

- Update and refine CFPA bylaws and employee handbook.
- Enhance compliance and secure external HR support as needed.
- Increase statewide recognition of the economic value of the Blue-Blazed Hiking Trail System.
- Expand volunteer Board Ambassador training to strengthen outreach and engagement with donors and members.
- Grow the CWCC program to provide fee-based services to partner conservation organizations.
- Expand volunteer engagement and resources for all CFPA programs to facilitate lifelong service with CFPA.

The Roots: Improve Our Organizational/Financial Stability

- Develop an expanded 10-year vision plan for the organization.
- Strengthen financial sustainability through endowment management and exploring new donor/ member categories.
- Enhance technology to improve trail mapping, user engagement and land management on CFPA's fee and easement lands.
- Elevate CFPA's visibility as the Connecticut's premier conservation, outdoor recreation, policy and environmental education leader.
- Model sustainability through green energy and building enhancements at CFPA headquarters.



"A tree has roots in the soil yet reaches to the sky. It tells us that in order to aspire we need to be grounded and that no matter how high we go, it is from our roots that we draw sustenance." - Wangari Maathai