



LEADERSHIP PROFILE

Executive Director

The Wilderness Land Trust

"We Keep the Promise of Wilderness - by acquiring and transferring private lands to public ownership to complete designated and proposed wilderness areas, or directly protect wilderness values."

- mission statement

A Compelling Opportunity

Over six decades after [The Wilderness Act](#) established the nation's strongest protections for public lands, a critical gap remains in America's conservation framework. There are more than 275,000 acres of private property—known as inholdings—within federally designated wilderness areas, creating vulnerabilities in some of the country's most pristine landscapes. These privately owned parcels, ranging from small plots to thousands of acres, represent potential sites for residential and industrial development in the heart of wilderness areas, threatening the ecological integrity and wild character that The Wilderness Act sought to preserve forever.

The Wilderness Land Trust (Trust) stands as the only national conservation organization dedicated exclusively to addressing this challenge. For 33 years, the Trust has built a reputation as a trusted partner across the political spectrum, strategically acquiring private wilderness inholdings from willing sellers and transferring them to public ownership. Through this targeted approach, the organization removes development threats while creating connected wildlife corridors, protecting critical watersheds, ensuring landscape-scale conservation essential for combating climate change and biodiversity loss, and providing public access to some of the most beautiful landscapes in our country. Each acquisition, regardless of size, strengthens ecosystem resilience and moves closer to completing the original vision of wilderness protection.

This presents an exceptional leadership opportunity for a visionary Executive Director to guide the Trust through its next phase of impact and growth. Founded three decades ago in Colorado's Roaring Fork Valley, the organization has cultivated a remarkably loyal community of supporters; many donors and board members have remained committed since its inception. Now,



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as the Trust looks toward 2026, the organization is focused on expanding its reach by engaging the next generation of conservationists and ensuring its community welcomes the full diversity of people who love wilderness.

The ideal candidate will join a mission-driven organization with deep roots and proven impact, leading strategic initiatives that balance conservation urgency with practical partnership development. The role demands someone who combines a deep passion for wilderness protection with strong nonprofit leadership experience, fundraising, and financial acumen, as well as the vision to broaden the Trust's appeal while working hands-on with a high-performing team dedicated to securing the highest level of protection available for America's public lands.

The Mandate

The Executive Director will lead a strong organization with an engaged and skilled board and a deeply experienced and committed staff.

Key Responsibilities of the next Executive Director are:

Strategic Leadership and Vision: Provide clear organizational direction and strategic thinking, synthesizing expertise across the organization to guide decision-making that aligns with the Trust's expanding conservation portfolio and long-term goals.

Fundraising and Donor Stewardship: Lead major and principal gift cultivation and fundraising efforts, working closely with development and communications staff, while maintaining personal relationships with high-level donors and foundations, ensuring sustainable operating and capital funding for land acquisition and organizational operations.

Board Management and Governance:

Collaborate effectively with a committed and experienced board of directors, leveraging their deep institutional knowledge and passion for the mission while maintaining clear governance boundaries. Provide strategic leadership that engages board members in high-level decision-making and policy development, ensuring productive board meetings that focus on the organization's vision, oversight, and strategic direction.

Financial Leadership and Risk Management:

Oversee complex financial operations, including loans, federal reimbursements, and acquisition financing, while making strategic decisions about project selection and resource allocation with appropriate risk tolerance for time-sensitive land deals.

Team Leadership and Organizational Culture:

Foster and maintain the Trust's collaborative, trust-based culture while providing steady leadership and strategic direction, empowering staff autonomy while ensuring accountability and supporting professional development.

Partnership and Coalition Building: Maintain and expand relationships with conservation organizations, government agencies, and community partners at local, state, and national levels, thereby continuing to establish a reputation as a trusted collaborator across diverse political boundaries.

Land Conservation Strategy: Guide strategic decision-making about which land projects to pursue, balancing organizational capacity with conservation impact, and ensuring efficient use of resources in an increasingly complex regulatory and political environment.



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The Candidate

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Professional Experience will include:

- Proven leadership ability, vision, and strategic acumen.
- Demonstrated track record in fundraising, including securing major and principal gifts.
- Evidence of effectively conveying organizational strengths and mission in written and verbal communications.
- Financial oversight skills with a focus on sustainability and fiscal responsibility.
- Experience with board management, including earning trust and leading the board strategically.
- Track record of coalition building and existing relationships with conservation and wilderness organizations at the local, regional, and national levels.
- Fifteen years or more of professional experience in a managerial or leadership role.

Personal Assets will include:

- High emotional intelligence.
- Excellent communication skills.
- Adaptability and the confidence to pivot and lead change as situations evolve.
- Ability to synthesize information, with the wisdom and maturity to ask hard questions and make decisions in alignment with organizational strategy.

- Approachable and collaborative leadership style balanced with the confidence to make difficult decisions.
- Exceptional interpersonal skills with the ability to build trust quickly and influence across all levels.

The Organization

The Wilderness Land Trust is a nimble, mission-focused conservation organization that has built its reputation on thoughtful, incremental growth and strategic partnerships for land acquisition. This land is transferred to the federal government for permanent protection. With a collaborative, non-hierarchical culture, the Trust operates with a team of seven dedicated professionals who work primarily remotely, valuing flexibility and trust.

The organization's operating budget is \$1.6 million, with a variable annual capital land acquisition budget of six and seven figures. It has been awarded a seal of accreditation multiple times by the Land Trust Accreditation Commission, an honor bestowed upon land trusts that meet the highest national standards for excellence and conservation governance, demonstrating sound finances, ethical conduct, responsible governance, and lasting stewardship.

The Trust has successfully stayed true to its mission of land conservation while building strong relationships with federal agencies, private donors, and conservation partners at the state, local and tribal levels. It has maintained a productive relationship with every Federal Administration, regardless of party affiliation. The Trust's work involves complex real estate transactions, strategic use of loans and financing, and patient capital deployment, requiring sophisticated financial management and risk tolerance. The organization prides itself on being able to move quickly on opportunities while maintaining due diligence,



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In 2024, the Trust successfully protected 42 properties spanning 2,073 acres across a vast geographic range from Alaska to Virginia. By permanently removing the threat of development, these preserved lands now serve as sanctuaries where wildlife can move freely, resilient ecosystems can flourish, and people from diverse backgrounds can find a connection with nature.

The combined monetary value of these protected properties exceeds \$37 million, yet their true worth extends far beyond financial measures. These landscapes provide invaluable ecosystem services—purifying air and water, offering spaces for solitude and reflection, and serving as sources of inspiration for countless visitors. In an era of rapid environmental change, the intrinsic value of these protected areas represents an investment in our collective future that cannot be quantified solely in dollars.

The Relationships

The Executive Director reports to:	The Wilderness Land Trust Board of Directors
Manages:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Vice President and Senior Lands Specialist• Senior Lands Specialist• Director of Development Operations• Director of Marketing and Communications• Director of Philanthropy• Senior Operations Manager

The Compensation

This position offers a competitive salary and includes a comprehensive benefits package. Compensation is based on experience and location and is expected to be in the mid \$100,000's.

The Location

The Executive Director will reside in a significant market in the West, with the ability to work at will, travel with ease and maintain connections with key donor bases.

For potential consideration or to suggest a prospective candidate for the position, please email:

TWLT_ED@BoardWalkConsulting.com

or call **Crystal Stephens** or **Terri Kohan**
at 404-BoardWalk (404-262-7392).

For the status of this and other searches, please visit

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