

2025-2028

Strategic Plan

Clear Lake Township Land Conservancy



Adopted by the Clear Lake Township Land
Conservancy Board of Directors
11/22/2024

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Since its founding in 1991, the Clear Lake Township Land Conservancy (CLTLC) continues to protect the natural environment of Clear Lake and its watershed. The success and growth of CLTLC is rooted in a community that engages in and generously supports our mission. The Conservancy exists thanks to countless donors and volunteers that have come together over the last 35 years to protect and preserve this cherished corner of Indiana.

In early years, volunteers joined together to begin water quality testing at inlet ditches of Clear Lake, creating a baseline of data still used to this day. These efforts were expanded to include a contracted Watershed Diagnostic Study taking more frequent samples for laboratory analysis. Water quality improvement projects are rooted in understanding our watershed patterns based on this long-term comprehensive data.

Through 2024, the Conservancy has actively preserved nineteen properties, including an island, multiple wetlands, a fen, open spaces, prairies, and wooded forests. The diverse landscapes within these environments are imperative to protecting the habitat of our native species within the Clear Lake Township and watershed. Currently, the Conservancy preserves and protects around 145 acres of sensitive areas that directly impact the water quality of Clear Lake and Round Lake. Alongside the management of owned land, the Conservancy works with landowners to educate and suggest land projects that promote a healthy lake.

The Clear Lake Township Land Conservancy will continue paving the way for environmental conservation within the Clear Lake Township and watershed. Throughout 2024, the Board of Directors met frequently to evaluate the current position and long-term vision of CLTLC. They highlighted three main goals for the next three years. Strategies to accomplish these goals remain focused on three pillars of work: **water quality enhancement, natural areas preservation, and environmental education.**

This strategic plan outlines the strategies and tactics of three goals:

Goal 1. WATER QUALITY: Implement water quality improvement projects based on accurate and ongoing data collection.

Goal 2. WATERSHED CONSERVATION: Increase soil and water conservation efforts across the Clear Lake Township and watershed.

Goal 3. SUSTAINABILITY: Improve financial sustainability to support major projects, operations, and staffing.

MISSION

The Clear Lake Township Land Conservancy works to preserve, protect, and manage the natural environment within the watershed and township for future generations.

VISION

By 2029, the water quality of Clear Lake will be stabilized and improved, land-based collaboration will increase within the watershed, and the organization will achieve sustainability by growing the Forever Fund and obtaining grants to cover major projects, operations, and staffing.

GOALS & STRATEGIES

Goal 1. Water Quality: *Implement water quality improvement projects based on accurate and ongoing data collection.*

Strategy: Continue gathering scientific data of water and watershed conditions.

- ◇ Continue contracted monitoring programs with ecology partners.
- ◇ Annually review monitoring reports to observe any target areas for phosphorus reduction.
- ◇ Add or modify the experimental design and data collection sites as needed to focus on target areas.

Strategy: Improve lake clarity by reducing negative human impacts.

- ◇ Educate boaters on proper boating depths and distance from shoreline to reduce further erosion of the lake floor and shoreline.
- ◇ Manage aquatic invasive species by partnering with local experts, completing bi-annual surveys, and funding recommended removal methods.
- ◇ Protect aquatic native species that drive our lake's natural ecosystem balance.
- ◇ Promote natural and glacial stone seawalls for shoreline protection.

Strategy: Reduce external and internal phosphorus levels.

- ◇ Evaluate and improve the capacity of Koeneman Lake and Settlers Wetland to filter and store phosphorus from inflowing ditches.
- ◇ Improve ditch conditions to slow transport of sediments and nutrients.

Goal 2. Watershed Conservation: *Increase soil and water conservation efforts across the Clear Lake Township and watershed.*

Strategy: Promote land usage best management practices within the watershed.

- ◇ Obtain National Water Quality Initiative (NWQI) designation and advocate for implementation of funded projects, partnering with Steuben County Soil and Water Conservation District (SCSWCD) and Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).
- ◇ Acquire land near ditches or partner with landowners near ditches to address excess runoff.
- ◇ Protect and manage nature preserves to remove invasive species and promote native plants, trees, and grasses.

Strategy: Educate watershed landowners on best management practices for a healthy lake.

- ◇ Host educational events with partnering organizations to demonstrate rain gardens, native plantings, and other water quality efforts.
- ◇ Prioritize personal interactions with residents and landowners to build relationships.
- ◇ Utilize communication platforms to share resources on land management including email, mail, and social media, partnering with local organizations when possible.

Goal 3 Sustainability: *Improve financial sustainability to support major projects, operations, and staffing.*

Strategy: Grow the Forever Fund, the Conservancy's permanent endowment fund, to cover operating and staff expenses.

- ◇ Promote impactful giving through year-end gifts and Legacy Society membership.
- ◇ Increase Forever Fund support by communicating the value of endowment funds.
- ◇ Work with Legacy Society members to understand their plans and their wishes for their Legacy.
- ◇ Continue investment monitoring with the Finance Committee.

Strategy: Apply for grant funding to support major projects.

- ◇ Identify and evaluate grant opportunities.
- ◇ Assign key volunteers to assist with the grant funding process.
- ◇ Utilize partnerships with Clear Lake Association, SCSWCD, NRCS and other local conservation organizations.