



STRATEGIC PLAN

2020-2025

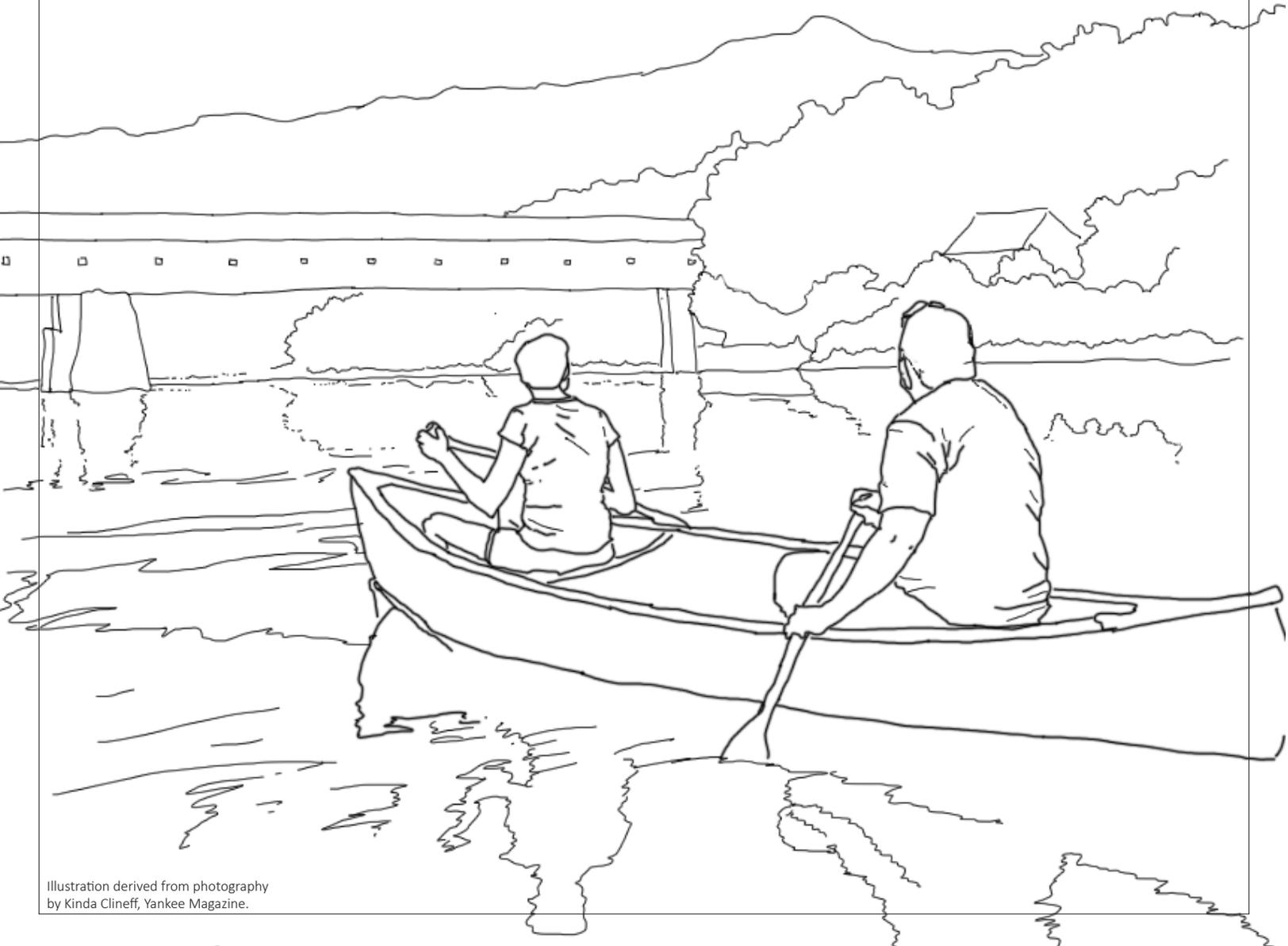


Illustration derived from photography
by Kinda Clineff, Yankee Magazine.

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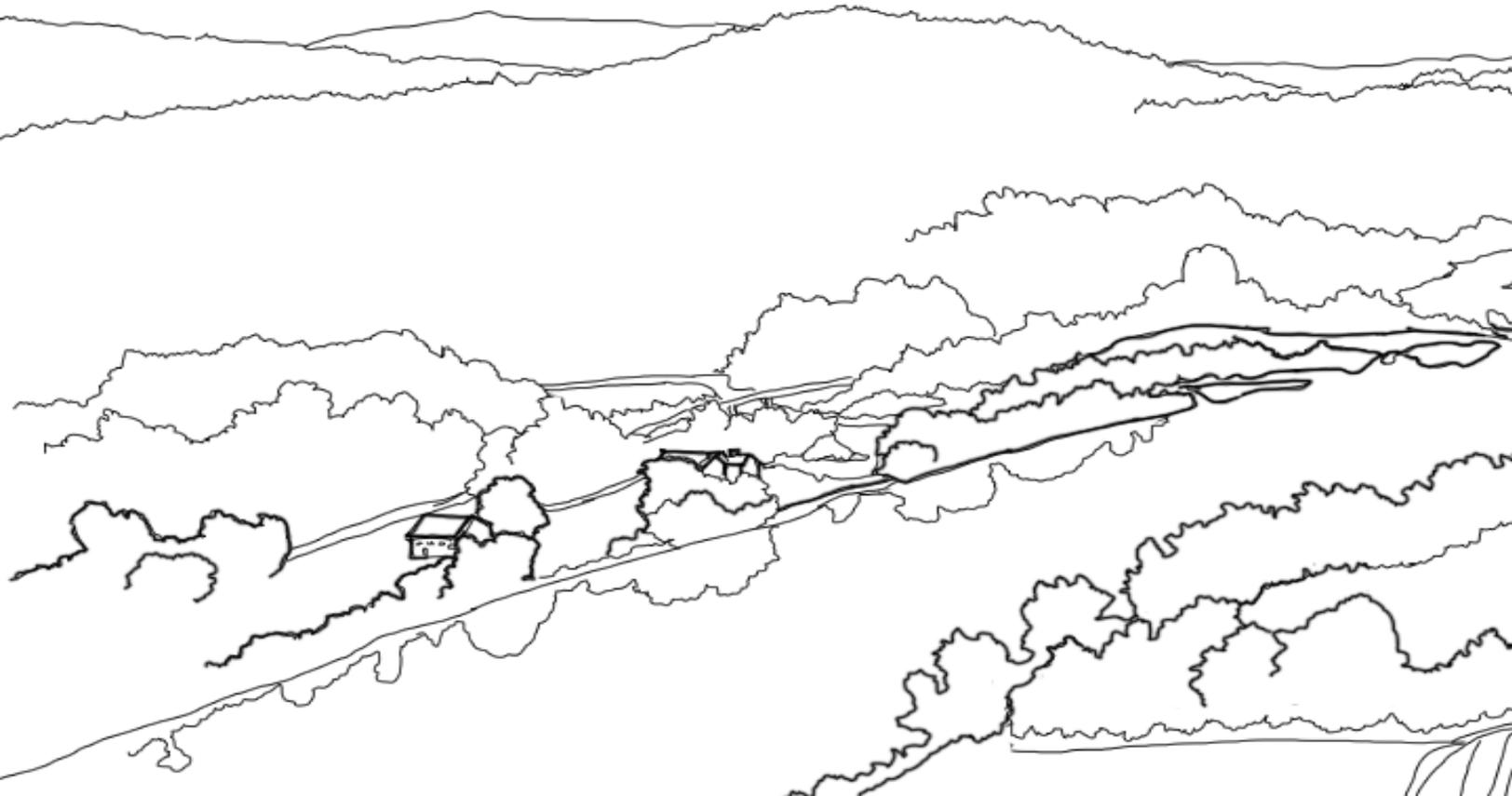
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This strategic plan incorporates feedback and ideas from our partners, collaborators, funders, volunteers, Commissioners, Local River Subcommittee members, and other stakeholders. We are grateful to everyone involved for their time, participation, and contributions to this plan. We look forward to our shared work in the Connecticut River Valley.

This plan was approved by the Connecticut River Joint Commissions on June XX, 2020.
Prepared by Emily Davis.

Illustration derived from photography
by Kinda Clineff, Yankee Magazine.



SUMMARY & NARRATIVE

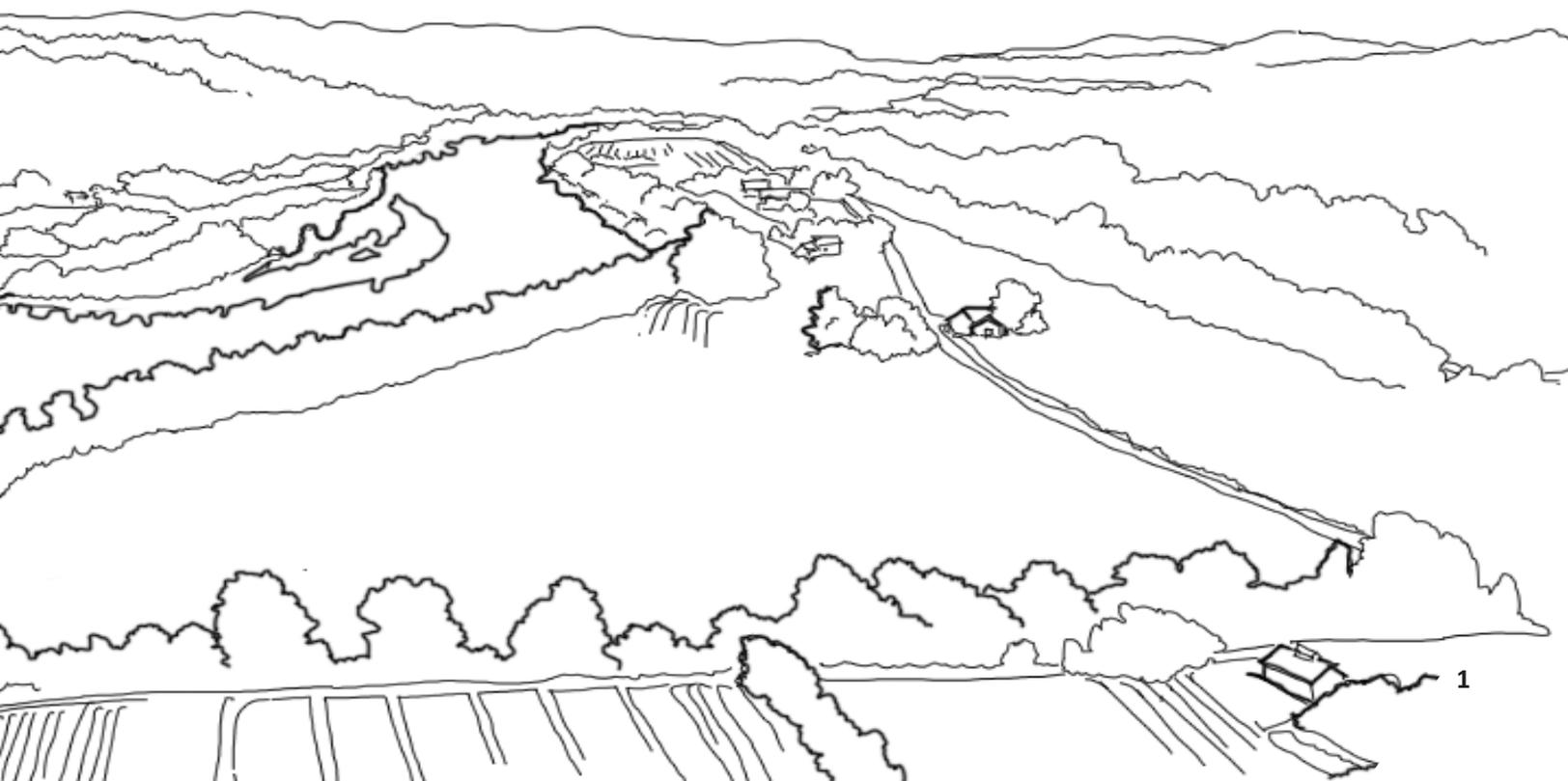
The Connecticut River Joint Commission's (CRJC) Strategic Plan 2020-2025 builds on over 30 years of experience in engaging communities in the Connecticut River Valley of Vermont and New Hampshire in a "shared commitment to safeguard a good place and a good life." (Connecticut River Corridor Management Plan, 1997)

The CRJC is a quasi-governmental organization composed of Governor-appointed and designated Commissioners from Vermont and New Hampshire, and the parent organization to five Local River Subcommittees. They may represent different interests, but are united in a shared regard of the Connecticut River, the surrounding landscape, and the ecosystem as a whole. Together, they identify and pursue collaborative efforts that safeguard the Valley.

We anticipate the Connecticut River Valley will see substantial growth related to migration from metropolitan areas to our east and south driven by climate change and sea level rise, as well as the current pandemic. The need for facilitated cooperation and coordination between the two states on development within the watershed will only increase.

The actions proposed in this plan leverage the group's strongest assets: the passion and commitment of the volunteer members and Commissioners, and its statutorily-enabled purpose and connection to state government. In the short term, these strategic leverage points will build internal capacity to help sustain the organization. Over time and amidst those global challenges, the CRJC intends to continue serving communities of the Valley by helping to guide the growth and development in a way that conserves landscape integrity and stewards the use of its natural resources.

The CRJC is well-situated to play a convening and advocating role, and understands that this work is most effective in partnership with existing organizations and initiatives. The CRJC values connection, advocacy, and mutual support, and is therefore dedicated to elevating collective efforts and collaborating with like-minded partners.



STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

STATUTORY PURPOSE <i>Our charge</i>	To facilitate the cooperation of Vermont and New Hampshire to guide development in a manner that conserves the visual, ecological and agricultural resources of the Connecticut River Valley.		
MISSION <i>How we fulfill the purpose</i>	The CRJC informs policy decisions, links local action to state and federal initiatives, and convenes partners in a common effort to protect the Valley's resources.		
CONSTITUENTS <i>Who we serve</i>	LOCAL RIVER SUBCOMMITTEES	PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS <i>(Ex: CRC, WUV, RPCs, state agencies, Friends of Conte)</i>	POLICY MAKERS <i>(Ex: Legislators, state agencies, Governors, federal delegation...)</i>
ACTIVITIES <i>How we serve the constituent</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create comprehensive on-boarding policy and materials • Create guidance for volunteer recruitment • Establish connections to broader policies and initiatives • Empower LRS members to attend events 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create incentives for partnership and collaboration, by... • Identify and leverage internal strengths and assets • Create systems for information-sharing and learning (both internal and external) • Build internal capacity for communication and facilitation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a robust internal system for tracking and monitoring legislation • Create guidance for Commissioner recruitment and connection to policymakers • Maintain relationships to Governor's offices and representative delegations
DESIRED RESULTS <i>The results of those activities</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 100% of municipalities participate in their LRS frequently • Relationships with state and municipal decision-makers is renewed and strengthened • LRSs are a source of helpful input • Corridor management plans are widely used and up-to-date • LRS leadership is cultivated locally 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Common policies are identified and advocated for cooperatively • Collective capacity is increased through information-sharing and partnership • Important decisions are informed by sharing knowledge throughout the network of partners • Knowledge is shared through well-facilitated stakeholder gatherings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy decisions are informed by LRS experience and knowledge • CRJC becomes a regarded and cooperative vector between local communities and state actors • Testimony is provided to state legislative bodies on relevant issues • Initiatives that benefit human and ecological communities of the CT River Valley are created and resourced
SUCCESS FACTORS <i>What needs to be in place to do those activities</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Occupied open seats on the LRSs • Active support of the LRSs through Commissioner engagement in their individual and collective projects • Increased awareness of the LRS in all riverside communities through improved communication 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased knowledge of the CRJC and it's capacity • Garnered respect of the CRJC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased awareness of the CRJC • Commitment and support of the policy makers • Stabilized (or, predictable) funding sources • CRJC acknowledged as essential
STRATEGIES <i>How we can leverage our strengths and opportunities</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use the authority of enabling statute to create relationships with policy-makers • Leverage the immediacy of COVID-related migration and development pressures to initiate conversations and identify potential partners • Improve on-boarding process, and identify individuals with specific skill-sets for Commissioner recruitment (and in turn, delegate discrete tasks) 		

2020-2025 PLAN SUMMARY

VALUES / CULTURE

The CRJC is a bi-state quasi-governmental organization composed of Governor appointed or designated Commissioners. They represent different interests, but pursue a common strategy through a shared regard of the Connecticut River and the surrounding landscape. The CRJC values connection, advocacy, and mutual support.



VISION

A healthy and cohesive Connecticut River Valley, where the CRJC is a respected voice and critical convener.



PURPOSE

To facilitate the cooperation of Vermont and New Hampshire to guide development in a manner that conserves the visual, ecological and agricultural resources of the CT River Valley.



MISSION

The CRJC informs policy decisions, links local action to state and federal initiatives, and convenes partners in a common effort to protect the Connecticut River Valley's resources.



GOALS

ADVOCATE *Be a voice for the Connecticut River Valley; initiate and bolster all efforts to safeguard its protection and conservation.*



OBJECTIVES

- actions
- actions

CONVENE *Gather partners to facilitate knowledge and resource sharing that supports the health of the Valley.*



OBJECTIVES

- actions
- actions

CONNECT *Bridge the divide between local communities and state entities for mutual benefit and project completion.*



OBJECTIVES

- actions
- actions

SUSTAIN *Build and maintain an enduring institution that delivers on its mission.*



OBJECTIVES

- actions
- actions

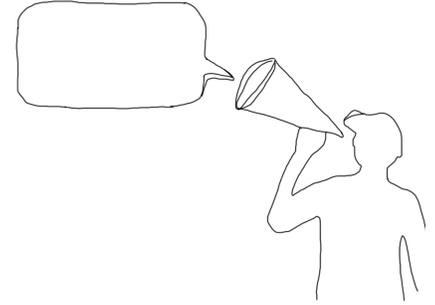


(Built into implementing these strategies, objectives, and actions should be mechanisms for review, feedback, and learning. Over time, this will refine the work plan to continuously align with the mission.)

(The following pages (pgs. 4-7) elaborate on these strategies, and outlines the proposed objectives and actions.)

STRATEGIC GOAL:

ADVOCATE



Be a voice for the Connecticut River Valley; initiate and bolster all efforts to safeguard its protection and conservation.

Start action
 Implementing
 Ongoing
 Completed action

PROPOSED OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS:

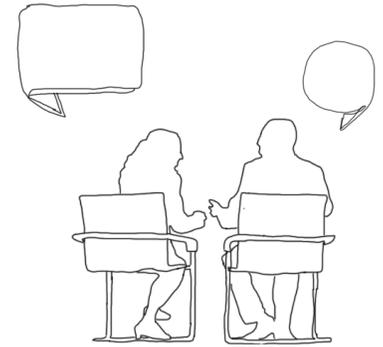
	FY21	FY22	FY23	FY24	FY25
1. IDENTIFY RELEVANT POLICY INITIATIVES / ISSUES					
Create a system for internal quarterly policy review / projection					
Host stakeholder gathering amidst COVID-19 pressures, to identify topic areas and issues most relevant to partners					
Host annual stakeholder gathering to identify topic areas and issues most relevant to partners					
2. SUPPORT A COMMON EFFORT					
Disseminate relevant information to stakeholders / partners on policy issues of interest (i.e. policy newsletter*)					
Gather feedback on policy initiatives, or facilitate communication between advocates and decision-makers					
Develop a system to survey organizations to see what is important to them*					
3. SUPPORT COMMUNICATION TO STATE GOVERNMENT					
Identify opportunities to provide information and testimony to legislative bodies					
Create and provide bi-annual CT River Valley updates to Governor's offices*					
Create and provide bi-annual CT River Valley updates to state and federal delegation*					
Create guidance for local leadership to engage in policy initiatives*					

**The pandemic has accelerated anticipated migration into the CT River Valley. Communities should take development pressures and the surge in the real estate market seriously, and may notice and participate in coordinated efforts to guide this growth and development. These proposed updates, guidance documents, and communications should serve this immediate need, and in turn create the internal systems for future work.*

STRATEGIC GOAL:

CONVENE

Gather partners to facilitate knowledge and resource sharing that supports the health of the Valley.



Start action
 Implementing
 Ongoing
 Completed action

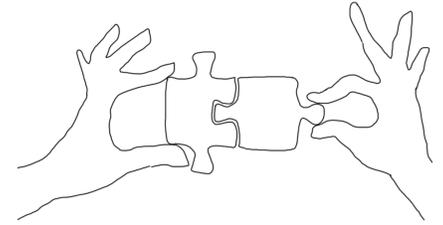
PROPOSED OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS:

	FY21	FY22	FY23	FY24	FY25
1. ESTABLISH CRJC AS A NETWORK CONVENER					
Host “Advisory Meeting” to review organizational strategy and shared interests for core stakeholders, partners, and funders*					
Utilize Commissioner networks (personal and professional), for expanded reach and awareness*					
Identify and create robust communication platform(s) (website updates, sharing resources via newsletters, etc)*					
2. DEVELOP PLAN FOR ANNUAL GATHERINGS					
Identify and collaborate with potential funders to support this kind of “think tank” gathering					
Create a Steering Committee to initiate and guide event/convening planning					
Host annual stakeholder gathering to identify topic areas and issues most relevant to partners (repeat action from “Advocate”)*					
Host an immediate gathering, aimed at pandemic-related development response*					
Consider surveying where convening is not possible					

**These proposed networking and convening actions should serve the immediate need in light of development pressures, and in turn create the internal systems for future work. In FY21, emphasize creating a network of like-minded organizations and funders that will be proactive in guiding development and safeguarding natural resources. Consider hosting a quick meeting among close partners to begin that conversation and create interest in the CRJC.*

STRATEGIC GOAL:

CONNECT



Bridge the divide between local communities and state entities for mutual benefit and project completion.

Start action
 Implementing
 Ongoing
 Completed action

PROPOSED OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS:

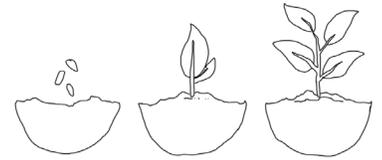
	FY21	FY22	FY23	FY24	FY25
1. BOLSTER LRS ACTION & LEADERSHIP					
Delegate Commissioner “Stewardship” of an LRS, as a connective line between their work and the parent organization*					
Create LRS member on-boarding / orientation document, that emphasizes role in municipality and supports local leadership*					
Prepare LRS for Water Resources Management Plan review and update					
Support LRS action / implementation by technical support and access to resources					
Create a suite of LRS recruitment materials (i.e. posters, flyers, news releases) to distribute in municipalities					
Draft a public article presenting the CRJC and its LRS network, including its role, local project highlights, and ways to get involved*					
Draft a letter from the LRS chairs to municipal select boards and conservation commissions, to fill open positions and support the town in guiding development*					
2. CONNECT LOCAL KNOWLEDGE TO BROADER INITIATIVES					
Create internal systems for gathering LRS updates, and share with state agencies as needed					
Create internal system for collecting and reviewing all relevant plans (regional plans, energy plans, transportation plans, water resources management, etc), as a resource for the corridor plan					
Advocate for the inclusion of our recommendations in relevant plans					
Create a system for supporting state-level decision making based on the recommendations in the corridor plan					

**These proposed actions create the “connective tissue” between state actors and local communities, and the lines of communication between the two in light of the pandemic response is critical.*

In FY21, emphasize learning and establishing these lines of communication. Gather knowledge from people on-the-ground, and share with policy makers (and vice versa), within a lens of service to the communities and mutual benefit. In time, revisit plans and policies that need to be adapted to new realities.

STRATEGIC GOAL:

SUSTAIN



Build and maintain an enduring institution that delivers on its mission.

Start action
 Implementing
 Ongoing
 Completed action

PROPOSED OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS:

	FY21	FY22	FY23	FY24	FY25
1. CREATE A ROBUST SYSTEM OF VOLUNTEER RECRUITMENT					
Identify desired skillsets, and recruit those individuals as Commissioners*					
Identify needed interest area representation, and recruit those individuals as Commissioners*					
Create a Commissioner on-boarding / orientation document (and, consider Commissioner “mentorship”)					
Review bylaws and align recruitment goals with internal policies					
2. MAINTAIN RELATIONSHIPS WITH EXISTING AND PROSPECTIVE FUNDERS					
Identify existing and prospective funding opportunities (including state agencies and private sector organizations)*					
Create annual CRJC factsheet / work / results update for state funders (including LRS work and progress)*					
3. CREATE INTERNAL SYSTEMS FOR FEEDBACK AND LEARNING					
Initiate an annual Full Commission facilitated meeting to summarize legislative outcomes and plan upcoming initiatives*					
Conduct periodic review of mission, work-plan, and implementation of this plan					

**Throughout this document (and specifically outlined within this Strategic Goal) are actions that build internal capacity and leverage the CRJC’s main strengths: the passion and commitment of the people, and it’s connection to government through enabling statute.*

Given the likely financial hardships following pandemic impacts, it is crucial that the CRJC doubles-down on these inherent strengths, and pivots to hosting the important conversations that are most relevant to CT River communities and decision-makers right now. Doing so would garner institutional recognition, and in turn help access future funding opportunities.