



Sacred Earth Foundation

Ekone Ranch... a place for children of all ages

Five-Year Strategic Plan, 2018-2023

Summary of Priorities

Mission

To activate children and adults to love the earth deeply and wisely, through stewardship of the Rock Creek watershed, authentic community experience, and place-based education.

Vision

A world in which people are connected to place and care radically for the planet, each other, ourselves, and all life.

Values

- ⊗ STEWARDSHIP ~ We prioritize healthy ecosystems in all of the workings of the organization.
- ⊗ COMMUNITY ~ We practice experiential community with all who are connected by and to this land.
- ⊗ LEARNING ~ We foster a culture of inquiry, curiosity and life-long learning.
- ⊗ RESPONSIBILITY ~ We are accountable for our impacts and our place in the lineage of earth stewards.
- ⊗ INTERDEPENDENCE ~ We see our connection with all things and humbly acknowledge that the bounty and beauty offered by the earth sustains our lives.

Preface

The overarching priority for this time period is a comprehensive upgrade to the entire physical infrastructure of Ekone Ranch, to ensure that Sacred Earth Foundation may continue its good work for a long future. The resulting facilities will be appropriate to the work of SEF in size, composition, aesthetic, and function, fully code compliant and 100% permitted. Amidst this significant undertaking, SEF will continue to steward the Rock Creek watershed actively and well, and to serve our human community in the following ways.

Area 1: Land Trust

Objective: To be a model of good land stewardship in the upper Rock Creek watershed, Klickitat County, Washington.

Priorities

1. Develop a comprehensive land stewardship plan that includes soil, water, air, plants, animals, energy, forestry and cultural resources.
2. Acquire (or support another conservation buyer to acquire) 20-acre Aspen Grove parcel.
3. Continue proactive stewardship activities, including:

- a. Forest management for health and fire resilience
 - b. Diligently addressing invasive species
 - c. Removing hazardous fencing
4. Increase SEF presence in the conservation and resource management community.

Wish List

1. Allocate a dedicated percentage of the Conservation Fund to be used for stewardship of SEF lands.
2. Create a new staff position for a Conservation Manager.
3. Assess next top-priority land acquisitions, and build sufficient Conservation Fund reserves to allow us to take advantage of opportunities as they arise.
4. Cultivate a relationship with a designated successor organization to assume ownership and stewardship of SEF lands in the unlikely event that SEF ever ceases operations.
5. Pursue certification by the Land Trust Alliance.

Area 2: Community

Objective: To have a thriving and stable residential and extended community of people who are actively engaged in supporting Ekone, both on the ground and away from the Ranch.

Priorities

1. Cultivate Ekone's extended community through programs, events, work parties and other volunteer opportunities, to create an inclusive, participatory experience of stewardship and community involvement.
2. Consider and articulate carrying capacity of the land and facilities, both for residential staff and guests through each season.
3. Develop our organizational usage of Council and Non-Violent Communication, as well as living community and employee policies, to support a healthy and vibrant organizational culture.

Wish List

1. Explore options for expanding the residential community on SEF lands through developing "tiny homes" or other personal structures, through careful site selection and planning, in keeping with the overall Land Stewardship Plan.

Area 3: Summer Camp and Animals

Objective: To provide an experience for summer campers that opens their eyes, fills their hearts, nourishes their souls, invigorates their bodies, and challenges them in all these ways.

Priorities

1. Develop a long-term plan for camp leadership, with stable, sustainable job positions filled by experienced and dedicated staff.
2. Further articulate the ethical framework of camp programming, as relates to SEF's mission and within the larger socio-political context.
3. Provide staff training towards that ethical foundation, to encourage and model our values and create the "third space" that is foundational to Ekone Magic.
4. Celebrate the diversity of cultural experiences of our campers.
5. Be proactive in expanding and diversifying the demographic of Ekone's campers.

- a. Expand the scholarship program and hone the acceptance criteria. Our goal is to offer scholarships to ½ of our campers, with scholarship recipients reflecting racial and cultural diversity with little or no other opportunity to experience the nourishing rural lifestyle and third space that Ekone provides.
- b. Develop and foster staff diversity.
6. Articulate that camp is at an optimal size and does not anticipate significant future growth. Carrying capacity has been met.
7. Ensure that we're doing great evaluation of the impact of summer camp.

Wish List

1. A small, covered arena for winter horse training.
2. A horse herd manager.
3. Horse shelters and a solid hay barn at Heavenly Heights.
4. Host a trail challenge schooling event or other horse event at the ranch as a service to the local community.

Area 4: Cemetery

Objective: To cultivate White Eagle as a model green cemetery as part of the movement towards values-aligned deathcare, turning our last act into a gift for the earth.

Priorities

1. Infrastructure improvements, including shelter for gatherings, improved access, and educational signage.
2. Refine the Apprentice Stewards program to support burials and groundskeeping.
3. Grow the Endowment Care Fund to support maintenance and conservation.
4. Develop and curate the Conservation Fund to support land protection and stewardship.
5. Continue support of Death Talk Project to further the regional conversation around values-aligned deathcare.
6. Develop climate change adaptation and resilience practices.

Wish List

1. Acquire a well-trained harness horse and establish a consistent practice of horse-drawn hearse burials.
2. Support creation of a national non-profit Conservation Burial Alliance (CBA); establishing conversation, collaboration and cooperation among conservation burial interests.
3. Engage in the "edge" of this growing conversation; for example, research and dialogue on multi-cultural practices, sequential burial, sky burial, and Death with Dignity.
4. Science! Become a place to offer research opportunities in soil science, decomposition, environmental studies, etc.
5. Integrate art and space for heartfelt engagement with land and people into cemetery operations. Create a labyrinth.

Area 6: Other Programs

Objective: To create more opportunities for kids and adults to experience "Ekone Magic" while maximizing facilities and generating income, in alignment with SEF's mission

Priorities

1. Keep what we have going! Cultivate relationships for maximum retention.

2. Develop a matrix for assessment of current and potential programs, to ensure that all programs serve SEF's mission in the best possible way.
3. Create programs/workshops/experiential opportunities for people to participate in and learn from the facilities projects at hand.

Wish List

1. Facilities that hold and serve year-round programs gracefully and comfortably (but not too comfortably).

This Strategic Plan was created through a month-long participatory process including board members, staff, residents, volunteers, and advisors during November and December 2017, culminating in a three-day retreat at Ekone Ranch. This work is based on the 2012 Strategic Plan, which was SEF's first. Through the process, we were pleased to find that nearly all of the goals outlined in the 2012 plan had been met, or thoroughly investigated and determined not viable. The strategic planning process has led us directly to the significant capital improvements project we are now embarking upon.