



PACIFIC CREST TRAIL

ASSOCIATION

Pacific Crest Trail Association 2014 – 2017 Strategic Plan

*Approved August 11, 2013
Revised July 26, 2015*



Dear PCTA Members, Partners, Volunteers and Supporters,

Every time we get out on the trail it hits us. Whether we're backpacking in the high country, digging dirt to make that trail tread just right or leading a string of pack mules carrying tools and food on a precarious ridge. There's a thing about the Pacific Crest Trail that's infectious. We feel it out there.

That feeling translates to the contributions each of us make to the Pacific Crest Trail Association, whether volunteering to cut back brush, advocating with decision makers on the trail's behalf or supporting the PCTA mission through memberships or larger donations. The passion we get from the trail fuels our work. And it shows.

The PCT is the longest hiking and equestrian experience in the United States. It is the most remote of the country's 11 National Scenic Trails, passing through more wilderness than any other. It is our mission to protect, preserve and promote the trail and all it provides not only for today's users, but future generations. The PCTA Board of Directors and staff members take this responsibility seriously. And while there always are big challenges ahead, nothing can slow our efforts. Simply put, it's our job to complete this trail.

We are proud to present in this document a road map to do just that. This Strategic Plan, developed after months of hard work by the board, staff, volunteers and partners, lays out ambitious but doable objectives that, if done correctly, will improve the world-class resource that is the PCT.

The Strategic Plan clearly lays out what we hope to accomplish for the next several years. It will help us measure our success along the way. We acknowledge that some goals are lofty and may take decades to achieve. Fortunately, our passion – and especially yours – will keep us focused on the path.

We will tap into the PCT community like never before. We recognize that success will come through our dedication and leadership, our ability to collaborate, and our integrity. Our vision is to ensure that the PCT is permanently protected, well maintained, and effectively managed, and that the PCTA is widely recognized as the trail's champion and steward. Through hard work, volunteerism and philanthropy, this can be achieved.

We will strive to bring the last private parcels into public ownership, protect the trail experience and views through land management planning, and regularly maintain 100 percent of the trail. We will see that the PCT is well known nationally and internationally and that the PCTA has the resources to support these efforts.

This work lies ahead. Our efforts to accomplish it will ensure that the Pacific Crest Trail remains a significant part of our nation's heritage and that the experience, that feeling, will be there for those who will come after we're gone.

It's up to all of us to make sure that we accomplish these goals. We thank you for the important role you play in implementing this strategy for protecting, preserving and promoting the trail we all love.

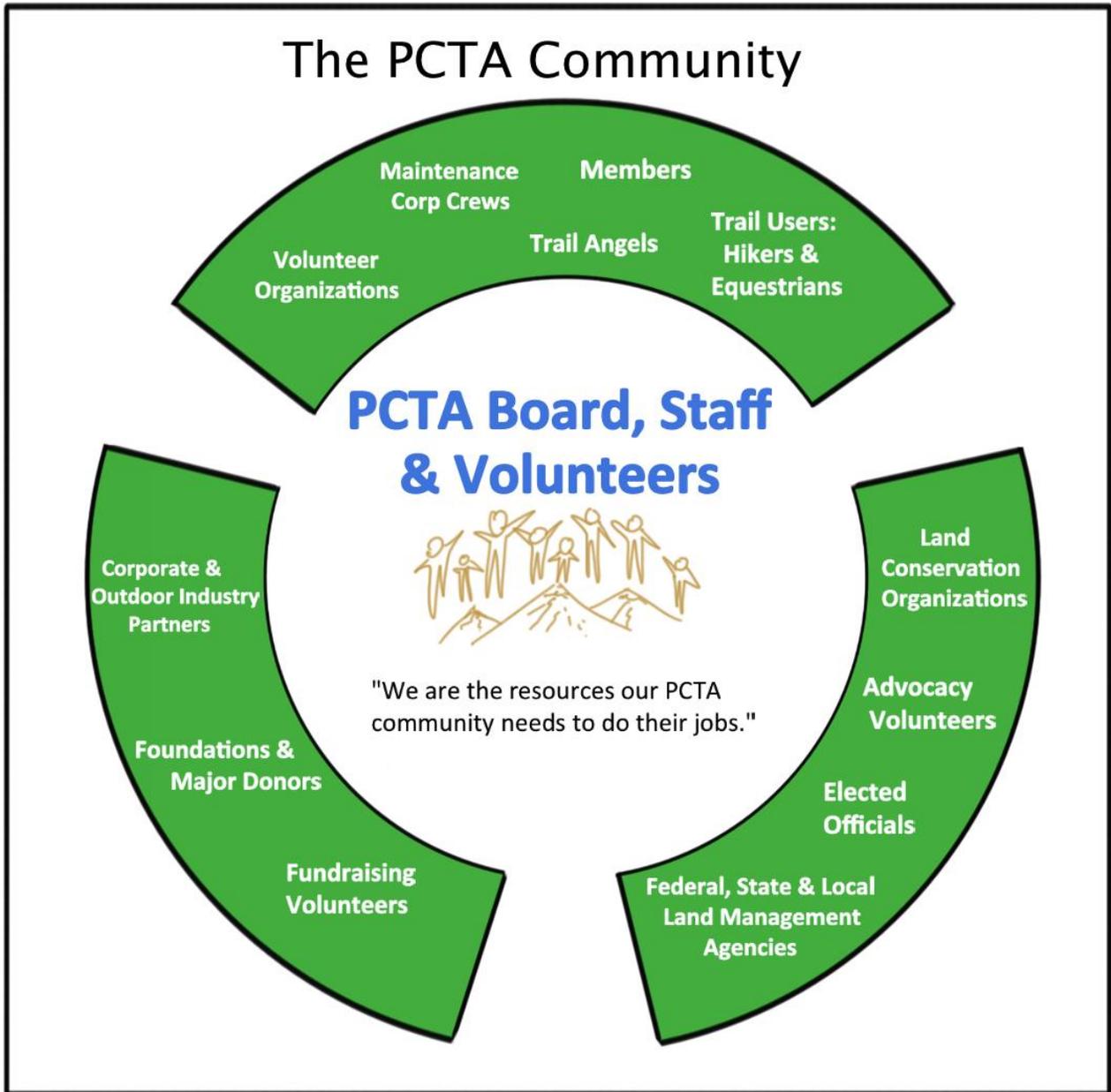


Barney Mann
Board Chair



Liz Bergeron
Executive Director and CEO

The PCTA Community



PCTA MISSION, VISION, AND VALUES

Mission Statement

The mission of the Pacific Crest Trail Association is to protect, preserve and promote the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail as a world-class experience for hikers and equestrians, and for all the values provided by wild and scenic lands.

Vision Statement

PCTA has a vision for the future of the Pacific Crest Trail and a vision for the future of our organization.

Our vision includes:

- The entire PCT corridor is permanently protected, well maintained and effectively managed. The trail is world renowned for offering a rare opportunity to travel through exceptionally scenic, remote, primitive landscapes.
- The PCTA, widely recognized as the trail's champion and steward, achieves its work through the strength of its partnerships, staff, volunteers, and the rest of the PCT community.

Values of the PCTA

Although there are many important principles that guide our work, we emphasize the following values as core to our efforts:

- **The Passion and Leadership of People** – The great work of the trail is a result of past visionaries who took a dream and made it happen. Passion for the trail experience continues to spread, inspiring the remarkable contributions from our volunteer leaders, professional staff, partners, and the rest of the PCT community.
- **Collaboration** – We work in positive and cooperative partnerships to make the most of resources available to the organization. We are committed to mutual trust and respect with our partners, and we strive to resolve differences when they may emerge with respect and civility.
- **Integrity** – We understand that our success and reputation depends on our integrity as an organization, and therefore will endeavor to use consistent, reliable decision-making to guide our efforts. We apply common sense and good judgment to our work, and recognize our essential responsibility to use contributions and resources to best support the needs of the trail.
- **Stewardship and Philanthropy** – We have a responsibility to steward the resources of the trail and the organization for the benefit of all, including future generations. The PCT belongs to all citizens. Through volunteerism and philanthropy, individuals can invest in the programs that keep the trail wild and accessible for hikers and equestrians. We recognize that we could not achieve our mission without the generosity, commitment and philanthropic support of our volunteers, members and donors who share these values.

Strategic Plan Terminology

Goals represent our expected longer term outcomes, over 30 years or more...



Priority objectives state our expected outcomes by 2017



Success measures show progress toward achieving the 2017 Priority Objectives.

Strategies articulate *HOW* the objectives will be achieved, or *WHERE* resources will be concentrated to implement the objective.

Programs - each Priority Objective will be “carved” into programs for implementation, some short term and some longer term, some active and some “on hold” until resources become available. Program information is not included in this document.



GOALS AND PRIORITY OBJECTIVES

Goal: Trail protection through land acquisition

The Pacific Crest Trail, trail corridor and viewshed are permanently protected, with the last private parcels of the trail corridor placed into public ownership through fee title acquisitions or conservation easements that ensure permanent public access and protect the trail experience.

Priority Objective 2014-2017

Significantly accelerate the pace of PCT land protection.

Success Measures

- Number of parcels and number of acres or easements protected
- Investments made, from all sources, for land acquisition or easements
- Number of dedicated PCTA land protection staff

Strategy

- Develop strategic partnerships with land trusts. Our unique role in this partnership is to advocate for the PCT and to have current knowledge of the special protections required, working with relevant partners to facilitate the eventual transfer of properties into ownership and management by Federal agencies.
- To fund this and other objectives, we will launch a private land protection initiative as we continue to lobby for Federal funding.
- Establish PCTA infrastructure needed, including dedicated land protection staff and maintaining a land inventory database.

Goal: Trail protection through land management planning

The Pacific Crest Trail, trail corridor and viewshed are protected from immediate relevant threats, including but not limited to land use threats.

Priority Objective 2014-2017

Participate proactively in all relevant agency land management and project planning processes. Engage regional and local agency staff in dialogue about how to best maintain the PCT experience, and how to develop formal trail management standards across agencies and their various planning units.

Success Measures

Rather than statistical measures, we will report our *activities* and tangible *outcomes* achieved on:

- The national policy level
- The unit planning level
- External (initiated outside primary PCT partnership) and internal (initiated inside partner agencies or organizations) proposed threats to the trail

Strategy

- Formally recommend a special management corridor as a required planning element in U.S. Forest Service forest plans. Then apply these minimum standards and guidelines within all agency planning processes.
- Use the Statement of the Trail Experience (see appendix) as the guide for all concerned to understand the ideal outcome.
- Develop strategies to address threats to the trail.

Goal: Trail maintenance and construction

The entire Pacific Crest Trail is designed, constructed and regularly maintained, to a level that meets standards agreed on between the PCTA and our agency partners.

Priority Objective 2014-2017

A fully-supported volunteer trail maintenance and construction program with fewer geographic gaps in stewardship coverage.

Success Measures

- Number of trail maintenance volunteer hours
- Staff hours to support all volunteer trail maintenance and construction program
- Miles of trail maintained annually by all programs
- The miles of trail covered by community volunteer stewardship groups and the miles of trail maintained annually
- Number of community based volunteer hours
- Staff hours to support community based volunteer maintenance and construction programs

Strategy

- Provide sufficient volunteer program staff hours to ensure adequate training, safety, supervision and a positive experience for volunteers.
- Match every mile of the trail with a regional volunteer organization or other program for maintenance and construction, using a partnership model appropriate to the geographic area.
- Scale our maintenance program to match projected available resources.

Goal: Awareness

The Pacific Crest Trail is well-known nationally and internationally among outdoor enthusiasts as a significant natural and recreational resource for hikers and equestrians.

Priority Objective 2014-2017

- A. Promote awareness of the PCT *and* membership in the PCTA within three primary targeted segments which were selected to expand our volunteer and resource base:
 - 1. PCT users, PCTA members and PCTA volunteers
 - 2. Trail towns and the larger cities nearby
 - 3. Prospective donors and likely segments to recruit new members
- B. Create broader awareness opportunities, especially in the arenas where our interests and concerns are being discussed and addressed.

Success Measures

- Total membership
- Membership renewal rate
- New members recruited
- Average monthly website visits (pcta.org)
- Comprehensive marketing plan

Strategy

- Broaden our concept of membership and the role of members well beyond dues contributions. Recruit all PCTA stakeholders (volunteers, affiliated groups, donors, trail users) to become members, even if it requires new member categories or dues structure.

Membership makes it easier to create awareness of the PCTA in a much larger context, easier to communicate with members on topics of their particular interest (opt in, for example volunteer opportunities, news of particular trail sections, equestrian news, etc.) and more effective to issue calls for action to a broader audience (advocacy letters, trail maintenance, property donations, etc.). It may also open wider opportunities for creating a sense of community using social media, and for offering stronger benefits with PCTA membership.

- Invest in marketing and communications and new member recruitment.

Goal: Fundraising

The Pacific Crest Trail Association has the financial resources needed to accomplish its mission, in the range of \$5 million in annual operating funds.

Priority Objective 2014-2017

Grow the operating budget from \$2 million to \$3 million through focused fundraising. With the current ratio between government funding and private sources, this will require a significant increase in private fundraising.

Success Measures

- Total operating budget
- Private dollars used to support the operating budget
- Private dollars raised

Strategy

- We will evolve our funding mix and development staffing to increase emphasis on high-potential individuals, foundations, the outdoor industry and other corporate donors.
- Develop fundraising plan annually with strategies to continually increase private donations in all programs.

Goal: Infrastructure and staffing

The Pacific Crest Trail Association continues to maintain an efficient and effective infrastructure and staff, to support our objectives and programs.

Priority Objective 2014-2017

Become a more effective and highly influential organization, defined to include all staff, volunteers, partners, members and donors as part of our resource pool, with sufficient staff to support these efforts.

Success Measures

- Total number of volunteers
- Number of non-trail maintenance and construction volunteer hours
- Staff satisfaction

Strategy

- Upgrade software and technology to improve staff and volunteer efficiency and make it easier for those in the PCTA Community to access and share information. Transition as many applications as possible to cloud-based software.
- Continue personal involvement with volunteers, members, donors and partners as much as it is feasible. Continue to recruit and develop skills to influence partner and volunteer groups.
- Hire new personnel to meet strategic plan initiatives.

Goal: Partnerships

The Pacific Crest Trail Association fully supports and coordinates partners and volunteers who contribute to the PCTA's work.

Priority Objective 2014-2017

Bring tighter focus to relationship development with all partner organizations and agencies who are involved in protecting, preserving and promoting the trail.

Success Measures

- Report on current and proposed strategic partnerships semi-annually

Strategy

- Define and identify our strategic partners in the outdoor industry, the land trust community, youth programs, partner organizations and agencies who bring us resources for our work. Make explicit decisions about which partners we support with which resources, and what benefits flow to partner organizations in return for their collaboration, even if soft benefits.
- Work in close cooperation with our agency partners and involve all partner organizations as full participants for achieving our mission, goals and objectives, in concert with our values and the value that the PCT brings to their own organization.

PCTA BOARD OF DIRECTORS



From left to right: Rick Thalhammer (former member), Eric Ryback, John Crawford, Chip Herzig, Scott Jacobsmeyer, Liz Bergeron, Barney Mann, Denise Gilbert, John Hoffnagle, Christy Corzine (former member)
Not pictured: Priscila Franco, Tim McGuire, Jim Newman, Don Ralphs, Tom Reveley

PCTA STAFF



Top row: Ian Nelson, Anitra Kass, Liz Bergeron, Jennifer Tripp, Angie Williamson, Teresa Fieth, Mike Dawson, Bill Hawley, Jack Haskel, Ryan Brizendine
Bottom row: Mark Larabee, Justin Kooyman, Lanz Nalagan, Megan Wargo, Dana Berthold, Leslie Sabin, Tammy Marsh, Shari Hansen

APPENDIX: STATEMENT OF THE TRAIL EXPERIENCE

The PCT, in its vision and reality, is more than just a trail. It is a trail experience. That is, the PCT provides the setting for certain rare and wonderful experiences. This document explains the history of the vision, facets of the experience, and the basic conditions required to provide it.

Background

“In the Cascade Mountains of Washington and Oregon and the Sierra Nevada of California is found some of the earth’s most sublime scenery ... For the recreationist they offer a lifetime of inspiration and adventure.” Thus begins the description of the proposed Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail (PCT) in the 1966 federal study *Trails for America*, the study that became the basis for the National Trail System Act (NTSA). Crafted alongside the Wilderness Act and other significant environmental and social legislation of the 1960s, the NTSA reflects deep American impulses, such as love of outdoor recreation, desire to protect natural landscapes, and devotion to iconic journeys.¹ *Trails for America* elaborates the vision for National Scenic Trails:

The spirit of adventure springs ever anew in the hearts of Americans, young and old. In no way is it better satisfied than in the exploration of unfamiliar terrain or in the discovery of the beauties of nature. Long-distance trails can provide unparalleled opportunities for such adventure and such satisfaction.

Importantly, the study acknowledged that such a vision could not be realized unless landscapes were protected: “The entire length of each national scenic trail, together with sufficient land area on both sides to safeguard adequately and preserve its character, should be protected in some form of public control.” This was in keeping with the original vision of the PCT. In the 1930s, Clinton Clarke envisioned a path linking the high ridges of the great Pacific mountains “traversing the best scenic areas and maintaining an absolute wilderness character.” Clarke’s vision inspired scores of young volunteers, who mapped the route in the late 1930s. The deep citizen involvement in the viability of the PCT and other eventual National Scenic Trails caught the attention of Congress, evidenced in that an opening clause of the NTSA states volunteer citizens should continue to be integral to trails’ planning, development, maintenance, and management.

Over 2,600 miles in length, the PCT is the longest continuously developed hiking and equestrian experience in the United States. The PCT is renowned as the most remote of our National Scenic Trails and passes through more miles of designated Wilderness than any other National Scenic Trail. As such, it takes a good deal of its character as a world-class hiker and equestrian resource from the opportunities it provides to experience landscapes that appear pristine, wild, and free from development by humankind. The PCT also boasts the greatest elevation changes of any of America’s National Scenic Trails, allowing it to pass through six out of seven of North America’s ecozones, including high and low desert, old-growth forest, and alpine country. The PCT Comprehensive Plan states that the Trail should be routed to “display a great variety of natural beauty and expanse of panoramic scenery from a position of height.” The Trail was intentionally routed through as many protected areas as possible, envisioned largely as a showcase of diverse and untrammeled ecosystems. From desert to glacier-flanked mountain,

¹ Elkinton, S., Caproni, L., Hoeflschweiger, J. (2008). *The National Trails System: A Grand Experiment*. Washington, D.C.: USGPO.

from meadow to rain forest, the PCT symbolizes everything there is to love—and protect—in the Western United States.

The PCT user's experience can be significantly impaired if, along the Trail in between protected areas, they encounter harshly clashing land uses. This was acknowledged early on by a federal interagency task force who interpreted the NTSA by developing these guidelines, which also appear in the PCT Comprehensive Plan:

The routes of national scenic trails should be so located as to provide for maximum outdoor recreation potential and for the conservation and enjoyment of the nationally significant scenic, historic, natural, or cultural qualities of the areas through which such trails may pass. They should avoid, insofar as practicable, established highways, motor roads, mining areas, power transmission lines, existing commercial and industrial developments, range fences and improvements, private operations, and any other activities that would be incompatible with the protection of the trail in its natural condition and its use for outdoor recreation.

Protection of the unique resource the PCT represents is particularly challenging because, along its 2,650 miles, hundreds of developments are proposed each year by an array of different land management agencies, private owners, and industries. However, the original vision was reaffirmed in the 21st century via executive order to the federal agencies: “Corridors associated with national scenic trails . . . [should be] protected to the degree necessary to ensure that the values for which each trail was established remain intact”.²

Principles

It is not enough for us to protect the Trail, if by that is meant merely the tread itself. We must protect the *Trail experience*. Trail users seek the tangible and intangible benefits of wandering amongst the exceptionally scenic, wild, natural, and historic landscapes along the crest of the Pacific ranges of the United States. The *Trail experience*, as used in this context, represents the sum of experiences available to the traditional and intended user traveling along the PCT. This sum includes opportunities to experience:

1. The Trail as an invitation into nature. An established route showcasing significant features of natural landscapes for the user's edification.
2. Wild scenery of the highest caliber and integrity. Extolled as spiritual by many classic advocates of wildlands (Bob Marshall said wildlands afforded “pure aesthetic rapture”³), these landscapes inspire awe for their immensity, timelessness, and self-organized complexity.
3. Refuge from industrialized civilization and its sights, sounds, and smells.
4. Non-mechanized travel on foot or horseback. Simpler locomotion from simpler times, a more natural pace that allows all our senses to work.
5. The freedom of an unconfined type of recreation.
6. Therapeutic effects of elevated “crest” views and naturally open landscapes, dwarfing human concerns within the perspective of a larger framework. Self-forgetting and humility, along with a sense of belonging to the natural whole.
7. Solitude and detachment from routine social pressures and distractions, providing the setting for inward reflection and self-discovery.

² Exec. Order No. 13195, 3 C.F.R. 743 (2001).

³ Marshall, R. (1930, February). The Problem of the Wilderness. *Scientific Monthly*, 30 (2), 145.

8. An extended retreat. National Scenic Trails were conceived as long-distance trails providing rare opportunities for extended backcountry trail travel, stretching for days, weeks or even months.
9. Physical challenge and personal accomplishment. Self-reliance, honing one's primitive travel and survival skills.
10. Taking part in an iconic journey. Reminiscent of pilgrimages, vision quests, or the struggles of early American explorers and pioneers to find new beginnings in the landscapes of our nation.
11. Forming meaningful bonds with fellow travelers and the rest of the trail community. Discovering beauty in how the trail affects people.
12. Cultural resources reaching into the history of the American West, including sites sacred to Natives, landmarks for prospectors, sheepherders, and pioneers, historic lodges and lookouts, and, in many areas, the engineering wonders of the treadway itself.
13. Citizen ownership of, and investment in, resources of national significance. The pride and passion of citizen stewardship of the Trail and its landscapes.
14. The satisfaction of bequeathing to future generations wild lands and their riches. Clean water and air, thriving wildlife, and healthy ecosystems—the value of their economic services.
15. Vicarious journeys and option value. Countless people who never set foot on the PCT nonetheless derive satisfaction from experiencing it through photos and accounts by others. For them, there is value simply in knowing it is possible to walk from Mexico to Canada on a continuous primitive trail.

Nature and Purposes and Desired Conditions

The National Trail System Act states that each National Trail is designated for its unique nature and purposes. Specific conditions are necessary to realize the PCT's purposes.

Favoring landscapes that appear wild and free from development by humankind, the Pacific Crest Trail's nature and purposes are to provide for unparalleled journeys on foot or horseback along the high and spectacular spine of the Pacific mountain ranges. Primitive forms of travel harken back to simpler and more rugged times. The trail's protected corridor offers a sense of solitude and closeness with nature, evoking extended retreat from civilization, even if venturing out only for a day.

To ensure the conservation of the PCT's nationally significant wild, scenic, natural, and heritage resources, and to maximize its intended recreation opportunities, the trail's entire length, together with sufficient land area on both sides to safeguard and preserve its character, should be publically owned, permanently protected, and managed as a single entity across jurisdictions. The investment of citizen stewards offers another critical thread of continuity from Mexico to Canada. The PCT experience should favor panoramic views of undisturbed landscapes in an uncrowded, non-mechanized, tranquil, and predominantly natural environment. It should feature diverse, untrammelled ecosystems and historic high country landmarks while avoiding, as much as possible, road crossings, private operations and other signs of modern development. Trail facilities such as campsites, water sources and other amenities for hiker and pack-and-saddle use should be simple. Such conditions will provide for the nature and purposes for which the PCT was established.