



Title: Director of Legal Services

Reports to: Vice President for Land Protection

GENERAL SUMMARY:

The Director of Legal Services oversees and directs all legal services, functions, programs, activities, and staff; and provides general counsel support to VLT's Leadership team. The Director of Legal services provides leadership in the provision of legal and project support services, including the closing of conservation easements and fee acquisition and disposition transactions, resolving issues involving conservation partners, advising and facilitating stewardship services, and managing internal customer service and systems. In coordination with other legal staff, the Director of Legal Services supports VLT's conservation activities, coordinates and creates systems, and facilitates effective information and work flows with federal, state, and local governmental offices, private non-profit entities, local organizations, and individuals.

ESSENTIAL JOB RESPONSIBILITIES:

- Plans, implements, oversees, monitors, and evaluates the specific programs, functions, services, and activities of the Legal Department.
- Develops and modifies programs, services, and operating systems in accordance with VLT's goals and resources, as well as varying external legal requirements/standards and community needs.
- Provides guidance and advice to the President and Leadership Team on general legal matters, including corporate governance and operational risk management. Manages VLT's relationships with outside counsel, as needed.
- Reviews contracts, leases, and other legal agreements on behalf of VLT.
- Coordinates delivery of legal and other project support services with other VLT staff. Confers regularly with staff to plan, coordinate, and evaluate activities, assign and review work, assist with difficult or unusual tasks, resolve problems, etc.
- Oversees and supervises all Legal Department staff and assigns, reviews, and evaluates their work. Participates in the interviewing, hiring, and training of new staff. Plans a variety of ongoing staff development and team building programs to enhance technical competency and team effectiveness.
- Confers regularly with the VPs of Land Protection and Land Activation to ensure strong cross-team coordination to accomplish organizational objectives.
- Performs a variety of research, planning, and development tasks related to all assigned functional areas, typically related to developing, assessing, and modifying land conservation operating systems.
- For all types of real estate transactions, in collaboration with project and stewardship staff, communicates with landowners and their attorneys to negotiate purchase and sales agreements, conservation easements, deeds, pledge agreements, and related legal documents. Provides advice on structuring conservation transactions and works with legal staff to draft, review, and revise all forms of documents related to such transactions.
- Assists staff at the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board, the Vermont Agency of Agriculture,

Food and Markets, and at other governmental entities, land trusts and conservation organizations with all the above project aspects, as requested.

- Confers regularly with Staff Attorney, the Vice President for Land Protection, Vice President for Land Activation, and other VLT staff to coordinate project closings and related implementation activities and systems, including exchanging information, investigating and resolving related problems, completing transactions, and negotiating and drafting related documentation.
- Collaborates with the Vice President for Land Protection in identifying and addressing policies associated with the legal implementation of VLT's conservation easement activities, including maintaining VLT's status as an LTA accredited land trust and compliance with LTA Standards and Practices. Interacts with VLT stewardship staff, landowners, and landowners' attorneys on matters involving the development and implementation of stewardship policy. Advises on stewardship related requests, drafts and negotiates related documentation, and provides counsel and legal services on matters related to the waiver and/or exercise of VLT pre-emptive rights (rights of first refusal and options to purchase).
- Investigates and resolves problems, explains and interprets legal issues and VLT policies, represents VLT, and deals extensively with a wide range of individuals and outside organizations implementing the varied conservation functions.
- Collaborates with Staff Attorney and other VLT staff to represent VLT's interests in litigation proceedings (or potential litigation), including development of strategy and management of outside counsel.
- Keeps abreast of relevant legal developments in the field and trains and educates staff on new developments. Develops and maintains expertise in all areas of law relevant to land conservation and stewardship, including Vermont real property and tax law, federal income and estate tax matters (including all matters relevant to VLT's tax exempt status, charitable deductions, planned giving, etc.), and general corporate counsel matters.
- Responds to internal and external inquiries and requests for guidance or assistance in land conservation related legal matters. Provides technical advice to smaller or unstaffed conservation organizations and groups.
- Organizes, leads, and/or attends various staff, work team, partner, and other meetings. Serves on committees as requested.
- Assists senior administrators with various policy, administrative, and organizational projects.
- May sign checks on behalf of VLT and make monetary disbursements at project closings.
- Performs special projects and other related duties as required, directed, or as the situation dictates.
- Regular attendance at the workplace is required.

SUPERVISORY RESPONSIBILITY:

Provides direct supervision to Staff Attorney, Legal Project Managers and Legal Project Coordinator. Supervisory responsibilities may include interviewing and selection, training and development, scheduling, counseling, and discipline, and coordinating, assigning, and evaluating work.

EDUCATION & EXPERIENCE:

Job duties require knowledge equivalent to completion of a bachelor's degree in a related field, a law degree from an ABA-accredited law school, and seven to ten years of relevant experience practicing law as a general real estate attorney with conservation easement law experience preferred. Management experience desirable. Must be able to obtain license to practice law in the State of Vermont within one year of hire. Consideration will be given to candidates demonstrating comparable qualifications acquired through a different combination of education and experience than what is outlined.

QUALIFICATIONS:

- Broad and in-depth technical knowledge and skills in the field of nonprofit and real estate law, including title searches, title insurance, deed preparation and execution, mortgages and other liens, and general real estate closing procedures. Good working knowledge of the federal tax code and municipal and administrative law.
- Flexibility in approach and perspective; ability to effectively balance and meet both pre-closing project goals and post-closing stewardship goals.
- Familiarity with the land conservation work of the Vermont Land Trust, including easements, goals, and priorities.
- Excellent planning, administrative, organizational, negotiating, problem-solving, and decision-making skills.
- Strong leadership skills: ability to effectively supervise staff and coordinate the work of various internal and external parties.
- Strong legal writing/reading, math, and general analytical skills.
- Excellent attention to detail, accuracy, quality, confidentiality, and an effective customer service focus.
- Strong written and oral communication skills.
- Ability to represent VLT and interact effectively with a wide range of organizations and individuals, both inside and outside the organization, requiring formal and informal negotiating skills.
- Excellent attention to detail, accuracy, and quality customer service internally and externally.
- Strong proficiency with Microsoft Office Suite. Ability to learn and integrate new tools.
- Ability to work occasional nights and weekends, and occasionally travel around the state. Valid driver's license and vehicle required.

SALARY AND BENEFITS

\$85,086 annual starting salary plus a generous benefits package, including a cafeteria plan equivalent to \$23,600 to cover the cost of the following benefits:

- Medical and dental care
- Flexible Savings Accounts
- 403b retirement program with employer match
- 6 weeks annually of Combined Time Off
- 8 hours of paid volunteer time

The Vermont Land Trust is an Equal Opportunity Employer. We encourage people of all backgrounds and lived experiences to apply. We recruit, employ, compensate, and promote without regard to race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, national origin, age, physical or mental disability, genetic or family medical history, marital, parental, veteran, or military status, unfavorable military discharge, or any other status protected by applicable federal, state, or local law.

ABOUT THE VERMONT LAND TRUST

Vermont is a place where the well-being of land and people is entwined. With families, communities, and partners, the Vermont Land Trust conserves land and fosters life-long connections to the farms, forests, and natural areas that define us.

The Vermont Land Trust is a nationally recognized leader in conservation. Rooted in Vermont since 1977, we have protected more than 620,000 acres of farmland, forestland, and community lands, covering over 11% of the state. Much of this land is privately owned and contributes to our abundance of local food, maple and timber products, tourism and recreation, and the vitality of our towns and villages.

OUR VALUES

Trust is in our name, and it lies at the center of who we are. Taking the time to listen and learn is in our bones. In every interaction, we strive to be reliable, communicative, and fair. Our core values, co-created with staff, continue to guide our intentions, actions, and culture.

Service: We value service through high-quality work and bring integrity to what we do. We keep our communities, landowners, partners, and donors at the forefront of our minds; and we apply this same mindset to our colleagues who rely on us to deliver results, together.

Trust: We value building and maintaining the trust of the communities and people with whom we work. This means following through on our commitments, taking time to build relationships, believing good intent, and making decisions closest to the work.

Communication: We value transparency, listening, curiosity, candor, clarity, and patience. We take time to slow down, inquire, and ensure shared understanding. Providing and receiving feedback is a natural and necessary part of our culture.

Fairness: We value the equal application of internal practices and policies, and we serve people regardless

of their status. Transparency in decision-making, fairness in recognition, and parity in pay are some ways in which fairness is embedded in our culture.

Community: We value a supportive and collegial environment based on teamwork and mutual respect. All colleagues contribute to VLT's success. We offer one another cooperation, flexibility, good humor, and support.

Learning & Growth: We value growth and improvement that challenges us and fosters learning, creativity, and flexibility. This means that we are curious about other perspectives, take time to reflect, share our learnings, and improve as we go.