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Ecological design and construction firm Biohabitats gives Nature a seat at decision table with shift in business model

BALTIMORE—Biohabitats—an ecological design and construction firm that helps communities throughout North America protect and restore nature—today became a Perpetual Purpose Trust (PPT), a business model that ensures all profits serve Biohabitats’ purpose of restoring nature, protecting and conserving biodiversity, and inspiring love for wild places.

Under this model, the Biohabitats Purpose Trust now owns the company, and it cannot be bought or sold. Every penny earned is reinvested in team members, operations and other organizations that support people and the planet.

One of the five seats on Biohabitats’ Earth Trust Stewardship Committee is allocated to nature, ensuring the environment has a direct role in the governance of the company. That seat will be held by an appointed Nature Guardian who will offer guidance to ensure the question “What would Nature do?” is always asked.

“We’re pro-profit and pro-business,” said Biohabitats President Keith Bowers, who founded the firm in 1982. “But traditional businesses are mostly accountable for creating shareholder wealth, even if it means harming the planet. We wanted a business model that is life-affirming, rather than extractive. As a Perpetual Purpose Trust, our only obligations are to our team, the planet, and delivering exceptional client service.”

Bowers signed the papers turning the company over to the Trust in a ceremony at Biohabitats’ Chesapeake/Delaware Bays Bioregion headquarters in Baltimore. The company employs 77 people and has offices serving bioregions stretching from Cascade Range to the Southern Rockies, through the Great Lakes to the Hudson River.

Last year, the outdoor clothing giant Patagonia also became a PPT to allow its profits to be directed to fighting climate change and preserving undeveloped land.

“You don’t have to be as big as Patagonia to reimagine how you do business,” said Greg Costello, senior advisor to, and former executive director of Wildlands Network, a nonprofit that has collaborated with Biohabitats for decades. “Biohabitats has shown that this kind of

thoughtful, progressive move for permanence can be made by businesses of any size that are wholly committed to their purpose.”

“Without fully functioning, natural ecosystems, our economy will continue its spiral into inequity, instability and, eventually, collapse,” Bowers said.

“We choose instead a path that is more beautiful, more ethical, more life-giving, where wild nature is returned as an unbroken, rich tapestry interwoven throughout human communities.”

ABOUT BIOHABITATS

Biohabitats is an applied ecology firm working to restore nature, conserve biodiversity, protect fresh water, address climate change and right environmental injustices. Through research, planning, design, and construction, Biohabitats works to inspire love for wild places.

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