

Wisconsin Wetlands Association

2013-2017 Strategic Plan

PREAMBLE

This strategic plan was developed from May – December, 2012. Information regarding the organization’s strengths, areas for improvement, and challenges and opportunities for wetlands were gathered through interviews and surveys of board directors, staff, members, and partners and synthesized into a report. The plan was drafted through an iterative process that consisted of a day-long facilitated session for all board directors and staff, subsequent sessions of board and staff member working groups, and email correspondence. This plan will guide staff work plans and board initiatives and provide a framework for accountability. It is also intended to be a living document – reviewed on a regular basis and adjusted as changing circumstances dictate. Amendments to the plan and new programs will be evaluated using the following criteria:

- *Is consistent with WWA mission and values;*
- *Creates a measurable impact on the landscape;*
- *Promotes stable funding;*
- *Builds a wetlands constituency;*
- *Raises public awareness;*
- *Entails staff effort proportional to outcomes; and*
- *Enhances partnerships.*

*Adopted by Board of Directors: **January 24, 2013***

MISSION

Wisconsin Wetlands Association is dedicated to the protection, restoration and enjoyment of wetlands and associated ecosystems through science-based programs, education and advocacy.

VISION

WWA envisions a state where wetlands are healthy, plentiful, and support ecological and societal needs and where citizens care for, appreciate, and interact with these natural treasures.

VALUES

WWA is a **non-partisan science-based** professional organization advocating for wetlands. WWA adheres to the following values to guide their work.

- **Achieving solutions** through thoughtful collaborations with partners and strong support of staff.
- **Inspiring others** to enjoy, appreciate, and respect wetlands throughout the state.
- **Engaging communities** to actively participate in activities that protect and preserve wetlands.
- Committing to doing **high quality work** and ensuring **accountability** through measurable goals and work products.

GOALS

Widespread Understanding of and Engagement in Wetlands

Goal 1: WWA will establish a Private Wetland Landowner Outreach Program to promote the protection, restoration and management of privately owned wetlands.

Objective 1.1: Conduct a needs assessment of private wetland landowner programs and resources by the end of FY 2013.

Objective 1.2: Produce *My Healthy Wetlands* materials for wetland landowners, completing a handbook addressing the NE Wisconsin Region by the end of FY 2014.

Objective 1.3: By the end of FY 2015 develop WWA's Private Wetland Landowner Outreach Program.

Goal 2: WWA will promote and support targeted public involvement in wetland conservation.

Objective 2.1: Build a program to encourage community engagement in local wetland policy and planning. In early 2013, develop criteria to guide where and how WWA will engage, and select 2-3 communities where WWA will pilot the approach in 2013 and 2014.

Objective 2.2: Build and strengthen constituencies to engage in federal, state, and local wetland policy debates and advocacy.

Objective 2.3: Explore and pursue opportunities to secure local funding to support WWA's work as it relates to activities in their communities. Secure at least one local contribution (financial or in-kind) for each community-based project.

Goal 3: WWA will foster direct engagement with wetlands through hands-on experiences for members, volunteers and target audiences.

Objective 3.1: Develop and apply interim criteria to use in the re-design of the 2013 Field Trip program by April 2013. Include the following elements:

- Overall Purpose of Field Trip Program (reaching out to potential members or target audiences, educating on particular wetland issues, etc.)
- Cost-effectiveness (does effort match benefit)
- Integration with other programs/priorities
- Measures of success

Objective 3.2: By the end of FY 2015 develop an engagement plan that identifies the many ways WWA will incorporate hands-on experiences in its programming.

Objective 3.3: Integrate *Wetland Gems™* materials and site visits with all aspects of WWA's Understanding and Engagement Programs (Goals 1-4).

Goal 4: WWA will use strategic communications to advance WWA's education, engagement, policy, and fundraising goals.

Objective 4.1: Develop and implement a Communications Plan by the end of FY 2014 considering the costs and benefits of various activities, staffing needs, target audiences, and desired outcomes.

Objective 4.2: Maintain, evaluate, and improve WWA member communications including the quarterly newsletter, electronic newsletter(s), and use of social media.

Objective 4.3: Re-design and modernize WWA's web site by end of FY 2014

Objective 4.4: Develop technical support/ability to communicate with members and prospects by upgrading the data base by the end of FY 2015.

Wetland Science and Practices

Goal 5: WWA will work to further advance the development and application of the best and latest wetland science, practices, and tools.

Objective 5.1: Conduct the Annual Wetlands Science Conference.

Objective 5.2: Develop and begin implementation of a Wetlands Sciences and Practices Program by 2016. This program will address the following elements:

- Fostering professional dialogue on best science and practices through symposia, workshops, on-site sharing opportunities, and other activities
- Identifying research and other wetland science needs and gaps
- Organizing and providing science and practices information to wetland professionals (clearinghouse)
- Improving the use of wetland science and best practices by those directly influencing wetland protection, restoration and management (landowners, agencies, legislators, conservation orgs., etc)
- Promoting the use and refinement of wetland assessment, restoration and management tools, methods and approaches
- Evaluating and amending the objectives of the Annual Wetlands Science Conference
- Providing wetland science support for other WWA programs and projects
- Identifying staffing, budget and infrastructural needs of Program

Policies and Programs that Promote Wetland Conservation

Goal 6: WWA will promote and support wetland friendly legislation and prevent legislation that harms wetlands.

Objective 6.1: Maintain systems for tracking wetland-related state and federal legislation.

Objective 6.2: Establish and sustain a partnership approach to legislative response efforts, including:

- developing clear criteria by the end of FY 2013 for when and how WWA will participate in legislative, advocacy and policy issues, and
- formalizing partnerships and using contract staff to more efficiently and effectively meet WWA's objectives (e.g. through shared funding) by the end of FY 2014.

Objective 6.3: Identify and pursue opportunities to change laws to improve wetland protection, restoration, and management in Wisconsin, including improving funding mechanisms.

Objective 6.4: Engage citizens/local groups in wetland-related legislative initiatives (see Objectives 2.2 and 8.2).

Objective 6.5: By the end of 2014, develop a section of the Communications Plan addressing the establishment of a long-term communications strategy to: a) educate legislators about the ecological, economic, and public safety benefits of wetlands in their districts; b) engage them in wetland conservation initiatives; and, c) leave a positive impression of WWA's efforts and approach (see Objectives 4.1 and 8.2).

Goal 7: WWA will expand and improve Federal, state and tribal government-sponsored wetland work in Wisconsin.

Objective 7.1: Identify needs and opportunities to improve government-sponsored wetland initiatives in Wisconsin. Establish criteria to evaluate opportunities and select 2-3 priorities by the end of FY 2014.

Objective 7.2: Facilitate a statewide dialogue on wetland economic valuation methods and needs in FY 2013. Help develop, complete and promote a pilot study on the value of wetland ecosystem services in the Rock River Basin by the end of FY 2014.

Objective 7.3: Develop and begin to apply criteria to guide when and how WWA engages in collaborative initiatives that promote and advance WWA's priorities (e.g. WICCI, WISC, WBCI, SWS, Wetland Team), by the end of FY 2013.

Objective 7.4: Assist local communities and agencies in the development of one Ramsar designation application per year from WWA's prioritized list.

Objective 7.5: Work with NRCS to address issues related to the long-term management of protected wetlands within the Wetlands Reserve Program using the results of the Needs Assessment (Obj. 1.1) as a guide.

Goal 8: WWA will ensure wetland laws are implemented and enforced to discourage and minimize impacts from wetland development.

Objective 8.1: Establish and maintain a process to oversee the implementation and enforcement of wetland permit programs and to build the capacity of partners to track and respond to wetland development proposals and cases by the end of FY 2014.

Objective 8.2: Develop and implement a strategy by the end of FY 2014 to efficiently and effectively help citizen advocates respond to wetland development proposals (coordinate with Goal 2).

Objective 8.3: Advocate for a science-based, watershed approach to mitigation where projects are strategically sited and there is accountability for ecological success of projects.

Goal 9: WWA will promote and support local government wetland conservation efforts.

Objective 9.1: Work with and through partners to provide basic wetland education and training to local elected officials and staff on wetland benefits, identification, and policy options.

Objective 9.2: Provide technical training and support to help communities strengthen ordinances, develop permit programs, and improve wetland protection and restoration decision-making practices. As a part of this, host 4-6 Basic Wetland Identification and Assessment workshops by the end of FY 2014.

Objective 9.3: Provide technical training and support to encourage local wetland planning and to improve consideration of wetlands, and the role of wetlands, in planning.

Objective 9.4: Help communities increase investments in wetland planning, protection, and restoration including promoting opportunities to leverage hazard mitigation plans to secure funding for wetland protection and restoration projects in FY 2013.

Healthy Organization

Goal 10: WWA Board and staff will work collaboratively to ensure the long-term financial stability of the organization.

Objective 10.1: Develop and begin implementation of a Fundraising Plan by the end of FY 2013, setting measurable goals to address the following elements:

- Increased member giving (number of donors, giving level) and retention.
- Increasing the percentage of members from outside of the Madison and Milwaukee metropolitan areas
- Cultivation of existing and potential major donors
- Grants and foundation support
- Corporate partnerships
- Establishment of an endowment fund and campaign
- Legacy giving
- Integration of fundraising goals with all aspects of WWA's communications and programs.
- Establishment and maintenance of a 6-month operating reserve

Objective 10.2: Establish an endowment fund and campaign plan by the end of FY 2013 and launch an endowment campaign to raise at least \$250,000 by the end of FY 2015.

Goal 11: WWA will develop a diverse, energetic, and active Board of Directors, with a clear leadership succession plan, to help WWA meet its organizational, financial and public outreach objectives.

Objective 11.1: Develop and begin implementation of a Board Development Committee and Plan by the end of the FY 2013 addressing the following elements:

- Board role and commitment to actively participate in the work of WWA
- Increase in the number of Board members
- Balance of necessary skills and abilities among Board members

Objective 11.2: Expand WWA's committee structure and explore other leadership opportunities to further engage Board members and to cultivate future potential leaders among WWA's membership by the end of FY 2014.

Goal 12: WWA will provide a workplace where staff are valued, supported, and provided opportunities for growth.

Objective 12.1: Restructure WWA to more efficiently meet the needs of the organization and personnel by the end of FY 2013, addressing the following elements:

- Organizational plan, programs structure, etc.
- Revisit positions, position descriptions, pay scales, progression, benefits
- Identify training needs and provide training
- Work plans – organizational, individual, development and implementation
- Identify and promote personal career goals
- Identify technical and infrastructural needs
- Identify staffing needs and a plan to address them