



OAKtober 14, 2022

Dear Chicago Wilderness Alliance Executive Council Members & Guests,

We look forward to seeing you next week at the OAKtober Executive Council Meeting:

Wednesday, OAKtober 19 from 9:30 AM – 11:30 AM

Join Zoom Meeting <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/623162292>

Meeting ID: 623 162 292

Password: 511661

One tap mobile +13126266799,,623162292#,,1#,511661# US (Chicago)

The Chicago Wilderness Alliance is an important force for conservation in the region and we look forward to working with all of our alliance members to continue our work to promote, preserve and restore the biodiversity of the region.

The agenda and support materials for the meeting is attached.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth S. Kessler, CWA Chair
McHenry County Conservation District

Mike Glester, Treasurer
Magnolia Land Partners

Nathanael Pilla, Exec. Secretary
Orbis Environmental Consulting

At Large Members of the 2022 Steering Committee

Jerry Adelman, Openlands
Jim Anderson, Citizens for Conservation
Michelle Carr, The Nature Conservancy in Illinois
Leslie Dorworth, Illinois-Indiana Seagrant
Cathy B. Geraghty, Forest Preserves of Cook County
John Rogner, IL Department of Natural Resources
Amy Rosenthal, Field Museum
Maggie Soliz, Kane-DuPage Soil & Water Conservation District, AISWCD
David Shimberg, Riverwoods Preservation Council
Victoria Wittig, Urban Waters Federal Partnership
Laura Reilly, Chicago Wilderness Coordinator



Executive Council Meeting

OAKtober 19, 2022, 9:30 AM – 11:30 AM

AGENDA

- | | | |
|------------|--|---------------------------|
| 1.0 | Introductions & Welcome
<i>Elizabeth S. Kessler, CWA Chair</i>
<i>McHenry County Conservation District</i> | 9:30 AM- 9:32 AM |
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| 2.0 | Approval of Agenda

<i>ACTION: Move to approve the Agenda for the Executive Council Meeting of OAKtober 19, 2022</i> | 9:33 AM- 9:34 AM |
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| 3.0 | Approval of Consent Agenda <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Acceptance of Treasurer's Report for July, August, September 2022 – 3rd Quarter• Approval of Executive Council Minutes for July 20, 2022• Approval of FY 2023 Budget• New Members<ul style="list-style-type: none">- TBD
<i>ACTION: Consideration of a motion to approve the Consent Agenda as presented for the Executive Council Meeting of OAKtober 19, 2022</i> | 9:34 AM- 9:35 AM |
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| 4.0 | Chicago Wilderness Alliance Message Framework Presentation
<i>Sharon Dewar, Public Communications, Inc.</i>
<i>Communications Working Group</i> | 9:35 AM- 10:00AM |
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| 5.0 | Green Vision Initiatives Update
<i>Brandon Hayes, Bold Bison Communications</i>
<i>Green Vision Goal Leads</i> | 10:00 AM- 10:30 AM |

Chicago Wilderness

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| 6.0 | JEDI Roadmap Working Group – Roadmap Update
<i>Raquel Garcia-Alvarez, Forest Preserve Dist. of Cook County</i>
<i>Dani Abboud, Brushwood Center at Ryerson Woods</i> | 10:30 AM-11:00 AM |
| 7.0 | Conservation Congress 2022 Update - November 3, 2022
<i>Cherie Fisher, US Forest Service</i> | 11:00 AM-11:15 AM |
| 8.0 | Recognition of Chicago Wilderness Alliance Members
<i>Elizabeth S. Kessler, McHenry County Conservation District</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Amy Rosenthal, Field Museum | 11:15 AM-11:18 AM |
| 9.0 | 2023 Nominations and Recruitment
<i>Elizabeth S. Kessler, McHenry County Conservation District</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Vice Chair: Michelle Carr, The Nature Conservancy:
At-Large (Term: 2023, 2024)• Secretary: Jim Anderson, Citizens for Conservation
(Term: 2023, 2024, 2025),• Nathanael Pilla, Orbis Environmental Consulting:
At-Large (2023, 2024, 2025)• At Large: Ted Haffner (Term: 2023, 2024, 2025)• At-Large: Leslie Dorworth, Illinois-Indiana Sea Grant
(Term: 2023, 2024, 2025)• At Large: Mark Bouman, Field Museum: (Term: 2023)• At-Large: Open (Term: 2023, 2024) | 11:18 AM-11:20 AM |
| 10.0 | Reports from Team & Working Group Committees | 11:20 AM-11:25 AM |
| 11.0 | Chicago Wilderness Coordinator Report
<i>Laura Reilly, CW Coordinator</i> | 11:25 AM-11:28 AM |
| 12.0 | Announcements | 11:28 AM-11:30 AM |
| 12.0 | Adjournment | 11:30 AM |

2023 Meeting Schedule:
January 18, 2023, 9:30 AM-11:30 AM
April 19, 2023, 9:30 AM-11:30 AM
July 19, 2023, 9:30 AM-11:30 AM
October 18, 2023, 9:30 AM-11:30 AM

CHICAGO WILDERNESS ALLIANCE

STATEMENT OF ASSETS, LIABILITIES and NET ASSETS
June 30, 2022

Assets

Cash and Investments	\$	529,189.96
Total Assets	\$	<u>529,189.96</u>

Liabilities

Accounts Payable	\$	-
Other Liabilities	\$	-
Total Liabilities	\$	<u>-</u>

Net Assets

Net Assets at Beginning of Period	\$	448,521.15
Change in Net Assets	\$	<u>80,668.81</u>
Total Net Assets	\$	<u>529,189.96</u>

Total Liabilities and Net Assets	\$	<u>529,189.96</u>
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STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES

For the period ending June 30, 2022

Revenue

Membership Dues	\$	21,050.00
Sponsorships	\$	3,500.00
Donations	\$	50,010.00
Grants	\$	20,000.00
Application Fees	\$	-
Registration Fees	\$	250.00
Interest Earned	\$	-
Total Revenue		<u>\$ 94,810.00</u>

Expenses

Friends of the Forest Preserves	\$	2,844.30
Blue Pay/Other Transaction Fees	\$	400.01
Payroll/Employment Expenses	\$	5,158.92
Insurance	\$	-
Operational Expenses	\$	3,719.28
Program	\$	<u>2,018.68</u>
Total Expenses		<u>\$ 14,141.19</u>

Net Surplus/(Deficit)	\$	<u>80,668.81</u>
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Chicago Wilderness Alliance Fiscal Year is January 1 to December 31

CHICAGO WILDERNESS ALLIANCE

STATEMENT OF ASSETS, LIABILITIES and NET ASSETS
July 31, 2022

Assets

Cash and Investments	\$	501,699.90
Total Assets	\$	501,699.90

Liabilities

Accounts Payable	\$	-
Other Liabilities	\$	-
Total Liabilities	\$	-

Net Assets

Net Assets at Beginning of Period	\$	529,189.96
Change in Net Assets	\$	(27,490.06)
Total Net Assets	\$	501,699.90

Total Liabilities and Net Assets	\$	501,699.90
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STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES

For the period ending July 31, 2022

Revenue

Membership Dues	\$	100.00
Sponsorships	\$	-
Donations	\$	10.00
Grants	\$	3,914.78
Application Fees	\$	-
Registration Fees	\$	-
Interest Earned	\$	-
Total Revenue		\$ 4,024.78

Expenses

Friends of the Forest Preserves	\$	120.74
Blue Pay/Other Transaction Fees	\$	215.06
Payroll/Employment Expenses	\$	5,302.23
Insurance	\$	-
Operational Expenses	\$	-
Program	\$	25,876.81
Total Expenses		\$ 31,514.84

Net Surplus/(Deficit)	\$ (27,490.06)
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Chicago Wilderness Alliance Fiscal Year is January 1 to December 31

CHICAGO WILDERNESS ALLIANCE

STATEMENT OF ASSETS, LIABILITIES and NET ASSETS
August 31, 2022

Assets

Cash and Investments	\$	490,001.74
Total Assets	\$	490,001.74

Liabilities

Accounts Payable	\$	-
Other Liabilities	\$	-
Total Liabilities	\$	-

Net Assets

Net Assets at Beginning of Period	\$	501,699.90
Change in Net Assets	\$	(11,698.16)
Total Net Assets	\$	490,001.74

Total Liabilities and Net Assets	\$	490,001.74
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STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES

For the period ending August 31, 2022

Revenue

Membership Dues	\$	50.00
Sponsorships	\$	10.00
Donations	\$	110.00
Grants	\$	-
Application Fees	\$	-
Registration Fees	\$	-
Interest Earned	\$	-
Total Revenue		\$ 170.00

Expenses

Friends of the Forest Preserves	\$	120.74
Blue Pay/Other Transaction Fees	\$	65.80
Payroll/Employment Expenses	\$	5,015.62
Insurance	\$	-
Operational Expenses	\$	-
Program	\$	6,666.00
Total Expenses		\$ 11,868.16

Net Surplus/(Deficit)	\$ (11,698.16)
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Chicago Wilderness Alliance Fiscal Year is January 1 to December 31

CHICAGO WILDERNESS ALLIANCE

STATEMENT OF ASSETS, LIABILITIES and NET ASSETS
September 30, 2022

Assets

Cash and Investments	\$	473,390.96
Total Assets	\$	<u>473,390.96</u>

Liabilities

Accounts Payable	\$	-
Other Liabilities	\$	-
Total Liabilities	\$	<u>-</u>

Net Assets

Net Assets at Beginning of Period	\$	490,001.74
Change in Net Assets	\$	<u>(16,610.78)</u>
Total Net Assets	\$	<u>473,390.96</u>

Total Liabilities and Net Assets	\$	<u>473,390.96</u>
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STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES

For the period ending September 30, 2022

Revenue

Membership Dues	\$	50.00
Sponsorships	\$	9,750.00
Donations	\$	710.00
Grants	\$	15,085.00
Application Fees	\$	-
Registration Fees	\$	2,275.00
Interest Earned	\$	-
Total Revenue		<u>\$ 27,870.00</u>

Expenses

Friends of the Forest Preserves	\$	836.10
Blue Pay/Other Transaction Fees	\$	458.51
Payroll/Employment Expenses	\$	7,881.69
Insurance	\$	-
Operational Expenses	\$	275.59
Program	\$	<u>35,028.89</u>
Total Expenses		<u>\$ 44,480.78</u>

Net Surplus/(Deficit)	\$	<u>(16,610.78)</u>
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Chicago Wilderness Alliance Fiscal Year is January 1 to December 31

Chicago Wilderness Alliance - Statement of Cash Flows FY 2022 - QTR 3
As of September 30, 2022

2022 BUDGET	YTD NET ASSETS	QTR 1 SUM	QTR 2 SUM	QTR 3 SUM													
	As of 12/31/2021	As of 3/31/2022	As of 6/30/2022	As of 9/30/2022													
						JANUARY	QTR 1 FEBRUARY	MARCH	APRIL	QTR 2 MAY	JUNE	JULY	QTR 3 AUGUST	SEPTEMBER			
REVENUE		\$ 123,546.93	\$ 232,771.93	\$ 264,836.71		\$ 61,106.93	\$ 53,105.00	\$ 9,335.00	\$ 14,150.00	\$ 265.00	\$ 94,810.00	\$ 4,024.78	\$ 170.00	\$ 27,870.00		\$ 264,836.71	YTD REVENUE
EXPENSE		\$ 41,791.83	\$ 73,395.08	\$ 161,258.86		\$ 23,575.50	\$ 12,649.61	\$ 5,566.72	\$ 10,759.40	\$ 6,702.66	\$ 14,141.19	\$ 31,514.84	\$ 11,868.16	\$ 44,480.78		\$ 161,258.86	YTD EXPENDITURES
NET SURPLUS/(DEFICIT)		\$ 81,755.10	\$ 159,376.85	\$ 103,577.85		\$ 37,531.43	\$ 40,455.39	\$ 3,768.28	\$ 3,390.60	\$ (6,437.66)	\$ 80,668.81	\$ (27,490.06)	\$ (11,698.16)	\$ (16,610.78)		\$ 103,577.85	YTD NET SURPLUS/(DEFICIT)
NET ASSETS	\$369,813.11	\$451,568.21	\$529,189.96	\$473,390.96		\$407,344.54	\$447,799.93	\$451,568.21	\$454,958.81	\$448,521.15	\$529,189.96	\$501,699.90	\$490,001.74	\$473,390.96		\$473,390.96	YTD NET ASSETS
							QTR 1			QTR 2			QTR 3				
						JANUARY	FEBRUARY	MARCH	APRIL	MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUGUST	SEPTEMBER			
2022 ACTUAL																	
Partnership Dues		\$ 65,600.00	\$ 88,250.00	\$ 88,450.00		\$ 53,300.00	\$ 3,075.00	\$ 9,225.00	\$ 1,575.00	\$ 25.00	\$ 21,050.00	\$ 100.00	\$ 50.00	\$ 50.00		\$ 88,450.00	
Sponsorship		\$ -	\$ 3,730.00	\$ 13,490.00		\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 230.00	\$ 3,500.00	\$ -	\$ 10.00	\$ 9,750.00		\$ 13,490.00	
Donation		\$ 53,250.00	\$ 103,280.00	\$ 104,110.00		\$ 3,110.00	\$ 50,030.00	\$ 110.00	\$ 10.00	\$ 10.00	\$ 50,010.00	\$ 10.00	\$ 110.00	\$ 710.00		\$ 104,110.00	
Grants		\$ 4,696.93	\$ 37,261.93	\$ 56,261.71		\$ 4,696.93	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 12,565.00	\$ -	\$ 20,000.00	\$ 3,914.78	\$ -	\$ 15,085.00		\$ 56,261.71	
Application Fees		\$ -	\$ -	\$ -		\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -		\$ -	
Registration Fees		\$ -	\$ 250.00	\$ 2,525.00		\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 250.00	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 2,275.00		\$ 2,525.00	
TOTAL REVENUE		\$ 123,546.93	\$ 232,771.93	\$ 264,836.71		\$ 61,106.93	\$ 53,105.00	\$ 9,335.00	\$ 14,150.00	\$ 265.00	\$ 94,810.00	\$ 4,024.78	\$ 170.00	\$ 27,870.00		\$ 264,836.71	
EXPENSES																	
FISCAL SPONSOR																	
Friends of the Forest Preserves		\$ 3,706.41	\$ 6,983.16	\$ 8,060.74		\$ 1,833.21	\$ 1,593.15	\$ 280.05	\$ 424.50	\$ 7.95	\$ 2,844.30	\$ 120.74	\$ 120.74	\$ 836.10		\$ 8,060.74	
TOTAL FISCAL SPONSOR		\$ 3,706.41	\$ 6,983.16	\$ 8,060.74		\$ 1,833.21	\$ 1,593.15	\$ 280.05	\$ 424.50	\$ 7.95	\$ 2,844.30	\$ 120.74	\$ 120.74	\$ 836.10		\$ 8,060.74	
INSURANCE																	
Insurance D/O		\$ -	\$ -	\$ -		\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -		\$ -	
TOTAL INSURANCE		\$ -	\$ -	\$ -		\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -		\$ -	
OFFICE																	
State of Illinois - Annual Filing		\$ -	\$ -	\$ 10.69		\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 10.69		\$ 10.69	
Blue Pay-Clover Business Solutions		\$ 943.43	\$ 1,432.72	\$ 2,172.09		\$ 849.46	\$ 44.09	\$ 49.88	\$ 53.26	\$ 36.02	\$ 400.01	\$ 215.06	\$ 65.80	\$ 458.51		\$ 2,172.09	
PayPal		\$ 2.07	\$ 3.45	\$ 3.45		\$ 0.69	\$ 0.69	\$ 0.69	\$ 0.69	\$ 0.69	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -		\$ 3.45	
Other E-Commerce		\$ -	\$ -	\$ -		\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -		\$ -	
Web Domain		\$ -	\$ 206.91	\$ 471.81		\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 206.91	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 264.90		\$ 471.81	
Formsite & Zoom		\$ -	\$ -	\$ -		\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -		\$ -	
Your Membership.com		\$ -	\$ 3,719.28	\$ 3,719.28		\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 3,719.28	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -		\$ 3,719.28	
TOTAL OFFICE		\$ 945.50	\$ 5,362.36	\$ 6,377.32		\$ 850.15	\$ 44.78	\$ 50.57	\$ 260.86	\$ 36.71	\$ 4,119.29	\$ 215.06	\$ 65.80	\$ 734.10		\$ 6,377.32	
CONTRACTOR																	
CW Coordinator		\$ 15,294.92	\$ 34,965.98	\$ 53,165.52		\$ 4,547.14	\$ 5,511.68	\$ 5,236.10	\$ 7,854.14	\$ 6,658.00	\$ 5,158.92	\$ 5,302.23	\$ 5,015.62	\$ 7,881.69		\$ 53,165.52	
TOTAL CONTRACTOR		\$ 15,294.92	\$ 34,965.98	\$ 53,165.52		\$ 4,547.14	\$ 5,511.68	\$ 5,236.10	\$ 7,854.14	\$ 6,658.00	\$ 5,158.92	\$ 5,302.23	\$ 5,015.62	\$ 7,881.69		\$ 53,165.52	
PROGRAM																	
Conservation Congress		\$ -	\$ -	\$ -		\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -		\$ -	
EERP		\$ -	\$ -	\$ -		\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -		\$ -	
Force of Nature		\$ -	\$ -	\$ -		\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -		\$ -	
Program Funding - Other		\$ -	\$ -	\$ -		\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 323.80	\$ 11,876.81	\$ 6,666.00	\$ 33,943.89		\$ 52,810.50	
IDNR Program Grant - DEI & Trees Initiative		\$ 10,500.00	\$ 14,414.78	\$ 29,499.78		\$ 7,000.00	\$ 3,500.00	\$ -	\$ 2,219.90	\$ -	\$ 1,694.88	\$ 14,000.00	\$ -	\$ 1,085.00		\$ 29,499.78	
TOTAL PROGRAM		\$ 10,500.00	\$ 14,738.58	\$ 29,499.78		\$ 7,000.00	\$ 3,500.00	\$ -	\$ 2,219.90	\$ -	\$ 2,018.68	\$ 25,876.81	\$ 6,666.00	\$ 35,028.89		\$ 82,310.28	
MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS																	
Member Appreciation		\$ -	\$ -	\$ -		\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -		\$ -	
Consultant		\$ 9,345.00	\$ 9,345.00	\$ 9,345.00		\$ 9,345.00	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -		\$ 9,345.00	
Print Collateral/Logo/Branding		\$ -	\$ -	\$ -		\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -		\$ -	
TOTAL MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS		\$ 9,345.00	\$ 9,345.00	\$ 9,345.00		\$ 9,345.00	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -		\$ 9,345.00	
VISIONING																	
Visioning		\$ 2,000.00	\$ 2,000.00	\$ 2,000.00		\$ -	\$ 2,000.00	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -		\$ 2,000.00	
TOTAL VISIONING		\$ 2,000.00	\$ 2,000.00	\$ 2,000.00		\$ -	\$ 2,000.00	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -		\$ 2,000.00	
TOTAL EXPENSES		\$ 41,791.83	\$ 73,395.08	\$ 161,258.86		\$ 23,575.50	\$ 12,649.61	\$ 5,566.72	\$ 10,759.40	\$ 6,702.66	\$ 14,141.19	\$ 31,514.84	\$ 11,868.16	\$ 44,480.78		\$ 161,258.86	
NET SURPLUS/(DEFICIT)		\$ 81,755.10	\$ 159,376.85	\$ 103,577.85		\$ 37,531.43	\$ 40,455.39	\$ 3,768.28	\$ 3,390.60	\$ (6,437.66)	\$ 80,668.81	\$ (27,490.06)	\$ (11,698.16)	\$ (16,610.78)		\$ 103,577.85	
NET ASSETS	\$369,813.11	\$451,568.21	\$529,189.96	\$473,390.96		\$407,344.54	\$447,799.93	\$451,568.21	\$454,958.81	\$448,521.15	\$529,189.96	\$501,699.90	\$490,001.74	\$473,390.96		\$473,390.96	YTD NET ASSETS



Chicago Wilderness **Executive Council Zoom Conference Call**

July 20, 2022, 9:00-11:00 AM Central

MINUTES

Present:

Ders Anderson, Openlands
Jim Anderson, Citizens for Conservation
Paul Botts, the Wetlands Initiative
Tim Brennan, Farm Foundation
Jack Brunner, Tetra Tech
Sharon Dewar, Public Communications, Inc.
Leslie Dorworth, Illinois-Indiana Sea Grant
Cherie L. Fisher, United States Forest Service
Tedd Haffner, unaffiliated
Drew Hart, United States Forest Service
Brandon Hayes, Bold Bison Communication Consulting
Amy Heldman, Friends of the Chicago River
Jim Jerozal, Jr., Nicor Gas
Charles Keppel, Davey Tree
Chris Kessler, Openlands
Elizabeth S. Kessler, McHenry County Conservation District
Andrea Kramer, Chicago Botanic Garden
John Legge, The Nature Conservancy
Thomas Meehan, Chicago Zoological Society, Brookfield Zoo
Bill Miller, Northwestern University

Jason Navota, Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning
Brenda Power, Metropolitan Water Reclamation District
Donna Prepejchal, LMV Lake Michigan Region
Laura Reilly, Chicago Wilderness
John Rogner, Illinois Department of Natural Resources
Maria Sadowski, communications consultant
Matthew Santagata, Openlands
Susie Schreiber, Waukegan Harbor Citizens Advisory Group
Jess Senger, USGS Midwest Climate Adaptation Science Center
David Shimberg, Riverwoods Preservation Council
Casey Sullivan, Argonne National Laboratory
Michelle Uting, Forest Preserves of Cook County
Pati Vitt, Lake County Forest Preserve District
Patrick Williams, Bold Bison Communication Consulting
Victoria Wittig, Urban Waters Federal Partnership
Marybeth Johnson, Lincoln Park Zoo

I. Call to Order and Welcome

Chair Elizabeth Kessler called the meeting to order at 9:30 AM central time with an introduction and welcomed the participants.

Vice Chair Jim Jerozal, Jr. (Nicor Gas) announced his departure from both the Chicago Wilderness and Nicor Gas.

II. Approval of Agenda

Jim Anderson (Citizens for Conservation) motions to accept the agenda and meeting format, seconded by Jack Brunner (TetraTech). No further discussion. All ayes. Approved.

III. Approval of Consent Agenda

- Acceptance of Treasurer's Report for April, May, June 2022 – 2nd Quarter
- Approval of Executive Council Minutes for April 20, 2022
- Approval of CW Alliance Policy and Procedures
- Amendment to FY 2022 Approved Budget
- NEW MEMBERS
 - o Oak Growth Forest Network-General

Donna Prepejchal (LMV Lake Michigan Region) motions to accept the agenda and meeting format, seconded by John Rogner (Illinois DNR). No further discussion. All ayes. Approved.

IV. Green Vision Launch & Partner Engagement Update

Sharon Dewer, Public Communications, Inc. (PCI)

Sharon Dewer updated the group on their work creating a communications strategy and messaging development. She highlighted key objectives and goals. Through PCI's analysis of Chicago Wilderness communication (i.e., website, newsletter, logo, etc.), interviews, and surveys, they created a summary of communication challenges. Additionally, a discussion on potentially updating the name "Chicago Wilderness" followed. She shared the five updates that they would recommend potentially changing within the Chicago Wilderness (CW).

V. Green Vision Collective Goals Update

Brandon Hayes, Bold Bison Communications Consulting

Patrick Williams, Bold Bison Communications Consulting

Brandon Hayes discussed their role in assisting the CW leadership in creating capacity to help the goal teams succeed and become standardized. He discussed their role in supporting the Congress team, facilitating leadership activities, and the scheduling of their work.

VI. Reports from Working Groups and Teams

1. Managing Healthy Landscapes

Pati Vitt, Lake County Forest Preserves District

Pati Vitt updated the council on their upcoming meeting on July 26, 2022, at 9:00 AM central time which will cover the initiative to ban Callery pear

2. Growing with Agriculture

Tim Brennan, Farm Foundation

Tim Brennan shared the success of the June 24, 2022, field trip in Will County, Illinois. Laura Reilly (Chicago Wilderness) followed, adding that due to the success of this field trip, that CW will continue to do similar events mentioning that the headphone option was a "game-changer".

3. Prioritizing Green Infrastructure

Jim Jerozal, Nicor Gas

Jim Jerozal, Jr. (Nicor Gas) updated the group on the successful traction that the Rights-of-Way team has made in part thanks to the work of Sara Race (ComEd). The group has been putting on CW Café presentations with the next on July 20, 2022.

4. Conserving Land for Biodiversity

No updates.

5. Increasing Equitable Access to Nature

Laura Reilly (Chicago Wilderness) recapped their last meeting which had Gary Community Partnership representative there who shared on the work they are doing. The next meeting will be September 23, 2022.

6. Taking Climate Action

Ted Haffner, unaffiliated

Ted Haffner updated the group on their upcoming meeting on July 25, 2022. They are also going to present at a CW Café on July 27, 2022. They also have met with the Midwest Climate Collaborative.

7. Protecting Healthy Water

Matthew Santagata, Openlands

Matthew Santagata informed the group that they met with PCI going over goal participation. They have also met with the US EPA Water staff who were involved with their Healthy Water's Plan and CMAP staff who were involved with the Green Infrastructure Vision.

VII. FY 2023 Draft Budget Discussion

Jim Jerozal, Jr., Nicor Gas

Jim Jerozal, Jr. filled in for Mike Glester (Chicago Wilderness Treasurer) and presented the draft budget for the 2023 fiscal year. Take away is that even with grant funding, we will be pulling from our reserves at approximately \$89,000 to meet the proposed budgetary needs.

Jim Anderson (Citizens for Conservation) motions to accept the 2023 fiscal year draft budget, seconded by Jack Brunner (TetraTech). No further discussion. All ayes. Approved.

VIII. Recognitions

Chair Elizabeth Kessler recognized four outstanding individuals who are retiring from their professional careers have served CW over the years including Lynda Lancaster (National Park Service), Jim Jerozal (Nicor Gas), Lynne Westphal (US Forest Service), and Bob McGuire (Openlands).

IX. 2023 Nominations and Recruitments

Chair Elizabeth Kessler discussed the five potential openings for the Steering Committee which includes:

- Vice-chair: Jim Jerozal, Jr.
- Executive Secretary: Nathanael Pilla
- At Large (9): Michelle Carr
- At Large (10): Leslie Dorworth
- At Large (11): Open

For the Vice-Chair position, the SC will need to move someone up into that position.

X. 2022 Conservation Congress

Cherie Fisher, US Forest Service

Cherie Fisher reminded the group that Congress will take place on November 3, 2022 (Thursday) and will be a half day event.

XI. JEDI Roadmap Working Group - Roadmap Update.

Raquel Garcia-Alvarez, Forest Preserve District of Cook County

Raquel Garcia-Alvarez gave a brief update on what the JEDI Working Group has been doing. CW is in Phase 3 of the Cream City Conservation JEDI project. She shared the surveys that showed that Awareness/Advocacy and Accessibility is important in the CW. The next steps are to finalize the goals and create sub-working groups to carry out the work.

XII. Government Relation Community

Michelle Uting, Forest Preserves of Cook County

Michelle Uting mentioned that they have been meeting with Ellicia Sanchez (The Nature Conservancy). They recently did a “Drone Café” as part of the CW Café Series.

XIII. Coordinator’s Report

Laura Reilly (Chicago Wilderness)

- CW Café Series has been a success and did a shout out to CW’s Career Center.

XIV. Announcements

Elizabeth Kessler (McHenry County Conservation District)

- SC has been meeting monthly and plan to have the September meeting in person in Indiana. She thanked Victoria Wittig (Urban Waters Federal Partnership) for hosting.
- The Illinois Environmental Council is hosting at 3:00 PM central time a forum relative to river access.

Victoria Wittig added that the next Urban Waters Federal Partnership meeting is October 20th via Zoom from 9:30-11:30 AM central time.

XV. Adjournment

Elizabeth Kessler (McHenry County Conservation District) thanked everyone for their time and adjourned the meeting at 11:20am central time.

Next Meeting: October 19, 2022, 9:30 AM-11:30 AM

Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/623162292>

Meeting ID: 623 162 292

Password: 511661

One tap mobile

+13126266799,,623162292#,,1#,511661# US
(Chicago)



Chicago Wilderness Alliance Marketing & Communications Strategy

*Developed by Public Communications Inc.
for Chicago Wilderness Alliance*

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Overview: Communications Plan Goals & Objectives



Chicago Wilderness, a regional alliance that leads strategy to preserve and improve natural areas and access to nature partnered with Public Communications Inc (PCI) to support the following:

- **Develop a communications strategy and plan** aimed at **increasing engagement**, building trust with Chicago Wilderness Alliance partners and an **overall broader awareness** of the Chicago Wilderness Alliance and value of the network, and increase awareness and assist in **launching the bold new Green Vision Initiatives**. The communications strategy should promote the Chicago Wilderness HUB, a repository of curated spatial data, reports and static maps, and include strategies to showcase model projects in the region that demonstrate progress towards Chicago Wilderness' Green Vision Initiatives.
- Effectiveness of these efforts will be measured:
 - More partners participating in events/activities
 - More individuals aware of CWA and positive perception of CWA
 - Increased partnership and engagement defined by geographic location and racial diversity

Brand Communications Review & Analysis



PCI analyzed Chicago Wilderness Alliance's current marketing and communications materials and digital channels evaluating them for clarity, and persuasiveness in motivating desired actions. The intended goal of the marketing and communications efforts, as stated by the organization, is to inspire positive perception of the organization and motivate more engagement of current partners while attracting new partners from diverse backgrounds and experiences.

In-depth interviews with leaders of the Green Vision Initiatives goal teams provided insights about each goal, their personal experiences as a leader within CWA and also challenges they face with engagement within their goal working groups. These insights helped inform messaging strategy for each goal as well as more deeply understand some challenges related to partner engagement that an effective plan will help mitigate. Additionally, a survey was developed and circulated among partners to provide insights into key motivating factors of being a partner and obstacles to engagement.

Below is an outline of the internal research conducted. Analysis and our corresponding recommendations are detailed further in the summary of challenges, with key recommendations incorporated into this plan.

In-Depth, Qualitative Interviews

13 interviews with Green Vision Initiatives goal leaders.

Partnership Survey

138 participants (nearly all from Illinois with only 7 representing Indiana, Wisconsin, and Michigan). **62%** of respondents **do not** currently participate on a team or working group. The lack of strong representation outside of Illinois is aligned with the lack of partners and partner engagement outside of the region.

Brand Communications Review & Analysis



Print / Digital Communications Analysis

- Annual Reports
- Biodiversity Recovery Plan
- CW Climate Action Plan for Nature
- Chicago Wilderness Magazine Archives
- Newsletters
- Culture and Inclusion Survey Results

Website Analysis

Seven topline navigation tabs and 17 primary sub tabs were analyzed for readability, message effectiveness, design and graphics. Sub tab pages include dozens of link-offs, including to the Green Vision Initiatives slide deck (labeled July 2021), individual Green Vision Initiatives pages and the Chicago Wilderness Hub. All information related to Green Vision Initiatives that could be found online was thoroughly reviewed and analyzed. Several other documents, presentations, webinars, and other resources linked were reviewed in part.

Social Media Channels Analysis

Social media channels being used by Chicago Wilderness Alliance include YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and LinkedIn. These channels were analyzed for number of subscribers, frequency of content, types of content, brand presentation and consistency, tone, perceived target audience of the content and engagement rate. Engagement rates were determined by the total number of interactions (reactions, likes, comments, shares, etc.) per post and per follower on all posts published from July '21 to July '22.

Summary of Key Insights from Partners: Motivations vs Obstacles to Participation

Key reported motivations for partnering with the Alliance as well as top-reported barriers to participation in working groups/committees gleaned during discovery include:

Key Motivating Factors: Primary motivations include contributing meaningfully to conservation, networking and training and professional development. Partners also like having access to programs and events that personally interest them.

Key Obstacles to Engagement: Some partners express perceptions that are holding them back from engagement. The primary reason reported is it requires too much time.

Others reported not feeling welcome, or not being personally invited to get involved. While some members admit they simply aren't interested in that level of commitment with the organization, a noteworthy number of those who surveyed shared that they don't know what the roles on working groups or committees are and if they have the right skills.

Summary of Limitations & Communications Challenges



On the following pages are a summary of key challenges and limitations compromising Chicago Wilderness Alliance's success communicating and marketing the organization and engaging partners. This assessment was gleaned from PCI's review and analysis of the Alliance's current marketing and communications efforts compared to best practices for marketing and communications, and insights provided by partners regarding motivating factors and obstacles to participation. We provide recommendations to solve for these challenges in the Objectives and Strategies section of this plan.

Chicago Wilderness Alliance is unique. With only one full-time staff coordinator, the organization is managed almost exclusively by volunteers with varying engagement levels, objectives and perspectives. The operating model presents unique challenges.

Organizational Strategic Plan

Branding and communications strategies typically go hand-in-hand with a five-year strategic business plan and are developed to support the strategies and goals outlined in the organizational plan. While it was our team's initial assumption that the Green Vision Initiatives, and the seven measurable goals within it, serve as Chicago Wilderness Alliance's strategic business plan, we were informed that is not the case. The Green Vision Initiatives is an organizing principle, but not an organizational strategic plan. This complicates development of a brand communications strategy because it creates a lack of clarity around organizational priorities and how much weight the Green Vision Initiative should have in the larger communications matrix.

Resource Limitations

One of the key limiting factors facing Chicago Wilderness Alliance from a marketing and communications perspective is resource allocation for marketing and communications. Without appropriate allocation of talent, tools, training and resources dedicated to marketing and communications efforts that will advance Chicago Wilderness Alliance toward its goals, the organization will likely struggle to effectively implement recommendations set forth in this plan.

Summary of Limitations & Communications Challenges



(Continued)

Limited, Lackluster Marketing and Communications Platform

Chicago Wilderness Alliance is using a self-limiting marketing membership platform called Your Membership, subscribed at the lowest entry point for platform engagement. This platform is used for the organization's website, newsletter development and distribution, Customer Relationship Management (CRM), and event registration.

While there can be an advantage to using one system for everything, there are many gaps and limitations of using this platform for the website and newsletters that are limiting the effectiveness of marketing and opportunities for prospect conversion and could be limiting partner engagement. We outline several challenges of the website and newsletters in this analysis and some of those limitations are due to the current platform being used.

One of the central features of the Your Membership website feature is that it is **designed primarily to monetize content that is exclusive and hidden behind a paywall**. Principally, that conflicts with Chicago Wilderness Alliance's objectives of being more inclusive, welcoming to younger and more diverse partners. Using a platform whose core features limit access to information is working against the Alliance's goals and sends a conflicting message to new prospects.

The functionality of the "members only" interface is reportedly clunky and challenging for partners to gain access into and use. They could, in theory, manage their own newsletter subscriptions in the My Preferences section of their profile, but that is only if they can and do regularly use the Member Portal. Reportedly, few people do, and this portal has essentially been abandoned by the Alliance with teams shifting to Google Drive to share information and collaborate. The use of multiple technologies for resource sharing and collaboration can be confusing for partners who may not know where to find the information they need. This also creates a backend challenge for the the Alliance's administrator who must ensure all information is duplicated and updated across all platforms.

Related to the use of Your Membership for newsletter design and distribution. Unfortunately, there are extremely limited opportunities for brand customization. It only offers three very basic drag and drop design templates, a few dozen fonts to choose from and the ability to choose the background page color, canvas background color and text color – opportunities to make newsletters visually appealing are slim.

Summary of Limitations & Communications Challenges



(Continued)

Critically, the website and newsletters are not mobile-friendly. There are no mobile optimization options offered by Your Membership (at least the subscription level that the Alliance uses), even though an estimated 59.4% of global web traffic is a result of people using mobile devices as their primary tool for accessing information. Additionally, 85% of people regularly use mobile phones to check their email so it is crucial to have content optimized for the majority of users.

Newsletter subscriptions are widely regarded as an entry point for brand engagement for non-profits, yet currently non-members can't subscribe to receive newsletters, nor does the platform provide an opportunity for users to select the kinds of information they wish to receive specific to their interests, due to the technical issues of partners accessing their profile. A vital component of effective marketing is personalization.

To make newsletter subscriptions open to non-members who can self-select to sign up (rather than having to contact an administrator to sign them up – a extra step many people won't take), Chicago Wilderness Alliance could consider using a different tool, like MailChimp or HubSpot or other major email marketing platforms, for newsletter distribution. Unfortunately, the Your Membership website does not integrate with any of these major systems.

Chicago Wilderness Alliance is working across a vast network, with many work streams, goals and strategies. If someone is most interested in learning more, or engaging more, in a specific type of work stream such as agriculture, environmental justice or rights of way and green infrastructure, there isn't an opportunity to subscribe to specific types of news content. It's all or nothing, or an administrator decides what kind of content they think each member should receive. This is an archaic gatekeeper model that is not current best practice where audiences expect personalization.

To fully realize the potential of Chicago Wilderness Alliance to more deeply engage partners and attract new partners, as outlined in this plan, the organization may need to invest in more robust and effective marketing tools.

While Your Membership may be an acceptable, and even desired tool for Customer Relationship Management and event registration and management, it may not be the most effective platform to use for the organization's website and newsletter distribution.

Summary of Limitations & Communications Challenges



(Continued)

This plan outlines recommendations for refinements and improvements. Some of the recommendations cannot be fully implemented using this limited tool in the current capacity.

Lack of Consistent Messaging

Inconsistencies are abundant throughout communications about the brand. The most obvious is the lack of consistency with the organization's name, while officially named Chicago Wilderness Alliance, logo lacked "Alliance" and there are numerous inconsistencies in the use of Alliance in the name. In addition, information related to the Green Vision Initiatives goals are inconsistent. Titles vary, numbers associated with them vary depending upon which document a user visiting the website or other communications materials may find. The website links to all of them, current or not current.

The use of the word member and partner is inconsistent. There doesn't appear to be a difference between becoming a partner or member, so the inconsistent word usage adds confusion.

Website Communications Lack Clarity/Call to Action

An organization's website should serve as a primary conversion channel. Currently, the Chicago Wilderness Alliance website is not welcoming to new, uninitiated audiences. The target audience is murky, and it offers no clear user journey. It is not written or designed to convert prospective new partners. The website seems to serve an archive of information for all things ever created in no strategic order. Visitors to the site may not know where to focus or get the information they are seeking. The multitude of links to assets, materials, slide decks, webinars, meeting notes and other websites forces users to hunt for information that may not yield satisfactory returns.

The information and links provided throughout the website vary widely between technical and specialized reports to basic, general information for lay audiences. Overall, information is not communicated in a way that solicits engagement or desired actions. This murkiness compromises brand credibility as well as engagement and conversion. Descriptions about the Alliance are vague without specific examples or clear calls to action. Overall, Chicago Wilderness Alliance **presents itself as an information source rather than action-oriented organization.**

Summary of Limitations & Communications Challenges



(Continued)

How can people participate in the most meaningful way?

The Alliance has goals for increased participation, but there is lack of clarity about what kinds of participation is most meaningful and prioritized. There are links for people to explore nature with their families, garden in their yard, go outdoors, or join a committee. But there aren't the basic information about what a deeper involvement in Chicago Wilderness Alliance working groups looks like and what the commitment entails.

- What skills and expertise are needed/desired/being sought?
- What does membership include?
- What is the value of membership?
- What is the time commitment to participate in working groups and teams? And "what's in it for me?"
- What are the roles/responsibilities involved with being on a working group, or team, or committee?
 - Furthermore, what is the difference between these three organization types (committee, working group or team?) and the kind of work they do, current projects and priorities?
- What opportunities are currently available?

It's unclear why there is a Green Vision Initiatives page and a separate CW Hub. Which one should audiences go to for information? On the Green Vision Initiatives webpage, it suggests all are welcome and encouraged to participate, but provides no information about what that means. Instead, an email address is provided, encouraging people to email to learn how to participate. **This creates an obstacle to participation**, making people work to get basic information serves as a deterrent to involvement.

On the **Get Involved** page there is a subhead titled **Join a Committee**. It encourages you to find an area of work that interests you, but **the link is broken**, thereby ending a prospect's conversion.

Of the surveyed partner participants, a quarter of them suggested they are **unclear what participation entails**; therefore, they don't participate or engage in working groups or committees. Others are unsure **if they have valuable skills to offer**.

Summary of Limitations & Communications Challenges



(Continued)

Constraints of the Name: Chicago Wilderness

The name Chicago Wilderness can be self-limiting and make increasing partnerships and engagement across Wisconsin, Indiana and Michigan more challenging. Incorporating Alliance more broadly and consistently to the organization name contributes a bit to better understanding, but with Chicago so boldly emphasized within the name of the organization, the Alliance will need to work harder and more strategically to emphasize the brand extends across the four-state region.

Important Note: PCI was not engaged to conduct a rebranding for the organization. While we provide brand creative refinement recommendations and new visual assets to help mitigate challenges that may be inherent in the organization's name, extensive research and rebranding work was not within the scope of work. This may be something worth exploring in the future if – following effective implementation of marketing refinements recommended in this plan – engagement of new partners outside of Illinois continues to be a struggle.

Illinois Bias Infused Throughout Communications

While likely unintended, many of the communications have an Illinois bias, likely resulting from a majority of partners being based in Illinois and focused on conservation efforts in Illinois. Our team found numerous references to numbers or data and other info shared via the website attributed to the Chicago Wilderness Alliance region, but actually only accounting for Illinois (without including clarifying statements that it was only Illinois represented and not full accounting for the entire Chicago Wilderness region).

Text Heavy/Lacks Passion or Visual Appeal

The website and newsletters are text-heavy and lack visual appeal. This is in part because of the platforms being used, and the lack of talent resource investment in design and visual communications and marketing. Modern audiences have shorter attention spans, and visual communications is king. Successful brands communicate their mission, values, and calls to action concisely and with engaging visuals and language that strike an emotional chord that appeals to their intended audience.

Summary of Limitations & Communications Challenges



(Continued)

The information presented by Chicago Wilderness Alliance is serious and professional, but lacks excitement, passion or urgency. This is of special concern as the Chicago Wilderness Alliance aims to deepen engagement, extend its reach and influence, and attract more people to its brand.

Summary of Perception Challenges



Time Intensity / Employer Allowances

The leading reason (35%) reported by partners who participated in the survey and self-reported they do not currently participate in a working group or committee, is that it is **too time intensive**.

Several partners suggest their **employer does not allow them to participate** with Chicago Wilderness Alliance. It is unclear if this is only for CWA work that would take place during the typical workday (while on the clock for their current employer), or if their employer restricts all participation any time as a conflict of interest of some kind. This requires more research. Increasing inclusivity of the organization includes creating a multitude of engagement opportunities that fit different schedules and ways to engage, remotely, in person, etc.

Strategically developing different kinds of partner engagement opportunities is outside of the scope of this marketing plan, but if there are currently a multitude of ways to participate, accommodating various levels of time commitment and availability, we recommend increasing communications that emphasize this to mitigate the perception that engaging with Chicago Wilderness Alliance is too time intensive.

Doesn't Feel Welcoming

Some partners (20%) who took the survey self-reported that they do not currently participate in a working group or committee because they do not feel welcome and/or have never been invited.

A few people suggested in written comments that they started engaging in a committee or working group but felt unwelcome. They felt their input wasn't sought or desired. Another former group participant suggested they were routinely left off emails that circulated among the group. Whether or not this was intentional, the partner found it to be hurtful and demotivating, so they stopped participating.

Another partner suggested they emailed a group leader to ask how they can get involved and never received any response. Yet another said they thought they were on a committee, but just stopped receiving any information.

Summary of Perception Challenges



(Continued)

We also heard from several individuals who expressed personal feelings and perceptions that some long-time partners of the Chicago Wilderness Alliance are holding on too tightly to control and direction and aren't making space for newer partners and younger generations to provide input, or their input is routinely dismissed or not incorporated. The perception for some may be that Chicago Wilderness Alliance says it wants diverse voices and perspectives but doesn't actually welcome them.

Lack of Urgency/Inaction

Additional perceptions that contribute to lack of engagement include **perceived inaction**. Several partners suggested in the survey or interviews that there is a lot of talking about problems, but few actions and outcomes. Some who are actively participating in working groups or committees have suggested that each time the group meets they seem to rehash the same conversation as the last meeting, with no action steps resulting.

Individuals who are inclined to act may become frustrated or join another organization they feel is more action oriented.

Summary of Membership Recruitment & Engagement Challenges



Lack of Partner Demographic Benchmarking Data

An intent of this plan is to increase partnership engagement and help attract and diversify partnerships. Currently, Chicago Wilderness Alliance barely tracks demographic information of its partners. While individuals who sign up for programs and events are being tracked in the CRM, most partner profiles have little demographic data. To measure the success and effectiveness of this plan, the organization needs a good baseline of data and a process to measure incremental change over time.

The organization seems to lack the following:

- **Partner prospecting strategy**
- **Partner recruitment strategy**
- **Partner orientation strategy**
- **Partner engagement strategy**

There also does not seem to be staffing resources dedicated to partner prospecting, recruitment and engagement. Developing and activating these will be foundational to strategically growing and diversifying partnerships and ensuring partner satisfaction.

Goals of the Plan

Here are the goals this brand communications plan aims to achieve:



Objectives & Strategies



This plan outlines objectives and strategies aimed at mitigating some of the communications and marketing gaps, challenges and limitations that could hold it back, and identifies strategies to maximize positive attributes that motivate engagement and minimize perceived obstacles to engagement.

Objective 1: Define Core Target Audience(s) for Chicago Wilderness Alliance

Chicago Wilderness Alliance's brand communications are jumbled with no clear target audience. In discussions with volunteer leaders, there seems to be a lack of alignment among many about who the organization should be engaging and marketing to. The most fundamental thing the Alliance must do is refine its audience segmentation strategy.

Brands can't be everything to everyone, or they will fail to reach and connect with anyone. Effective brands clearly identify their core audience, identify key attributes that most appeal and attract that audience, and tailor their overall marketing and messaging to connect and engage that core audience.

Secondary and niche audiences are also identified for strategic and specific marketing outreach for products, programs or initiatives that are designed for them. Each sub-audience will require its own marketing strategy and assets tailored to them.

It is especially important for associations to recognize that while **their members/partners** and **member/partner organizations** serve and target a particular audience – that is not necessarily the core target audience for the Alliance. **Chicago Wilderness Alliance should not confuse its core audience as being the same as the core audience(s) of its partners.**

Objectives & Strategies

Objective 1 (Continued)



Strategy 1: Review available partner demographics, conduct brand analysis and seek partner input to inform recommendations

Based on our understanding of those who are primarily and most engaged with Chicago Wilderness Alliance and partner research and analysis we conducted, we strongly recommend that Chicago Wilderness Alliance embrace **Conservation Practitioner** as its core audience.

To reach and engage more members at a deeper level, we strongly recommend leaning into conservation practitioners as the primary target audience for communications.

This does not mean that Chicago Wilderness Alliance will not reach and engage secondary audiences for specific programs and efforts. We outline those in Strategy 2.

While we anticipate that there may be some vocal minority leaders within Chicago Wilderness Alliance who disagree with this recommendation, of the partners surveyed who participated, 78% suggest conservation practitioners are, or should be, the priority audience for Chicago Wilderness Alliance.

Our definition of conservation practitioner:

Someone who lives within the Chicago Wilderness Alliance region and works, volunteers or advocates for conservation-related causes, reforms, programs or initiatives. Ideal targets have training/experience in fields such as sustainability, corporate social responsibility, conservation ecology, plant or animal expertise, water management, green infrastructure or architecture, land and resource management, environmental health and justice, environmental education, environmental law, or work for a conservation organization and bring skills and experience in government relations, marketing, design, HR, community relations, etc.

Objectives & Strategies



Objective 1 (Continued)

Strategy 2: Identify secondary audiences

Chicago Wilderness Alliance has several initiatives that will target niche audiences. Some of these audiences are identified below and there may be others still to be identified as the Green Vision Initiative goal groups develop their strategies and plans:

Government Officials – Government officials require discrete types of communications. Reaching and appropriately engaging with government officials on behalf of Chicago Wilderness Alliance requires its own communication strategy and plan, and targeted materials. This is likely a core audience for the Government Relations Committee and is a secondary audience for the overall organization.

Educators/Educational Institutions – While environmental educators are a core audience of Chicago Wilderness Alliance under the category of conservation practitioner, educators and institutions with less engagement or expertise in conservation may be targeted for specific programs and initiatives developed or offered through the Alliance.

Agricultural Industry/Farmers – A core audience for Goal 2 Green Vision Initiative working group, but secondary audience overall for Chicago Wilderness Alliance brand.

Developers/Property Managers and Associations – These may be an ideal target audience as a partner, or to receive information or programming offered as part of Chicago Wilderness Alliance working groups or teams under the Green Vision Initiatives.

Objectives & Strategies



Objective 1 (Continued)

Strategy 2: Identify secondary audiences (Continued)

Corporations – Corporate social responsibility and environmental experts within corporations fall under the core target category of Conservation Practitioner. There may also be opportunities to target uninitiated business leaders in the region related to specific initiatives of the Alliance or its Green Vision Initiatives goal groups, such as the Prioritizing Green Infrastructure group.

Public Health Specialists – There may be programs and opportunities that arise as part of initiatives under the Green Vision Initiatives that target public health specialists.

Media—Media can be both an audience and a channel for reaching an audience. There may be situations and opportunities where a persuasive editorial by an influential news outlet will help the Alliance achieve a key objective, or when securing a placement may deepen the satisfaction or engagement of partner institutions or other key objectives identified as part of a marketing strategy.

Public – There may be specific offerings or programs or materials that result from the work of the collective efforts of Chicago Wilderness Alliance working groups and teams that are intended to engage the public such as homeowners or advocacy and action alerts related to specific products or communities. Communications strategies and tactics should be developed specifically, as relevant to reach targeted audiences with clear purpose and call to action.

Objectives & Strategies

Objective 2: Refresh Visual Identity

Strategy 1: Officially incorporate “Alliance” into all references for Chicago Wilderness Alliance

Incorporating the word Alliance into the name supports an increased awareness and understanding that the organization is not a stand-alone non-profit entity, but rather an association and network of people and organizations working collaboratively toward a common goal. All communications channels, collateral and references to Chicago Wilderness should be updated to include Alliance in the name.

Strategy 2: Develop a new visual identity

To increase clarity and consistency about who Chicago Wilderness Alliance is and where you work, we recommend refreshing the organization’s visual identity and using this new identity to emphasize both **Alliance** in its name and a visual representation of the **four-state region** where you operate. Incorporating the region into the logo serves as a constant reminder of the operating area for the Alliance.

Transform visual identity from this:

Chicago
Wilderness

To this:



Objectives & Strategies

Objective 2 (Continued)



Strategy 3: Define the essence of Chicago Wilderness Alliance's brand personality

While PCI did not take Chicago Wilderness Alliance through an entire branding exercise, identifying the core audience and refining how the organization communicates with this audience is critical to the marketing strategy. Successful brands are personified – living and breathing that persona in all forms of communications.

We recommend the following brand attributes be infused into communications to both highlight the widely recognized strengths of the Alliance today and the aspirational attributes of who the organization is becoming:

- Collaborative
- Purpose-Driven
- Visionary
- Active
- Committed
- Professional
- Welcoming
- Inspiring

These traits should inform the messaging, tone and personality of the brand communications in all forms.

Objectives & Strategies

Objective 2 (Continued)



Strategy 6: Develop a visual identity sub-brand for the Green Vision Initiatives

The Green Vision initiatives is a distinct “product” of Chicago Wilderness Alliance, and each Goal Team will seek to engage niche audiences to engage and advance the strategies and goals. Each niche audience will require discrete marketing materials, messaging and communications strategies. Yet every goal, and the Green Vision Initiatives, should be unified under the parent brand. For future consideration: Develop a tagline to be used with the Green Vision Initiatives logo centered around biodiversity.

PCI developed:

- Provide a Green Green Vision Initiatives suite of logos and graphics saved in multiple formats.
- Create Green Vision Initiatives brand guidelines.

Here are creative concepts for the Green Vision Initiatives sub brand:



Objectives & Strategies

Objective 2 (Continued)

Strategy 6: (Continued)



Objectives & Strategies

Objective 2 (Continued)



Strategy 7: Create a New Brand Book for Chicago Wilderness Alliance

Brand Guidelines were last updated prior to 2016 and do not reflect the current incarnation of the word Alliance in the organization's name. Develop brand guidelines for Chicago Wilderness Alliance and its Green Vision Initiatives sub brand; identify other sub-brands or graphic representation that should be updated to align with the brand guidelines; update channels and marketing assets accordingly and share the guidelines with committee chairs and working group leaders for use in any materials that reference, or on behalf of Chicago Wilderness Alliance.

- Provide a Chicago Wilderness Alliance logo suite of logos saved in multiple formats.

Strategy 8: Develop Brand Templates for Chicago Wilderness Alliance

Tactic 1: Audit all branded content that is regularly being used.

Tactic 2: Develop a prioritization list of new branded assets needed, such as event graphics updates (like CW Cafés), presentation deck templates, reports, agendas, meeting minutes or other assets regularly shared publicly by the organization that should have consistent brand presentation to increase brand awareness and positive perception.

Strategy 9: Develop a rollout plan with timeline for the new logo and branded assets

Objectives & Strategies



Objective 3: Refine Messaging and Storytelling

Chicago Wilderness Alliance presents itself as a curator of information. It is professional and informative, but isn't tailored to a core audience and it doesn't infuse passion, urgency or personality. The Alliance is more than just an information source – it is a network of people who are committed, purpose-driven and passionate, motivated to collaborate and take collective conservation actions, learning from each other and sharing experiences. There are opportunities to refine content in a way that brings the essence and vibrancy of Chicago Wilderness Alliance to life through communications channels that serve to motivate members to engage more deeply, and spark interest with newcomers.

Those who are already deeply engaged in Chicago Wilderness Alliance – the insiders – have been initiated. They *get* what the Alliance is all about and the value of the connections, collaborations and the shared purpose of all involved. But that seems to be somewhat of a trade secret. Outsiders won't intuit that from the communications.

Refine messaging and storytelling techniques to clearly communicate the value and purpose of Alliance partnership (passion, purpose, collaboration, networking, learning) and bring that personality into the channels.



Strategy 1: Develop an organizational message framework

An overarching message framework will help Chicago Wilderness Alliance streamline and organize messaging in a way that prioritizes the most important information for the core target audience, mitigating some of the challenges of the brand, such as lack of consistency and clarity, Illinois bias, perceived lack of action, passion or urgency, and will help bring the brand personality to life.

The framework aims to increase understanding of who the Alliance is, where you work, what you do, why it matters and inspires engagement.

A refined message framework draft has been developed as an addendum to this strategic plan.

Objectives & Strategies

Objective 3 (Continued)



Strategy 2: Develop a message framework for the Green Vision Initiative

The climate crisis, loss of biodiversity and executive order issued by President Biden to conserve 30 percent of land and water by 2030, sparks renewed momentum for Chicago Wilderness Alliance leaders to mobilize partners, engage new members and work toward a green region for *all*.

Chicago Wilderness Alliance leaders are working together to achieve seven science-based goals and targets, aligned with the national 30x30 Initiative and other global targets, to be achieved in the Chicago Wilderness Alliance region by 2030.

PCI activated development of a message framework to help articulate the goals, the strategies to achieve them, and specific calls to action to engage members to clear opportunities to contribute and join colleagues toward achieving the regional goals.

The message framework is included as an addendum to this plan.

Strategy 3: Develop a story mining and story development process

Great work is happening within the Alliance, but might not be shared outside of committees, or across committees, and many good opportunities to amplify stories that highlight actions, collaboration and successes may be missed. By developing and activating a story mining process for Chicago Wilderness Alliance, it can help build a foundation for on-going content creation that advance the marketing objectives.

Objectives & Strategies



Objective 3 (Continued)

Strategy 3: (Continued)

One example could be to recruit and embed into each committee and working group with a team member who brings strong journalism and storytelling expertise. Their ability to sniff out a good story and provide perspective on what stories will resonate on which channels to which audiences could be invaluable to Chicago Wilderness Alliance.

Convene these communications professionals every month as part of communications committee to share updates, and work collaboratively toward an overarching communications plan and editorial calendar for the organization.

Strategy 4: Create an editorial calendar with balanced mix of content from goal teams; balancing give vs. get messaging

One of the obstacles to participation and engagement is perceived time commitment, and another is not wanting that level of commitment. These perceptions seem to indicate that for some individuals the value of partnership is not balanced to what they are willing to contribute. Showcasing people doing great work – together – through collaboratives and emphasizing the personal reward they feel for being a part of something big will help lean feelings of value against effort.

Balancing content across committees will help showcase the diversity of people, talent, locations and specialties at work within the Alliance.

Strategy 5: Emphasize partnerships across boundaries

Share testimonials and partner spotlights with stories about partnership and networked approach to conservation across county, state or other geopolitical boundaries, or partnerships between people, groups or organizations that might not typically be working collaboratively but share a common vision and cause.

Objectives & Strategies



Objective 3 (Continued)

Strategy 6: Emphasize people and opportunities for connections

One of the primary motivating factors reported by partners to be a part of Chicago Wilderness Alliance is networking. Lean into this by emphasizing people involved across the organization in working groups and teams (not just the leaders). People like to see themselves, their friends and colleagues being named and recognized. Partner prospects might be attracted to join a team or engage because of the people likely to be in the room they want an opportunity to network with and collaborate.

4 Objectives & Strategies



Objective 4: Acquire More Visual Assets for Communications and Marketing

Visuals are sparse on all of the Alliance's channels, yet modern audiences engage with highly visual content. Use of strong, compelling images that showcase partners working together, in nature, accomplishing something and having fun, can motivate people to engage. People are the heart of the organization. Show them.

Strategy 1: Develop or expand video and photo library

Tactic 1: Identify the types of images or video that would best bring to life or illustrate specific actions and activities of each Green Vision Initiatives goal.

Tactic 2: Solicit partners to share visual assets that meet the criteria of Tactic 1.

Tactic 3: Acquire images through stock.

Objectives & Strategies

Objective 5: Invest in Marketing Support and/or Activate a Marketing Committee

Chicago Wilderness Alliance lacks staffing and resources to successfully implement ongoing effective marketing and communications content development and partner engagement. Effective use of social media alone for content creation and engagement is a full-time job. For Chicago Wilderness Alliance to fully realize its potential, the organization should prioritize marketing and communications as a key focus area for the organization. This could be accomplished in several ways. Below are a few strategies:

Strategy 1: Identify a strong marketing and communications leader to chair, develop and lead an Alliance Marketing and Communications Committee.

An active and engaged communications and marketing committee could help activate recommendations of this plan and support the ongoing story mining and content development needs of the organization.

Strategy 2: Develop a recruitment strategy for PR, marketing and communications professionals to join the committee.

Start by engaging organizations that are already institutional partners of Chicago Wilderness Alliance (or have active individual partners) to actively recruit within current partnerships of the Alliance.

Actively reach outside of current partner organizations and individuals whose purpose aligns with the Alliance, but those who will infuse diverse perspectives, experiences and ideas to the committee.

Ideally, ALL committees and working groups of the Alliance will include individuals who represent a diversity of age, gender, location and race. As you build out a marketing and communications committee, we recommend strategically developing it to be representative of the region represented.

Strategy 3: Assign a PR and Marketing Committee member as a liaison to each Green Vision Initiatives goal team.

Provide them a specific role and story beat that they can bring back to the committee from that goal team every month to ensure regular content coming from all goal groups.

Objectives & Strategies



Objective 5 (Continued)

Strategy 4: Identify all relevant conservation conferences, meetings and events across the Chicago Wilderness Alliance region where Alliance representation and marketing would be valuable.

Each committee member could be assigned to specific counties to support research and identification of opportunities for the Alliance to be represented – prioritizing regions where the Alliance is currently underrepresented.

Strategy 5: Develop a strategy for increasing Alliance representation at relevant meetings, events and conferences in regions that are currently underrepresented by partners.

Some tactics could include:

Tactic 1: Identifying whether any Alliance partners are attending or speaking. If so, actively engage them to help promote the Alliance.

Tactic 2: Determine what marketing assets might be most helpful to partners attending meetings, and develop and provide those assets to encourage them to promote the Alliance.

Strategy 6: Work with each Green Vision Initiatives goal team to identify the types of marketing assets that would be most beneficial for team recruitment or advancement of goals.

Each goal team will have niche audiences they want to reach with specific, targeted information and calls to action – communications materials should be developed to support these efforts. For example, a postcard, pamphlet or digital brochure specifically targeting transportation or utility companies about the value of naturalizing right of ways with an invitation to join Chicago Wilderness Alliance, could be advantageous Goal Group 3: Prioritizing Green Infrastructure. Goal Group 2 could benefit from materials specifically targeted toward farmers, etc.

Objectives & Strategies



Objective 5 (Continued)

Strategy 7: Develop a Speaker's Bureau

The Alliance occasionally gets requests for speakers but there is not currently a good process for supporting these opportunities. Developing a process, identifying speakers, and creating branded assets such as PowerPoint decks for a variety of topics, could advance the Alliance's ability to support more opportunities for brand awareness and partner recruitment in the future.

Objectives & Strategies



Objective 6: Redesign Chicago Wilderness Alliance Website

The brand's website is not serving the Alliance as well as it could, potentially compromising audience understanding and the organization's credibility, thwarting conversion and engagement. We recommend re-designing the website, organizing it and designing it with user-focused approach.

The website would bring the brand to life infusing more visual appeal, action-oriented language and personality to accentuate what makes Chicago Wilderness Alliance unique, desirable to join, exciting for members to be a part of, with clear calls to action and conversion in mind.

A redesign is a big process. As an incremental step, we recommend infusing the new message framework into the website as a first step in the process, eliminating the substantial number of link offs (and the problem with broken links, and linking to outdated information).

As noted earlier in this strategy, it is confusing to have the Green Vision Initiatives located in multiple places. We recommend sending people to one place to learn about the initiatives – that place is currently sub-branded as the "CW Hub" microsite.

With the hub solely dedicated to the Green Vision Initiatives, **we recommend dropping the sub-brand name and logo "CW Hub."** Having an additional sub-brand is confusing and seems unnecessary. Instead, **infuse the new Green Vision Initiatives sub-brand throughout the microsite.** In other words, instead of directing people to the CW Hub to learn about the Green Vision Initiatives, send people directly to the Green Vision Initiatives website to learn more. We recommend removing the "Our Vision" section and instead adding "Green Vision Initiatives" (with a direct link to the microsite) to the top navigation bar of Chicago Wilderness Alliance's website.

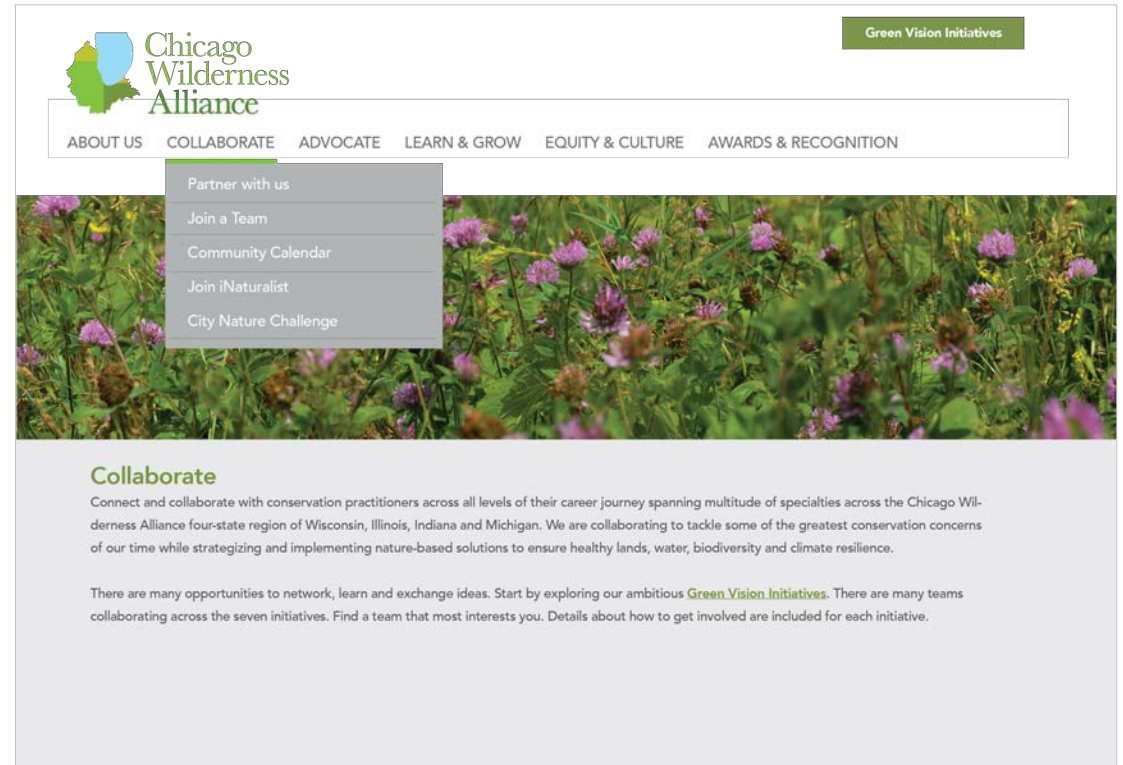
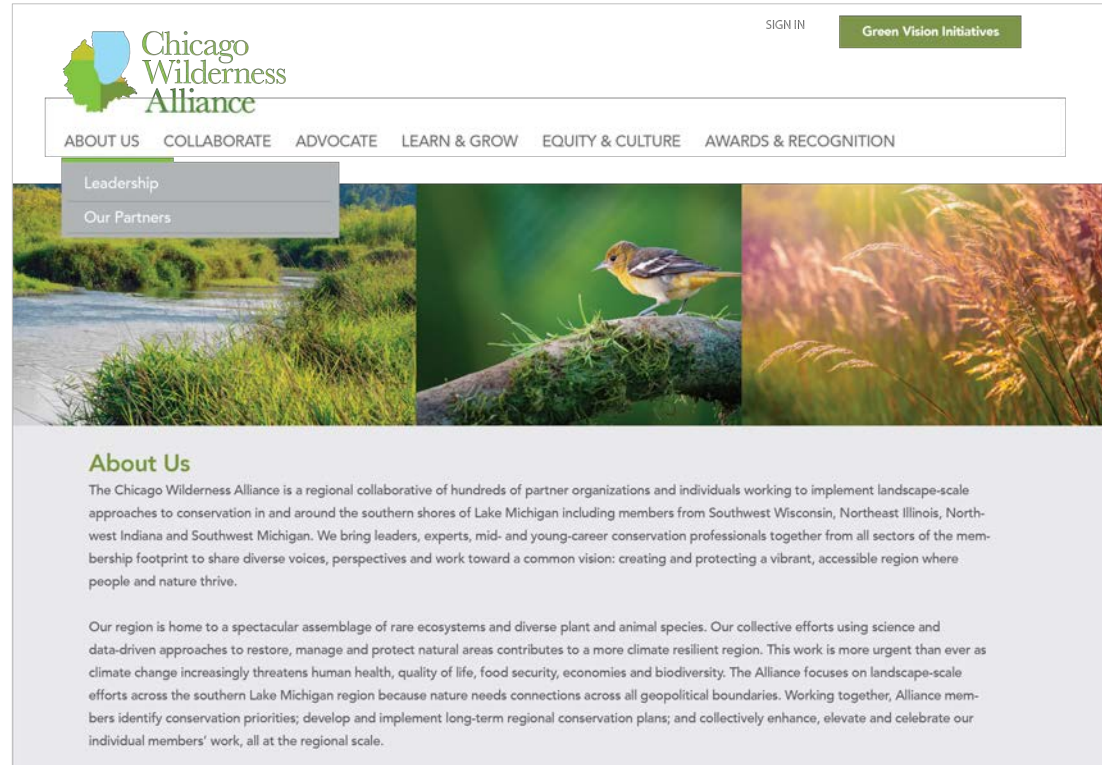
The formerly named CW Hub will include all new messaging for the Green Vision Initiatives.

Objectives & Strategies



Objective 6 (Continued)

Chicago Wilderness Alliance Landing Page

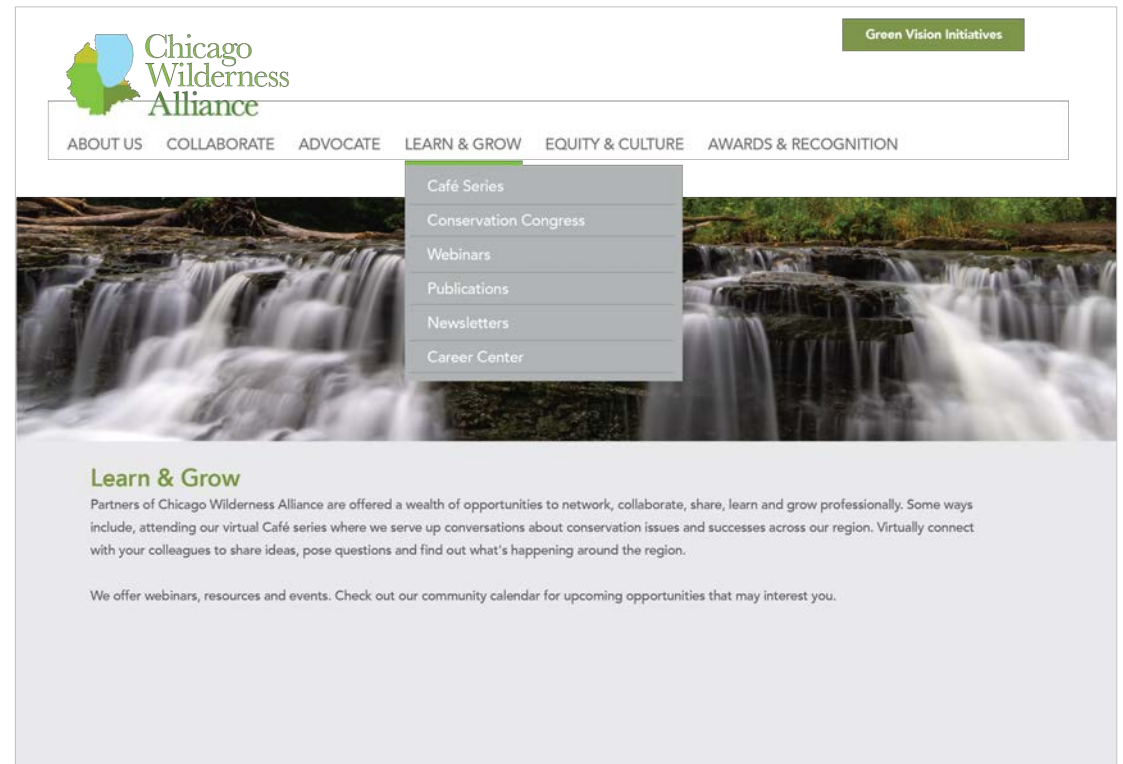
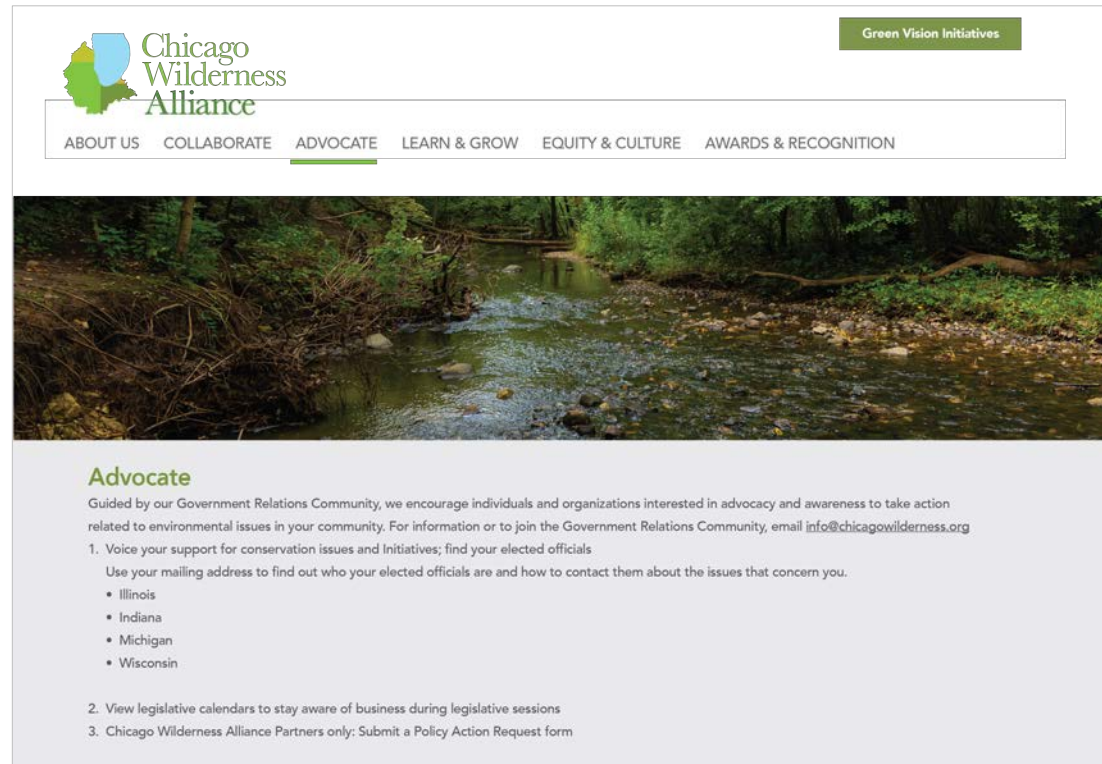


Objectives & Strategies



Objective 6 (Continued)

Chicago Wilderness Alliance Landing Page

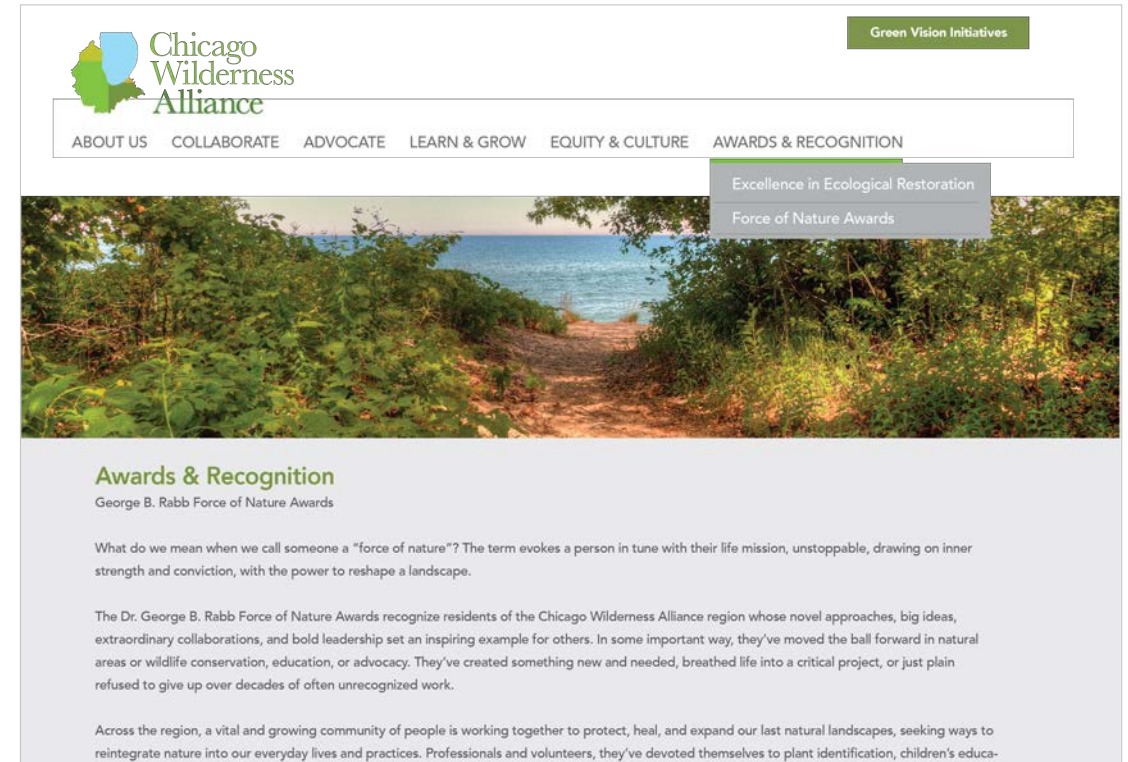
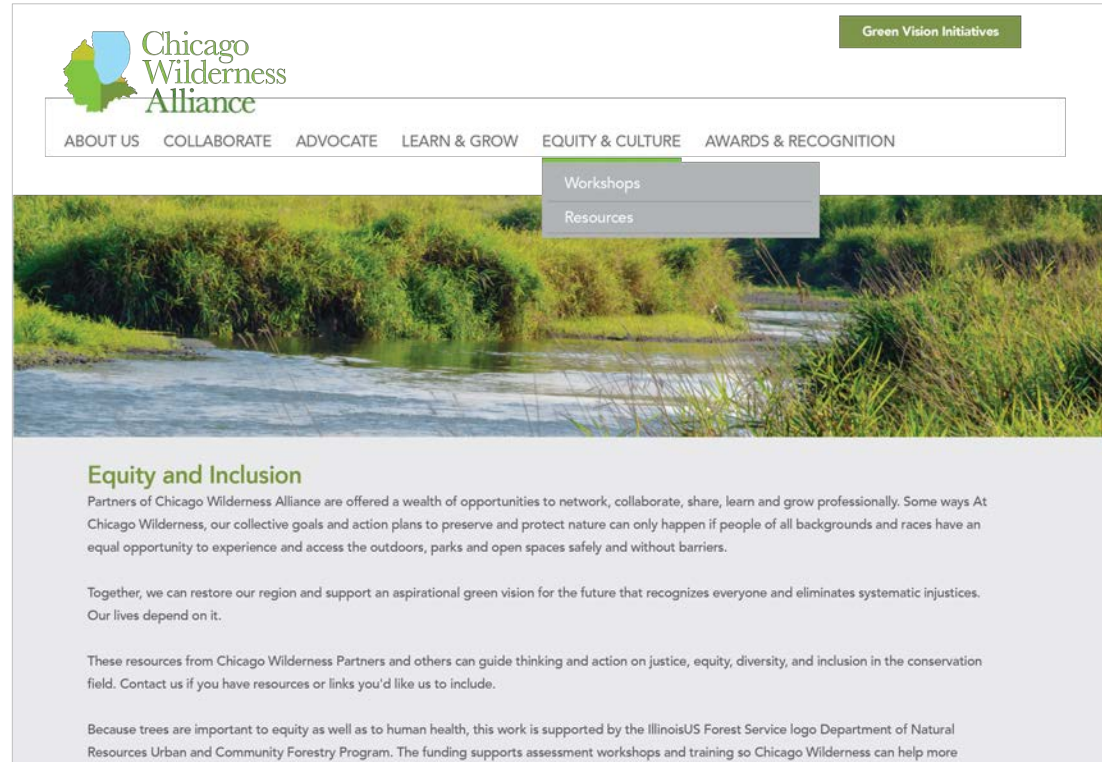


Objectives & Strategies



Objective 6 (Continued)

Chicago Wilderness Alliance Landing Page



Objectives & Strategies

Objective 6 (Continued)

Here is a creative concept for what the Green Vision Initiatives website could look like with the new brand concept:



Home:

- Replace CWHub bug in navigation to new Green Vision Initiatives graphic
- Update top navigation with Green Vision Initiatives names
- New Green Vision Initiatives branding
- Introduction to the Chicago Wilderness Alliance's Green Vision Initiatives and what to expect from the microsite

Objectives & Strategies

Objective 6 (Continued)

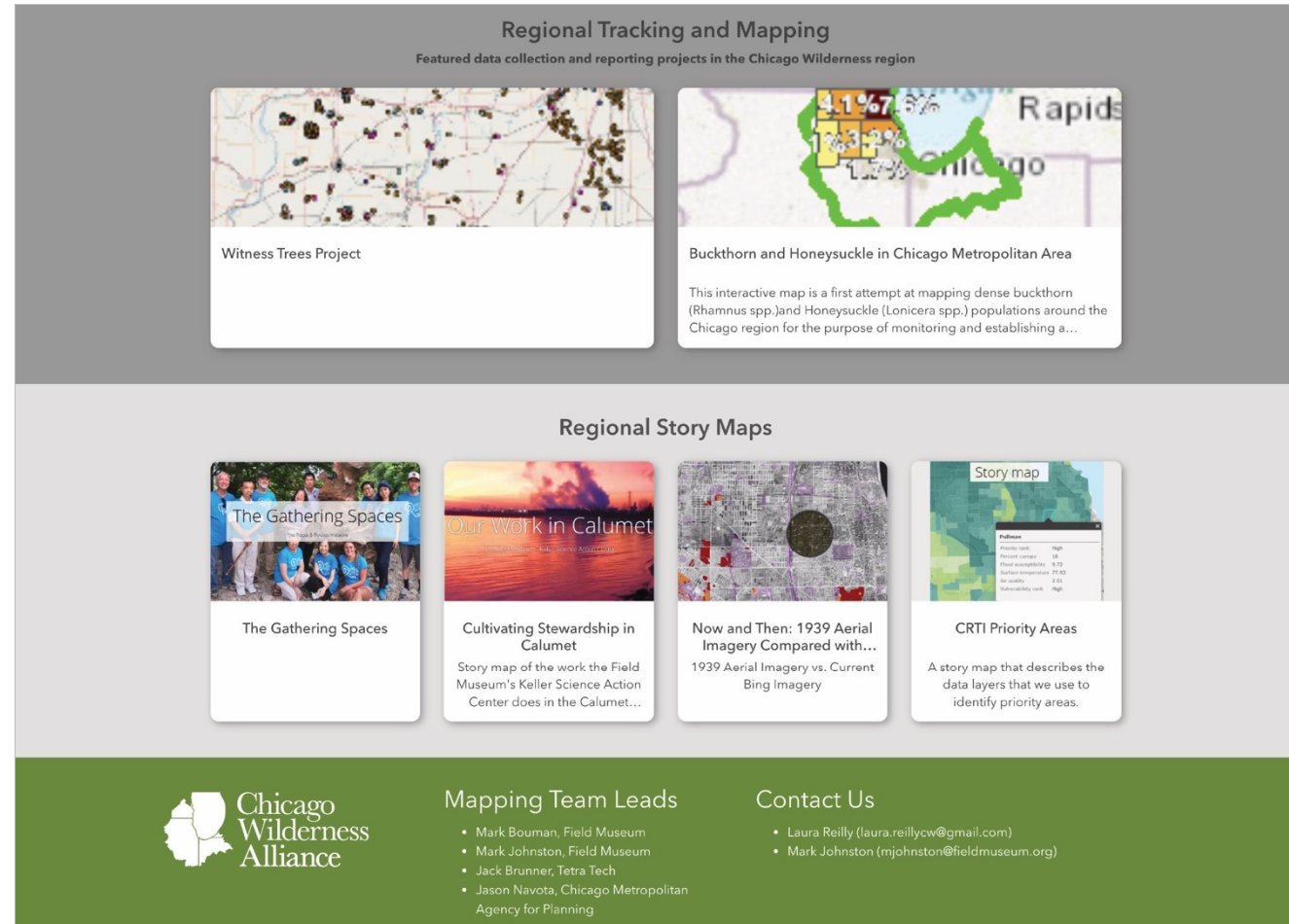


Home:

Green Vision Initiatives
branded graphics: click to
each individual goal.

Objectives & Strategies

Objective 6 (Continued)

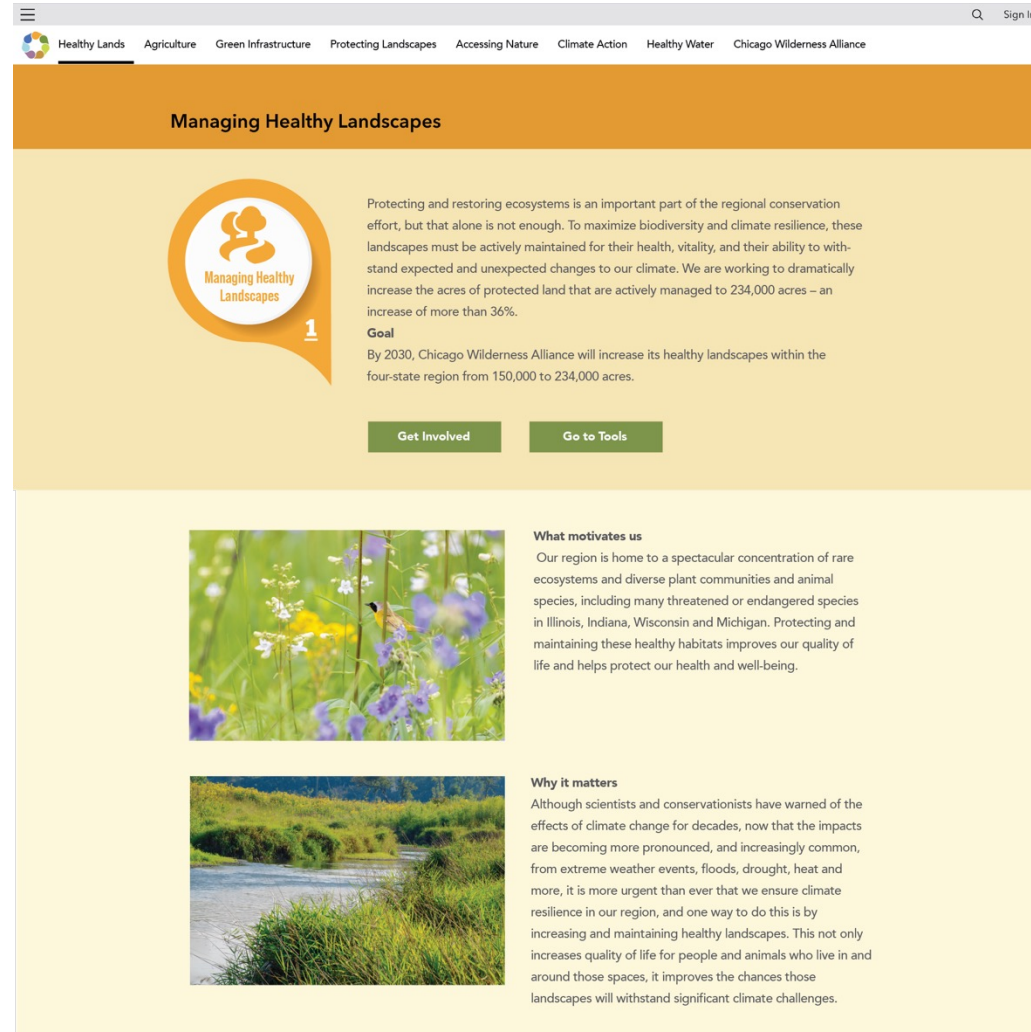


Home:

- Keep existing tracking and map features banners
- Update logo to new Chicago Wilderness Alliance logo

Objectives & Strategies

Objective 6 (Continued)

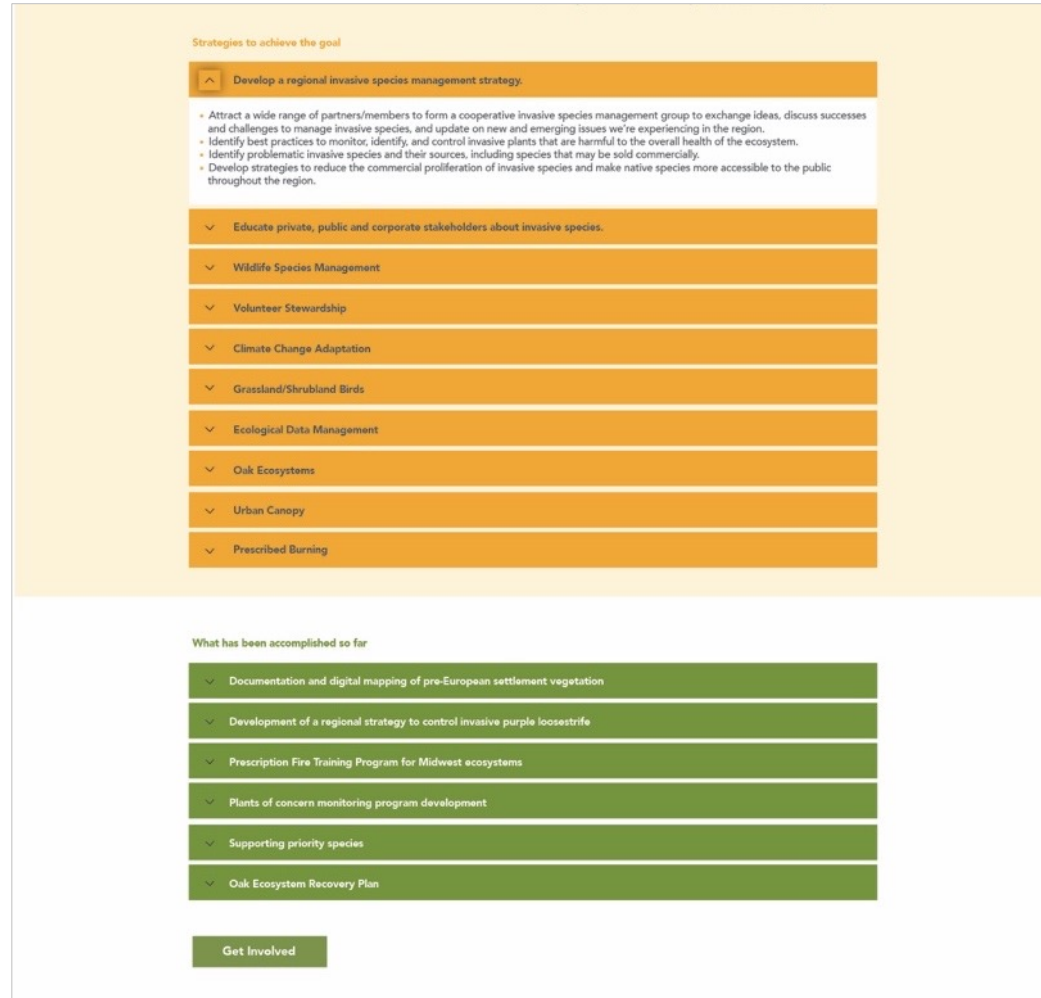


Goal Pages:

- Key message and goal
- “Get Involved” button links to page
- “Go to Tools” button anchors to the tool section on the page
- What motivates us
- Why it matters

Objectives & Strategies

Objective 6 (Continued)



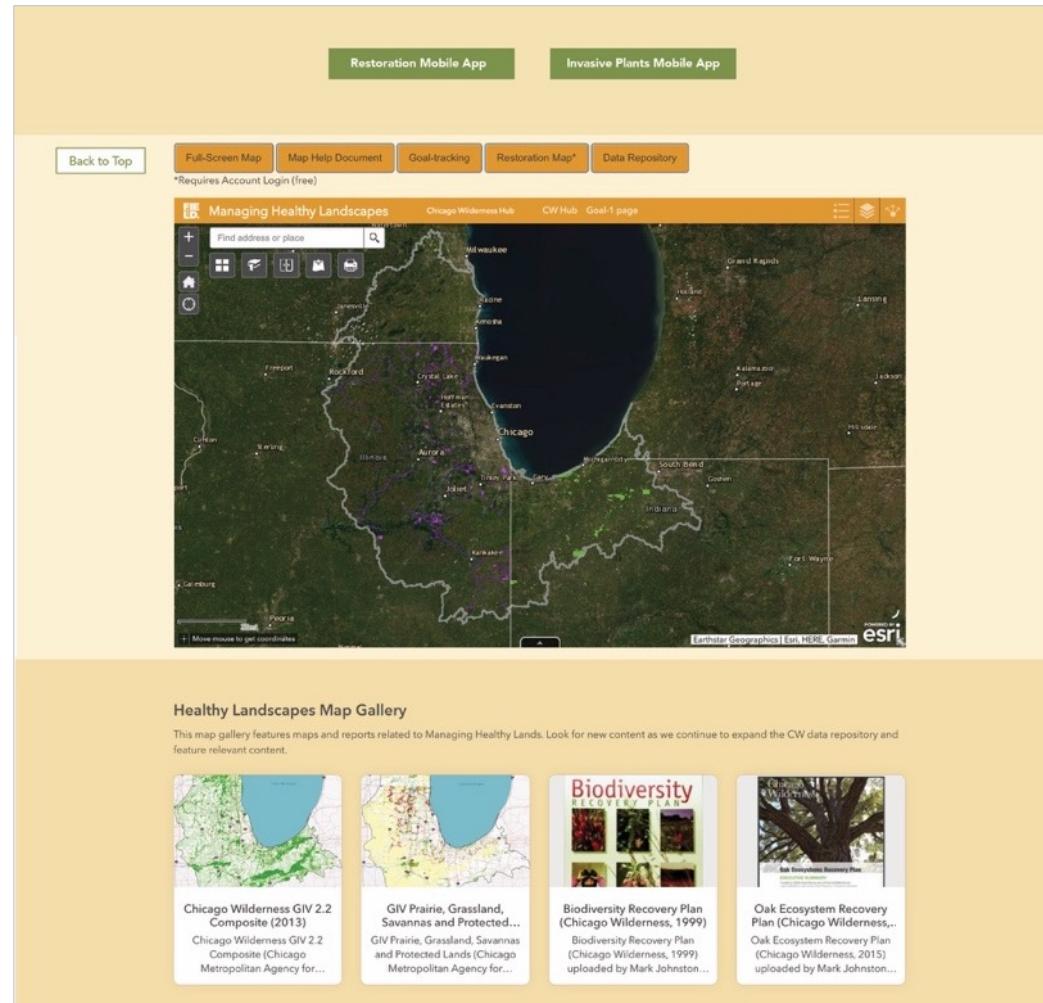
Goal Pages:

Accordion pull-down:

- Strategies to achieve the goal
- What has been accomplished so far
- “Get Involved” button links to page (repeat from top)

Objectives & Strategies

Objective 6 (Continued)



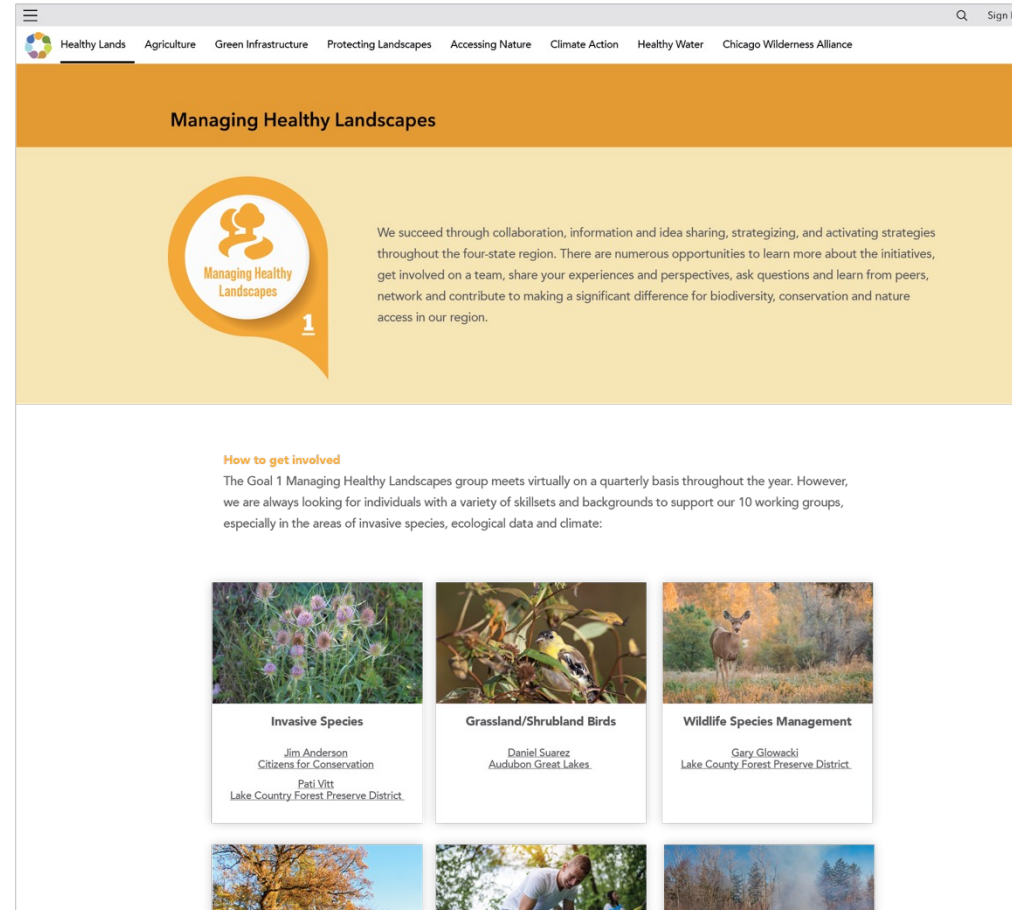
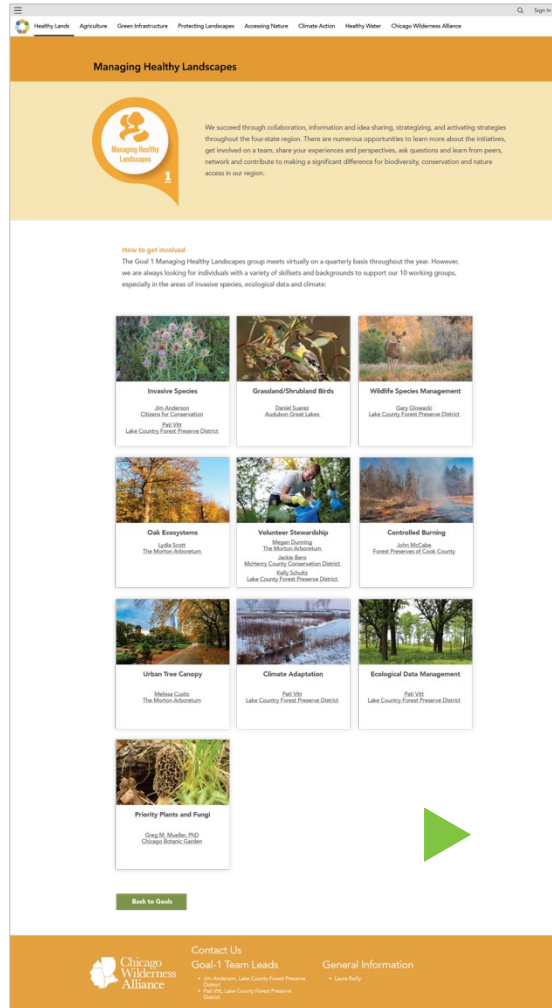
Goal Pages:

Scroll and Anchor to tools:

- Application download buttons
- Map tool
- Map gallery
- “Back to Top” button

Objectives & Strategies

Objective 6 (Continued)



Goal > Get Involved Pages:

- Why to get involved
- How to get involved
- Individual working groups with email links to lead contacts

Objectives & Strategies



Objective 6 (Continued)

Additionally, for the main Chicago Wilderness Alliance website we recommend the following actions:

Strategy 1: Identify the goals and objectives of the website for partnership growth and conversion.

Strategy 2: Conduct a full website evaluation of what is working and currently serving the organization and what is not – what is serving to advance the organization’s strategic focus on deeper member engagement, and new member recruitment – and what is not.

Strategy 3: Engage website designer, communications specialists and key CWA leaders who can help guide the website redesign and organization process using a user-focused approach.

Strategy 4: Develop a rollout plan to partners for the website redesign



Tactical activation: Website refinement recommendations

As a stop-gap measure to a full website audit, and potential redesign on a different platform, PCI is developing and delivering as an addendum to this plan, recommended refinements to the website – reprioritizing hierarchy of information in the top and sub navigation tabs, language used, and types of information to include or eliminate if it is not relevant to the core target audience.

Objectives & Strategies



Objective 7: Refine Use of Social Media

Chicago Wilderness Alliance is active on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and LinkedIn, with limited use of YouTube. Overall, the tone is positive and collaborative, but engagement is low.

Chicago Wilderness Alliance seems to primarily repurpose the stories of its partners, and reposts much of the same content across different social channels. While this tactic suggests that it has partners doing good work, it does not advance understanding or highlight the value of being an active partner of Chicago Wilderness Alliance.

There is minimal original content created or shared that specifically **highlights current collaborative efforts underway**, showcasing how partners across multiple institutions, counties and states are developing strategies or advancing conservation actions – together. This is a missed opportunity for Chicago Wilderness Alliance. Refining the strategic approach to leverage these social media channels to advance partner engagement and recruitment goals of the organization, while shaping positive perception of Chicago Wilderness Alliance and building greater awareness about the Alliance’s collective work across the four-state region, is recommended.

Social media can also be used more effectively as a partner engagement tool – not just reposting content, but actively engaging with partners on their social channels and engaging non-partner prospects.

With Chicago Wilderness Alliance embracing “Alliance” into its name, we recommend remodeling social handles. ChiWilderness is the current social handle for the majority of the accounts, while keeping to the handle character limits (15 for Twitter; 30 for Facebook)

Objectives & Strategies



Objective 7 (Continued)

Strategy 1: Develop a Social Media Playbook

A social media strategy will help Chicago Wilderness Alliance define its goals for each platform, the ideal target audiences for each, and the best content for each platform to increase engagement with target audiences and expand Alliance awareness.

The social media strategy should critically evaluate the demographic targeting opportunities of each social channel, including channels not currently used by Chicago Wilderness Alliance. For example, TikTok could help the Alliance reach and engage younger and more diverse audiences.

An effective social media playbook also should recommend a balanced content mix across the Green Vision Initiatives goal groups' activities. Storytelling that highlights efforts in Indiana, Michigan and Wisconsin to advance understanding that Chicago Wilderness Alliance is actively working in those states also should be emphasized.

Strategy 2: Develop a Social Media Activation Strategy

Effectively using social media requires dedicated time and talent, daily. Develop a strategy to activate regular content creation and ongoing community management to get the most value from these communications tools.

Objectives & Strategies



Objective 8: Increase Newsletter Subscribers, Open and Conversion Rates

Chicago Wilderness Alliance regularly produces a monthly newsletter, and weekly or routine action alerts and promotions for CW Café, and other events. There is no specific schedule for delivery of newsletters.

Newsletters are not only a great way to communicate and engage with partners, but they are also a great introduction to the organization for partner prospects. Many non-profit organizations see newsletter subscription as the first ladder rung for member or donor engagement. It is an easy entry point to learn more about an organization and determine if a prospect wants to get more involved. Currently, the Alliance does not offer newsletter subscription to non-partners.

The promising thing we're seeing is that compared to non-profit industry benchmarks, Chicago Wilderness Alliance open rate and click-through-rate **is above average**. We pulled data from March through September 2022:

- Current newsletter average open rate is 34.68% and click-through-rate is 3.35%.
- Non-profit industry average open rate is 25.17% and click-through-rate is 2.79%.

This is impressive given the challenges with the newsletters outlined in the analysis. This suggests that Chicago Wilderness Alliance partners are highly engaged and committed to the organization (even if the rate of engagement in other ways isn't where leaders would like to see engagement rates) – they are interested in what the Alliance is doing and offering.

With refined messaging, storytelling strategies, visual appeal, and more strategic target customization, we see strong potential for deeper engagement and conversion.

Objectives & Strategies

Objective 8 (Continued)

Strategy 1: Create branded templates and increase visual appeal

Design style applications for newsletters and alerts that give each communication type its own unique look, while incorporating the new visual identity for Chicago Wilderness Alliance and its sub-brand Green Vision Initiatives.



Objectives & Strategies



Objective 8 (Continued)

Strategy 2: Open-up subscriptions to non-members

Without forcing potential prospects to contact an administrator to sign them up – a limitation and barrier to engagement and conversion – opening subscriptions to non- partners may only be possible if the Alliance uses a different marketing tool for website and newsletter distribution.

Strategy 3: Offer personalized selection of newsletter categories

Several of the goal team groups will be working with niche audiences who may want to receive updates relevant to their interest areas (for example, farmers may be interested only in work related to agriculture). Currently, partners and users can't self-select the updates they receive unless they can access the member-only portal which has proved challenging. Therefore, typically, only the Alliance administrator can select which partners or prospects receive what newsletters or alerts. If a partner unsubscribes from one, they unsubscribe from all.

Best practice is to allow users to select the kind of information and the frequency of information they will receive from organizations. This can be accomplished using a more mainstream email marketing tool, and a website that allows integration with that tool.

Strategy 4: Develop a newsletter content development strategy and calendar

Develop a structure for each newsletter type, and an established day and timeframe partners can expect to receive it, optimizing for the best open rate. For example, one email a week distributed on Tuesdays. Or the monthly newsletter the first Thursday of every month.

Objectives & Strategies



Objective 8 (Continued)

Strategy 4: (Continued)

Based on several studies, the optimal days, in order of optimization, for sending emails are:

1. Tuesdays
2. Thursdays
3. Wednesdays

Develop a consistent structure for sharing goal group updates to ensure balance and consistency across all the goal groups. Infuse storytelling, and partner recognition into the newsletters.

Objectives & Strategies



Objective 9: Increase and Diversify Partnerships

Partner prospecting, recruitment, onboarding and retention is a significant amount of work that currently doesn't have an "owner" within Chicago Wilderness Alliance, other than the one full-time staff administrator. With increased partnership as a core objective, we recommend the Alliance consider resource allocation for a partnership coordinator.

Strategy 1: Create a position or develop a Partnership Committee

Many non-profits that have active partners of Chicago Wilderness Alliance have membership experts. Work to identify a strong and committed leader. Then solicit current partners about the opportunity for membership professionals to join the Alliance and support its growth.

Strategy 2: Develop a Partner Prospecting Strategy

Currently, the organization does not have a strategy for identifying potential candidates. Below are tactics to support development of a prospecting strategy:

Tactic 1: Gather relevant partnership demographic details, especially related to age, location (state and county), gender and race, and professional specialization/area of expertise. This will create a benchmark of current diversity of partnerships and help identify specific demographic gaps.

Tactic 2: Work with Green Vision Initiatives goal teams to understand partner recruitment desires and needs.

Tactic 3: Research conservation organizations and practitioners living or working in the areas least represented by current partners.

Tactic 4: Identify prospective organizations social channels; research individuals within prospective organizations on LinkedIn to see whom within the Alliance partnership network they may already be connected.

Objectives & Strategies



Objective 9 (Continued)

Strategy 2: (Continued)

Tactic 5: Identify upcoming opportunities in the regions/communities underrepresented in Alliance partnerships for networking and engagement. These could be relevant events, meetings or programs hosted by relevant organizations or individuals that Alliance personnel could attend.

Strategy 3: Develop Partner Recruitment Strategy

Once a partner prospecting strategy has been developed, and prospects have been identified, below are tactics to begin engaging with prospects and introducing them to Chicago Wilderness Alliance.

Tactic 1: If Alliance current partners are connected via LinkedIn to identified prospects, engage with current partners and ask if they would be willing to connect that individual to the Alliance.

Tactic 2: Follow prospects on social media and engage with their content.

Tactic 3: Develop a targeted recruitment pitch relevant to that prospect based on their area of specialty, where they live and work, and what they may express a passion about via social channels. Reach out to introduce potential partners to Chicago Wilderness Alliance and promote the value that partnering offers and why it could be a great fit for them.

Tactic 4: Determine if specific partnership marketing materials should be created for specific niche targeted outreach to prospects based upon their location, specialty, etc. Work with marketing committee or Alliance coordinator to develop them.

Tactic 5: Conduct outreach and follow up. Invite them to an event or program that may interest them.

Objectives & Strategies



Objective 9 (Continued)

Strategy 4: Develop a new partner onboarding strategy

It can be daunting to be a newcomer to an Alliance with so many longtime active partners. Many might just dip their toe in to see how it feels before they commit to deeper engagement. Smoothly onboarding them and making them feel welcome will help create a positive experience and impression of the Alliance that will strengthen their affinity and desire to deeply engage and recruit friends and colleagues.

Tactic 1: Create a new partner orientation series of email newsletters, specifically targeted to them that helps orient them Chicago Wilderness Alliance – the organization’s vision, goals, current priorities, current opportunities to join teams, etc.

Tactic 2: Assign them an organizational sponsor/mentor who will introduce them to different people and teams as well as inviting them to meetings and events. This could be especially welcoming for someone who is new to their career to help them feel welcomed and valued.

Tactic 3: Have the mentor conduct an onboarding interview. Learn more about what brought them to Chicago Wilderness Alliance, and what they are most interested to get out of being a partner. Identify areas of passion and interest.

Tactic 4: Curate a suite of opportunities tailored to their interests and goals, aligned to the needs of the Alliance and working groups across the goal teams.

Tactic 5: Encourage goal team leaders to intentionally engage new partners in meeting discussion, encourage sharing their new perspectives and step in to redirect conversation if a new member’s ideas are being dismissed.

Objectives & Strategies



Objective 9 (Continued)

Strategy 4: (Continued)

Tactic 6: Host a new partner welcome and networking event to introduce new partners to goal team leaders and other influencers within the organization. Given the size of the four-state region, utilize virtual events when seeking to engage the entire partnership and host local/regional events to allow for in-person networking opportunities.

Tactic 7: Incentivize new partners to attend the Conservation Congress or other major events by creating a corporate sponsored program (or other funding mechanism) to fund their attendance and cover travel expenses.

Strategy 5: Develop a Partner Retention and Appreciation Strategy

A partner appreciation campaign can reinforce the benefits of being a partner, get partners excited about engaging with various activities and incentivize them to bring in new partners. Here are some ideas for incentivizing partnership and showcasing appreciation:

Tactic 1: Expand the idea of the virtual CW Café by offering in-person networking events as well.

Tactic 2: Coordinate professional field trips to partner organization field sites for demonstrations of technology/systems/recovery program efforts, etc. For example, a trip to Emiquon to see the copi (Asian carp) sorter, a trip to a farm supplier to witness operations first-hand, a tour of innovative green infrastructure, etc.

Tactic 3: Create participation milestones (tracked by volunteer hours) that result in VIP access to an exciting Alliance project or opportunity, or branded Chicago Wilderness Alliance swag.

Tactic 4: Encourage members to refer a colleague to join the Alliance and incentivize each referral with a reward such as discounted partnership, branded swag or shout out in a newsletter.

Objectives & Strategies



Objective 9 (Continued)

Strategy 5: (Continued)

Tactic 5: Spotlight individual accomplishments on LinkedIn, e-newsletters.

Tactic 6: Keep employers apprised of individual partners successes and provide them with prepared, Chicago Wilderness Alliance-branded material an employer could share internally.

Tactic 7: Create Partner Spotlights to be shared on the website and other communications.

Objectives & Strategies

Objective 10: Expand Opportunities for Partners to Participate

To mitigate the challenge some partners express as a primary reason they choose not to engage or participate with Chicago Wilderness Alliance working groups – too much time commitment or employers not allowing participation during working hours – we recommend the Alliance evaluate all the opportunities for partner to actively participate and provide suite of diverse opportunities across all teams.

Strategy 1: Find opportunities for partners with different time allocation abilities to contribute meaningfully and feel welcomed by the Alliance

Similar to how a website donations page may offer options from \$10 to \$10,000, outline all of the potential opportunities to participate and the potential time commitment involved. Represent all levels of engagement from one-time opportunities to several hours per month. One-time opportunities may be an entryway to partners who will be open to larger commitments down the road.

Strategy 2: Clearly communicate opportunities to participate, roles, responsibilities and expectations within each working group

Some partners may be hesitant to raise their hand because they don't know what the commitment will entail or if they have the necessary skills. Communicate exactly what involvement entails, the value they will gain from participating and how their contribution will support the mission.

The website should be a resource that is visually appealing, welcoming and easy to navigate with clearly identified descriptions and buttons that provide more information and directly connect the user with a human resource. One inspiring model for sharing different levels of engagement to support an environmental cause is the UN's The Lazy Person's Guide to Saving the World that includes tabs for different levels of involvement.

Objectives & Strategies

Objective 10 (Continued)

Strategy 3: Welcome partners to sit in on meetings without committing to joining them

Some partners may be curious what the working groups and committees do, and what the experience will be like, but may be hesitant to commit to joining until they have a firmer grasp on what it entails. Invite partners to sit in, listen, contribute, without a commitment to formally join the committees or working groups if they do not feel so inclined.

Strategy 4: Actively invite individuals for targeted roles

Some partners may not participate in working groups or teams because they don't feel they have been invited. Goal team leaders should consider the skills and perspectives they would like infused on their team and work with membership committee or administrative coordinator to help prospect candidates. Proactively reach out and formally invite them to consider engaging more deeply.

Be prepared to learn why they may not be able/interested to engage more deeply and determine if there are alternative opportunities for engagement that may be better suited to them that demonstrates their contribution – at whatever level it may be – is welcomed.



Thank You

This plan was developed by a team of conservation communications professionals at Public Communications Inc.

If you have questions, you can reach out to team lead, below:

Sharon Dewar
Senior Vice President
708.616.7452
sdewar@pcipr.com



**Public
Communications
Inc.**



Chicago Wilderness Alliance FINAL DRAFT Operating Budget FY 2023

REVENUE	FISCAL YEAR 2023 (January 1, 2023 to December 31, 2023)						NOTES
OPERATING REVENUE							
Partnership Dues							
	2 Tier 1		\$ 12,500	\$ 25,000			Dues levels remaining the same for 2023. Increased Number of Partners in Categories.
	4 Tier 2		\$ 8,500	\$ 34,000			
	3 Tier 3		\$ 4,500	\$ 13,500			
	6 Tier 4		\$ 2,500	\$ 15,000			
4	5 Tier 5		\$ 1,200	\$ 6,000			4 to 5
20	25 Tier 6		\$ 550	\$ 13,750			20 to 25
7	10 Tier 7		\$ 300	\$ 3,000			7 to 10
27	30 Tier 8		\$ 100	\$ 3,000			27 to 30
30	35 Tier 9		\$ 50	\$ 1,750			30 to 35
16	25 Tier 10 - Individual/Retired		\$ 25	\$ 625			16 to 24
	0 Tier 11 - Student		\$ 10	\$ -			
	6 Tier 12 - Other/Sponsorship		\$ -				
	151	Sub-Total Membership Dues		\$ 115,625			
		Total Membership Dues			\$ 115,625		
Donations							
	Corporate Donations			\$ -			
	Individual Donations			\$ 1,000			
		Total Donations			\$ 1,000		
Grants							
	Nicor Gas			\$ 20,000			Nicor Gas (\$20k 2022, \$20k 2023) - Grant Awarded - Support Green Vision/HUB Core Work
	Illinois Department of Natural Resources			\$ 8,500			Total grant \$75,000 (Green Vision work - IDNR secured for JEDI, Admin Support and Tree Initiative)
		Total Grants			\$ 28,500		\$30,500k in 2021; \$8,500 for Tree Café in 2023
Programs							
Cafe Series & Workshops							
	12 Sponsorship - Café Series		\$ 1,500	\$ 18,000			To be solicited and secured.
	4 Sponsorship - JEDI Worksops & Initiatives		\$ 3,500.00	\$ 14,000			To be solicited and secured.
		Sub-Total Café Series & Workshops		\$ 32,000			
Conservation Congress - Field Trips							
	4 Sponsorship or Grant/Philanthropic Initiative - Field Trips		\$ 2,000	\$ 8,000			To be solicited and secured.
	400 Registration - Field Trips		\$ 20	\$ 8,000			100 Registrations x 4 Field Trips
		Sub-Total Conservation Congress - Field Trips		\$ 16,000			
Excellence in Ecological Restoration Program (Biennial)							
	2 Sponsorship		\$ 500	\$ 1,000			Program 11/2023
	8 Applicant Fee (\$100 Members/\$300 Non-Members)		\$ 100	\$ 800			
		Sub-Total EERP		\$ 1,800			
Force of Nature Awards (Biennial)							
	2 Sponsorship		\$ 500	\$ 1,000			Program 11/2023
	0 Applicant Fee		\$ -	\$ -			
		Sub-Total Force of Nature Awards		\$ 1,000			
		Total Program			\$ 50,800		
OPERATING REVENUE SUB-TOTAL					\$ 195,925		
CWA FUND RESERVES INVESTMENT					\$ 88,289		Investment from Fund Reserves to Support FY 2023 Initiatives. Discussion on sustainability.
TOTAL REVENUE					\$ 284,214		
EXPENSES							
Fiscal Sponsor							
	Sponsorship Fee of 3% of Revenue			\$ 7,500			
		Total Fiscal Agent			\$ 7,500		
Insurance							
	D/O Insurance & General Liability Insurance			\$ 1,600			Actual 2021 - \$
		Total Insurance			\$ 1,600		
Office Operations: Technology (Computer/Software, Credit Processing, Web)							
	Membership Portal (YourMembership.com)			\$ 8,000			Semi-Annual \$3,719.80 x 2
	Website Domain Licensing (GoDaddy.com, Network Solutions.com)			\$ 200			Paid in 2019 - 3 Years @ \$197.91 - Budget in 2022
	Credit Card Processing (BluePay.com, PayPal.com, etc.)			\$ 3,100			
	EERP & FON Application - Formsites			\$ 1,000			Remain on Formsites.com - EERP/Force of Nature, etc.
	Zoom Communications Platform			\$ 2,000			Café Series/Webinars - Capacity up to 500 Participants
	Computer			\$ -			13" Macbook Pro, Mouse, Microsoft Suite, etc. - Purchased in 2021 - Replacement (2028) - 7 Years
	Project Management: Trello			\$ -			
	Surveys (Google)			\$ -			

Chicago Wilderness Alliance FINAL DRAFT Operating Budget FY 2023

	Canva - Photo/Desktop Publishing			\$ 120			\$119.40 per year
	Adobe			\$ 120			\$9.99 per month
	Hootsuite			\$ 400			\$398.88 per year (May)
	Google Drive Storage			\$ 120			\$9.99 per month
	State of Illinois - Annual Filing Not-for-Profit			\$ 10			
	Misc. Expenses			\$ 1,000			
	Total Office Operations				\$ 16,070		
	Alliance Coordination						
	Chicago Wilderness Alliance Coordinator						
	1 @ 40 Hrs/Wk x \$35.60 (7%) Hr x 52 Weeks) & 11% Overhead			\$ 82,194			2023 \$35.60 (7%); 2022 - \$33.28 (4%); 2021 - \$32; \$31; 2019 - \$30
	Mileage Reimbursement, Misc.			\$ 2,000			Standard Mileage Rate - Itemize Submittal of Mileage Request
					\$ 84,194		
	Program						
	New Rebranded Program - Conservation Congress Field Trips 2023						
	Event Coordination Management			\$ -			
	General Communication			\$ -			
	Facility Rental			\$ -			
	400 Food & Beverage	\$ 20	\$ 8,000	\$ 8,000			
	Speakers/Presenters			\$ -			
	4 Transportation - Field Day	\$ 4,000	\$ 16,000	\$ 16,000			
	4 Misc. - Field Trips	\$ 1,000	\$ 4,000	\$ 4,000			
	<i>Sub-Total Conservation Congress</i>			\$ 28,000			
	Excellence in Ecological Restoration - Biennial (2021)						
	100 Awards Reception (Food & Beverage)		\$ 25	\$ 2,500			
	8 Awards - Site Signage & Award		\$ 200	\$ 1,600			
	0 Postage/Mailing		\$ 0	\$ -			
	<i>Sub-Total EERP</i>			\$ 4,100			
	Force of Nature Awards - Biennial						
	100 Awards Reception (Food & Beverage)		\$ 25	\$ 2,500			
	15 Awards		\$ 100	\$ 1,500			
	0 Postage/Mailing		\$ 0	\$ -			
	<i>Sub-Total Force of Nature</i>			\$ 4,000			
	Program Funding						
	Program Grants (Goal Group Led Initiatives)			\$ 21,000			Team Working Groups - Review Process, Develop Timeline, etc. - 7 Goals @ \$3,000 Per Goal
	HUB Mapping & Intern			\$ -			
	Green Vision Specialist			\$ 40,000			Supported by Nicor \$20k (2023 Corporate Donation)
	JEDI Workshops & Engagement Strategy			\$ 10,000			
	Funds for Key Work Activities - Strategic Support & Meetings			\$ 2,000			Max. \$250 Working Teams/Groups
	<i>Sub-Total Program Funding</i>			\$ 73,000			
	Meeting Supplies						
	Member Appreciation Event			\$ -			
	Executive Council Meetings (4 @ \$200)			\$ -			
	Corporate Council Meetings (4 @ \$75)			\$ -			
	Misc. Supplies - Coffee Service (4 @ \$75)			\$ -			
	<i>Sub-Total Meeting Supplies</i>			\$ -			
	Total Program				\$ 109,100		
	Marketing & Communications						
	Communications Consultant						
	Outreach to Donors/Supporters/Partners on Green Vision Stories (4 Stories - 15 Hours)			\$ 4,200			Maria Sadowski - 5 to 10 Hours Per/Week @ \$52/Hour (4%) - Increase to \$70 -2022 - 500 Hours
	Annual Report (45 Hours)			\$ 3,150			
	Café Series (20 Workshops x 5 Hours)			\$ 7,000			
	Promote JEDI Workshops & Field Trips (4 Workshops & 4 Field Trips x 5 Hours Each)			\$ 2,800			
	Implementation of PCI Recommendations			\$ 5,000			
	Supporting GV Process (7 Goals x 15 Hours)			\$ 7,350			
	Promoting Chicago Wilderness Brand & Activities and Work of Partners (12 Months x 25 Hours)			\$ 21,000			
	<i>Sub-Total Communications Consultant</i>			\$ 50,500			
	Print Collateral & Branding						
	Misc. Campaign/Advertising			\$ 15,000			Future Wish List Ideas: Video Infomercial, Annual Report, Branding - Increased from \$10k to \$15k
	Postage/Mailing (\$0.49)			\$ 250			
	Total Marketing & Communications				\$ 65,750		
	TOTAL EXPENSES				\$ 284,214		
	NET SURPLUS/LOSS				\$ -		
	CASH RESERVES/OPERATING FUND BALANCE						
	Actual Retained Earnings as of 12/31/2017				\$ 33,600		Goal of 25% Revenue

	Actual Retained Earnings as of 12/31/2018				\$ 121,545		
	Actual Retained Earnings as of 12/31/2019				\$ 205,362		
	Actual Retained Earnings as of 12/31/2020				\$ 329,761		
	Actual Retained Earnings as of 12/31/2021				\$ 369,813		
	Actual Retained Earnings as of 9/30/2022				\$ 473,391		



Message Framework

Key Messaging



Who We Are

The Chicago Wilderness Alliance is a regional collaborative of hundreds of partner organizations and individuals working to implement landscape-scale approaches to conservation in and around the southern shores of Lake Michigan including members from Southwest Wisconsin, Northeast Illinois, Northwest Indiana and Southwest Michigan. We bring leaders, experts, mid- and young- career conservation professionals together from all sectors of the membership footprint to share diverse voices, perspectives and work toward a common vision: creating and protecting a vibrant, accessible region where people and nature thrive.

What We Do

Our region is home to a spectacular assemblage of rare ecosystems and diverse plant and animal species. Our collective efforts using science and data-driven approaches to restore, manage and protect natural areas contributes to a more climate resilient region. This work is more urgent than ever as climate change increasingly threatens human health, quality of life, food security, economies and biodiversity.

The Alliance focuses on landscape-scale efforts across the southern Lake Michigan region because nature needs connections across all geopolitical boundaries. Working together, Alliance members identify conservation priorities; develop and implement long-term regional conservation plans; and collectively enhance, elevate and celebrate our individual members' work, all at the regional scale.



The Green Vision Initiatives are a centralized framework to guide, track and implement progress toward a common vision and an inclusive approach to thriving nature for people and wildlife. The executive order issued by President Biden to conserve 30% of land and water by 2030 (called the 30x30 Initiative) sparks renewed momentum.

In the largely urbanized areas of the four-state Chicago Wilderness Alliance region, the capacity to deliver on the 30x30 goals will come not just from traditional conservation lands and waters, but from activating every land type — agricultural, residential, corporate — to contribute meaningfully to landscape-scale conservation.

Our Green Vision Initiatives include seven key thematic areas: conserving and managing healthy landscapes and protecting water; regenerative agriculture; green infrastructure; increasing access to nature, and taking climate action. All goals are centralized using a mapping tool that empowers regional members to visualize, share and track progress. Each theme is brought to life by teams that provide opportunities for the Alliance to engage, contribute and collaborate on our shared goals.



Managing Healthy Landscapes

Key message

Protecting and restoring ecosystems is an important part of the regional conservation effort, but that alone is not enough. To maximize biodiversity and climate resilience, these landscapes must be actively maintained for their health, vitality, and their ability to withstand expected and unexpected changes to our climate. We are working to dramatically increase the acres of protected land that are actively managed to 234,000 acres – an increase of more than 36%.

Goal

By 2030, Chicago Wilderness Alliance will increase its healthy landscapes within the four-state region from 150,000 to 234,000 acres.

Managing Healthy Landscapes



What motivates us

Our region is home to a spectacular concentration of rare ecosystems and diverse plant communities and animal species, including many threatened or endangered species in Illinois, Indiana, Wisconsin and Michigan. Protecting and maintaining these healthy habitats improves our quality of life and helps protect our health and well-being.

Strategies to achieve the goal

Develop a regional invasive species management strategy.

- Attract a wide range of partners/members to form a cooperative invasive species management group to exchange ideas, discuss successes and challenges to manage invasive species, and update on new and emerging issues we're experiencing in the region.
- Identify best practices to monitor, identify, and control invasive plants that are harmful to the overall health of the ecosystem.
- Identify problematic invasive species and their sources, including species that may be sold commercially.
- Develop strategies to reduce the commercial proliferation of invasive species and make native species more accessible to the public throughout the region.

Educate private, public and corporate stakeholders about invasive species.

- Increase understanding about the dangers of failing to properly manage invasive species and making green spaces climate resilient.

Managing Healthy Landscapes



Strategies to achieve the goal (Continued)

Wildlife Species Management

- Hold a symposium/roundtable series, beginning with one focusing on the threat of disease on local wildlife.
- Assess progress of the priority species campaigns.
- Track emerging wildlife diseases to reduce their impact on active conservation activities.

Volunteer Stewardship

- Continue collaborative volunteer training efforts focusing on Brush Pile Burning, Prescribed Burning, Chainsaw Safety and Herbicide Application.
- Create communications and collaborations across the four-state region to encourage regulators to develop more specific licensing for herbicide applicators, to promote more natural area management and to be more inclusive in its testing practices.

Climate Change Adaptation

- Foster communication among regional land managers about potential climate change adaptation strategies.
- Understand the impacts on ecosystems and the services they provide during extreme weather conditions such as flooding or drought.
- Work with the Taking Climate Action goal team to update the Chicago Wilderness Climate Action Plan.

Managing Healthy Landscapes



Strategies to achieve the goal (Continued)

Grassland/Shrubland Birds

- Work with the data on regional bird trends developed by the Bird Conservation Network to determine management practices to support birds that are in decline.
- Explore methods to controlling spread of the invasive Callery (Bradford) Pear, which is commonly available commercially and has seeds that are easily spread by birds that consume its fruit.

Ecological Data Management

- Continue to explore opportunities for data sharing across the four-state region, including data repositories.
- Work with the web developer to streamline data available for download and partners on the resources available, including the Restoration Form that allows land managers and stewards to deposit standardized ecological land management data in a central repository.

Oak Ecosystems

- Develop a network of oak ecosystems, including remnant oak ecosystems, that are protected and managed to restore or maintain biodiversity, ecosystem structures and functions across a range of land uses and ownerships.
- Create a coordinated regional stewardship network focused on maintaining and enhancing oak ecosystems that can communicate to broad audiences the value in having healthy oaks and help people understand threats to the oak ecosystems.

Urban Canopy

- Create a regional network tasked with inspiring people to value trees with the goal of reducing threats to the tree canopy, creating trees and ecosystems that are healthier, more abundant, more diverse, and more equitably distributed.

Managing Healthy Landscapes



Strategies to achieve the goal (Continued)

Prescribed Burning

- Continue to expand opportunities for emerging professionals to obtain basic wildland fire fighting skills and certification.
- Expand training opportunities to provide an avenue for emerging professionals to become a certified Prescribed Fire Burn Boss.
- Create opportunities for cross-training between organizations to provide a broader base of experience and learn how different habitats and teams approach prescribed burning.
- Continue efforts to educate the public, as well as administrative and elected officials, regarding the benefits of prescribed fire and how critical fire is to maintaining healthy landscapes.
- Strengthen the Illinois Prescribed Burning Act by advocating for the passage of SB 3724 which contains the following language: *Amends the Illinois Prescribed Burning Act. Removes provisions that provide that a property owner and any person conducting a prescribed burn is liable for actual damage or injury caused by the prescribed burn or resulting smoke upon proof of negligence. Provides instead that no landowner, agent of the landowner, or certified prescribed burn manager is liable for damage, injury, or loss caused by a prescribed burn or resulting smoke unless proven to be grossly negligent. Effective immediately.*

Managing Healthy Landscapes



What has been accomplished so far

- **Documentation and digital mapping of pre-European settlement vegetation**
 - Chicago Wilderness Alliance used historical data to create an interactive vegetation map and technical reports addressing areas across the four-state region that was used to develop the CWA Community Classification System. These findings were instrumental in showing the value of using fire to restore and manage remnant vegetation as well as a model for landscape vegetation pattern and structure.
- **Development of a regional strategy to control invasive purple loosestrife**
 - This invasive plant, introduced to commercial and residential landscapes through retail industry, was once in nearly every wetland throughout the Chicago Wilderness four-state region. Through collaboration among Chicago Wilderness Alliance partners, the coalition identified the species could be biologically controlled with the use of a non-invasive foliage-eating beetle. A successful educational program was launched publicly and within the public school system, engaging private homeowners and classroom students in the growth and release of beetles to control purple loosestrife.
- **Prescription Fire Training Program for Midwest ecosystems**
 - Chicago Wilderness Alliance helped initiate prescribed burn education appropriate for the public. The coalition of partners launched annual training opportunities that still exist today under the leadership of member organizations and are attended by dozens of people every year, continuing to shape how controlled burns are used and viewed in conservation plans. Additional training has been regularly offered to provide certification of prescribed burn bosses.
- **Plants of concern monitoring program development**
 - Hundreds of volunteers have been trained in monitoring rare-plant species to help experts understand what these plant species need to thrive. Volunteers gather information on hundreds of species throughout the Chicago Wilderness Alliance four-state region each year as part of this program that has become a model for others across the U.S.

Managing Healthy Landscapes



What has been accomplished so far (Continued)

- **Supporting priority species**
 - We support critical habitats necessary for the Priority Species including the wetlands, woodlands, prairies, savannas, streams and lakes on which they depend. Supporting our species means collaborating across the region to improve and expand critical habitats through restoration, plantings, monitoring, outreach and more.
- **Oak Ecosystem Recovery Plan**
 - Oak trees are a keystone species that are being crowded out by invasive tree species and urban development. The Oak Ecosystems Recovery Plan was created to sustain oaks in the region.

Why it matters

Although scientists and conservationists have warned of the effects of climate change for decades, now that the impacts are becoming more pronounced, and increasingly common, from extreme weather events, floods, drought, heat and more, it is more urgent than ever that we ensure climate resilience in our region, and one way to do this is by increasing and maintaining healthy landscapes. This not only increases quality of life for people and animals who live in and around those spaces, it improves the chances those landscapes will withstand significant climate challenges.

Managing Healthy Landscapes



How to get involved

The Goal 1 Managing Healthy Landscapes group meets *virtually* on a quarterly basis throughout the year. However, we are always looking for individuals with a variety of skillsets and backgrounds to support our 10 working groups, especially in the areas of invasive species, ecological data and climate:

- Invasive Species
 - [Jim Anderson, Citizens for Conservation](#)
 - [Pati Vitt, Lake County Forest Preserve District](#)
- Grassland/Shrubland Birds
 - [Daniel Suarez, Audubon Great Lakes](#)
- Wildlife Species Management
 - [Gary Glowacki, Lake County Forest Preserve District](#)
- Oak Ecosystems
 - [Lydia Scott, The Morton Arboretum](#)
- Volunteer Stewardship
 - [Megan Dunning, The Morton Arboretum](#)
 - [Jackie Bero, McHenry County Conservation District](#)
 - [Kelly Schultz, Lake County Forest Preserve District](#)

Managing Healthy Landscapes



How to get involved (Continued)

- Controlled Burning
 - John McCabe, Forest Preserves of Cook County
- Urban Tree Canopy
 - Melissa Cusic, The Morton Arboretum
- Climate Adaptation
 - Pati Vitt, Lake Country Forest Preserve District
- Ecological Data Management
 - Pati Vitt, Lake Country Forest Preserve District
- Priority Plants and Fungi
 - Greg M. Mueller, PhD, Chicago Botanic Garden

Goal Leaders

- Pati Vitt, Lake Country Forest Preserve District
- Jim Anderson, Citizens for Conservation



Growing with
Agriculture

Key message

Farmers, and the agricultural industry across the Chicago Wilderness Alliance four-state region, contribute significantly to our states' economies, feeding millions of people. They also have the potential to have a meaningful impact on regional climate resilience with the implementation of conservation-forward production practices that actively restore habitat, reduce greenhouse emissions, protect biodiversity in and around production areas, while bolstering the livelihoods of farmers by increasing crop yields and reducing the negative effects of climate change.

Our Goal

By 2030, the 4.4 million acres of agricultural lands within the Chicago Wilderness Alliance four-state region will continue to be an integral and permanent component of our regional fabric and important contributor to food-system and climate resilience. We'll support this by collaborating with farmers and agricultural production leaders to improve farming methods that result in measurable and sustained ecological improvements that increase diversity in food production for local consumption and improve quality of life in rural communities.

Growing with Agriculture



What motivates us

Farmers are stewards of the land as well as the planet's food suppliers. We believe the best way to support eco-friendly agriculture is to listen to and work with the farmers who care deeply about their land to support systemic change that will lead to a thriving farming industry across the four-state region resulting in healthier people, soils and ecosystems as well as securing a better standard of living for farmers.

Strategies to achieve the goal

- Develop/utilize standard measurements adopted across the region to track and assess agricultural lands that support nature-friendly farming practices.
- Listen to farmers and support spaces and events for them to network and share resources and ideas.
- Maintain and expand regular events, such as Field Days, in each state so that farmers, suppliers, distributors and the other members of the community can exchange successful nature-friendly practices and needs to support changes throughout the agricultural system.

What has been accomplished so far

- Agriculture is a new area of concentrated efforts for many members and partners of the Chicago Wilderness Alliance, but many within the farming community have been making great strides in these areas for years. Today, we're excited by the increasing collaboration with Chicago Wilderness Alliance partners and the farming community to innovate, test, trial and measure the success of various farming practices that aim to increase wildlife habitat, improve soil and water health, improve crop yields and contribute to climate resiliency.
- The Chicago Wildlife Alliance has recently launched efforts to bring farmers together, to learn from each other, including through events like Field Days that provide a venue for farmers currently engaging in new, conservation-forward regenerative practices to exchange ideas and to demonstrate successful techniques.

Growing with Agriculture



How to get involved

The Growing with Agriculture goal group – “the Ag Team” -- is looking to expand its reach throughout the four-state region. Individual farmers, organizations and ag businesses are encouraged to join Chicago Wilderness Alliance as a partner to be part of the teams or working groups, but membership is not required. Participation at all levels is welcome. Here are some practical ways you can get involved:

- Do you know a farmer using conservation-forward, regenerative practices? Introduce us! Or if you're that farmer, please introduce yourself by reaching out to our group leads:
 - Tim Brennan, Farm Foundation
 - Maggie Soliz, IL Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts, Kane-DuPage Soil and Water Conservation District
 - Daniel Suarez, Audubon Great Lakes
- Chicago Wilderness Alliance supports conservation forward, regenerative agricultural practices across a four-state region and we're looking to boost our impact in CWA's Wisconsin, Indiana and Michigan target areas. We welcome new members from all four states. Scholarships are available. Contact CWA coordinator Laura Reilly to learn more.
- Do you have experience with agriculture policy on the state or national level? Share your expertise by attending an Ag Team meeting. We meet virtually. If our meeting times don't work for you, don't worry, we welcome your thoughts, expertise and contribution to this focus area and we'll find ways to accommodate your schedule.
- The Ag Team meets the second Tuesday from 1-2 p.m. during odd-numbered months (January, March, May, July, September and November). Please contact CWA coordinator Laura Reilly for more information and a link to the virtual meetings.
- Attend nature-friendly farming events, such as Field Days. Visit the Chicago Wilderness Alliance calendar for current event opportunities.

Growing with Agriculture



Goal Leaders:

- Tim Brennan, Farm Foundation
- Maggie Soliz, IL Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts, Kane-DuPage Soil and Water Conservation District
- Daniel Suarez, Audubon Great Lakes

Working Group Members/The Ag Team – The Ag Team meets virtually the second Tuesday from 1-2 p.m. during odd-numbered months (January, March, May, July, September and November).

- Aimee Collins, The Conservation Fund
- Alicia Pellegrino, Shirley Heinze Land Trust
- Ben Haberthur, Forest Preserve District of Kane County
- Emy Brawley, The Conservation Fund
- Brenna Ness, McHenry County Conservation District
- Daniel Suarez, Audubon Great Lakes
- Eric Ness, Lake County Forest Preserves
- Janice Hill, Executive Planner
- Jerry Adelman, Openlands
- Jessica Mino, The Conservation Foundation

Growing with Agriculture



Working Group Members/The Ag Team (Continued)

- Jill Kostel, The Wetlands Initiative
- John Rogner, Illinois Department of Natural Resources
- Lenore Bayer, Kinship Foundation
- Maggie Soliz, Association of Illinois Soil & Water Conservation Districts
- Max Webster, American Farmland Trust
- Megan Baskerville, The Nature Conservancy
- Michelle Blackburn, Forest Preserve District of Will County
- Nathan Aaberg, Liberty Prairie Foundation
- Patrick McPartlan, Kane DuPage Soil & Water Conservation District
- Paul Botts, The Wetlands Initiative
- Tom Slawski, Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission
- Tara Neff, The Conservation Foundation
- Tim Brennan, Farm Foundation
- Tyler Strom, Illinois Agri-Food Alliance

Growing with Agriculture



Sub-Groups:

- **Innovative Practices Subcommittee** -- This sub-group meets virtually on the second Tuesday from 1-2 p.m. of even-numbered months (February, April, June, August, October and December).
 - Tim Brennan, Farm Foundation
 - Maggie Soliz, Association of Illinois Soil & Water Conservation Districts
 - Tyler Strom, Illinois Agri-Food Alliance
 - Michelle Blackburn, Forest Preserve District of Will County
 - Megan Baskerville, The Nature Conservancy
 - Daniel Suarez, Audubon Great Lakes



Key message

Healthy, ecologically valuable habitat isn't just reserved for nature preserves. Opportunities to improve our quality of life by expanding natural habitats throughout the Chicago Wilderness Alliance four-state region are bountiful and often found in unexpected places such as on roofs and around office and government buildings, school campuses, utility rights-of-way, stream corridors and detention ponds, and even our own back yards.

Our Goal

By 2030, the Chicago Wilderness Alliance will support the transformation of 84,000 acres of non-nature reserve lands on private, corporate, and public properties, creating new wildlife corridors, and increasing climate resilience across the four-state region.

Prioritizing Green Infrastructure



What motivates us

- Natural spaces enhance the quality of life for people and wildlife. Working in partnership across the Chicago Wilderness Alliance four-state region connecting communities and wildlife is essential in creating spaces where people and nature can harmoniously thrive despite a changing climate.

Strategies to achieve the goal

- Increase the number of businesses and corporations actively engaged with Chicago Wilderness Alliance and together identify new opportunities for developing healthy habitats throughout the region within non-traditional conservation landscapes.
- Engage with additional rights-of-way owners, such as railroads and highway transportation departments, to join the efforts of ComEd and Nicor Gas to transform their properties to pollinator habitats.
- Engage more school districts and universities beyond the University of Illinois system to commit to creating more pollinator spaces, which can serve to beautify campuses as well as provide opportunities for hands-on learning and research.
- Provide support to all municipalities and counties within the CWA region as they utilize an updated EPA approved 9-elements Watershed Plan to identify, prioritize, estimate cost of green Infrastructure projects, and identify stakeholders. These watershed plans will be an addendum to their approved comprehensive plans.

Prioritizing Green Infrastructure



What has been accomplished so far

- Chicago Wilderness Alliance is proud to have leaders within corporate utilities such as ComEd actively engaged in conservation actions resulting in thousands of acres of rights-of-way – including more than 500 acres of high-quality native prairie habitat -- that now serve as wildlife corridors, awarded as critical pollinator habitat, supporting biodiversity and connecting wildlife in habitats across the region.
- With the help and hard work of partners ComEd and the University of Illinois at Chicago, our Chicago Wilderness Alliance region achieved 4,000 acres in pollinator habitat expansion in recent years.

Why it matters

- People are happier and healthier when connected to nature, yet development and urban sprawl historically cut people off from nature, and closed off preserves for wildlife, hindering their movement and health, but it doesn't have to be that way. We now know how important connection to nature is for human health and wellbeing, and how wildlife corridors are for wildlife to thrive. We also now know that even small gardens, and narrow habitats spread throughout a landscape have proven vital to overall regional health for people and wildlife. Increased natural areas are even more critical to help buffer the impacts of climate change. Rights-of-way offer connections for fragmented habitat and many high-quality areas are in these corridors, add acreage to the 30x30 Initiative goals and increase biodiversity, particularly for pollinators. Further, ecosystem services can help reduce municipal costs by minimizing storm water damage, preventing contaminated water and sediment from entering waterways, and mitigate for heat island effect.

How to get involved

- Chicago Wilderness Alliance Goal 3 Prioritizing Green Infrastructure has four working sub-groups that need support from volunteer professionals with a variety of skillsets and expertise from throughout the four-state region.
- **Corporate/Industrial/Schools/University Campuses:** The group works in partnership with businesses, school districts and universities to expand green infrastructure on their properties. The team is always looking for fresh ideas and outreach support. Contact [Jim Kleinwachter](#) of The Conservation Foundation for more information on how to help.

Prioritizing Green Infrastructure



How to get involved (Continued)

- **Rights-of-Ways:** This group engages key partners, such as utilities, road authorities and conservation organizations to expand and enhance opportunities to transform rights-of-ways into biodiverse wildlife corridors across the four-state region. Those interested in supporting corridor expansion – from simple native grass plantings to high-quality native prairie habitat – may contact Sara Race of ComEd at Sara.Race@comed.com
- **Municipalities and Residential:** This group seeks to support relationships and thoroughly expand its reach across the four-state region by working with municipal governments to enhance and build upon their comprehensive green infrastructure plans. Those wishing to connect with this work may contact Maggie Soliz of Kane-DuPage County Soil and Water Conservation Districts at msoliz@res.us.
- **Tree Canopy:** This group is working to expand its presence across the four-state region in support of urban forestry initiatives and the goals of state natural resources departments in Wisconsin, Michigan, Indiana and Illinois. This group provides resources and engages in community outreach expand and enhance forestry programs and the regional tree canopy. To work with this group, please contact Laura Riley of the Chicago Wilderness Alliance at laura.reillycw@gmail.com.

Other ways to get involved

- Ask your employer/school/local government about teaming up with Chicago Wilderness Alliance and consider adding more wildlife friendly green spaces.
- Add more native plants to your own backyard; replace mowed grass and paved surfaces with native plantings when possible.

Goal Leaders

- Maggie Soliz, Kane-DuPage County Soil and Water Conservation Districts
- Sara Race, ComEd



Protecting Land and
Waters for Biodiversity
Conservation

Key message

Chicago Wilderness Alliance is working to add protected lands and waters, which are essential to improving quality of life and building climate resiliency across the four-state region. In the same spirit as the national 30x30 initiative, increasing natural areas for landscape protection will provide the biodiversity needed to sustain healthy ecosystems that allow humans and wildlife to thrive.

Our goal

Bolster quality of life and climate resiliency by adding 270,000 acres of protected lands and waters – including 27.5 acres of identified unprotected critical habitat – by 2030, while maintaining the protected status of 578,000 acres that already exist across the Chicago Wilderness Alliance four-state region.

Protecting Land and Waters for Biodiversity Conservation



What motivates us

Lush, protected landscapes are vital to the health and well-being of all who live in the Chicago Wilderness Alliance four-state region. Expanding the amount of protected lands and waters is critical to sustain healthy and diverse landscapes with abundant wildlife and the ability to withstand a changing climate. In recent years CWA partners have conserved lands and waters at a rate of about 2,525 acres per year. To meet the national 30x30 Initiative, the pace will need to increase to 33,750 acres per year.

Strategies to achieve the goal

- Support ballot initiatives to fund and expand land protection efforts, such as the Forest Preserves of Cook County referendum.
- Connect and collaborate with landowners and managers in counties throughout the Chicago Wilderness Alliance region on landscape protection goals and identify highest-priority sites.
- Work in partnership with teams focusing on increasing equitable access to nature (Goal 5), to identify opportunities to acquire and protect more lands and waters in underserved areas.
- Incentivize landowners to protect lands through voluntary conservation easements.
- Raise tax caps on operational budgets for land-management agencies, and/or develop alternative funding mechanisms to increase capacity for land managers to acquire more lands and protect watersheds.
- Host a visioning retreat to bring together top thinkers in the region and emerging next generation conservation leaders to help review availability, methodology and opportunity for conserving lands and waters outright, and importantly, to find new ways of incorporating lands and waters that are not conventionally conserved into a healthy functioning ecosystem.

Protecting Land and Waters for Biodiversity Conservation



What has been accomplished so far

The Chicago Wilderness Alliance region has roots that stretch deep into the beginnings of the modern conservation movement. From the creation of the nation's first forest preserves, to the development of

Chicago's Burnham Plan, to Chicago Wilderness's own Biodiversity Recovery Plan, the region carries the identity of an epicenter for land preservation efforts that has enhanced the quality of life for residents and supported healthy economic development. This Goal Team has focused on mapping and quantifying information of lands and waters protected to date and analyzing acquisitions over time:

- The group has established a revised Chicago Wilderness Alliance footprint of 7.97 million acres. We calculated the amount of conservation holdings in the region and analyzed the scale and pace of additional protection needs. CWA now updates the inventory of acquisitions by landowner agencies as they occur, enabling us to track the pace of protection across the region.
- In an effort not only to be reactive in tracking regional protection successes, we created a map of conservation opportunities. This "best of what's left" map assists local planners in protecting lands and waters across borders and creating corridors for plants and wildlife across the four-state region.
- The total acres protected throughout the Chicago Wilderness Alliance region since the beginning of conservation efforts in the late 19th century is 577,929, or 7.3% of the four-state region.

Why it matters

- Protecting more lands and waters, and ensuring we don't lose healthy habitat, is vital for creating a climate resilient region that will contribute to the health and well-being of all life and will support the continued economic viability of the region.

Protecting Land and Waters for Biodiversity Conservation



How to get involved

Chicago Wilderness Alliance Goal 4 Preserving Lands and Waters for Biodiversity Conservation is looking to create four teams that need support from volunteer professionals with a variety of skillsets and expertise from throughout the four-state region. Please contact CWA coordinator [Laura Reilly](#) to see where your interests and skillset would best fit:

- **Rapid Response Team (RRT)** – This team will focus on identifying and responding to immediate alerts whenever habitat is under threat. This team will devise strategies to eliminate habitat destruction throughout the four-state region, including helping Forest Preserves to safeguard their holdings against development proposals.
- **Conservation Strategy** – This team will focus on high-level brainstorming and strategic development to increase conservation holdings throughout the four-state region, reviewing availability, methodology and opportunity for conserving lands and waters outright, and finding new ways of incorporating lands and waters that are not conventionally conserved.
- **Watershed Conservation** – This team will work with other Chicago Wilderness Alliance watershed groups to conserve and protect areas identified in regional watershed plans.
- **Goal Leaders:**
 - Cathy Geraghty, Forest Preserves of Cook County
 - Ben Haberthur, Forest Preserve District of Kane County
 - David Holman, data specialist, Liberty Prairie Foundation

Protecting Land and Waters for Biodiversity Conservation



- **Supporting Group Members**

- Ed Collins McHenry County Conservation District
- Jim Anderson, Lake County Forest Preserve District
- Debra Moskovits, Field Museum
- Brook McDonald, The Conservation Foundation
- Todd Boonstra, US Fish and Wildlife Service
- Ralph Schultz, Forest Preserves of Will County
- Erik Neidy, Forest Preserve District of DuPage County
- Matthew Freer, Chicago Park District
- Ben Helphand, NeighborSpace
- Margaret Frisbie, Friends of the Chicago River
- John Rogner, Illinois Department of Natural Resources
- Fran Harty, The Nature Conservancy
- Casey J. Sullivan, Argonne National Laboratory
- Walter G. Levernier, Fermilab
- Laura Reilly, Chicago Wilderness
- Laurel Ross, Field Museum
- Chris Slattery, Forest Preserves of Cook County

Protecting Land and Waters for Biodiversity Conservation



- **Supporting Group Members (Continued)**
 - Christopher Adas, Forest Preserves of Cook County
 - Diana Krug, Forest Preserves of Cook County
 - Michelle Uting, Forest Preserves of Cook County
 - Stacy Meyers, US Environmental Protection Agency
 - Mark Bouman, Field Museum
 - Mark Johnston, Field Museum
 - Izabella Redlinski, Forest Preserves of Cook County
 - Colleen Novander, Forest Preserves of Will County
 - Jennifer schwarz Chicago Botanic Garden
 - Airis Cervantes, Morton Arboretum



Increasing
Equitable Access
to Nature

Key message

Nature should be for everyone, yet green spaces are not equitably distributed nor equally accessible. We are committed to addressing historical inequities and increasing access to nature for people in the Chicago Wilderness Alliance four-state region who have been historically excluded from its benefits.

Our Goal

By 2030, the Chicago Wilderness Alliance will represent the full diversity of the region to:

1. Increase access to natural areas and green spaces of all types that are welcoming to all;
2. Expand nature-based programming across the region, particularly in places with the least area of healthy green space as of 2020;
3. Directly addresses the region's legacy of environmental injustice.

These efforts will expand who reaps nature's benefits, with an emphasis on those who have been historically excluded, and deepen people's engagement with nature across the region.

Increasing Equitable Access to Nature



What motivates us:

Nature is for everyone. The plants, animals and habitats across the Chicago Wilderness Alliance region provide tangible social, cultural, health, and economic benefits to residents and visitors of the region. Yet, these benefits are not equitably distributed, nor equally accessible to all, damaging quality of life and opportunity in many neighborhoods and jurisdictions.

Strategies to achieve the goal:

- Seek the voices and perspectives of historically underrepresented communities.
 - Specifically, grow strategic community partnerships with BIPOC-led environmental organizations to understand the barriers to accessing nature, work collaboratively to enact change, and support their growth and capacity to enact change.
- Increase public awareness of the locations, assets and benefits of green spaces and nature across the four-state region.
 - Provide multilingual information about green spaces and natural areas.
 - Increase outreach and social media to a wider variety of people and institutions about green spaces and their benefits.
- Expand nature-based programming in places with the least area of healthy green space as of 2020.
- Decrease costs and fees associated with accessing natural areas, including transportation, parking and site fees.
- Increase mobility and access to green spaces:
 - Create 20% more bike lanes connected to green space.
 - Increase the length of greenways and blueways by 10%.

Increasing Equitable Access to Nature



Strategies to achieve the goal (Continued)

- Increase the number of green spaces.
 - Contribute to annual increases in green space in the majority of jurisdictions in the region, incorporating as much as possible community-defined green spaces.

What has been accomplished so far

- Chicago Wilderness is committed to working together to increase equitable access to nature.

Why it matters

- Nature underpins our health and well-being. Everyone should have equal access to nature's benefits.

How to get involved

- Join the team working to achieve this goal.
- Individuals, organizations, and businesses are encouraged to join Chicago Wilderness as a partner to be part of the teams or working groups, but membership is not required.
- View the Chicago Wilderness Calendar of Events to find upcoming goal group meetings. All are welcome to attend.

Goal Leaders

- Radhika Miraglia, Friends of the Forest Preserves
- Teishetta Daniel, Chicago Park District
- Amy Rosenthal, Field Museum



Taking
Climate Action

Key message

Climate resiliency is key to the success of all Chicago Wilderness Alliance goals as well as to the survival of our planet as we know it. For biodiverse land-based and aquatic ecosystems across the four-state region to thrive, they must be able to withstand our changing climate in ways that are foreseen and unforeseen.

Our Goal

Work in collaboration with all Chicago Wilderness Alliance goal groups to ensure climate resiliency is at the forefront of all efforts to support thriving biodiversity throughout the four-state region. By 2030, all member organizations will reduce their greenhouse gas emissions by 45%, expand the suite of nature-based adaptations and apply them equitably across the region. Work on this will include Nature-based solutions (NbS) to climate change that address the national 30x30 Initiative (America the Beautiful) as well as healthy natural communities that will support carbon sequestration by robust and ecologically healthy plant communities.

Taking Climate Action



What motivates us

The climate is on a warming trajectory, as evidenced by a dramatic increase in extreme weather events across the globe, and immediate action is needed to preserve a livable planet. Reaching net-zero throughout the four-state Chicago Wilderness Alliance region is an achievable, but challenging goal that can best be attained through collaboration and cohesiveness. Our communities and governing bodies must be engaged and committed to understanding nature-based solutions to our climate crisis and take action.

Strategies to achieve the goal

Mitigation

- Engage every Chicago Wilderness Alliance member and partner as the alliance develops standardized metrics for measuring their carbon footprint – ways in which they are contributing to greenhouse gas emissions – and identify ways to reduce emissions by 45% by 2030, and ultimately eliminate them.

Government Relations and Advocacy

- Ensure climate resiliency measures are at the forefront by maintaining relationships with key legislators in Wisconsin, Illinois, Indiana and Michigan and supporting members in advocating for climate-forward policies.
- Maintain and expand relations with local governmental bodies across the four-state region to help officials identify their needs and implement climate-forward practices.
- Update partners on opportunities to civically engage and advocate for climate-forward measures.

Taking Climate Action



Strategies to achieve the goal (Continued)

Community Awareness and Education

- Expand educational outreach in Illinois, Wisconsin, Indiana and Michigan to supply teachers with valuable climate change information and resources.

Ecosystem Resilience and Adaptation

- Collaborate with members of the other six Green Vision goals to ensure that expertise on adaption-based strategies is available in all areas – healthy landscape management, agriculture, green infrastructure, land conservation, protecting healthy water and providing equitable access to nature throughout the region.

Climate Equity and Environmental Justice

- Support the work of – Goal 5 Increasing Equitable Access to Nature – to ensure the Taking Climate Action goal group understands the identified inequities and provides climate-forward supports to ensure climate resiliency in all CWA communities.
- Support, promote and advocate for measures and initiatives that center the priorities of underserved communities.

Taking Climate Action



What has been accomplished so far

- CWA has run successful climate change professional development clinics for public school teachers and others, providing age-appropriate resources and dealing with disinformation in the classroom.
- The goal group is in the midst of developing standardized metrics for measuring the greenhouse gas emissions for all CWA partners who will be able to use this information to reduce their carbon footprint with the goal of eventually attaining net zero.
- CWA has created a roadmap for climate resiliency through the Climate Action Plan for Nature, a comprehensive guide to managing and restoring natural communities, identifying conservation goals, deliver environmental education, promote sustainable development, involve residents in decision-making and enhance the quality of life for all throughout the four-state region.
- CWA has refined a robust ActionAlert system that allows for members to share timely opportunities to civically engage in and support partners' policy work.

Why it matters

Robust action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions is the only way to preserve a livable planet and thwart the worst impacts of our changing climate across the Chicago Wilderness Alliance four-state region.

Taking Climate Action



How to get involved

- Individuals, organizations, and businesses are encouraged to join Chicago Wilderness as a partner to be part of the teams or working groups, but membership is not required. Scholarships are available. Contact [Laura Reilly](#), CW coordinator, to learn more.
- Commit a team within your organization tasked specifically with understanding its climate footprint and recommending ways to mitigate it.
- **Goal Leaders:**
 - [Ted Haffner, The Nature Conservancy in Illinois](#)
 - [Michelle Carr, The Nature Conservancy in Illinois](#)
 - **Subcommittees**
 - Adaptation
 - [Doug Stotz, The Field Museum](#)
 - Mitigation
 - [Casey Sullivan, Argonne National Laboratory](#)
 - Climate Equity and Environmental Justice
 - [Mario Longoni, The Field Museum](#)
 - Community Awareness and Education
 - [Susan Ask, Animalia Project](#)
 - Government Relations and Advocacy
 - [Ellicia Sanchez, The Nature Conservancy of Illinois](#)

Taking Climate Action

Active working group members:





Protecting
Healthy Water

Key message

With 34,700 linear miles of streams; over 169,000 acres of inland lakes and marshes, and 126 miles of Lake Michigan coastline, protecting, maintaining and restoring aquatic environments across the four-state region has been an overwhelming prospect. Yet with the proper baseline index tool in place, Chicago Wilderness Alliance members and partners will be able to share information and comprehensively measure improvements to watershed health as each partner tackles their unique goals for reaching the federal 30 by 30 Climate Initiative.

Our Goal: Chicago Wilderness Alliance member organizations across the four-state region will be able to access a regionalized baseline index to contribute to and comprehensively measure improvements to watershed health with the goal of supporting partners in protecting, maintaining and restoring 30% of their freshwater aquatic environments by 2030.

Protecting Healthy Water



What motivates us

From protected forests to food-supplying agricultural land, water is essential to all life and robust ecosystems. Water is prevalent throughout the four-state region in the form of streams, wetlands, marshes, rivers, creeks, ponds and lakes, so there is no one plan that works at protecting fresh water in each individual ecosystem. Water is a prominent player in our changing climate as increasingly severe weather systems prompt a challenging flood-drought cycle that threatens the well-being of the entire Chicago Wilderness Alliance region. CWA seeks to empower members with the tools needed to protect all forms of fresh water, bolster climate resiliency and improve people's quality of life.

Strategies to achieve the goal

- Use lessons learned from the EPA Healthy Water Index to establish a baseline and metrics by 2025, giving members a chance to use the tool to secure funds for localized freshwater projects.
 - Educate partners on how to contribute data and use the tool.
- To make the goal of creating a water measurement tool more manageable, consider different levels of commitment through which members and partners can be involved.
 - The goal team has worked closely with experts, and is now eager to invite other levels of users into the conversation to gather feedback on how they need the tool to function to make it as useful as possible.

What has been accomplished so far

- A team of water-protection experts spearheaded plans to create a regionalized index that will support members and partners throughout the Chicago Wilderness Alliance four-state region in protecting, restoring, and maintaining the region's watershed health and meeting the federal 30 by 30 Climate Initiative.

Protecting Healthy Water



Why it matters

- Healthy watersheds are critical to the quality of life for people and wildlife, including providing food, healthy drinking water, and habitat for native plants and animals.
- There currently is no baseline for watershed health, nor is there any consistent measurement taking place. Without this, we do not have a good understanding of the quality of the region's water resources.

How to get involved

- The Chicago Wilderness team working to achieve this goal welcomes additional members and leaders. Individuals, organizations, and businesses are encouraged to join Chicago Wilderness as a partner to be part of the teams or working groups, but membership is not required. Contact Laura Reilly, CW coordinator, to learn more.

Goal Leaders

- Matthew Santagata, Openlands
- Jerry Adelmann, Openlands

2023 STEERING COMMITTEE ROSTER					
Position	Individual	Term	Election Cycle Groups	Next Election Cycle	Next Installation Cycle
Chair	Elizabeth Kessler	3-Years	1	2024	2025
Vice-Chair	Michelle Carr.	3-Years	1	2024	2025
Treasurer	Mike Glester	3-Years	2	2023	2024
Executive Secretary	Jim Anderson	3-Years	3	2022	2023
At-Large – 1	Jerry Adelman	3-Years	1	2024	2025
At-Large – 2	TBD	3-Years	1	2024	2025
At-Large – 3	Cathy Geraghty	3-Years	1	2024	2025
At-Large – 4	John Rogner	3-Years	1	2024	2025
At-Large – 5*	Victoria Wittig	3-Years	1	2024	2025
At-Large – 6	Mark Bouman	3-Years	2	2023	2024
At-Large – 7	David Shimberg	3-Years	2	2023	2024
At-Large – 8	Maggie Soliz	3-Years	2	2023	2024
At-Large – 9	Nathanael Pilla	3-Years	3	2022	2023
At-Large – 10	Leslie Dorworth	3-Years	3	2022	2023
At-Large – 11	Ted Haffner	3-Years	3	2022	2023

GROUP 1 (ELECTIONS 2024, 2027, 2030, ...)

Chair
Vice Chair
At-Large No. 1
At-Large No. 2
At-Large No. 3
At-Large No. 4

GROUP 2 (ELECTIONS 2023, 2026, 2029, ...)

Treasurer
At-Large No. 5*
At-Large No. 6
At-Large No. 7
At-Large No. 8

*During Election Cycle 2024, At-Large No. 5 will be slated for 2-Years to Align the Rotation

GROUP 3 (ELECTIONS 2022, 2025, 2028, ...)

Executive Secretary
At-Large No. 9
At-Large No. 10
At-Large No. 11