

Chicago Wilderness Legislative Priorities and Principles

Chicago Wilderness is a diverse organization committed to building and implementing a regional plan for vibrant nature that improves environmental and human health, promotes better quality of life, and benefits our collective home.

The Government Relations Community considers potential policy engagements through a process that reflects current CW initiatives and the political landscape. CW's mission is not advocacy driven. We acknowledge the advocacy work of our partners and member organizations. To that end, the community seeks to identify and facilitate opportunities to amplify our collective voice on issues that impact the biodiversity in the region.

Below is an outline of Chicago Wilderness' legislative priorities and principles. This list serves as a general guide to members seeking support from CW or its membership on a policy matter. It does not list specific policies as those are part of a moment in time and this guide is meant to be a consistent directing document as legislative sessions come and go. This is a living document as part of a pilot phase of the CW Government Relations Community that will be updated as CW initiatives are further developed.

Please contact Susan Donovan sdonovan@tnc.org or Michelle Uting michelle.uting@cookcountyil.gov with questions or concerns.

LANDS, WATERS, PLANTS & WILDLIFE

Principle: Chicago Wilderness supports policies and funding opportunities to advance the protection, preservation, and management of natural lands and waters and native plants and wildlife.

Priorities

- Oppose any attempt to weaken landmark conservation legislation
- Promote the value of programs that fund conservation work
- Advocate for funding opportunities that protect, preserve, and restore natural places
- Support policies that provide opportunities for access to open space and recreation
- Expand and protect the limited amount of funding dedicated to the acquisition and management of natural areas should be used for the intended purpose
- Promote the use of native species on private and public land
- Protect endangered and threatened species and their habitat

CLIMATE & INFRASTRUCTURE

Principle: Chicago Wilderness supports the maintenance and expansion of transportation alternatives and mass-transit as a tool to reduce emissions. We support initiatives that seek to mitigate the effects of climate change through reduced energy consumption and access to alternative energy options.

Priorities

- Support transportation alternatives and mass-transit
- Back the expansion of transportation alternatives and mass-transit to under-served neighborhoods
- Support research on and access to clean energy alternatives
- Promote initiatives to reduce energy consumption

- Support research on the resilience of the CW region, its communities, and its ecosystems

PEOPLE & HEALTH

Principle: Chicago Wilderness believes the benefits or burdens of environmental choices and natural areas should not be disproportionately felt by specific communities in the Chicago Wilderness Region.

Priorities

- Promote initiatives that seek to provide access to nature by removing barriers such as language gaps, mobility difficulties, safety and proximity to natural areas
- Provide support to the inclusion of nature and outdoor education in school curriculums across the region
- Frame interacting with nature as an opportunity to increase quality of life
- Promote opportunities for all communities to access jobs in the conservation field

Types of actions that can be requested (BY CW Member Only.)

1. Share info with CW partners working on this issue
2. Post issue to Government Relations Community page
3. Share on CW social media and SocialLink
4. Share action alert via CW eblast
5. Create CW Cafe on this topic/issue
6. Request CW to write letter of support*

*Requests will be evaluated by the GRC team and approved by Executive Council

Any issues raised with the Government Relations Community will be evaluated on the following criteria.

1. Is this issue relevant to the three CW Priorities and Principles?
2. How does this issue impact the community, nature, wildlife, etc of the Chicago Wilderness Region?

It is not always possible for CW to take collective action on a current legislative issue. When collective action is not possible, there are two additional options:

- a If the issue is relevant to CW and actionable, we can share information with the broader membership for each to act on their own;
- b If the issue is not relevant to a majority of CW members or is not a current actionable issue, we can refer you to a CW member organization with expertise on the issue.
- c Members are welcome to post items at any time to their own SocialLink feed.