Learning to lead with intention and investing in a regional network

*We gather, we educate, we coordinate, we collaborate and we strive!*

In 2021, CW leadership prioritized preparing the entire Chicago Wilderness Alliance to launch a renewed Green Vision. We realized that our volunteer leadership, and the leaders we hoped would emerge from the network, didn’t have the tools and resources to take on such a daunting task. So we invested in ourselves and in our partners across Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, and Wisconsin, offering free training across a host of topics.

Our goal was to make sure all interested partners had the support and skills to actually implement the Green Vision, and to empower people within the network to become leaders, regardless of their job title.

One important step was to hire the Institute for Conservation Leadership (ICL) to guide us through the process of *leading from within in an alliance*, including building capacity to better reach key and core stakeholders, get deeper into the existing membership including geographic balance, and be a welcoming space for new members to come on board.

Most of the trainings were offered at no cost to CW members and the public, though some was specifically for the CW volunteer leadership teams. Trainings included how to lead, how to create detailed agenda, building advanced
planning timelines, assessing a give-and-get ratio, and using tools like Menti and Jamboard to create a participatory experience so people can get and stay involved and engaged. ICL also helped us look at what new partners can give and get, especially in relation to diversifying and expanding the network.

Throughout this process, we reflected and gained insight, especially into the power of the network, but also into the white dominant culture of our society as a whole, and the conservation field specifically, including the philanthropy that supports conservation. We also acknowledged that the dominant culture emphasizes product over process.

We can now clearly state and agree that, while we will always support our partners in the creation of their products, Chicago Wilderness is fundamentally about the process of conservation rather than the product; that we value network connection as a fundamental part of our Alliance; and that the strength of Chicago Wilderness is in the power of its network. We can only move at the speed of the trust we develop within the Alliance and outside of it, but movement—indeed huge progress—is happening.

Perhaps most importantly, we realized that the benefits of having a network like Chicago Wilderness can best be seen by comparing to other regions that do not. What would the region look like if Chicago Wilderness hadn't been created 25 years ago? The answer is clear: there would be no shared regional vision, nor would there be the many conversations, the research and publications the exchange of knowledge and insight, the multitude of species protected and landscapes preserved and restored, the personal and professional connections, or the funding to support those concepts across four states, hundreds of organizations, and thousands of individuals.

**RFQ for Chicago Wilderness Branding Strategy & Communications/Engagement Plan for Green Vision Campaign Launch**

The Chicago Wilderness Alliance is seeking proposals from expert communication and marketing strategists to support the work of the Alliance. The selected firm will assist positioning the Chicago Wilderness brand and launching our new Green Vision by September/October 2022, which is the timeframe of hosting our Conservation Congress.

The qualified candidate will provide services that include, but are not limited to consulting on brand strategy, diverse audience development,
messaging/content plans, communications plans, roadmap strategy, integration of justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion principles.

Please share the attached RFQ with potential candidates. Proposals will be accepted through March 14.

Prescribed Burn Training Opportunities in March

S130 Basic Wildland Firefighter Training (Field Day only), March 10.

CW Prescribed Burn Crew Training at McHenry County Conservation District, March 19.

S219 Ignition Operations Training on March 24-25.
Unmanned Aircraft Vehicles (UAVs) and Public Land

Wednesday, March 2

10-11:30 am CST

Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs), or drones, play useful roles in gathering data, showcasing conservation work, and in responding to emergency situations, but they also pose a potential threat to wildlife, public safety, and may impact peoples' wilderness/nature experience. Join this conversation to learn how UAVs are being used on behalf of conservation and outdoor recreation and how public land agencies are implementing the federal and state rules regarding UAVs and ensuring the responsible use of drones in the air space above their lands.

Moderators:
Ellicia Sanchez, The Nature Conservancy of Illinois
Michelle Uting, Forest Preserves of Cook County

Co-hosts/Speakers

Anthony Tindall, Forest Preserves of Cook County Policy & Sustainability Manager
Garret Wais, Forest Preserves of Cook County GIS Specialist
John Buehler is the NPS Aviation Branch Chief.
Kristin Swoboda is National Park Service (NPS) Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) program manager

Reducing Barriers to the Outdoors through Gear Libraries
This presentation will talk about how gear libraries expand access to the outdoors in the Chicago Wilderness region and beyond. Participants will hear about a national network, the Outdoors Empowered Network, that works with local partners to provide gear through gear libraries to help support communities in changing the face of adventure recreation. Participants will learn about local gear libraries and how to use them and how they can help increase access through gear and training!

**Moderator:**
Teish Daniel, Chicago Park District

**Co-hosts/Speakers:**

Allison Paul, the Field Museum  
Liz Holley, Chicago Park District  
Brian Arnoldt, Forest Preserves of Cook County  
Katie Grundin, Forest Preserves of Cook County  
Justin Mercer, Forest Preserves of Cook County  
Kristen Baecker, Forest Preserves of Cook County

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**One Earth Film Festival March 4-13**

The 11th annual [One Earth Film Fest](#) is coming March 4 - 13. Please help #TurnTheTide on climate change and environmental injustice by [sharing the festival](#) with your audiences, staff and members!

Thousands of people will gather throughout the nation and world-wide to watch and discuss films at **17 virtual watch parties and several Chicago-based events**. All events include live Q&As with filmmakers and expert panelists.

Events are free, with a suggested $8 donation.
Time to start thinking about the City Nature Challenge! From April 29th through May 2nd, 2022, people in >400 metro regions in >40 countries will be snapping and sharing photos of flora and fauna for this annual global bioblitz. Whether you bird in downtown Chicago or botanize in Kankakee, all Chicago Metro area nature sightings added to iNaturalist during the City Nature Challenge weekend will automatically count for the challenge. The City Nature Challenge aims to connect people in metro areas to their local nature (and each other) as well as create data for science and conservation. With over 1.2 million observations made during the 2021 weekend, this is big for urban biodiversity data!

If you or your organization are planning an event, fill out this form and it will be added to the list of regional events. Join the iNaturalist project to stay up-to-date, watch this Chicago Wilderness Cafe to learn more about iNaturalist and the CNC.

TEAM UPDATES:
WORKING TOWARDS THE GREEN VISION
Join a CW Team or Working Group. Login to the CW Partner portal to join and learn how to participate. Watch this short training video. Add members of your staff to the CW portal so that they can get involved. Send Laura Reilly their name and email address.

Upcoming CW Workshops, Team Meetings and Events

**CW Cafe: Unmanned Aircraft Vehicles (UAVs) & Public Lands**  
3/2/2022

**CW Mapping Hub Team Meeting**  
3/7/2022

**CW Growing With Agriculture Team Meeting (Goal#2)**  
3/8/2022

**S130 Basic Wildland Firefighter Training (Field Day Only)**  
3/10/2022
CW Resources

Please share your events, jobs, internships and opportunities with us so that we can help connect

CW Meetings, Regional Events, Programs, Awards, and Funding Opportunities
View full calendar below and add your opportunities here.
Career Center

Find and share job and career resources in the region.

Policy Action Request

Are you a CW partner organization with an issue you want shared with the CW community? Review our Government Relations Community Legislative Priorities and Principles and fill out this form for consideration or post directly to your SocialLink feed.

Download the Annual Report 2021
Support the Chicago Wilderness Alliance and Green Vision
Renew Your Membership, Become a Partner or Donate Today

4www.chicagowilderness.org

If you would like to unsubscribe: @@unsubscribe_url@@