

Goal 5: Nature Access and Benefits for People

Background: Nature is for everyone. The plants, animals, and habitats in the Chicago Wilderness region provide tangible economic, social, cultural, and health benefits to the 11.5M residents who live here and the 60M who work, convene, and visit every year. Combined with the diverse human communities of the region, they constitute the shared natural and cultural heritage inherited by each generation. Yet currently, these benefits are not equitably distributed, and the natural assets that sustain them are not equally accessible to all, damaging quality of life and opportunity in many neighborhoods and jurisdictions.

The Goal: By 2025, a Chicago Wilderness alliance representing the full diversity of the region will have identified and implemented the best approaches 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 in 2020; and (3) foster a regional partnership that addresses the region's legacy of environmental injustice and as part of its internal operations and external relationships. At least **3M more people** will reap nature's benefits from this activation of local green spaces, with an emphasis on those who have historically been excluded.

Coordination:

- **Lead Organization(s)/CW Committees etc:** The Field Museum, Chicago Park District, TBD
- **Supporting Organizations/Committees:** CW Education Committee
- **Primary Point Person:** Amy Rosenthal, Teishetta Daniel
- **Steering Committee Most Accountable Person:** Amy Rosenthal

Key Sub-Goals on access, programming, and process:

Increased **access** will be fostered by:

- **Growing community partnerships** to truly understand barriers to access to nature and collaboratively address them in ways that mitigate negative impacts such as green gentrification, etc.
- **Increasing outreach and communications** that expand and enhance local knowledge and perceptions of what and where nature is and provide tools for parents, teachers, students, residents, and others
- **Providing multilingual information** available about double the number of green spaces and natural areas
- Increasing the **length of greenways and blueways by 10%**
- Creating 20% more **bike lanes** connected to green space
- **Decreasing costs and fees** associated with accessing these areas, including transport, parking, and site fees
- Annual increases in **green space** in the majority of jurisdictions in the region, incorporating as much as possible community-defined green spaces such as community gardens, neighborhood trees, schoolyard gardens, and backyards

Increased **programming** will be fostered by:

- 10% increase in children served by **environmental education programs** through collaboration and partnerships with families, schools, health care professionals, day cares, and other avenues
- 10% increase in participation in nature-based and outdoor programming for people of all ages
- **Annual expansion** in partnership, programming, outreach, and education in jurisdictions where the majority of residents are low-income and/or people of color

More equitable distribution of resources will be fostered by **decision-making processes** that include a variety of stakeholders reflecting the diversity of the region. To this end, the Chicago Wilderness alliance will:

- Sustain a more **diverse membership** across the dimensions of race, ability, geography, age, sexual orientation, and religion preference
- Build capacity to 1) address long standing barriers to diversity, equity and inclusion in the conservation movement, such as implicit bias, narrow recruitment practices, inadequate training, and poor retention of people of color and 2) support anti-bias and anti-racist practices that aim to make green spaces and CW organizations more inclusive and diverse
- Establish practices that annually increase the number of **community-based organizations participating in CW** and the socioeconomic and **racial diversity of stakeholders** actively engaged in all aspects of the alliance, including its leadership