

Strategic Plan

2019-2021

Chippewa
Watershed
Conservancy

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CWC | CHIPPEWA
WATERSHED
CONSERVANCY

Protecting Central Michigan's
Valuable Natural Resources



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Mission Statement

To protect and restore Central Michigan's land, water, and wildlife resources to improve the quality of life for all.

Vision

We see a world where communities are enriched by being connected to land, water, and wildlife resources.

Core Values

Land Protection: We believe that it is critical to set aside land to be preserved in a natural state for its scenic beauty, wildlife habitat protection, water and air quality protection, recreational opportunity and community sustainability.

Water Quality: We believe that by protecting and restoring land that we play a pivotal role in preserving water quality for all.

Wildlife Habitat: We believe in the value of protecting wildlife habitat in order to preserve biodiversity.

Access to Nature: We believe that providing opportunities for public non-motorized outdoor recreation opportunities on lands we own and manage that does not permanently impair its condition is an effective way to connect people to the natural environment.

Environmental Education: We believe that educating both children and adults is core to our success and sustainability in the long-term. Environmental education is an important tool to connect adults and children to nature, spread awareness about the need for land conservation and increase the presence of CWC in the community.

High Visibility and Broad Support: We believe all people in Central Michigan should recognize our name and positively associate us with land and water conservation.

Sustainable Management: We believe that building adequate financial and human resources is essential to allow us to achieve our mission in perpetuity.

Service Area

Our service area is Clare, Gratiot, Isabella, Mecosta and Montcalm Counties in the state of Michigan.

I. Land Protection

- I. Engage in land protection projects that meet the following criteria.
 - A. General Criteria. In considering whether to move forward with a land protection project the following general criteria apply:
 1. The protection of the property is consistent with local zoning.
 2. We are interested in acquiring land that has value for conservation, education, or recreation purposes.
 3. We are interested in acquiring land only if we can fulfill whatever stewardship responsibilities, i.e. monitoring, management, and enforcement are associated with the given property.
 4. The property is of sufficient size whereby its conservation resources are likely to stay intact, even if adjacent properties are developed.
 5. We will consider whether the cost of protection is reasonable and whether the project is viable both from a short-term and long-term financial perspective.
 6. Activity on surrounding land may increase the need for protection or may reduce the viability of meeting the conservation objectives.
 7. Preference will be given to land acquisitions over 20 acres and conservation easements over 40 acres in total size. The organization may still decide to protect a smaller parcel if conservation values warrant.
 - B. Natural Resource Criteria. In considering whether to move forward with a land protection project the following general natural resource criteria apply:

1. Habitat for plant or animal species classified by the state or federal government as rare, endangered, or threatened.
2. Land connecting existing protected areas that enhances movement and protection of wildlife.
3. Scenic outlook or key element within a scenic landscape.
4. Productivity for agricultural and/or forest products.
5. Land important for ground and surface water quality protection and improvement, or for providing natural control of flooding.
6. Land providing public recreational opportunities consistent with the protection of natural resources.
7. Land providing important educational or research opportunities which also relate to other natural resource criteria.

C. Other Favorable Factors

1. Proximity of population centers for purposes of recreation, education, or scenic enjoyment by the public.
2. There is a threat of development. We do not oppose development but instead strive to provide a balance between community growth and conservation. Areas which would be negatively affected by development or which provide needed open space in otherwise developed areas will be considered for protection.
3. There is a low level of existing protection.
4. There is a low potential for future monitoring, management, liability, or enforcement problems.
5. We are interested in working to preserve land within the watershed area that will include some degree of public access or usage where appropriate. Various types of access may include, but are not limited to such uses as: walking, hiking

trails, swimming, camping, cycling, skiing, fishing or hunting.

D. Complicating Factors. The following factors must be considered in the project evaluation:

1. Freedom from hazardous waste contamination. Hazards such as, but not limited to fuel tanks or abandoned buildings must be detailed in the project proposal. We are not able to proceed with protection of properties at risk from hazards or risks of contamination without prior clean up or removal or without a remediation plan.
2. Title consideration: Significant problems or defects should be brought to the Board's immediate attention. Any encroachment, easement or boundary dispute which could affect CWC ownership or management of the property must be described in the proposal presented to the board.
3. Conservation Easement Amendments: As general rule conservation easements will not be considered for amendment. Only for extenuating and compelling reasons should the Board consider amending an easement and then only after evidence has been presented that there would be no net loss of conservation value that the easement was designed to protect. An amendment to a conservation easement may occur only if the change would strengthen or have a neutral effect on the easement provisions.
4. CWC Access: Property access is imperative for stewardship and monitoring purposes. Proposed property restrictions and reserved rights must not interfere with the overall conservation value of the project.
5. Public Access: We are interested in working to preserve land within the watershed area that will include some degree of public access or usage where appropriate. Various types of access may include but are not limited to such uses as:

walking, hiking trails, swimming, camping, skiing, cycling, fishing, or hunting.

II. Land Stewardship

1. Follow the CWC Land Stewardship Policy and each preserve's stewardship plan for management of fee-simple properties.
2. Monitor each conservation easement and preserve annually.
3. Train volunteers including preserve stewards and easement and preserve monitors annually.
4. Update GIS parcel maps for all conservation easements and preserves.
5. Develop Forest Management Plans on all preserves for forest health and enhancement of wildlife habitat.
6. Place standard signage on the following preserves:
 - A. Neyer Preserve
 - B. Hiawatha Hills Preserve
 - C. Kjolhede's Kove Preserve
 - D. Lake Steven (replace sign)
 - E. Peterson Natural Area (replace sign)
 - F. Sponseller Preserve
7. Develop partnerships to best manage invasive species and trail networks on preserves.
8. Evaluate and pursue opportunities for CWC to assist with management and/or development of mismanaged or underutilized public land such as trail development or invasive species management.
9. Identify preserves for trail and/or public access development where high-quality recreational opportunities exists and minimal degradation of natural resources will occur.

III. Fundraising and Financial Resources

1. Follow the CWC Fundraising Plan. Update plan for 2019-2023.
2. Expand funding through grants to support new staff positions, operations and capital projects.
3. Increase membership by 10% annually.
4. Increase endowment funds by 10% annually.
5. Grow annual operating budget by 5% annually.
6. Grow land protection fund by 10% annually.
7. Add five new members for the Conservation Legacy Society planned giving program.
8. Maintain the Land Trust Alliance required minimum amount in Conservation Defense Fund.
9. Continue organization of annual spring banquet and fall fundraising event.
10. Identify and secure reliable source of funding to support staff and operations expenses.
11. Develop one new annual membership event.
12. Assess opportunities to acquire and sell land to generate additional revenue.
13. Identify opportunities to manage forest land on preserves to generate additional revenue while promoting healthy forests and wildlife habitat.
14. Partner with local government or public school entity in the CWC coverage area to secure program support such as through the Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe of Michigan and other local resources.
15. Increase membership so at least 10% of our members live in each county in our service area.
16. Annually network with staff and trustees of area foundations.

IV. Marketing, Outreach and Environmental Education Programming

1. Follow the 2019-2021 CWC Marketing, Communications and Public Outreach Plan. Update plan every three years.
2. Utilize website, newsletter, email, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, local radio, television, newspaper and other similar forms of media to market the work CWC does.
3. Produce and disseminate Heron Tracks, the CWC newsletter, three times annually.
4. Send out weekly emails regarding upcoming events, volunteer opportunities and important land protection news to recipients.
5. Continue recruiting and scheduling new presenters for the monthly CWC Speaker Series.
6. Solicit new environmental educational event leaders annually.
7. Expand Preschool Preservers Program to other preschools in our service area.
8. Network with local, state, federal and tribal government officials to support outreach efforts about the work we do.
9. Continue offering programming to area alternative schools under the Wilderness Wanderers Project.
10. Articulate the relationships about land protection and water quality to citizens and government leaders.
11. Continue to offer indoor and outdoor environmental education programming every season.
12. Routinely update fundraising mailing lists for accuracy.
13. Develop and strengthen relationships with key partners such as:
 - a. Educational Institutions
 - i. Central Michigan University
 - ii. Chippewa Hills School District
 - iii. Clare Public Schools
 - iv. Ferris State University

- v. Mid-Michigan College
 - vi. Mt. Pleasant Public Schools
 - vii. Shepherd Public Schools
- b. Environmental Conservation Organizations
 - i. Michigan Department of Natural Resources
 - ii. Michigan Department of Environmental Quality
 - iii. Isabella County Parks and Recreation Commission
 - iv. Mt. Pleasant Parks and Recreation
 - v. Heart of the Lakes
 - vi. Land Trust Alliance
 - vii. Little Forks Conservancy
 - viii. Saginaw Basin Land Conservancy
 - ix. Headwaters Land Conservancy
 - x. Land Conservancy of West Michigan
 - xi. Saginaw Bay Watershed Initiative Network (WIN)
- c. Public Agencies
 - i. Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe of Michigan
 - ii. Counties in our Service Area
 - iii. Villages and Cities in our Service Area
 - iv. Townships in our Service Area
 - v. State of Michigan

V. Administration

1. Develop additional staff capacity (.5 FTE equivalent).
2. Formalize a CWC internship program.
3. Develop a five year CWC Technology Plan.
4. Ensure continued compliance with Land Trust Alliance Standards and Practices.
5. Annually review committee structure and make changes as necessary.
6. Coordinate monthly meetings for CWC Relationships Committee, Governance Committee and Lands Committee.
7. Update all organizational policies every five years or less.
8. Continue to offer staff and board members professional development opportunities.
9. Develop a CWC Succession Plan.
10. Review and/or upgrade office technology and furniture annually.
11. Routinely seek out new funding sources.
12. Ensure all grants are properly managed and reports are submitted on time.