



# STRATEGIC PLAN

2011-2015

Hoosier Chapter

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## ABOUT THE SOCIETY

The Soil and Water Conservation Society (SWCS) is a nonprofit scientific and educational organization—founded in 1943—that serves as an advocate for conservation professionals and for science-based conservation practice, programs, and policy. SWCS members around the world include researchers, administrators, planners, policymakers, technical advisors, teachers, students, farmers, and ranchers. Our members come from nearly every academic discipline and many different public, private, and nonprofit institutions. SWCS chapters represent the grassroots element of the organization. They conduct a variety of activities at local, state, and provincial levels and on university campuses.

The Society's mission is *to foster the science and art of natural resource conservation*. Our work targets conservation of soil, water, and related natural resources on working lands—the lands used to produce food, fiber, and other services that improve the quality of life people experience in rural and urban communities. We work to discover, develop, implement, and constantly improve ways to use land that sustain its productive capacity and enhance the environment at the same time.

The Hoosier Chapter was officially organized in 1948 and from that time has been one of the leading Chapters in the nation, winning numerous awards for our professional development and leadership activities. Many of our members have served in leadership roles in the Society and have also been recognized individually for their outstanding service. We were one of the first Chapters in the Society to fully embrace the idea of strategic planning. Since our first plan 15 years ago, we have successfully used these plans to help the members stay focused on our goals and be an effective voice for conservation in Indiana.

## CURRENT PLAN

Every five years, the Chapter Development and Administration Committee leads an effort to review and update the organization's strategic plan. This is important to the Chapter because the annual plan of work and budget are developed from the strategic plan. The planning process for the current plan began in November of 2009 with an on-line survey of all members. Members were asked to respond to questions about the primary function of the organization, important customers, key products and services, and what the future should look like. The response from members was 36%, which was good given the short timeframe. The survey proved very helpful to the Council's leaders as they began the process of reviewing and revising the plan.

As far as function and purpose of the Chapter, professional development and training opportunities for members and others ranked highest, with 91.8% of all respondents indicating it as very important. The second highest ranking was networking and mutual support, and the third was building partnerships. Practicing conservationists were named as the most important customers we serve, with conservation-minded agencies/organizations, academia, researchers, and policy makers ranking second and third. Students seeking employment or studies in conservation-related fields ranked fourth.

Key products or services the Hoosier Chapter provides are training opportunities, a unified voice for conservation-related matters, networking opportunities, and partnership building.

Participants were also asked open ended questions in three areas:

- How must we change and evolve in order to realize your vision of the future? What are the barriers?
- Where do you see the Hoosier Chapter in 5 to 10 years? Do you see any change in focus? Emerging areas of emphasis?
- If you could change just one thing to improve the Chapter, what one thing would you change?

Over 80 handwritten comments were received in response to these questions. All comments were grouped and summarized for the planning committee. Diversity of members, connecting with students, keeping our website up to date, and getting more people involved were the most often mentioned comments. Limited time and resources were named as the largest barrier to membership growth and involvement. Communications and outreach were high on the list and stressed the need for improved visibility, staying in tune with technology, the development of high quality products and tools for marketing. Partnership building and training were also stressed as ways we can keep the Chapter strong and viable.

One of the biggest changes in the current plan is a revision of the strategic priorities. Although all areas of the organization are important, this plan focuses most of our energy on **our members**—so you will see more efforts in recruitment, retention, engagement, networking, mentoring, training, and working with students. With limited time and resources, the planning group tried to narrow the focus to the strategies that are critical in the next few years and could provide us the biggest return on investment. The plan also focuses on two other important goals – advocacy and partnership building.

# HOOSIER CHAPTER STRATEGIC PLAN

## VISION

*A professional society that promotes the wise use of soil, water, and related natural resources in Indiana through professional development, collaboration, and advocacy.*

## PRIORITIES

Professional Development

Networking and Mentoring

Partnership and Alliance Building

Membership Recruitment and Involvement

Advocacy

## GOALS, KEY CONSIDERATIONS AND STRATEGIES

### PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

**GOAL 1: We will provide professional development opportunities that meet the needs of members, students, and other professionals.**

#### **Key Considerations:**

- Members have identified that professional development is the most important reason they are members.
- Employers cannot provide all the technical training needed.
- Members need to be the best professionals they can be.
- Membership in the Society offers many opportunities to develop leadership skills.

#### **Strategies:**

1. Visit student chapters and colleges to promote the Society and also careers in conservation-related fields.
2. Hold at least two professional development meetings each year that include CEU opportunities.
3. Promote participation in regional and international Society activities.
4. Keep abreast of emerging technology and conservation issues and communicate to members.
5. Encourage members to participate in leadership development training offered at the regional and international level.
6. Offer certification training and testing opportunities whenever possible.
7. Provide training on the basics of conservation and our SWCS history.
8. Extend training opportunities to non-members who are in conservation related jobs.

## NETWORKING AND MENTORING

**GOAL 2. We will foster a culture of networking and mentoring.**

**Key Considerations:**

- The opportunity to network is a high priority for members.
- The Society provides social, educational, and professional benefits to members.
- Membership in the Society connects us to resources and provides opportunities to find solutions.
- The Society connects us on an area, state, region, and national level.
- It is important to pass on the knowledge and expertise of those who are advanced in their careers.

**Strategies:**

1. Hold regional networking events, such as Council meetings.
2. Provide social and family opportunities by tagging on to other events to get members together, e.g. football and basketball games, summer meeting, etc.
3. Actively link members with potential mentors by creating a mentor cadre and providing training and support to both mentors and mentees.
4. Encourage members to sign up for SWCS on-line social networking opportunities.
5. Utilize job shadowing opportunities such as the “Walk A Mile in My Boots” program through NRCS.
6. Include member spotlights in newsletters and on the web.
7. Investigate and promote opportunities to network with other chapters.
8. Explore potential projects that would bring members together, e.g. river clean up.

## PARTNERSHIP AND ALLIANCE BUILDING

**GOAL 3. We will actively seek and maintain alliances with organizations, groups, and individuals that can help us achieve our vision.**

**Key Considerations:**

- Partnering with like minded groups creates a larger voice for conservation.
- Partnerships make more efficient use of limited member resources.
- Increase opportunities for cross-training and building our knowledge base.
- Enhance our perspective and ability to see the bigger picture.

**Strategies:**

1. Identify opportunities to hold co-sponsored events.
2. Continue to participate in the Indiana Conservation Alliance (INCA).
3. Identify opportunities to partner with other organizations and professional societies that offer training.
4. Organize events around special areas of interest (e.g. Mississippi River Basin and Great Lakes Restoration Initiatives).
5. Invite key leaders to attend SWCS activities or events (professors, agency leaders, etc.).
6. Look for opportunities to partner with businesses that are bringing new technology and funding to the market.

## MEMBERSHIP RECRUITMENT AND INVOLVEMENT

### **GOAL 4. We will recruit, retain, and engage members.**

#### **Key Considerations:**

- Recognize that people have limited time and money.
- Diverse membership improves knowledge base, provides a broader perspective of issues, and increases credibility.
- Continually identifying member needs is important.
- Additional members give us a louder voice.
- Students can benefit significantly by attending meetings, becoming members and/or participating in a student chapter.
- Members can fulfill personal objectives such as contributing to a larger cause – something bigger than themselves.
- Membership offers opportunities to get to know people on a different level.
- Membership in professional societies often provides an “edge” in competing for jobs.
- SWCS provides opportunities for recognition of professional abilities and other conservation accomplishments.
- Promote the Society’s value to members and non members.

#### **Strategies:**

1. Identify ways to diversify our membership.
2. Actively seek opportunities to engage members in the work of the Chapter, such as committees.
3. Identify new membership pools and methods of approaching potential members.
4. Find meaningful ways to engage student chapters.
5. Look for opportunities to create new student chapters.
6. Increase visibility with all conservation related agencies and organizations.
7. Maintain an up-to-date website to help members stay connected.

## ADVOCACY

### **GOAL 5. We will be a voice for natural resources conservation in the legislative process and public policy.**

#### **Key Considerations:**

- The future of conservation is influenced and impacted by the legislative processes and policy makers.
- Members and the general public need to have an awareness of current issues and trends related to natural resources.
- Members want to have a united voice and an opportunity to be proactive.

#### **Strategies:**

1. Provide a representative to serve on the Indiana Conservation Alliance (INCA) workgroup to identify and support important issues related to the mission of the Society.
2. Annually solicit member input into the Chapter's policy development using tools such as position statements, resolutions, focus forums, etc. to help identify gaps in needed policy and provide a clearinghouse of important issues.
3. Explore opportunities to actively collaborate with and provide input to other like-minded organizations' efforts.
4. Identify issues of importance to the Society and determine the Chapter's level of involvement.
5. Distribute talking points and important timelines of issues as needed.
6. Provide training for Chapter members and others in educating legislators and staff.
7. Utilize website and other technology (Facebook, Twitter, on-line blogs and forums, etc.) to connect members to current topics of interest.

## **CHAPTER MEETINGS**

The Chapter holds two regular professional development meetings a year to provide training to members and non members. In addition, the Council meets quarterly.

## **CHAPTER COMMITTEES**

Committee membership is encouraged for all members. Some committees meet only a few times a year and others are active throughout the year. Members can be involved as much or as little as they would like. For more information check out the website ([www.hoosierchapterswcs.org](http://www.hoosierchapterswcs.org)) and contact one of the committee chairs, or contact William Elliott, Administrative Secretary at the number below.

- Legislation, Public Policy, and Public Affairs
- Professional Development
- Public Information and Education
- Chapter Development and Administration
- Membership Growth and Involvement

## **STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE**

Special thanks to the following individuals for their commitment to planning for the Chapter's future: Andrew Brown, Jerod Chew, William Elliott, Becky Fletcher, Susannah Hinds, Roger Kult, Alyson Keaton, Ron Lauster, Susan Meadows, Jill Reinhart, Becky Ross, Tammy Swihart, Chris Torp, Scott Wagner, and Chad Watts.

## **STRATEGIC PLAN DEVELOPMENT COORDINATION**

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*All programs and services of the Hoosier Chapter are offered on an equal opportunity basis.*