



HOOSIER CHAPTER STRATEGIC PLAN

2023 - 2027

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Introduction

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, ranchers and land owners interested in improving private and publicly owned lands. 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, which people experience in rural and urban communities. We work to discover, develop, implement, and constantly improve ways to use land that sustains 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 (four of our members have been International Society Presidents) and over 50 of our individual members have also been recognized 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 20 years ago, we have successfully used these plans to help the members stay focused on our goals and be an effective voice for soil and water conservation in Indiana.

We pursue our mission through a combination of research, education, and advocacy. Our ongoing activities and special projects are designed to:

- Improve the practice of conservation by fostering the development of state-of-the-art conservation practices and systems.
- Improve conservation policy by bringing science and professional judgment to bear in shaping local, state, provincial, and federal policy.
- Enhance the capabilities of conservationists through training and professional development.
- Sustain the ethic and spirit of professionalism among conservationists through networking and mutual support.

Visi on

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

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 professional development as the most important benefit of membership.*
- *Employers struggle to 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:

- *Visit student chapters and colleges to promote the Society and additionally careers in conservation-related fields.*
- *Hold at least two professional development meetings each year that include CEU opportunities if applicable.*
- *Promote participation in regional and international Society activities and continuously informing members of opportunities and topics of interest.*
- *Keep members informed of emerging technology and conservation issues.*
- *Encourage members to participate in leadership development training offered at the regional and international level.*
- *Provide training on the basics of conservation and our SWCS history.*
- *Extend training opportunities to non-members who are in conservation related jobs.*
- *Meet annually with conservation leaders to determine training needs.*
- *Identify opportunities to hold joint sponsored events with other organizations and professional societies.*
- *Invite key leaders to attend SWCS activities or events (professors, agency leaders, etc.)*

Goals, Key Considerations and Strategies

- Increase visibility with all conservation related agencies and organizations.

Networking

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 members to resources and provides opportunities to find solutions.
- The society connects members on a local/municipal, state, region, and national level.
- It is important to pass on the knowledge and expertise of those who are advanced in their careers.

Strategies:

- Build social time into networking events.
- Encourage members to sign up and be active in SWCS social networking opportunities.
- Utilize job shadowing opportunities such as the "Walk A Mile in My Boots" program through NRCS.
- Include member spotlights in newsletters and on the web.
- Investigate and promote opportunities to network with other chapters.
- Explore potential projects that would bring members together, e.g. river clean up.
- Organize events around special areas of interest (e.g. Regional Conservation Partnership Program, Mississippi River Basin Healthy Watershed Initiative, and Great Lakes Restoration Initiative).

Goals, Key Considerations and Strategies

- *Look for opportunities to partner with businesses which 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 individuals have limited time and money.*
- *Diverse membership improves knowledge base, provides a broader perspective, and increases credibility.*
- *Continually identifying member needs is important.*
- *Additional members give the society 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 know people on a deeper 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.*

Strategies:

- *Improve our membership by promoting the society's value to include promoting equity and diverse recruitment.*
- *Identify ways to recruit membership with clearly defined benefits.*
- *Actively seek opportunities to engage members in the work of the Chapter, such as committees.*
- *Find meaningful ways to engage student chapters.*
- *Increase visibility with all conservation related agencies and organizations.*
- *Maintain an up-to-date website.*
- *Utilize social media to increase member involvement.*

Goals, Key Considerations and Strategies

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:

- *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.*
- *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.*
- *Explore opportunities to actively collaborate with and provide input to other like-minded organizations' efforts.*
- *Identify issues of importance to the Society and determine the Chapter's level of involvement.*
- *Distribute talking points and important timelines of issues as needed.*
- *Provide training for Chapter members and others on educating legislators and staff.*
- *Utilize website and other technology (Facebook, Twitter, on-line blogs and forums, etc.) to connect members to current topics of interest.*

Goals, Key Considerations and Strategies

- *Provide training on “how to contact” your legislator.*
- *Continue to participate in the Indiana Conservation Alliance (INCA)*
- *Educating members on advocacy restrictions for government-paid professional members*

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 participation 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 as their time allows for professional growth and activities. For more information check out the website (www.hoosierchapterswcs.org) and contact one of the committee chairs, or contact William Elliott, Administrative Secretary at the contact information 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: William Elliott, Mary Jo Woodruff, Jill Reinhart, Seth Fisher, Will Fett Scott Wagner, Jerod Chew, and Leslie Fisher.

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Contact Us

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