

Southern Appalachian Wilderness Stewards

Mission: To educate, cultivate and empower an engaged public for the stewardship of protected public lands

Strategic Plan 2016 – 2021

GOAL 1: INCREASE WILDERNESS RELEVANCY IN OUR LANDSCAPE

Produce programming and institute partnerships across Southern Appalachia that provide opportunities to get involved with designated wilderness through field work or advocacy.

Outcome 1.1: Increased awareness of Wilderness values and the definition of Wilderness as a federal designation in at least 10 priority rural and 10 priority urban communities within the 5 states of our landscape.

Strategy 1.1.1. Expand the Wilderness Ranger program to lead education and outreach in 10 rural and 10 urban communities in our 5 state landscape.

Strategy 1.1.2. Build outreach networks and communication capacity to inform and recruit 10 rural advocates and 10 urban advocates in our 5 state landscape that participate in conversations and activities promoting Wilderness values. (i.e., speakers bureau, roundtable, guest blogs, LTEs, op-eds).

Strategy 1.1.3. Cultivate and empower more partners' organizations (such as colleges, churches, businesses) to be stewards and to own a piece of the wilderness stewardship programs in 10 rural and 10 urban communities in our 5 state landscape.

Outcome 1.2: Ten (10) recreation interest groups, within the 5 states of our landscape, actively promoting Wilderness as a management strategy and take a leading role in promoting Wilderness in the spectrum of public lands.

Strategy 1.2.1. Cultivate and leverage relationships with a variety of recreation partners across our landscape, and enlist them to actively work on and be committed to stewardship programs.

Strategy 1.2.2. Recruit recreation partners to participate in the Wilderness Skills Institute and leverage that participation to communicate Wilderness values to others in the recreation community.

Outcome 1.3: Enlist 100 new advocates for Wilderness who can lead political action.

Strategy 1.3.1. Leverage SAWS stewardship programs to build political support for Wilderness in 10 rural and 10 urban communities within our 5 state landscape, and connect them to existing opportunities with our Wilderness Advocacy Partners (TWS, Sierra Club, SELC, etc.).

GOAL 2: INCREASE STEWARDSHIP IN OUR LANDSCAPE

Support the growing need and range of challenges faced by designated wilderness through expanded capacity and skill building programs. Build on agency capacity for wilderness stewardship by increasing

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internal staff, expanding volunteer field options and fostering new partner relationships to produce a larger and more active community of stewards.

Outcome 2.1: Resource impacts are mitigated to improve conditions of trail corridors and other recreation resources which are improved for public use.

***Strategy 2.1.1.** Develop annual volunteer opportunities that engage and empower partners, and build interest in giving back to public lands across the SAWS footprint.*

***Strategy 2.1.2.** Grow to 6 paid seasonal Wilderness Field Crews to address larger and more remote projects.*

***Strategy 2.1.3.** Employ 10 Wilderness Rangers to help identify and prioritize projects that could improve conditions being adversely impacted through recreation.*

Outcome 2.2: SAWS is a resource to address longer-term challenges and impacts to Wilderness character and to help inform agency decisions.

***Strategy 2.2.1.** Expand SAWS engagement in the scoping, decision making and implementation of USFS standards for protecting Wilderness character.*

***Strategy 2.2.2.** Provide higher level skills and additional seasonal field work to address larger and more complex restoration and resource improvement projects.*

Outcome 2.3: Partners are available to support and act upon agency management decisions related to visitor use impacts within designated Wilderness. Partners are engaged and play a larger role within Wilderness boundaries, including speaking with members of the public about how they can help protect the Wilderness resource.

***Strategy 2.3.1.** Refine the Wilderness Skills Institute curriculum to engage other USFS partners to consider the protection of Wilderness values within the scope of their work.*

***Strategy 2.3.2.** Engage partners with social media and newsletters to keep community members aware of volunteer and professional opportunities to serve identified needs of the Wilderness areas in the Southern Appalachians, and align the training provided at the Wilderness Skills Institute to match the resource needs identified. Collect, as possible, data that represents that collective volume of work provided to the Wilderness resource by SAWS partners and attendees of the Wilderness Skills Institute.*

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GOAL 3: BUILD A MORE DIVERSE CONSTITUENCY

Increase engagement of diverse communities through well-designed and well-executed initiatives that connect public lands to diverse communities.

Outcome 3.1: The community of stewards and advocates for protected public lands better reflects the diversity of our region.

Strategy 3.1.1: Identify, engage and connect with at least 10 partners who represent ethnic and racial diversity through partnerships that lead to 25 new stewards and advocates.

Strategy 3.1.2: Leverage partnerships formed by 3.1.1 to increase the stewardship hours performed by SAWS through ethnically and racially diverse populations to equal 20% of our total stewardship hours.

Strategy 3.1.3: Engage in outreach and communication efforts that invite 10 representatives of racially and ethnically diverse populations to participate in all program elements.

Outcome 3.2: The staff and board of SAWS reflects the diversity of our region.

Strategy 3.2.1: Find and recruit new board members and crew leaders that reflect the ethnic and racial diversity of our footprint.

Strategy 3.2.2: Cultivate new understandings and develop new staff processes for attracting ethnically and racially diverse populations to future employment opportunities with SAWS.

GOAL 4: DEVELOP THE NEXT GENERATION OF CONSERVATION LEADERS

Provide opportunities for professional and personal growth to an emerging community of passionate stewards, to ensure an ever growing pipeline of wilderness-oriented conservation leaders in the Southern Appalachians.

Outcome 4.1: Wilderness-aware seasonal employees empower SAWS' success and continue to develop professionally within the conservation community.

Strategy 4.1.1: Educate and instill a Wilderness ethic and appreciation of wilderness values among SAWS seasonal staff and volunteers.

Strategy 4.1.2: Provide hard skills training and certifications to seasonal staff on an annual basis.

Outcome 4.2: SAWS staff are equipped to take on higher-level conservation leadership roles within SAWS and beyond.

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Strategy 4.2.1: *Develop a succession plan for SAWS' sustainability and growth, and identify internal talent pool to implement.*

Strategy 4.2.2: *Provide training and professional development to enhance the skill sets of SAWS staff in current and prospective future positions in conservation.*

Outcome 4.3: Processes for hiring, developing and empowering new conservation leaders are shared openly with the larger public lands community in our region and across the country.

Strategy 4.3.1. *Share our best practices for staff and volunteer recruitment and development with other public land stewardship organizations.*

Strategy 4.3.2. *Share the success of our USFS working relationship to inform other USFS partnerships.*

Strategy 4.3.3. *Create gatherings and exchange points for SAWS alumni, volunteers and current staff to share in ideas around leadership and conservation.*

GOAL 5: BUILD ORGANIZATIONAL STABILITY

Provide a foundation of financial strength and long-term sustainability through prudent fund-raising, staff development, board development and organizational information transfer.

Outcome 5.1: A diverse portfolio of funding sources with a steady pipeline of emerging funding sources.

Strategy 5.1.1. *Establish a Development Committee made up of a subset of the Board of Directors and SAWS Development staff, who will drive the fundraising goals and create a list of 100 priority individuals, Foundations and corporations who will be connected with by 2017.*

Strategy 5.1.2. *Increase annual unrestricted funding to \$750,000 and ensure 60% of funding comes from private foundations, corporations and individuals by 2021.*

Strategy 5.1.3. *Create a Development Outreach Plan that ensures proper management of prospect information in a database and thoughtful outreach and solicitation to donors and prospects throughout the year.*

Strategy 5.1.4: *Develop a "stewards" membership and merchandise program as a way to engage lower dollar donors and cultivate new prospects via online and mobile engagement tools (such as Indiegogo, Snapchat, Instagram, Facebook, etc.).*

Outcome 5.2: An engaged and active board with a sustained pipeline of future Board leaders and Board members.

Strategy 5.2.1. *Establish a permanent Board sub-committee to define Board needs and requirements and to generate a steady pool of candidates for Board membership.*

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***Strategy 5.2.2.** Implement a plan for onboarding new Board members and keeping current Board members engaged and connected to SAWS efforts.*

Outcome 5.3: A succession plan is in place for organizational leadership.

***Strategy 5.3.1.** Cultivate the skills and passion needed for organizational leadership through staff professional development.*

***Strategy 5.3.2.** A sub-committee of the Board creates a plan on how to replace the Executive Director should he/she decide to leave or need to be replaced.*

Outcome 5.4: A reserve fund of \$750,000 is in place by 2021.

***Strategy 5.4.1.** Starting in FY2016, invest reserve fund monies from each year's budget.*

***Strategy 5.4.2.** Launch an endowment campaign in FY2018 to bolster early reserve funds.*