



Strategic Action Plan

2015-2018

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Introduction

In 1990 a small group of citizens came together because of their shared concerns for clean water and the conviction that they needed to do something to protect the Cannon River. From the dream of the founding members, the Cannon River Watershed Partnership has grown into a well-respected, member-based, 501 (c) (3) nonprofit organization. This strategic plan is designed to help assist the staff and board in:

- Staying focused
- Guiding work over the next four years (2015 – 2018)
- Framing fundraising and grant writing options
- Providing boundaries of when to say “No” and “Yes”
- Informing staffing needs & structure
- Making best use of the organization’s resources
- Helping the organization be sustainable
- Establishing a framework to use to evaluate our progress

Basic Organizational Elements

Mission – To engage people in protecting and improving the water quality and natural systems of the Cannon River watershed

Vision – We envision a healthy watershed with clean water that is fishable, swimmable and drinkable.

Core Values

- We value clean water for drinking, wildlife, and for its economic and recreational uses.
- We care for the watershed through public and private partnerships and citizen involvement.
- We value opportunities for all people to enjoy the water and natural areas of the watershed.

Integrating Concepts

These are the concepts that CRWP uses throughout our work as guiding principles.

- **Partnership.** We work with partners including county planning and zoning offices, soil and water conservation districts, cities, state agencies, academia and other citizen groups to improve our waters and natural systems.
- **Community Engagement.** We ensure there is a role for people to participate in projects and activities to extend our staff resources as well as make it more likely we will reach our vision of clean water.
- **Education.** We believe that education is present in all of our work. Informing people about why issues are important, what they can do and how to do it leads to action.
- **Capacity.** We know that human and financial resources create both opportunities as well as limitations for what we can do. As new options emerge a realistic understanding of capacity is necessary before taking on additional work.

Board and Staff

Board of Directors - The Cannon River Watershed Partnership is governed by a 25 member Board of Directors. Twelve are elected officials (or their designated representative) – six county commissioners and six Soil and Water Conservation District Supervisors from the six counties of the watershed. Thirteen are citizen members who are elected by our membership

Staff - An Executive Director and staff carry out program and project work. A list of current staff can be found on our website at www.crowp.net.

Programs

Agriculture

- Activities – Promote Farm Bill eligible practices and programs (especially CRP and EQIP), convene/assist with peer-to-peer groups of farmers on Soil Health focus, encourage reduced tillage, cover crops, conservation drainage, host field days/workshops, provide cost-share funding, conduct feasibility study with canning crop companies and cover crop promotion, shoreland buffer promotion.
- Funding Sources-Grants from: National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF), McKnight Foundation, Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (319 Grant program – Little Cannon and Belle Creek), Fishers & Farmers (Rice Creek)

Community Engagement

- Activities – Watershed Wide Cleanup, Rain Barrel Workshops, Storm Drain Stenciling, Booth at Community Events/Fairs, Paddles (Straight River Days, Defeat of Jesse James Days), Kayak class, Building Citizen Capacity in select subwatersheds, Website, Facebook and E-newsletter, newspaper articles.

In addition to engaging citizens, part of our work is to engage and coordinate with local units of government and other water quality professionals. In 2015 we will be working with the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency and local partners to develop the Watershed Restoration and Protection Strategy (WRAPs) document. As the state shifts to watershed plans on a major watershed scale CRWP will need to monitor this effort and determine how best to be engaged in the process.

- Funding Sources – Sponsorships/donations, contracts with City of Northfield and the City of Faribault, Grants from: Xcel Energy, Carl & Verna Schmidt Foundation, 319 Grant (MPCA – in 2015), non-competitive contract with MPCA.

Wastewater

- Activities – Facilitate projects in small communities throughout SE MN (10 counties) as part of the Southeast Minnesota Wastewater Initiative to improve wastewater treatment in these communities. Work with task forces, grant writing, complete paperwork, work with state and local agencies.

- Funding Sources – Clean Water Legacy Funds. CRWP is a subcontractor for the Southeast Minnesota Water Resources Board. Community systems are typically funded in part through grants and loans from the Public Facilities Authority (PFA).

Strategies and Anticipated Actions

Strategies

Five strategies were prioritized during the planning process:

1. Continue and enhance ongoing operations with respect to work on Agriculture, Community Engagement and Wastewater programs. **(Enhance Ongoing Operations)**.
2. Promote and create more opportunities for river and lake recreation to expand the number of people who enjoy the river as well as strengthening their connections with CRWP **(Revitalize River/Lake Recreation)**.
3. Strengthen connections and partnerships with associations, organizations, and institutions that share an interest in the outdoors and conservation **(Cultivate Connections)**.
4. Increase understanding and appreciation of water, water quality, our watershed, and the Cannon River Watershed Partnership with people who live in the watershed **(Water Awareness and Appreciation)**.
5. Review and strengthen CRWP membership structure, expand memberships, clarify contributions of members, and increase financial support **(Meaningful Membership)**.



Building Blocks to Strengthen CRWP Impacts and Outcomes

Anticipated Actions

This section summarizes how to strengthen CRWP with the anticipated major activities to make progress toward each goal.

Strategy One: Enhance Ongoing Operations

- A. Review existing programs and activities to assess ways to improve and modify if needed.
- B. Carry out actions identified in Action A.

Strategy Two: Revitalize River Recreation

- A. Increase community outreach and connections with people who use/recreate on the water (paddlers) as well as those who have outdoor interests such as hunting, fishing, birding, etc.
- B. Make it easier for people to access and enjoy our rivers and lakes through actions such as improved access points, signage, equipment availability and skill building classes.
- C. Work together with others who are interested in revitalizing river and lake recreation to promote recreational options by raising visibility.

Strategy Three: Cultivate Connections

- A. Staff and board become members of and develop relationships with prioritized groups such as lake associations, Sportsman's clubs, etc.
- B. Review and use existing affiliations of CRWP Board members to build relationships and connections with CRWP.
- C. Strategically recruit from other groups to expand membership in CRWP and develop future Board Leadership.

Strategy Four: Water Awareness & Appreciation

- A. Target awareness of more people outside of Northfield to come to know CRWP and the watershed. Focus on groups who already care about what we care about such as paddlers and other outdoor recreation groups.
- B. Consider options to sponsor events hosted by others.
- C. Host CRWP educational and recreational events in targeted areas in the watershed.

Strategy Five: Meaningful Membership

- A. Staff and Board, with input from members, review the philosophy and role of membership in CRWP, potential membership benefits and expectations and make recommendations for changes to what constitutes membership if applicable. (e.g., consider service hours as a way to become a member, youth/student membership levels, etc.)
- B. Revise by-laws with new membership structure and role if applicable.
- C. Develop a campaign to publicize revised membership.

Additional Ideas and Issues to Pay Attention to over time

These ideas emerged during our planning process as items and issues to pay attention to and potentially work on as resources and opportunities permit.

- Clarify our role and process for taking a position on issues and policies
- Coordinate a natural resource volunteer clearinghouse
- Serve as a partner and collaborator for the Master Water Stewards Program
- Review the role of CRWP work with regard to Climate Resiliency
- Review board structure and effectiveness
- Provide organizational support to small and/or start-up groups such as Lake Associations

Anticipated Impacts

The impacts of our work are the ultimate reasons we carry out the actions in this plan. Achieving our vision of clean water that is fishable, swimmable and drinkable may be many years down the road. The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency's 10-year watershed assessment cycle will be the primary means of assessing improvements to our watershed. Assessing engagement of people will also be an important impact to track and will be part of our metrics and measures. Below is a list of long and short term impacts we anticipate as a result of our efforts.

Long term (10+ years)

- Engaged citizens are taking action to improve water quality.
- Measurable improvements to surface waters - increases to the number of water bodies that meet state standards and show improvements to aquatic recreation and aquatic life assessments.

Short term (2-5 years)

- Increased capacity and number of people who are taking action for cleaner water.
- People are having direct experiences with water and natural areas and are enjoying outdoor recreation/water sports.
- Build trust and stronger relationships with citizens and partners.
- Members feel committed to CRWP and support our work.

Metrics and Measures

A plan for measuring the impacts of our work will be developed by June 2015 and will be used to assess progress on activities and report that information to our Board of Directors, citizens and stakeholders.

Anticipated Resource Requirements

Each strategy will require a budget feasibility assessment. This evaluation and assessment will include determining to what extent we are able to implement each goal and where the funds will come from.

Activating Strategic Plan

These actions will insure that the strategic plan is activated and guides board and staff efforts.

1. Develop annual work plans based on the actions in strategic plan.
2. Add an agenda item to board meetings 'Update on Priority Strategies'
3. Reconvene the small group who guided the Strategic Planning twice a year (every six months) to review progress and barriers.

Credits

Donna Rae Scheffert, President of Leadership Tools guided the strategic planning effort.
www.online-leadership-tools.com