

Strategic Plan of the Michigan Chapter of
the Soil and Water Conservation Society
2024 – 2029

Approved by the Executive Council on 4/11/2024

Contents

Vision and Mission Statement	3
Introduction	4
Focus Area: Member Recruitment and Involvement	6
Focus Area: Providing Quality Professional Development	9
Focus Area: Collaborating with Partners	11
Focus Area: Broadening Influence and Staying Current	12
Focus Area: Seeking Sustainable Funding	14
Implementation Plan	15

Vision and Mission Statement

Vision

The Michigan Chapter of the Soil and Water Conservation Society envisions a Great Lakes Region where the residents recognize the benefits of protecting our soil, water, and related natural resources. The citizens and policy makers of our state will understand the value of managing and protecting these resources for future generations, and will support the work of conservation professionals. SWCS will be a respected, well-known, and credible source on issues related to implementing effective and critical conservation practices in Michigan.

Mission

Fostering the science and art of soil and water conservation in Michigan and the Great Lakes Region.

Introduction

Why was it developed?

Almost ten years ago the Michigan Chapter of the Soil and Water Conservation Society developed a five-year strategic plan that identified priorities, goals/objectives with associated strategies, measurable results, and timeframes for completion. In 2021, the chapter acknowledged that a review and update of the strategic plan was overdue and formed an ad hoc strategic planning committee to start the process. The first task the committee undertook was to assess which of the plan's goals had been met, which still needed work, and what, if any, new priorities should be added. The committee concluded that the priorities and goals of the existing plan were ongoing and served as targets for the chapter to consistently strive for. The committee also found that the plan's scope was comprehensive, and strategies sufficiently detailed that more than an update was needed to guide the chapter's next five-year period. Over the past year, the ad hoc committee refined the existing plan by removing objectives that no longer apply, and adding other objectives that address new challenges to member recruitment and outreach; most of the prior plan remains intact, a testament to the sound efforts of the previous authors.

Why is it important?

Developing a strategic plan and aligning efforts towards that plan is crucial to chapter success. If we as a group do not know where we want to go, what is important to us, and which actions should be taken to get there, we will never be able to achieve our goals. One of the easiest ways to explain strategic planning is by using a simple analogy; if you compare strategic planning for an organization with vacation planning for a family, the following would be equivalents:

Vision = Where are we going?

Mission = What are we going to do on vacation? (i.e., to visit family, see new places etc.)

Goals = Where are we stopping along the way?

Strategies = How are we going to get there (which routes are we going to take)?

As illustrated above, a family that does planning before a vacation will have a destination and a route that is agreed upon by all who are traveling together. So, too, is it with strategic planning. Once completed, the members will understand and agree upon where they are headed and will know they have arrived at their destination once they get there.

How was it developed?

The original plan was developed by a strategic planning committee through a series of conference calls, computer correspondence and an in person planning session in April 2013 and was refined over the five-year period by the chapter's Executive Council. This update was coordinated by an ad hoc committee through Zoom meetings and computer correspondence from 2021 through 2023.

How will it be used?

The strategic plan is a tool to guide decision making and priorities for the Michigan Chapter of the Soil and Water Conservation Society. This "road map" will be used in conjunction with annual work plans to move the chapter towards its strategic objectives. The strategic plan can also be used by the membership at large to help identify areas where individuals can utilize and insert their unique skills and experience to help in achieving these goals.

How often will it be updated?

The chapter executive council will present an annual strategic plan progress report at the chapter annual meeting. This report will include a summary of activities or other efforts directed at achieving strategic plan goals and will provide an assessment of the efforts remaining to achieve these goals. The strategic plan will be evaluated after 5 years to determine if an update is required.

What were the identified prioritized focus areas?

1. Member Recruitment and Involvement
2. Providing Quality Professional Development
3. Collaborating with Partners
4. Broadening Influence and Staying Current
5. Seeking Sustainable Funding

Focus Area: Member Recruitment and Involvement

Goals and Objectives	Strategies	Measurable Results	Timeframe
----------------------	------------	--------------------	-----------

Goal 1: Increase Chapter Membership, Retention, and Involvement			
Obj. 1A: Increase Chapter Membership. Responsible Committee: Membership and Outreach	Make specific appeals to targeted membership categories.	Membership increases by 50%	2024 - 2029
	Develop a quality, professionally designed recruitment piece clearly outlining benefits of enrollment.	Recruitment document drafted.	2024
	Leverage/enhance the chapter's social media presence to distribute the recruitment document.	Recruitment document distributed via various channels	Ongoing
	Coordinate with national's new chapter liaison to help create and distribute the recruitment document		March 2024
	Encourage Chapter members to donate memberships to prospective members		Ongoing
	Continue to pursue hosting a National SWCS Conference in Michigan		Ongoing
Obj 1B: Learn about recruitment efforts of other Chapters and utilize membership	Work with national chapter liaison for suggestions on recruitment.	Communications with other chapters and development of a Michigan Chapter	March 2024

<p>resources available to the Michigan Chapter from the SWCS National Office.</p> <p>Responsible Committee: Membership and Outreach</p>	<p>Identify a state chapter that has been successful with membership growth and determine how they achieved that growth.</p> <p>Participate in regional North Central meetings to learn how other chapters recruit.</p>	<p>recruitment protocol.</p>	
<p>Obj 1C: Make specific appeals to general membership to join committees and run for council positions.</p> <p>Responsible Committee: Membership and Outreach</p>	<p>Appoint the Nominations Committee earlier in the year to provide more time for recruitment.</p> <p>Conduct one on one phone calls.</p> <p>Committee chair recruitment</p> <p>Encourage committee chairs to attend Executive Council meetings, including direct individual invitations.</p> <p>Give committee chairs opportunities to report on each council agenda</p>	<p>Nominations Committee appointed and assigned 120 days before Annual Meeting.</p> <p>More than one candidate for top offices.</p> <p>More first-time council members</p> <p>More active Committee Chairs.</p> <p>Provide more meaningful opportunities for non-council members to attend council meetings.</p> <p>More activity in committees.</p>	<p>June 2024</p> <p>Summer 2024</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>January 2024</p> <p>2024</p> <p>Ongoing</p>
<p>Obj 1D: New members will be contacted within 3 months of membership and asked a series of “get to know you” questions to determine if/and how</p>	<p>Chapter Secretary notifies council of new member as soon as possible.</p> <p>A council person is identified to make the contact</p>	<p>New members are welcomed to the Chapter by more than one officer.</p> <p>More first-time council members.</p> <p>Provide more</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>

to involve new members to meet their expectations. Responsible Committee: Membership and Outreach		meaningful opportunities for non-council members to attend council meetings.	
Obj 1E: Improve the membership's understanding of officer duties. Responsible Committee: Membership and Outreach	Develop a Chapter Leader Manual that outlines the duties and responsibilities of each office position	A complete Michigan Chapter Leader Manual is made available to prospective officers and the general membership	March 2024
Goal 2: Increase frequency and quality of Chapter Communication with members			
Obj 2A: Establish a regular schedule for newsletters and have a schedule for who will write which newsletter articles. (Examples: President writes a column for each newsletter; regional reps write one each and rotate, etc.). Responsible Committee: Membership and Outreach	Make specific invitations to general membership to contribute articles. Include spotlight articles on members. Research spotlight, where a recent open access article is profiled by a member. <u>Actively invite non-council members to submit articles.</u>	Newsletters are sent out quarterly. At least one article in each newsletter is written by a chapter member other than the editor.	Ongoing
Obj 2B: Increase visibility of executive	President will provide a monthly or quarterly email	Quarterly notes completed.	Starting March 2024

council to the membership.	including any tidbits of interest from the national email to executive councils and any other pertinent updates or notes.		
Responsible Committee: Membership and Outreach	Actively invite non-council members to council meetings.	Increased chapter member attendance at council meetings.	June 2025

Focus Area: Providing Quality Professional Development

Goals and Objectives	Strategies	Measurable Results	Timeframe
----------------------	------------	--------------------	-----------

Goal 3: Improve access to, while maintaining overall quality of, professional development opportunities and ensure that they are relevant to members' needs			
Obj 3A: Increase the effectiveness of developing and planning workshops/tours/events and maximize time for marketing and advertising to increase participation.	Develop a preparation timeline guidance for chapter workshop, tour and meetings and incorporate this guidance into Annual Plan of Work.	Conduct Annual Ag & Natural Resources Seminar.	Ongoing
Responsible Committee: Professional Development	Actively invite non-council members to participate in planning, topics, and guest speakers.	Partner with MACD for Summer/Fall Conferences.	Ongoing
		Conduct an educational session during MISWCS Annual Meeting.	Ongoing
Obj 3B: Actively use member feedback, survey results and current and emerging topics to plan interesting and	Provide workshops or events when convenient for members.	A list of strategies is developed.	Annually
		Feedback and survey results are used to plan for upcoming	

<p>relevant events.</p> <p>Responsible Committee: Professional Development</p>	<p>Offer programs with partners (private sector, universities, state agencies).</p> <p>Identify new and emerging issues and proactively offer program topics-(ex. planning for climate change).</p> <p>Encourage the Professional Development Committee to take an active role in researching professional development needs, and monitoring for trends and new developments in natural resource management, conservation, and sustainability.</p> <p>Outline clear objectives for each event/workshop/tour we are hosting.</p>	<p>workshops and seminars.</p> <p>Consult with partners to promote workshops and seminars</p>	
<p>Obj 3C: Use technology in events to incorporate more ways for members to participate.</p> <p>Responsible Committee: Executive Council</p>	<p>Implement workshops as virtual webinars.</p> <p>Evaluate new technologies to enhance participation in events as they emerge.</p>	<p>The annual meeting is provided to members by a virtual platform.</p>	<p>ongoing</p> <p>Calendar year 2024 ANR Seminar.</p>
<p>Obj 3D: Pursue an opportunity to host the National SWCS conference in</p>	<p>Establish a contact at National office that manages conference planning and</p>	<p>Develop a proposal to host a National Conference</p>	<p>2024-2025</p>

Michigan. Responsible Committee: Executive Council	determine what our chapter needs to do to be considered for hosting the national conference. Establish a National Conference Subcommittee to put together a proposal to develop such a conference.	Include a list of possible tour ideas. Submit proposal to National Office. Utilize site visits from NCSS (NRCS and LGU) 2022 Regional Soils tour in Grand Rapids (Matt Bromley & Jerry Miller, June 2022) as a template for SWCS National Conference.	
--	---	---	--

Focus Area: Collaborating with Partners

Goals and Objectives	Strategies	Measurable Results	Timeframe
----------------------	------------	--------------------	-----------

Goal 4: Improve partner relationships through collaboration			
Obj 4A: Seek partners (such as sponsors, hosts, and presenters) when appropriate to collaborate on events, workshops and/or tours. Responsible Committee: Executive Council	Continue to collaborate with existing partners and find additional partners for events. Develop a list of existing and potential partners for reference. Develop a protocol for communication with partners.	At least one event annually is planned collaboratively with a partnering organization. List and protocol developed and available for event planning.	Ongoing 2024
Obj 4C: Use scholarships and awards as opportunities to engage partners and increase building our	Contact listed partners and determine opportunities for sharing announcements	List of partners who may be interested in awards and scholarship announcements is developed.	2024

relationships . Responsible Committee: Scholarship	and recruiting nominations.		
---	-----------------------------	--	--

Focus Area: Broadening Influence and Staying Current

Goals and Objectives	Strategies	Measurable Results	Timeframe
----------------------	------------	--------------------	-----------

Goal 5: Broaden the Chapter's influence within the conservation community and stay current on emerging issues.			
Obj. 5A Assure that Michigan Chapter policies and positions are consistent with National and Regional activities. Responsible Committee: Policy	<p>Communicate with the Society headquarters and the North Central Region to enhance consistency with SWCS and Regional policies and positions on current and emerging issues.</p> <p>Recruit a chapter member to participate on the Society Science and Policy Committee as a member or observer.</p>	<p>Michigan Chapter actions on current and emerging issues are consistent with Society positions and policies.</p> <p>A chapter member becomes involved with, and/or participates with, the Society Science and Policy Committee and reports back to the Executive Council on results.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>2024</p>

<p>Obj. 5B Identify appropriate target partner groups to share society and chapter achievements with.</p> <p>Responsible Committee: Executive Council</p>	<p>Establish an Ad Hoc Committee or Work Group to define “target partner groups” and identify existing groups that meet that definition.</p>	<p>A definition of “target partner groups” is developed and an initial listing of potential “TPGs” is created.</p>	<p>May 2024</p>
	<p>Develop and implement a plan to foster communication with target partner groups to increase awareness.</p>	<p>A partner group communications plan is developed and implemented.</p>	<p>Sep 2024</p>
	<p>Ensure that target partner groups are aware of the accomplishments of the National Society and recent research achievements</p>	<p>Partner groups are informed of Society and chapter achievements.</p>	<p>Annually</p>
<p>Obj. 5C: Identify key issues that the chapter might engage in publicly.</p> <p>Responsible Committee: Legislative</p>	<p>Establish a protocol to find, select and advise the Executive Council on issues the chapter might engage publicly in, and assign or develop a committee for this purpose.</p>	<p>A process and protocol are developed for identifying appropriate issues for the chapter to address.</p>	<p>By June 2024</p>
	<p>Chapter publicly states positions on current issues where appropriate.</p>	<p>Legislative Committee is active, and one issue is selected and recommended to the Executive Council for development of a position paper.</p>	<p>By October 2024</p>
	<p>Communicate consistently and frequently with key groups to help change policies, behaviors, and outcomes over time.</p>		

Focus Area: Seeking Sustainable Funding

Goals and Objectives	Strategies	Measurable Results	Timeframe
----------------------	------------	--------------------	-----------

Goal 6: Improve the financial standing of the chapter.			
Obj 6A: Continue to pursue ways to conduct low-cost seminars of value to membership to bring in funding to the chapter. Responsible Committee: Finance and Professional Development Committees	Continue to review and evaluate costs of online platforms. Continue to seek sponsorships to help cover seminar expenses.	Available online platforms for webinars are assessed for potential use. (started using Zoom webinars in 2020) Increase in sponsorships to support seminars	Ongoing Ongoing
Obj 6B: Seek and evaluate opportunities to apply for grants when appropriate. Responsible Committee: Finance Committee	Identify a person and/or committee to oversee this effort. Develop a “wish list” of project ideas and/or needs (and associated goals and objectives). Determine if it is feasible to apply for and manage grants as a long-term funding strategy.	Committee established or assigned. Wish list of project ideas developed. Decision made about whether this is a long-term effort.	2024 2024 2024
Obj 6C: Increase sponsorship support of chapter events	Identify appropriate organizations/businesses	A list of potential sponsors is updated and maintained.	Ongoing

Responsible Committee: Finance and Professional Development Committees	from which to solicit sponsorships. Identify benefits that can be offered to sponsors.	Sponsorship form is evaluated and updated annually.	Ongoing
Obj 6D: Grow the scholarship fund to be able to offer increased scholarships (higher amount or more than one each year) Responsible Committee: Finance and Scholarship Committees	Explore alternate fundraising events (beyond events and sponsorships).	List of fundraising activities	2024

Implementation Plan

The five identified priorities, associated strategies and resulting measurable results have been detailed in the above tables. A general timeline has been provided for each activity and is offered as guidance. The timeline is intended to ensure that Council Members are aware of action steps needed to meet the long-term strategic goals of the Chapter and can incorporate important activities into the Annual Work Plan.

To accomplish the set of goals and objectives outlined in this document, the chapter will need to rely on the hard work of volunteers through reinvigorated committees and individual leadership. As an initial step, the Strategic Planning Subcommittee recommends the following committees should be appointed to manage implementation under each major priority.

Focus Area	Lead Committee	Supporting Committees
Member recruitment and involvement	Membership and Outreach	Nominations Student Chapter Relations Professional Development
Providing quality professional development	Professional Development	Annual Meeting
Collaborating with partners	Executive Council	Professional Development

		Scholarship
Broadening influence and staying current	Legislative	Membership and Outreach
Seeking sustainable funding	Finance	Professional Development Scholarship

The Executive Council will work to activate appropriate lead committees as soon as possible in 2023 and identify individual Council members to “champion” two to three identified objectives from the tables above. Each Committee Chairperson will be responsible for soliciting committee participation from members and communicating with the identified “champion.” The Council Member identified as the “Champion” will be responsible for continually monitoring progress, reporting to the Executive Council, and making sure that committee needs are recognized, and tasks are integrated into the yearly Work Plan.

A list of the important activities for the plan’s first year is listed below, followed by a list of ongoing and annual activities through 2029. Each objective listed below has associated tasks that need to be incorporated into yearly plans.

2024 Important Activities

Obj. 1A: Increase chapter membership: distribute membership flier (Responsible Committee: Membership and Outreach)

Obj 1B: Learn about and utilize membership resources available to the Michigan Chapter from the National Office. (**Responsible Committee:** Membership and Outreach)

Obj 1C: Make specific appeals to general membership to join committees and run for council positions. (Responsible Committee: Membership and Outreach)

Obj 1E: Improve the membership's understanding of officer duties: develop chapter leader manual. (Responsible Committee: Membership and Outreach)

Obj 2B: Start regular communications from the chapter president either by email or in newsletters. . (Responsible Committee: Membership and Outreach)

Obj 3D: Develop a proposal for hosting an International SWCS conference in Michigan. (Responsible Committee: Executive Council)

Obj 5A: Chapter members will become involved with, and/or participate with the Society Science and Policy Committee and report back to the Executive Council. (Responsible Committee: Policy)

Obj 5B: Target a partner group list and develop an engagement plan (Responsible Committee: Executive Council)

Obj 5C: Develop protocol to identify issues/policy topics the chapter should address (Responsible Committee: Legislative)

Obj 5C: Legislative Committee is active, and an issue is recommended to the Executive Council for the development of a position paper. (Responsible Committee: Legislative)

Obj 6B: Establish a committee for evaluating prospects of the chapter pursuing grant opportunities and develop a wish list of funded projects. (Responsible Committee: Finance)

Obj 6B: Determine long-term feasibility of the chapter pursuing grant funding. (Responsible Committee: Finance)

Obj 6C: Develop a list of prospective sponsors. Responsible Committees: Finance and Professional Development)

Obj 6D: Develop a list of fundraising activities for supporting the scholarship fund. (Responsible Committees: Finance and Scholarship)

Important Ongoing and Annual Activities

Obj 1D: Encourage new chapter members to participate/attend Executive Council meetings. (Responsible Committee: Membership and Outreach)

Obj 2A: Regularly develop and distribute the chapter newsletter. (Responsible Committee: Membership and Outreach)

Obj 3A: Host educational sessions for ANR week, MACD, and the chapter's Annual Meeting (Responsible Committee: Professional Development)

Objs 3B and 4A: Develop engaging educational seminars/workshops, with partner organizations when appropriate. (Responsible Committees: Executive Council and Professional Development)

Obj 5A: Evaluate the chapter's positions and policies to ensure alignment with the national organizations' priorities. (Responsible Committee: Policy)

Obj 5B: Inform partner organizations of chapter achievements. (Responsible Committee: Executive Council)

Obj 6D: Seek additional sponsorships for educational sessions and scholarship fund. (Responsible Committees: Finance and Scholarship)