



**“Making A Difference. Affecting Positive Change.
Having Deeper Impact!”**

The Strategic Plan for The Conservation Foundation

2012-2017

Our Mission

We preserve and restore natural areas and open space, protect rivers and watersheds, and promote stewardship of our environment.

Our Long Term Vision

We envision a sustainable region where through education and collaboration:

- Protected natural areas provide habitats for wildlife and places where people can enjoy nature forever.
- Public and private partnerships accelerate the pace of land preservation for the enrichment of all.
- People benefit from and enjoy clean and healthy streams, wetlands and lakes.
- All land development incorporates stewardship of the environment.
- People understand and embrace conservation issues, and act to preserve the environment.

The Conservation Foundation is a recognized expert and reasoned voice on conservation issues, and with the help of its members and donors, provides the leadership required to achieve this vision.

Our Strategic Focus

Over the next five years, The Conservation Foundation will increase its efforts to transition to a more community-based, grass-roots conservation organization with impactful on-the-ground programs and projects tailored to the needs of each of the four core counties we serve. This strategic approach will achieve:

- **Deeper mission impact in our communities**
- **A consistent and expected presence in our communities**
- **Meaningful and long-lasting relationships with communities and individuals**
- **A more engaged (grass-roots) community in local conservation**
- **Broader community support for TCF and for local conservation programs**
- **Enlightened communities where conservation is encouraged and is a core value**

*We save land.
We save rivers.*



Our Major Strategic Initiatives and 5 Year Goals

Critical Principles to Success

- We must understand that advancement is everyone's responsibility- it must permeate through everything we all do, every day.
- We must identify our "publics/customers" and develop strategies to communicate effectively with each of them in an ongoing manner.
- We must focus our programs on specific county priorities and engage our local communities.
- We must develop our staff, cross-train and advance skill development while maintaining our areas of expertise.
- We must develop our board and staff to be active in various advancement strategies toward a more sustainable (unrestricted) funding sources.

Strategic Initiative #1: To be more impactful in the communities we serve, we will expand our sources of revenue, especially unrestricted funding.

- Increased unrestricted funding is coming in annually to help fund priority programs.
- The Advancement Committee is taking the lead in developing annual advancement plans and the plan is being implemented by both board and staff as a team.
- The Leadership Board is engaged in the advancement of TCF and is actively helping to raise funds and awareness.

Strategic Initiative #2: To expand our sphere of influence and bolster our support base, we will increase awareness of our positive impact in communities.

- Four County Program Directors are in place, each coordinating county priorities, engaged in local communities, participating in various local organizations and leading projects/programs.
- Each Advisory Council is engaged in implementing county priorities and actively working with their county program director
- As part of an overall advancement plan, a well-funded marketing initiative is being implemented and directed at target audiences that are strategic to our long-term success.

Strategic Initiative #3: To ensure we remain the noted professional experts in conservation, we will develop the marketing, fundraising, relationship building, and technical skills of our board and staff.

- Annual staff training plans are developed each year by staff and their supervisor based on professional development objectives identified in the annual performance review; these costs are included as part of the annual budget.
- Board self-assessments continue on an annual basis with board goals developed and progress tracked and monitored by the Governance Committee. Individual work plans for each trustee guide and provide focus for trustee actions.
- Training has helped the board of trustees become more involved in advancement activities, thus, helping to provide the necessary resources to sustain the organization.

Strategic Initiative #4: To ensure we are meeting the needs of the communities we serve, we will modify, tailor and create programs and services responsive to the specific needs of each county we serve.

DuPage County

- The DuPage County Open Space Master Plan is completed and being actively implemented with agencies working together on major linkages; DuPage County Program Director is leading this effort and the project is supported financially by local stakeholders.
- TCF's water quality education and outreach efforts (DuPage County contract) are congruent with the goals of the DuPage River Salt Creek Workgroup and being implemented.
- Municipal rain barrel programs are active in 50 percent of DuPage County communities; Conservation @ Home enrollment is 650 and certified properties have increase from 200 to 400.
- TCF has completed or facilitated at least five land preservation projects.

Kane County

- There are active, local watershed committees working to implement the Blackberry Creek and Ferson-Otter Creek watershed plans; Kane County Program Director is facilitating this effort and the project is partially supported financially by local stakeholders.
- Municipal rain barrel programs are active in all Fox River towns; Conservation @ Home enrollment is 300 and certified properties have increased from 100 to 200.
- All TCF conservation easement sites are being actively managed.
- TCF has completed or facilitated at least 10 land preservation projects.

Kendall County

- The Lower Fox River Land Conservation Plan is being implemented and used as the primary planning tool for the forest preserve district and others interested in preserving land along the Fox River; Kendall County Program Director is leading this effort and the project is partially supported financially by local stakeholders.
- There is an active, local watershed committee working to implement the Aux Sable Creek Watershed Plan; Kendall County Program Director is facilitating this effort and the project is partially supported financially by local stakeholders.
- TCF has completed or facilitated at least five land preservation projects.
- Municipal rain barrel programs are active in at least two towns; Conservation @ Home enrollment is 135 and certified properties have increase from 25 to 100.
- TCF continues to provide administrative support to the Dickson-Murst Farm Partners volunteer group and a long-term site development and maintenance plan has been developed.

Will County

- There is ongoing implementation of the Lower DuPage River watershed plan coordinated through the Lower DuPage River Coalition; water quality monitoring has been completed and at least two projects recommended in the plan are being implemented; Will County Program Director is facilitating this effort and the project is supported financially by local stakeholders.
- TCF and GEI are partnering on education programs with the Naperville Park District for the public at the McDonald Farm; programs are marketed together and attendance has doubled since 2011. A long-term site development and maintenance plan has been developed.
- Municipal rain barrel programs are active in at least five communities; Conservation @ Home enrollment is 135 and certified properties have increase from 35 to 100.
- TCF has completed or facilitated at least 10 land preservation projects.

Other Program Goals

- The Lower Fox River Land Conservation Plan is being implemented in LaSalle County; at least three priority properties have been protected as identified in the plan.
- Three “Beyond the Basics” training seminars have been conducted with at least 200 people in attendance each time; the event is financially self-sustaining.
- Conservation @ Home has been expanded regionally with TCF as the lead agency; every county in NE Illinois has a lead organization implementing C @ H in their county; a regional “council” oversees the effort and expansion.

Our Implementation Timeline

YEAR 1: FY 2012-13 Major Goals

- Complete a new DuPage County Open Space Master Plan; the staff position becomes PT DuPage Program Director
- Change the DuPage County Water Quality Education contract to be more consistent with DuPage River Salt Creek Workgroup educational goals; implement
- Facilitate communication with the Blackberry Creek and Ferson-Otter Creek watershed groups and get them focused on plan implementation
- Expand Conservation @ Home in the Fox Valley and certify 75 new properties
- Begin implementing the Lower Fox Plan in Kendall and LaSalle Counties (phase the position into PT Kendall Program Director)
- Staff and manage the Lower DuPage River Coalition and begin implementing the Lower DuPage River Watershed Plan
- Expand McDonald Farm education programs in partnership with Green Earth Institute and the Naperville Park District; assist park district with planning their new nature center at Knoch Knolls Park across the street
- Conduct the Beyond the Basics Stormwater Best Management Practices Workshop (Feb. '13)
- Develop a long-term advancement plan for TCF
- Hire additional advancement staff (2 FTEs)

YEAR 2: FY 2013-14 Major Goals

- Begin implementation of DuPage County open space plan
- Make DuPage County Program Director (Jan Roehll) FT; hire PT executive assistant
- Transition Dan Lobbes to Kane County Program Director
- Begin implementing BBC/FO watershed plans; facilitate watershed groups
- Begin seeking funding for expanding Conservation @ Home regionally (NE IL)
- Begin coordinating implementation of ASC watershed plan; facilitate watershed group
- Ongoing programs and activities; continuation of new initiatives in previous fiscal year

YEAR 3: FY 2014-15 Major Goals

- Set up a regional Conservation @ Home program; find partners in Cook and McHenry Co.
- Conduct the Beyond the Basics Stormwater Best Management Practices Workshop (Sept. '14)
- Ongoing programs and activities; continuation of new initiatives in previous fiscal years
- Hire Will County Program Director, pending funding (PT/FT)

YEAR 4: FY 2015-16

- Ongoing programs and activities; continuation of new initiatives in previous fiscal years
- Conduct the Beyond the Basics Stormwater Best Management Practices Workshop (Feb. '16)
- Transition all PT County Program Directors to FT, pending funding

YEAR 5: FY 2016-17

- Ongoing programs and activities; continuation of new initiatives in previous fiscal years
- Hire PT program assistant position