



A Strategic Plan for the Conservation @ Home Program

2020- 2023



Defining “*Conservation@Home*”

WHAT is *Conservation@Home*?

Conservation@Home is a regional initiative that *encourages* the use of native plants, *educates* private landowners and *recognizes* their commitment to sustainable landscaping practices, *advocates* for municipal codes that support sustainable landscape practices, *promotes* native plant garden design and management within the landscape industry, and *inspires* a new way of thinking about traditional private landscapes.

WHY do we do *Conservation@Home*?

Private properties throughout the Chicago Wilderness region are landscaped with native plants that support wildlife, provide clean water and clean air, conserve the region’s biodiversity, and provides resilience to climate change, while providing a healthy environment for people and pets that makes a tangible difference. These naturally landscaped areas provide corridors and linkages to larger publically owned natural areas that help wildlife thrive.

WHO is the target audience for *Conservation@Home* and how do we want them to change?

More and more residential and business owners in the Chicago Wilderness area utilize sustainable landscaping practices and develop a deeper connection to nature. Routinely, *Conservation@Home* partners work with public land owners to showcase native plants and demonstrate sustainable landscaping practices. In support of the *Conservation@Home* principles, The Conservation Foundation staff also may work to educate private landscapers in an effort to promote sustainable landscaping practices and the use of native plants.

HOW does *Conservation @ Home* work?

The Conservation Foundation created the program in 2004 and continues to provide leadership throughout the region. The program is implemented by TCF staff in their core counties and works primarily with private residents and businesses. The hallmark of the *Conservation@Home* program is individual attention via site visits and one-on-one guidance designed to ensure property owners can truly succeed as they embark on conservation and landscape transformation. TCF assists partner organizations and businesses to promote conservation practices inside the home and work place, as well as supports a network of conservation organizations in the Chicago Wilderness region that adopt and implement the *Conservation@Home* program for a fee.

Impact

Conservation@Home embodies the vision of The Conservation Foundation and is strongly rooted in the organization's operations. As it grows over the next several decades, neighborhoods and corporate landscapes will change dramatically:

While strolling through any neighborhood in the Chicago Wilderness region, you are serenaded by songbirds and the buzz of busy pollinators as they enjoy an amazing variety of native plants. Native flowers, grasses, shrubs and trees thrive in areas that were once just turf grass. Thanks to these home and business owners, private properties throughout the region are an integral part of the patchwork of landscapes that now support wildlife, provide clean water and clean air, and protect our region's biodiversity. Property owners now recognize rain as a resource and actively work to conserve water on their property. As private lands have transformed, there's been a paradigm shift in people's recognition and acceptance of native landscapes and their benefits to human health and happiness. Sustainable landscaping practices are commonplace and have become the new industry standard practiced throughout the region by licensed landscapers. Visitors to the region leave with a true understanding of what "Chicago Wilderness" really means.

Enabling Conditions

(These six conditions must be in place in order to achieve the above Impact. They are not prioritized.)

- *Conservation@Home* grows in TCF's core four counties and throughout the Chicago Wilderness region.
- *Conservation@Home* participants are engaged in the larger TCF mission.
- A diverse array of products and services, including affordable native plants, are readily available for the public
- The landscape industry knows of and practices sustainable landscaping.
- Municipal and county ordinances and zoning rules allow for and encourage the use of sustainable landscape practices.
- Partner organizations, supported by *Conservation@Home* staff outside of the core four counties, but within the Chicago Wilderness region, implement *Conservation@Home*.

Measures of Success and Tasks

Enabling Condition #1:

Conservation@Home grows in TCF's core four counties and throughout the Chicago Wilderness region.

Measure of Success A

Each year, we will increase the number of participants in the program in TCF's core four counties by 50%, as tracked by the number of people who have expressly signed up for more information about the program.

Measure of Success B

Each year, we will increase the number of certified properties by 50% in TCF's core four counties and throughout the CW region.

FY 2020 TASK: Develop a marketing and communications plan to recruit more prospects and move existing participants to certified.

- Seek advice from TCF staff working on C @ H in January 2020
- Advancement Team to develop draft plan by March 2020 and run by TCF staff working on C @ H
- Finalize plan by May 2020
- Integrate into work plans and implement July 2020

ONGOING TASK: Assist partner organizations with advice and consultation on how they can increase the number of participants and certifications in their CW territories.

- Continue annual regional C @ H meetings with partners in Winter and be available throughout the year to provide advice and answer questions

Enabling Condition #2:

Conservation@Home participants are engaged in the larger TCF mission.

Measure of Success A

In the next five years, the percent of *Conservation@Home* certified members who renew their introductory TCF membership increases to 65% from 50%.

Measure of Success B

In the next five years, 50% of certified *Conservation@Home* members will complete 3-5 different engagement actions. Engagement actions include: opening emails, liking or posting on social media, attending events, etc.

FY 2020 TASK: Develop a *Conservation@Home* certified members' engagement plan that focus on engaging them in other TCF activities.

- Fold into the Marketing and Communications Plan in #1 above.

Enabling Condition #3:

Partner organizations, supported by Conservation@Home staff outside of the core four counties, but within the Chicago Wilderness region, implement Conservation@Home.

Measure of Success A

By 2026, the entire Chicago Wilderness region is covered by an organization implementing the *Conservation@Home* program.

Measure of Success B

By 2026, a *Conservation@Home* map that plots program activities, participants and/or certifications throughout the Chicago Wilderness region will be 50% more densely populated.

FY 2021 TASK: Reach out to CW members outside of NE IL and encourage them to learn more and consider joining the C @ H regional partnership.

- Send letter/email to executive directors at targeted organizations by August 2021.

FY 2021 TASK: The current dot map will be updated every two years (end of calendar 2020, 2022, etc.)

- All participating organizations will send their C @ H data to Dave Holman by December 1 of those years and Dave will update the dot map.

Enabling Condition #4:

A diverse array of products and services, including affordable native plants, are readily available.

Measure of Success A

By 2035, 80% of all retailers and wholesalers in the core four counties that sell plants also sell native plants so that all property owners have access to native plants, close to home for an affordable price.

Measure of Success B

50% of retailers who sell native plants offer high-quality plants and a wide variety of options that meet a high standard, as defined by The Conservation Foundation.

Measure of Success C

20% of staff at retailers that sell native plants are well-trained and are able to guide customers on how to use native plants by 2035

TASK: (Notes: support wholesalers, TCF native plant sales, promote other native plant sales, promote other places to access native plants.)

*** We may want to rethink the above success measures and focus less on retailers.

Enabling Condition #5:

The landscape industry knows of and practices sustainable landscaping.

Measure of Success A

TCF partners with institutions with existing training programs to host trainings on sustainable landscape practices each year. Training includes information about *Conservation@Home*.

Measure of Success B

10 landscape companies send participants to a sustainable landscaping training each year.

TASK: Build mutually beneficial relationships with landscape companies and industry associations. (Long-term)

Enabling Condition #6:

Municipal and county ordinances and zoning rules allow for and encourage the use of sustainable landscape practices.

Measure of Success A

By 2021, top 10 largest communities in each of the core four counties encourage sustainable landscape practices.

Measure of Success B

Each county in the Chicago Wilderness region encourages sustainable landscape practices by 2026.

Measure of Success C

80% of communities that are engaged in the Conservation In Our Community program have reviewed their ordinances for compatibility with sustainable landscaping practices and have adopted model sustainable landscaping codes and ordinances.

FY 2021 TASK: Look at weed and landscape ordinance in all Conservation In Our Community communities to ensure they are compatible with C @ H practices; make recommendations for changes if necessary.

FY 2021 TASK: Place Dennis Dreher's model landscape ordinance and booklet from Jan's workshop on TCF/C @ H web page and promote link to community partners; encourage education and adoption.

FY 2021 TASK: Review all CW county landscape ordinance to evaluate whether they allow and encourage sustainable landscape and if not, work to make necessary changes.

FY 2022 TASK: Review landscape ordinances in the 10 largest communities in each of the core four counties to evaluate whether they allow and encourage sustainable landscape and if not, work to make necessary changes.