

FY2021-2023 Strategic Plan – Preparing for the Future

| | Strategic Direction | Purpose |
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|  <p>OUR WATER</p> | <p>Engage the public, landowners and governmental agencies on water quality issues, restoration efforts of habitats along rivers, creeks and wetlands, and promote water-related activities.</p> | <p>To manage, protect and restore wetlands to improve water quality, quantity and aquatic habitats</p> |
|  <p>OUR LAND</p> | <p>Restore to ecological health, an interconnected landscape of woodlands, savanna, prairies, and wetlands in a manner that is responsive and resilient to ensure they are preserved into perpetuity.</p> | <p>To protect thriving native plant and wildlife populations while responsibly managing public lands that support diverse outdoor recreation, educational and immersive experiences.</p> |
|  <p>OUR COMMUNITY</p> | <p>Undertake communication, education and outreach initiatives to engage and empower people of all ages, cultures and abilities to learn about and contribute to conservation in diverse and impactful ways</p> | <p>To build broad public awareness and support for conservation while instilling a deeper awareness of conservation issues and encouraging an active and healthy outdoor lifestyle, thus adding to the overall quality of life and economic vitality of the county.</p> |
|  <p>OUR STEWARDSHIP</p> | <p>Continue organizational effectiveness by focusing resources on core activities, allocating funds responsibly, and diversifying revenue sources to support and advance our vision and mission. Identify core activities that prioritize protecting our natural and cultural heritage resources, opportunities for immersive and educational experiences, and maintaining safe, public access for outdoor recreation.</p> | <p>To ensure financial and organizational capacity to pursue the vision and mission of the Conservation District.</p> |

| | Goals |
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| | <p>Restore Wetlands: Improve natural flood storage capacity.</p> <p>Minimize Flooding: Identify remaining restorable wetlands and share data with strategic partners.</p> <p>Maximize Groundwater Quality: Assess the positive impact of 25,000 acres of public open space on the quality and quantity of groundwater.</p> <p>Water Activities: Work in partnerships to plan future opportunities for water-related activities.</p> |
| | <p>Restore Natural Habitat: Restore a minimum of 500 acres of new, natural habitat.</p> <p>Land Preservation: Protect parcels as opportunity and funding become available.</p> <p>Site Use: Continue to improve opportunities for public site use and accessibility.</p> <p>Trail Connections: Work in active partnerships to plan and protect future local and regional trail corridors.</p> |
| | <p>Inspire New Conservation Champions: Energize, educate and empower community citizens and volunteers.</p> <p>Cultivate Knowledge: Maintain a professional and knowledgeable team to achieve land, water, community and stewardship goals.</p> <p>Promote Health & Wellness: Establish the Conservation District as an important community partner for improving the health and wellbeing of McHenry County residents.</p> <p>Influence Advocacy: Initiate and advocate for legislative and public policy objectives that protect and safeguard public lands/ water, wildlife, and way of life in McHenry County.</p> |
| | <p>Financial Sustainability: Balance new and existing resources with core activities to ensure long-term organizational stability.</p> <p>Expand Philanthropic Support: Work with the McHenry County Conservation Foundation to grow their donor base to support, sustain and advance conservation, education and recreation programs of the District.</p> <p>Effective Governance: Provide the Board of Trustees and elected officials with continuous, in-depth knowledge about the opportunities and challenges facing the Conservation District to ensure informed, fact-based decision making.</p> <p>Improved Technology Infrastructure: Enhance organizational effectiveness through the use of reliable and emerging technologies and information resources that support innovation, increased accessibility, and efficiency.</p> |

Since 1971, McHenry County Conservation District has been preserving natural land, restoring wildlife habitats, and investing in projects and programs that protect our water, wildlife, and way of life in McHenry County. McHenry County Conservation District has protected nearly 25,600 acres of high-quality natural areas and fulfills a statutory mandate to steward these public lands which represent McHenry County's natural and cultural heritage. These are irreplaceable resources which are critical for protecting the quality of our air, land and water, providing ecosystem services, wildlife habitats and recreational spaces on which all living things depend.

For almost 50 years, the District has worked collaboratively with conservation advocates, volunteers, and other partners to implement ambitious plans to preserve and protect McHenry County's treasured natural landscapes. Maintaining healthy and resilient lands, expanding communication and outreach, and ensuring quality service and visitor safety standards remains a priority, however, it has become increasingly more difficult to achieve these goals without capturing inflationary growth. Preserving wildlife habitats, protecting threatened and endangered plants and animals, mitigating impacts of climate change, providing education and outdoor recreation programs, and maintaining sites and facilities comes at a price and requires adequate funding.

Smart and sustainable approaches are necessary, securing additional resources to carry out our statutory mission is inevitable and conservation stewardship needs to be realized as a shared endeavor.

The path to successfully restore McHenry County's natural areas to optimal health and resiliency and to provide safe access to these areas for the general public to enjoy is outlined in this three-year strategic plan. The four pillars focus on water, land, community and stewardship, and will launch strategic initiatives and conservation efforts that will pave the way for a better tomorrow.

We invite you to share in our important conservation work and to monitor our progress as we begin the next phase of our journey.