



Strategic Plan

2020-2023



Executive Summary

Since 1995, the Blue Mounds Area Project has worked with private landowners to educate, inform and empower them with the goal of restoring and protecting native biodiversity and ecosystem health. Their programs and services are well respected and to the extent they can measure, their efforts have been successful.

The strategic direction established approximately five years ago provided some guidance for the organization, but follow-through on some of the priorities was inconsistent. In mid-2019, the board decided to reassess their current state and identify areas where they may need to shift in order to achieve their vision. The board was also interested in establishing mechanisms to help maintain focus and hold themselves accountable for achieving the goals they set forth.

Through this process, the board reaffirmed their mission and drafted a vision for a future they are working toward. They determined that the organization's unique value is that they provide support and information for private landowners in a nonthreatening way with no agenda other than a dedication to land preservation and enjoyment. They decided that a focus on the four strategic priority areas described below best leverages this unique value offering and moves the organization closer to accomplishing its vision. The priority areas are:

- 1. Attract and retain members.** This includes learning more about their current members and determining how best to engage them given budget and resource constraints. It also includes taking concrete steps to attract and engage new members.
- 2. Offer high quality, relevant programming and support services that engage members and encourage ongoing protection.** This focuses on assessing existing avenues of support programming, identifying gaps and overlaps, and either ending certain programs or creatively filling program gaps with new internal programs, partnership with external organizations, or other options.
- 3. Effectively and efficiently communicate to our members and potential members.** The emphasis for this priority is on providing good quality information to members and potential members in an engaging, timely and efficient manner.
- 4. Strengthen internal capacity and capability in order to accomplish our priorities.** This focuses on building the infrastructure needed to support future growth including people (roles and skills), information management and financial resources.

Mission

“The Blue Mounds Area Project is a community-based organization that seeks to inspire, inform and empower private landowners in the Southwestern Wisconsin region to enjoy, protect and restore native biodiversity and ecosystem health.”

BMAP Purpose

- Promote understanding, appreciation and conservation of native woodlands, prairies, savannas, rivers, streams, wetlands and other ecosystems and their special species in an economically viable manner, through community outreach programs and private contacts.
- Act as a clearing house for information from people and organizations involved in preserving native biodiversity including information about plant, animal and habitat identification, management, restoration, seed sources, native plant nurseries and invasive, non-native species.
- Encourage cooperative, volunteer restoration and management activities.
- Identify public and private land use changes that may affect ecosystem health and promote community-based stewardship of the unique natural heritage of the Blue Mounds and the Southwestern region of Wisconsin.
- Manage and acquire property for conservation purposes.
- Exercise any, all and every power that a nonprofit corporation organized under the provisions of the Wisconsin Nonstock Corporation Law for charitable, educational, religious and scientific purposes, all for the public welfare, can be authorized to exercise but not any other purpose.



Vision

Every private landowner in our service area has the agency and support they need to positively impact the environment.

Values

The core values that drive the work of BMAP’s board, staff and volunteers are:

Collaboration – We proactively seek out and create partnerships that advance our mission.

Community – We understand that community is built on service, participation, and interactions.

Competence – We have the ability, knowledge and skills to perform our work effectively.

Curiosity – We have a strong desire to explore, investigate and learn.

Land Ethic – We believe we have a moral responsibility vis a vis our natural world.

Stewardship – We are responsible in the planning and management of land resources.

Welcoming – We are friendly and we help others feel accepted and happy.

Plan Process

This strategic plan reflects broad input from current and former board members, constituents, partners, funders and community members.

Data was gathered over a two month period by the external consultant with guidance from the board president and a subset of the board. Data was obtained through one-on-one interviews with 14 stakeholders. Data collected in previous member surveys was also used.

Two half-day facilitated planning meetings with representation from the board and staff were held in December, 2019 and January, 2020. Through the analysis of the data referenced above, the planning group arrived at the strategic priority areas described in detail in this document. Detailed work plans for each priority will be implementation monitored by board “Champions” over the next several years.

Internal Environment Summary

Strengths. All stakeholders agree that one of BMAP’s major strengths is that they engage landowners in a neutral, nonthreatening way with the desire to help people protect and enjoy the environment. The Ecologist’s expertise is an especially appreciated and sought-after service. Constituents strongly feel BMAP connects people to resources in an effective, helpful way through the ecologist, the newsletter, the e-newsletter and the programming, and they often form strong, helpful bonds beyond the organization. The board is viewed as hard working, knowledgeable and experienced with huge passion for the work of the organization.

Weaknesses. While these strengths can be leveraged in the future, there are areas the organization could improve on. The current programs and services are appreciated by members, but they aren’t relevant for all members and may not have the greatest impact for the resources they require. They also may not keep members engaged and active for the long term or engage potential members. The organization does little to encourage new membership which limits growth and puts a strain on current members.

External Environment Summary

Opportunities. There are many external opportunities the organization can seize in order to fulfil its mission. The target population of conservation-minded landowners and “townies” remains largely untapped by the organization which is a huge opportunity. The potential to partner with other organizations on grants, education opportunities and restoration work is also great and would increase the engagement of current members and possibly attract new members. There is a high level of knowledge and passion on the board and in the organization which can be leveraged in a variety of ways to get work done and make headway on the mission and vision.



Threats. There are also threats to the organization’s mission. Demographics are shifting in BMAP’s geographical focus area which will impact membership and member engagement. The number of organizations that do similar work to BMAP’s are increasing and may impact member engagement and confuse potential members.

Strategic Priorities

To fully leverage strengths while mitigating weaknesses, the planning team has decided to focus on four strategic priority areas described below.

Priority 1: Attract and retain members.

Measures and targets:

1. Increase in the average membership donation per “basic” member per year (Target: \$5 annual)
2. Memberships retained year over year. Target: 90% annually.
3. Annual member satisfaction. Target: 80%

Specific Strategies:

- Develop a membership attraction campaign
- Devise strategies to retain members

Priority 2: Offer high quality programs and services.

Measures and targets:

1. Increase in the number of site visits year over year Target: 20 per year by 2023.
2. Increase year over year in the total number of attendees at events. Target: 10% increase year over year.
3. Number of programs in our “catalog” that meet the needs of each person in our targeted demographic groups. Target: 2 programs per demographic group.

Specific Strategies:

- Analyze existing programming for relevance, quality and resource usage
- Offer or sponsor the highest quality programs
- Offer relevant programming including internal and external offerings



Priority 3: Communicate effectively and efficiently to members.

Measures and targets:

1. Maintain ebulletin opens. Target 50% per ebulletin
2. Maintain Website hits. Target: 50 per month
3. Average number of new attendees at events per quarter: Target: 2

Specific Strategies:

- Create a messaging plan that supports membership and fund development efforts
- Update and/or create collateral (for example: brochures, website, etc.)
- Monitor marketing efforts

Priority 4: Strengthen internal capacity and capability.

Measures and targets:

1. Increase in the number of major gifts (greater than \$250): 1 new one per year
2. Succession plan in place for board members including officers. Target: 1 person in pipeline for each position at all times.
3. Percent of board members who are engaged. Target: 100%
4. Job descriptions in place for all positions.

Specific Strategies:

- Create and implement a fund development plan
- Design a flexible organization with engaging and meaningful roles
- Upgrade technology

