



**THE WILDLIFE SOCIETY  
STRATEGIC PLAN  
2015-2019**

*“The privilege of possessing the earth entails the responsibility of passing it on, the better for our use, not only to immediate posterity, but to the unknown future, the nature of which is not given to us.”*

Aldo Leopold, *Some Fundamentals of Conservation in the Southwest* (1923)  
President, The Wildlife Society, 1939-40

## **Introduction**

The Wildlife Society, founded in 1937, is an international non-profit association dedicated to excellence in wildlife stewardship through science and education. Our mission is to inspire, empower, and enable wildlife professionals to sustain wildlife populations and habitats through science-based management and conservation. The Society’s membership in 2014 includes nearly 10,000 professionals and students with expertise in all aspects of wildlife biology, research, conservation, and management.

Over the next five years, The Wildlife Society will maintain or improve its performance in five core strategic areas: wildlife sustainability, leadership, member services, organizational integration, and the Society’s sustainability. Directions and actions in these areas are described below in terms of outcome-based themes and associated execution strategies. Plan implementation will be based on annual operational plans that are aligned with the strategic themes and strategies, along with performance metrics, resources and budgets needed to drive results. Operational flexibility will be essential for the plan to remain relevant in the face of today’s rapid change. Thus, each year the Society will assess and adjust the level of effort and resources in each of the areas, as needed to best serve the Society’s strategic goals and member needs.

## **Vision**

The Wildlife Society is a strong and effective voice in representing wildlife conservation and management, and ensuring sustainable wildlife populations in healthy ecosystems.

## **Mission**

To inspire, empower, and enable wildlife professionals to sustain wildlife populations and habitats through science-based management and conservation.

## Values

The Wildlife Society is committed to the following values:

- Integrity
- Service
- Excellence
- Understanding

## Strategic Themes

### **1. The Wildlife Society achieves a positive impact on the sustainability of wildlife populations.**

It is the continuing opportunity of future generations to appreciate and experience appropriately functioning ecosystems, and the diversity of wildlife that is integral to them, which will most effectively express the long-term realization of The Wildlife Society's vision and values.

- a. The Society helps develop future generations of wildlife professionals by maintaining its outreach activities such as mentoring, internships, training, and certification; by continuing its support for the development and growth of student chapters; by increasing its work with colleges and universities on curricula; and by facilitating increased human diversity within the profession.
- b. The Society influences decisions and actions affecting wildlife populations and habitats by providing the best available science-based information. The Society streamlines its processes for developing position statements, technical reviews and fact sheets, and increases their dissemination to managers and policymakers.
- c. The Society expands its efforts to deliver credible wildlife-related science and information to a broad audience by increasing awareness, encouraging dialogue, and promoting best practices through print media, e-media and conferences.
- d. The Society enables wildlife professionals and partners to foster active public involvement and participation in conservation by initiating calls to action, providing networking opportunities, and distributing information on current issues. The Society increases engagement of its members and partners through the Conservation Affairs Network, the use of action alerts, and other mechanisms.

### **2. The Wildlife Society is a recognized and trusted organization for expertise on science-based wildlife management and conservation.**

Media and policymakers at the state/provincial and federal levels seek out the expertise of staff and members of The Wildlife Society on issues related to science-based wildlife management and conservation.

- a. The Society increases efforts to enhance its visibility, influence, and audience through the proactive sharing of useful and newsworthy information.
- b. Natural resource agencies and conservation groups increase their collaboration with the Society as a recognized authority and primary source of expertise on wildlife management and conservation.
- c. The Society maintains effective liaisons with other conservation and natural resource organizations and agencies by exchanging information, collaborating on actions, and leading selected initiatives in support of wildlife and wildlife professionals.
- d. The Society maintains ethical standards for science-based research and management through its advocacy of a code of ethics and standards of professional conduct in wildlife conservation and management.
- e. The Society maintains its emphasis on the importance of ethical standards to wildlife professionals through print media, e-media and networking.

### **3. The Wildlife Society supports, encourages, and enables its members to conserve and manage wildlife through the application of science.**

The Wildlife Society seeks to be the premier membership organization for wildlife professionals, students and partners through its services and promotion of science-based wildlife conservation and management.

- a. The Society delivers outstanding member service and support to wildlife professionals, students, and partners by assessing, prioritizing, and delivering key benefits.
- b. The Society provides insightful and useful information on current issues concerning wildlife science, conservation, management, and policy by increasing its outreach of information through print media, e-media, member input, and other mechanisms.
- c. The Society sets educational standards for science-based wildlife research and management by maintaining and promoting its certification program for wildlife biologists.
- d. The Society enhances networking and collaboration opportunities for its members through e-media, conferences, and other mechanisms to enhance their professional and academic development.

- e. The Society promotes professional growth of its members by maintaining its professional development program, mentorship program, and conservation leadership training.

**4. The Wildlife Society supports and encourages networking among student chapters, state/provincial chapters, sections, working groups, Council, and headquarters to leverage synergies and communications that advance science-based wildlife conservation.**

The Wildlife Society integrates cooperative efforts across all levels of the organization. It encourages sharing of information and coordination of messages, so as to advocate and implement science-based wildlife conservation.

- a. Society staff and members increase their support for sections, chapters, and working groups by becoming members of these units, attending their meetings, and providing technical support, financial support, and consultations on business operations.
- b. Section and chapter members increase their support of the Society by becoming members of TWS international, networking with professionals and students outside of their units, attending TWS annual conferences, and sharing information about unit activities and needs.
- c. The Society and sections and chapters develop more effective communication channels that promote the sharing of membership information to keep members at all levels informed and strengthen the voice of the organization.
- d. The Society increases its presence and involvement in international wildlife conservation, by networking with international organizations, co-hosting international events, and encouraging international collaboration through the chapters, sections, and working groups.

**5. The Wildlife Society is professionally managed and financially robust.**

The Wildlife Society is committed to best management practices for non-profit organizations that are grounded in transparency, accountability, and sustainability.

- a. The Society adheres to professional and ethical business practices, including staffing and human resources, rules of governance, organizational structure, legal and tax obligations, record-keeping, and reporting to its membership.
- b. The Society strives to recruit and retain a diverse staff and membership at all levels through diversity initiatives and funding opportunities.
- c. The Society complies with and maintains generally accepted practices for finance and accounting, including conducting annual independent audits, careful tracking of revenues and expenses, transparent financial reporting, and management of investments.

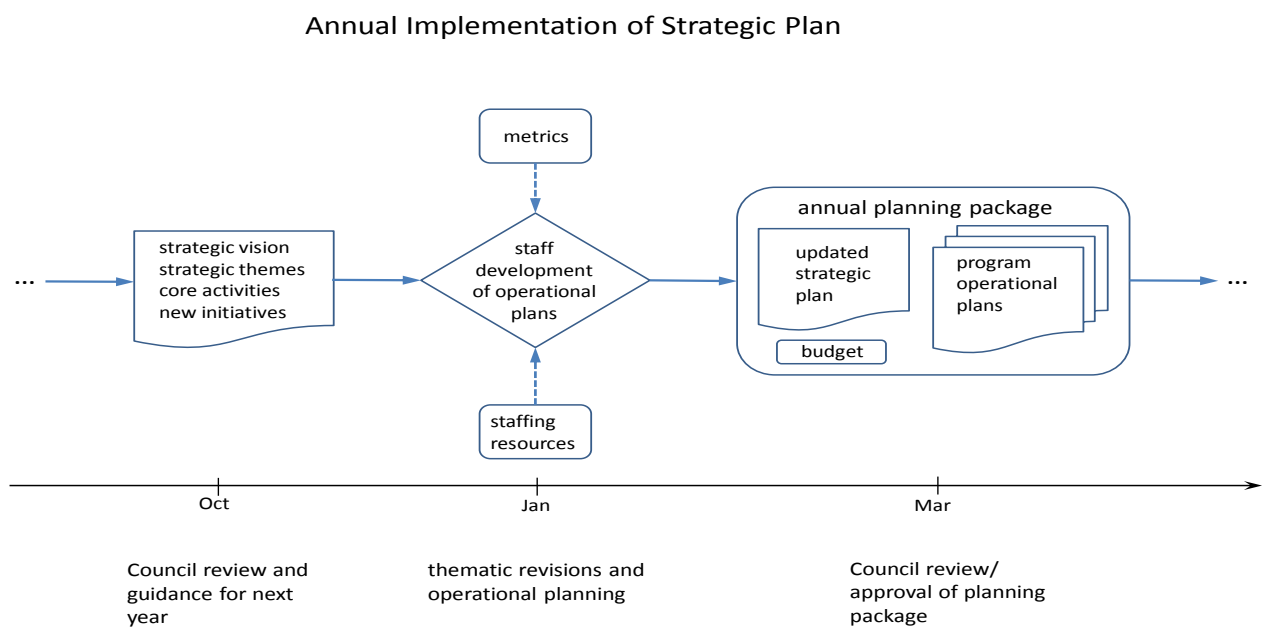
- d. The Society is committed to ensuring that its operating reserves are compliant with levels specified in its financial policy and in accordance with best practices for non-profit organizations.
- e. The Society actively seeks opportunities to expand its financial assets while providing valued benefits and services to members and ensuring the achievement of its overall mission.

## Implementation

To be useful in guiding The Wildlife Society over the next five years, strategic planning must be based on a comprehensive framework that includes not only a vision and strategic themes, but also an implementation process that ties operations, resources, and budgets to the vision and themes. Thus, the Society’s strategic planning framework includes the following elements:

- The Strategic Plan itself, with its statement of the Society vision, strategic themes and objectives
- Annual operational plans for the Society’s business units that are aligned with its strategic themes and available resources, and include metrics by which to measure progress
- Mechanisms by which new initiatives and opportunities can be introduced, evaluated and prioritized
- Annual program budgets that are aligned with the annual operational plans

Linkages among these components are illustrated in the following figure:



This figure characterizes an annual sequence of events:

- Each October staff will ask Council to
  - Reaffirm support for or make changes to the Plan's strategic themes
  - Make recommendations regarding any new initiatives that should be considered for implementation in the upcoming year
  - Identify any core activities that should be discontinued
- Based on this input, between October each year and February the next year Society staff will develop operational plans for core revenue-generating business units and for non-revenue generating business units. All operational plans will be developed in alignment with available staffing, resources, and budget.
- The staff will then assess the remaining capacity and resources that are available for new initiatives, and propose an initial prioritization to Council prior to the March meeting.
- At the March Council meeting, the entire Strategic Plan package will be reviewed by Council for approval or recommended changes.

It is in the course of this sequence, and in particular the development and approval of operational plans, that actions and their projected consequences (e.g., increase, decrease, or maintain) are to be identified. The intent is for the operational plans, staffing, and budgets to align with the strategic themes. Developing annual operational plans will ensure that our actions remain timely and relevant, and the planning process retains the agility that will be needed over the five-year planning horizon.