MISSION IN BRIEF

In order to protect all living things, the Environmental Defenders is dedicated to the preservation and improvement of the natural environment in McHenry County. As a grassroots organization, we are committed to building sound ecological relationships between people and the natural world that supports all life.

“In nature nothing exists alone.”
Rachel Carson
MISSION

In order to protect all living things, the Environmental Defenders is dedicated to the preservation and improvement of the natural environment in McHenry County. As a grassroots organization, we are committed to building sound ecological relationships between people and the natural world that supports all life.

To achieve environmental preservation and improvement, we provide our members, and the broader community, with volunteer and environmental advocacy opportunities as well as educational programs. Our work is accomplished through volunteer Action Teams that focus on specific areas of environmental and conservation concerns. All are welcome to join an Action Team and make a difference. Some topics we address include: pollution prevention, sustainable land use, renewable energy and natural resource conservation. We advocate for policies that protect drinking water supplies and conserve land for open space and agriculture. We encourage natural resource protection through native landscaping and stream protection programs. We advocate for plastic reduction in everyday life and encourage bike/walk friendly communities and alternative transportation practices to the traditional automobile. We demonstrate waste reduction through recycling drives and special collection sites. We also enjoy McHenry County outdoors together through kayaking its rivers and biking, walking or skiing its many trails.

The Environmental Defenders is a non-partisan, non-profit organization founded in 1970.

VISION

We envision a planet that is healthy for future generations and understand that decisions today affect everyone’s tomorrow. We understand and work to educate everyone residing in our county about the local connection to global realities and how global trends affect the well-being of humans and all species, locally. From the threats of global climate change, habitat loss and polluted watersheds to soil health and plastic reduction, it is vital that we advocate for best management practices with regard to decisions that affect our shared environment.

We plan to meet our vision through specialized committee work and through a new program of advocacy training with the potential of building a force of dedicated and passionate stewards of McHenry County who are willing to volunteer their time as watchful residents. With trained volunteers who attend, listen and report from municipal, township and county meetings on environmental issues, The Defenders will stay better informed as an organization about decisions affecting our county, whether positive or negative. Through its network of environmental “ambassadors,” The Environmental Defenders endeavors to deepen its roots and meet its vision through change on a systemic level.

Our Vision of work in McHenry County is one that is inclusive of all who reside here regardless of station or place.
BACKGROUND: Founded in 1970, The Environmental Defenders is a non-partisan, 501c3 organization serving all of McHenry County founded for the purpose of environmental preservation, protection, & education as well as environmental advocacy for the well-being of all.

PURPOSE OF STRATEGIC PLAN

This plan sets goals for The Environmental Defenders to continue stewardship of the environment through programs that protect and preserve. It will also expand its reach to more people currently without presence within the organization’s leadership and membership. Through its seven working Action Teams, The Defenders is committed to engaging all of those who call McHenry County home and who wish to participate in its environmental health.

At the conclusion of the three years covered by this strategic plan, we hope to realize an organization that is fulfilling its mission, continuing to build a dedication to environmental stewardship in McHenry County and is operationally and fiscally sound while growing its staff to match increasing community needs and environmental pursuits.
PROGRAMMATIC GOALS—ACTION TEAM DRIVEN

1. Outreach

Visit and reach out directly to communities that over time can also build both membership and member diversity.

A. Latino – MC1B
B. African American – MC1B
C. Multi-family dwellings/mobile home parks - MC1B
D. Schools – EDC
E. Community organizations – MC1B
F. Government – WRC2A
G. Young professionals; families; seniors – MC1B

2. Action Team Connection & Strengthening

Through its seven working Action Teams, The Defenders is committed to engaging all of those who call McHenry County home and who wish to participate in its environmental health.

A. Engage interested members monthly –
   i. office supplies monthly updated list to chairs.
   ii. committee chairs send direct email to list.
   iii. updates on meetings sent weekly through eNews.
   iv. meetings posted on website; Facebook?
B. Board interface
   i. review monthly reports provided by committee chairs
   ii. sit on at least one committee as Board liaison.
C. Attract volunteers to action teams
   i. help grow committee numbers through actively inviting current volunteers to join a committee of interest.
   ii. Highlight committee work at all tabling events.
D. Work on establishing new action teams as needs demand
   i. Discuss quarterly at board meetings.
   ii. Establish subcommittee groups, such as young professionals, Latino and business.

See addendum with Committee Goals and Action Plans. In consultation with chairs and volunteers, the committees will engage in two to three Goals with a minimum of two action plans per goal.

3. Environmental Grassroots Advocacy

Strengthen Environmental Ambassador program, which asks volunteers to keep a watchful eye out for environmental issues (whether positive or negative) at municipal level, then report back to office with useful information if applicable.

   i. Create systemic concern for county’s environmental health through grassroots observation – MC, WNRPC, WR, RC, TC, EDC
   ii. Provide environmental advocacy education, training and support for volunteers – MC
   iii. Recruit environmental “ambassadors” – MC, WNRPC, WRC, RC, TRC, EDC
   iv. Connect existing members to program through phone calls and outreach to members in each town in the county. MC
   v. Goal to strive for: two ambassadors per town/village/city. 4Q2020
   vi. Reinvigorate relationships with local legislators.

Never believe that a few caring people can’t change the world. For, indeed, that's all who ever have.

Margaret Mead
1. **Fiscal responsibility – 3Q Annually**
   *In order to provide long-term fiscal stability, The Defenders will develop a diverse financial plan.*
   - Monthly Finance meetings
     1. Review and revise funds management policy (1Q2020)
     2. Identify Annual Financial Goals (4Q2020)
   - Initiate development of investment guidelines (2Q2020)
   - Align with mission and vision (3,4Q2020-2023)
   - Revise planned giving/legacy/estate planning program (4Q2020) – MC, Finance

2. **Annual budget – 4Q Annually**
   *Create annual budget that assures financial sustainability to meet both staffing and programmatic needs.*
   - Request annual budget from committees
   - Plan budget for annual operating expenses
     1. Existing and future grant review
     2. Fundraising goals

3. **Financial reporting -**
   *Improve and update reporting methods.*
   - Formulate grant giving report design and other changes to reporting – 1Q monthly
   - The Green Read – independent financial statement - 1Q monthly
   - Monthly board reporting adjusted to reflect board member needs. Annually

4. **Staff capacity**
   *In order to more effectively engage the broader McHenry County community, redefining of staff responsibilities is needed.*
   - Identify specific needs of additional staff and create position (s). (1Q2020)
   - Hire staff for newly created position(s). (2Q2020)
   - Adjust executive director duties. (2Q2020)
   - Implement Succession Plan for future stability (4Q2020)

5. **Media relationships**
   *Strengthen and build relationships with all types of media outlets.*
   - Create plan to communicate stewardship, education, volunteer and advocacy opportunities. (2Q2020)
   - Disseminate Action Team programs/events (2Q2020)
   - Review and update media contact list. (2Q2020)
MEMBERSHIP ACTION TEAM (MC)

1) Diversify membership
   a) Identify an individual/s who can lead and establish plan to organize the young professional program.
   b) Work on membership outreach that is inclusive of the Latino/Hispanic community and other underrepresented communities within The Defenders' family.

2) Increase number of total memberships
   a) Conduct a "recruit ONE new member" or “purchase gift membership” challenge to attain goal of hitting the 1,000-member mark during 50th anniversary year in 2020.
   b) Explore new opportunities to table and through social media in order to increase visibility.

3) Increase retention of existing members
   a) Study attrition rates nationwide to see if we’re at normal loss to gain ratio.
   b) Survey members through Six-Second Survey.

4) Explore alternative ways Members can give
   a) Establish a legacy giving program for members to include in their plans.
   b) Provide incentives for members to increase their annual donation or select monthly giving option.

FUNDRAISING ACTION TEAM (FRC)

1) Replace lost revenue from County Fair volunteers
   a) Increase revenue at Green Spot
      Tactic a: Increase quality of books being sold at Green Spot
      Tactic b: Review pricing structure to make it easier for sorters
      Tactic c: Review quality of books being priced and removing “acceptable”
   b) Review alternative fundraising event suggestions
      Tactic a: Assess each suggestion based on: volunteer hours required, volunteer leadership interest and minimum funds needed to make a profit.

2) Keep office area and Green Spot from becoming a recycling center for books
   a) Prevent unacceptable books from being left at the Green Spot or Office
      Tactic a: Limit Hours of donations to Green Spot hours – not office hours
      Tactic b: Train volunteers at Green Spot on acceptable standards for book acceptance and how to explain alternatives to donors for rejected books.
      Tactic c: Put up bigger sign blocking drop off when office is open.
      Tactic d: Remove drop off box from front of building
EDUCATION ACTION TEAM (EDC)

1) Increase involvement by youth (age 18 or less) in Environmental Defenders activities by 20% over 2019 numbers. *(If we don’t have numbers of students volunteers, we can track this for 2020 and then increase 20% over these numbers.)*

   a) Make contact with the service organizations within the schools such as National Honor Society and Key Club for all the public and private high schools and middle school in McHenry County and provide the sponsors for these clubs with service opportunities available with the Environmental Defenders of McHenry County.

   b) Determine the logistics of reporting service hours for individuals and have the forms for this reporting ready to send to high schools.

   c) Develop grade level specific activities for use at Defenders’ events to attract youth with environmental concerns.

   d) Develop outreach so that demographics of active youth in Defenders match the demographics of McHenry County.

2) Increase the number of environmental clubs in McHenry County by 20% over the next three years.

   a) Develop a resource guide to support the efforts of environmentally-focused clubs for McHenry County.

   b) Make contact with current sponsors of “green” clubs and develop an email list with updates of current Environmental Defenders of McHenry County events that have appeal to school-age students and scout groups. A monthly newsletter can go out to these sponsors.

   c) Make contact with potential “green” club sponsors to provide them with support in the form of the resource guide and networking opportunities with other “green” clubs sponsors.

3) Increase the number of requests for speakers from the Speaker’s Bureau to 1 per month. *(2019 numbers were about 6 per year.)*

   a) Update and organize the Speakers Bureau List.

   b) Seek out additional organizations that would like to have speakers.

   c) Develop a method of getting the information of topics and target audience from the Speakers Bureau to more organizations.
WASTE REDUCTION ACTION TEAM (WRC)

1) Plastic Straw Reduction
   a) Identify restaurants, cafes, bars, etc., that no longer use plastic straws and give them window decal.
   b) Continue to encourage restaurants still using plastic straws to switch to alternative materials.
   c) Advocate for “ask first” policy at restaurants, etc., saving them money and waste.

2) Plastic Bag (and other single use bags) Fee
   a) Re-invigorate work at the municipal level to put a fee on single-use bags.
   b) Share Woodstock ordinance with other municipalities.
   c) Continue to advocate for state-wide fee through work with the IEC.
   d) Contact organization handing out plastic bags at events, such as hospitals, sheriff, MCC.

3) Compost advocacy
   a) Recruit new committee members who are interested in working on food waste reduction and curbside pick-up advocacy.
   b) Identify partners to work on composting efforts county wide, such as farms, school and restaurants.
   c) Push for waste haulers to make household composting easier.
   d) Implement mindful waste procedures in schools.

RECYCLING ACTION TEAM (RC)

1) Styrofoam Collection Program
   a) Continue to collect Styrofoam at county drives and collection shed sites.
   b) Consider plan of action to “retire” Styrofoam collection pickup and hand over to company, like Dart. Or, keep open until suitable county or municipal alternatives are available. Possibility to still be involved in prep as part of deal.
   c) Engage more volunteers to make the process run smoothly.

2) Greening Fairs and Festivals
   a) Partner with McHenry County Fair and Mexican Independence Day on continuing to green these events through proper recycling as an example to others in the county.
   b) Identify annual fairs and festivals in McHenry County and build relationships and outreach for greening events and provide advice and resources where applicable.

3) Consider The Defenders’ future role in recycling
   a) Partner with the county on recycling drives in 2020 and next three years.
   b) Consider shredding opportunities at events in order to attract wider audience.
   c) Respond to limited invitations from towns for one-day recycling events (towns not involved in county drives and only in fair weather.)
   d) Consider other waste materials that could be recycled.
TRANSPORTATION ACTION TEAM (TRC)

1) Advocate for finishing/re-configuring incomplete bike trails throughout the county
   a) Rte 14 to Woodstock Square
   b) Pave last nine miles of northern part of Prairie Trail
   c) Crystal Lake Avenue near RR crossing (East street) – too narrow
   d) Sandbloom road north of Souwanas (Algonquin)
   e) Monitor the progress of trails identified in MCDOT’s five-year plan

2) More EV charging stations
   a) Identify locations
   b) Encourage local business financial support with possible government cost-sharing
   c) Provide support (technical, supplier info) to interested parties
   d) Implement stations

3) Cycling awareness/education
   a) Connect Cycling Savvy with school districts
   b) Integrate cycling into school PE programs
   c) Facilitate workshops (i.e., in conjunction with bike shops) on safety, maintenance/repair
   d) Advise local government and contractors on implementation of bike lanes, shoulders in early phases of road design/construction

WATER & NATURAL RESOURCES PROTECTION ACTION TEAM (WNRPC)

1) Work to restore/establish roadside prairies in McHenry County.
   a) Continue our efforts to care for O’Brien Prairie and Triangle Prairie by removing invasives, removing trash, conducting controlled burns, and plant more native plants.
   b) Continue our collaboration with McHenry Township to care for and collect data from the four roadside prairie areas that were planted in 2019.
   c) Attempt to increase roadside plantings in McHenry Township with their collaboration.
   d) Share information with other McHenry County townships about roadside prairies and our experiences with McHenry Township to try to expand the number of roadside prairies in the county.

2) Identify major rivers/streams in the County with signs to promote more awareness and desire to protect these surface waters and the watersheds that they drain.
   a) Collaborate with MCDOT in 2020 to identify major rivers/streams and to create signs to name each of them in the Kishwaukee and Nippersink watersheds that intersect county roads.
   b) Seek grant funding to cover costs for the project with MCDOT in order to make and erect the signs during 2020 and into 2021.
   c) Expand this project to include signage on IDOT, township and municipal roads/streets in McHenry County townships and municipalities in the Kishwaukee and Nippersink watersheds.
   d) Expand this project to identifying major rivers/streams with signs in the Fox River watersheds in the future.
3) **Work collaboratively with the McHenry County Conservation District and with the Lake and McHenry Counties Soil and Water Conservation District to create a restoration plan for the joint properties owned by all three entities on Dean Street.**

   a) Establish team to create restoration plan involving all three entities in 2020.
   b) Seek to have plan approved by all three entities by end of 2020.
   c) Establish regular volunteer workdays to remove invasives on these properties beginning in 2020.
   d) Seek grant funding to pay for restoration plans through Clean Energy Community Foundation as well as other funders in 2021.
   e) Begin hiring professionals to accomplish large-scale restoration work on all three properties in 2021.

4) **Continue work to bring about a reduction of the use of coal tar sealants or a ban of these sealants with municipalities, government bodies, businesses, churches and residences in McHenry County.**

   a) Work with Defenders’ community advocates to promote a community-wide ban on the use and sale of coal tar and other high PAH sealants in home rule communities in the county.
   b) Create a model ordinance to share with communities.
   c) Develop packet of materials for use with school districts and churches that encourages them to not use toxic pavement sealants.
   d) Reach out to Defenders’ members via newsletter and emails to ask them to share no toxic pavement sealant campaign materials with their school districts and churches.

5) **Place signs at each of the four prairies where the Defenders are creating/improving habitat for pollinators to explain need to protect pollinators.**

   a) Obtain grant funding for signs in 2020.
   b) Create design of information/graphics on signs in 2020.
   c) Erect signs at Triangle Prairie, O’Brien Prairie, County Fairgrounds, and Defenders’ property in 2020.