



*"American Lady on Orange Coneflower" by Ed Buchs
2018 Photo Contest, Pollinators category*

WILD ONES: NATIVE PLANTS, NATURAL LANDSCAPES

2019-2021 STRATEGIC PLAN



Wild Ones Mission

Wild Ones: Native Plants, Natural Landscapes promotes environmentally sound landscaping practices to preserve biodiversity through the preservation, restoration and establishment of native plant communities. Wild Ones is a not-for-profit environmental education and advocacy organization.

Vision

Wild Ones strives to become a widely recognized voice for native plants and the sustainable landscaping movement, promoting increased use of native plantings that create living landscapes through grassroots efforts by example, education, marketing, & personalized support. We will:

- **Raise public awareness** regarding the benefits that native plants, including trees, shrubs, wildflowers and grasses, offer in a variety of settings so landscaping with native plants becomes the norm rather than the exception.
- Persuade the public that **including native plants** in home and public landscapes is **aesthetically pleasing and healthier** for our environment, and that reducing unnecessary turf grass reduces storm water runoff and unnecessary use of water, fuel, and lawn chemicals.
- See the **use of native plants extend** into an increasing number of areas where plants touch the soil – such as pollinator support and public places.
- **Join forces with others** to preserve native plants and biodiversity from loss due to development and other forces, including displacement by non-native invasive plants.



Core Values

Respect. Our mission stems from our respect for the other species on this planet and future generations. We will treat each other—our staff, members and volunteers—with respect at all times. We respect different tastes in landscaping, but also ask that others show respect for the common good by considering how they can conserve resources and improve the environment via the inclusion of native plants in their landscapes.

Personalized support. Our members value the opportunity for direct contact with other Wild Ones members and the ability to “learn locally.” This sets Wild Ones apart from many similar organizations. Networking and education are our most important functions.

Appreciation—volunteers are the heart of Wild Ones. To keep our dues low and our efforts local, Wild Ones is a grass-roots organization that runs primarily on volunteer effort. We will continue to rely on volunteers to carry our mission forward. We will support our volunteers and recognize their efforts, especially those in volunteer leadership positions.

All members are valued members. At the national level our income is largely derived from member dues and donations. We appreciate all members, respecting that everyone has varying priorities and demands on their time, which impact their ability to volunteer.

Fresh and adaptable. While we stay focused on our core abilities and goals, we will continually look for and solicit ideas from our Board, our members and honorary directors for new strategies that we might use to further our goal of promoting sustainable landscape practices.

*PHOTO “Monarch Resting” by Dawn-Marie Staccia
2018 Photo Contest, Pollinators category*

About This Strategic Plan

This is Wild Ones' second strategic plan; it follows an initial plan that covered 2015-2017. Work on this updated plan started at the August 18, 2018 Wild Ones Annual Meeting when board members defined key concepts and set the general direction of the new plan.

How this plan is organized

Considering the organization broadly, Wild Ones consists of a national office that supports members and chapters, a chapter structure, thousands of members, and the organization's place among other environmentally-focused nonprofits. This strategic plan is organized similarly in four sections:

1. The national office and how it supports the organization
2. The chapters, our main structure
3. The members, both those who belong to a chapter and those who are Partners at Large (PALs)
4. How Wild Ones "fits" among other environmental organizations

Time period

This strategic plan covers a three year period beginning January 1, 2019 through December 31, 2021. (A 2022-2024 plan will need to be started in fall of 2021.)

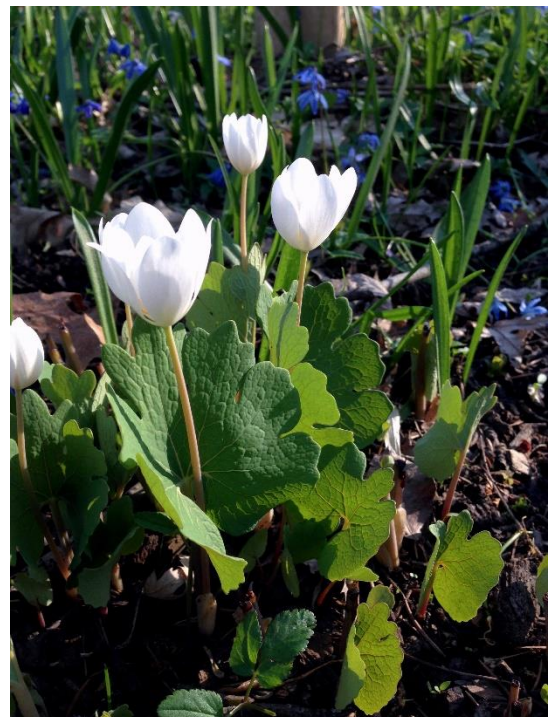
Strategy vs. tactics

Strategies define where we want to be three years out. This plan outlines the courses of action that will achieve long-range (3-year) goals that set the organization's direction and purpose (toward our mission statement).

Tactics are steps needed to get where we want to be. These are the short-term efforts that will achieve strategic, longer-term goals (an operating plan). Tactics are a coordinated set of tasks for carrying out the goals set in the strategic plan and typically have shorter horizons than a strategic plan—usually 1 year. The tactics needed to meet the strategic plan's goals are mainly the responsibility of staff, assisted by board and other volunteers.

Authors

The board members listed at the end of this plan, along with staff, coordinated efforts to prepare this plan. The Wild Ones board adopted it on February 25, 2019.



*"Bloodroot Blooms" by Paula Altekruise
2018 Photo Contest, Flora category*

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*"Two is Better than One" by Leanne Phinney
 2018 Photo Contest, Pollinators category*

Wild Ones NATIONAL

Strategic Goal #1. Strengthen chapter leadership

Our national organization is only as strong as our chapters. Thus, we commit to using all available tools to help chapters develop effective leadership teams.

Tactic A – Ongoing chapter officer training

- With the updated *Chapter Guidebook* as a reference, chapter officers will be invited to participate in live online new chapter officer briefings each year after annual chapter elections.
- The chapter officer briefings will be recorded for 24/7 access via the Members-Only site.
- The national office will seek chapter officer input on areas in which they need further training/ resources and, where sufficient demand warrants, will hold online training sessions.

Timing: 2019-2021

Tactic B – Regular communications with chapter leaders

- On a monthly basis, or more frequently if needed, publish an emailed *National-Chapter Forum* for chapter officers that contains updates and information helpful to chapter operations.

Timing: 2019-2021

Strategic Goal #2. Provide more native plant resources

To put our organization's message in front of the public, Wild Ones national office will seek and provide continually new native plant and landscaping information and will share members' and chapters' information across the organization.

Tactic A – Expand Wild Ones' educational resources

- While Wild Ones has historically provided quality educational resource materials, our efforts slowed in recent years. We want to expand and improve educational resources, including:
 - Native plant education in all forms, including new scientific studies and research reports, distributed via *Wild Ones Journal* articles, social media, postings on the Wild Ones website, and in the Members-Only site.
 - Suggested planting plans appropriate to various ecoregions.
 - Links to native landscape plant databases (via partner organizations).
 - Printed and online materials, such as brochures and one-page handouts.

(cont.)

- Annually, gather and share updated “most successful practices” of chapters and members.
 - Each year, the State of the Chapters Report gathers information on chapters’ success (e.g. holding events, creating displays, holding programs); that information will be compiled and widely shared with chapters.
 - Chapter Confabs and *National-Chapter Forum* will ask for success stories; that information will be recorded and widely shared throughout Wild Ones.
- Provide members and chapters with literature to download, print, and share via affiliated outreach (e.g., to local government entities, companies, garden groups, friends). Some examples:
 - Share the benefits of natives and the difference that one yard or planting can make with new construction areas, homeowner associations, and communities.
 - Work with DOTs, related government entities, and partner organizations to encourage using natives in roadside plantings.
 - Ask for Honorary Director assistance with contacts, short videos, articles, etc.
 - Create stock resource and learning materials for members/chapters to use with different groups (e.g. *weed ordinance info for local government, benefits of natives in roadside plantings to DOT agencies, safe ways to control invasives for local businesses and community centers*). These can consist of short videos, recorded webinars, and PowerPoint presentations.

Timing: 2019-2020

Strategic Goal #3. Secure, reliable access to Wild Ones data

Our members rely on the national office’s ability to provide secure, reliable access to national and chapter websites, as well as the member database and Wild Store. We have work to do to fully ensure that in each of these areas, our technology is up to date, secure, and consistently available to our members.

Tactic A – Update MDB

- Our member database (MDB) will be updated and converted from an old 1997 system into more current programming that can be easily maintained into the future.

Timing: 2019

Tactic B – Data security and privacy

- With privacy of members’ information as a priority, the national board and staff will ensure that our new systems include security that is continually updated to handle threats to our data.

Timing: 2019

Tactic C – Reformat Members-Only

- The Members-Only section of the website has become obsolete and difficult to navigate. As part of technology improvements, the national office will ensure that each member and chapter officer has access to the data/information they need, segmented by user type (with appropriate access credentials).

Timing: 2019

Strategic Goal #4. Ensure Wild Ones is adequately funded

Without the ability to generate significant funding from sales of goods and services, we must find and secure monies to cover not just annual operating expenses, but also updated technology and programming. The board, working with staff, will identify sources and apply for funding, including both traditional and nontraditional sources of monies.

Tactic A – A funding plan

- Wild Ones national board, working with staff and volunteers, will create a written fund-raising plan to guide 2019-2021 fund-raising actions.

Timing: 2019

Tactic B – Seek grants

- Identify grantors that best fit our organization and its projects among:
 - Family foundations
 - Corporate foundations
 - Companies' corporate giving departments
- Network with likely grantors to develop relationships, then formally request funding.
- Develop a model/template grant application (Grants & Sponsorships Committee).
- Grant application drafts will be reviewed by volunteers (e.g. skilled members, SCORE volunteers) and finalized and submitted by staff.

Timing: 2019-2021

Tactic C – Use best available measures to recognizing chapters' and members' financial support

- Develop a relationship plan for Wild Ones major donors (those giving \$500 or more) that includes special communications.
- Develop ways to honor all those who contribute to the organization, both members and chapters.

Timing: 2019

Tactic D – Explore nontraditional fundraising

- With constantly evolving electronic media/online fund-raising, Wild Ones will utilize any that show promise. (Our Amazon Smile efforts have netted over \$400 to date.) Some examples are HuTerra, GoFundMe, Facebook special occasion fundraisers.

Timing: 2019-2021

Tactic E – Implement planned giving/legacy program

- Incorporate the message in all communications (emails, newsletters, website, direct mail).
- Develop a handout/web posting that explains how to designate Wild Ones as an estate recipient.
- Incorporate testimonials into *The Journal* (“Why I am a legacy donor”).

Timing: 2019



*"Butterfly Buffet"
by Nan Sanders Pokerwinski
2018 Photo Contest, 2nd place,
Pollinators category*

Wild Ones CHAPTERS

Wild Ones' mission is accomplished via its chapter structure. Since each chapter is responsive to local issues and interests, chapters best serve our U.S.-wide membership.

Strategic Goal #1. Increase the net number of chapters by six

Tactic A – Identify geographic pockets of potential growth

- Enlist local chapters in identifying neighboring communities and leaders with potential interest in starting new Wild Ones chapters.
- Contact PALs to find which might be able to start new chapters.
- Focus Wild Ones chapter growth on strategic areas (e.g. on monarch butterfly migration paths).

Timing: 2019-2021

Tactic B – Support a chapter start-up mentor program

- Identify a team of skilled chapter leaders who are willing to provide ongoing coaching for new chapter leaders on the best strategies for growth.

Timing: 2019-2020

Strategic Goal #2: An Exceptional Native Landscaping Recognition Program

This goal encourages Wild Ones chapters to widely recognize local corporate, church, school, and government-owned landscapes that promote biodiversity via native plant landscaping.

Tactic A – Define “exceptional native landscaping”

- Chapters and national work together to develop a list of qualifications for what constitutes “exceptional native landscaping.”

Timing: 2019

Tactic B – Develop a Wild Ones recognition program

- Develop an annual program for chapter use: test, refine, release.
- Widely publicize winners and highlight their efforts and the outcomes of their landscapes.

Timing: 2019-2020

Wild Ones MEMBERS

Wild Ones' core values stress appreciation of our member volunteers' work and the value of each member to the organization. Not only do member volunteers work toward our mission, but their work also keeps our dues as low as possible and our efforts local.

Strategic Goal #1. Annually, retain at least 75% of members

Wild Ones' historic retention rate is about 66%, while norms for member retention are closer to 80%. Clearly, we have ample room for improvement in this area.

Tactic A – Engage members from Day 1

- Compile exceptional methods and success stories for new member orientation practices.
- Research whether a new member mentor program on the chapter level would be viable; implement if appropriate.
- Develop a way to gather new members' expectations and needs of Wild Ones to share with chapters, since new members have different needs.
- Use the Lapsed Member Survey to feed back to chapters how to encourage new members.
- Craft interactive member benefits via social media.

Timing: 2019

Tactic B – Help chapters provide retention incentives

- Create strategies to help chapters incentivize people to retain membership (and to join) using discounts on conferences, at plant sales, special events, etc.

Timing: 2019

Tactic C – Reinforce members' decisions to believe in, join, and maintain membership

- Identify key differentiators that make Wild Ones essential and worth supporting, then craft, test, distribute and measure the effectiveness of messaging so it resonates with each unique target audience.
- Emphasize what members' dollars accomplish; provide reminders of ongoing member benefits, both nationally and locally.
- Tell the stories of why members are committed to Wild Ones.
- Improve the Members-Only site so that it is a model member benefit.
- Encourage native plant nursery partners to offer discounts to Wild Ones members.
- Share the *National-Chapter Forum* directly with PALs and Lifetime members.
- Re-define membership dues as a donation in support of Wild Ones' mission.

Timing: 2019-2021

Tactic D – Template presentations and educational materials for recruiting

- To support chapter recruitment efforts, national will assemble template presentations covering a variety of specific topics (*examples: bird and insect habitat, pollinator gardens, water management, attracting beneficial insects etc.*) for use at libraries, garden clubs, etc. These templates should mainly come from chapters sharing their successful materials, supported by the national office's gathering and distributing them.

Timing: 2019-2020

Strategic Goal #2. Increase the number of new members by 15%+

Tactic A – Spread member retention and development successes among chapters

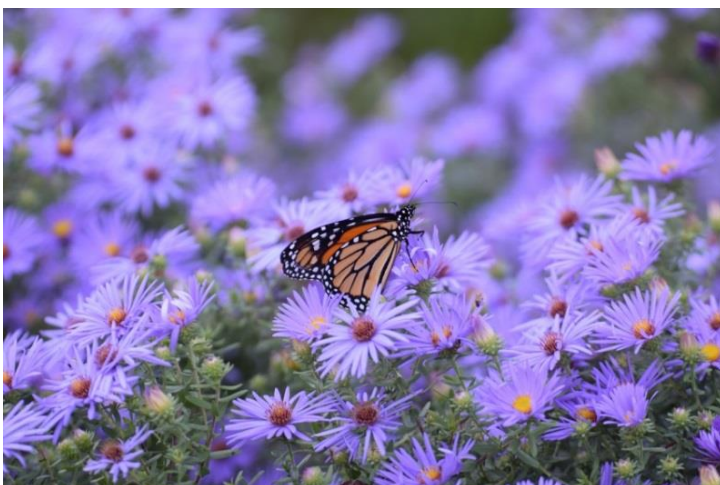
- Identify chapters with the most potential for reactivating members and invite their leaders to forums where membership chairs can share effective tactics.
- Seek membership growth hints from nonprofit support organizations and via networking with other organizations.

Timing: 2019-2021

Tactic B – Identify new “markets” and segment our message

- Schools
 - Elementary – teach children at an early age
 - High schools – get the next generation involved
 - Colleges – have a presence on campus and get college students involved
- New homeowners
- Local government entities, esp. DOT – not only good for the environment, but saves money on maintenance and repair (from erosion due to rainwater runoff)

Timing: 2019-2020



*"Monarch on Aromatic Aster" by Liz Stanley
2018 Photo Contest, Pollinators entry*

Wild Ones AMONG ENVIRONMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

Where it is known, Wild Ones is viewed as a hands-on and credible source of native plant information by environmental organizations and a gateway for local conservation action. However, Wild Ones has not yet reached the point of being nationally recognized.

Greater outcomes come from collaboration. We must identify and seek opportunities to collaborate, build relationships, and increase our partner network nationally by working with other like-minded environmental organizations that support our mission through their own work.

Strategic Goal #1. Clarify Wild Ones' values and vision

Tactic A – Review current WO positions; verify and update

- Review and update Wild Ones guidelines for integrating native plants and natural landscaping into a range of environments.
- Using scientific research and proven benefits of growing natives, explain the significance of ecotype and provenance and how the parameters of an ecoregion may differ in gardens, habitats, and restorations.
- To help preserve biodiversity, provide guidelines on nativars, rare species, pesticides, invasives, and other such issues.
- Update each and communicate to members and chapters.

Timing: 2019

Strategic Goal #2. Increase regional and national visibility

Tactic A – Increase Wild Ones' use of electronic media

- Dedicate more resources to our blog, information available on our website, social media, and via other methods of reaching the general public.
- Develop "citizen science" programs that engage members and the public; provide data to select partners.

Timing: 2019-2021



*"Don't Bother Me" by Kim Lowman Vollner
2018 Photo Contest, Pollinator entry*

Strategic Goal #3. Build strategic partnerships with like-minded organizations

Tactic A – Share native plant expertise

- Expand Wild Ones' visibility and regional presence by sharing expertise/competencies and resources with other sustainability groups and native plant groups on high-profile projects.
- Recognize the work of partner organizations, especially where partnering with chapters.
- Include our Honorary Directors in seeking and expanding partnerships.
- Identify outstanding public gardens with native plant landscapes and high-quality natural areas – sites that inspire Wild Ones members and the public.
 - Highlight these periodically in Wild Ones communications.
 - Create and post a list of recommended "Wild Sites."

Timing: 2019-2020

Tactic B – Seek educational materials on dwindling insect populations from invertebrate specialists

- Ask Xerces and others for technical support for educational materials and information updates on the problem of declining insects. Wild Ones reciprocates by expanding their reach and providing our native plant information and sources.

Timing: 2019

Tactic C – Encourage chapter partnerships

- Encourage chapters to cooperate on large events or campaigns. (*Examples: conservation programs related to biodiversity, water quality and resilience to climate change; best growing practices; exemplary native gardens and habitats.*)
- Champion and promote the good works of chapters that maintain partnerships that support Wild Ones.
 - Identify types and numbers of chapter partnerships and their accomplishments.
 - Use that information to foster new partnerships by all chapters to share new ideas, information, and conservation efforts.
- Encourage chapter-to-chapter collaboration and regional partnered meetings and events for chapters in geographically-similar areas.

Timing: 2019-2021

Wild Ones Board 2019

Marti Agler
Sevierville, TN

Nan Calvert
Kansasville, WI

Ellen Folts
Springwater, NY

Denise Gehring
Toledo, OH

Susan Hall
Secretary
Martinsburg, WV

Janice Hand
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Karen Syverson
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Pam Todd
Oak Park, IL

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Apple Valley, MN

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"WILD Center in Winter" by Elaine Krizenesky