

Strategic Plan (2011 – 2015)



Final As Approved

Itasca Waters Legacy Partnership



Plan History: Local water quality advocates came together in late 2006 to identify and implement a set of activities that would ensure clean water resources and quality habitat in the major watersheds of Itasca County. IWLP formalized its operations as a community coalition by establishing a board and executive committee to guide partnership activities. IWLP has had significant success in our first 5 years. Key examples include:

- securing \$1,000,000 across multiple competitive grants focused on waters projects in Itasca County
- strengthening our relationship with our partners – citizens, businesses, community infrastructure and government to drive focus around our “**Team Up For Clean Waters**” initiatives
- begun focused outreach in classrooms with a K-12 audience and by teaming with KAXE and Grand Rapids Library to inform and educate local citizens

Over the same period – IWLP has matured as an organization demonstrated by:

- building brand recognition for IWLP around the **Team Up For Clean Waters** standard and steadily growing membership (2010 membership doubled our 2009 level – we now have 112 members including lake associations, local businesses, members of local government and citizens)
- Attracting active advisory members of the board from key community partners including - Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, Itasca County Soil and Water Conservation District, Itasca Community College, Minnesota Division of Natural Resources, Chippewa National Forest, and the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources.
- Attracted voting members of the board from key community partners including – Grand Rapids Herald Review, University of Minnesota, Itasca County Government, Community Radio KAXE, Itasca Coalition of Lake Associations, Minnesota Power, Itasca Realty Lakes and Homes, Cedar Point Resort and UPM.
- establishing by-laws to guide our operations
- publishing a web site to increase organization identity and outreach

With these successes accomplished - in the fall of 2010 our board met and decided we needed to focus resources on ensuring the longevity of the IWLP organization and helping to better organize our efforts to drive community impact given our very limited volunteer resources which were reaching full use. The outcome was two-fold. First – examining alternatives to become a legal entity – and as a result we are pursuing and expect to be a 501c3 as this plan is approved during the spring 2011. Second – to launch a formal strategic planning process to allow us to better organize and leverage the efforts of our board volunteers as we have grown and significantly increased the efforts required.

Plan Process – Net Overview: Our board met November 29th, 2010 and used a process outline common to strategic plans – essentially taking the following steps:

1. Start with your **mission** – in a couple of sentences, how would you describe what you do?
2. List your **values** – those specific to your organization and its mission. Use these to guide your groups objective and priority setting in the planning process.
3. Give thought to where you want your organization to be in 6 months to 5 or more years – we broke these “**visions** of your future” into two segments:
 - Internal Focus - What would we look like administratively / organizationally?
 - External Focus – What would our community impact be around clean waters and who would we be partnered with in order to achieve these impacts?
4. Set **objectives** that drive you towards these visions.
5. Set **specific action steps** – with owners and timelines – that meet ensure the organization meets these objectives.
6. Agree to **celebrate successes** as they are attained.
7. Agree to **regularly reassess** the organizations strategic plan – making adjustments and extending further into the future as time passes.

We also made available to those board members actively involved in the planning process – a briefing paper entitled “**Ten Keys to Successful Strategic Planning for Nonprofit and Foundation Leaders**” written by Richard A. Mittenthal, president TCC Group, which helped simply focus on special needs of an organization like IWLP. You will note that we borrowed our key questions in each of the following sections from this white paper.

The following pages are the result of the board’s thoughts and efforts – known collectively as the IWLP Strategic Plan for the years 2011-2015.

IWLP Strategic Plan (2011-2015)

Section 1

IWLP Mission Statement – a mission statement should be a brief expression of the organization’s purpose answering the questions “***Why do we exist?***” and “***What, at the most basic level, do we do?***”

Fortunately for those board members working on the strategic plan – the organization had just redone its Mission Statement and so we had this work completed to begin our planning process – our Mission Statement is:

To work collaboratively on water issues and mobilize on-the-ground actions that encourage diverse sustainable use, protection, recovery and enjoyment of Itasca County's world-class water and shore land resources that are critical to a strong economy.

Section 2

Values Statement - The principles on which an organization is built, and that guide its planning, operations and programs. It answers the question “***What do we believe in?***”

We spent a significant portion of our planning efforts on this question – working to boil down the answer to a set of values that both represented the organization and also that was focused around our specific mission. The resulting six values are:

- **WATER** - The water systems in our community are unspoiled and we value them for their positive impact on our lives and economy.
- **BALANCE** – We take a realist approach that recognizes development and use will continue and so strive to bring forward approaches that encourages diverse sustainable use, protection, recovery and enjoyment of our waters.
- **SCIENCE and DATA** – We believe decisions should be based on or influenced by scientific process and relevant data and so we take an active role in prioritizing, collecting and understanding data on our water systems.
- **COLLABERATION** – Because water is valuable to different people for different reasons - we bring teams of stakeholders (shoreline owners, resorts, water users, businesses, academia and government) together in a forum to “***Team Up For Clean Waters***”.

- **BEHAVIOR** – We focus on validating best management practices around water – and changing people’s behavior through education and knowledge.
- **EARLY FOCUS** – we believe it is better to keep our water systems healthy than to have to fix them after they are broken.

Section 3

Our Vision of our organization in the Future – this effort should answer the questions “**Where do we want to be in 5 years?**” and “**What is the impact of our work?**” In line with our recognized needs to both better ensure IWLP’s longevity and to better organize our efforts to drive community impact – we broke this section into two key parts. We set up part 1 to work on focusing on our internal focus of how the organization would administratively function in 5 years and part 2 with an external focus of where we would drive our efforts at community impact around clean waters.

Section 3 - Part 1:

Vision of our Future State regarding IWLP’s Internal Administration / Operations focus. We selected four key vision elements looking inward and designed to help drive our groups efforts as we move from being an informal community coalition to becoming a successful 501c3 with significant contractual oversight responsibilities and energies to devoted to driving IWLP brand recognition and further grant successes. These four keys are:

- **More permanence in the Organization** – this specifically addresses the fact that our team of community volunteers has no legal basis as an entity –and as a result cannot directly receive contract funds, own property, serve as an employer and many other limitations which hinder our effectiveness as we continue to grow, building partnerships and driving interests around clean waters.
- **More horsepower than board can provide** - this vision acknowledges that even as we establish ourselves as a 501c3 – our organization already has its hands full providing oversight to those initiatives already underway – and that meeting 4 times each year as a group is not providing enough resource to sustain our growth.
- **Domain Leadership Role** – this vision asks the question of do we see ourselves as simply a very local Itasca County organization – or is there more leverage if we attempt to serve also as an umbrella organization – perhaps uniting lake associations and other groups with beliefs and goals similar to ours.
- **Formalize our “stakeholders”** - our title includes partnership on purpose – but we feel there is work to be done to ensure that one of our focuses remains ensuring participation by our stakeholders – internally this means seeking representation in membership, volunteers and board members in our makeup.

Section 3 - Part 1:

Vision of our Future State regarding IWLP's External "What is the impact of our work?" focus. We selected six key vision elements looking outward and designed to help drive the group's efforts forward as we move from being an informal community coalition to becoming a successful 501c3 with significant contractual oversight responsibilities and energies to devote to driving IWLP brand recognition and further grant successes. These six keys are:

- **Successful grant completion** - Our most visible and easily attained way to ensure our external vision of the future is to perform on those grants already in process. We have received approximately \$1,000,000 towards eight (need to check this number) grants focused on elements of our mission. With these successes comes the obligation to ensure successful completion in order to meet our mission, further build our brand and lay out the baseline for future grant applications that are built on past success.
- **Growth** – this specifically addresses our need to attract additional partners and align support for our mission in the community around clean waters. This will take the form of growing membership, increasing our diverse partnerships for greater leverage as well as continuing to be successful at identifying relevant grant sources and successfully competing for these additional resources and opportunities.
- **Increased/Improved External Communications** – We are a relatively new organization, with a partnership mission supported by strong trusts in outreach. With organizational success and maturity comes the increased need to effectively communicate with membership, partners, and the affected community members about our mission around clean waters.
- **Permanence in ICC success** – We have built a strong, though somewhat fragile partnership with the Itasca Community College in our first few years. To date the focus has been on the creation, supplying and accreditation of a top notch lab waters testing lab. This allows us great leverage in our mission of ensuring clean waters by measuring and establishing a baseline while building and then maintaining the testing resource as a local, Itasca County resource. We see growing this into ground water / well water certifications, and further collaborating with ICC inside their classrooms by influencing clean waters elements of the curriculum as well as providing intern opportunities for ICC students who can receive credit while furthering IWLP's core mission around clean waters.
- **Education Thrust** – our value of "...validating best management practices around water – and changing people's behavior through education and knowledge" requires an effective engagement practice. IWLP sees this as a twofold approach – K-12 in classroom interactions helping students gain waters knowledge and interests as well as engaging citizens directly through effective community outreach.
- **Formalize our "stakeholders"** – as with our internal focus, we seek to maintain our partnership focus – and so we want to ensure participation across our

stakeholders – these initiatives will ensure IWLP's external focus draws on members of the business, government, education and citizen stakeholders.

It is all good and well to outline where you want to be in 5 years – in fact it is necessary order to ensure focus over a 5 year timeframe against which to measure the organizations direction. However purposeful and sustained movement towards those goals requires much more specific steps and so you will see that we next endeavored to put objectives in place that we believed would drive IWLP to arrive in 5 years at the destinations set in the visions. In addition, each objective has action steps required to get there, owners outlined who will take responsibility for the organization to achieve those action steps and a timeline to keep things prioritized and to measure against to gauge progress. To outline these will be the goal of the remainder of this strategic plan – sticking to the divisions of internal and external begun in this section.

Section 4

Objectives, Action Steps, Ownership and Timeline associated with achieving IWLP's internally focused future – how the organization will achieve its administrative and operations 5 year destination.

This work lends itself best to being portrayed in chart format – with each visions actions, owners, and timelines arranged in such a manner as it makes it easy to measure and report upon progress. However, prior to including those charts – it is important first to let the reader know that we have already agreed and approved one key internal action step – that will be shown on a chart below – but needs to be explained prior to showing the charts as it will make understanding them easier. Under the **“more permanence in the organization”** and **“more horsepower than board can provide”** future destinations described above in the organizations internal future vision – we decided that arranging ourselves in a manner that allowed us a substructure smaller than the whole board and divided into committees with specific purpose and limited but delegated authority would make sense. As a result, at our board meeting on January 14th, 2011 – we proposed this and agreed to establish committees which would own membership, grants, public relations / communications, education / outreach, planning, budget and an executive committee to serve as management of these efforts. First chairs and members were established and agreed and so you will see that these committees are often listed as the owners of the actions on the charts which follow.

With that said – here are the outlines of the internal vision destinations objectives, action steps, owners and timelines:

Internal Vision Element: More Permanence in Organization				
Objective	Action Step	Owner	Due	Status
Establish Legal Entity for IWLP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 501c3 Selected – Now Implement 	Patty Gould-St. Aubin	1Q-2011	On Track
Implement Strategic Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Draft 1st Plan – Agree Establish Project to Own & Measure 3 Year cycle - Repeat 	John Zimmerman Board	Jan 2011 Jan 2011	Completed Completed
		Planning Committee	Jan 2013	Open
Establish Committee Structure & Staff it	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Which Projects? Assign Leader Leader & Board staff Define role, Objectives, Dates, etc. 	Board	Jan 2011	Completed
		Board	Jan 2011	Completed
		Com Chair & Pres Committee & Exec Committee	Feb 2011 April 1, 2011	Open Open
Develop Organization Chart	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Publish Internal Org Chart – Committee Roles, Officer Roles, “At Large” Roles, Board Member Roles 	Executive Committee will assign	1Q 2011	Open
By-Laws Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Incorporate project roles, 501c3 actions into by-laws Publish amended by-laws after board approval 	Executive Committee will assign	1Q-2011 to assign	Open
			3Q-2011 to complete	Open
		PR/Communications Committee	3Q-2011 to publish	Open
Solidify Sources of Revenue to IWLP vs Grant Performers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build “overhead” or “admin” fees as appropriate for IWLP into grant proposals Consider other Incubator (like water lab) opportunities Curriculum Opportunities (in Partnership with ICC) 	Grants Committee	Ongoing – each new proposal is checkpoint	Open
		Executive Committee / Board	2012 (after economic value study)	Open
		Executive Committee / Board	YE 2011	Open

Internal Vision Element: More Permanence in Organization (continued)				
Objective	Action Step	Owner	Due	Status
Establish Key Business Metrics and Financial Plan for Organization against which we run ourselves and by which we gage degree of success (examples include # members, Rev by source, # or \$ value of grants won, Lakes affected, students impacted, forums held, # positive media placements, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initial metrics proposed to executive committee Agreed “score at a glance” summaries agreed (for instance green = on target – demonstrable actions taken), Yellow = action needed – still internal miss, Red = action needed – external miss) First report against approved metrics Committees Report at each board meeting Summary Report at YE 	Each Committee	June 2011	Open
		Executive Committee	June 2011	Open
		Each Committee	3 rd Board meeting 2011	Open
		Each Committee	Quarterly	Open
Develop Key Member Succession Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide Resume to Executive Committee Collect org chart & roles data from prior tasks Discern fatal, critical loss members Examine others in org for best fit backup (level of energy / commitment a factor) Work to develop best fits – search out missing fits Relook annually 	Board Members and Tech Advisors	June 2011	Open
		Executive Committee	July 2011	Open
		Executive Committee	Sept 2011	Open
		Executive Committee	Sept 2011	Open
		Executive Committee	YE 2011	Open
		Executive Committee	4Q each year	Open
		Executive Committee	4Q each year	Open

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Internal Vision Element: More Horsepower Than Board Can Provide				
Objective	Action Step	Owner	Due	Status
Effectively Use Committees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NA - Repeat of prior Steps 	NA	NA	NA
Utilize Outsiders to supplement board / staff (Volunteers, Ad Hoc Project members & Technical Advisors)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board "tech adv" roles defined – assessed • Project – ad hoc members (rules & delegation in place) • Volunteer Program defined and process in place 	Executive Committee will assign team to propose these definitions and then approve final guidance	3Q-2011	Open
Hire Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define roles needed (Admin / Grant Writer / Event Planner) • Establish programs required (payroll, hr, contract, etc.) • Hire 	Various (committees, board, etc)	Ongoing	Open
		Executive Committee	When needed	Open
		Exec Committee		

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Internal Vision Element: Domain Leadership Role				
Objective	Action Step	Owner	Due	Status
How Expansive do we want to be – Umbrella across other local resources? Which ones? How far – county, region, state?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define role (examples include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. single focus on own mission B. Team Up For Clean Waters tie between DNR, SWDC, Blanden Foundation & IWLP for outreach in schools C. Data dissemination etc across lake associations D. Incubator for related needs in Itasca? 	Executive Committee to establish working group	2Q-2011	Open
		Study and provide recommendation to full board	2Q-2012	Open

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Internal Vision Element: Align IWLP Structure & Operation with Stakeholders				
Objective	Action Step	Owner	Due	Status
Formalize Stakeholder Categories	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> List and Define 	Membership Committed perform and report to Executive Committee	2Q-2011	Open
Examine Board Makeup Against Categories	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use resume's and other information to analyze board makeup – list and present to board 	Membership Committee as working group for Board	3Q-2011 1Q-2012	Open Open
Examine Membership Makeup Against Categories	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Utilize membership materials to analyze and determine current makeup Make specific recommendations to board for corrective actions 	Membership Committee Membership Committee	2Q-2011 3Q-2011	Open Open

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Section 5

Objectives, Action Steps, Ownership and Timeline associated with achieving IWLP's externally focused future – how the organization will achieve its “What is the impact of our work?” 5 year destination – here are the outlines of the external vision destinations objectives, action steps, owners and timelines:

External Vision Element: Successfully Complete Current Grants				
Objective	Action Step	Owner	Due	Status
Successfully Complete Current Grants	• Develop “library” of current grants – summarize key elements in common format	John Zimmerman does backlog	1Q-2011	In Process
		Grant Project completes format when new Grant Awarded	Ongoing with each new grant proposed	Open
	• Track Progress Against Milestones	Executive Committee assigns focal point to collect data quarterly from grant performers	2Q-2011	Open

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External Vision Element: Growth				
Objective	Action Step	Owner	Due	Status
Grow Membership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> List and Define Develop Targets / objectives for each as appropriate Put actions in place to Achieve 	Membership Committee	1Q each year 1Q each year 2Q each year	In Process Open Open
Grow Grants by Competing for and Winning New Ones (3 Legs Model)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leg 1 – Efficiently Find / Cultivate Opportunities Leg 2 – Successfully Write Proposal & Win our Share Leg 3 – Ensure Performance to drive reputation based on past performance 	Grants Committee	Ongoing	Open – Report Quarterly on progress
Grow Grants – Already Identified Targets (Economic Impact of Clean Waters Study)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pitch concept to Blanden – is there interest / funding there? Provide detailed information requested by Blanden after first meeting Assign Study and oversee results 	Dave Lick with help from board Grants Committee and Dave Lick Grants Committee recommends to Exec Committee/oversees	1Q-2011 2Q-2011 2Q-2011 and ongoing until completion	Done – Blanden interested but requested specifics Open Open
Grow Grants – Already Identified Targets (Education – be in classrooms, including Project Wet, Purple Loosestrife, etc.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate Purple Loosestrife situation – recommend go/no go to board Incorporate a TUFCW sticker / branding Investigate Project Wet and application to IWLP Incorporate a TUFCW sticker / branding 	Harold Dzuik Grants and PR Committees Grants Committee recommend to board Grants and PR Committees	1Q-2011 2Q-2011	Board Approved Open
Grow Grants – Already Identified Targets (Target Legacy Funds)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate ways to target Legacy Funds and report to Executive Committee / Full Board 	Grants Committee	YE 2011 and ongoing as opportunities in this area mature	Open

<p>Grow Grants – Already Identified Targets (Ground Water – Systems focus vs lakes, rivers and shore front and septic)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build strategy to tie our current work (grants & outreach) into broader framework...help fund souces better understand and think system wide 	<p>Grants Committee – review and recommend to Full Board</p>	<p>YE 2012</p>	<p>Open</p>
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External Vision Element: Increased / Improved External Communications				
Objective	Action Step	Owner	Due	Status
Assign Overall Ownership & Approvals (media)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Form Communications Committee (oversight for media, web, logo, annual report, etc) Work Strategic initiatives owned / impacted by Communications Committee 	Board	1Q-2011	Done
		Communications Committee	April 1, 2011	Open
Drive IWLP Branding and Outreach via Media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop media process Implement media process Drive effective community communications utilizing media process 	Comms Committee	May 2011	Open
		Comms Committee w/ Board Approval	June 2011	Open
		Comms Committee	Ongoing	Ongoing
Build & Maintain Good Communications Tools for the Organization – Formal Communications Plan to drive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop Signage for study sites on lakes, propose to board, oversee implementation Web up and maintained Web Cross linked – id targets – prioritize Annual Report Complete Membership Collateral developed Education / Outreach material 	Comms Committee to propose, Exec Comm to approve, Comms Committee to implement	April 1, 2011 on in time for Deer & Pokegama project use	In process
		Comms Committee with assist from Shirley	Ongoing	Ongoing
		Comms Committee	Annual review in June each yr	Open
		Comms Committee	Jan each yr	Open
		Comms Committee	Ongoing	Open
Strengthen Communications by reviewing by stakeholder, rework as needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tailored Membership Communications Web appeals to all – offends none Annual report, etc. 	Comms and Mbrship Committees	2Q-each yr	Open
		Communications Committee	3Q-each yr	Open
		Communications Committee	1Q-each yr	Open
Support Grants / Programs with “branding” theme built around “Team Up For Clean Waters” (sticker, etc)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with Grants Committee to develop sticker for programs (eg: Purple loosestrife grant) Get Board Approval 	Comms & Grants Committee	Ongoing	Open

External Vision Element: Increase Permanence in ICC Lab Status & ICC Relationship				
Objective	Action Step	Owner	Due	Status
Full Time Lab Director	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate need, outline plan to accomplish 	ICC management and IWLP Executive Committee	2011	Open
Work to ensure adequate volume of thru-put to support lab	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Write into our grants as preferred supplier Introduce Lab to others in waters projects 	Grants Committee Board	Annually	Open
Build and support Accredited Coursework related to clean waters initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build courses – can drive waters related income for ICC to build critical mass – support lab and instructors and interns 	ICC (perhaps: Lab Director w/ assistance from Barbara McDonald)		
Build Lab expertise and related credentialing – market and drive lab strength	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pursue and attain certification for well water testing Examine new sources of revenue based upon certification 	Lab Director	2Q-2011	In process
		ICC & IWLP partnership	Ongoing	Open

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External Vision Element: Strengthen Education Outreach on Clean Waters				
Objective	Action Step	Owner	Due	Status
Maintain & build upon excellent relationship with ICC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthen & Use Lab Stay connected to summer intern program Guest Lecture as part of accredited curriculum 	Grants and Executive Committees	Ongoing	Open
Build Public and School Youth versions of lake health report using data collected thru studies so far – add best practices and expert sources section for take-away	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 	Education Committee		

Section 6

Plan Improvements

This is a living document – and as such is intended to be maintained between plan periods and then formally updated with full board participation every 3-5 years.

Committees own their own sections and should propose changes to the executive committee / board as necessary.

- Modest changes should take the form of a corrected version emailed from the committee head to the planning lead and can be worked directly to conclusion between those two parties.
- Extensive changes should be shared with the board by the relevant committee at a quarterly meeting in cooperation with the planning lead.
- Milestones as met should be noted by sending an email to the planning head with details supporting completion.
- Changes to due dates, missed dates and other similar changes should be shared with the board for their knowledge and can be done so during a committee's quarterly report.

It is important to maintain this document as accurately as possible as it is available to sources of funds, partners and the public and is a key marketing tool in that it demonstrates our management abilities as well as our focus areas.