

**Save the Dunes
Strategic Plan 2018-2020**

Approved by the Board of Directors on April 25, 2018

Introduction

“We are prepared to spend the rest of our lives if necessary to save the dunes.”

Dorothy R. Buell, Founder

The Indiana dunes region is renowned as the birthplace of ecology, boasting of complex natural systems and over 1,100 plant species. Yet, for more than a century, people have struggled to keep this precious landscape from disappearing beneath harbors, breakwaters, steel mills, and unchecked development. In 1952, Ogden Dunes native Dorothy Buell founded Save the Dunes simply to protect the remaining untouched dunes of Northwest Indiana. One of our greatest triumphs was aiding in the establishment of the Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore in 1966 and fostering several dune-expansion bills to increase its size to over 15,000 acres of lands and waters.

With a growing Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore and the Indiana Dunes State Park nestled in between, some may claim that the dunes are already saved. However, there continues to be new threats that endanger these beloved lands and waters. Invasive species, water pollution, degraded habitats, development pressures, and more threaten the protection of both the dunes and Lake Michigan for current and future generations. While saving the dunes looks differently than what it may have over 65 years ago, we continue to do meaningful work to preserve, protect, and restore the Indiana dunes and our Lake Michigan.

***Save the Dunes Refreshed Vision:
A healthy & protected dune ecosystem and
Lake Michigan—Embraced by all as the
Centerpiece of Northwest Indiana***

The mission of Save the Dunes is to preserve, protect and restore the Indiana dunes and all natural resources in Northwest Indiana’s Lake Michigan Watershed for an enhanced quality of life.

Strategic Plan Summary

In order to carry out our mission and achieve our vision, Save the Dunes has developed this refreshed Strategic Plan to make us a more focused and more effective organization. The resulting plan utilizes stakeholder feedback, board and staff input, and assessment of the preceding plan and its progress. The plan’s development was led under the direction of a seasoned consultant trained in supporting non-profit entities and was funded by the Unity Foundation of LaPorte County. We believe this plan is both feasible and comprehensive. In order to maintain accountability, the Board of Directors will monitor the plan’s implementation through assessment twice a year.

Over the next three years, we will concentrate our work on priority areas significant to the health of the Indiana dunes ecosystem as well as Lake Michigan. In selecting the places where we work, we will be considerate of other organizations, seek partnerships, and look to enhance efforts rather than duplicate. Through the collaborative spirit, we will protect and enhance the Indiana dunes ecosystem and Lake Michigan through advocacy, meaningful restoration and protection projects, and community connection. Accordingly, we have identified four Strategic Goals to guide our work over the next three

years:

Strategic Goal #1: Save the Dunes will protect the Indiana dunes by preserving and restoring critical lands and waters that make up the dune ecosystem of Northwest Indiana.

Strategic Goal #2: Save the Dunes will be recognized as a leading advocate in Great Lakes and Northwest Indiana’s dune ecosystem protection and enhancement at the local, regional, state, and national levels.

Strategic Goal #3: Save the Dunes will engage Northwest Indiana communities in Indiana dune ecosystem and Lake Michigan protection, while increasing recognition of the organization’s role and value in the community.

Strategic Goal #4: Save the Dunes will maintain and enhance its status as a financially sound and sustainable organization with a growing base of diverse, unrestricted financial support and dedicated support for priority programs.

Each of these goals is described in detail in the pages that follow, with strategies and implementation initiatives for each goal. This strategic plan is the foundation for our 3-year roadmap. A detailed operational plan with metrics and budget to support the strategic plan will be approved by the Board of Directors annually.

Strategic Goals

Strategic Goal #1: Save the Dunes will protect the Indiana dunes by preserving and restoring critical lands and waters that make up the dune ecosystem of Northwest Indiana.

We will concentrate our efforts on strategically selected priority landscapes within Northwest Indiana’s Lake Michigan watershed, working to achieve measurable conservation goals in these places to ensure their preservation and restoration in the face of invasive species threats, developmental pressures, climate change, and other emerging threats. The highest priority landscapes and surrounding waterways are: Miller Woods, Tolleston Dunes, Cowles Bog, the Great Marsh, Hobart Marsh complex, the Indiana Dunes State Park, and Lake Michigan. We will also look for opportunities that exist adjacent to our own land. We will maximize our effectiveness to achieve our conservation goals on priority landscapes by partnering with other organizations, agencies, and individuals to manage lands and waters at the landscape-level.

Strategy	Implementation Initiative
In partnership with other conservation groups, agencies, municipalities and so forth,	• Complete/update plans, assessment of funding potential, and action plans for each priority site.
	• Advance one meaningful restoration project in identified priority areas per year.

advance conservation goals in priority restoration projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Apply best management practices to protect priority areas from threats of invasive species, development, encroachment, climate change, and pollution (noise, light, runoff, etc.)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide leadership and capacity support for landscape-level conservation and restoration in the Indiana dunes.
Pursue strategic acquisitions and other preservation efforts to protect key habitats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain an updated database with GIS data on parcels with acquisition potential for the National Park Service.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategically acquire lands on behalf of the National Park Service for the incorporation in the Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore boundary.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategically acquire lands that are adjacent to existing Save the Dunes' lands and that are of high conservation value for the organization to maintain.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In partnership with other conservation organizations, agencies, and municipalities, act as a land broker for lands that are high in conservation value but not of interest to the National Park Service or adjacent to Save the Dunes' land.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create and implement a plan for Save the Dunes' current lands—identifying key parcels to maintain and others that are better suited for other conservation organization's management.

Strategic Goal #2: Save the Dunes will be recognized as a leading advocate in Great Lakes and Northwest Indiana's dune ecosystem protection and enhancement at the local, regional, state, and national levels.

In order to most effectively protect, preserve, and restore the lands and waters of the Indiana dunes ecosystem, and enhance our ability to facilitate practical landscape-level conservation and management solutions with regional land managers, we will focus our advocacy on key proactive and defensive policy initiatives at the local, regional, state, and national levels. We will partner with other organizations and through coalitions to enhance our efforts. We will carry out our work in a manner that defines us as reasonable and practical problem-solvers and strong advocates for the Indiana dunes. To be successful, we must develop greater capacity for policy and advocacy, and enhance our communications and connections with Northwest Indiana communities.

Strategy	Implementation Initiative
Refine advocacy goals; maintain and enhance role in key Great Lakes and dune ecosystem advocacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify proactive advocacy goals, including focusing on specific issues of local and regional significance and policies that support conservation in priority regions (e.g. Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, federal and state budgets, climate adaptation, federal, state, and local land and water management policies and regulations, etc.).

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partner with local, regional, and national conservation organizations and issue-based partners to strengthen advocacy efforts.
Build advocacy capacity while raising community awareness on impacts to the Indiana dunes and Lake Michigan, as well as regulation and oversight influence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain and direct an advocacy committee to provide greater attention to advocacy priorities as needed.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Train community members on how to advocate on behalf of Lake Michigan and the Indiana dunes through workshops, speaking engagements, and adult education experiences.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a network of citizen advocates to respond to action alerts as needed.
Champion strong policy for Indiana dunes and Lake Michigan protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partner with local, regional, and national conservation organizations and issue-based partners to define and advocate for improved policies that enhance and protect the Indiana dunes and Lake Michigan.

Strategic Goal #3: Save the Dunes will engage Northwest Indiana communities in Indiana dune ecosystem and Lake Michigan protection, while increasing recognition of the organization’s role and value in the community.

We will enhance our outreach in Northwest Indiana, providing unique opportunities to learn about Northwest Indiana’s biodiversity through meaningful events. We will maintain a meaningful, versatile, current and user-friendly website to advance the objectives of the organization, provide value to members, disseminate information, and assist in event and program promotion. Additionally, we will utilize social media as a powerful tool to help reinforce all levels of communication. Simultaneously, we will enhance our visibility with Northwest Indiana residents and visitors as well as policymakers by expanding our media relations efforts and hosting more community engagement events to make Save the Dunes the first organization looked to for information about the Indiana dunes and Lake Michigan.

Strategy	Implementation Initiative
Provide outreach events that connect residents and visitors to broad conservation messages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initiate and maintain outreach to communities and stakeholders through meaningful experiences such as hikes, workshops, etc.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consult and coordinate with municipal councils and community-led groups through meetings or other mechanisms to maximize conservation impact in priority areas.
Enhance communication that both informs and connects residents and visitors to broad conservation messages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Media-train a core group of fundraising staff.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish stronger working relationships with print and online journalists in targeted media markets.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Invest resources and time in social media and online presence to penetrate and optimize use of social media as a way to reach target audiences and expand our reach.

Strategic Goal #4: Save the Dunes will maintain and enhance its status as a financially sound and sustainable organization with a growing base of diverse, unrestricted financial support and dedicated support for priority programs.

Financial stability and revenue growth, particularly diversified funding that is flexible to meet our needs and address urgent opportunities, will be vital to accomplishing our conservation objectives. We will move from a largely grant-funded organization subject to the interests/instability of government funders to an organization that attracts a diversity of resources to underwrite our identified priorities. This will require testing new funding avenues and recruiting volunteer leadership and additional staff with expertise in these arenas. To be successful, we must develop greater capacity in development and program.

Strategy	Implementation Initiative
Raise more unrestricted contributions and increase revenue source diversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete fundraising plan with specific revenue benchmarks and annual targets, that includes increasing the number and average size of gifts from major donors each year; increasing support from corporations and foundations; and increasing and maintaining dues-paying members. • Utilize a donor management system and provide adequate training to key staff and committee members for maximum effectiveness.
Diversify and strengthen the Board	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Add new Board members with specifically identified, diverse skill sets. • Add new Board members that equally represent LaPorte, Porter, and Lake counties. • Provide specific fundraising training to Board members annually.
Enhance Board governance structures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revise Board orientation materials and update each year. • Develop annual individual goals for each Board member, including goals that employ the policy, technical, and other unique expertise Board members provide. • Ensure that all Board members fulfill a personally agreed upon pledge of financial and event support annually.
Increase staff support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and implement a nimble staffing plan for key positions such as Project Coordinator, Development Director/Associate, Marketing/Outreach, etc. • Identify volunteer and committee opportunities to provide additional support as needed.
Explore fee/donation for service and other revenue models	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to develop, test, and implement fee for service models such as staff-led hikes, speaking engagements, trainings, merchandise with Save the Dunes' logo, license plates, and other models as they arise.

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About Save the Dunes

Save the Dunes is dedicated to preserving, protecting, and restoring the Indiana dunes and all natural resources in Northwest Indiana's Lake Michigan Watershed for an enhanced quality of life. Founded in 1952, Save the Dunes has served as Northwest Indiana's local champion for dune ecosystem and Lake Michigan protection. Our commitment: Through collaboration, mutual respect, positive energy and the right know-how we can ensure that generations to come will have the dunes to enjoy as a place of wonder and respite.