

Lake Superior Collaborative Charter

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LAKE
SUPERIOR
COLLABORATIVE

I. Background and Purpose

The Lake Superior Collaborative (LSC) formed in 2018 to coordinate environmental protection and restoration efforts in Wisconsin's portion of the Lake Superior Basin. The collaborative is composed of governmental agencies (federal, state, Tribal, and local government), academic institutions, and non-governmental organizations working in or near the Lake Superior Basin of Wisconsin.

The Lake Superior Collaborative has evolved from historical partnership efforts conducted by the Lake Superior Basin Partner Team (1998-2012), the Chequamegon Bay Area Partnership (2009-2017), and the Lake Superior Landscape Restoration Partnership (2014-2017). The current Lake Superior Collaborative operates under the principles set forth in the 2018 Collaborative Charter, and revised in 2020.

This charter outlines the Collaborative's shared vision, and goals, and creates principles of cooperation and coordination between the member organizations. The charter more fully describes the collaboratives working structure, including its goals, roles and responsibilities of cooperation and coordination of its members, a decision-making process, and a fundraising process.

The Collaborative will develop an five-year Action Plan that identifies priorities and actions, which will guide the collaborative's work into the future. Collaborative Workgroups then can identify their specific projects or initiatives of interest based on the Action Plan. Selecting specific projects or initiatives to focus on within a fiscal year will provide direction to the Workgroups to achieve overall success.

II. Shared Vision

The communities and ecosystems of Wisconsin's Lake Superior Basin are climate resilient and supported by sustained, collaborative conservation partnerships and projects.

III. Goals

The LSC has six goals that address its overarching mission to protect and restore natural resources, maintain clean water, and support climate resiliency in Wisconsin's Lake Superior Basin:

Goal 1: Align local natural resource management priorities with regional priorities, including the Lake Superior Lake-wide Area Management Plan.

Goal 2: Implement on-the-ground collaborative projects on public and private lands that reduce nonpoint source pollution, improve land use, preserve fish and wildlife habitat, and increase climate change resiliency.

Goal 3: Facilitate networking and information exchange among partners.

Goal 4: Coordinate public outreach efforts to increase awareness and engagement in watershed stewardship.

Goal 5: Assess the value added benefits of the Collaborative's efforts to promote protection and restoration of the Lake Superior Basin in Wisconsin.

Goal 6: Pursue funding opportunities to increase the investment in protection and restoration of the Lake Superior Basin in Wisconsin.

IV. Organizational Structure

The Lake Superior Collaborative is composed of member organizations, workgroups, a coordinator, and steering team. Member organizations may be any organization with a commitment to the shared vision and goals of the Lake Superior Collaborative. Workgroups are any combination of members who work together to work on an initiative or implement a project that meets the objective(s) of the collaborative. The LSC coordinator position is filled by the University of Wisconsin-Madison Division of Extension. Steering Team members (as of August 2020) include representatives from the following organizations:

- Ashland County (Land and Water Conservation Department)
- Bad River Band of Lake Superior Chippewa (Department of Natural Resources)
- City of Ashland (Department of Parks and Recreation)
- Natural Resources Conservation Service
- Northland College (Mary Griggs Burke Center for Freshwater Innovation)
- US Fish and Wildlife Service
- US Forest Service (Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest)
- Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
- Wisconsin Wetlands Association

The specific roles and responsibilities for each of these parts of the organization are outlined in Section V.

V. Roles and Responsibilities

Steering Team: The LSC Steering Team guides the current and future direction of the Lake Superior Collaborative through the following actions and commitments:

- Attending regular Steering Team meetings to share information and identify opportunities for collaborative members
- Providing direction, support and guidance to the coordinator; assisting the coordinator in planning meetings, workshop presentations, and special events as needed
- Developing a multi-year LSC Action Plan as identified through the needs and/or priorities of the partners
- Acting as liaisons to other staff and leadership in their respective organizations to promote the LSC and share documented results and accomplishments
- Seeking and identifying funding sources to carry out goals of the Collaborative, including capacity support for the coordinator
- Advocating for continued collaboration among all groups and promote the Collaborative at local, regional, and national meetings

Organizations that participate on the Steering Teams agree to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) as a statement of their commitment and participation in the Collaborative. The MOU is a non-binding document, but outlines a member organization's contribution and investment into the Collaborative. Examples of investment can include funding, resources, staff time, or a combination. If funding is part of the investment, then additional agreements according to the participating organizations rules and regulations may also apply.

Coordinator: The LSC Coordinator is responsible for supporting and implementing the decisions of the Steering Team in collaboration with Steering Team members and other LSC partners. Specific responsibilities include:

Facilitation & Support

- Organize regular (monthly to bi-monthly) meetings of the Steering Team
- Follow up with Steering Team and Project Team members between meetings to ensure action items are completed timely
- Identify funding sources to carry out goals of the collaborative
- Facilitate discussions among LSC members to help identify, prioritize and implement projects in the Collaborative's Action Plan. Facilitate updates to the Action Plan every 3-5 years
- Evaluate effectiveness and opportunities to improve LSC functioning
- Stay up to date on best practices for collaborative and partnership functioning and sharing this information with Steering Team and all LSC partners

Communications & Events Planning

- Organize annual meetings, workshops, and/or special events of the larger collaborative
- Provide regular news and updates including events and funding opportunities to LSC members via email, e-newsletters, etc.
- Present/share collaborative information at local, regional, and national meetings

Members: LSC members can include both organizations and individuals representing organizational interests or their own perspective. Membership in the LSC is free and at-will to any organization or individual who would to:

- Participate in regular meetings, workshops and/or special events as provided
- Receive regular news and updates from the LSC
- Contribute input and ideas to the Action Plan
- Bring expertise to the table to implement projects or initiatives in the Action Plan
- Implement activities in the Action Plan
- Participate in, and/or lead Workgroups as needed
- Identify opportunities to partner on funding, come together to discuss and act on opportunities
- Share project progress, lessons learned, and results of initiatives or projects with the larger Collaborative

Workgroups: LSC Workgroups share interest and knowledge in specific conservation issues and/or implement ongoing initiatives or projects that meet LSC goals. These groups:

- Are self-organized and selected to implement specific initiatives or projects that meet the goals of the Collaborative
- Share project progress and lessons learned with the larger collaborative
- Maintain membership for the purpose of a specific project
- Current LSC Workgroups focus on Communications and Outreach, Slow the Flow and Natural Flood Management, and Nearshore Monitoring.

VI. Decision Making Process

Each member organization retains authority to make decisions as appropriate as an independent agency or entity. However, the Steering Team will make decisions regarding the goals and priorities of the Collaborative.

The Action Plan, approved by consensus of the Steering Team, reflects the prioritization of strategies, actions and funding to meet Collaborative goals and objectives, regardless of whether the actions will be taken or the funding sought by individual Collaborative members, groups of Collaborative members, or the Collaborative as a whole. Input on the development of the initial Action Plan and subsequent updates, will be sought from the members and approved by Steering Team consensus. Implementation of the Action Plan, as approved, is done at the Working Group level. Workgroup membership and leadership is voluntary and open to all members of the Collaborative.

The Steering Team will be made up of representatives from government agencies, academic institutions and non-governmental organizations participating in the Collaborative. Steering Team members can designate an alternate who can attend meetings in their stead if they are unable to attend. Good faith effort will be made to ensure adequate representation on the Steering Team according to different types of organizations, geography of the Basin, and relevant skills/knowledge of individual members. No more than two representatives per participating organization can sit on the Steering Team, and each participating organization will have one vote on LSC decisions to ensure balanced decision-making across all organizations.

The Lake Superior Collaborative has determined that all decisions made by the Steering Team or Workgroups will be made by a consensus of members present. Therefore, all members agree to work toward consensus and not simply block a decision they disagree with. In striving for consensus, members will listen actively and suggest options they believe can meet all perspectives. If a consensus is not reached after allowing a reasonable time for discussion, members will follow this process to move toward consensus:

- Determine whether all available facts or information have been shared, and if not, get the information and review it together.
- Clarify the areas of agreement and disagreement.
- Those who do not consent have the responsibility to suggest alternatives that meet the needs of all parties and incorporate the differing perspectives.
- Collaborative members should remain at the table during deliberations to hear the full discussions in order to make informed judgments when decision-making occurs.
- Absence will be equivalent to not dissenting.
- If consensus cannot be attained after following this process, the group will vote by supermajority (80% of members present) whether to (a) decide the issue by a super-majority vote, or (b) table the decision with suggestions on ways to make future progress toward consensus.

VII. Implementation of Partnership Goals

Action Plan - The Lake Superior Collaborative will develop a 5 year Action Plan that identifies priority projects and initiatives that best meet Partnership goals. A draft Action Plan will be developed with the leadership of the Steering Team with compiled input from all interested partners. The Action Plan will include identification of which partners will engage in items in the work plan.

LSC Member Participation - Each LSC member organization is encouraged to support the goals set forth in this Charter and the Lake Superior Collaborative Action Plan. Voluntary participation in LSC Workgroups and Projects reflects the interests of those involved, and participation as a LSC member organization does not imply full organization support of any and all Collaborative activities that different organizations may undertake. Each organization can contribute in the way that is consistent with their organization's capacity, authorities and mission. Contributions may include staff time and expertise (e.g. work planning), equipment, and/or funding.

Funding - Some LSC member organizations may actively pursue grant funding to support partnership coordination and on the ground work. Some may utilize the Collaborative's Action Plan and associated strategic priority setting as criteria in the distribution of their funding programs. The Collaborative will provide regular opportunities for members to share interests in collaborative fundraising, to ensure strategic and coordinated submission of funding requests, and to assist in identifying potential funding matches.