

Montana Watershed Coordination Council

# Strategic Plan

2021-2023



Approved by the MWCC Board of Directors  
1-28-2021



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## BACKGROUND AND HISTORY

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The “Water Resource Coordination Committee” was formed in 1992 to bring people together to collaborate and discuss the many water issues in the state. In 1993, the group changed its name to Montana Watershed Coordination Council (MWCC) to reflect the need to expand beyond water issues and promote coordination. The primary goals were to coordinate communication between groups and streamline assistance to local groups. MWCC was intended to serve as a forum for hands-on coordination, the sharing of expertise, data, information, and other resources.

In 1995, federal, state, and local natural resource agencies and organizations in Montana signed a Memorandum of Understanding, “Establish a framework for cooperation and coordination to sustain ecosystems, watersheds, and communities in Montana.” This MOU recognized the need for supporting local efforts to develop and implement watershed or ecosystem-based strategies. It further identified MWCC as the forum for coordinating and supporting these efforts.

Between 1993 and 2000, MWCC actively pursued outreach to local watershed efforts. The primary accomplishments were hosting quarterly meetings to connect local stakeholders and agencies addressing watershed management, fulfilling needs of watershed groups, and discussing information of statewide importance. Members created a webpage to introduce and define MWCC as a source for watershed coordination, information, and services to local groups. MWCC established additional funding to support local watershed efforts and created watershed awards to acknowledge significant contributions to improve resource management and social conditions made by Montana’s watershed groups.

In 2001, MWCC sponsored its first watershed symposium to allow groups to communicate and share their successes, failures, and processes; to provide regional training and workshops; to transfer education and information amongst attendees; to introduce leaders in Montana’s watershed initiatives; and to share an MWCC Watershed Source Book (information including a listing of watershed efforts and funding sources for projects).

In 2007, MWCC completed strategic planning and updated the MWCC guiding principles. In 2011, MWCC created an email newsletter to keep partners and supporters aware of local watershed efforts. In 2013, MWCC successfully obtained its 501(c)3 status and hired full-time staff. This increase in capacity greatly increased MWCC’s ability to fulfill its mission through new programs and activities.

As a result, MWCC created and grew the Watershed Fund and initiated the Watershed Stories campaign, while increasing notoriety and impact of the Watershed Symposium, Annual Meeting, and Project Tour. As we move into the future, MWCC will retain its high-quality services while becoming increasingly resilient and innovative. This strategic plan is our guide to success.

## VISION

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The vision communicates MWCC's ideal state of being for its stakeholders, what should be realized as a result of the organization's work.

*A Montana where watersheds and communities are healthy, productive, and thriving*

## MISSION

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The mission communicates what MWCC strives to do to reach its vision. MWCC works to:

*Unite and support Montana's community-based conservation networks to promote healthy and productive watersheds*

## VALUES

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Guiding principles of MWCC Board of Directors and staff; used to fulfill its mission and realize its vision for Montana watershed communities:

- **Accept independence and interdependence**  
*Members have their unique purpose yet remain linked to the whole. Members make their own choices while being sensitive to their impacts on others.*
- **Nurture trust and safety**  
*Members can respectfully speak and be heard without fear. Members cooperate, understand one another, and eliminate any practices or communications that include discrimination and inequity.*
- **Cultivate skillful practice**  
*Members support and take advantage of ongoing training to improve their work.*
- **Demand transparency**  
*Members communicate clearly, examining their assumptions and seeking understanding across different perspectives. Information will be available, relevant, and reliable.*
- **Encourage consensus**  
*Members strive for consensus-based decision making, honoring diverse approaches and partners as part of the process.*
- **Remain inclusive**  
*Members encourage purposeful participation and actively seek to engage diverse communities and perspectives.*
- **Honor humor**  
*Members recognize that if we are not having fun, we probably won't show up.*

## CORE STRATEGIES

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Core strategies are central priorities of the strategic plan that provide focus and context for the mission and vision of MWCC. They are the central tenets of MWCC, linking the purpose of the organization with focus areas and objectives to achieve meaningful progress and propel the organization forward.

MWCC works with individuals and organizations connected to Montana's watersheds. These conservation partners include watershed groups, conservation districts, non-profits, government agencies, nongovernmental agencies, landowners, legislators, and others. "Watershed communities" refers to the collection of people and groups working within a watershed to protect and restore local resources.

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### CONNECT

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*Provide opportunities to learn from one another*

The purpose of this core strategy is to connect the network of individuals and groups involved in the promotion of healthy and productive watersheds and landscapes. By providing a forum for connection, we are able to communicate and learn from one another while increasing coordination, collaboration, and capacity to protect and restore watersheds. This captures MWCC's role of connecting people, with the ultimate goal of increasing opportunities to work together, share information, and increase knowledge.

Focus Areas:

- Serving as the go-to expert and clearinghouse for watershed groups
- Connecting the network of organizations and agencies involved with watershed conservation and supplementing the dialogue with additional resources
- Providing opportunities to foster relationships and make new connections

Objectives:

- Plan and execute events with a focus on increasing diversity and inclusivity  
(*Annual Meeting, Symposium, Watershed Tour, Watershed Day*)
- Provide targeted information effectively and efficiently to a wide audience  
(*Partners ListServ, watershed directory, watershed map, watershed news*)

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### SUPPORT

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*Provide funding, technical assistance, and capacity-building resources to local conservation-based networks*

The purpose of this core strategy is to support and strengthen the organizational needs of watershed communities by providing information, expertise, and opportunities related to funding, tools, and resources. It is meant to improve the capacity of local conservation-based organizations. This captures MWCC's role of identifying emerging needs and creating resources or connecting organizations to them, with the ultimate goal of empowering our network to achieve their goals.

Focus Areas:

- Equitably supporting the technical and organizational needs of watershed communities
- Developing and providing funding opportunities to empower our conservation partners to attain healthy and productive landscapes

Objectives:

- Offer financial resources, with emphasis on achieving basic capacity needs for our conservation-based community partners  
*(Watershed Fund, Professional Development funding, fiscal sponsorship)*
- Provide relevant and useful technical resources using a variety of effective and creative methods  
*(Website, watershed news, watershed coordinator handbook, watershed group portal, webinars)*
- Understand the needs of our conservation partners and provide necessary support  
*(Supporting Member Program, Big Sky Watershed Corps host site support, steering committee, administrative support, fee for service)*

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INSPIRE

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*Celebrate and share accomplishments in community-based conservation*

The purpose of this core strategy is to promote good practices and natural resource stewardship, improve communication, and encourage additional engagement among MWCC, our network, supporters, and funders. It highlights the need to recognize the important work in community-based conservation that is happening statewide and to celebrate accomplishments together. This captures MWCC's role of sharing information and inspiring others to achieve natural resource stewardship goals.

Focus Areas:

- Identifying and sharing accomplishments related to community-based conservation
- Promoting effective local approaches to conservation and natural resource stewardship
- Demonstrating the benefits of diversity and inclusion for community-based conservation and resource stewardship

Objectives:

- Amplify local successes through outreach and media, with a focus on increasing the scope and number of media opportunities  
*(Watershed stories, blogs, watershed news, website, social media, audio, film)*
- Present awards and give recognition, focusing on expanding the diversity of nominees and maximizing the appreciation of awardees and individuals or groups receiving accolades  
*(Watershed stewardship awards)*

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## REPRESENT

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*Be a collective voice and provide leadership to support watershed communities and the issues they are addressing*

The purpose of this core strategy is to focus on representing watershed communities and building relationships with the public, agencies, non-governmental organizations and other partners to support community-based conservation. It is intended to provide a mechanism for statewide messaging and communications, to be a unified voice for our network, and to elevate and strengthen our work. It captures MWCC's role of providing representation to important watershed issues and providing leadership, outreach, and education to gain additional support when appropriate, acknowledging the value of diversity and self-representation within the watershed community.

### Focus Areas:

- Acting for and speaking on behalf of watershed communities on important statewide issues
- Building relationships to foster support for community-based conservation
- Providing leadership, statewide messaging, and communications

### Objectives:

- Establish and foster governmental relationships; help watershed communities to connect with their state legislators and state leaders to develop relationships, awareness, understanding, and support of community-based collaborative conservation
- Achieve regular participation in statewide and regional discussions, establishing MWCC as a representative of community-based conservation efforts
- Help watershed communities and conservation partners identify and resolve complicated problems
- Produce impactful reports, increase engagement with the public at a statewide level to increase awareness of community-based conservation efforts

*(Legislative bulletin, State of the Watersheds Report, Impact Report, press releases, media)*

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## ORGANIZATIONAL EXCELLENCE

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*Create and sustain a strong organization, staff, and Board of Directors*

The purpose of this core strategy is to emphasize clear organizational direction, strong operations, and consistent engagement. It emphasizes motivated and supported staff and Board of Directors, as well as stability in finances, programs, and procedures. We strive to have a foundation that will allow us to be responsive to the needs of our network, to grow our programs, and to be transparent and efficient. Within MWCC, this reflects the need to achieve stability and organizational strength, both of which are necessary for growth and innovation.

### Focus Areas:

- Building and retaining an engaged and diverse Board of Directors

- Recruiting and retaining excellent staff
- Increasing financial sustainability
- Maintaining strong and relevant strategic direction

Objectives:

- Strive for staff that feel supported, valued, and fulfilled by maintaining relevant compensation and benefits, encouraging personal and professional development, and establishing succession planning
- Increase the strength of MWCC's financial and organizational foundation and increase the ability of the Board of Directors to review financial information and contribute to financial development
- Provide clear expectations through access to relevant and updated organizational documents, guidance, and procedures
- Offer education/training to enable the Board of Directors to increase their capacity to serve MWCC
- Provide opportunities for the Board of Directors and staff to connect, collaborate, foster relationships, and support staff in achieving MWCC's goals

## **STRATEGIC DECISIONMAKING**

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- Does it help us advance our mission? How?
- Does it align with our vision, mission, and core strategies?
- Does it serve our watershed communities or the water community at large?
- Does it build on or reinforce our unique strengths?
- Can we pay for it? How?
- Do we have the capacity or expertise to do it?
- Are we the best organization to take this on? Why?

## **USE OF THE PLAN**

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Upon adoption of the strategic plan MWCC staff will develop an annual work plan. The strategic plan will be reviewed annually, at the December board meeting, to mark progress and assess if modifications are warranted. This review will help inform the annual budget and upcoming work plans for the organization, staff and Board of Directors. After three years, MWCC will formally assess the plan to consider changes in the external landscape and modify the plan as necessary.