

2023- 2026 STRATEGIC PLAN



*Connecting people with nature and improving
natural resources -- making Story County a
great place to live, work, and recreate.*

EXECUTIVE STATEMENT

Story County Conservation serves the citizens of Story County by offering a wide variety of programs and services improving quality of life and natural spaces. It is imperative that this work is done in a responsible, responsive, and inviting manner. This strategic plan looks at inward and outward facing services and opportunities to meet the mission of the organization well into the future.

Many events or factors have occurred during the last several years which provide context to this plan. Some of these include: increased use of outdoor recreation opportunities, numerous improvements to parks and trails, staffing changes to better address water quality, law enforcement, and park operations. The effects of climate change and the need for greater inclusion are also readily observable.

This plan was developed through a series of board and staff input sessions as well as a public survey. SCC past accomplishments, current strengths and opportunities, as well as current obstacles were reviewed. The SCC strategic plan dynamically guides efforts and initiatives through fiscal year 2026.

The plan does not address all of the ongoing SCC efforts. SCC has a long and rich history of providing educational and recreational offerings, as well as environmental services which better the community. These are SCC's ongoing pillars. This work will be strengthened by the goals and initiatives in this strategic plan.

Please join us in making Story County a great place to live, work and recreate.



MICHAEL COX

Director



CHRISTINE LAUMER

President, SCCB

MISSION, VISION, AND VALUES

Mission

Connecting people with nature and improving natural resources - making Story County a great place to live, work, and recreate.

Vision

Partner with others to wisely manage natural resources, provide recreational opportunities, and engage individuals, businesses, and communities to be responsible stewards of our natural environment--creating environmental, economic, and social benefits.

Values

These values guide SCC's mission and vision:

- Creativity/innovation
 - achieving success in new ways
- Efficiency
 - achieving objectives with minimum waste or unnecessary effort
- Legacy
 - achieving positive results which transcend generations
- Passion
 - achieving vision with personal and organizational commitment and excitement
- Teamwork
 - achieving solutions collaboratively

RECENT ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Growth

- Began water quality monitoring program
- Hired watershed coordinator
- Developed Nature Connect service assistance program
- Developed Environmental Education offerings for diversified audiences
- Realigned field staff to better meet the needs of park users

Protected

- Permanently protected 465 acres
- Instituted ban on toxic ammunition
- Completed environmentally sensitive area inventory
- Initiated cell phone recycling program
- Stabilized a 1,000 feet of South Skunk River streambanks

Invested

- Renovated Hickory Grove Park Lake and amenities
- Paved 12 miles of recreational trails
- Installed wayfinding signage at several parks
- Updated recreational offerings at several parks

Awarded

- Received several state awards
 - Wildlife Habitat Award 2019, 2020, 2021
 - Stormwater and Urban Watershed Development of the Year Award
 - Outstanding Interpretative Print Media Award
- Received official state designation of the Skunk River Water Trail
- Received \$2,700,000 in grants since 2018

Waterbugs Summer Camp
July 2022





STRATEGIC DIRECTION ONE

Strategic Direction 1: Addressing Climate Change and the Health of the Environment

Goal: Leadership that lessens impacts of climate change and improves environmental health through example and education.

Outcome 1: SCC operations encourage people to connect with nature.

Actions:

- Continue to utilize a diverse array of tools to encourage people to interact with nature
- Continue to identify and reduce barriers to participation in educational programs and recreational opportunities
- Continue to develop parks, facilities and programs inviting to all audiences
- Increase community and volunteer involvement in stewardship of natural resources

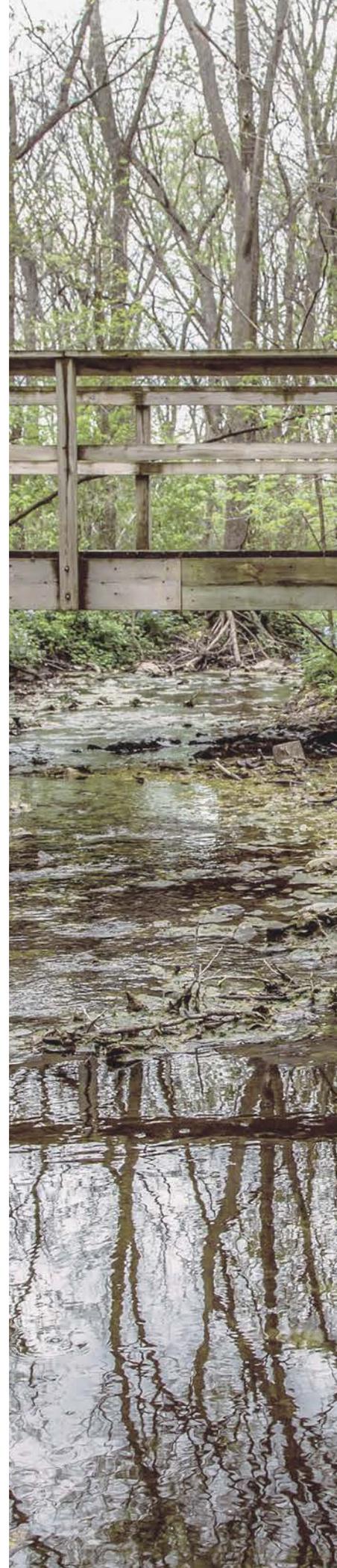
Outcome 2: Increase the use of effective conservation practices to lessen the impact of climate change and improve environmental health. Practices will be equitable and intentionally minimize unintended and disproportionate impacts.

Actions:

- Continue to preserve, protect, and manage large tracts of land for wildlife, including the Skunk River Greenbelt, that align with expected future climate conditions
- Maintain and expand native vegetation/ecosystems for carbon sequestration

Outcome 2 actions continued...

- Continue to minimize the spread of invasive species
- Promote and practice watershed management practices to slow nutrient, sediment, and water movement
- Continue to promote effective conservation practices and adaptations to make agriculture and other land uses more resilient to climate impacts
- Continue to protect and restore water resources, including lakes and streams, flood plains, wetlands, and oxbows
- Design and build infrastructure that accounts for future climate conditions
- Promote clean energy, walkable communities, and green building design
- Support efforts to develop diverse and sustainable tourism and outdoor recreation
- Continue to promote conservation practices on private land including drainage districts
- Continue to encourage land owners to adopt water quality improvement practices
- Continue to demonstrate effective environmental health improvement practices



Outcome 3: SCC operations contribute towards greenhouse gas emission reduction.

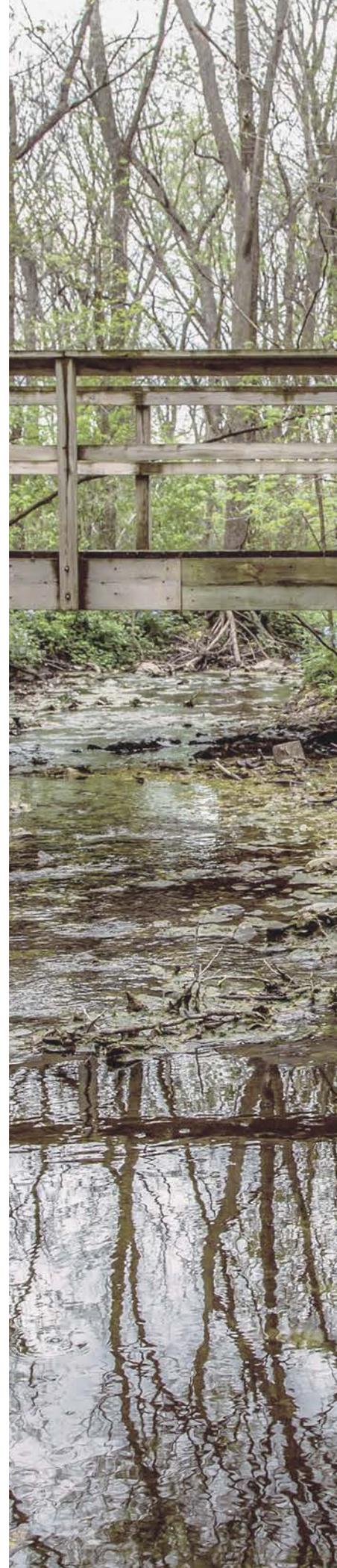
Actions:

- Conduct an energy efficiency study, prioritize options, and implement the best options
 - Use non-fossil fuel and low-carbon energy sources
 - Use EVs and/or fuel-efficient vehicles and equipment
 - Increase energy efficiency in buildings and operations
 - Install EV charging stations at parks
 - Improve accessibility of biking and walking infrastructure
 - Continue to promote and practice waste reduction
 - Review and implement green energy policies, practices, and statements

Outcome 4: Education and outreach efforts focus on climate change and environmental health topics.

Actions:

- Assess the inclusion of climate change and environmental health messaging in current education programs and signage
- Continue to create and use climate change and environmental health messaging
- Align education and outreach efforts on climate change and environmental health with the needs of underrepresented audiences
- Continue to communicate SCC practices on climate change and environmental health to stakeholders
- Continue teaching climate change and environmental health topics
- Include environmental health and climate change education in development of a new nature center to better connect people with nature





STRATEGIC DIRECTION TWO

Strategic Direction 2: Ensuring Organizational Sustainability

Goal: Maintain high quality work.

Outcome 1: Continue to enhance the workplace environment.

Actions:

- Continue to conduct workload assessments to determine whether positions are adequately staffed
- Continue to assess the use of seasonal, volunteer staff, and contractual services versus full-time SCC employees to meet the organizational needs
- Continue to assess public use of facilities, properties, and programs
- Provide internships and mentorships with underrepresented audiences leading to seasonal jobs/opportunities
- Recruit underrepresented audiences for board, staff, and volunteer positions
- Board, staff, and volunteers demonstrate diversity, equity, and inclusion competency
- Continue to improve training for board, staff, and volunteers

Outcome 2: Increase staff retention.

Actions:

- Continue to identify job strengths and address job concerns
- Continue to provide opportunities for job transfer and advancement within the organization
- Continue to conduct pay assessments to be competitive with other entities and the cost of living
- Promote diversity in board, staff, and volunteers
- Continue to determine staff passions and interests and use them to the organization's advantage
- Continue to enhance a diversity, equity, and inclusion organizational culture
- Continue to provide leadership training and development for board, staff, and volunteers

Outcome 3: Update and expand facilities and equipment.

Actions:

- Provide adequate program space
- Provide adequate employee workspace
- Provide adequate equipment
- Enhance community engagement through innovative, updated, and expanded facilities
- Include culturally appropriate elements at facilities and parks



Goal: Obtain additional sustainable funding for SCC current and future growth.

Outcome 1: Increase the number of funding partnerships.

Actions:

- Increase SCC's visibility across the county
- Increase stakeholder awareness of SCC
- Partner more fully with potential funders
- Identify and attempt to attain additional funding sources
- Increase paid advertising to improve SCC exposure with stakeholders
- Better advertise the availability of the SCC newsletter to all Story County residents

Outcome 2: Use current and new funding sources to finance unmet needs.

Actions:

- Continue to update the list of unmet needs and related costs
- Pass a local referendum for funding SCC needs
- Secure additional corporate match funding
- Increase the number of grant proposals submitted
- Improve communication with stakeholders about SCC's future plans
- Secure new funding to better serve underrepresented audiences
- Continue to provide opportunities and expectations for all staff to be involved in fundraising

