



Strategic Priorities 2016-2018

Connecticut River Valley Sanctuaries

Our Goal

For more than 70 years, we have been working towards Mass Audubon's mission in the Connecticut River Valley. Our mission, to *protect the nature of Massachusetts for people and wildlife*, is meaningful though broad and needs a strategic approach to accomplish. Mass Audubon has completed an in-depth strategic planning process at the statewide level that will help guide us for the coming five years. The goal of our local planning process described here, which was independent of the larger statewide process, was to gather input from the community to further assist us in prioritizing our work in the Connecticut River Valley.

Our Process

The process was intentionally brief. An electronic survey completed in January 2015 was the first phase of the planning process. We received responses from 42 people including staff, volunteers, members, donors, community members and community leaders. The second phase consisted of in-person meetings to further develop ideas from the results of the survey. The third phase involved review and fine tuning. It is important to note that the priorities outlined below are not inflexible. They will continue to evolve as new opportunities to accomplish our mission emerge and input from our community is received.

Our Strengths and Opportunities

Examining our strengths, why people are engaged here, and where there is room for improvement are all important aspects of determining the appropriate priorities for the coming years. The planning survey provided a variety of answers to these questions but there remained clear themes that ran throughout the responses. The bulleted lists below represent those themes.

What attracted people to be involved?

- Love – of the sanctuary land, of being outdoors, of nature
- The mission of Mass Audubon
- The location and proximity to communities
- Volunteering
- Educational programs





What are our biggest strengths?

- Land protection and management
- Educational programs for all ages – including preschool and camp
- Staff

What improvements and additions would people like to see?

- Engaging more people – near Arcadia, Laughing Brook, and throughout Franklin, Hampden, Hampshire Counties
- Collaboration with other nonprofits
- Increase fundraising
- More advocacy on local environmental issues, including climate change
- More citizen science opportunities

Our Strategic Priorities

Below are the highest priorities for our work locally as determined from the Connecticut River Valley Sanctuaries community. There are many additional ideas for priority projects that are not included here but remain under consideration for future years.

All priorities fit within the larger context of Mass Audubon's Strategic Plan 2020. Mass Audubon's mission and values are, of course, at the core of our work in the Connecticut River Valley. Mass Audubon's Organizational Imperatives, as described in the new five-year strategic plan, will also be integral in all our work in the coming years. In fact, there are many similarities between those Imperatives and the themes for local improvements and additions mentioned above. The Organizational Imperatives are: Strengthen Financial Sustainability, Expand Visibility and Comprehension, Measure Our Impact, Embrace Diversity, and Increase Integration and Collaboration.

The resounding message of this process was the importance of land protection for all parts of our community as a top priority in the coming years. Expanded school programming and community outreach were also essential for much of our community and round out the top three priorities for the coming years. Tier 2 priorities are projects that we will continue to explore in the coming years and will be implemented as opportunities arise. Below each priority is a reference to how it connects to the Mass Audubon five-year strategic plan.

Tier One Priorities

I. Protect more land abutting our sanctuaries and other ecologically important properties.

- Build upon relationships with landowners of priority properties in our land protection plan.
- Move the process forward on known land protection opportunities.
- Support other land protection organizations to ensure the success of all land protection.

Mass Audubon's Strategic Plan 2020

Strategic Goal 2: Protect and Care for Land and Habitats of Significance

Actions: Strategically acquire high-quality conservation land, and Deepen our collaboration with conservation partners

2. Increase school programming, both in schools and hosting school groups on sanctuaries, and include more climate change education in programs.

- Increase Education Department staff to expand our school programming capacity.
- Build a network of connections at public and private schools in the three counties.
- Find funding to support increased programming.

Mass Audubon's Strategic Plan 2020

Strategic Goals 1 & 3: Connect People and Nature for the Benefit of Both, and Address the Challenges of Climate Change in Massachusetts.

Actions: Ensure that environmental education is included in school-based curriculum, expand efforts to build lifelong conservation leaders, and use our wildlife sanctuaries as climate change resource centers

3. Expand our presence throughout the Valley to raise awareness and engage a wider audience.

- Be involved at large local events, at community centers, and at other non-sanctuary locations.
- Increase promotion of our sanctuaries, programs, and projects in local media: print, online, radio, TV.
- Be a louder voice on local environmental issues.

Mass Audubon's Strategic Plan 2020

Strategic Goal 1: Connect People and Nature for the Benefit of Both

Organizational Imperative: Expand Visibility and Comprehension

Tier Two Priorities

1. Develop a structured internship program engaging area colleges to expand the scope of work we can accomplish and prepare young adults for a career in conservation.
2. Develop a continuing citizen science program specific to the Connecticut River Valley for schools and community members to participate in.
3. Complete a floodplain forest restoration project at Arcadia, increasing acreage of this rare habitat.

View the full Strategic Plan 2020 at www.massaudubon.org/about-us. There are many initiatives that are not listed in our top priorities here but are in Mass Audubon's statewide strategic plan and will be worked on locally in the coming years, including: leading by example in reduction of energy use, expanding habitat-based research and management on our sanctuaries, and expanding our outreach with urban audiences. Progress towards these initiatives and others will continue in addition to our push towards accomplishing our top priorities.



How to Help

In order to accomplish our priority projects, we will rely on the support of the community. There are a variety of ways to get involved. Below are suggestions on how you can have an impact. Contact Sanctuary Director Jonah Keane to learn more about how you can best assist us in protecting the nature of the Connecticut River Valley or visit www.massaudubon.org/arcadiasupport.



Donate

Join our community of local donors whose contributions allow us to protect more land, educate more kids, and advocate for better environmental policies.



Volunteer

Lend a hand and share your talents. Volunteers greatly increase our impact through a wide-range of projects from property management to environmental education to visitor services and outreach.



Advocate

Spread the word. Tell your personal network about our work and encourage their involvement. Amplify our outreach by spreading our messages using social media.



Join

Enjoy the benefits of Mass Audubon membership, including free admission to all of our sanctuaries across the state, while also supporting our work.

All photos taken at Arcadia ©Phil Doyle



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