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This document was developed with the generous support of:

Thank-you! to the volunteers, board members, stakeholders, forum participants, sponsors, photo contributors & Coalition members for your input, time, commitment & vision to develop this guiding document.
Collaborating for a Healthy Ecoregion

Greening the Future in Southwestern Ontario

Michelle Kanter, Executive Director for the Carolinian Canada Coalition, 2007

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This strategic plan is a map to a greener future for southwestern Ontario through the collaborative efforts of hundreds of initiatives, all levels of government, multiple sectors and stakeholders, communities and private citizens that make up the Carolinian Canada Coalition.

This comprehensive ecoregional strategy aims to:

- Create a strong and coordinated support network for healthy landscapes;
- Build on successful programs and create new opportunities to address increasing conservation challenges effectively and efficiently;
- Inspire, inform & catalyze nature conservation through collaboration and partnerships founded on a researched understanding of the region;
- Guide and track collective progress of hundreds of habitat conservation and restoration programs that are working towards a shared vision to enhance the unique nature of southwestern Ontario;
- Enhance capacity of groups and individuals to act for nature conservation.
- Support the essential work of Coalition members;
- Partner with key stakeholders;
- Engage new supporters.

Thank-you! to the volunteers, board members, stakeholders, forum participants, sponsors, photo contributors & Coalition members for your input, time, commitment & vision to develop this guiding document.

The Carolinian Zone of southwestern Ontario stands out as one of the most diverse ecoregions in North America with many unique species and habitats. On this, the most threatened landscape in Ontario, the need is urgent for recognizing and stewarding natural heritage as a framework for healthy landscapes.
VISON FOR A HEALTHY ECOREGION

With natural cover ranging from 6 –18 % in southwestern Ontario, a strong focus on cooperative habitat restoration is required to bring natural cover closer to the 30% recommended for healthy landscapes by Environment Canada. With over one quarter of Canada’s population in this region and growing concerns of water, air and soil quality and climate change, this goal becomes even more compelling. On the settled landscape of southwestern Ontario, conservation must be embedded in community action to be successful.

Carolinian Canada Coalition (CCC)

CCC is a significant catalyst for achieving a healthy ecoregion on a highly active landscape. It provides a critical role as a central networking hub, coordinating a shared conservation strategy, promoting a researched understanding of nature and catalyzing action across many sectors.

In just over 20 years, Carolinian Canada Coalition (CCC) has built a large and diverse network of allies with a shared passion for protecting and restoring healthy landscapes in southwestern Ontario. Amidst rapid advances in conservation science, policies and programs, the Coalition continues to be a catalyst for effective action, a coordinator of a shared conservation strategy and a central networking hub for government and non-government groups.
1. Building a Viable Coalition

The goals of CCC are ambitious and the activities outlined in this strategic plan, require strong growth of the organization over the next five years including board and volunteer participation, staff resources, membership and supporters.

1.1 Board Capacity
Develop new board & committee structures with diverse representation from groups and individuals.

- Board Development Workshops
- Guiding Documents

1.2 Budget Growth
Support the implementation of this strategic plan by funding a growth budget for staff, expenses and coordination.

- Fundraising strategy

Nature conservation is currently less than 1% of the budget of all governments while the environment is a top priority for Canadians. The Coalition has a vital role in promoting increased funding for nature conservation from both public and private sectors.

2. Networking for Ecoregional Sustainability & Stewardship

CCC’s networking mechanisms, maintained for over 20 years, are the key to its success to implementing collaborative conservation. A critical role in past and future for CCC is to build bridges between formal government protected areas at all levels and private stewardship on the ground.
2.1 Environment & Sustainability Forum
Work with diverse partners to host a series of collaborative workshops.

- Explore key issues associated with natural heritage research and stewardship
- Examine new science and how it applies to the southwestern Ontario
- Provide links between specialists, professionals, decision-makers and citizens
- Build capacity of groups & communities to deal with growing issues of landscape sustainability
- Promote multi-stakeholder participation to develop and share strategies

The networking function of CCC is now critically relevant in southwestern Ontario given current rapid changes in conservation science, environment health; public engagement, land use planning and new government and non-government programs and policies.

2.2 Growing Network
Expand links between thousands of groups and individuals across southwestern Ontario to provide access to the latest conservation updates in science, stewardship, programs and materials.

- Critical Pathway for distribution and technical transfer of new materials
- Shared Communication: Enhance links between local networks;
- Efficient Follow-up: Stay connected to an active conservation community;

3. Promoting a Researched Understanding
CCC’s conservation strategy is an important mechanism to focus hundreds of allies and initiatives on priority goals and best approaches. The development of a shared strategy engages a wide range of stakeholders, an important process in itself.

3.1 Big Picture Monitoring
Monitor CCC’s Big Picture and other conservation strategies to assess successes and gaps across the ecoregion by county, watershed and critical issues such as invasive species, policy, stewardship action and climate change.

- Big Picture Report Card
- Future Big Picture Climate Change Strategy
- Big Picture Updates
- Link to Provincial, Federal & Local Strategies

CCC’s ecoregional conservation strategies have been adopted widely by conservation and community groups and agencies, at all scales, resulting in major progress in policy, stewardship and protection practices across the ecoregion. These strategies have also been used as models for other areas.
3.2 Woodland Recovery
Coordinate and lead the implementation of the Carolinian Woodland Recovery Strategy.

- Community Stewardship Action Plans for Species at Risk
- Technical Transfer, Networking & Capacity Building
- Community Habitat Models

The implementation of CWRS will build capacity of a range of conservation partners to target land securement, stewardship and restoration efforts in a coordinated and prioritized way to efficiently benefit high concentrations of Species at Risk.

3.3 Carolinian Research Network
Link experts and stakeholders by examining natural heritage issues relevant to communities and targeting applied research at the needs of stewardship programs.

- Critical Issue Reviews
- Student Research Program
- Research Links
- Research Centre

For the past decade and more, the kind and volume of research on environmental, land use, local and regional planning, agriculture, ecosystem health and other knowledge relevant to Carolinian Canada’s primary goal of nature conservation and sustainable use of southwestern Ontario has been increasing at a very rapid rate.

4. Catalyzing Effective Action
Efforts will be made to promote cross-disciplinary, cross-sectoral and broad civic understanding of research and its implications for conservation and sustainable use of the Carolinian Canada Ecoregion.

4.1 Innovative Partnerships
Develop partnerships with key land management groups such as forestry, aggregates, planning and tourism.

- Big Picture Guidelines & Best Practices
- Peer Promotion
- Public Policy Input

Peer networks are an important point of contact with landowners. These may be associations, industries, businesses, municipalities or community groups.

4.2 Capacity-building Outreach
Work with a range of groups to promote a unified message for stewardship & conservation. Provide tools to increase the outreach capacity of hundreds of conservation initiatives in the region through collaborative initiatives.

The primary target audience is landowners, both public and private. Strategic outreach will focus on landowners of Big Picture Core Areas with a secondary focus on landowners of significant natural areas, potential corridors and potential restoration areas. Secondary target audiences influence, assist and may become future landowners including:

- conservation groups
- peer networks
- youth & youth leaders
- urban and rural community leaders
Especially in southwestern Ontario, conservation of natural spaces must be embedded in community attitudes, ethics and priorities. CCC is a unique position to initiate a coordinated and cooperative ecoregional outreach program that links across many communities and many conservation programs.

Unique Communities Social Marketing Strategy
Carolinian Canada Conservation Awards
Biodiversity Culture Project
Landowner Links
Carolinian Canada Book
Carolinian Canada Almanac
Publications & Roadshow
Natural Heritage Plaques
Stewardship Centres of Excellence

Although protected areas are a small percentage of the overall landscape, their role in Carolinian Canada is vital as important outreach centres for conservation and stewardship, both for local landowners and visitors.

CCC Benefits for Members & Partners
Collaborating for a Healthy Ecoregion

Networking for Stewardship & Sustainability
- Capacity-building for staff, volunteers and organizations
  - Technical Transfer
  - Access to Resources & Good Ideas
  - Neutral link between public and private programs

Catalyzing Effective Action
- Stewardship BMP’s
- Public Policy Input
- Highlighting Success
- Capacity-building Outreach Tools
- Linking new allies to conservation partners
  - Strategic Advice & Guidance
  - Subsidized information resources

Building a Viable Coalition
- Partnerships
- Central Hub

Promoting a Researched Understanding
- Links to Experts
  - Targeted Research
- Strategies based on Sound Science
- Implications for Local Landscapes
  - Measuring progress
  - Decision-making tools
  - Youth Training

Get involved! www.carolinian.org 519-433-7077
INTRODUCTION

The Carolinian Canada Coalition (CCC) was initiated in 1984 with a mandate to protect and restore the natural heritage of southwestern Ontario through cooperation and consensus based on sound science. In 2007, the landscape of conservation action has changed dramatically but the goals and approaches of the Coalition remain highly relevant to today’s society.

The purpose of this strategic plan is to identify major program areas for the Coalition act effectively and efficiently in collaboration with its partner groups across the landscape of the Carolinian ecoregion.

This strategic plan outlines a comprehensive ecoregional strategy to build conservation capacity of current programs, partner with key stakeholders and engage new supporters to create a strong and coordinated support network for healthy landscapes. As it is implemented, it will inspire and monitor collective progress of hundreds of habitat conservation and restoration programs that are working towards a shared vision to enhance the unique nature of southwestern Ontario.

In just over 20 years, Carolinian Canada Coalition (CCC) has built a large and diverse network of allies with a shared passion for protecting and restoring healthy landscapes in southwestern Ontario. Amidst rapid advances in conservation science, policies and programs, the Coalition continues to be a catalyst for effective action, a coordinator of a shared conservation strategy and a central networking hub for government and non-government groups.

This Strategic Plan maps out a future for the Coalition that builds on successful programs and creates new opportunities to address increasing conservation challenges effectively and efficiently. As importantly, it identifies ways that the Coalition can build capacity and support the essential work of its many member groups and individuals.

On this, the most threatened landscape in Ontario, the need is urgent for recognizing and stewarding natural heritage as a framework for healthy landscapes. This Strategic Plan is a map to a greener future for southwestern Ontario through the collaborative efforts of hundreds of initiatives, all levels of government, multiple sectors and stakeholders, communities and private citizens.
BACKGROUND

The Natural Landscape

The landscape of southwestern Ontario is unique in Canada, as it is home to the Carolinian Zone, an ecological region like no other. This region hosts several globally significant species and ecosystems. With among the highest biodiversity in Canada, one of the richest concentrations of species at risk, extensive aquatic ecosystems and some of the most valuable and productive natural communities, this region is national treasure.

The Human Landscape

Overlaid with a highly active network of communities with deep historical roots and connections to the land, the natural systems of southwestern Ontario are a great resource and an important responsibility for the people who live here. Without a large and focused investment in the green infrastructure of this region in this decade, the health, economy and future of the communities are at risk.

Carolinian Canada Coalition (CCC)

CCC is the leading ecoregional organization in Canada and one of few successful long-running initiatives of its kind globally. The strong roots of the Coalition were seeded from the passion, commitment and vision of its founders: leading ecologists, researchers, policy-makers and conservationists who recognized the unique natural heritage at risk in this region. The Coalition made its mark early in its existence by coordinating a joint conservation agenda between government and non-government groups such as MNR, NCC, Parks Canada, local groups, Ontario Nature, World Wildlife Fund and Environment Canada. This began with the identification of 38 the most critical, unprotected natural areas remaining in the region. These Signature Sites led to the development of innovative and cooperative approaches to conservation. In 2001, the Carolinian Canada Conservation Strategy evolved to a Big Picture vision of 140 core areas and connecting natural corridors, based on the latest science. The Big Picture has proved to be a highly successful basis for engaging allies from municipalities, agriculture, forestry and many other land-based sectors and has been adopted widely.
Vision for a Healthy Ecoregion

Coalition supporters, from all levels of government and a wide range of sectors, share a vision to cooperatively protect and restore a network of high quality natural areas across Carolinian Canada, a green network that will support thriving wild and human communities in harmony for many generations to come.

Natural Landscape Vision: With natural cover ranging from 6 –18 % in the 14 core municipalities of the region, a strong focus on cooperative habitat restoration is required to bring natural cover closer to the 30% recommended for healthy landscapes by Environment Canada. With over one quarter of Canada’s population in this region and growing concerns of water, air and soil quality and climate change, this goal becomes even more compelling.

Both the quality and quantity of natural cover are important in protecting provincial, national and global biodiversity, as well as associated ecological services such as water supply, flood control, wildlife habitat and adaptation to climate change. A restored natural heritage network that can support rare species will contribute to the prevention of more species becoming at risk. Healthy and high quality natural ecosystems are the backbone of healthy landscapes that will support all life, wild and human.

Human Community Vision: On the settled landscape of southwestern Ontario, conservation must be embedded in community action to be successful. Studies show that healthy natural areas contribute to the health, happiness and productivity of human communities. While many people are getting involved in nature conservation in a variety of ways, it is important to focus growing interest on appropriate actions, priority habitats and keystone species for efficient and effective conservation.

Mandate

CCC’s objects (formally registered in 2006) are the basis of this Strategic Plan:

1. Protect and restore natural heritage in the Carolinian life zone for healthy, balanced and sustainable landscapes.
2. Collaborate with individuals and groups who care about natural lands to enhance the effectiveness of conservation action in the region.
3. Promote a researched understanding of nature and its critical interdependence with humans.
STRATEGIC OVERVIEW

CCC is a significant catalyst for achieving a healthy ecoregion on a highly active landscape. It provides a critical role as a central networking hub, coordinating a shared conservation strategy, promoting a researched understanding of nature and catalyzing action across many sectors.

Many of CCC’s current programs, such as the Annual Forum, Conservation Awards, Big Picture Communications Strategy and Carolinian Woodlands Recovery Strategy are highly successful and effective and require on-going resources. A viable organization is needed to ensure the strong growth of these programs and to develop new strategic programs to meet the growing challenges of landscape conservation.

A comprehensive strategic planning process was carried out over two years through consultation with a wide range of members, allies and stakeholders. Board and stakeholder workshops and surveys were implemented with outside facilitators. Updates were provided to the membership for feedback throughout the process. Current strengths, challenges and new opportunities were assessed (see appendix).

The resulting strategic plan identifies four overlapping program areas that will:

- Guide, inform & catalyze nature conservation through collaboration and partnerships founded on a researched understanding of the region.

- Enhance capacity of groups and individuals to act for nature conservation.

Strategic Plan Program Areas & Principal Directions

Networking for Stewardship & Sustainability
- Environment & Sustainability Forum
- Growing Network

Building a Viable Coalition
- Board Capacity
- Budget Growth

Catalyzing Effective Action
- Innovative Partnerships
- Capacity-building Outreach

Promoting a Researched Understanding
- Woodland Recovery
- Big Picture Monitoring
- Carolinian Research Network
### CCC Program Goals

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<th>Program Areas</th>
<th>Goals</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Building a Viable Coalition</strong></td>
<td><strong>Maintain A Sustainable Organization Into The Future</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Board Capacity</td>
<td>• Focused &amp; effective ecoregional organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>Budget Growth</td>
<td>• Capacity to deliver &amp; sustain major programs</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Networking for Stewardship &amp; Sustainability</strong></td>
<td><strong>Connect People &amp; Groups to Build Conservation Capacity</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Environment &amp; Sustainability Forum</td>
<td>• Provide a leadership hub for an expanding &amp; active conservation community</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Collaborate with key sectors &amp; groups</td>
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<tr>
<td>Growing Network</td>
<td>• Enhance members’ work through efficient zone-wide communications &amp; tools</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Develop shared language</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Promote a Researched Understanding</strong></td>
<td><strong>Coordinate &amp; monitor a joint ecoregional conservation strategy to protect &amp; restore biodiversity</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Big Picture Monitoring</td>
<td>• Set shared nature conservation priorities &amp; goals for the region</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Report on conservation progress</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Provide leadership in developing effective landscape strategies that link across scales, sectors &amp; boundaries</td>
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<tr>
<td>Woodland Recovery</td>
<td>• Focus resources on high priority areas &amp; species</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Address ecoregional policy, planning, stewardship issues with focus on SAR</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Link Recovery Plans &amp; on-ground programs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Carolinian Research Network</td>
<td>• Link research to stewardship initiatives</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Target research at on-ground needs</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Catalyzing Effective Action</strong></td>
<td><strong>Facilitate informed decision-making for nature conservation</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Innovative Partnerships</td>
<td>• Develop ecoregional guidelines in partnership with target groups</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Strategically develop resources &amp; guidelines for key groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capacity-building Outreach</td>
<td>• Build public &amp; community support for nature</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Resources for landowners, municipalities, public, farmers, youth</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Link science &amp; culture</td>
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1. BUILDING A VIABLE COALITION

A viable coalition needs strong leadership and financial health to develop effective programs. The goals of CCC are ambitious and the activities outlined in this strategic plan, require strong growth of the organization over the next five years including board and volunteer participation, staff resources, membership and supporters.

1.1 Board Capacity

A new board and committee structure was created in 2006 (see appendix). It reinforces the Coalition’s emphasis on collaboration by calling for diverse representation from groups and sectors. It also provides an opportunity to increase involvement by individuals with a passion for protecting healthy landscapes.

A formal set of by-laws was adopted in preparation for incorporation in 2006. Board terms of reference have been completed and a set of board policies is in development. This strategic plan provides a direction for the board over the next 5 years.

Principal Direction: Over the next 5 years, the Board Development Committee should focus on recruitment for board and committees to engage groups associated with our target audiences and individuals with connections and skills needed to reach our goals.

a. Board Development: Annual board workshops can be used as a simple and effective means engage, align and build capacity of the board as a whole.

b. Guiding Documents: The board manual drafted in 2007 should be updated on an ongoing basis and be available electronically to all board members to assist board members. Policies should be created on an as-needed basis to make the organization run efficiently, fairly and consistently.

c. Annual Plan: The annual budget and workplan should be developed carefully to advance the strategic plan. New programs should be reviewed by the board and Management Committee to assess the relevance to the strategic plan.

d. Virtual Resources: Board and staff should explore ways to use virtual technology to increase participation; reduce environmental impact, minimize expenses and expand geographic representation for board, committee and program activities.

1.2 Budget Growth

A fundraising strategy is in development to explore ways to implement this strategic plan. The Coalition has traditionally relied on in-kind support of its management committee and project grants that were uncertain sources of funding from year to year and that covered minimal overhead expenses.

Principal Direction: The implementation of this strategic plan requires increased staff, expenses and coordination on the order of double or triple the size of the current annual budget. The board will need to balance annual priorities against funds available to manage growth incrementally.

a. Fundraising strategy: To ensure a viable coalition, a strong fundraising strategy must
be implemented with the assistance of board, committees, staff and professional consultants to expand CCC’s network of supporters.

b. Overhead: While CCC aims to become a stable, independent and charitable organization it should retain its ability to minimize overhead through in-kind partnerships, virtual resources and other means.

c. Conflict of Interest: To avoid potential conflict of interest in fundraising with our member groups, CCC should focus on partnership projects and work to increase the overall funding resources for nature conservation.

Nature conservation is currently less than 1% of the budget of all governments while the environment is a top priority for Canadians. The Coalition has a vital role in promoting increased funding for nature conservation from both public and private sectors.

2. NETWORKING FOR ECOREGIONAL SUSTAINABILITY & STEWARDSHIP

CCC was created as a networking hub to establish and implement a shared government and non-government vision for nature conservation in southwestern Ontario. The organization has always promoted a coordinated and cooperative approach to conservation and highlighted the need for efficient and regular communications to its network of supporters to achieve this.

A critical role in past and future for CCC is to build bridges between formal government protected areas at all levels and private stewardship on the ground.

CCC’s networking mechanisms, maintained for over 20 years, are the key to its success to implementing collaborative conservation. They provide a central hub for developing joint conservation strategies with the input of diverse stakeholders; promoting researched understanding and for guiding and catalyzing on-ground conservation directed at priority actions.

The networking function of CCC is now critically relevant in southwestern Ontario given current rapid changes in conservation science, environment health; public engagement, land use planning and new government and non-government programs and policies.

2.1 Environment and Sustainability Forum

Throughout its history, CCC has organized collaborative forums and workshops, as a core activity, to promote connections between research and stakeholders and apply best science to conservation issues. In a highly active and diverse conservation community, ecoregional workshops are ideal mechanisms to inform, catalyze and guide collaborative conservation. Based on recent feedback, CCC’s forums play a key role for member groups and stakeholders to build capacity and network to increase their efficiency on the ground.

Principal Direction: CCC should work with partners to host a series of collaborative workshops with a focus on bringing together research on key topics, expanding technical transfer and professional development opportunities for member groups and translating research into best management practices. Aims of the workshops will be to:

a. Explore biodiversity benefits for communities, climate change strategies, water quality, protected areas, watershed management and other key issues associated with natural
heritage on a multi-use landscape. (see appendix for potential list of topics);

b. Examine new science and how it applies to the southwestern Ontario landscape;

c. Provide links between specialists, professionals, decision-makers and citizens;

d. Document and distribute workshop results and take action on findings and recommendations in collaboration with its Board members and CCC supporters;

e. Build capacity of experts, planners, government programs, stewardship groups and communities to deal with growing issues of landscape sustainability; Develop partnerships to expand technical transfer opportunities

f. Provide access to best information and tools available for groups involved in land use and conservation programs

g. Promote multi-stakeholder participation to develop and share strategies, build networking capacity and provide input into key issues.

2.2 Growing Network

CCC has developed a regular newsletter, listserve and active website that shares information between thousands of groups and individuals. This network links between traditional partners while engaging, motivating and linking new allies to conservation partners. It facilitates collaboration, linkages and accessibility to conservation resources. It can assist allies by promoting their work and disseminating their materials.

The CC Network provides a neutral shared platform for groups that normally do not interact to come together to discuss and collaborate on decision-making for important landscape issues.

**Principal Direction:** Expand CCC’s active communications network of natural spaces supporters across the zone and carry out a user survey to enhance these goals:

a. *Public-Private Connections:* Continue to connect traditional public and private partners, supporters and stakeholders to stay informed with the latest resources, strategies and opportunities;

b. *Critical Pathway:* Expand the network’s role as a critical pathway for distribution, technical transfer and strategy development, as noted in other parts of this strategy;

c. *Shared Communication:* Highlight the network’s capability to increase the communication capacity of member groups and enhance links between local networks;

d. *Efficient Follow-up:* Promote the network’s role as an efficient follow-up to new allies to remain motivated and connected to an active conservation community;

e. *Expanded Innovations:* Use the network effectively to expand successful innovative programs and best practices in partnership with member groups;

f. *Education:* Link to schools, teachers workshops, curriculum and education systems

g. *Multi-media:* Explore the use of innovative communications techniques to reach new audiences and youth while continuing to maintain ‘multiple windows’ of access through the newsletter, listserve and website.
3. PROMOTING A RESEARCHED UNDERSTANDING

One of the main strengths and contributions of CCC is its role in bringing together a wide range of research by many different partners and developing shared conservation strategies based on a researched understanding. This role is closely linked to the networking activities of the organization, such as workshops and member consultation. It builds capacity of allies to efficiently develop programs based on the best available science and consistent and targeted strategies for a healthy ecoregion.

CCC’s conservation strategy is an important mechanism to focus hundreds of allies and initiatives on priority goals and best approaches. The development of a shared conservation strategy engages a wide range of stakeholders, an important process in itself. CCC’s ecoregional conservation strategies have been adopted widely by conservation and community groups and agencies, at all scales, resulting in major progress in policy, stewardship and protection practices across the ecoregion. These strategies have also been used as models for other areas.

CCC Conservation Strategies have always identified on protected areas as a fundamental building block for a healthy and sustainable natural heritage network. This strategic plan focuses on an integrated approach to securement and stewardship by engaging the community, linking public and private stewardship, and linking formal and informal protected areas. It engages universities, colleges and schools to participate in landscape conservation.

3.1 Big Picture Monitoring

The success of the Coalition over the last two decades has been rooted in its ability to bring together a wide range of stakeholders to develop a shared conservation vision for a healthy ecoregion. This began with a focus on 38 critical, unprotected sites and now is centred around the Big Picture, a connected network of natural areas as a foundation of healthy landscapes. The 1997 Conservation Strategy and the 2002 Options for Greening Carolinian Canada set out a coordinated approach for efficient and effective conservation for government and non-government allies.

The CCC Big Picture and Options for Greening Carolinian Canada, released in 2001 and 2002, provides a vision for a healthy landscape and cooperative conservation that is central to the CCC programs. Many stakeholders have used the Big Picture and applied its concepts as a basis for their work to implement and refine the Big Picture at a community scale. It has been used as the basis for the national Conservation Blueprint (Nature Conservancy of Canada) and the provincial Greenways Strategy (Ontario Nature). CCC supports implementation through its Big Picture Roadshow which allows staff to attend local meetings, give presentations, review documents and provide advice. This type of facilitation is essential to build capacity across the ecoregion.

Monitoring the progress of a conservation strategy is essential to ensure it is effective and to adapt it for the future. Although CCC has provided reviews of specific issues in the past and there are dozens of unconnected monitoring initiatives in the region, there has not been a comprehensive program to link issues and track the progress of the Coalition’s collective goals either at a policy or landscape level. CCC is in an excellent position to bring together a range of current monitoring groups to develop an overview of the state of conservation in the region. CCC’s Big Picture and other conservation strategies provide a framework to assess trends, needs and successes in conservation and healthy landscapes. CCC’s monitoring committee developed a proposal for initiating a monitoring and reporting tool in 2006. This tool will build capacity of communities in making best land-use decisions based on the most up to date information.
Ecoregional monitoring can assess and report on the progress of collective conservation efforts in the region from on-ground results to policy to community actions.

The Big Picture also provides an excellent canvas to assess potential impacts of major threats to the landscape. Climate change is a priority issue which will affect aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems, wild populations and natural resources that communities depend on. Understanding climate change effects on natural features in southwestern Ontario is essential to good planning, policy and stewardship of the landscape to ensure healthy futures for wild and human communities.

**Principal Direction:** Implement the proposal of the Monitoring Committee to assess conservation successes and gaps across the ecoregion by county, watershed and critical issues such as invasive species, policy and climate change.

a. **Big Picture Report Card:** Develop a reporting tool with the input of community stakeholders to inform and build capacity of communities, stakeholders and decision-makers to deal with conservation issues.

b. **Future Big Picture Climate Change Strategy:** A strategy for dealing with climate change in conservation-related activities can be initiated by developing a model for landscape impacts in southwestern Ontario. This project would review and collate all current work, identify gaps in knowledge and work closely with recognized experts and develop a model and a strategy that is useful for local communities.

c. **Big Picture Updates:** It is critical to regularly update CCC’s conservation strategy to ensure that it is based on the best available science; relevant to current stakeholders; responds to a changing landscape; and is appropriate to current policies and programs. Updates may focus on key issues and should follow from results of regular monitoring reports.

d. **Strategy Links:** Big Picture Monitoring should bring together the work of conservation authorities, municipalities and other local groups that have refined the Big Picture in their regions. Updates should also link to provincial and national mapping and monitoring programs, such as SOLRIS. Big Picture Roadshow should be used to collect feedback from stakeholders on key issues related to the Big Picture.

### 3.2 Woodland Recovery

Carolinian Woodlands Recovery Strategy (CWRS) examines in detail one aspect of the Big Picture, that is species and communities at risk, with a focus on woodlands. The Carolinian Canada region is marked by the one of the highest concentrations of species at risk in Canada with over 100 listed species and 500 provincially significant species and ecological communities. Therefore, species at risk are reliant on a functioning and healthy natural heritage system throughout the region and their conservation and recovery is closely tied to the implementation of the Big Picture conservation strategy.

CWRS includes a broad ecosystem strategy (phase I, in final draft) and a community strategy (phase II, in development). The recommendations of the ecosystem strategy provide a mechanism to network effectively between the 50+ Recovery Strategies in the region. The implementation of CWRS will build capacity of a range of conservation partners to target land securement, stewardship and restoration efforts in a coordinated and prioritized way to efficiently benefit high concentrations of Species at Risk. Priority areas for implementation have been identified through a 2007 project in...
partnership with the Nature Conservancy of Canada, Environment Canada and the Department of Fisheries and Oceans based on highest concentrations of terrestrial and aquatic species at risk.

**Principal Direction:** CCC should act a coordinator and leader to implement CWRS.

a. **Community Stewardship Action Plans for Species at Risk:** CCC should work closely with communities in priority areas to coordinate implementation of CWRS using consistent standards and best available science.

b. **Technical Transfer, Networking and Capacity Building:** CC Network activities should include a component to provide on-going technical support to on-ground groups and enhance links between recovery strategies.

c. **Community Habitat Models** can be developed by using the Natural Spaces Natural Heritage Modeling Tool combined with Conservation Blueprint planning techniques to focus on keystone species and habitats.

### 3.3 Carolinian Research Network

For the past decade and more, the kind and volume of research on environmental, land use, local and regional planning, agriculture, ecosystem health and other knowledge relevant to Carolinian Canada's primary goal of nature conservation and sustainable use of southwestern Ontario has been increasing at a very rapid rate. Much of this research produces information relevant to specialists such biologists, economists, pedologists, and climatologists as well as other specialists, professionals, citizens and decision-makers.

Too often, however, research results are confined primarily to researchers in one sector and do not reach other specialists, professionals, decision-makers and citizens who are in a position to apply new knowledge efficiently. The consequence is that the research results do not maximize potential improvements in nature conservation, ecosystem health and sustainable land in the Carolinian Canada Ecoregion.

**Principal Direction:** To assist in closing this knowledge gap, Carolinian Canada Coalition proposes to link experts and stakeholders by examining natural heritage issues relevant to communities and targeting applied research at the needs of stewardship programs.

a) **Critical Issue Reviews:** CCC will act as a facilitator to bring together experts and input from a range of sectors to summarize, analyze and present research results in ways accessible and relevant to community leaders through the Environment and Sustainability Workshops, professional consultants and stakeholder partnerships.

b) **Student Research Program:** Continue program initiated in 2007 to engage youth and communities in natural areas research by linking with universities and stewardship groups across the ecoregion.

c) **Research Links:** Link researchers to stewardship partners for topics, sites and assistance by using the CC communication network. Build capacity for targeted research to inform and benefit existing stewardship initiatives and contribute to rural economic development. Maintain an experts list keyed to research areas of high relevance to conservation and sustainable use of Carolinian Canada's ecosystems and natural resources.
d) **Research Centre:** Develop a centre of Carolinian Canada Research through partnerships with universities, parks and stewardship groups

### 4. CATALYZING EFFECTIVE ACTION

Various methods will be used to present the results of research relevant to the conservation and sustainable use of ecosystems and natural resources to citizens of the Carolinian Canada Ecoregion as well as responsible specialists, professionals and decision-makers. Efforts will be made to promote cross-disciplinary, cross-sectoral and broad civic understanding of research and its implications for conservation and sustainable use of the Carolinian Canada Ecoregion.

#### 4.1 Innovative Partnerships

The landscape of Carolinian Canada is a mosaic of landowners, land use practices and attitudes. Many core natural areas are divided into 100 or more properties. Greater ecosystems that include buffering landscapes and connecting natural corridors can involve hundreds more landowners. There is a great diversity of ownership within both the private and public sectors. Many private owners are farmers in southwestern Ontario however rural non-farm residents are growing. Most core natural areas also contain industry, camps, horticulture, non-government groups, recreational areas and more.

One-on-one landowner contact is highly effective to promote stewardship actions site-by-site, but it is labour intensive, focused on early adopters and requires careful follow-through. CCC piloted the first large scale landowner contact program in Canada in partnership with the University of Guelph. It was highly successful and now many local groups in region run their own programs customized to their area and projects. This has helped build a momentum for nature stewardship across the region.

Peer networks are another important point of contact with landowners. These may be associations, industries, businesses, municipalities or community groups. Landowners look to peer groups for guidance and networking. Both aspects are important for influencing attitudes and promoting conservation actions. Developing partnerships with peer groups can also reinforce existing on-ground relationships with landowners.

**Principal Direction:** Develop partnerships with key land management groups such as forestry, aggregates, planning and tourism and other sectors to establish joint Big Picture Guidelines / Stewardship Best Management Practices (BMP’s) related to their sector.

- **Big Picture Best Practices:** Engage industry partners in a review of conservation issues related to specific land uses, as a background to developing Best Practices (BMP’s). Develop partnerships to expand the use of innovative and successful tools developed locally or in other regions. Work with stewardship groups to provide access to Carolinian ecologists, on-ground support and other experts as needed.

- **Peer Promotion:** Promote and encourage the voluntary adoption of BMP’s in partnership with peer networks. Provide technical transfer through publications and workshops for peer leaders. Develop a publicly recognized program and highlight industry successes through social marketing to promote high nature conservation standards. Use this network to monitor uptake.

- **Public Policy Input:** Use BMP’s and conservation strategies as guidelines for providing input into public policy.
4.2 Capacity-building Outreach

Especially in southwestern Ontario, conservation of natural spaces must be embedded in community attitudes, ethics and priorities. Carolinian Canada’s landowner contact program initiated over 20 years ago demonstrated how targeted communications can be highly effective in a settled landscape. CCC’s Communication Strategy (2001) has been successful in expanding awareness and building capacity for Big Picture actions across a variety of sectors. This momentum must be maintained with an on-going outreach program to keep the issue relevant and current for communities across southwestern Ontario.

CCC is a unique position to initiate a coordinated and cooperative ecoregional outreach program that links across many communities and many conservation programs. The ecoregional perspective connects directly to a ‘sense of place’ which is crucial to promoting awareness of natural heritage values. This type of program can provide tools to increase the outreach capacity of hundreds of conservation initiatives in the region.

It must be recognized that conservation action on the scale called for by the Big Picture in southwestern Ontario will be implemented by a broad range of groups and individuals. Communities, working sectors and youth have an increasing interest in environmental action that will drive the momentum of nature conservation action in this region. CCC has played an important role in increasing overall awareness of local natural features across many sectors and age groups and this role should be enhanced and expanded into the future, including outreach to youth and adults to integrate nature conservation into daily activities. To achieve awareness at this scale, CCC must focus on efficient outreach tools that can be implemented by a wide variety existing programs. This approach will promote consistent messages across the region and help to capture the attention of a greater portion of the public through combined efforts. These tools should be designed to use state-of-the-art social marketing techniques.

A social marketing program can build on the groundswell of current community action and reinforce a growing ethic of nature protection. It also provides an opportunity to provide efficient outreach across many conservation partners and guide interests and actions to focus on priority conservation needs.

*Social Marketing has the goal of changing people’s behaviour rather than selling a specific product. This type of outreach is key to promoting a ‘Caring for Nature’ attitude that is needed for effective conservation.*

Although protected areas are a small percentage of the overall landscape, their role in Carolinian Canada is vital as important outreach centres for conservation and stewardship, both for local landowners and visitors. They have facilities and programs in place to educate, inform and demonstrate stewardship BMP’s.

CCC’s outreach programs should be designed with a knowledge of primary and secondary target audiences. The primary target audience is landowners, both public and private. Strategic outreach will
Carolinian Canada Coalition Strategic Plan 2007 - 2012

focus on landowners of Big Picture Core Areas with a secondary focus on landowners of significant natural areas, potential corridors and potential restoration areas.

Secondary target audiences influence, assist and may become future landowners. Strategic outreach will include a consideration of:

- conservation groups that work with landowners;
- associations representing different types of public and private landowners;
- community leaders including decision-makers and business leaders that influence landowners;
- youth leaders that work with future landowners;
- urban and rural communities that influence attitudes and ethics of landowners and are a source for future landowners.

**Principal Direction:** Build capacity of participating groups to promote a unified message for greater impact. Ensure that useful tools and information are readily available to the primary target audience of landowners. Work with secondary target audiences to build their capacity in promoting consistent messages and assisting landowners in appropriate nature conservation.

a. **Unique Communities Social Marketing Strategy:** Bring together a working group with representatives from groups across southwestern Ontario to develop an ecoregional social marketing and outreach strategy for nature conservation. Use the results of the strategy to implement effective outreach programs and develop a publicly recognized profile. Promote pride in the unique natural features, species at risk and natural spaces of Carolinian Canada across the ecoregion. Build on recognized profile of Carolinian Canada ecoregion to enhance the public connection with caring for local landscapes. Make concrete links between well-being and quality of life for human communities and the capacity to care for nature.

b. **Carolinian Canada Conservation Awards:** Continue to recognize, encourage and inspire conservation excellence across sectors. Use CCC Conservation Awards program to highlight leading municipalities, industries, groups, landowners and volunteers.

c. **Biodiversity Culture Project:** Engage youth and new audiences through cultural and arts activities to promote the message of healthy natural areas, species at risk and landscapes.

d. **Landowner Links:** Enhance connections between landowners, conservation partners and peer networks through the ‘Caring for Nature’ factsheet project. Provide follow-up and build capacity of leading landowners to act as resources within their communities through network workshops and publications.

e. **Carolinian Canada Book:** Develop a major publication to build a high profile across the region that will influence target audiences and help to create a high standard of conservation awareness, ethics and support.

f. **Publications & Roadshow:** Translate research findings to sustainable approaches in daily life in and around natural areas.

g. **Natural Heritage Plaques:** Continue to work with local communities to mark significant natural heritage sites.

h. **Carolinian Canada Almanac:** Collate CCC materials and findings into a regular publication, to act as an efficient vehicle for broad distribution to target audiences using
social marketing techniques. Use it to disseminate tools in partnership with a range of groups to build capacity in land-use sectors, planning and communities.

i. **Stewardship Centres of Excellence**: Work with parks, existing interpretation centres and other groups to promote outreach materials and stewardship BMP’s to relevant to target audiences. Use regular workshops for professional development of staff. Promote parks as knowledge sources. Develop outreach materials that can be used or customized by partner groups so they can focus their resources directly on landowner support, as demand increases.

**PROGRAM INTERACTIONS**

CCC programs and activities should overlap to provide consistent, efficient and goal-focused programs. The program areas outlined in this plan provide mechanisms to collaborate around any critical issue identified by the board and committees as relevant to the vision and mandate of the Coalition.

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**Example of Program Interactions**

*Carolinian Canada Coalition*

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**Collaborative Workshops**
- Workshops to review issue & to report results
  - Technical transfer to member groups, stakeholders, leaders & volunteers

**Critical Issue**
- eg. Climate Change, SAR
  - Identification
  - Funding Partner

**Critical Issue Review**
- Research current state, practices, gaps, challenges
  - Develop shared strategy
  - Target research at priority needs
  - Monitor BMP’s

**Develop Stakeholder Partnership**
- Develop & promote joint BMP’s
  - Incorporate into outreach program
  - Provide strategic support as needed

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6-2
Benefits for Partners and Members

This strategic plan was built on discussions with a wide range of partners and stakeholders to ensure it reinforces collaboration across various sectors and links with other strategies being implemented for conservation in southwestern Ontario.

The Coalition plays a unique role in linking between local, provincial, federal and international strategies. The participation of member groups is central to the Coalition's mandate to enhance efficiency of conservation action in southwestern Ontario. Therefore, the strategic direction of the Coalition should have clear benefits to member groups and partners.

The diagram below summarizes some of the ways that group members and partners can benefit from the this strategic plan.
# IMPLEMENTATION OF STRATEGIC PLAN

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principal Directions</th>
<th>Activity Status (as of Sept 2007)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. Viable Coalition</strong></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| 1.1 Board Capacity | ✓ Incorporated 2006  
| | ➞ First elections fall 2007  
| | ➞ Committees in development  
| | ➞ Board manual and workshops initiated  
| | ➞ Strategic Plan and policies developed  
| | ➞ Business plan in development  |
| 1.2 Budget Growth | ➞ Fundraising Strategy in development  
| | ➞ Charitable status in progress  
| | ◇ Seeking funds for fundraiser  |
| **2. Networking for Ecoregional Sustainability & Stewardship** |  |
| 2.1 Environment & Sustainability Forum | ↑ Annual Forums – increase focus  
| | ↑ Strengthen professional development aspect  |
| 2.2 Growing Network | ↑ Newsletter, Listserv and Web to be enhanced  
| | ◇ User survey to be initiated  |
| **3. Promoting a Researched Understanding** |  |
| 3.1 Big Picture Monitoring | ✓ Monitoring committee initiated 2005  
| | ◇ Big Picture Report Card proposal developed 2006  
| | ◇ Climate Change Forum in 2007 to initiate strategy  |
| 3.2 Woodland Recovery | ✓ Ecosystem Strategy in final draft  
| | ➞ Phase II Community Strategy in development  |
| 3.3 Carolinian Research Network | ↑ Student Research Program initiated 2007  
| | ◇ Research Centre discussions initiated  |
| **4. Catalyzing Effective Action** |  |
| 4.1 Innovative Partnerships | ◇ Proposal developed 2007  |
| 4.2 Capacity-building Outreach | ➞ Conservation Awards initiated 1999  
| | ➞ Landowner Links initiated 2005  
| | ➞ Roadshow requires new funds  
| | ◇ Almanac proposal developed in 2006  
| | ◇ Strategy & Stewardship proposal developed 2007  |

**Key to Symbols:**
- ✓ Complete
- ↑ Current activity to be enhanced
- ➞ In progress or development
- ◇ New activity to be initiated
## Collaborating for a Healthy Ecoregion

### Greening the Future in Southwestern Ontario

#### Timeline for Carolinian Canada Coalition Strategic Plan 2007 – 2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>1 2007-8</th>
<th>2 2007-9</th>
<th>3 2009-10</th>
<th>4 2010-11</th>
<th>5 2011-12</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Building a Viable Coalition</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Board Capacity</td>
<td>• First Elections</td>
<td>• Increased Board Recruitment</td>
<td>• Board Manual</td>
<td>• Update as needed</td>
<td>• Policy development</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Annual Workshops</td>
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<tr>
<td>Budget Growth</td>
<td>• Strategic Plan</td>
<td>• Hire fundraiser to implement strategy</td>
<td>• Fundraising Plan</td>
<td>• Fundraising Committee</td>
<td>• Charitable status</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Policy development</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Business Plan</td>
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<td><strong>Networking for Ecoregional Sustainability &amp; Stewardship</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Environment &amp; Sustainability Forum</td>
<td>• Climate Change</td>
<td>• Protected Areas</td>
<td>• Develop partnerships</td>
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<tr>
<td>Growing Network</td>
<td>• Newsletter</td>
<td>• User Survey</td>
<td>• Regular Communications</td>
<td>• Listserve</td>
<td>• Membership Drive</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Listserve</td>
<td>• Membership Drive</td>
<td>• Multi-media</td>
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<td>• Upgrade Website</td>
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<td><strong>Promoting a Researched Understanding</strong></td>
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<td>Big Picture Monitoring</td>
<td>• Monitoring committee</td>
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<td>• Pilot Project – Big Picture Report Card</td>
<td>• Expand &amp; Evaluate</td>
<td>• Big Picture Network</td>
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<td>• Big Picture Network</td>
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<td>Woodland Recovery</td>
<td>• Community Strategy</td>
<td>• Community Hotspot Plans</td>
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<td>• Woodland Network</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Woodland Network</td>
<td>• Landowner SAR Plans</td>
<td>• Stewardship Guides / Tracking Success</td>
<td>• Evaluate</td>
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<td>Carolinian Research Network</td>
<td>• Student Research Program pilot</td>
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<td>• Expand program</td>
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<td>• Research Centre</td>
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<td><strong>Catalyzing Effective Action</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Innovative Partnerships</td>
<td>• Roadshow</td>
<td>• Develop joint BMPs</td>
<td>• Develop joint BMPs</td>
<td>• Evaluate</td>
<td>• Develop partnerships</td>
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<td>• Review critical issues – link to forum</td>
<td>• Promote – link to almanac</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Social Marketing Strategy</td>
<td>• Stewardship Centres of Excellence</td>
<td>• Biodiversity Culture Project</td>
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<td>• Landowner Links – Caring for Nature Factsheets</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Landowner Leaders</td>
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<td>• Major Book</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Landscape Guide</td>
<td>• Pilot Almanac – link to target audiences</td>
<td>• Evaluate</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Annual Conservation Awards</td>
<td>• On-going Media Strategy</td>
<td>• Complete Natural Heritage Plaques for Signature Sites</td>
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