



**Wabash River Defenders**  
73 West Canal Street  
PO Box 2  
Wabash, IN 46992  
260-563-6726 / [WabashRiverDefenders.org](http://WabashRiverDefenders.org)

## **Wabash River Defenders Strategic Plan 2015-2025**

### **Meet the Wabash River Defenders**

The Wabash River Defenders organized in 2010 with the purpose of improving the aesthetic and ecological conditions within the Wabash River in Wabash County. These efforts focused initially on river clean up events and have since blossomed to include adult and youth-based education and outreach, habitat restoration, trail and campsite improvement and community engagement.

### **Our Mission Statement**

The Wabash River Defenders improve, protect and preserve the Wabash River.

### **Our Vision Statement**

The Wabash River Defenders envision an educated and informed public focused on improved Wabash River water quality and the diverse wildlife and abundant recreational opportunities that the Wabash River provides.

### **Our Accomplishments**

The Wabash River Defenders celebrates a variety of successes:

- Engagement of 300+ volunteers working annually to improve aesthetic and environmental conditions within the Wabash River.
- Removal of more than 124,000 pounds of tires, scrap steel, construction materials and other materials through three river clean-out events.
- Worked with Wabash County to pass trash dumping ordinance.
- Posting of signage aimed at reducing public dumping in the Wabash River and its tributaries within Wabash County.
- Creation of a new publicly-accessible campsite within the City of Wabash along the Wabash River Trail.
- Cultivation of the Wabash River Defenders speaker's bureau which highlights opportunities for individuals to engage with the Wabash River.
- Creation and development of the Wabash River Junior Defenders.
- Recognized by the Attorney General Greg Zoeller for efforts to clean out the Wabash River as part of the 2013 Year of the River Celebration; and photographed by Outdoor Indiana as part of their efforts to document efforts on behalf of the Wabash River and their "We all live downstream" July/August 2013 article.



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**Our Goals**

Our five goals will create a solid structure upon which we can move the Wabash River Defenders and our programs forward. We aim to build a solid structure, then use that structure to engage a diverse membership and cultivate members and volunteers to implement a diverse program which supports our mission and vision.

- Goal 1: Build an internal structure for the Wabash River Defenders.
- Goal 2: Develop a cohesive funding program.
- Goal 3: Create and coordinate a cohesive membership program.
- Goal 4: Create and coordinate a robust volunteer program.
- Goal 5: Develop programs and projects that will improve the environmental and aesthetic conditions of the Wabash River.

**Goal Development**

To achieve our mission, we created an ambitious series of strategies. These strategies are designated in the tables below as follows:

|           |            |           |
|-----------|------------|-----------|
| Immediate | Year 1     | 2015-2016 |
| Priority  | Years 1-5  | 2015-2020 |
| Long-Term | Years 5-10 | 2020-2025 |

**Our Strategies**

| <b>Goals and Strategies</b>   | <b>Timeframe</b> |
|---|------------------|
| <b>Goal 1: Build an internal structure for the Wabash River Defenders.</b>                                |                  |
| Complete incorporation of the Wabash River Defenders.   | Immediate        |
| Complete application for 501(c)3 status.  | Immediate        |
| Identify a functioning board of directors and develop a board training program.                           | Immediate        |
| Complete and begin implementation of a strategic plan.  | Immediate        |
| Develop Wabash River Defenders by-laws.   | Immediate        |
| Identify program coordinators and technical and professional advisors.                                    | Immediate        |
| Develop a traditional and social marketing program to increase the Wabash River Defenders public profile. | Priority         |
| Identify and establish a funding mechanism and complete hiring of an executive director.                  | Priority         |



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|   |           |
|---|-----------|
| <b>Goal 2: Develop a cohesive funding program.</b>  |           |
| Identify key partners and meet with each of them individually to introduce the Wabash River Defenders and identify and develop partnership and funding opportunities.   | Immediate |
| Determine the need for a development committee, and if needed, identify members, develop a work plan and launch the development committee.  | Priority  |
| Create a fundraising plan to secure sustainable funding for operations and programs. Funding options should include a mix of grants, donations, sponsorship, membership and events.   | Priority  |
| Implement fundraising plan.   | Long-term |
| <b>Goal 3: Create and coordinate a cohesive membership program.</b>   |           |
| Determine if membership is a good option for providing sustainable funding, and if so, identify a membership structure.   | Immediate |
| Identify membership development committee members, request their participation, develop a work plan and launch the membership program.  | Priority  |
| Develop a membership marketing program.   | Priority  |
| Develop clear engagement, enrichment and participation activities and engage membership in regularly scheduled events.  | Priority  |
| Generate a list of all potential partner organizations and entities, and then develop a plan to meet with each entity individually about the Wabash River Defenders, our programs and membership options.                                     | Long-term |
| <b>Goal 4: Create and coordinate a robust volunteer program.</b>  |           |
| Identify members to serve on a volunteer development committee, request their participation, develop and launch the volunteer program.  | Priority  |
| Identify volunteer opportunities across all seasons and promote these options to volunteers.  | Long-term |
| <b>Goal 5: Develop programs and projects that will improve the environmental and aesthetic conditions of the Wabash River. Programs fit within four main categories: Water quality, habitat, education and recreation/regional marketing.</b> |           |
| Identify an individual or committee to lead each program area.  | Priority  |
| Identify potential partner organizations and develop methods for collaboration and cross promotion of programs.   | Long-term |



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**Our Program Areas**

| <b>Program Strategies</b>   | <b>Timeframe</b> |
|---|------------------|
| <b>Water Quality</b>  |                  |
| Continue to cultivate the relationship with Southwood Elementary and High Schools and the development of water quality improvement and education and outreach projects along Treaty Creek.  | Immediate        |
| Develop a watershed management plan for the Treaty Creek-Wabash River Watershed.  | Priority         |
| Identify potential partner organizations and develop methods for collaborating and cross promoting water quality based projects.  | Priority         |
| Initiate and implement a water testing and analysis program including a mix of volunteer and professional opportunities.  | Priority         |
| Identify the need for agricultural and urban best management practice (BMPs) implementation, establish a funding mechanism and develop a plan for implementing BMPs.  | Long-term        |
| Identify additional watershed planning areas within Wabash County that have not been addressed through other planning projects.   | Long-term        |
| <b>Habitat</b>  |                  |
| Identify habitat improvement needs and prioritize this list. Projects could include installation of wood duck boxes, placement of bird houses along trails and walkways, creation of wildlife sanctuary and bioengineering or bank stabilization. | Immediate        |
| Establish a rotating clean-out event schedule for the Wabash River, Salamonie River and other tributaries, then implement this schedule.  | Priority         |
| <b>Education</b>  |                  |
| Identify mechanisms to engage the Wabash River Junior Defenders in education and outreach programs and events.  | Immediate        |
| Work with the Wabash River Junior Defenders to allow them to act as spokespeople for the Wabash River and the Wabash River Defenders.   | Priority         |
| Establish an annual celebration of the Wabash River Defenders and develop this event.   | Priority         |
| Develop educational programming, which may include the following: storm drain stenciling, septic tank maintenance, fishing contests, educational signage, demonstration project implementation and photography and art contests.                  | Long-term        |
| <b>Recreation and Regional Development</b>  |                  |
| Establish a regular float trip schedule to connect the local community and the Wabash River Defenders to the Wabash River.  | Priority         |
| Continue to maintain existing campsite and further develop camping opportunities along the Wabash River.  | Long-term        |
| Assist with development of a county-wide riverwalk and establish additional programming focused in this area.   | Long-term        |
| Establish additional canoe and kayak access points.   | Long-term        |



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**Future Committees**

Potential committees identified as part of the strategic planning process include: development, membership, volunteer coordination, water quality programming, habitat programming, education programming, and recreation and regional development programming. While these committees have not yet been established, if and when the executive committee determines that a specific committee should be established, the executive committee will enact the following procedure:

- Hold an official vote of the executive committee to establish the committee.
- Appoint a committee chair and no less than three committee members.
- Require each committee to create a plan of work, which will include committee tasks, responsible party and target completion timeline. The executive committee will review the committee’s plan of work within two months of committee creation.
- Annually, the executive committee will review the committee’s work plan and progress and allocate a budget towards their efforts.

**Our Outlook**

Our leadership believes the following will occur in the next five years:

- The Wabash River Defenders will develop a strong base on which our programs will be founded.
- The Wabash River Defenders will be financially viable.
- The Wabash River Defenders will develop and solidify mutually supportive and beneficial relationships with community partners and volunteers.
- The Wabash River Defenders will develop a solid membership foundation.
- The Wabash River Defenders will improve community participation and engagement, environmental and habitat quality and social awareness.

**Sustainable Funding**

In order for the Wabash River Defenders to successfully implement our strategic plan, we need to develop a diverse long-term funding strategy. The following serves as a basis for areas in which our funding program should focus. Once established, the development committee will develop their funding plan using these options as a basis.

| Grants   |                        |
|--|------------------------|
| Continue to cultivate IDEM and IDNR funding opportunities through the Section 319 and Lake and River Enhancement programs.   | Immediate              |
| Identify potential natural resources funding options such as DNR Community Forestry Grants, Land and Water Conservation Funds, Forest Management Grants and the Recreational Trails Program.   | Priority               |
| Identify potential education and outreach funding options such as those that focus on K-12 and adult education. Edutopia maintains a list of these grants and their due dates at <a href="http://www.edutopia.org/grants-and-resources">http://www.edutopia.org/grants-and-resources</a> . | Priority               |
| Cultivate relationships with the Ball Foundation, Nina Mason Pulliam Trust and others as sources of operational funds.   | Priority/<br>Long-term |
| Investigate national funding options such as those managed through the National Fish and Wildlife Federation, USEPA and others   | Long-term              |



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|  |           |
|--|-----------|
| <b>Donations</b>   |           |
| Establish an annual giving program.  | Priority  |
| Establish a planned giving program.  | Long-term |
| Establish a capital giving program.  | Long-term |
| <b>Sponsorship</b>   |           |
| Develop a sponsorship structure for the Wabash River Defenders. This structure should include membership, event or general support sponsorships and should identify benefits associated with each sponsorship level. | Priority  |
| <b>Membership</b>  |           |
| Contact regional River Network staff to access their membership program development resources.   | Priority  |
| Review membership structures of Indiana environmental-based nonprofits such as Acres Land Trust, Tippecanoe Watershed Foundation, White River Alliance, Save the Dunes and others.                                   | Priority  |
| <b>Events</b>  |           |
| Develop an annual event that celebrates the successes of the Wabash River Defenders, reports the programs progress and highlights volunteer and member achievements.   | Long-term |

**Plan Implementation**

Plan implementation requires continued cultivation of the Wabash River Defenders board of directors and recruitment to and creation of several committees that will work cohesively to move forward. The Wabash River Defenders Steering Committee will revisit this plan annually during the fourth quarter to review project successes, set committee structure, create budget allocations and provide direction to the membership, volunteers and partners.



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**Work Plan in Timeline Basis**

| Immediate Tasks   |             |
|---|-------------|
| Task  | Assigned To |
| Complete incorporation of the Wabash River Defenders.   |             |
| Complete application for 501(c)3 status.  |             |
| Identify a functioning board of directors and develop a board training program.   |             |
| Complete and begin implementation of a strategic plan.  |             |
| Develop Wabash River Defenders by-laws.   |             |
| Identify program coordinators and technical and professional advisors.  |             |
| Identify key partners and meet with each of them individually to introduce the Wabash River Defenders and identify and develop partnership and funding opportunities.   |             |
| Determine if membership is a good option for providing sustainable funding, and if so, identify a membership structure.   |             |
| Continue to cultivate the relationship with Southwood Elementary and High Schools and the development of water quality improvement and education and outreach projects along Treaty Creek.  |             |
| Identify habitat improvement needs and prioritize this list. Projects could include installation of wood duck boxes, placement of bird houses along trails and walkways, creation of wildlife sanctuary and bioengineering or bank stabilization. |             |
| Identify mechanisms to engage the Wabash River Junior Defenders in education and outreach programs and events.  |             |



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| Priority Tasks  |             |
|---|-------------|
| Task  | Assigned To |
| Identify and establish a funding mechanism and complete hiring of an executive director.  |             |
| Determine the need for a development committee, and if needed, identify members, develop a work plan and launch the development committee.  |             |
| Create a fundraising plan to secure sustainable funding for operations and programs. Funding options should include a mix of grants, donations, sponsorship, membership and events. |             |
| Identify membership development committee members, request their participation, develop a work plan and launch the membership program.  |             |
| Develop a membership marketing program.   |             |
| Develop clear engagement, enrichment and participation activities and engage membership in regularly scheduled events.  |             |
| Identify members to serve on a volunteer development committee, request their participation, develop and launch the volunteer program.  |             |
| Identify an individual or committee to lead each program area.  |             |
| Develop a traditional and social marketing program to increase the Wabash River Defenders public profile.   |             |
| Develop a watershed management plan for the Treaty Creek-Wabash River Watershed.  |             |
| Identify potential partner organizations and develop methods for collaborating and cross promoting water quality based projects.  |             |
| Initiate and implement a water testing and analysis program including a mix of volunteer and professional opportunities.  |             |
| Establish a rotating clean-out event schedule for the Wabash River, Salamonie River and other tributaries, then implement this schedule.  |             |
| Work with the Wabash River Junior Defenders to allow them to act as spokespeople for the Wabash River and the Wabash River Defenders.   |             |
| Establish a regular float trip schedule to connect the local community and the Wabash River Defenders to the Wabash River.  |             |
| Establish an annual celebration of the Wabash River Defenders and develop this event.   |             |



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| Long-Term Tasks  |             |
|--|-------------|
| Task   | Assigned To |
| Implement fundraising plan.  |             |
| Generate a list of all potential partner organizations and entities, and then develop a plan to meet with each entity individually about the Wabash River Defenders, our programs and membership options.                        |             |
| Identify volunteer opportunities across all seasons and promote these options to volunteers.   |             |
| Identify potential partner organizations and develop methods for collaboration and cross promotion of programs.  |             |
| Identify the need for agricultural and urban best management practice (BMPs) implementation, establish a funding mechanism and develop a plan for implementing BMPs.   |             |
| Identify additional watershed planning areas within Wabash County that have not been addressed through other planning projects.  |             |
| Develop educational programming, which may include the following: storm drain stenciling, septic tank maintenance, fishing contests, educational signage, demonstration project implementation and photography and art contests. |             |
| Continue to maintain existing campsite and further develop camping opportunities along the Wabash River.   |             |
| Assist with development of a county-wide riverwalk and establish additional programming focused in this area.  |             |
| Establish additional canoe and kayak access points.  |             |

**Approval date:** 8 January 2016