Wisconsin’s Plan
For Environmentally Literate & Sustainable Communities
# Table of Contents

Foreword ................................................................. i
Contributors ............................................................. vii
Acknowledgments ....................................................... ix
Introduction ............................................................. 1

  Related Statewide Efforts ........................................... 2
  Benefits of a State Plan ............................................. 2
  How to Use The Plan ................................................ 3
  At Home, Work, School, and Play .................................. 4

Executive Summary .................................................... 7

Goal 1 ........................................................................... 8

Goal 2 ........................................................................... 10

Goal 3 ........................................................................... 12

Goal 4 ........................................................................... 14

Goal 5 ........................................................................... 16

History and Context ................................................... 18

  Plan Development History ........................................... 19
The Wisconsin Environmental Education Board (WEEB) has enthusiastically adopted and supports the implementation of Wisconsin’s Plan for Environmental Literacy and Sustainable Communities. This plan is the latest in a long line of environmental education initiatives in the state. Beginning with the Conservation Movement in the late 1800s and early 1900s through the Environmental Movement in the 1960s and 70s and on to today, residents of Wisconsin have played a key role in shaping the knowledge, skills, and attitudes of individuals, groups, and organizations with respect to environmental issues at the national, regional, and local levels. As a new century has just begun, this plan provides a pathway for all of us to build upon this prior work and move forward in developing an environmentally literate society comprised of sustainable communities.

The goals of this plan are broad and far-reaching and will only be attained through the efforts of a variety of individuals and organizations. Overall, this plan looks to build awareness and capacity, promote access to information and experiences, identify strategies, foster research, and assess progress. While the WEEB, along with the Wisconsin Environmental Education Foundation and the Wisconsin Association for Environmental Education, intend to support and help implement this plan, as you read through this document, you will undoubtedly find ways to contribute and collaborate with others. We encourage you to do so. Wisconsin’s Plan for Environmentally Literate and Sustainable Communities is a plan for all residents of Wisconsin, thus all of us need to play an active role in making certain the goals are met, and hopefully exceeded.

We face many challenges; challenges that are too large and too complex for any one organization or group to solve. Only by collectively bringing all resources together can we ensure that we not only meet the goals described in this document, but that we provide our children and our children’s children an example of how to identify an issue, investigate it carefully, and take action in a responsible manner.

Sincerely,

Scott Ashmann, Chair
Wisconsin Environmental Education Board

Janet Brandt, Chair
Wisconsin Environmental Education Foundation

Karla Lockman, Chair
Wisconsin Association for Environmental Education
Contributors

Wisconsin’s Plan for Environmentally Literate and Sustainable Communities was developed through the efforts of many organizations, agencies and contributors. Throughout the development process, significant effort was made to include a diversity of sectors and Wisconsin communities in producing the end result you see here. This is, therefore, a document created by and for all people in Wisconsin. While project steering and guidance was sustained by a Managerial Committee, the bulk of the inspiration and input for this document was devised by a diverse Advisory Team representing numerous Wisconsin communities.

Sectors Represented

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sector</th>
<th>Sector</th>
<th>Sector</th>
<th>Sector</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>Education (PK-12)</td>
<td>Faith</td>
<td>Media/Communications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Architecture/Building</td>
<td>Endangered Resources</td>
<td>Families</td>
<td>Sustainability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>Foundations</td>
<td>Technical Colleges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commerce</td>
<td>Environment</td>
<td>Government</td>
<td>Tourism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservation</td>
<td>Env. Education</td>
<td>Human Resources</td>
<td>Tribes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early Learning</td>
<td>Forestry</td>
<td>Latino</td>
<td>Youth Groups</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Advisory Team

Bobbi Aguero, Loyola Academy/Council for the Spanish Speaking, Inc.
John Anderson, Mid-State Technical College
Peter Bakken, Wisconsin Council of Churches
Marta Bechtol, Education Communications Board
Corry Joe Biddle, Metro Milwaukee Association of Commerce
Sunshine Buchholz, Wisconsin Center for Environmental Education
Dan Collins, Wisconsin League of Conservation Voters
Eric Crawford, GreenMan Alliance
Kathe Crowley Conn, Wisconsin Environmental Education Board/Aldo Leopold Nature Center/Nature Net
John Fojut, Kohl's Department Stores
Sherri Gruder, Wisconsin Green Building Alliance
Jeff Hicken, Department of Public Instruction
Brian Jackson, Wisconsin Indian Education Association
Amy Lou Jenkins, Author: Every Natural Fact
Rebecca Katzenmeyer, Montessori Schools
Charlie Luthin, Wisconsin Natural Resources Foundation
Gretchen Marshall, Wisconsin Center for Environmental Education—Wisconsin K-12 Forestry Education Program (LEAF)
Diane Mayerfeld, Center for Integrated Agricultural Systems, UW Extension & SARE Program
Jim McGrath, Green Schools National Network/Green Charter Schools Network
Gretchen Mead, Victory Garden Initiative
Representative Louis Molepske, Wisconsin State Assembly
Elisabeth Olson, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources—Green & Healthy Schools
Chris Protz, Camp Whitcomb-Mason/Boys & Girls Club
Wayne Reckard, The Kubala Washatko Architects
Craig Schlender, Pheasants Forever/Great Wolf Lodge
Rebecca Schroeder, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources—Endangered Species
Gerry Slater, Wisconsin Nature Action Collaborative for Children
Joel Taylor, Sustainable Forestry Initiative/NewPage Corporation
Cathy Techtmann, Northern Great Lakes Visitor Center
Mike Walters, Affiliated Engineers, Inc.
Angela Watry, Hydrite Chemical Co.
Daithi Wolfe, Wisconsin Council on Children & Families
Advisory Forum Facilitator: Ralph Schwartz, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources

Managerial Committee
Beth Fetterley Heller, Urban Ecology Center
Jesse Haney, Wisconsin Environmental Education Foundation
Deb McRae, Wisconsin Environmental Education Board/Wehr Nature Center/UW-Extension
Betsy Parker, Plan Coordinator/Wisconsin Association for Environmental Education
Victoria Rydberg, Department of Public Instruction
Susan Schuller, Wisconsin Center for Environmental Education/Education for Sustainability

Past Managerial Committee Members
Elaine Andrews, UW-Madison Environmental Resources Center
Kathe Crowley Conn, Wisconsin Environmental Education Board/Aldo Leopold Nature Center/Nature Net
Jessica Jens, 4H/Upham Woods
Carrie Morgan, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
Sonya Newenhouse, Madison Environmental Group
Jeremy Solin, Wisconsin Center for Environmental Education—Wisconsin K-12 Forestry Education Program (LEAF)
Acknowledgments

The following people provided help and support in many ways: by writing and reviewing drafts; by sharing materials; and by providing feedback and encouragement.

Janet Brandt, Wisconsin Environmental Education Foundation
Abbie Enland, Wisconsin Association for Environmental Education/Aldo Leopold Nature Center
Ginny Carlton, Wisconsin Environmental Education Board
Keith Holt, Milwaukee Bicycle Works
Carol Howard, Nature in the Parks
Sherry Klosiewski, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources—State Parks
Dolly Ledin, University of Wisconsin Center for Biology Education
Karla Lockman, Stevens Point Area High School/Wisconsin Association for Environmental Education
Kirsten Moore, Wisconsin Land and Water Conservation Association/Canon Envirotthon Board of Directors
Carolyn Rock, Wisconsin State Parks
Dr. Garry Running, UW-Eau Claire Department of Geography & Anthropology
Jeff Su, Myrick Hixon Eco Park
Tara Von Dollen, Aldo Leopold Nature Center
Rick Wilke, UW-Stevens Point College of Natural Resources/Environmental Education Training and Partnership
Wisconsin Environmental Education Board members: 2009-11
Wisconsin Environmental Education Foundation board members: 2010-11
Wisconsin Association for Environmental Education board members: 2010-11

Special thanks to Minnesota Pollution Control Agency and A GreenPrint for Minnesota: State plan for environmental education, third edition for inspiration and guidance.

Financial Contributors

Wisconsin Environmental Education Foundation (WEEF)
Wisconsin Environmental Education Board (WEEB)
UW-Madison Environmental Resources Center (UW-ERC)
Wisconsin Association for Environmental Education (WAEE)

Copyrighted Materials

Every effort has been made to ascertain proper ownership or copyrighted materials and to obtain permission for this use. Any omission is unintentional.
Introduction

Wisconsin's Plan for Environmentally Literate and Sustainable Communities

Wisconsin's Plan for Environmentally Literate and Sustainable Communities (referred to in this document as the “Plan”) serves as a strategic plan for achieving the vision of environmentally literate and sustainable communities across Wisconsin. The Plan is meant to build capacity, awareness, and support for environmental literacy and sustainability at home, work, school, and play. It encourages funding, research, and education for environmental literacy and sustainability and it supports Wisconsin's Plan to Advance Education for Environmental Literacy and Sustainability in PK-12 Schools.

This Plan was developed through input from diverse representatives from around the state, all of whom—like many before them—are attentive to the health and well-being of Wisconsin's people, the stewardship of our natural resources, the sustainability of our communities, and to leaving a positive legacy for the future. Wisconsin people value the state's natural resources and the functions these resources serve at home, work, school, and play. This commitment to protecting and conserving valued resources can and does lead to sustainable communities that enjoy a healthy environment, a prosperous economy, and a vibrant civic life. The purpose of this Plan, therefore, is to provide a roadmap, a course of action, individuals, organizations, businesses and governments must take to attain environmental literacy and sustainable communities. By providing a shared vision, mission, and goals, encouraging the use of common language, and promoting collaborative efforts, the Plan offers the opportunity for extraordinary impact and change.

The Wisconsin Environmental Education Board (WEEB) is charged with leadership for environmental education for all people in the state and is required to develop a strategic plan every ten years. This Plan was born from that demand. WEEB's previous strategic plan, A Plan for Advancing Environmental Education in Wisconsin: EE2010, had seven goals that were based on the central purposes of providing positive leadership; developing local leaders; developing and implementing curricula; and furthering professional development. An

Environmental Literacy

Possessing knowledge about the environment and issues related to it; capable of, and inclined to, further self-directed environmental learning and/or action.

Environmental literacy consists of four essential aspects:

- developing inquiry, investigative, and analysis skills;
- acquiring knowledge of environmental processes and human systems;
- developing skills for understanding and addressing environmental issues;
- practicing personal and civic responsibility for environmental decisions.

(North American Association for Environmental Education)
assessment provided insight into this plan’s successes and what remains to be done. Major successes include:

- The creation of a website, EEinWisconsin.org, which acts as a tool for statewide communication and a clearinghouse for both formal and non-formal environmental education in Wisconsin.
- The WEEB’s use of the goals in its grants program.
- The initiation of research in environmental literacy and sustainability.
- The establishment of Wisconsin Environmental Education Foundation, which is leading the way toward more sustainable funding for environmental education.

The assessment found more work needs to be done to support and enhance non-formal and non-traditional environmental education. The Plan addresses this need and sets new goals.

**Collaboration with Other Efforts**

*Wisconsin’s Plan for Environmentally Literate and Sustainable Communities* considers educational needs and responses for the whole community and supports sustainable practices at home, work, school, and play. The Plan is coordinated with and supported by two additional statewide efforts to advance the implementation of the Plan’s goals and the integration of sustainability. They are:

- *Wisconsin’s Plan to Advance Education for Environmental Literacy and Sustainability in PK-12 Schools* addresses multiple aspects related directly to pre-kindergarten through high school student learning to ensure every student graduates environmentally literate. (NCLIwisconsin.org)

- *Cultivating Education for Sustainability in Wisconsin* builds capacity and support for schools and communities to focus student learning on sustainability. It provides recommendations for resources and services to implement education for sustainability in schools. (www.uwsp.edu/wcee/efs)

**Benefits of a State Plan**

- Provide a common vision and set of goals for people in Wisconsin to work toward.
- Guide decision-making, policy making and priority setting.
- Serve as justification for and purpose behind creating or continuing programs, tools and resources.
- Set priorities for development and delivery of educational programs, business plans, and community efforts.
- Rationale and guidance for funding and research efforts.
How to Use the Plan

*Wisconsin’s Plan for Environmentally Literate and Sustainable Communities* is not an organization, but rather a document that serves as the state strategic plan requiring partnerships and collaboration. It is designed to serve as reference material for individuals, businesses, and communities. Those who influence environmental literacy and sustainability in Wisconsin such as community leaders, traditional and non-formal educators and administrators, resources developers and providers, policy makers, funders and researchers will find the *Plan* useful as a guide in setting priorities and making decisions. Over the course of the next decade, the *Plan’s* desired outcomes will be central to environmental literacy and sustainability efforts across the state. As Wisconsin people work toward achieving the four main outcomes of the *Plan*, this document can help guide attitudes, planning, actions, and endeavors.

Several statewide organizations are committed to providing leadership for the *Plan*. The Wisconsin Environmental Education Board (WEEB), as the state’s sanctioned consensus-building authority for environmental education, has already provided the vision for the *Plan* and aims to further support the implementation and evaluation of the *Plan*. The Wisconsin Association for Environmental Education (WAEE), the state’s non-profit professional organization of environmental educators, will put many aspects of the *Plan* into effect by supporting and training educators, administrators and others who play a direct role in implementing the *Plan’s* action ideas. The Wisconsin Environmental Education Foundation (WEEF) is pledged to facilitating the fundraising needed to meet the *Plan’s* goals. While these agencies provide leadership for the *Plan*, ultimately, the *Plan* goals can only be accomplished with the participation and contribution of diverse individuals, organizations, businesses, governments and sectors throughout Wisconsin. In short, the *Plan’s* success depends on a collaborative effort by all people in Wisconsin.

Each goal listed in this document includes a rationale, objectives, and sample action items that may lead to achieving the final goal. Although great effort was made to include a variety of action ideas suitable to many sectors in Wisconsin, the “sample action items” listed are intended to serve as examples. Similarly, where specific organizations are mentioned, those references are intended to serve as sample organizations or groups. Any lists of organizations in the “sample action ideas” section are not intended to be all-inclusive.

**Outcomes of Successful Implementation**

- All people in Wisconsin use sustainable practices at home, work, school and play.
- All people in Wisconsin have access to clean and sustainable natural resources.
- All people in Wisconsin have access to quality outdoor experiences.
- All people in Wisconsin have opportunities to learn about the natural world and their place in or connections to it.
At Home, Work, School, and Play

Opportunities for Wisconsin residents to become environmentally literate and implement sustainable practices are everywhere. There are four locations where we commonly gain our knowledge, skills, and attitudes: home, work, school, and play. From lifestyle choices we make as family units and the health and welfare of employees, to hands-on learning in schools and outdoor recreation, providing knowledge and effecting change that advances environmental literacy and sustainability can be a part of everyone's life. Our knowledge, attitudes, skills, and actions in each location can ensure the health of our communities and natural resources. While the Plan is a goal-based plan, special attention is paid to the places where people learn and make choices. Below are the four locations with suggestions for action.

At Home

Today, there are many opportunities to strengthen environmental literacy in the home setting. This location includes families, consumers, and faith based groups. In the home setting, people can access information when making decisions as a family unit and they can make wise consumer-choices when exercising purchasing power. Choices made in the home include buying goods and services that are affordable, economically and socially responsible, and environmentally friendly. Faith communities can provide a supportive community that sustains people in their attitudes and actions towards environmental literacy and sustainability.

The Plan outlines suggestions for creating resources, designing programs, and serving Wisconsin residents in the home. The following considerations should be made when providing education for environmental literacy and sustainability for those in the home setting:

• A broad definition of what constitutes a family should be used.
• Providing guidance and education in the home can help families make socially responsible and environmentally friendly lifestyle choices, can assist in creating wise consumers, and can support faith communities with moral and ethical considerations.
• Multi-generational programs and sensitivity to cultural diversity can offer many rich opportunities for furthering environmental literacy and sustainability.
• Careful planning should be used to develop projects and programs that can be shared and worked on over longer periods of time (longer than what is attainable in other educational settings).

Sustainable Communities

A sustainable community can persist over generations, enjoying a healthy environment, prosperous economy and vibrant civic life. It does not undermine its social or physical systems of support. Rather, it develops in harmony with the ecological patterns it thrives in. (Minnesota Pollution Control Agency)
At Work

Developing a greater sense of the importance and impacts of environmental literacy and sustainability in the workplace can not only shift attitudes and actions but also increase productivity, efficiency, and profitability. Workplace settings include business communities, landowners and producers, the media, and governmental units and organizations of all levels.

Often, the best way to achieve business success and impact the business community is through networks that supply or support guidance for environmental literacy and sustainable practices. If this guidance is to be useful and relevant it must consider the mission of the organization or business, provide information that relates to the success of the business, and take into account the needs and goals of future generation employers and employees. Conceivably, shifts toward sustainability in the workplace should also positively affect the health, safety, and welfare of employees and employers.

The Plan objectives address ways businesses, producers, governments and the media can effect change in their communities. The following considerations should be taken into account when striving for environmental literacy and sustainability in the workplace:

- Workplace programming should maintain sensitivity to economic conditions.
- Best practices within a business or industry should be recognized, shared, and replicated.
- Relationships between businesses and their local communities should be created and/or strengthened.

At School

Integrating education for environmental literacy and sustainability across all disciplines and at all age-levels should not only help learners gain necessary knowledge and skills related to natural resource use, but also make learning experiences more fulfilling and relevant to the world around us. Whereas Wisconsin's Plan to Advance Education for Environmental Literacy and Sustainability in PK-12 Schools focuses on the traditional school setting, this Plan includes not only pre-kindergarten through high school students, but also formal and non-formal teachers and administrators, students and faculty at institutes of higher education, homeschool communities, and early childhood education and care.

The Plan suggests ways educators and administrators can affect education in our schools and learning communities and proposes ways in which the greater community can help educational programs foster environmental education.

Environmental Education

Environmental education is a lifelong learning process that leads to an informed and involved citizenry having the creative problem-solving skills, scientific and social literacy, ethical awareness and sensitivity for the relationship between humans and the environment, and commitment to engage in responsible individual and cooperative actions. By these actions, environmentally literate citizens will help ensure an ecologically and economically sustainable environment. (WEEB)
Education for Sustainability (EfS) provides people with the knowledge, skills, ways of thinking, and opportunities to promote a healthy and livable world. It is a holistic and systems-based approach to teaching and learning that integrates social justice, economics, and environmental literacy. The ultimate outcome of EfS is to sustain both human and natural communities. 

(WCEE)

Education programs, projects and experiences for environmental literacy and sustainability should consider the following:

- Education for environmental literacy and sustainability should be integrated into the existing curriculum, including traditional and non-traditional disciplines.
- Programming should be relevant to the educational and developmental levels of all students and inclusive of all learners.
- In-school instruction and guidance can and should support academic achievement in all subject areas.
- Environmental and sustainability education opportunities should be made available for formal and non-formal teacher training at all levels and in all subjects.

At Play

Connecting Wisconsin residents to their community and local environment through play or recreation can help build sustainable and safe communities. Traditionally, building an appreciation of nature and a conservation ethic for hunting and fishing was a focus at the play location. These components should be maintained but also supplemented by a broader vision of connecting play and sustainability. Involving residents in their community through outdoor activities and civic engagement, as considered with this location of “play”, should not be perceived as merely extracurricular, but rather as a critical component to achieving environmental literacy and sustainability.

The Plan provides suggestions that help establish safe and healthy communities where residents can be active, engaged, and involved. When programs, resources, and projects are created at play, the following considerations should be made:

- Educational opportunities at play should include methods like service learning or community-based programming that builds relevancy and meaning to the learning experience.
- Programs should be accessible to everyone while including elements that are customized for diverse age groups and cultures.
- Recreational outdoor public spaces should be safe, welcoming, accessible, and promote awareness of environmental literacy and sustainability.
- Events, programs and learning activities should promote healthy lifestyles and recognize and promote opportunities for synergy between play, health, and sustainability.
- Program providers should recognize the potential of unbuilt environments in urban and suburban areas for environmental literacy and play.
- Public learning opportunities should be offered by a variety of agencies, organizations and individuals, including (but not limited to) nature centers, parks, museums, residential learning centers, club centers, and zoos.
Executive Summary

Wisconsin’s Plan for Environmentally Literate and Sustainable Communities recognizes that Wisconsin’s rich environmental, cultural and economic heritage is based directly on the natural resources around us. The Plan acknowledges that in order to use, enjoy, and preserve these resources, individuals, organizations, businesses, and governments must have the knowledge, attitudes, and skills to ensure the health of our communities and natural resources. The Plan fills the need for a state strategic vision for environmental literacy and sustainability, and provides a shared set of goals for all people in all sectors of Wisconsin to work towards. It was developed by a diverse set of stakeholders and with the distinct aim to include numerous voices and perspectives in the process. From this inclusive process the following goals were established:

1. **Build awareness of environmental literacy and sustainable communities.**
   1.1 Develop and implement communication methods for diverse audiences.
   1.2 Identify and promote best practices and successes in environmental literacy and sustainability.
   1.3 Develop and strengthen the capacity of community leaders to communicate the value of environmental literacy and sustainable practices.

2. **Promote access to educational experiences needed to support environmental literacy and sustainable communities at home, work, school and play.**
   2.1 Help the formal education setting support education for environmental literacy and sustainability.
   2.2 Encourage education for environmental literacy and sustainability outside of the formal educational setting.

3. **Build the capacity of individuals, organizations, businesses, and governments to advance environmental literacy and sustainable communities.**
   3.1 Identify tools and resources that support environmental literacy and sustainable practices.
   3.2 Facilitate access to identified tools and resources.
   3.3 Facilitate innovative collaborations between diverse individuals, organizations, businesses, and governments.

4. **Promote research and assessment to identify strategies that advance environmental literacy and sustainable communities.**
   4.1 Assess Wisconsin’s progress toward environmental literacy and sustainable communities.
   4.2 Inventory and connect existing research.
   4.3 Identifying strategies for accomplishing identified research priorities.
   4.4 Conduct needed research related to environmental literacy and sustainable practices.
   4.5 Educate the public on research findings.

5. **Develop strategies to secure funding to achieve environmental literacy and sustainable communities.**
   5.1 Develop diverse strategies to secure funding to accomplish the Plan’s goals and objectives.
   5.2 Build the capacity of groups to obtain funding to educate for environmental literacy and sustainability.

**Vision:** Environmentally literate and sustainable communities

**Mission:** To provide opportunities for Wisconsin residents to become environmentally literate and implement sustainable practices at home, work, school and play.
Goal 1: Build awareness of environmental literacy and sustainable communities.

Objective 1.1 Develop and implement communication methods for diverse audiences.

Sample Action Ideas:

- Identify underserved audiences of environmental literacy and sustainability. Identify barriers and develop strategies to address the barriers. Characteristics of typically underserved audiences may include urban, rural, low-income, culturally and socioeconomically diverse.

- Develop key strategies for addressing audiences that are disengaged from environmental issues. Strategies may include (but are not limited to) community building, social networking and media, educating people on the impact of individual choices, or recognizing individuals, organizations, businesses, and governments for their actions.

- Promote environmental literacy and sustainability as a shared common value for individuals, organizations, businesses, and governments.

- Support marketing strategies that are community- and audience-based and develop a common understanding of environmental literacy and sustainability. Example strategies: using diverse, high profile individuals that can influence particular audiences (for example businesses, youth), using public service announcements and social networking or marketing, developing consumer guides, or highlighting best practices and new initiatives.

Objective 1.2 Identify and promote best practices and successes in environmental literacy and sustainability.

Sample Action Ideas:

- Share successes via statewide networks and online:
  - Highlight specific examples of Wisconsin individuals, organizations, businesses, and governments that have successfully implemented sustainable practices. Demonstrate how they and others in Wisconsin benefit from their successes.
  - Recognize businesses and organizations that use effective strategies to develop sustainable, local communities and that consider ecological and social performances in addition to financial performance, meeting or surpassing the “triple bottom line.”

Communication

Rationale: Goal one strives for effective communication to help increase environmental literacy in Wisconsin and make available resources that help communities become more sustainable. It endeavors to provide a communication plan that all stakeholders can use whether at home, school, work, or play.
- Acknowledge accomplishments of those who are designing holistic solutions to environmental and social issues at the community, regional or state level.
- Seek out successful models of networks and partnerships that transcend political boundaries (from, for example, other states or Native American Tribes) in order to foster policies and practices that support environmental literacy and sustainable communities.

Objective 1.3 Develop and strengthen the capacity of community leaders to communicate the value of environmental literacy and sustainable practices.

Sample Action Ideas:
- The following action ideas pertain to communicating the value and benefits of environmental literacy and sustainability.
- Help develop community leaders’ own understanding of the value of environmental literacy and sustainability so they can better communicate these values to those in their community.
- Support community leaders, especially those from sectors that are not traditionally associated with environmental education, in teaching individuals, organizations, businesses, and governments.
- Provide guidance to local individuals, organizations and businesses on ways to effectively communicate with government officials, boards and policy makers.
- Support the work of state agencies, such as UW Extension and the Department of Natural Resources, that are directly related to strengthening the capacity of community leaders.
- Help government officials and boards gain an understanding of the value and importance of environmentally literate and sustainable communities.
- Partner with the health community to encourage healthy, environmentally literate and sustainable life-style choices.
- Strengthen statewide memberships in organizations and associations, such as Wisconsin Association for Environmental Education, The Wisconsin Green Schools Network, and 4H, that directly further environmentally literate and sustainable communities.
Goal 2:  
*Promote access to educational experiences needed to support environmental literacy and sustainable communities at home, work, school, and play.*

**Education**

*Rationale:* The need to educate for environmental literacy and sustainability is important because it helps society understand and promote environmental stewardship, economic vitality, and healthy communities. Educational opportunities need to be available and accessible to everyone through both formal, school and non-formal, community-based sites.

**Objective 2.1 Help the formal education setting support education for environmental literacy and sustainability.**

**Sample Action Ideas:**

**School**

- Provide community support to schools by offering guidance, input, expertise and actions that will assist school systems in achieving the goals of *Wisconsin's Plan to Advance Education for Environmental Literacy and Sustainability in PK-12 Schools*. (See sidebar page 11.)
- Support the vision of advancing education for environmental literacy and sustainability through actions outside the scope of *Wisconsin's Plan to Advance Education for Environmental Literacy and Sustainability in PK-12 Schools*.
- Create and encourage partnerships between school districts and the community that support environmental literacy and sustainable practices.
- Advance education for environmental literacy and sustainability in early childhood learning centers and encourage an appreciation for nature in the very young.
- Advance education for environmental literacy and sustainability in institutions of higher education. Sample strategies: integrating environmental literacy and sustainability into non-environmental courses, instilling sustainability as a part of campus culture, connecting post-secondary students and faculty with pre-kindergarten through high school schools and other community efforts.
- Support statewide leadership positions that directly advance education for environmental literacy and sustainability.
Objective 2.2 Encourage education for environmental literacy and sustainability outside of the formal educational setting.

Sample Action Ideas:

- Encourage sectors that are not traditionally associated with environmental education to support or provide environmental and sustainability educational programming within their communities.
- Support non-formal educators in helping people of all ages develop a clear understanding of the value of environmentally literate and sustainable communities.
- Ensure non-formal educators have opportunities for enhanced preparation and ongoing professional development related to education for environmentally literate and sustainable communities.
- Foster education for environmental literacy and sustainability at home, work, school and play.

Home

- Promote environmentally literate and sustainable practices at home.
- Enhance school-based learning through family activities.
- Help faith communities provide information and foster community atmospheres that encourage environmental literacy and sustainability.

Work

- Partner businesses with schools in developing workers needed for a sustainable future.
- Develop environmental knowledge and sustainability skills relevant to the worksite.

School

- See Objective 2.1 and sidebar

Play

- Extend student learning through environmental and sustainability education during out-of-school experiences.
- Connect environmental knowledge and sustainable practices with recreational activities.
- Encourage community centers, civic organizations, and other community-based groups to incorporate environmental education programming into their offerings.
- Encourage children and families to get out and enjoy nature.
- Endorse policies that ensure children have access to outdoor experiences.

Wisconsin’s Plan to Advance Education for Environmental Literacy and Sustainability in PK-12 Schools goals embedded within 2.1:

Prepare students to understand, analyze, and address the major environmental and sustainability challenges facing Wisconsin, the United States, and the planet.

Provide field experiences as part of the regular school curriculum and create programs that contribute to healthy lifestyles through outdoor recreation and sound nutrition.

Create opportunities for enhanced preparation and ongoing professional development for teachers and school leaders by improving environmental and sustainability subject matter knowledge and pedagogical skills in teaching about environmental and sustainability issues, including the use of interdisciplinary, field-based, and research-based learning, effective assessment practices, and innovative technology in the classroom.
Goal 3:
Build the capacity of individuals, organizations, businesses, and governments to advance environmental literacy and sustainable communities.

Objective 3.1 Identify tools and resources that support environmental literacy and sustainable practices.

Sample Action Ideas:
- Inventory current environmental literacy resources, including programs, internships, employment and professional development opportunities, and grants. Identify where gaps exist and bring attention to exemplary resources.
- Identify successful and innovative methods, tools, and resources to use as models.
- Identify ideas and solutions that make global issues relevant at a local level.
- Determine if there is existing legislation or policy that supports achieving the Plan vision. Identify where gaps exist and bring attention to exemplary policies.

Objective 3.2 Facilitate access to identified tools and resources.

Sample Action Ideas:
- Enhance EEinWisconsin.org, Wisconsin’s central clearinghouse for environmental literacy, in order to expand its reach and usefulness to:
  - appeal to all sectors
  - regionally connect resources and audiences
  - provide simplified audience-specific links for home, work, school and play
  - share the long-term benefits and values of sustainable practices and the cost-benefit of making environmentally-based and socially responsible decisions at home, work, school and play
- Foster the distribution and awareness of existing resources that are directly related to environmental literacy and sustainability through conferences, expos and forums.
- Promote the use of existing resource centers that directly foster environmental literacy and sustainability, such as the Wisconsin Environmental Education Resource Library, Department of Natural Resources outreach tools, UW Extension Environmental Resources Center and other community or nature centers.
Objective 3.3 Facilitate innovative collaborations between diverse individuals, organizations, businesses, and governments.

Sample Action Ideas:

- Facilitate partnerships between otherwise unconnected individuals, organizations, businesses, and governments, using values shared within various Wisconsin communities regarding environmental literacy and sustainable practices.
- Help providers of environmental literacy and sustainability education understand how they can most effectively reach new audiences through the use of common language, goals, priorities, and values.
- Encourage individuals, organizations, businesses, and governments to collaborate with government officials, boards and other decision-makers to educate all audiences on the value and non-partisanship of environmental literacy and sustainable practices. Encourage these collaborators to include unique sectors (such as tourism, manufacturing, urban planners, and health) and to use inclusive language.
- Provide support to government officials, boards and other decision-makers in developing policies and community infrastructure that support environmental literacy and sustainability (in sectors such as waste management, land use, and energy use).
- Support community leaders in educating individuals, organizations, businesses and governments about the benefits of sustainable practices and how to develop and implement them.
Goal 4:
Promote research and assessment to identify strategies that advance environmental literacy and sustainable communities.

Research and Assessment

Rationale: Environmental education practices and programs are more efficient, effective, and relevant if grounded in findings from both educational and scientific research and evaluation. Goal four addresses the need to understand what research has already been done, what still needs to be accomplished, and how to best communicate information and data to the greater community.

Objective 4.1 Assess Wisconsin’s progress toward environmental literacy and sustainable communities.

Sample Action Ideas:
- Compile a list of indicators of the knowledge, skills, attitudes and actions needed to be environmentally literate and to implement sustainable practices at home, work, school, and play.
- Conduct a baseline assessment of Wisconsin’s environmental literacy and sustainable practices using the identified indicators. Create a plan for conducting follow-up assessments in the future.
- Create community report cards to measure environmental literacy and sustainability. Create self-assessment tools that can be used to evaluate the effectiveness of environmental and sustainability programs and educators.
- Share successful assessment tools for unique audiences found at home, work, school and play via statewide networks and online.
- Partner with organizations, businesses, school systems and governments to integrate environmental literacy and sustainability assessments into evaluations they currently use.
- Use assessments of environmental literacy and report cards of progress in environmental literacy to report on the effectiveness of current programming and resources at a statewide level.

Objective 4.2 Inventory and connect existing research.

Sample Action Ideas:
- Identify and organize research that is already done or being done regarding environmental literacy and sustainable practices.
- Ensure all Wisconsin-specific research is included in Wisconsin Environmental Education Research Database (WEERD).
- Seek out existing research projects being conducted within other potentially relevant disciplines (for example health, psychology, agriculture, conservation) and connect or add environmental literacy or sustainability components.
• Support the work of state agencies, such as UW-Extension, that evaluate existing research and help make connections between researchers and the community.
• Conduct a gap analysis to determine where further research is needed.

Objective 4.3 Identifying strategies for accomplishing identified research priorities.

Sample Action Ideas:
• Identify and inventory specific tools that can be used to best gather research data pertaining to environmental literacy and sustainable practices. In seeking the best research tools, special consideration should be made for tools that use: Wisconsin-specific data, current and efficient technology, already existing resources, non-partisanship, “citizen scientist” or student researchers, collaboration, and incentives for funding.
• Investigate potential partnerships with sectors not traditionally associated with environmental education (for example business and industry, tourism) to cultivate funding opportunities for environmental literacy or sustainability research.
• Communicate with government officials, boards and other decision-makers to determine methods, tools and strategies that can be used by local and state governments to support research priorities.

Objective 4.4 Conduct needed research related to environmental literacy and sustainable practices.

Sample Action Ideas:
• Partner with universities, colleges and other research institutes to create and share an inventory of needed research topics. Topics should be based on the gap analysis (objective 4.2).
• Encourage researchers to conduct research related to environmental literacy and sustainability topics identified in gap analysis (objective 4.2) as missing, lacking or out of date. Sample topics may include: current status of environmental literacy; benefits of environmental literacy and sustainable practices; people’s behavior changes as a result of education for environmental literacy and sustainability; impacts of the Plan vision on education; attitudes and behaviors and their origin as they relate to the Plan vision; the role of policy or legislation in achieving the Plan vision; funding needs to support the Plan vision; how to work with communities in achieving the Plan vision (for example how to build collaboration, or how to address differing world views and cultures)
Objective 4.5 Educate the public on research findings.

Sample Action Ideas:

- The following action ideas pertain to research regarding environmental literacy and sustainability.
  - Provide easy access to research findings via statewide networks and online.
  - Devise the best way to communicate research findings and their interpretations to specific audiences.
  - Promote and publicize research findings to all audiences, such as government officials, the media, schools and school administrators, businesses, parents, and other community leaders.
  - Use research and assessment to demonstrate a need for additional environmental literacy and sustainability funding at the local, state and federal levels.
  - Increase awareness and use of Wisconsin Environmental Education Research Database (WEERD).

Goal 5:

Develop strategies to secure funding to achieve environmental literacy and sustainable communities.

Objective 5.1 Develop diverse strategies to secure funding to accomplish the Plan’s goals and objectives.

Sample Action Ideas:

- Identify funding levels needed to accomplish the Plan’s goals and objectives.
- Develop and share a diverse set of tools and strategies for raising funds to support the Plan vision. Tools and strategies should support long-term financial stability. Examples may include: social media and online mechanisms, fundraising events or products, secured revenue streams from foundations or state monies, memberships, grants, and corporate sponsorships.
Objective 5.2 Build the capacity of groups to obtain funding to educate for environmental literacy and sustainability.

Sample Action Ideas:

- Connect individuals, organizations, businesses, and governments that have shared values concerning environmental literacy and sustainability and identify potential strategic funding partnerships.
- Foster partnerships between environmental education centers and businesses or civic organizations to fund local environmental and sustainability education programs and projects.
- Encourage partnerships with sectors not traditionally associated with environmental education (for example tourism, agriculture, media, faith) that can help garner funds for environmental literacy and sustainability.
- Establish collaborative efforts to seek funding and meet mutual funding needs. Use collaborative coalitions to leverage more funding from regional, national or global sources and to minimize competition for funds.
- Disperse information on successful funding tools, best practices, strategic funding partnerships and collaborative funding coalitions via statewide networks and online.
- Compile and share research and assessments that justify the need for funding for education for environmental literacy and sustainability at local, state and federal levels.
- Communicate to potential funders how fostering environmental literacy and sustainability can directly support their mission and benefit business and the community.
- Inform government officials, boards and other decision-makers on the need and importance of funding for environmental literacy and sustainability.
History and Context

With Wisconsin's rich natural resources, it is no wonder that past, present, and future lives are so intricately interwoven with the raw materials around us. From Wisconsin's cultural history, which is forged by native people living on the land and the many immigrants that settled here, to the expansive list of famous conservationists, Wisconsin has long celebrated the abundant natural resources needed to sustain families and communities.

Wisconsin families past and present benefit from the natural assets of Wisconsin's waterways, forests, grasslands, wildlife, and varied outdoor recreational opportunities. Hunting and fishing traditions are strong in families throughout the state and many families visit land “up north” each year. Wisconsin communities celebrate their communities and natural resources with seasonal festivals that not only bring community members together, but also often generate visitors from other areas of the state and country.

Not only is Wisconsin's culture steeped in the natural resources we use and enjoy, but the state's economy is also dependent on our waterways, land, and abundant wildlife. Whether it is tourism, agriculture, hunting and fishing, paper and wood production, or clean energy generation, millions of dollars and hundreds of thousands of jobs are dependent on clean and sustainable natural resources. The people of Wisconsin value the state's natural resources and expect them to be available for future generations.

Stewardship of Wisconsin's natural resources is a rich part of the state's history. After early years of timber exploitation, poor farming practices, and air and water pollution, the state became a national leader in recognizing the significance of conserving and using our natural resources sustainably. As early as 1935, Wisconsin required conservation training for teachers. Today, Wisconsin is home to many conservation organizations and dedicated individuals throughout the state who contribute to improving and sustaining our natural resources.

Natural resource stewardship in Wisconsin dates back well over a century, and has been influenced by some of the United States' greatest conservationists, including John Muir, Aldo Leopold, and Sigurd Olson. In fact, Wisconsin Senator Gaylord Nelson, who focused his work on protecting air and water resources at the national level in the 1960s, initiated the first Earth Day in 1970. As far back as 1962, when the Wisconsin Council for Conservation Education (which later became the Wisconsin Association for Environmental Education) was created, representatives from Wisconsin's schools, universities, natural resources agencies, businesses, and industries have coordinated efforts to sustain environmental education in our state. In 1985, these efforts were supported by the Wisconsin State Legislature which became the first in the nation to require pre-service teachers to train in environmental education and to mandate curriculum plans to meet state standards in environmental education. In 1990, the state legislature authorized the creation of the Wisconsin Environmental Education Board and its grants program, as well as the Wisconsin Center for Environmental Education.
Ensuring Wisconsin’s natural resources are used through sustainable practices and systems has become increasingly important to the livelihood of individuals, businesses and communities. To keep natural resources clean for future generations, Wisconsin has enacted legislation protecting our air and water resources from abuse. Some examples of groups and organizations already using sustainable practices include farming and timber harvesting industries that work to perpetuate the resources they rely on; the Menominee Nation, whose internationally known sustainable forestry practices draw reservation visitors from all over the world; and businesses throughout the state that use renewable energy and LEED certified work spaces to save money and help preserve our natural resources. Communities throughout Wisconsin recognize the importance of sustainable practices and thus, recycle paper, metal, glass and plastics and reduce the amount of waste going into landfills. Many communities design and construct buildings for energy and water conservation, plan for growth with sustainability in mind, and adopt eco-municipality resolutions. Eco-municipalities aspire to develop ecologically, economically, and socially healthy communities for the long term, using the Natural Step framework for sustainability as a guide, and a democratic, highly participative development process as the method.

Wisconsin residents recognize the inextricable link between environmental and human health. Achieving the vision of environmentally literate and sustainable communities requires that people have the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to creatively develop an ecologically, economically, and socially just society. It requires Wisconsin people to continue building and strengthening education for environmental literacy and sustainability and engaging in activities that sustain a healthy environment, build vibrant communities, and support strong local economies.

Wisconsin’s Plan for Environmentally Literate and Sustainable Communities, much like the innovative efforts of the past, is a collaborative effort to promote environmental literacy and sustainable practices at home, work, school, and play. Through the Plan, the people of Wisconsin can lead the way toward a healthy, sustainable, and productive future.

**Plan Development History**

The development of this document started in September 2009. Funding for the development was secured through funds from the WEEB and WEEF with contributions from WAEE and the UW-Madison ERC. Great effort was taken to receive input from a large variety of sectors interested in environmental literacy and building sustainable communities. Below is an explanation of the steps taken and the inclusive process used in the development of this document.

In April 2010, a needs assessment was executed by the Managerial Committee with collaborative input from a select group of stakeholder representatives from the environmental education, conservation, and business communities. To complete this needs assessment, previously identified needs were compiled from the following:

Wisconsin’s Plan for Environmentally Literate and Sustainable Communities

“Gathering Community Input for the Minnesota GreenPrint Update” (2007) Minnesota Pollution Control Agency

Wisconsin No Child Left Inside Coalition needs appraisal (2009) which included input from WAAE, DNR, WCEE, EETAP, WEEF and WEEB.

The needs appraised from the above documents were then compiled with other needs established by the Managerial Committee and the stakeholder representatives. Through a capacity building process, the stakeholder representatives developed twelve needs with an understanding that the ultimate goal in meeting these needs is all Wisconsin people are environmentally literate and use sustainable practices. The resulting needs were:

1. Having and Implementing an Environmental Literacy Plan
2. Addressing Apathy/Increasing Understanding and Awareness
3. Community & Agency Support
4. Resources/Tools & Training
5. Marketing & Communication
6. Promoting Successes
7. Using New Approaches
8. Strengthening & Promoting EE as a Profession
9. Networking
10. Legislature/Policy Development
11. Funding
12. Evaluation & Assessment

The outcomes of the Plan were also developed.

The five goals and objectives outlined in this document were a result of an extensive year-long process.

2010:
- Goals statements were created by the Managerial Committee based on the April 2010 Needs Assessment.
- These goals were revised the environmental education community at the WAAE Fall Conference.

Spring 2011:
- By merging common themes found in the draft goals, the Managerial Committee devised six main goal categories.
- The goals were shared with the Advisory Team during an all-day meeting. The Advisory Team offered extensive input on each goal and suggested ideas of action ideas.

Summer 2011:
- Using all the input and action ideas produced by the Advisory Team, the Managerial Committee generated objectives.
- The resulting objectives were presented to the Advisory Team, as well as the WEEB, WEEF and WAAE board members, for comments.
- After including feedback and suggested revisions, the goals and objectives were then refined by the WEEB and descriptive action ideas were formed and again reviewed by the Advisory Team, and WEEB, WEEF and WAAE board members.

October 2011:
- The final set of goals, objectives, and action ideas were shared with all stakeholders and released for public review.

November 2011
- The final draft was released at the WAAE Fall Conference.