



# STRATEGIC PLAN

## CALENDAR YEAR 2018-2022

### INTRODUCTION

For 120 years, Audubon Naturalist Society achieved important conservation milestones in the greater Washington, DC region and beyond. Our victories range from the enactment of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act to preservation of the C&O Canal, from saving Dyke Marsh, to, most recently, protecting Ten Mile Creek and the emergency drinking water supply for 4.3 million area residents. We are proud to preserve essential habitat at our 40-acre Woodend Nature Sanctuary in Maryland and our 68-acre Rust Nature Sanctuary in Virginia.

Throughout our history, science has underpinned, informed, and guided our conservation and education work. Audubon Naturalist Society leads the region in delivering outstanding environmental education to children of all backgrounds in partnership with public school systems in Montgomery County, Loudoun County, Fairfax County, and the District of Columbia. The Audubon Nature Preschool, the first preschool to become a Maryland Green School, hosts international education leaders eager to learn about our successful curriculum. Our adult education programs are unrivaled in their depth and quality of instruction. Our cadre of more than 500 volunteers complements the dedication of our staff and members and makes it possible for ANS to live out its mission and vision every day.

Dedicated planning is empowering Audubon Naturalist Society to greet the future with aspiration and excitement. We have embraced the discipline of planning in consultation with national experts. As we successfully complete our previous 5-year Strategic Plan, targeting our programs to meet our region's most pressing conservation and environmental education goals, we can take pride in the release of our new, 50-year Master Plan for restoring Woodend Nature Sanctuary and our iconic historical headquarters and sustaining them for future generations.

With the launch of this Strategic Plan for 2018 - 2022, Audubon Naturalist Society is about to enter one of the most exciting periods in its modern history. We will restore the habitats and buildings at Woodend Sanctuary, creating the region's most vibrant, living classroom, where we will inspire thousands of people to enjoy, learn about, and protect the natural world. We will expand our adult education programs to promote environmental literacy in our region and reach a wider cross-section of our demographically diverse community. Our conservation program will enlist and train scores of area residents in the fight to ensure that local habitats are protected, creating healthy communities for people and wildlife. Over the next five years, the ANS community and its impact will grow. More friends of Audubon Naturalist Society than ever before will learn about nature with us and will act with ANS to protect and preserve the natural world we treasure.

## **MISSION**

The Audubon Naturalist Society inspires residents of the greater Washington, DC, region to appreciate, understand, and protect their natural environment through outdoor experiences, education, and advocacy.

## **VISION**

The Audubon Naturalist Society seeks to create a larger and more diverse community of people who treasure the natural world and work to preserve it.

## **CONSERVATION AND RESTORATION PROGRAM**

ANS aims to connect people in the Washington, DC, region with nature, especially as the population of this metro region continues to grow, urban density intensifies, and development sprawls outwards. When natural habitats degrade and fragment, threatening native wildlife, the connections between people and nature are stressed or lost. Given ANS's physical presence on the boundaries of high-density growth, plus our expertise in native wildlife, clean water, and land protection policies, ANS will play a leading role in protecting habitats and strengthening the connection between people and nature.

### Goals

- Conserve special natural places in the DC region including our region's stream valley corridors—the last remaining wild places in the region—as well as Woodend Nature Sanctuary, and Rust Nature Sanctuary;
- Work to reduce the severity of climate change with local mitigation, particularly natural solutions, in response to this global crisis;
- Model conservation stewardship by restoring Woodend Nature Sanctuary to inspire residents to steward local landscapes that provide habitats for native species, and to improve climate resilience and water quality;
- Advocate for effective implementation of local and regional policies that support biodiversity, assure healthy native habitats for wildlife and healthy neighborhoods for people, and protect and restore stream valley corridors while planning for an evolving future;
- Expand and empower the cadre of residents who are effective advocates for conservation, and continue to partner with other organizations to increase our impact;
- Work to protect people and wildlife in the DC region as we prepare for and adapt to climate change; and
- Increase the effectiveness of ANS's citizen scientists by communicating their results broadly to residents and decision makers in the DC region.

## **EDUCATION PROGRAMS**

Residents of the busy DC metro region experience many pressures that cut them off from nature, including traffic, time constraints, shrinking green space, and their ever-expanding engagement with technology. A gulf is widening between people and the natural world. ANS's education programs seek to shrink that divide by providing outstanding opportunities for people of all ages to reconnect with the environment and with themselves to gain the benefits of embracing nature in our hectic lives.

### **ADULT EDUCATION PROGRAM**

#### **Goals**

- Expand our adult education program to help more people become environmentally literate champions of native habitats and wildlife in the DC metro region;
- Increase outreach to new and diverse adult audiences who will enjoy, learn about, and be inspired to protect nature; and
- Offer adult programming in new venues, both geographical and digital, to reach adult learners from across the Washington, DC region.

### **CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH EDUCATION PROGRAM**

#### **Goals**

- Create, use, and share the highest standards for early childhood nature-based education;
- Provide a Play Space in the Woods at Woodend Sanctuary to welcome children, families, and teachers to connect with nature in a fun and inviting place;
- Offer new opportunities for children of all backgrounds to experience ANS out-of-school educational programs; and
- Expand ANS's status as a valued partner for systemic environmental education in public school systems in the DC region.

## **DIVERSITY, EQUITY, ACCESSIBILITY AND INCLUSION**

As the population of the Washington, DC region has become increasingly diverse, the opportunity to add new voices, viewpoints, and experiences to the work of ANS has grown. As a result, ANS aims to better reflect the rich diversity of our region in the composition of our members, staff, board, volunteers, and program participants.

## Goals

- Model diversity, equity, accessibility and inclusion as best practices for the region’s environmental community;
- Equip the organization to make progress every year toward diversity, equity, accessibility and inclusion goals;
- Open pathways and reduce barriers to engage new partners, people, and communities in the environmental education and advocacy work of ANS; and
- Retain new stakeholders as active participants in the ANS community.

### **What do we mean by “equity”?**

Environmental equity means ensuring everyone has equal access to nature and all the benefits it provides.

## **MEMBERSHIP, DEVELOPMENT, AND ENGAGEMENT**

Today, people support causes in vastly different ways than people did when ANS was founded in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when supporters paid dues, became members, and donated their time to a cause. ANS recognizes that to expand our support base today, we must engage people in ways and through channels that are meaningful to them.

## Goals

- Create and maintain a new engagement model to identify and grow the number of people who actively support ANS over the long term;
- Integrate our internal information systems to more fully engage with our current and future supporters ANS; and
- Engage supporters and raise funds for the restoration of Woodend Nature Sanctuary.

## **MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS**

To ensure ANS is effectively achieving its mission and connecting people to nature in the DC metro region, it is important to dedicate attention to new channels and types of communication for our outreach. Each new platform of engagement increases the potential for wider, more diverse audiences to learn about and engage with ANS and its extensive

program and event offerings. As we look to the future, our focus will be to deepen our communications connections with people, partners, and the media in the DC metro region.

#### Goals

- Bring our mission work to the attention of more people of diverse backgrounds;
- Bring our mission work to the attention of more environmental and community partners;
- Support ANS program directors in meeting strategic program and revenue goals;
- Support growth of membership and donor rolls; and
- Educate ANS stakeholders about marketing and communications strategies.

#### **OPERATING PRINCIPLES**

- We routinely evaluate ANS's programs to gauge whether they advance this strategic plan and our mission as effectively as possible.
- We engage in thoughtful planning, drawing on the expertise of our board of directors, staff, and volunteers, as appropriate, to develop new activities that are scalable and sustainable, and that directly advance this strategic plan and our mission.
- Working collaboratively extends ANS's reach and impact. To advance our mission, we may join forces with other organizations, communities, and government agencies.
- We ground all our work in the best available science.
- Our conservation advocacy focuses on issues that pose a significant threat or confer a significant benefit to habitat in our region.
- We strive for positive outcomes in our advocacy and consider carefully whether to engage on issues.
- Our volunteers provide enduring strength to ANS, and we actively cultivate them to advance ANS's mission.