



Fostering the Spirit of Wildness and Conserving the Alpine Areas of Northeastern North America

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Alpine Areas

In the U.S.

Algonquin
The Bigelow Range
Cadillac Mountain
Camels Hump
Franconia Ridge
Haystack Mountain
Katahdin
Mount Mansfield
Mount Marcy
The Presidential Range
Whiteface Mountain

In Canada

Gros Morne
Long Range
Mealy Mountains
Monts Chic-Chocs
Monts Groulx

Strategic Plan

2015 – 2020

July 1, 2015

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Strategic Plan Overview

This Strategic Planning process began in late 2011 and progressed slowly under three Presidents and a host of Board members. It is grounded in a 2005 Case Statement and a Mission, Vision, and Goals document created by the Board in 2006, which at that time was still populated by several founders of the organization.

In 2012, the Board participated in a Strategic Planning Workshop facilitated by Adrien Vlach, a nonprofit organization consultant. From that meeting a draft Strategic Plan emerged but remained a draft until the present time.

In 2014, we met with several founders of the organization to talk about the future of the Fund and gained a greater understanding of its history and purpose in the early years.

The Board reapplied its time and energy to completing this plan in early 2015. We made liberal use of some of the text from the early documents mentioned above and are grateful for the founder's clear articulation of what the Waterman Fund is all about. We hope our efforts continue to move the Fund forward.

It is our intent that this plan will guide the organization through January 2020 and will serve as a reminder of our commitment to substantially evaluate the direction and capacity of the organization every five years. In addition, the Board will review its progress annually, and if necessary, revise its priorities and direction.

Our Mission

The Waterman Fund fosters the spirit of wildness and strengthens the stewardship and understanding of the alpine areas of Northeastern North America to conserve their ecological, cultural, and recreational values.

We pursue this mission through education, trail rehabilitation, and research.

Our Vision

Alpine areas retain their ecological integrity.
Every visitor stewards the land and experiences its wonder.

Least intrusive management practices prevail
and human impacts are minimized.

The spirit of wildness pervades the mountains.

“What else is wildness? Certain attributes come to mind: remoteness, inaccessibility, uncertainty, mystery. A wild place can be a difficult place, uncomfortable for humans. And we should seek to keep it that way, not try to make it safer, more comfortable, more like the civilization we leave behind.”

Guy and Laura Waterman, Wilderness Ethics 1993

“In the Northeast, the age of exploration has receded into the past, as has the age of trail building. The age of stewardship has dawned.”

Laura Waterman, Forest and Crag, 2003

Introduction

The alpine summits of Northeastern North America are among the most dramatic landscapes in North America. High, bare, windswept peaks rise above the surrounding valleys like an archipelago of islands amidst the seemingly endless ocean of the Northern Forest. From the Adirondacks to the Greens to the Whites to the Katahdin massif and into the more remote ranges of Canada, few visitors to this stunning landscape come away unaffected. Indeed, for the many people who grew up or live in the region, the very ideas of stewardship, environmental protection, and ethical responsibility are inextricably linked to the mountains of home.

The peaks, however, are at great risk of degradation. Most of them are within a day's drive of 100 million people, and the open summits with their expansive views are the destination for thousands upon thousands of hikers every year. Although the tundra and other vegetation can withstand some of the most ferocious weather on earth, they are no match for the footfalls of multitudes of well-meaning peak baggers. The multitudes encroach on the spirit of wildness as well. The economic reality for the government agencies and volunteers responsible for land management and trail maintenance is one of limited funds often allocated to below treeline projects. Finally, global climate change may impact the alpine zone more than other habitats as temperatures rise. There is no higher ground for alpine flora and fauna. The Waterman Fund supports research efforts to better understand the threats to these fragile areas as well as stewardship actions to mitigate visitor impacts and protect their ecological integrity and wilderness values.

The Waterman Fund is the only organization in the Northeast (and likely the United States) with a mission that combines the spirit of wildness and alpine stewardship.

Background

The Waterman Fund was chartered in the spring of 2000 as the Guy Waterman Alpine Stewardship Fund, a donor-advised fund of the Vermont Community Foundation based in Middlebury, Vermont. The Fund is a nonprofit corporation created to carry out one or more purposes as specified in Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, including, for such purposes, the making of distributions to organizations that qualify as exempt under this section. A nine member volunteer board of directors raises and distributes funds to organizations and individuals to further its mission.

The Fund draws its name and inspiration from Guy Waterman, noted explorer, climber, trail maintainer, writer, and philosopher whose death in February 2000 sparked his friends and admirers to create a memorial fund to further his work and spirit on behalf of the wilderness values he championed and treasured and the stewardship ethic he embodied. Together with his wife, Laura Waterman, Guy wrote a series of books and articles that have profoundly affected and inspired the thoughts and actions of the many people who care about the mountains of the Northeast and the spirit of wildness that makes them so compelling. Laura Waterman serves as an active and founding member of the Board.

An endowment created in the early years is managed carefully to provide a continued income stream to support the programs described below. This stewardship of financial resources is supplemented annually by about 150 donors who are committed to the work of the Fund. The Fund is not a membership organization.

Current Programs

The Waterman Fund administers four ongoing programs to accomplish its mission. We annually award grants, recognize an outstanding alpine steward, administer an essay contest, and co-sponsor the biannual Alpine Stewardship Gathering with a partner organization. Our newsletter, the Alpine Steward, is mailed to our donors in November and features articles on progress, programs, and events of the past year.

Grants. The grants program began modestly in 2002 with \$1,200 in annual awards and has grown to \$24,000 in annual awards in 2014. Since inception, more than \$150,000 has been awarded to organizations and individuals for alpine stewardship in the form of trail, research, and education projects as well as the winners of the essay contest whose writing has contributed to fostering the spirit of wildness. Every project must have an education component, evaluate project impacts on the spirit of wildness, and address project sustainability. Project awards in 2015 included rehabilitation of the Spur Trail in the Northern Presidential Range by the Randolph Mountain Club, photo monitoring on Mount Mansfield by the Green Mountain Club, and a youth education effort from the White Mountain (Middle) School in Littleton, NH entitled *Using Leave No Trace to Save Our Alpine Environment, One Child at a Time*.

Guy Waterman Alpine Steward Award. This award is given annually to an individual who has made a significant contribution to alpine stewardship. Twelve outstanding people have been honored since 2003.

Essay Contest. Guy and Laura Waterman spent a lifetime reflecting and writing about the Northeast's mountains. The Waterman Fund seeks to further their legacy of stewardship through essays from emerging writers that celebrate and explore issues of wilderness, wildness, stewardship, and humans through the Fund's annual essay contest. A specific theme is chosen each year. The 2014 theme was the value of wilderness fifty years after the Wilderness Act.

Alpine Stewardship Gathering. This meeting brings together researchers, trail maintainers, educators, managers, and volunteers with a passion for the alpine zone. Two full days of presentations, panels, field trips and networking offer an opportunity to share new ideas and information. In 2014, the Gathering was held near Mount Monadnock in southern New Hampshire in partnership with Antioch University New England and its Monadnock Ecological Research and Education Project. One hundred sixteen people attended included many students from nearby Antioch and Keene State Universities.

Goals

- Goal 1. Strengthen the Human Stewardship and Understanding of Alpine Areas of Northeastern North America**
- Goal 2. Foster the Spirit of Wildness Through and Beyond Our Existing Programs**
- Goal 3. Increase the Visibility and Relevance of the Fund**
- Goal 4. Increase our Endowment and Annual Gifts**

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Goal 1. Strengthen the Human Stewardship and Understanding of Alpine Areas of Northeastern North America

Programs and Actions	Priority	Who	When
Grants			
Broaden outreach about the grants and Alpine Gathering beyond the current list to more universities, high schools, middle schools, and nonprofit educational organizations within the region, including Canada. Highlight that the grants program includes grants to individuals.	High	Entire Board	Annually by December 15
Solicit specific requests for proposals as needed if submissions for trails, education, or research are lacking.	High	Grants Committee	Annually by December 15
Actively co-host and provide financial support (in advance if necessary) for the Alpine Gathering.	High	Entire Board	Bi-annually
Increase our giving capacity (see Goal 4).			
Guy Waterman Alpine Steward Award			
Solicit nominees for and present the Guy Waterman Alpine Steward Award at either the Alpine Stewardship Gathering or Waterman Fund Dinner (each is bi-annual in alternate years).	High	Entire Board	Annually
Alpine Stewardship Gathering/Alpine Stewards			
Update the handbook (how to) for the Alpine Gathering.	High	Alpine Stewardship Gathering Committee	Bi-annually
Encourage cross-training and exchanges between alpine steward programs to ensure best practices.	High	Entire Board	Annually
Include essay contest winners and participants in Alpine Gathering and other Waterman Fund events.	High	Essay Committee	Annually

Programs and Actions	Priority	Who	When
Youth Involvement			
Increase attendance of young people at Alpine Stewardship Gathering.	High	Alpine Stewardship Gathering Committee	2017
Develop request for proposals specifically for high school and middle school students (e.g., Whitefield School).	Medium	Grants Committee	2016
Implement a Young Alpine Steward Award.	Low	Entire Board	2016
Implement a high school essay contest.	Low	Essay Committee	2018
Essays and Writing			
Continue to develop essay themes that challenge writers to explore existing and emerging issues with wildness, ethics, and alpine stewardship.	High	Essay Committee	Annually
Partner with grantees, outdoor clubs, universities, and hiking magazines to encourage writing that highlights the Fund and fostering the spirit of wildness and stewardship of the alpine zone.	Medium	Entire Board	Annually

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Goal 2. Foster the Spirit of Wildness Through and Beyond Existing Programs

Programs and Actions	Priority	Who	When
Continue to make wildness and wilderness ethics a part of the Alpine Stewardship Gathering	High	Alpine Stewardship Gathering Committee	Bi-annually
Publish an anthology of winning essays. Solicit new contributing authors as needed.	High	Essay Committee	2017
Send the Northeastern Alpine Wildness panel discussion held at Antioch University on the road throughout the region. Provide any needed financial support for panelists.	High	Entire Board	2015 and ongoing
Broaden the outreach for the essay contest with more universities, within the wilderness and alpine research, management, and stewardship communities, and into Canada.	Medium	Essay Committee	2017
Continue distributing <i>Wilderness Ethics</i> to stewardship partners. Include a cover letter to request information on emerging wilderness and stewardship issues.	Medium	Public Relations Committee	2017
Republish Backcountry Ethics.	Low	Laura Waterman	2018

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Goal 3. Increase the Visibility and Relevance of the Fund

Programs and Actions	Priority	Who	When
Form a Public Relations committee to take the lead on achieving this goal to increase the visibility and relevance of the Fund.	High	Entire Board	Done
Work closely with a new contractor to reorganize and update the website, brochure, newsletter, and more. Board members will create new content as needed.	High	Public Relations Committee	2015
Incorporate new logo, mission statement, vision, and goals into all communications media as appropriate and rewrite text as needed.	High	Public Relations Committee	2015
Create Facebook presence, stay active on it, and test success of paid advertising.	High	Public Relations Committee	Ongoing
Resurrect e-newsletter and create content to keep donors informed but not overwhelmed.	High	Public Relations Committee	9/2015
Invite local and state media to Alpine Gatherings, field trips, and other events.	High	Public Relations and Alpine Stewardship Gathering Committees	2015
Issue press releases to local and state media regarding Alpine Steward Awards.	High	Public Relations Committee	Annually
Continue to support the maintenance of the Appalachian Mountain Club on-line alpine database.	High	Entire Board	As needed
Develop targeted media list of statewide and local publications and keep it updated.	Medium	Public Relations Committee	2016
Create press kit for Waterman Fund and grantee use.	Medium	Public Relations Committee	2016
Update web site links to partners.	Medium	Public Relations Committee	Annually
Seek opportunities to write/speak about the Fund.	Medium	Entire Board	Ongoing

Programs and Actions	Priority	Who	When
Write articles about the Fund's programs and accomplishments for the IUCN Newsletter and other publications.	Medium	Public Relations Committee	Ongoing
Partner with writer in residence programs (Robert Frost Center) and publications with similar interests (Orion Magazine) to market the essay contest.	Medium	Essay Committee	2017
Create flyer/poster for essay contest.	Low	Essay Committee	2017
Request or require grantees to publicize their work and the Fund's role with their members and/or the general public.	Low	Grants Committee	Ongoing

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Goal 4. Increase our Endowment and Annual Giving

Programs and Actions	Priority	Who	When
Annual Gifts			
Purchase a user-friendly database software and import and organize our donor and contacts lists. Train multiple board members in its use.	High	Ad Hoc Committee Matt, Set, Kim	2016
Expand our list of donors, grantees, partners, and others through the Gathering, networking, and personal contacts. Include alpine stewards.	High	Entire Board	Ongoing
Host dinners, field trips, or other events in each state for donors, highlighting the work of the Fund through grantees whenever possible.	High	Entire Board	Ongoing
Survey donors about why they support the Fund.	Low	Entire Board	2018
Consider donor incentives of various kinds.	Low	Entire Board	2018
Endowment			
Develop gift acceptance and endowment policies and announce and market a planned and memorial giving program.	High	Development Committee	2016
Following the announcement of the gift acceptance and endowment policies, identify and approach potential major donors for either general support or specific to endowing the Essay Contest or the Alpine Stewardship Gathering.	High	Development Committee	2016
Identify grant sources such as Sweetwater Trust that fund endowments or support increasing organizational capacity.	Medium	Development Committee	2017
Evaluate the efficacy of developing a business supporter program.	Low	Development Committee	2018
Research the hiring a consultant to assess the feasibility of increasing our endowment through an active campaign.	Low	Development Committee	2018

Waterman Fund Standing Committees 2015

Alpine Stewardship Gathering Committee: President; previous host and organizer; current host and organizer; others as needed

Development Committee: Charlie Jacobi; Matt Larson, others as needed

Essay Committee: Bethany Taylor, Chair; Laura Waterman; Annie Bellerose; Carl Demrow; Peggy Dillon; Julia Goren; Kim Votta; Michael Jones; Judy Marden; Rebecca Oreskes; Val Stori; and Michael Wejchert; Christine Woodside,

Executive Committee: Officers plus Laura Waterman

Grants Committee: Peter Palmiotto, Chair; Mike Jones; Kim Votta

Public Relations Committee: Seth Jones, Chair; Mike Jones; Judy Marden.

The Ten Basic Responsibilities of Nonprofit Boards

1. Determine the organization's mission and purpose. It is the board's responsibility to create and review a statement of mission and purpose that articulates the organization's goals, means, and primary constituents served.
2. Select the chief executive. Boards must reach consensus on the chief executive's responsibilities and undertake a careful search to find the most qualified individual for the position.
3. Provide proper financial oversight. The board must assist in developing the annual budget and ensuring that proper financial controls are in place.
4. Ensure adequate resources. One of the board's foremost responsibilities is to provide adequate resources for the organization to fulfill its mission. *This means fundraising.*
5. Ensure legal and ethical integrity and maintain accountability. The board is ultimately responsible for ensuring adherence to legal standards and ethical norms.
6. Ensure effective organizational planning. Boards must actively participate in an overall planning process and assist in implementing and monitoring the plan's goals.
7. Recruit and orient new board members and assess board performance. All boards have a responsibility to articulate prerequisites for candidates, orient new members, and periodically and comprehensively evaluate its own performance.
8. Enhance the organization's public standing. The board should clearly articulate the organization's mission, accomplishments, and goals to the public and garner support from the community.
9. Determine, monitor and strengthen the organization's programs and services. The board's responsibility is to determine which programs are consistent with the organization's mission and to monitor their effectiveness.
10. Support the chief executive and assess his or her performance. The board should ensure that the chief executive has the moral and professional support he or she needs to further the goals of the organization.

*Based on a handout from Boardsource.org
Revised June 2008.cmp*