



Michigan Vernal Pools Partnership

Strategic Plan *February 2, 2018*

Mission

The mission of the Michigan Vernal Pools Partnership is to increase awareness, understanding and protection of vernal pools through conservation, research & mapping, education & outreach and collaboration.

Goals

Conservation

1. Provide guidance to local and regional governmental agencies to encourage and help facilitate protection of vernal pools.
 - a. Identify, develop and/or provide example/model local ordinances that protect vernal pools (e.g., wetland ordinances, natural features, master planning).
 - b. Provide a standard definition of what constitutes a vernal pool and/or Identify and provide criteria for vernal pool protection (e.g., protecting high quality vernal pools and what would constitute a high quality vernal pool).
2. Develop and/or provide sector-specific standards or Best Management Practices for protecting vernal pools for land managers and other target audiences/sectors (e.g., forestry, developers, private landowners, transportation, agriculture, etc.).
3. Develop and provide targeted outreach/trainings and resource materials to local governments, public and private land managers and other professional audiences/groups (e.g., private forest landowners, family forest landowners, land conservancies).
4. Encourage state programs to fully use current tools and explore additional tools for protecting vernal pools in the future.

Research and Mapping

1. Continue and expand statewide vernal pool mapping and monitoring efforts (multi-faceted: citizen science program and targeted vernal pool mapping & research projects/efforts).

- a. Focus on mapping at the local community level to tie to local protection efforts, or focus on communities with local wetland ordinances that protect or have potential to protect vernal pools.
 - b. Research, identify, and obtain data from other datasets with vernal pool locations/information that can be incorporated into statewide vernal pool database. Develop a table of potential data sources. Continue to encourage partners to help collect vernal pool data.
 - c. Continue to investigate the use of radar to increase vernal pool mapping efficiency and effectiveness.
 - d. Determine best approach, feasibility, and cost of mapping potential vernal pools statewide (i.e., landscape level, more accurate). Further investigate using National Wetland Inventory and landscape modifiers to identify and map vernal pools, combination of radar and remote sensing, LIDAR, etc.
 - e. If mapping potential vernal pools statewide is not feasible, identify and focus mapping efforts in parts of the state with greater likelihood for vernal pools.
 - f. Develop a mobile application to facilitate mapping and collecting data on vernal pools in the field.
2. Examine vernal pool data collection protocol and standards with protection in mind to make sure collecting data needed to help inform and facilitate protection.
 - a. Examine vernal pool data collection protocols to ensure protocols are minimizing disturbance and potential for adverse impacts to pools and associated species. Make certain data collected is the data that is needed.
 - b. Examine vernal pool data collection protocols and methods for efficiency, data accessibility, and ability to integrate and exchange data with other databases (e.g., Natural Heritage Database, Herp Atlas, etc.).
 - c. Work with other subcommittees to clarify standard vernal pool definition.
3. Examine and help ensure vernal pool data are accessible.
 - a. Examine statewide vernal pool database platform.
 - b. Make vernal pool information/data accessible for future land acquisitions for land trusts.
 - c. Make sure database is accessible and compatible/linked with mobile application.
4. Identify, conduct, and/or encourage additional research on the ecology of vernal pools in Michigan to inform, prioritize, and enhance vernal pool management and protection.
 - a. Work with the Partnership and others to identify priority research needs.
 - b. Share priority research needs and identify and work with researchers interested in helping to address priority research needs.

Education and Outreach

1. Develop website and social media presence for the Partnership and associated efforts.
 - a. Michigan Nature Association is taking the lead and working with Michigan Natural Features Inventory to develop a website for vernal pools, the Partnership, and the Vernal Pool Patrol program. Michigan Nature Association has agreed to host the website (for at least next several years).
 - b. Decide on which social media outlets to use (e.g., Facebook, Twitter), develop page/account, and start posting. Determine goal/purpose of communication effort to decide appropriate social media outlet(s).
2. Expand the Vernal Pool Patrol program to get more K-12 teachers/students and other target groups (e.g., nature centers, watershed councils, land conservancies) aware of vernal pools and involved in vernal pool mapping and monitoring.
 - a. Utilize MDNR and GLSI network.
 - b. Develop strategic plan for sustaining program over time.
 - c. Develop and distribute brochure to promote/market the Vernal Pool Patrol program.
 - d. Develop and provide t-shirts for students participating in the Vernal Pool Patrol program (and others).
 - e. Investigate the potential for adding or integrating the Vernal Pool Patrol program, or an introduction/overview of vernal pools, into other environmental education curricula/programs (e.g., module in Project Learning Tree curriculum, Project WILD/Aquatic WILD).
 - f. Develop data quality control plan/standards to ensure high quality data for the Vernal Pool Patrol program. Emphasize the importance of data quality and intensive training. Also address making sure monitoring efforts have minimal impact on vernal pools, and come up with recommendations/practices for how Vernal Pool Patrol participants can minimize impacts while still collecting high quality data.
 - g. Include messaging on public health/mosquitoes and vernal pools in training workshops and materials. Conduct literature review and develop appropriate messaging.
 - h. Develop and promote/distribute videos to promote and support the Vernal Pool Patrol program.
3. Develop informational / education and outreach materials to promote awareness, understanding, and protection of vernal pools.
 - a. Develop and distribute brochure and/or FAQ sheet on vernal pools (e.g., what they are, why they are important, how to manage and protect them, etc.).
 - b. Educate people on what is a vernal pool and what is not.

- c. Look at DEQ's wetland guides for reference and example communications to see if we can incorporate existing wetland outreach materials/information into vernal pool education and outreach, and also provide links between vernal pool and other wetland/DEQ education and outreach efforts.
 - d. Develop travelling exhibit on vernal pools.
 - e. Develop and distribute a marketing piece on vernal pools to reach out to nature centers, landowners, land managers, educators, etc.
 - f. Work with Conservation Subcommittee to promote/distribute management guidelines for vernal pools to target audiences.
4. Develop peer reviewed publications related to vernal pools (e.g., Vernal Pool Patrol, citizen science, K-12 students and citizen science, impact on science learning and new science standards).
 5. Develop and implement effective and informative tools/approach/metrics for evaluating the Vernal Pool Patrol program and general vernal pool education and outreach efforts to measure progress toward meeting goals and objectives and ensure efforts are helping us reach our goal of improving awareness, understanding, and engagement among our target audience groups.
 - a. Identify specific and measurable goals/objectives for the Vernal Pool Patrol program and vernal pool education and outreach efforts, and develop metrics for measuring progress towards goals/objectives.
 - b. Develop evaluation instruments/tools and approaches.
 - c. Implement evaluation program. Summarize and analyze data, and share results and findings to improve the Vernal Pool Patrol and vernal pool education and outreach efforts as needed.

Collaboration and Coordination

1. Ensure the Partnership and subcommittees are making progress on the Partnership goals and objectives in a timely manner.
2. Identify and help recruit additional partners to the Partnership.
3. Work with subcommittees and general partners to identify and secure resources needed to accomplish Partnership goals and objectives.
 - a. Identify potential funding sources.
 - b. Help coordinate grant applications.
4. Develop marketing and informational or resource materials to promote and support the Partnership.
 - a. Develop logo for the Partnership.
 - b. Develop and distribute brochure for the Partnership.

5. Maintain the Strategic Plan for the Partnership.
6. Maintain the vernal pool definition for the Partnership.
7. Organize an annual Partnership meeting for all partners.