

# SIERRA CLUB STRATEGIC PLAN

APPROVED MAY 7, 2015 BY  
BOARD OF DIRECTORS



SIERRA  
CLUB

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### MISSION STATEMENT

*The purposes of the Sierra Club are to explore, enjoy, and protect the wild places of the earth; to practice and promote the responsible use of the earth’s ecosystems and resources; to educate and enlist humanity to protect and restore the quality of the natural and human environment; and to use all lawful means to carry out these objectives. (1981)*





## I. INTRODUCTION

*To change everything, we need everyone.*

– People’s Climate March, September 2014

“If you want to make God laugh,” the saying goes, “announce your plans to the universe.” Yet, without a plan or strategy, the loftiest goals are little more than wishful thinking. Henry David Thoreau, whose writing and thinking deeply influenced both John Muir and Martin Luther King, Jr., wrote that “In the long run, you can only hit what you aim at.” Therefore, even if you might miss, Thoreau concluded, “you had better aim at something high.”

Over its long history, the Sierra Club has seen its share of both huge victories and bitter defeats. Thankfully, the former have far outnumbered the latter. But regardless of whether we have won or lost, we have always done our best to “aim at something high.” The chance to do that—and succeed—is what has drawn countless people to give their time and passion to this organization and its mission.

That mission—to inspire and empower humanity to explore, enjoy, and protect the wild places of

the Earth—has always been worthy. Now it has become critical.

The effects of climate disruption pose a threat unlike any other we have faced. Climate disruption threatens all the wild places we have fought so hard for more than 100 years to protect, as well as all humanity and every living thing. To respond, we must aim not only higher but also truer than ever before—for we might not get a second shot.

This Strategic Plan attempts to make our aim as true as it can be during these next few, crucial decades. It begins by setting goals—ambitious ones—that we believe are both essential and achievable. Some of these goals are quite specific, such as 100 percent clean energy or 30 million acres of newly protected lands. Others, such as becoming a diverse and inclusive organization, enhancing the democratic and grassroots nature of the Sierra Club, or embracing cutting-edge communications and digital tools for change, may be harder to measure. All of them, though, are necessary to our future success.

Defining our goals, however, is only a starting point. Just as important is knowing how we want to achieve those goals. Given the magnitude of the challenges that face us, and the power of the entities that are already resisting change, it's clear that we need to enlist every possible ally in our cause. A Sierra Club that consists of predominantly white, middle-class environmentalists — no matter how dedicated — cannot succeed. It is essential that we not only embrace but also actively work toward building a Sierra Club that reflects the true diversity of America. Only by doing so can we engage and empower a movement of the size and power required to bring about the changes the planet needs.



The purpose of the Sierra Club has always been to both inspire and empower humanity. From the moment John Muir took Teddy Roosevelt to Yosemite, we have worked toward creating that “ah-ha” moment when an individual realizes that he or she can and must take action for the planet. More than a century’s worth of experience has reminded us how those moments can be created on the trail. We also know that the same kind of inspiration can come at a hearing, when a mother of a child with asthma discovers her voice as a citizen. Those moments can come in the streets, when a student group is surrounded by hundreds of thousands of like-minded people. Whether they happen on the trail, at a march,

in members’ living rooms, over the airwaves, or while reading a tweet on a smartphone, such moments are what will make the difference. Today, we must scale those moments as never before, while providing the tools and resources people can use to elevate those moments into action.

Although this plan focuses primarily on the organization’s topline national goals and campaigns, it is important to recognize that our greatest asset has always been our grassroots. The Sierra Club’s grassroots volunteers run hundreds of campaigns at the local, state, regional, national, and international levels that, although they might not always be priorities of the national organization, remain essential to our greater mission. Many of these grassroots campaigns further the goals of our national campaigns and some may, over time, become national priority campaigns. As we evolve and build a high-performance organization, it must be capable of supporting the work of the Sierra Club at all levels. To reach our goals, we must support the people of the Sierra Club, through trainings, by providing resources, and by enhancing the integration and efficiency of the organization at all levels.

This plan would not have been possible without significant input from Sierra Club leaders, members, and allies. We are grateful for all of your time and thoughts. It also draws from a variety of campaign and change-management plans that have been developed by volunteer and staff teams over time.

The world is a volatile, complex place. To chart and navigate our course for decades to come may be to tempt divine ridicule. Yet aim we must if we want to succeed. By adopting bold goals for the future and working for solutions that steer us toward those goals, we can achieve not only a stronger, more effective Sierra Club but also a safer, healthier world.

[Michael Brune](#)  
[Executive Director](#)  
[Sierra Club](#)





## II. VISIONARY GOALS

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IN THE COMING DECADES, THE SIERRA CLUB WILL ENLIST, INSPIRE, AND EMPOWER HUMANITY TO:

### **ACHIEVE AMBITIOUS AND JUST CLIMATE SOLUTIONS**

Solve the climate crisis in a way that protects the environment and also is enduring, fair, and equitable.

- Transition to 100 percent clean energy.
- Maximize energy efficiency across all sectors, including transportation, urban design, and land use.
- Return greenhouse gas concentrations to a safe level below 350 ppm.
- Address non-energy emissions such as agriculture and methane.
- Protect and rebuild the capacity of forests and other lands to absorb excess carbon dioxide and provide more robust climate resilience through supporting biodiversity and natural system functions.

### **EXPLORE, ENJOY, AND PROTECT OUR NATION'S LANDS, WATERS, AIR, AND WILDLIFE**

Steward our natural resources to safeguard them for present and future generations.

- Protect and restore wildlands and waterways to provide large and connected habitats in all ecosystems that will withstand climate change, and also provide suitable habitat for the protection and restoration of rare and endangered species.
- Defend our wild heritage, onshore and offshore, from extractive energy development. Put an end to damaging mining, logging, and other highly disruptive resource exploitation practices.
- Protect our air, water, land, and communities from pollution. Promote environmentally sensitive land use and urban design to minimize sprawl, provide a healthy environment for all, and minimize resource use.

- Ensure that all who live in the United States have access to natural areas, including in or near their communities, as well as the opportunity to experience the natural world through Sierra Club outings or in other ways.

**TO ACCOMPLISH THESE GOALS, WE WILL:**

**ENGAGE AND SUPPORT A BROAD, DIVERSE, INCLUSIVE, AND POWERFUL MOVEMENT**

Attract and empower a base of supporters and activists strong enough to challenge the status quo and accomplish our ambitious programmatic goals.

- Engage the public, civil society, the business community, and other partners who share our values.
- Lead in diversifying the environmental movement to reflect the demographics of our society.
- Have the clout to influence public perception and public officials on our core issues, and to elect and hold accountable environmentally committed leaders at all levels of government.
- Help our activists, local communities, and allies win on the environmental issues most important to them. Engage in strategic alliances on broader issues if this can help further environmental causes and remain consistent with our values.

**BECOME AN EVER STRONGER, HIGH PERFORMANCE ORGANIZATION**

Function as a high-performance environmental organization by building on our legacy and embracing innovation.

- Build powerful, capable, diverse, and inclusive volunteer leadership nationally and in every state and major metropolitan area. Diversify the staff at all levels and develop and support within all staff clearly defined values, leadership, and core competencies to excel in their field. Build a strong partnership and

mutual respect between volunteers and staff.

- Foster an organizational culture that promotes results, accountability, learning, transparency, and good governance.
- Enhance the democratic and grassroots nature of the Sierra Club in a manner that balances centralized and decentralized power, on-the-ground and online mobilizing, and bottom-up, top-down decision-making.
- Maximize the effectiveness of our campaigns at the local, state, national, and international levels. Leverage all of our capacities, including communications, digital strategies, policy, organizing, and legal.



**ENSURE OUR FINANCIAL STRENGTH AND SUSTAINABILITY**

Ensure that the Sierra Club and its entities have a combination of diverse, secure, sustainable, and flexible funding that will enable us to:

- Win on our priority work and, where feasible, leverage our resources to help our movement allies win, too.
- Adapt to change as new opportunities and challenges arise.
- Invest in organizational capacity.
- Ensure that all of our chapters and groups have the financial resources and opportunities to succeed.





### III. BACKGROUND

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These visionary goals and the strategies to achieve them were developed over the course of the past year through a broad, consultative process. Senior volunteer and staff leadership held two retreats and considered input from advisory committees, campaign teams and local leaders. We evaluated the Sierra Club’s strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT), based on the legacy of our work to date, an assessment of our current political and economic context, and a review of our peer organization’s strategic directions. This section provides a brief summary of the background which informs our goals and strategies. For more detail, see Appendices E: Strategic Planning Process; C: Historical Timeline; and D: SWOT Analysis.

#### A. SIERRA CLUB HISTORY

Over time, the Sierra Club has steadily evolved to respond to changing times, threats, opportunities, and challenges. As we embark on another major expansion of our work, it is helpful to look back at previous important stages in our organizational and programmatic growth.

#### Explore, Enjoy, Protect

**Focus:** The Sierra Club was founded in 1892, originally to focus on exploring, enjoying, protecting, and rendering accessible the mountain regions of the Pacific Coast and particularly the Sierra Nevada in California. Up until the 1960s, conservation campaigns focused almost exclusively on public land and wild river protection.

**Strategy:** The Club’s primary tool to achieving success was having volunteer leaders lobby influential decision makers. Outings were an important vehicle for introducing people to wild areas and inspiring their passion to protect them.

**Structure:** During this period, the Club was small and based primarily in California. Membership required sponsorship by an existing member, which kept the Club exclusive, small, and mostly white.

**Successes:** The Sierra Club was instrumental in establishing and defending most of the early national parks in the United States and establishing the National Wilderness Preservation System.



## Lands, Pollution, and Expansion of Volunteer Leadership and Professional Staff

**Focus:** By the late 1960s, in addition to land preservation efforts, environmental quality issues became a major national concern. The Club expanded its agenda to include air pollution, water pollution, toxic substance regulation and cleanup, and other pressing issues.

**Strategy:** The Club started running big national campaigns that relied on a broad variety of new tools including litigation, exhibit-format books, movies, full-page newspaper ads, petitions, action alerts, and rallies. We also leveraged new developments such as the first images of Earth from space, the Cuyahoga River catching fire, and worsening urban smog, to inspire action to protect the planet and its resources.

**Structure:** The Club expanded to have chapters in every state, with staff lobbyists in many of the state legislatures. Volunteer committees were expanded to address a wider variety of external and internal programs. The Club hired organizers, communications specialists, and lobbyists to run

big, nationally coordinated campaigns. This major national lobbying presence led to the loss of the Club's tax deductible status and firmly established our reputation as an advocacy organization. The Sierra Club Foundation was established in the 1960s, and ever since the Club has raised and spent tax-deductible funds in cooperation with the Foundation. The Sierra Club Legal Defense Fund was also established as a separate organization to represent the Club in environmental litigation. During this period, the Club also started an international program and established political action committees.

**Successes:** Establishment of the Wilderness Preservation System and national seashores. Stopping dams in the Grand Canyon. Passage of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act, National Forest Management Act, Federal Land Policy and Management Act, and the enactment of dozens of state wilderness bills. Establishment of the Environmental Protection Agency and passage of the National Environmental Policy Act. Enactment of a raft of major anti-pollution bills, including the Clean Air Act, Clean Water Act, Safe Drinking Water Act, Resource Conservation and Recovery Act, Toxic Substances Control Act, and Superfund.





## Partnership and Climate Change

**Focus:** By 1990 it was becoming clear that the environmental community could not prevail any longer just by mobilizing card-carrying environmentalists. To win the day we would need to enlist a broad spectrum of allies including people of color, people of faith, labor, hunters, anglers, and pro-environmental business leaders who shared our values. In 2005, the Club held an historic Sierra Summit where hundreds of leaders from across the country told the Board that the time was ripe to launch a huge new campaign to combat climate change. This led to the establishment of the Climate Recovery Partnership and the Club adopting major campaigns to promote 100 percent clean energy.

**Strategy:** We branched out and started work on environmental justice issues, international trade, and human rights. We developed campaigns that resonated on Main Street in local communities through the Environmental Public Education Campaign (EPEC) and the Building Environmental Communities (BEC) programs. We started an Environmental Partnerships program and established the Blue-Green Alliance. We also leveraged public

awareness, heightened by Hurricane Katrina and Al Gore's film, *An Inconvenient Truth*.

**Structure:** The organization grew to 63 chapters, 373 groups and 600 national and chapter staff in about 90 offices. The Club is still volunteer run and volunteer governed, but as a complex \$100 million-per-year organization it requires a professional staff to work in partnership with its volunteer leaders.

**Successes:** Beyond Coal Campaign; preventing KXL tar sands pipeline approval; higher automobile efficiency standards; new national monuments such as the San Gabriel Mountains and Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks.

## B. THE CONTEXT FOR OUR WORK

While many different themes came up in the strategic planning comments and discussions, there was a large degree of consensus around some of the top factors that influence our work.

### Voter Views on Environmental Issues

Historically, environmental issues have been broadly supported by the American people and by the major political parties. Today, polls at the national and state levels continue to reveal strong support for clean air, clean water, and action on climate change. In the last

election, local land conservation was a big winner. However, environmental issues are judged by the electorate to be second or third tier, so the voters that do show up at the polls vote for candidates who promise them better economic times and security. Anti-environmental campaigns paint environmental protection as unaffordable and a job killer, when just the opposite is true.

## Partisan Politics in Washington, D.C.

The present political climate stands in marked contrast to our history of bipartisan cooperation on environmental issues. Now, unfortunately, climate change has become a touchstone issue, largely dividing politicians along party lines. We can still count on limited Republican support for certain land protection, energy efficiency, and renewable energy programs. However, we are seeing aggressive partisan attacks on core environmental protections, such as the Clean Air and Water Acts, as well as resistance to proactive measures to fight climate change and promote clean energy. Currently, we depend heavily on successful executive action. For long-term success, we will need to shift the balance of power in Washington and change the calculus of climate action. Being weak on climate and clean energy issues will become a big liability for politicians, regardless of party.

## Challenges and Opportunities at the State and Local Levels

Historically, the states and municipalities have been major incubators for innovation and leadership on environmental issues. This is particularly important given that many land-use, climate adaptation, and energy decisions are made at the local level. Today, anti-environmental forces have taken over a majority of the statehouses and governorships, threatening local progress. We are also seeing sophisticated opposition to clean energy progress, with damaging legislation being introduced in one state after another, and then being brought to the federal level. Despite these setbacks, states

and localities continue to offer some of the best examples of land conservation and progress toward 100 percent clean energy. The challenge will be to string these successes together to form a broad and powerful movement.



## Vote Suppression and Dirty Money in Politics

Pro-environment voters are not turning out in elections, particularly in off-year non-presidential election cycles. This is coupled with conscious, cynical voter suppression to keep certain voters from participating. Anti-environment candidates are being bankrolled by polluters, largely thanks to Citizens United and other anti-democratic decisions. The airwaves are filled at election times with negative independent expenditure ads that scare voters and turn them off from voting. Fighting voter suppression and dirty money in politics through the Democracy Initiative and other efforts will require broad alliances beyond just the environmental movement.

## Economic Factors

One of our greatest challenges has been our opponents' success in framing environmental issues as being in opposition to economic development. Since voters consistently rank the environment after jobs and security on their list of top concerns, we can only succeed by exposing the fallacy of that framing. This task is made easier by the fact that clean energy is increasingly becoming cheaper and creating more jobs than dirty energy sources. The divestment movement has helped bring attention



to the high risk of investments in fossil fuel assets, which are likely to remain stranded as we become more serious about fighting climate change and clean energy sources surge. Increasingly, activists are learning to leverage not only their votes, but also their consumer dollars.



## Other Organizations

While the challenges are daunting, we are far from alone in the fight. We work closely with traditional allies, including other large environmental groups, and are steadily developing new alliances. At times we disagree about strategy, but our differing constituencies and approaches typically add to our power. Increasingly, we are working with new diverse allies who share our values to regularly and visibly demonstrate deep, diverse, and powerful commitment to our cause. In the early years, the Club was among a handful of conservation groups on the local and national scene. Today there are thousands of groups who work to promote environmental and justice causes. Some focus primarily on lobbying or organizing, others on litigation. Some have a grassroots network and governance and others are staff-driven. Some are primarily on the ground, while others are primarily online. The Club probably has the widest scope of issues, geographic presence, and variety of campaign tools and tactics. We also have the deepest bench of volunteer leaders nationwide. Having a vast and diverse network to collaborate with allows our movement to share responsibility and build off each others' strengths.

## Changing Forms of Engagement and Communication

The ways that the public chooses to become involved with organizations has been steadily changing and remains dynamic. The Club's first 100 years presumed that face-to-face meetings, outings, and print publications sent to our dues-paying membership were the way to run an organization and a campaign. Today, many people are less interested in joining an organization as a member, attending meetings, and receiving print publications from organizations that they join. They want to make a difference and are willing to donate to a cause, but prefer to have an informal relationship and are mainly interested in participating online, at least initially. The Club is developing engagement and communications tools to attract and serve both audiences and to move as many members and supporters as possible up the ladder of engagement. Achieving success on conservation goals always depends on building and sustaining relationships—within the Club and with our partner organizations—and we will continue to use and enhance all the available communication channels to do so.

## Environmental Inequity

The advocacy work of the mainstream environmental groups, however well intentioned, has all-too-frequently overlooked how their solutions may disproportionately people of low income communities and communities of color. "You can't enlist humanity if you only speak for half the population," noted environmental justice activist Gail Swanson in Green 2.0's 2014 report, *State of Diversity in Environmental Organizations*. Given the relevance of our mission, the disparities embedded in the issues on which we work, the severity of the challenge, and the scale of our opposition, we cannot afford to postpone or deny our need to change and address the justice dimension of every environmental issue.



## IV. STRATEGIES

Based on our contextual review, it became clear that the Sierra Club has a unique and important role to play. This section describes our ongoing strategies to achieve each of our high-level visionary goals. Appendix B: Building Blocks, contains a summary of the ongoing initiatives that underlie many of these strategic directions. In addition, Appendix A: Short and Medium Term Goals and Metrics, provides details about the interim objectives we plan to achieve on our path toward the visionary goals. Far more detailed strategies can be found in backup campaign plans and other resource documents for programs.

### A. ACHIEVE AMBITIOUS AND JUST CLIMATE SOLUTIONS

Solve the climate crisis in a way that protects the environment and also is enduring, fair, and equitable.

- Transition to 100 percent clean energy.
- Maximize energy efficiency across all sectors, including transportation, urban design, and land use.
- Return greenhouse gas concentrations to a safe level below 350 ppm.

- Address non-energy emissions such as agriculture and methane.
- Protect and rebuild the capacity of forests and other lands to absorb excess carbon dioxide and provide more robust climate resilience through supporting biodiversity and natural system functions.

In 2005, more than 5,300 Sierra Club members and supporters gathered for the Sierra Summit, where they decided to make climate disruption a top priority for the organization. This led to the creation of a number of key initiatives to move us beyond fossil fuels and nuclear power toward a 100 percent clean energy future. (If you are reading this document online you can click on the hotlinks below for additional information.)

### [Beyond Coal](#)

Together with over 100 allied organizations, the Sierra Club has defeated 184 proposed coal-fired power plants that would have emitted 642 million metric tons of CO<sub>2</sub> annually, which is about 10 percent of the annual CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent U.S. emissions. In 2010, the campaign turned its attention to retiring



the existing 522 coal plants and replacing them with energy efficiency, wind, solar, and geothermal rather than natural gas, biomass, or nuclear power. Supporting local implementation of strong EPA rules on power plants will be a priority.

## [Beyond Natural Gas](#)

Like many of our initiatives, the Sierra Club's opposition to natural gas— particularly fracking— started with local efforts. This work has paid off in places like New York, where Governor Andrew Cuomo in December 2014 announced a permanent ban on hydraulic fracturing. In California, having secured the end of coal, we have turned our attention to eliminating natural gas, the last significant source of carbon emissions in the electric sector. We will continue to expand this work to other states.

## [Beyond Oil](#)

We are seeking to reduce both the demand for, and supply of oil in a variety of ways, including: increasing fuel efficiency standards; promoting electric and plug-in hybrid vehicles; and fighting pipelines, oil trains, export terminals, and new drilling. We are working to reduce vehicle miles driven by promoting public transportation and walkable and bikeable communities. These communities not only lower carbon emissions, they are also healthier, safer, more appealing, and provide better access to jobs and services.

## [Keeping Dirty Fuels in the Ground](#)

Fossil fuel exploitation currently proposed on our public lands by coal, oil, and gas companies would release more than 100 billion tons of carbon pollution into the atmosphere. Uranium mining is also destructive, dangerous, and polluting. Our strategies to address this are described in the next section.

## [International Commitment](#)

The Sierra Club is working to establish strong federal and international policies and treaties that will help solve the global climate crisis and address the need for access to sustainable energy worldwide. The



Club collaborates with and provides training for local activists. The Club also issues an annual report on the global movement to move beyond coal.

## [Climate Justice and Local Initiatives](#)

The challenge of transforming the fossil fuel-based energy economy to 100 percent clean energy presents the opportunity to fundamentally break with the market-driven and exploitive relationships and dynamics of the past and embrace policy solutions and institutional relationships predicated on environmental, economic, and racial justice. The effects of climate change and the tools to address it are found by and large at the local level. The Sierra Club works within communities across the country to eradicate specific sources of pollution and the impacts of climate change, and promote clean energy. We are particularly committed to working with the front-line communities that disproportionately bear the brunt of climate disruption and economic disempowerment. In order to win on climate issues the solutions we propose should be economically beneficial to all.

## [Building the Public Will for 100 Percent Clean Energy](#)

While the Sierra Club celebrates our many local, state, national, and international climate victories, we realize that individual victories will never happen fast enough. We must end the use of all fossil fuels and nuclear power at a pace that many skeptics and opponents say is unrealistic. To do this, we need to

shift the national narrative about clean energy from “experimental, expensive, and unstable” to “reliable, clean, and affordable.” A key role for the Sierra Club will be to set ambitious clean energy targets and build the public will to meet them. Already, governments, businesses, utilities, and nonprofits representing over 45 million people have shifted or are committed to shifting over the next few decades to 100 percent renewable energy in at least one sector. We will build on this momentum.

*It is the role of the Sierra Club to advocate for the leading edge of what’s presently believed possible and then effect political change to ensure that progress keeps pace with the urgency of the climate science. In the absence of technological and economic barriers, it is our role to set an aspirational goal and create the considerations for political progress on a timeline consistent with the science, but predicated on the need for action.*

– Final Report of the Sierra Club Climate Movement Task Force, May 2014

## **B. EXPLORE, ENJOY AND PROTECT OUR NATION’S LANDS, WATERS, AIR, AND WILDLIFE**

Steward our natural resources to safeguard them for present and future generations.

- Protect and restore wildlands and waterways to provide large and connected habitats in all ecosystems that will withstand climate change, and also provide suitable habitat for the protection and restoration of rare and endangered species.
- Defend our wild heritage, onshore and offshore, from extractive energy development. Put an end to damaging mining, logging, and other highly disruptive resource exploitation practices.
- Protect our air, water, land, and communities from pollution. Promote environmentally sensitive land use and urban design to minimize sprawl, provide a healthy environment for all, and

minimize resource use.

- Ensure that all who live in the United States have access to natural areas, including in or near their communities, as well as the opportunity to experience the natural world through Sierra Club outings or in other ways.

The Club’s recently redesigned [Our Wild America](#) Campaign integrates our work on protecting wild lands and waters, forests, and wildlife. It includes sub-campaigns to keep dirty fuels in the ground, protect nearby nature, and promote and provide access for more people from all walks of life to enjoy the outdoors. Vital work on air, land, and water protection also occurs at the group and chapter levels outside the national Our Wild America Campaign.

America is blessed with millions of acres of wild natural places and coastal waters that are held in public trust for everyone’s benefit. Public lands contain the forests that help sequester greenhouse gases and slow climate change. They contain wetlands and streams that purify our water and help prevent flooding and storm damage. They are home to plants and animals, and they are the key to maintaining biodiversity. They are the places that we visit for rejuvenation and respite from the daily grind. They are also job creators and economic engines for the surrounding communities. Each and every American inherits a birthright to these lands, but current plans to develop these lands and waters for dirty fuels is threatening to damage sensitive areas irreparably at a time when climate disruption is increasing the severity of floods, fires, and drought. We are currently at a critical juncture in protecting our public national heritage.

### **Protecting Wild Lands and Waters**

Over the Club’s history we have helped to protect over 250 million acres of public lands and waters as wilderness, national parks, wild and scenic rivers, marine sanctuaries, and other protected areas. There are over 150 million additional acres of ecologically



important wild public lands and waters that still need protection. These include both remote wilderness areas and open space in close proximity to urban centers. It is a sign of the Sierra Club's effectiveness that we have continued to expand significantly our inventory of protected areas despite the hostile federal political environment. In the coming years, we plan to leverage our membership and new allies to conserve public lands by securing permanent protections, preserve lands and waters for the public trust in perpetuity, and ensure that state and national forests are managed in the most optimal way in the face of climate change. We envision a national network of protected connected wild lands and marine areas that preserve America's wildlife, as well as cultural and recreational heritage.

### Keeping Dirty Fuels in the Ground

One of the biggest threats to our lands and waters is the development and burning of dirty fossil fuels and uranium. New aggressive technologies such as hydraulic fracturing (fracking) and acidization have created a new oil and gas boom, opening up millions of acres of lands and waters once inaccessible to dirty fuel extraction. This fracking boom poisons the air and water. Once oil and gas is extracted, it is transported through an aging and unsafe infrastructure of exploding oil trains, tanker ships, and leaking pipelines to be refined and exported, threatening communities across the nation.

Scientists tell us that 80 percent of the known fossil fuel reserves must be left unburned if we are to protect the earth and avoid exceeding the life-threatening 3.6 degrees Fahrenheit increase. The Sierra Club and its allies are working to keep climate-disrupting dirty fuels in the ground by stopping destructive leases on our public lands and waters, securing public safety measures to minimize dangerous transport of fossil fuels and uranium, ending fracking for oil and gas, and ensuring that our nation does not export dirty fuels to other countries.

### Building a Movement to Explore, Enjoy,

### and Protect

Our public lands, water, air and wildlife are fundamental assets that belong to all of us as part of our American legacy, but maintaining them depends upon keeping their importance central in an increasingly diverse voting populace. We organize and mobilize a diverse and powerful national movement to ensure our nation's public assets of lands, water, air, and wildlife provide all Americans fundamental natural, health, recreational, and cultural benefits. The Sierra Club helps provide outdoor experiences for over 265,000 youth, adults, and veterans each year. Connecting people and communities to the outdoors builds our movement and supports public health and community needs. In coming years, we will grow these efforts by expanding our existing base and recruiting broad and diverse constituencies to enjoy wild natural places of all sorts and sizes and build on those experiences to inspire them to be active advocates working to protect the places that they love.

### Local Action

Every year our local activists are cleaning up streams or suing to stop toxic air pollution. They are fighting sprawl and promoting walkable, bike-friendly communities served by mass transit while protecting open space and nearby nature. These efforts are vital to provide a clean, safe, healthy environment for all living things. The Clean Air Act and Clean Water Act held out the promise that all of our skies and waters would be cleaned up. While we have made substantial progress over the past 45 years, the task is not complete, and millions of Americans still live in communities where the air and water does not meet federal standards.

### **C. ENGAGE AND SUPPORT A BROAD, DIVERSE, INCLUSIVE, AND POWERFUL MOVEMENT**

Attract and empower a base of supporters and activists strong enough to challenge the status quo and accomplish our ambitious programmatic goals.

- Engage the public, civil society, the business community, and other partners who share our values.
- Lead in diversifying the environmental movement to reflect the demographics of our society.
- Have the clout to influence public perception and public officials on our core issues, and to elect and hold accountable environmentally committed leaders at all levels of government.

Help our activists, local communities, and allies win on the environmental issues most important to them. Engage in strategic alliances on broader issues if this can help further environmental causes and remain consistent with our values.



At the People’s Climate March in New York City in September 2014, many signs carried the words: “To change everything, we need everyone.” That phrase best captures why we need a movement to solve a huge problem like climate change, when the political institutions and the powerful financial resources of the global fossil fuel industry are determined to block meaningful action. A basic tenet of political reform is that to overcome the power of dirty money you must have the power of people. We also need to work to direct major financial investments into

projects that will solve our environmental problems in a just way.

The march represented a powerful moment when over 400,000 people (including 25,000 Sierra Club members) took to the streets of New York. That same day there were over 200 parallel events in 162 countries. The march was not just environmental activists—it included 1,574 partner organizations representing climate justice and front-line communities, labor, people of faith, indigenous groups, scientists, civil rights organizations, and more.

That one-day gathering represented just an iota of the potential movement. For another data point, the Renewables 100 Policy Institute notes that there are “8 Countries, 45 Cities, 51 Regions, 8 Utilities, 21 NonProfit/Educational/Public Institutions, totaling more than 45 million people (and counting...) who have shifted or are committed to shifting within the next few decades to 100 percent renewable energy in at least one sector (e.g., electricity, transportation, heating/cooling).”

*“If everyone who’s passionate about climate change, who gets that we’re living in a moment in which the fate of the Earth and of humanity is actually being decided, found their place in the movement, amazing things could happen. What’s happening now is already remarkable enough, just not yet adequate to the crisis. The climate movement has proved to be bigger and more effective than it looks, because most people don’t see a single movement. If they look hard, what they usually see is a wildly diverse mix of groups facing global issues on the one hand and a host of local ones on the other.”*

– Rebecca Solnit writes in her essay [Everything’s Coming Together While Everything Falls Apart](#)

To see the full depth of the emerging climate movement one must look to Denton, Texas, the birthplace of fracking, where the city actually enacted a ban on the practice last November. Look



at Oregon and Washington, where port cities and communities all the way up the rail lines, rivers, and highways to the coalfields are rallying to ban coal exports. Or Florida, where activists continue to fight offshore oil leasing. In Detroit, frontline communities are standing up to coal pollution and tar sands waste contamination. The Cowboy and Indian Alliance from the Northern Great Plains, which brought its protest against the KXL pipeline to the National Mall in Washington, D.C., is another powerful example of the people rising up to protest dirty energy policies and promote climate solutions. We also need to build on our collaboration with international organizations and partners.

At the same time, in recent years the Club has taken some important first steps to build alliances with other movements. Notable among those efforts are the Club's leadership (along with the Communications Workers of America, the NAACP and Greenpeace) in creating the Democracy Initiative; the Club and the United Steelworkers establishing the Blue-Green Alliance; our blogs and our encouragement of volunteers and staff to support #Black Lives Matter and the Fight for 15 to support a living wage. Building alliances across and among movements will take many forms in the coming years, and the Club should both respond to and look for opportunities to highlight the intersectionality of our movements. [See <http://www.yesmagazine.org/planet/get-intersectional-why-your-movement-can-t-go-it-alone>]

We have much to build on, but much more to do in order to set ourselves up for success. Ultimately, what is being assembled as a climate movement today needs to broaden and merge to form a movement that can address the full range of environmental and justice issues. We will also need to use this movement to help restore our democracy so that people, not money, create a bright and hopeful future for our society and for the earth.

## **D. BECOME AN EVER STRONGER, HIGH-PERFORMANCE ORGANIZATION**

Function as a high-performance environmental organization by building on our legacy and embracing innovation.

- Build powerful, capable, diverse, and inclusive volunteer leadership nationally and in every state and major metropolitan area. Diversify the staff at all levels and develop and support within all staff clearly defined values, leadership and core competencies to excel in their field. Build a strong partnership and mutual respect between volunteers and staff.
- Foster an organizational culture that promotes results, accountability, learning, transparency, and good governance.
- Enhance the democratic and grassroots nature of the Sierra Club in a manner that balances centralized and decentralized power, on-the-ground and online mobilizing, and bottom-up, top-down decision-making.
- Maximize the effectiveness of our campaigns at the local, state, national, and international levels. Leverage all of our capacities, including communications, digital strategies, policy, organizing, and legal.

The Sierra Club has steadily evolved over its long history to respond to changing circumstances. Our history shows we have adopted new and different structures, technologies, programs, capacities, and strategies to maintain our leadership and effectiveness. We must continue to be nimble and evolve in order to solve daunting environmental challenges, remain relevant in the face of dramatically changing demographics, and become the organization of the future that millions will want to join and support.

In the years ahead the Club will continue to adopt new tools so it can continue to join with local activists to tackle local and global problems. The

Sierra Club will need to be agile, efficient, solutions-oriented, and embrace the racial and cultural diversity that America presents, while staying true to its core values.

The leadership of the Club has already identified a number of key change processes that are underway to help transform the Sierra Club. Initially, this change will focus on:

### Becoming a More Diverse, Inclusive, and Equitable Organization

The Club has adopted three goals to promote Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI): 1) Foster an inclusive organizational and workplace culture that nurtures and retains diverse, engaged teams of staff and volunteers; 2) Ensure that DEI competency is an ongoing, welcoming learning cycle across all organizational work; 3) Ensure that our programmatic outcomes reflect our commitment to justice and equity. Leadership development and strategic partnerships are core strategies for long-

term, sustained success. This transformation started slowly in 1976, and the Board has now agreed to accelerate the pace of change and has adopted a multi-year DEI organizational plan.

### Nurturing Existing, New, and Diverse Leaders

Sierra Club leaders must possess the skills required to carry our organization forward in the years ahead. All levels of the organization will need to develop the necessary capacities to thrive and succeed in the new, evolving Sierra Club. Leadership development was identified by the Council of Club Leaders as its top priority in a 2014 survey, and it emerged as the top priority at the Board-Executive Team February 2015 planning retreat. The Chapter Capacity Wheel (a tool to assess and measure a chapter's ability to carry out various essential functions) has been adopted as a way to measure existing leadership capacity and to identify locations in which we will need to better develop those skills while holding our leadership accountable. Also, leaders throughout the Club—starting with the Board and the senior staff—have made a commitment to be accountable by planning, measuring, and tracking results.

### Developing and Adopting New Digital Tools and Platforms

Our new digital information system (CORE) can help us improve the management and flow of information about our membership and network to better serve our community and make us more effective. We have also invested in a new online engagement and campaigning tool (AddUp) that will enable our activists, leaders, and staff to identify and involve millions of new supporters to move them up the ladder of engagement and become future leaders and donors. We will also revamp our internal information network and replace Clubhouse with CAMPFIRE, so volunteers and staff have a more user-friendly resource hub.

None of these initiatives alone is sufficient for the organization to move forward. We must be





successful at all three, as well as integrate one into the other, to make a compelling and powerful Sierra Club. The Board and staff will identify and prioritize other change processes needed to keep us on track to achieve our ambitious goals.

## **E. ENSURE OUR FINANCIAL STRENGTH AND SUSTAINABILITY**

Ensure that the Sierra Club and its entities have a combination of diverse, secure, sustainable, and flexible funding that will enable us to:

- Win on our priority work and, where feasible, leverage our resources to help our movement allies win, too.
- Adapt to change as new opportunities and challenges arise.
- Invest in organizational capacity.
- Ensure that all of our chapters and groups have the financial resources and opportunities to succeed.

Increasingly, over the last ten years, very large restricted grants have enabled the Sierra Club to scale up certain campaigns to an entirely new level of activity. These resources have also provided

crucial overhead revenues to support our core infrastructure. However, much of the funding has come from a limited number of sources, leaving us vulnerable to changes in funders' priorities. Moreover, they have been mostly focused on a limited number of campaigns, leaving other priorities underfunded.

At the same time, membership dues, donations and other sources of net unrestricted funding have declined, leaving us with fewer resources to support our regional and political work, invest in reserves or staff and volunteer development, or pay for core infrastructure.

In the coming years, the Sierra Club will prioritize diversifying our funding sources and increasing the flexibility of those funds. We will work to align our fundraising and budgeting with our strategic priorities and donor intent, as well as to balance fiscal prudence with programmatic urgency and need. We will also continue to expand our efforts to raise money at the local level and will explore new opportunities for online fundraising and business partnerships.





## V. NEXT STEPS

The process of developing this strategic plan has been valuable, but its greatest utility will be realized when it is put to use in the years to come. It is a living document, which will help us unite around a common vision and shared priorities, and help us allocate our scarce resources accordingly. We will need to:

### Articulate Core Values

At the February 2015 retreat, the Board and senior staff decided to engage Club leaders and stakeholders in articulating our core values. This process will occur in the latter half of 2015 and the results will be incorporated into the strategic plan as an appendix once it is adopted. A new task force will be established to complete this work.

### Communicate our Vision

The core components of the vision will be distilled

into talking points and PowerPoint slides to be shared with numerous audiences. While the full plan is intended for an internal audience, we will develop shorter versions for supporters, allies, and the general public. The Communications Department and The Visibility and Outreach Committee will play a leading role in this work.

### Align Planning and Budgeting

The plan's overarching goals should serve as a foundation for the 2016 budget process, as well as future planning and budgeting efforts at all levels of the organization. Since much of our funding is restricted, we will focus on maximizing the impact of our unrestricted dollars to advance our goals, and seek new, like-minded donors. The Finance and Risk Committee and Advancement Department will support planning, budgeting, and fundraising throughout the organization.



## Refine Goals and Metrics

After the plan is approved, the short- and medium-term goals (Appendix A) will continue to be updated as DEI, Movement Building, and other goals are finalized. In addition, our annual top-level organizational goals and more detailed campaign and departmental goals and metrics will be reviewed for alignment with the Club's visionary goals. All of these goals and metrics, and our progress on meeting them, will be reviewed with the Board on an annual basis. The Chief-of-Staff and National Program Director and her Deputy will have primary responsibility for this work, together with relevant taskforces and campaign leads.

## Implement Existing Organizational Priorities

The strategic plan reaffirms our commitment to several significant initiatives, including: Diversity, Equity and Inclusion; building a broader movement; rolling out new digital tools; and creating the public will for 100 percent clean energy. Implementation of these initiatives will be overseen by the Diversity Steering Committee, Digital Strategies, and Communications. The Climate Movement Task Force is scheduled to sunset in May 2015, so longer-term guidance on movement building needs to be assigned.

## Elevate Grassroots Capacity and Accountability

Participants in the February 2015 retreat chose this as a top priority in coming years. Using the Chapter Capacity Wheel, we have already identified our first priorities: leadership development and diversity. The Chapter and Leader Support Team and Volunteer

Leadership Advisory Committee will take a lead on these efforts. We will need to focus on grassroots capacity, leadership, and accountability at group, chapter, national and international levels. The Club will need further examination about how best to enable grassroots led campaigns.

## Become a High Performance Organization

While we do not have the capacity to take on any additional large organizational changes right now, there are many smaller ways in which we can improve our governance and effectiveness. Eventually, we may want to consider additional organizational or structural changes. In the meantime, we can learn by experimenting with various organizational models. The Board and Senior Management/Executive Team are already doing much of this work, with contributions from Human Resources and other parts of the organization.

Update and Monitor the Strategic Plan – The Board should commit to reviewing and consider updating this plan on an ongoing basis and determine the mechanisms for ongoing implementation and monitoring. At the beginning of 2018, the Board should consider if it wants to update the entire plan or at least develop a new or updated set of short-term multi-year goals.

# APPENDIX A: MEDIUM- AND SHORT-TERM GOALS AND METRICS

## I. ACHIEVE AMBITIOUS AND JUST CLIMATE SOLUTIONS

Solve the climate crisis in a way that protects the environment and is enduring, fair, and equitable.

- Transition to 100 percent clean energy.
- Maximize energy efficiency across all sectors, including transportation, urban design, and land use.
- Return greenhouse gas concentrations to a safe level below 350 ppm.
- Address non-energy emissions such as agriculture and methane.
- Protect and rebuild the capacity of forests and other lands to absorb excess carbon dioxide and provide more robust climate resilience through supporting biodiversity and natural system functions.

### Medium-Term Goals (2020-2030)

- U.S. electric grid is 100 percent fossil fuel free by 2030. (Board approved)
- Reduce the carbon emissions from the oil sector by 50 percent by 2030. (Board approved)
- Strong majorities of the public and public officials at all levels believe that solving climate change and 100 percent clean energy is the right course and are willing to act on those beliefs. (Clean Energy Works)
- Limit tar sands imports to 2.1 million barrels per day by 2020, keeping U.S. oil sector emissions from increasing dramatically. (Dirty Fuels Campaign)
- International Climate Agreement is adopted and faithfully being implemented by all parties, setting us on the path to solve the climate crisis in a just fashion. Global emissions are being steadily reduced to meet goals.
- International Financial Institution lending is reformed to strengthen environmental and

social protections, increase investment in energy efficiency and renewable energy — especially for the poor — and reduce support for fossil fuels. (Federal and International Climate Campaign (FICC) long-term goal)

- Trade rules protect the environment and workers through enforceable environmental chapters, reform of investment rules, and flexibilities included for policies which protect the climate, such as limiting liquid natural gas exports. The proliferation of harmful trade rules and agreements is prevented. (FICC long-term goal)
- U.S. funding & support for international family planning is increased with no additional constraints or policy limitations. Global reproductive health, reproductive rights, and sustainable development initiatives are recognized — at the Sierra Club, in relevant national legislation, and in international treaties and plans of action related to sustainable development — as essential to combating climate change and environmental degradation. (FICC long term goal)

### Short-Term Goals (2015-2017)

#### Beyond Coal Campaign

- No new coal plants, coal-to-liquid plants, or coal-to-gas plants break ground in the U.S.
- No later than 2015, one third of coal-fired power plant megawatts are retired or under an enforceable agreement to retire no later than 2020, and the electricity generated by these retired coal plants is replaced with clean energy.
- No later than 2017, half of coal-fired power plant megawatts are retired or under an enforceable agreement to retire no later than 2025, and the electricity generated by these retired coal plants is replaced with clean energy.
- Restrict the supply of coal by stopping or delaying new mountaintop removal mining in



Appalachia and surface mining in the Powder River Basin, and by forcing industry to internalize the costs of mining through aggressive Clean Water and Clean Air Act enforcement.

- No new coal export infrastructure is constructed in the U.S.
- EPA finalizes the following rules no later than 2017: carbon for new and existing coal, water toxics (effluent limitation guidelines), and ozone.

### **Beyond Oil Campaign**

- President rejects permit for Keystone XL's northern segment.
- The 2025 light-duty vehicle standards are not lowered when reviewed in 2017 and new federal standards are created that reduce fuel consumption of middle-duty and heavy-duty vehicles by 40 percent.
- U.S. electric vehicle sales increased to cumulative total of 275,000 by the end of 2015.
- Fracking operations contained by cutting off their access to market through infrastructure wins (blocking pipelines and LNG export facilities).
- Commitments obtained from 2-3 major corporate fleets privately and 1-2 companies publicly to: 1) improve their fuel efficiency 15-25 percent over 5 years and 2) minimize their reliance on tar sands.
- Diverse Beyond Oil movement in North America established by 2015, characterized by the engagement of hundreds of traditional and non-traditional organizations and hundreds of thousands of individuals regularly acting independently and in concert.

### **Federal and International Climate Campaign**

- U.S. government agrees to take strong action within the context of an ambitious global climate agreement in 2015, which puts the world on a trajectory to reduce emissions to stay below a 2-degrees Celsius increase.
- International Financial Institution lending is reformed to strengthen environmental and

social protections, increase investment in energy efficiency and renewable energy especially for the poor, and reduce support for fossil fuels. (FICC long-term goal)

## **II. EXPLORE, ENJOY AND PROTECT OUR NATION'S LANDS, WATERS, AIR AND WILDLIFE**

Steward our natural resources to safeguard them for present and future generations.

- Protect and restore wildlands and waterways to provide large and connected habitats in all ecosystems to withstand climate change and protect and/or recover rare and endangered species.
- Defend our wild heritage, onshore and offshore, from extractive energy development. Put an end to damaging mining, logging, and other highly disruptive resource exploitation practices.
- Protect our air, water, land, and communities from pollution. Promote environmentally sensitive land use and urban design to minimize sprawl, provide a healthy environment for all, and minimize resource use.
- Ensure that all who live in the United States have access to natural areas, including in or near their communities, as well as the opportunity to experience the natural world through Sierra Club outings or in other ways.

### **Medium-Term Goals (2030)**

- 30 million acres of newly protected wild lands and waters are added to a national network of connected landscapes, providing human health, cultural, recreational, economic, and environmental benefits to all Americans.
- Americans from all walks of life discover and enjoy the outdoors and are inspired by personal experiences in nature to defend and expand our nation's public trust of land, water, air, and wildlife. The Sierra Club is the national leader in connecting Americans with the outdoors, getting an additional 1 million people outdoors by 2020.

- Our public lands and waters reduce, rather than contribute to, climate disruption. No new leasing and development of public lands and waters for fossil fuel development.

## Short-Term Goals (2015-2018)

### Permanent Protections

- 5 million acres of new landscape-level national monuments are designated.
- A national network of diverse leaders is established that advocates for public lands protection.
- Over 1 million acres of new wilderness is passed by Congress and signed by the president.
- Efforts to seize or privatize federal public lands are thwarted

### Protect Forests & Wildlife

- Conservation principles within forest plans under the 2012 National Forest Management Act rule (including “early adopter” forest plans) are strengthened.
- Our national forests are insulated from federal legislation that undermines or undoes the federal laws that protect them.
- Keystone/iconic species populations are recovering over large, connected landscapes.

### Keep Dirty Fuels in the Ground

- 10 million acres of public and private lands protected by passing strong reforms, moratoria, or bans.
- 100 billion metric tons of new carbon dioxide is not released from onshore and offshore leasing.
- Obama administration makes decision to keep dirty fuels in the ground based on potential carbon emissions.
- Liquefied natural gas (LNG) export terminals are prevented or delayed in the U.S.

### Nearby Nature

- Diverse public support and administrative policies result in greater investments in urban

parks, waters, greening initiatives, and programs that connect kids and youth with nature.

- Trail projects and outings are engaging new and diverse communities in outdoor opportunities, building networks of youth and young adults with a passion for conservation.

### In partnership with Sierra Club Outdoors and National Outings

- 500,000 people get outside annually through Sierra Club Outdoors and National Outings.
- A robust network of young and diverse leaders for conservation is trained, supported, and sustained. Engage and empower 2,000 youth and young adult (30 and under) leaders to lead outdoor trips and local, regional, and national delivery teams.
- Both the Department of Veterans Affairs and the Department of Defense integrate outdoor recreation resiliency training for veterans, servicemembers, and their families.
- 100 outings are conducted to celebrate the centennial of the National Park Service with a social media campaign to inspire thousands more.

## III. ENGAGE AND SUPPORT A BROAD, DIVERSE, INCLUSIVE, AND POWERFUL MOVEMENT

Attract and empower a base of supporters and activists strong enough to challenge the status quo and accomplish our ambitious programmatic goals.

- Engage the public, civil society, the business community, and other partners who share our values.
- Lead in diversifying the environmental movement to reflect the demographics of our society.
- Have the clout to influence public perception and public officials on our core issues and to elect and hold accountable environmentally committed leaders at all levels of government.
- Help our activists, local communities, and allies win on the environmental issues most important

to them. Engage in strategic alliances on broader issues if they can help further environmental causes and our consistent with our values.

## Medium-Term Goals (2030)

- The movement is diverse, inclusive, and equitable. Justice for all is recognized as a mission-critical goal. The movement has expanded beyond its progressive core and now includes a full spectrum of society that share our values of environmental protection and justice.
- The movement is recognized as a powerful political force that must be listened to by all major parties and decision-makers in the country.
- Dirty money is taken out of politics and people power is paramount at all levels of government. All segments of civil society have equal access to participation in government.
- Elect an environmental majority in the U.S. House of Representatives in 2022 after the next redistricting cycle.
- Elect environmental majorities in a majority of state legislatures in 2022 after the next redistricting cycle.
- Shift public opinion so that opposing efforts to curb climate change is as politically dangerous as supporting tobacco in most states and congressional districts.
- Add 10-12 million participants through AddUp and other Club-sponsored networks by 2030 (Digital Strategies – also listed below under High Performance Organization).

## Short-Term Goals (2015-2018)

Short-term goals from Climate Movement Task Force May 2014 report:

- Create a unifying frame for all Sierra Club's climate solutions work.
- Develop and expand ability to leverage key movement moments, aka tipping points.
- Develop and expand the core of committed volunteer leaders.

- Build chapter, group, and local organizing team ability to deliver on nationwide, state, and local strategies.
- Strengthen organizational competence to work across differences.

Re-examine and revise communications strategies to comport with environmental justice and diversity commitments. (Diversity Steering Committee)

- Our list grows to 6 million by 2018, with demographics shifting to reflect take-up of people of color and younger constituents. (Digital Strategies)
- Our movement is so politically strong that we have a climate hawk in the White House and a working pro-environment majority is restored in the U.S. Senate.

## IV. BECOME AN EVER STRONGER, HIGH PERFORMANCE ORGANIZATION

Function as a high performance environmental organization by building on our legacy and embracing innovation.

- Build powerful, capable, diverse, and inclusive volunteer leadership nationally and in every state and major metropolitan area. Diversify the staff at all levels and develop and support within all staff clearly defined values, leadership and core competencies to excel in their field. Build a strong partnership and mutual respect between the two.
- Foster an organizational culture that promotes results, accountability, learning, transparency, and good governance.
- Enhance the democratic and grassroots nature of the Sierra Club in a manner that balances centralized and decentralized power; on-the-ground and online mobilizing; bottom-up and top-down decision-making
- Maximize the impact of our campaigns at the local, state, national and international levels and leverage all of our capacities, including



communications and digital strategies, policy, organizing and legal.

## Medium-Term Goals (2030)

- The Club is a Multi-Cultural Organization: leverages the diversity of knowledge and perspectives that different groups bring to help shape the strategy, work, management and operating systems, along with core values and norms of the organization. DEI lens is applied to all facets of Club's work. Multi-Cultural Organization is described in detail in "The Multicultural Organization Development Model" by Bailey Jackson and Rita Hardiman, 2006.)
- Leaders and participants reflect the demographics of the communities in which the Club operates (Grassroots Effectiveness Team)
- Youth leadership and engagement is vested throughout the entire Club not siloed only in Sierra Student Coalition (Grassroots Effectiveness Team)
- By 2030, all chapters will have fully integrated the capacity assessment process into an annual planning process; no chapters are low performers in any capacity; all chapters are high performers in the capacities that the Club prioritizes. (Chapter Capacity and Leadership Team)
- The Chapters and National have developed a "mutually beneficial relationship" as "one in which a set of specific Club goals defined respectfully by chapters and national or by staff and volunteers, are each supported and advanced" and where "trust and teamwork continues always to grow as people get better and better at working together." We are interdependent where all parts of the Club intentionally build towards common purpose and movement creation. We act as an interdependent whole, delivering outcomes of high value to the Club. (from Chapter-National Relationship Task Force Report as adopted by the Board)
- Chapter and National Staff are viewed as one staff, are treated equitably, and routinely

collaborate to maximize effectiveness. (Chapter Staff Task Force report.)

- 10-12 million participants in AddUp and other Club-sponsored networks and communities. (repeat of goal under Movement Building above) (Mid-term vision for Digital Strategies)
- Sophisticated mobile technology allows for micro-campaigning, where many individuals can build campaigns on the fly that don't last long, but solve immediate, pinpointed problems. Sierra Club is now providing high-value digital services that help people understand their footprint and how that footprint aggregates up to the regional, national and global level. We simultaneously provide real-time opportunities to change things in the moment to adjust the outlook for a given problem. Example: Say your city is having a bad air day. You could immediately identify 3-5 things you could do to tune down your emissions, and then build an on-the-fly campaign to get people in your area to do the same. Regional leaders can band together and get many more people to do the same. All the while, we're showing in real-time how air pollution improves throughout the day as the campaign progresses. Adherents can monitor progress from their devices. (Mid-term vision for Digital Strategies)

## Short-Term Goals (2015-2018)

- The Club's data management systems (e.g. CORE) include easy-to-use, value-added functionality that enable and incentivize volunteer leaders to enter and manage volunteer-related data, e.g. event participation, topical interests, training, leadership roles. (Grassroots Effectiveness Team)
- In 2015, establish an accurate baseline of current chapter capacities, and use that information to develop a long-term chapter capacity building strategy and a 2016-2018 funding proposal. (Grassroots Effectiveness Team). Board identifies the top chapter capacities in addition to leadership that need improvement, and by

2018 substantial progress is demonstrated in those areas.

- Staff and volunteer leaders report increased confidence, in self and colleagues, to integrate and apply diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) and anti-oppression values to work. (DEI 2018 outcome)
- Staff and volunteers report Sierra Club as a welcoming and respectful place to work and volunteer, that values their contribution and talent. (DEI 2018 outcome)
- Community partners report Sierra Club as a respectful and reciprocal partner for justice and a vibrant element of the movement for an equitable and sustainable world. (DEI 2018 outcome)
- External outcomes demonstrate broader commitment to justice and equity. (DEI 2018 outcome)
- Demographics of staff, volunteer leaders, members and champions more closely reflect the communities we serve, particularly at the decision-making, leadership level. (DEI 2018 outcome)
- AddUp is as accepted as email as a means of digital campaigning, and is even more effective as a movement building platform. National and regional campaigns as well as local and regional Chapter work incorporate AddUp regularly to generate action, syndicate awareness and build capacity. (By 2018 for Digital Strategies)
- Offline/fieldwork uses AddUp and CORE to organize and populate events. (By 2018 for Digital Strategies)
- Revamp our internal information network and replace Clubhouse with CAMPFIRE, so volunteers and staff have a more user friendly resource hub.
- We've upped our online donations 3-fold via AddUp and new audiences. (By 2018 for Digital Strategies)
- We have a much better understanding of our list, and are able to target and automate marketing

efforts to our constituents. (By 2018 for Digital Strategies)

- Our list grows to 6 million, with demographics shifting to reflect take-up of people of color and younger constituents. (By 2018 for Digital Strategies)

## V. ENSURE OUR FINANCIAL STRENGTH AND SUSTAINABILITY

Ensure that the Sierra Club and its entities have a combination of diverse, secure, sustainable, and flexible funding that will enable us to:

- Win on our priority work and, where feasible, leverage our resources to help our movement allies win, too.
- Adapt to change as new opportunities and challenges arise.
- Invest in organizational capacity.
- Ensure all of our chapters and groups have the financial resources and opportunities to succeed.

### Medium- and Short-Term Goals

#### 1. Diversify funding sources and maximize funding flexibility

- a. Strive to have less than \* percent of our funding come from any single source (or top 5 or 10 sources).
- b. Maximize funding sources that provide program and capacity support.
- c. Major Gifts; online fundraising; Membership and Direct Marketing; and Business Partnership target #'s
- d. Ensure that ancillary revenue-generating activities generate a positive return on investment (ROI).

#### 2. Maintain adequate operating reserves and cash flow to ensure financial stability, as well as the ability to respond quickly in times of crisis or opportunity

- a. Unrestricted c(4) reserves of \* months and c(3) reserves of \* months of current operating expense budget.

- b.** The annual budget includes adequate allocation for “emergency response and opportunistic investment.”
- c.** Cash and cash equivalents equals or exceeds \* months of operating budget expenses.
- d.** Working capital ratio of 2.0.

**3. Ensure that programs and campaigns, chapters and groups have ample and stable funding**

- a.** Each major program or campaign has at least one anchor donor and 3 months of funding to carry forward at each year-end. Where a program or a campaign has at least one anchor donor, secure multiple large donors.
- b.** Each chapter’s unrestricted c(4) reserves are maintained at equal or greater than 6 months of the current year’s operating expense budget.

**4. Invest adequately in organizational capacity**

- a.** Across the organization, including chapters, employees are paid at least \* percent of current market comparables.
- b.** Our back office, legal (both business law and conservation law), technology, and capital investments are appropriate to the size of the organization. (Target needs to be determined)
- c.** Invest adequately in our fundraising and financial management capacity at the national and local levels.
- d.** Continue to invest adequately in chapter support and communications.

\*-Still being developed and numbers not available at press time.



# APPENDIX B: STRATEGIC BUILDING BLOCKS OF THE SIERRA CLUB, 2000-2015

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(Updated April 13, 2015)

- In September 2013, the Board appointed a Climate Movement Task Force to make recommendations on how best to build a movement. The task force set out to define an inspiring solutions-based message and strategy for coordinating our national campaigns and relevant movement-building approaches to increase the Sierra Club's effectiveness in mitigating the most catastrophic impacts of climate disruption. It thought about this work in terms of the why, the what, and the how: Why is our climate work imperative, and what have we learned about the latest thinking from the scientific community that underscores its urgency? What are the most effective outcomes for the Sierra Club to pursue in order to effect change at the scale dictated by scientific data? How will we contribute most effectively to an evolving climate movement that must grow in scale and effectiveness to have the power to win? The Task Force issued its [report](#) in May 2014 and is scheduled to issue a final set of recommendations in May 2015 before it sunsets.
- AddUp was formally launched in April 2015. CORE Phase I was completed in 2014 and Phase II is underway in 2015. These new tools will revamp our current ability to provide online capabilities to our organizers and constituents; enable us to get a much better full-circle view of our online supporters; create new fundraising opportunities; make our business processes more efficient; and generally engage people across the country in new, exciting and potentially important ways. In an effort to maximize the opportunities of these significant investments, we're focusing on change management and what the introduction of sophisticated technology means for the future of the Club. CAMPFIRE will replace Clubhouse as a user-friendly resource hub in 2016.
- The Sierra Club's Diversity, Inclusion, and Equity Statement (adopted by Board in April 2013). The Board has adopted a Diversity Statement and appointed a Diversity Steering Committee which partners with the Staff Diversity Committee. The Steering Committee produced a draft [Multi-Year Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Organizational Plan](#) in November 2014. Every staff department develops an annual Diversity, Equity and Inclusion plan and results are reported twice annually. In May 2015 the Board is expected to adopt a Multi-Year Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Plan.
- The Political Program Review (adopted at the November 2013 Board meeting). A strategic review was conducted, discussed, and recommendations were forwarded to the Political Team for review and implementation where feasible. The Political Team, in conjunction with the Board and senior staff, is continuing to review options and retool our work in this area in advance of the 2016 national elections.
- [Reform of the Activist Network](#) (adopted by the Board in April 2013). A team is working to better integrate the Activist Network teams and the national campaigns based on the report's recommendations. Activist Network has been renamed the Grassroots Network. Additional resources were allocated to the Grassroots Network in 2015, and a progress review will happen later in 2015.
- [The Chapter-National Relationship Task Force Recommendations](#) (adopted by Board in February 2012). The final Chapter National Relationship Implementation Team Report was made to the Board in September 2013. The Chapter and Leader Support Team oversees this work.
- Following the 2005 Sierra Summit, the Board

in November 2005 adopted three long-term

conservation initiatives: Smart Energy Solutions, America's Wild Legacy, and Safe and Healthy Communities. These initiatives were adopted for the 2006-2010 timeframe. By the end of this time period, the initiatives were folded into and replaced by the Climate Recovery Partnership (see next item below).

- The Climate Recovery Partnership (as amended, most recently by the [adoption of the redesigned Our Wild America Campaign, February 2013](#)) Adopted in 2009, the CRP was intended to run for five years. Initially the Board-approved CRP initiatives included Clean Energy Solutions, Curbing Carbon, Green Transportation, and Resilient Habitats. The Strategic Campaigns shifted over the years, as did the fundraising targets and goals. Our Wild America (OWA) expanding and replacing Resilient Habitats was the most recent change adopted by the Board, including the incorporation of Beyond Natural Gas into the Dirty Fuels element of OWA. The Clean Energy Vision and Climate Movement review noted above is the next strategic re-evaluation.
- [Project Renewal](#) (adopted by the Board in February 2008). This organizational reform set up new Board Advisory Committees; migrated issue committees into Activist Network teams; articulated the future role of volunteer/staff co-leads for committees and task forces; and clarified the roles of setting policy and positions as opposed to implementing policy and positions for various Club entities.
- The Two-Year Strategic Briefs (most recently [adopted by the Board in February 2013 and covering 2013-2014](#)). These biennial documents adopted by the Board lay out the broad political landscape and the Club's theory of change to carry out our goals. They lay out internal and external broad strategies and specific goals and internal conditions necessary for success.

- [The annual priorities for the Executive Director.](#)

Prior to 2014, these documents were reviewed and adopted annually by the Board in February, and established the top priority goals for the Executive Director. In 2014, the Executive Director's annual priorities were replaced by annual Organizational Priorities. Each top line organizational goal is accompanied by a set of specific and measurable SMART goals that are Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound.

- Long-term and annual plans and budgets for campaigns, departments, chapters, and groups. Each national conservation campaign and program—from Beyond Coal to Population—has an accompanying annual budget, campaign plan, and set of annual SMART goals. These are adopted at the beginning of each calendar year by the campaign or program committees and are available to the Board. The National Program Director (Sarah Hodgdon) routinely reports on the progress of these campaigns and programs to the Board throughout the year. This Conservation program planning happens through the [Managing for Results](#) system. Every department has an annual work plan and goals that match the Board-approved budget. As part of the Chapter-National Relationship Task Force implementation, there is some joint national-chapter campaign planning that takes place. Planning by individual chapters and groups is not tracked by the national organization, but it is encouraged and some training to assist chapter planning is provided.

## APPENDIX C: ABBREVIATED CLUB TIMELINE

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- 1892** The Sierra Club is founded on May 28. John Muir elected first president. Club helps defeat proposal to reduce boundaries of Yosemite National Park.
- 1901** In the Club's first outing, William Colby leads 96 participants on a trip to Yosemite Valley and Tuolumne Meadows, beginning a tradition of annual High Trips.
- 1903** President Theodore Roosevelt visits Yosemite with John Muir.
- 1905** State of California, through efforts of John Muir and others, returns Yosemite Valley to federal management.
- 1927** Sierra Club elects its first woman president, Aurelia Harwood.
- 1950** Sierra Club approves first non-California chapter, the Atlantic Chapter, which covers the entire eastern United States.
- 1952** Sierra Club hires its first Executive Director, David Brower.
- 1956** Sierra Club participates in successful campaign to prevent dam construction in Dinosaur National Monument. Club membership reaches 10,000.
- 1960** The Sierra Club Foundation is established. This Is the American Earth, the Club's first coffee-table book, is published. The Club's membership reaches 15,000.
- 1961** David Brower offers to sponsor anyone to be a member, and the Board responds by dropping the requirement that a member had to be sponsored by an existing member, ending discriminatory practice that had been used to exclude some based on race, religion, or other factors.
- 1964** Wilderness Act is passed by Congress after a long campaign by the Club and others. Over 9 million acres of wilderness established by law.
- 1966** Sierra Club runs full page ad in New York Times urging protection for Grand Canyon from dams. Internal Revenue Service rules that donations to the Club are no longer tax-deductible and the Club reorganizes as a 501(c)4 organization.
- 1969** First Canadian Sierra Club entity incorporated in British Columbia.
- 1970** Club helps organize first Earth Day. Efforts of the Club and others lead to creation of Environmental Protection Agency and passage of the National Environmental Policy Act, Clean Air Act, Clean Water Act, and other landmark environmental legislation. Sierra Club chapters extended to cover all 50 states. Club membership passes 100,000.
- 1971** Sierra Club Legal Defense Fund set up by Club leaders to give the organization legal tools to protect the earth.
- 1976** Sierra Club launches national Inner City Outings program to provide safe and fun wilderness trips for low-income youth and others who have limited access to the outdoors. Sierra Club Committee on Political Education is formed to endorse candidates and coordinate Club work in elections.
- 1980** Sierra Club plays leading role in passage of Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act, adding 103 million acres of parks, wildlife refuges, and wilderness areas.
- 1981** Sierra Club and other groups gather more than a million signatures urging the ouster of Interior Secretary James Watt. Shortly thereafter Watt resigns. Club membership tops 325,000.
- 1982** Sierra Club first starts using personal computers and electronic mail to communicate.



- 1986** Sierra Club launches campaign to protect Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and California desert wilderness areas. Club membership tops 400,000. Sierra Club of Canada created.
- 1991** People of Color Summit participants issue letter to Sierra Club and other national environmental groups challenging their commitment to environmental justice, diversity, and inclusion. Sierra Club Executive Director Michael Fisher invites justice groups to take over the Sierra Club and vows to improve our record. Sierra Student Coalition established.
- 1992** Sierra Club celebrates its centennial. Centennial campaign establishes a major gifts and foundation fundraising program within the Sierra Club which vastly expands the c(3) funding supporting the Sierra Club through the Sierra Club Foundation.
- 1993** Sierra Club forms Environmental Justice program to address overwhelming evidence showing that low-income communities and people of color bear disproportionate environmental burdens when it comes to pollution and health issues. Club opposes North American Free Trade Agreement on environmental grounds.
- 1994** Sierra Club shifts from internal mobilization to an organizing culture and outward focus through Project ACT and the Building Environmental Communities and Environmental Partnerships programs.
- 2005** Sierra Club holds Sierra Summit, attended by over 5,300 members and supporters. Delegates discuss new directions and afterward the Board launches the Climate Recovery Partnership, including our flagship Beyond Coal Campaign. Climate change becomes a top priority and focus of the Sierra Club. Puerto Rico Chapter founded, first Spanish-speaking chapter outside the United States.
- 2006** Sierra Club and Steelworkers form the Blue-Green Alliance to promote joint environmental-labor issues.
- 2007** Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Statement adopted.
- 2008** DEI plan adopted.
- 2011** Sierra Club wins a campaign to preserve one million acres around the Grand Canyon as off-limits to new uranium mining. In addition, the Club achieves the milestone of defeating 150 proposed new coal-fired power plants and reaches 1.4 million members and supporters. Club starts Digital Strategies Department.
- 2013** On February 13, Sierra Club President Allison Chin and Executive Director Michael Brune join dozens of environmental, civil rights, and community leaders from across the country for a historic display of civil disobedience at the White House. Forward on Climate rally held on the National Mall.
- 2014** Sierra Club helps organize the People's Climate March, which draws more than 400,000 citizen activists to New York City on September 21. The march — which includes 25,000 Sierra Club members and supporters — is the largest climate protest in history. At the 50th anniversary of the Wilderness Act we have now protected over 110 million acres.

# APPENDIX D: SWOT ANALYSIS FOR SIERRA CLUB STRATEGIC PLANNING

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(notes from May 15, 2014 Board and Executive Team Retreat)

## STRENGTHS

Grassroots power base in 50 states +  
Our ranks: our excellent volunteers and staff  
High brand recognition  
Commitment to transforming organization on diversity, equity, and inclusion at highest levels  
Excellent digital transformation rollout and investment in new tools to stay on cutting edge  
Strong management  
Our political clout and program  
Bold, exciting campaigns  
Commitment and vision to climate movement  
Strong outings program to involve new people  
Locals empowered to work on issues that matter to them

## WEAKNESSES

Financial sustainability and flexibility lacking. Limited ability to work on issues that are not funded by restricted dollars  
Volunteer structural weaknesses  
Divisions between staff/volunteers and national/local  
Club's inability to change easily  
Campaigns not integrated  
Inability to easily adopt new digital tools  
Lack of inclusiveness and diversity  
Tolerance of bad behavior  
Mission doesn't match Mission Statement  
Too old; need more youth involvement and younger leaders organization-wide  
Grassroots democracy leads to bureaucracy and lack of nimbleness. Bugged down in process.  
Concentration of power within the Club  
Club image as elitist  
Lack of political clout to influence elections  
Still bifurcated between digital and non-digital Clubs  
Weak policy expertise  
Diminishing brand  
Inability to reach the masses  
Desire to do it all vs real life constraints

## OPPORTUNITIES

Clean energy solutions are available now

President Obama making this a priority and speaking out, as well as national climate assessment

Public's distrust of oil and coal industry

Climate disruption events drive up public concern

Public opinion on climate change starting to rise again

Club implementing diversity, equity, and inclusion

Demographics in the country changing and broader awareness and willingness to act by emerging constituencies

Improved communications and digital programs

Democracy Initiative building valuable new partnership for action

Mega-donors still interested in climate

Political activism at local, state, and national levels

Obama's new commitment to preserve lands through executive action

We have great mid-level donor potential

Educated class is hearing our message

## THREATS

Possibility of even more electoral losses at all levels

Big Money overpowering our people power

Public's interest in membership and participation falling

Climate change is happening too fast and our response is too slow

Public's perception that economic growth requires continued reliance on fossil fuels and nuclear

Fickle funders

EJ communities lack power

Rapid loss of wildlands to energy and other development

Digital conversions are tough

Threats to democracy from Citizens United, attacks on voting rights, etc.

Racism within society and within the Club and movement

Widening income/inequality gap and feelings of insecurity

Growing opposition to centralized large-scale renewables

Public indifference and apathy

Lack of strong, dedicated champions in Congress or White House for lands protection

Weakening/eroding of Club's grassroots tradition and roles

Political corruption and incompetence by elected officials

Lack of adequate financing for clean energy transition



## APPENDIX E: THE STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

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The Sierra Club initiated its Strategic Planning process in 2013. We began by assembling and preparing a series of background papers and documents to assist the Board and the senior staff in assessing the environment that we operate within and what iterative strategic planning decisions the Club had made in recent years. These documents are available to readers who want to learn more. Among the documents assembled were:

- A list of the Club's major strategic initiatives, called Strategic Building Blocks.
- A summary of the strategic plans from other environmental groups.
- A study on the strategic approaches of several key public policy groups.
- A profile of many of the key leading environmental organizations.
- A survey of the Club's chapters and their priorities for capacity investment.
- The campaign plans for the Club's priority national conservation campaigns.
- Former two-year Strategic Briefs adopted by the Board.
- Academic papers on strategic planning.
- Detailed copies of other group's strategic plans.

Relying on these documents, the Board and the Executive Team held a retreat in May 2014 to discuss Strategic Planning and next steps. At this retreat, the Board and Executive Team assessed the Club's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (a SWOT analysis). It also conducted brainstorming to explore the goals we wanted to accomplish in the decades ahead and the type of organization we would need to be in order to achieve those goals. We adopted a plan outline.

The results of this retreat were captured in notes which informed this strategic planning process.

At the conclusion of the retreat, the decision was made to extend the planning horizon so that we could have the strategic plan aligned with the annual budget cycle and our budget would reflect our strategic goals. Since we were already part way into the 2015 budget process and had adopted budget guidelines for 2015, it was decided to devote the coming year to the plan and to adopt a plan in April 2015 and the 2016 budget guidelines in May 2015.

In the fall of 2014, a draft of five overarching long-term goals was circulated to chapter leaders, campaign teams, Board advisory committees, staff, and others for comment. The Board also met with the Council of Club Leaders at its annual meeting in November 2014 to discuss the Club's proposed strategic goals and how they could best be integrated and serve our chapters. Also in the fall of 2014 the Senior Management Group and the Board discussed what would be the best logical groupings for our highest-priority short- and medium-term priorities.

During this same period, each campaign and major initiative was asked to submit its short-term (2015-2018) and medium-term (2025-2030) major goals. Two of these goals—a 50 percent reduction in U.S. oil consumption by 2030 and 100 percent clean energy grid for the US by 2030—were debated and adopted by the Board.

On February 26-27, 2015, the Sierra Club Board and Executive Team conducted a two-day strategic planning retreat in Santa Fe, New Mexico. Part of the February 27 session was attended by The Sierra Club Foundation board and staff. At this retreat the attendees discussed the complex issues around building a movement and becoming a

high-performance 21st century organization. We looked at our history and key moments of major change within that history. We identified our historic values and emerging values. We reviewed and refined the proposed overarching goals. Developing the Club leadership that can carry us forward to accomplish our goals in the years ahead was identified as a top priority.

Throughout March and April, the Board and senior staff worked together to review and approve draft versions of the plan. A comprehensive draft was assembled in late April and circulated for review by senior volunteers and managers. In early May, the Board adopted this final version of the plan.

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EXPLORE, ENJOY, AND

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SIERRA  
CLUB

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PROTECT THE PLANET

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