Our Mission

**From Wabasha, Minnesota, teaching the world about North American eagles.**

**STRATEGIC PLAN 2013**

Our Mission

*To foster environmental stewardship and community sustainability through education about eagles and the Mississippi River watershed*
Dear Friends,
This Strategic Plan provides a road map for the near-term future of the National Eagle Center. It articulates the strengths, challenges and opportunities of the world class interpretive center and museum on the banks of the Mississippi River in Wabasha, Minnesota. It provides the staff and Board of Directors with a focus for their collective work and activities for the future.

We are indebted to many for help and input into this Plan. And we look forward to the many collaborations, partnerships, and relationships that will allow the Plan to be fully realized.

Sincerely,
Rolf Thompson
Executive Director

Strategic Plan Task Force
- James Reidy, Winona, MN, Chair of Board of Directors
- Carol Scott, Wabasha, MN, Vice-Chair of Board of Directors
- Jon Lineweaver, Wabasha, MN, Secretary/Treasurer of Board of Directors
- Ward Johnson, St. Paul, MN, Board of Directors
- David Kostik, Minneapolis, MN, Board of Directors
- Ran Miner, Hugo, MN, Board of Directors
- Ramona Redig, Fountain City, WI, Board of Directors
- Scott Mehus, Director of Education
- Alison Springer, Director of Administration and Finance
- Rolf Thompson, Executive Director

Participants in National Eagle Center Stakeholder Summit
*The following people were either interviewed or participated in a facilitated discussion during the strategic planning process. We are grateful for the input, advice and perspectives so generously offered.*

| Jerry Arens          | Ward Johnson          | Rick Samples          |
| Karla Bloem         | Tom Kingston          | Gary Schlosstein      |
| Hein Bloem          | Sandy Klas            | David Schmidt         |
| Suzanne Blue        | Dave Kostik           | Joan Schnabel         |
| Peter Brown         | Paul Labovitz         | Bruce Schwartau       |
| Tom Crowley         | Jon Lineweaver        | Carol Scott           |
| Randy Eggenberger   | Mark Martell          | Karlin Symons         |
| David Fisk          | Malcolm McDonald      | Mike Trok             |
| Bucky Flores        | Dan McElroy           | Rick Vaplon           |
| Kevin Foerster      | Reggie McLeod         | Leonard Wabasha       |
| John Friedmeyer     | Ran Miner             | Mike Weinandt         |
| Brian Fries         | Victoria Moore        | Marty Wilson          |
| Rollin Hall         | Sue Mundy             | John Wodele           |
| Eileen Hanson       | Ed Passe              | Brian Wolfe           |
| Carroll Henderson   | Julia Ponder          | Cheri Wright          |
| Don Jacoby          | Pat Redig             | Tim Yager             |
| Kris Johansen       | Cindy Samples         |                       |

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Our Strategic Advantages
“Strategic Advantages” are an organization’s distinctive assets. They may be areas of distinctive programming or operation and are objective and quantifiable. They cannot be claimed by the competition nor can they be copied.

- Location that is unparalleled: on the banks of the Mississippi River; within two hours of very large population; “on the way” and/or not “out-of-the-way”; small historic river town setting that is integral part of the visitor experience.
- A building that is visually impressive in a setting that is incredibly beautiful.
- A central subject, the eagles of North America that are very charismatic and inherently attractive. Eagles have deep and significant symbolism and meaning to American Indians, U.S. military and veterans, and to all Americans. The Bald Eagle is second only to the flag as the most widely recognized and revered symbol of the United States.
- A visitor experience that includes eagles up close and personal, with no glass or barrier between them and visitors. At the same time eagles are present, and sometimes abundant, in the wild right out the window.
- The Golden Eagle Project, a research project that is adding significantly to the world’s knowledge of golden eagles in the region.

Our Impacts
These “Impact Statements” are aspirational and serve as our organizational vision of the impact we desire to make.

- The National Eagle Center is widely recognized as the “go to” source for clear and accurate information about eagles and the Upper Mississippi River watershed.
- The National Eagle Center provides high impact education for over 250,000 people annually through on-site and outreach programming and internet-based applications.
- The National Eagle Center draws over 100,000 visitors annually to Wabasha, creating significant positive economic impact on the community and the region.
- Those who encounter the National Eagle Center leave inspired to learn more, to live as more thoughtful environmental stewards, intrinsically motivated to keep the natural and human community in a healthy condition.

Big Questions Facing the National Eagle Center
A “Big Question” is an opportunity or threat to which the organization must respond. Usually, it is beyond the scope of the organization’s current strategies, thus requiring a new strategy.

IF PRESENTED AN OPPORTUNITY OR NEED THAT REQUIRED MORE SPACE, WOULD WE HAVE SUITABLE OPTIONS TO RESPOND?
Currently, the National Eagle Center building has no space to expand. There is no space to house or train any more live eagle ambassadors. There is no space for additional major exhibits or loaned collections. Classroom space is often filled to capacity and office and storage space is sorely lacking.

HOW CAN WE ENHANCE AND IMPROVE OUR FACILITY, EXHIBITS, AND VISITOR EXPERIENCE TO ATTRACT MORE PARTICIPATION AND RETURN VISITORS?
The building that houses the National Eagle Center turned five years old in 2012. Very little within the building has changed in those years and there is a need for renewed exhibits and innovative
programming. There is also a need for expanded marketing and the development of a more focused brand.

**HOW DO WE BECOME WIDELY VIEWED AS THE EAGLE AUTHORITY AND SPREAD THIS KNOWLEDGE TO A BROADER COMMUNITY?**

One of our desired impacts is to be widely recognized as the “go to” source for clear and accurate information about eagles and the Upper Mississippi River watershed. Fulfilling this aspiration will require collaborations, expanded marketing, and new education delivery or programming.

**HOW CAN WE ASSURE OUR REVENUE MODEL SUSTAINS AND GROWS OUR RESOURCES TO FUND OUR STRATEGIC PLAN?**

A high proportion of the NEC’s operating budget comes from admission fees and retail. Membership and contributed support account for only 13 per cent of revenues (FY2012), indicating room to grow.

**STRATEGIES 2013 – 2015**

**Facility Planning**

We will develop and operate from a comprehensive facility and funding plan that encompasses future needs for eagle care, education, exhibit space, visitor experience, office, and storage.

- Develop a plan for financing, including a potential capital campaign.

**Visitor Experience**

We will strive to continuously improve the visitor experience through program innovation and exhibit renewal and expansion.

- Create, fund and implement at least one new exhibit annually.

**Brand Development**

We will focus on developing a powerful organizational brand through collaborations, expanded marketing, and new educational programming.

- Develop and implement a comprehensive communications plan including effective use of electronic, social media, and stakeholder engagement.
- Raise awareness of the NEC through strategic relationships and partnerships.

**Revenue Growth**

We will work aggressively to diversify our revenue through new programming, improved marketing and increased fundraising.

- Maximize revenue potential of existing programs such as Taste of Wabasha and Eagle Viewing Field Trips.
- Implement a robust annual donor/membership campaign including a “Primary Feather” donor circle.
- Implement a comprehensive Development Plan including events, annual campaign, planned/endowment giving, and capital.