

Strategic Plan 2026–2031

SER Midwest–Great Lakes Chapter

The SER Midwest–Great Lakes (MWGL) Chapter has developed this Strategic Plan to clarify who we are, what we do, and where we aim to be over the next five years. The Plan prioritizes actions that advance ecological restoration science and practice in the Midwest and Great Lakes region, while recognizing the constraints and opportunities of a primarily volunteer-led organization. This Strategic Plan is intended to be a living document, reviewed periodically by the Board of Directors and updated as opportunities, partnerships, and capacity evolve.

MISSION

Our mission is to advance the science and practice of ecological restoration across the Midwest and Great Lakes region through leadership, collaboration, education, and outreach.

VISION

To be the leading regional source that connects ecological restoration science to practice and advances restoration professionals and students.

VALUES

- We value science-based ecological restoration grounded in sound ecology and adaptive management.
- We value connection between science and practice, recognizing that successful restoration outcomes require both.
- We value professional development and mentorship, particularly for students, early-career practitioners and volunteer stewards.
- We value inclusive, collaborative, and ethical engagement with communities, Tribes, agencies, NGOs, and the private sector.
- We value regional identity and relevance, with a focus on the ecological, social, and cultural contexts of the Midwest and Great Lakes.

GOALS

We seek to advance our Vision through the following Goals:

1. Member Value and Engagement
2. Regional Leadership and Partnerships
3. Student and Early-Career Development
4. Organizational Capacity and Sustainability

STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

Goal 1. Member Value and Engagement

Strengthen the professional, educational, and networking benefits of SER-MWGL membership.

Strategic Initiatives

- Provide at least one major membership event annually.
- Deliver quarterly online webinars on regional restoration issues, methods, practices, and/or research.
- Provide Continuing Education Credits (CECs) for appropriate certifications for all meetings and webinars held as well as to support SER's CERP program. (CEC lead)
- Develop and review an annual summary of initiatives by the Board collectively and members individually that have encouraged networking and interaction among our diverse membership base. (President, Program Manager, All Board members).

Goal 2. Regional Leadership and Partnerships

Position SER-MWGL as a trusted regional source of information and collaboration on ecological restoration.

Strategic Initiatives

- Develop a strategy and action plan for the Chapter to become engaged on policy positions locally and regionally within the constraints expected of a non-profit 501(3)c organization.
- Support, partner or host a minimum of one meeting or workshop annually with at least one restoration-related agency or organization.
- Create nomination and selection processes for specific awards for outstanding urban and rural restoration efforts and outstanding ecological community restoration projects to be presented each year at the annual meeting. (Awards committee.)
- Dedicate one webinar annually to educating members in knowledge and skills needed for achieving awareness, involvement, participation and support of major global restoration initiatives and the larger work of SER International. (Webinar Committee)

Goal 3. Student and Early-Career Development

Support the next generation of ecological restoration professionals.

Strategic Initiatives

- Provide financial support through student and early-career travel awards and mini-grants.
- Encourage and support active Student Associations across the region.

- Create intentional opportunities for mentorship, training, and recognition of student achievements.
- Increase student-focused programming at annual meetings and chapter events.

Goal 4. Organizational Capacity and Sustainability

Build a resilient organization capable of sustaining and expanding chapter activities.

Strategic Initiatives

- Strengthen Board governance, clarity of roles, and leadership continuity.
- Improve financial stability through diversified revenue streams.
- Increase administrative capacity while maintaining a working Board model.
- Develop pathways toward professional staff support as capacity allows.

ACTION ITEMS

Action Items represent tangible actions that support the Strategic Initiatives. Responsibility and timelines are indicative and may be adjusted by the Board of Directors.

Goal 1. Member Value and Engagement

- Host at least one major chapter event annually (Annual Meeting Committee, Board; ongoing).
- Offer quarterly webinars focused on restoration science, practice, and policy (Webinar Committee; ongoing).
- Maintain an active website and social media presence highlighting members, projects, and opportunities (Program Manager; ongoing).

Goal 2. Regional Leadership and Partnerships

- Develop a strategy and action plan for the Chapter to become engaged on policy positions locally and regionally within the constraints expected of a non-profit 501(3)c organization. (Program Manager, Executive Committee, by 2027.)
- Create nomination and selection processes for specific awards for outstanding urban and rural restoration efforts and outstanding ecological community restoration projects to be presented each year at the annual meeting. (Awards committee by 2027)
- Support, partner or host a minimum of one meeting or workshop annually with at least a restoration-related agency or organization. (All Board members)

Goal 3. Student and Early-Career Development

- Offer annual student and early-career travel or research awards (Awards and Student Association Committee; ongoing).

- Provide student-specific programming at annual meetings (Annual Meeting Committee, Student Association Committee; ongoing).
- Develop and initiate events that bring established restoration professionals and Student Associations and their members together that develop organizational and practical strategies for advancing Student Associations (Student Association Committee, State Representatives; ongoing).

Goal 4. Organizational Capacity and Sustainability

- Develop and approve annual budgets and multi-year financial projections (Treasurer, Board; annually).
- Increase sponsorships, grants, and donations to achieve positive cash flow by 2030 (Program Manager, Board; 2026–2030).
- Clarify Board expectations and improve onboarding materials (Board Development Committee, Executive Committee; by 2027).
- Evaluate feasibility of hiring a full-time Executive Director by 2030, contingent on financial readiness (Board; 2028–2030).
- Annually review the Strategic Plan at each year’s annual meeting to evaluate progress and make adaptive changes as needed . (Executive committee, Board, Membership.)