

MCA Organizational Functions

Throughout the Action Planning Process, partners expressed the need for the Plan to define the functions of the Metrowest Conservation Alliance. As a partnership with a broad scope, these functions guided the formation of actionable objectives throughout the Plan. Below lists the overarching functions of the partnership.

MCA Functions

Function 1: Partner Education → Provide training opportunities and share relevant information and resources with SuAsCo conservation practitioners through online educational resources, workshops and webinars, and sharing examples of successful projects.

Function 2: Regional Capacity-Building → Support capacity-building for regional conservation by facilitating conversations, organizing committees, applying for and administering grants, and conducting outreach.

Function 3: Networking → Fostering community and connections among the SuAsCo land conservation community, center peer-to-peer learning and sharing, and strengthen connections with professional services (foresters, realtors, attorneys) and audiences beyond current MCA membership (public health agencies, affordable housing commissions, sustainability coordinators)

Function 4: Tool Development → Create and publish useful tools to further regional land protection in the SuAsCo area.

Function 5: Committee Coordination → Facilitate committee organization to work on specific goals and objectives under priority issues, and encourage the formation of new committees and recruitment of new members.

Function 6: Public Education → Educate the public about the importance of regional conservation and land management in a uniform message for SuAsCo partners.

Priority Issues, Goals, and Objectives

A. Agricultural Land and Grasslands: Protection and Management

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Goal 1: Increase the rate of protection of agricultural lands within the SuAsCo area through purchase, agricultural preservation restrictions (APRs), and Conservation Restrictions (CRs).

Objectives:

1. Host one workshop per year highlighting farmland protection tools, farmland succession planning, and farmland protection success stories;
2. Compile a list of resources & success stories for farm succession planning on the MCA webpage;
3. Alert MCA partners about federal, state, and local grants relevant to farmland protection and farmland planning;
4. Host one agricultural-themed networking event per year to connect partners with farmers.

Goal 2: Provide support and resources for grassland and field habitat management and restoration.

Objectives:

1. Host one educational program per year at site(s) conducting field habitat Best Management Practices;
2. Coordinate regional problem-solving efforts (bylaws, outreach, enforcement, etc.) for dog management across conserved open field areas, especially with breeding grassland birds;
3. Partner Share Best Management Practices for grassland management

Goal 3: Encourage partners to protect and manage fields for grassland birds

Objectives:

1. Compile resources outlining Best Management Practices for grassland birds;
2. Host one program per year about field management for grassland birds;
3. Encourage partners to conduct joint outreach for landowners with known breeding populations of threatened grassland bird species.

B. Collaborative Land Conservation Projects

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Goal 1: Encourage partners to collaborate on **regional land protection and management projects**.

Objectives:

1. Identify and facilitate/support cross-town conservation projects to address regional conservation concerns;
2. Apply for grants for cross-town land acquisition and land management projects leveraging applicant eligibility;
3. Organize proactive outreach campaigns to reach private landowners;
4. Facilitate outreach and educational programming to educate SuAsCo residents and conservation professionals about conservation options, including conservation restrictions, Chapter 61 enrollment, and donation.
5. Host one workshop per year highlighting the *Valuing Nature's Services* presentation for partners and the general public in communities with limited land protection support.

Goal 2: Protect **water resources**, including public water supplies;

Objectives:

1. Identify shared water supplies and form committees to address acquisition and/or management needs. Form coalitions around water supply protection and management, while engaging with water districts.
2. Identify dams removal and other river restoration projects using MassGIS resources, and facilitate conversations and add capacity to collaborative projects.

Goal 3: Protection and planning for both **wildlife and recreation corridors**.

Objectives:

1. Identify key parcels for linkage of regional recreation priorities;
2. Identify key parcels for linkage of habitat priorities, including utility corridors for early successional habitat;
3. Identify prime areas and connect partners to form projects for aquatic species passage.

C. Forest Management

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Goal 1: Improve the health of forests by **protecting forest habitat** and **supporting restoration of healthy forest ecosystems**.

Objectives:

1. Create a SuAsCo-wide Woodlots program based on the Cold Hollow to Canada Woodlots Toolkit (<https://woodlots-toolkit.coldhollowtocanada.org/>); This model emphasizes peer engagement of forest landowners, coupled with technical assistance and funding opportunities.
2. Host one webinar per year focusing the substance and examples of successful forest management plans;
3. Document and share existing forest projects on the MCA Forest Health webpage.

Goal 2: Coordinate regional effort for **deer management** to address biodiversity concerns of overabundance.

Objectives:

1. Facilitate one regional project with the Deer Management Committee;
2. Conduct one workshop per year about the ecological importance of deer management for both partners and the general public.

D. Climate Adaptation

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Goal 1: Share comprehensive **ordinances and bylaws** that incorporate climate adaptation.

Objectives:

1. Compile a list of exemplary bylaws and ordinances that address climate change concerns, including Wetlands and Stormwater Bylaws, and post on the MCA Climate Adaptation webpage;
2. Collaborate with Massachusetts Society of Municipal Conservation Professionals (MSMCP) to share resources with our partners;
3. Support communities in adopting local bylaws/ordinances that support protections for healthy canopy and improvements to soil health (per MA Health Soil Action Plan).

Goal 2: Leverage the **Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Program** (MVP) for regional projects that can benefit multiple communities and lessen project management burden.

Objectives:

1. Compile a list of MVP projects in the SuAsCo region and publish on the MCA Climate Adaptation webpage.
2. Identify common themes throughout partner MVP plans to brainstorm regional projects;
3. Apply as a partnership for an MVP grant to address relevant climate concerns (heat island, stormwater, river passage, etc.);
4. When appropriate, host a networking meeting for MVP Grant recipients in the SuAsCo.

E. Native Pollinator Systems

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Goal 1: Advocate for planting **native plants** and maintaining needed **habitat features** in gardens and meadows.

Objectives:

1. Support the establishment of one pollinator garden or pollinator meadow in all 36 communities;
2. Compile a list of bylaws and ordinances requiring native plants in landscaping plans;
3. Form a committee to create a recommended native plants list and native seed mixes, and where to find them, which will be published on the MCA Native Pollinator System webpage;
4. Create a region-wide, interactive map showing each pollination system garden and/or meadow in the SuAsCo;
5. Convene a committee of land managers focused on creating pollinator habitat on conserved land.

Goal 2: Enhance habitat for **threatened bumblebee species** through the Bumblebee Project.

Objectives:

1. Conduct one public education program per year highlighting how to create habitat for threatened bumblebee species (and other pollinators) for both partners and the general public;
2. Expand the number of gardens and meadows/habitats with host and nectar species supporting threatened pollinator species;
3. Host one summer garden tour per year;
4. Host one winter sow program per year;

F. Inclusion and Justice

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Goal 1: Support and partner on projects to address the rising **heat index** in vulnerable communities.

Objectives:

1. Conduct urban heat island studies in most impacted and Environmental Justice communities;
2. Compile a list of urban heat island plans for the MCA DEIJ webpage.

Goal 2: Participate in efforts to balance **affordable housing and conservation**

Objectives:

1. Compile examples, plans, and testimonies for projects combining conservation and housing;
2. Host a networking event for affordable housing developers and land protection professionals.

Goal 3: Expand land access and land use for **indigenous communities and Environmental Justice Communities**.

Objectives:

1. Host one workshop per year demonstrating area-relevant conservation practices to expand land access and use for indigenous communities;
2. Provide resources on the MCA Inclusivity & Justice webpage;
3. Build coalitions/liaison relationships with indigenous communities to connect them with funding and cultural resources;

Goal 4: Improve **trail accessibility** across the SuAsCo region.

Objectives:

1. Advocate for more trails with accessibility features and share examples in the SuAsCo on the MCA DEIJ webpage;
2. Partner with groups specializing on accessibility within the recreation space to host one accessible outdoor program per year;
3. Add to existing databases of accessible trails, such as the Birdability map.

G.Policy and Advocacy

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Goal 1: **Educate** partners about **relevant environmental bills**.

Objectives:

1. Host a Legislative Breakfast connecting partners with SuAsCo legislators at the beginning of new legislative sessions;
2. Circulate newsletters and template action letters (where applicable) regarding relevant bills to alert SuAsCo communities of opportunities to engage;
3. When appropriate, facilitate webinars outlining relevant bills.

Goal 2: **Advocate** for regionally important conservation legislation.

Objectives:

1. Advocate for the ban of SGARs within the SuAsCo area;
2. Support adaptability in the Wetlands Protection Act that streamlines permitting while supporting environmental protections.