

NEWPORT BAY NATURALISTS AND FRIENDS 2007/8 STRATEGIC PLAN

This document defines how the Newport Bay Naturalists and Friends (NBNF) will work to fulfill its mission during the period July 1, 2007 to December 31, 2008. The timeframe is unusually short for a Strategic Plan, but has been chosen because of the manner in which we function in support of the California Department of Fish and Game (DFG), Orange County Harbors, Beaches and Parks (HBP) and the other members of the Upper Newport Bay (UNB) Management Coalition, and the potential need to change the way we function based on the Comprehensive Resource Management Plan (CRMP) that will be developed for UNB over roughly the same 18-month period. The CRMP will be prepared by the City of Newport Beach. HBP will pay 20%, based on the area of UNB it owns, and the City will pay the balance on behalf of itself and DFG.

This document may therefore be regarded as an Interim Strategic Plan or a Transition Plan. It will be subject to refinement or revision as the intentions of the land-owning agencies at and around Upper Newport Bay (UNB) regarding cooperative resource management, and the role of NBNF in this becomes clearer.

Mission

The NBNF Mission Statement adopted by the Board of Directors in January 2007 is:

- To ***preserve*** and ***restore*** the ecosystems of Upper Newport Bay.
- To ***educate*** the public about the ecological value of the Bay and its watershed and help ensure compatible public use.

The inclusion of “watershed” recognized the reality that most of the current threats to the ecosystems of UNB arise in the watershed. Activities such as dredging are remediating rather than solving the problems.

The Board also adopted the following Guiding Principles under which to function:

- *We will work to fulfill our mission in cooperation with all Upper Newport Bay stakeholders.*
- *To effectively achieve our mission we will function as “**the conscience of the Bay**” and coordinate, facilitate and advocate as necessary to ensure a holistic approach to the management of the Bay.*

Strategy for Preservation and Restoration

NBNF is not a land-owner or land-manager at UNB. Therefore it must work with those land-owning agencies at and around UNB to be successful in its mission. Additionally, since the most significant threats to the health of UNB arise in the watershed, NBNF must be active in the watershed.

NBNF will therefore strive to fulfill the preservation and restoration part of its mission by:

- Helping coordinate the efforts of the land-owning agencies and others engaged in stewardship at and around UNB and make those efforts more effective.
- Helping plan, lead and conduct community-based restoration projects and programs at and around UNB.
- Actively participating in forums, committees, etc. that are active within our surroundings and our watershed to help ensure that projects and programs that are beneficial to the ecosystems of UNB are effectively carried out and activities that are detrimental are minimized or ameliorated.

- Helping ensure that current, scientifically valid information is available and prioritized to be used as the basis for making decisions pertaining to the stewardship and public use of UNB and its surroundings and to projects and programs in the watershed that could impact UNB.

The current forums for the coordination of preservation and restoration efforts are the UNB Management Coalition and the Restoration Team that functions beneath it. We will continue to support these bodies and the member organizations and assist in achieving a smooth transition to any new coordinating bodies established to implement the CRMP.

The development of a scientifically-sound CRMP that can and will be implemented to provide effective, adaptive management of the entire bay is crucial to our preservation and restoration efforts and we must therefore be involved in that process as much as possible.

An Integrated Regional Water Management Plan (IRWMP) is currently under development for the Newport Bay Watershed. This plan will be the basis of significant bond funding for water conservation, water quality and environmental improvement projects. The development of a scientifically-sound IRWMP that can and will be implemented to provide effective, adaptive management of the watershed is also crucial to our preservation and restoration efforts and we must be involved in that process as much as possible.

Strategy for Education

Education is a multi-faceted activity worthy both in its own right and also as a key means of helping ensure the long-term protection of the Bay.

The link between preservation and restoration, and education is clearly illustrated by the California Coastal Commission Restoration and Education Program that we support here at UNB. It is not sufficient to merely have volunteers remove non-native plants. They must understand why the non-natives are detrimental to the long-term health of UNB and other ecosystems, and become sufficiently engaged to want to help prevent the spread of non-natives here at UNB, in our watershed, or on a more global level.

NBNF will therefore strive to fulfill the education part of its mission by:

- Helping coordinate the efforts of the land-owning agencies and others engaged in education at and around UNB and make those efforts more effective. This will be accomplished in large part through the Education Team.
- Supporting the operation of the Peter and Mary Muth Center and the Back Bay Science Center.
- Planning, leading and conducting school, scout, family and other education tours and programs at other locations at UNB alone or in partnership with other facilities such as the Newport Aquatic Center.
- Engaging in outreach at UNB, and within the city of Newport Beach and our watershed.
- Through our website and other media providing information that will help people to appreciate the natural history and ecological importance of UNB and to better understand the impacts of human activities.
- Evaluate educational programs and adapt to keep current and supportive of our mission.

Education includes explaining and promoting compatible public use. It includes teaching children to become responsible environmental citizens. And it also includes counseling elected officials and other decision-makers about ecological and other matters in order that they may make wise decisions to protect the habitat and wildlife of UNB and other open spaces.

Our efforts must address the watershed and extend into the watershed so that those living miles inland understand that the trash and other pollutants on their streets and lawns are washed by storm water into UNB impacting habitat and wildlife.

Mission Goals and Strategic Actions

Preservation and Restoration are intertwined with Education and goals overlap. Since we strive to achieve our mission in good part by providing staff, volunteers and other resources to support the agencies at UNB, goals and strategic actions are best grouped based on how that support will be provided and how other activities will be performed.

Our Mission Goals are to:

1. Maximize the effectiveness of NBNF education programs, events and outreach in educating the public about the ecological importance of UNB.
2. Help maximize the effectiveness of the UNB Management Coalition and the Education and Restoration Teams that act under the auspices of the Coalition in achieving the mission of the Coalition.
3. Help maximize the effectiveness of the operation of the Muth Interpretive Center in educating the public about the ecological importance of UNB.
4. Help maximize the effectiveness of the operation of the Back Bay Science Center in educating the public about the ecological importance of UNB.
5. Help maximize the effectiveness of community-based restoration programs and projects at UNB to protect the long-term health of UNB.
6. Help ensure that the CRMP is developed in the most efficient and effective manner by taking a key role in the development of the CRMP.
7. Help ensure that the issues affecting the long-term health of UNB, the operation of UNB facilities and/or the mission of NBNF are properly addressed by the governing entities.

Management Coalition

In order to help maximize the effectiveness of the UNB Management Coalition and the Education and Restoration Teams that act under the auspices of the Coalition in achieving the mission of the Coalition, in 2007-8 we will:

1. Participate in and facilitate the Management Coalition and the Restoration and Education Policy Teams.
2. Organize and chair meetings, issue agendas and prepare minutes.
3. Undertake specific projects on behalf of the Management Coalition and the Restoration and Education Policy Teams such as installation of information kiosks, formulation of interpretive signage standards, etc.
4. Interact with project staff and consultants of the ACOE Dredging Project, Big Canyon Project, etc. to help ensure consistency of approach.

Muth Interpretive Center

In order to help maximize the effectiveness of the operation of the Muth Interpretive Center in educating the public about the ecological importance of UNB, in 2007-8 we will:

1. Execute a written agreement with the County governing the solicitation, holding and expenditure of the IC Capital Campaign monies that would establish NBNF as Project Manager for agreed capital projects with title for the completed items transferring to the County on project completion.
2. Establish priority projects to be carried out in 2007-8 using existing Capital Campaign funds (roughly \$250,000) or new funds.
3. Expand volunteer hours strictly in support of the IC to 3,000 hours per year – 1,000 hours in support of school and other programs and 2,000 hours in Front Desk and related support.

4. Seek funding for an additional Education Specialist to organize and conduct more elementary school programs at the IC, once key positions are filled at the BBSC. (Only one of the eight staff position at the IC is an education position.) As an alternate or supplement to this and Item 4, consider recruitment and assignment of interns (paid and unpaid) to conduct programs.
5. Provide approximately \$20,000 of annual operations funding to benefit the IC, including such items as bridge funding of staff, hiring of part-time interns, underwriting of busing, etc.

Back Bay Science Center

In order to help maximize the effectiveness of the operation of the Back Bay Science Center in educating the public about the ecological importance of UNB, in 2007-8 we will:

1. Contribute to the development of high school lab curricula on behalf of the City.
2. As part of the BBSC Work Group for Facilities (or equivalent body), help with the design of the Teaching Lab tenant improvements and outfitting, outdoor aquaria and interpretive stations, dock revamp, and associated items such as marine life support systems in a coordinated manner consistent with the long-term operational objectives of the BBSC and Shellmaker Island.
3. As part of the BBSC Work Group for Programs (or equivalent body), help with the definition of program mix, promotion, etc.
4. Under agreement with DFG develop a Fundraising Plan and necessary literature to embark upon a fast-track Capital Campaign to raise roughly \$500,000 in addition to the \$250,000 already pledged to NBNF for the interpretive stations, act as primary and coordinating fundraiser and provide project management for agreed capital projects with title for the completed items transferring to DFG on project completion.
5. Under agreement with the City provide one or more suitably-qualified staff to organize and conduct hands-on research-based high school lab programs.
6. Expand volunteer hours strictly in support of the BBSC to 3,000 hours per year – 2,000 hours in support of education and research programs and 1,000 hours in other support to be determined as the staffing and operation of the BBSC is better defined.
7. Provide NBNF staff and volunteer support with respect to volunteer coordination, program promotion and reservations, and general administration.
8. Seek grants and other funding to expand science staffing at the BBSC, replace Sharkmobile and/or fill other needs identified by the BBSC Work Groups.

Community-Based Restoration

In order to help maximize the effectiveness of community-based restoration programs and projects at UNB to protect the long-term health of UNB, in 2007-8 we will:

1. Work with the Coastal Commission to build the ROOTS program at UNB, and the HBP Second Sundays program by providing Naturalists and Associates as leaders, assistants and other regular helpers contributing roughly 1,500 hours a year.
2. Use the Coastal Commission's Our Wetlands, Our World field exercises as part of high-school on-the-water programs conducted at the Newport Aquatic Center, and promote the Our Wetlands, Our World in-school curricula as part of our outreach coordination.
3. Provide approximately \$20,000 of operations funding for tools, supplies, etc. for community-based programs.
4. Work with neighborhood Homeowners Associations to eradicate invasive plants, adopt water management initiatives, and undertake measures to reduce influx of sediments and other pollutants into the Bay.

5. Assist in the securing of funds for larger-scale restoration projects (including those identified per Item 4) as determined through the UNB Restoration Policy Team.
6. Evaluate programs and adapt to keep current and supportive of our mission.

NBNF-Coordinated Tours, Events and Outreach

In order to maximize the effectiveness of NBNF education programs, events and outreach in educating the public about the ecological importance of UNB in 2007-8 we will:

1. Expand high-school on-the-water programs conducted at the Newport Aquatic Center incorporating the Coastal Commission's Our Wetlands, Our World field exercises.
2. Expand multi-level Girl Scout and Boy Scout programs at the IC and BBSC.
3. Expand weekend water and walking tours at various locations around the Bay.
4. Expand weekend outreach at various outdoor locations around the Bay including Big Canyon, Newport Aquatic Center, etc.
5. Conduct other outreach at community events, schools and other locations including UNB Introductory Ecology classes at the NAC, Sea Base, etc.
6. Continue to take the lead in coordinating and staffing UNB special events such as Earth Day.
7. Take on the responsibility of coordinating all outreach at UNB, including Sharkmobile. BBSC staff and volunteers would continue to conduct Sharkmobile outreach visits, but reservations would be made through a central UNB outreach/programs number.
8. Expand volunteer hours in support of the above to 1,500 hours per year.
9. Provide roughly \$10,000 of funding for busing and program costs for low-income schools.

Comprehensive Resource Management Plan

In order to help ensure that the CRMP is developed in the most efficient and effective manner, we will seek to play a key role in the development of the CRMP by undertaking to perform the prep work under contract to the City. Assuming the City does indeed fund our efforts, in 2007-8 we will:

1. Catalog, peer review, synopsise and conduct a gap analysis of studies, plans, reports, etc. pertaining to the Upper and Lower Bay, the Newport Bay Watershed, and other areas in California and elsewhere with similar habitats, wildlife and/or management issues.
2. Develop easy web-based access to this information to allow the stakeholders of the CRMP to jointly use the information to establish management goals and priorities most effectively.
3. Coordinate the above with the development of the City Harbor Area Management Plan.
4. Establish ways of becoming more involved in promoting and facilitating a more holistic and effective approach to watershed management.

Advocacy

In order to help ensure that the issues affecting the long-term health of UNB, the operation of UNB facilities and/or the mission of NBNF are properly addressed by the governing entities, in 2007-8 we will:

1. Work with watershed and other partners to help ensure continued federal funding of the ACOE UNB Restoration (Dredging) Project.
2. Review and adopt official NBNF positions on projects such as Big Canyon and the Horse Arena, and items such as the HBP Strategic Plan and City Harbor Area Management Plan that are of concern to NBNF and/or its members, consistent with our strategic decision-making policy.

3. Address issues that cannot be resolved at a local staff level with agency upper management and local, state and federal elected officials as appropriate.
4. Maintain involvement in committees, task forces, etc. as needed to keep abreast of potential advocacy issues and be able to advocate effectively when the need arises.

Marketing and PR

In order to maximize our effectiveness in meeting our other mission goals we will perform marketing and PR as follows in 2007-8:

1. Expand circulation of Tracks and continue to restructure copy to do a better job of selling NBNF's credentials in the environmental, business, government and other communities.
2. Establish long-term plan for use of Daily Pilot column and for development of copy each month.
3. Expand advertising (free/paid; print/web) of our programs and improve name recognition.
4. Identify chamber and other memberships that we could capitalize on, and community events at which we should be involved.

Organizational Goals and Strategic Actions

In order to undertake the Strategic Actions to meet our Mission Goals we must improve the effectiveness of our volunteers and strengthen our Board, Advisory Board and staff.

Volunteer Management

To maximize the effectiveness of our volunteers, in 2007-8 we will:

1. Expand our volunteer base.
2. Improve the match-up of volunteers with volunteer needs.
3. Improve Membership/Board communication and interaction.
4. Address recruitment of interns to fulfill specific needs.

Board, Advisory Board and Staff Development

To strengthen our Board, Advisory Board and staff, in 2007-8 we will:

1. Increase Board size to its full complement of fifteen (15) members, and focus on recruiting individuals that can and will interact with local, state and federal elected officials on major advocacy issues, individuals that can and will help elevate our social networking and fundraising event capabilities, as well as those with specific talents for board tasks such as crafting donor agreements.
2. Define how the Advisory Board should operate and recruit members accordingly.
3. Recruit the staff needed to fulfill all of the other objectives.

Financial Goals and Strategic Actions

In order to meet our Mission and Organizational Goals and Objectives we must strengthen our financial position. In 2007-8 we will:

1. Agree with the City/DFG (as necessary) and the County on the overall philosophy regarding Capital Campaign fundraising and fund management (and our compensation for this) and execute the necessary written agreements for us to proceed in earnest with BBSC and IC capital funding.
2. Establish the extent of funding to be provided to us under agreement with the City.
3. Identify grants and other sources of restricted funds, including seed funding of a Development Director to fulfill basic staffing and other operating needs, and write grants accordingly.
4. Establish a Plein Air Spring 2008 fundraising event team, reinvigorate our Corporate Membership fundraising program, and conduct other fundraising as appropriate.