

# *Strategic Plan* *2020*

*Mass Audubon's Five-Year Strategic Plan for  
Increased Engagement, Effectiveness, and Impact*



# Strategic Plan 2020



*Mass Audubon's ability to be nimble, creative, and resourceful in addressing today's conservation challenges and opportunities stems from our solid foundation and lessons learned from 120 years of environmental leadership.*

Jared Chase, Chair of the Board

**M**ass Audubon’s Strategic Plan 2015–2020 places special emphasis on connecting our rich history with the possibilities of the future. The Plan validates existing actions, and embraces new ones, that will strengthen and expand our leadership role to effectively advance conservation in Massachusetts. Through our network of wildlife sanctuaries, we will continue to provide places for everyone to connect with the natural world. And, informed by science, we will employ our tested strategies of conservation, education, and advocacy to make Mass Audubon even more relevant, engaging, effective, and sustainable.

Since our founding in 1896, Mass Audubon has joined with partner organizations, scientists, government officials, conservationists, and community activists to protect and maintain the natural heritage of Massachusetts for people and wildlife. We are now increasingly aware of the need to take bold, comprehensive steps to make Massachusetts more resilient to the impacts of climate change. Our Plan therefore articulates the unique role we will play in advancing the understanding of, and response to, this challenge.

Above all, our Strategic Plan focuses on ensuring that the gift of nature is shared with the broadest possible range of people in ways that are the most meaningful to them. Whether it is exploring one of our trails, participating in an educational program, attending a summer camp, becoming a citizen scientist, or advocating for sound environmental policy—there is a place for everyone.

We are inspired by our ambitious Plan that defines three key goals:

- Connect People and Nature for the Benefit of Both*
- Protect and Care for Land and Habitats of Significance*
- Address the Challenges of Climate Change in Massachusetts*

The challenges of conservation can be daunting, but we have established a road map for increasing our reach, expanding partnerships, sharing best practices, and engaging more people in the wonders of nature. We are resolute in our conviction that, together with our members, donors, staff, partners, and volunteers, we will protect the nature of Massachusetts now and for generations to come.

***Please join us.***



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## ***MISSION***

*To Protect the Nature  
of Massachusetts for  
People and Wildlife*

# VISION

Mass Audubon embraces a vision of our state in which nature—whether found in a city park or deep inside the forests of western Massachusetts or within an urban greenway or along the 1,500 miles of Massachusetts coastline—is valued as essential to quality of life, and where people live with appreciation and respect for the complex ecological systems that sustain life on earth, working together to ensure that they are protected.

# ROLE

To serve as a leader and a catalyst for conservation, by acting directly to protect the nature of Massachusetts and by stimulating individual and institutional action through conservation, education, and advocacy.

## Our Distinctive Tools and Core Approaches

### ■ *Conservation*

Protect and partner.

### ■ *Education*

Teach and inspire.

### ■ *Advocacy*

Inform and act.

### ■ *Science*

Study and apply.

### ■ *Wildlife Sanctuaries*

Welcome and engage.

# VALUES

## *Love of Nature*

We value the diversity and resilience of nature and treasure its beauty. Nature sustains and renews us, provides unexpected moments of joy, and inspires our daily work.

## *Passion and Commitment*

We are committed to nature and to people. We share our passion with others to connect people with nature and to inspire everyone to be stewards of the environment.

## *People and Community*

We care deeply about our colleagues, our partners, our members, and the communities with whom we work. We learn from their experience, expertise, and beliefs, and together we build conservation communities that welcome and respect all people.

## *Inspiring Action*

We believe that every person can make a positive difference. Through education, personal discovery, and transformational experiences, we foster a conservation ethic in current and future generations.

## *Credibility*

We bring expertise, sound science, long-term thinking, and community knowledge to solve pressing and important environmental challenges. Our personal and organizational integrity serves as a foundation for our work.

## *Teamwork*

We work together to embrace opportunities and challenges in an ever-changing world. We encourage creativity, innovation, and action, while respecting individual points of view.



# STRATEGIC GOAL

*Connect People and Nature for the Benefit of Both*

# 1



*Mass Audubon is nationally respected for its leadership in environmental education—camps, partnerships with schools, kids out on sanctuaries. We need to work together to encourage people to connect with nature, and Mass Audubon is showing the way.*

Rand Wentworth  
President, Land Trust Alliance (2005–2015)

**M**ass Audubon is uniquely positioned to build lasting bonds between people and the natural environment and inspire adults and children alike to form positive, personal connections to nature. Through our network of wildlife sanctuaries, nature centers, museums, and education programs we are able to engage and influence members and visitors from diverse communities, foster children's connections with nature through our Pre-K to Grade 12 school programs, and inspire the conservation leaders of tomorrow.

We will continue to be responsive to the changing demographics of Massachusetts, including fostering a welcoming atmosphere for new immigrants, urban dwellers, and young professionals, and demonstrating how our work enriches the quality of life for all families and communities. Mass Audubon's highly effective urban education programs across the state provide the foundation for additional innovative approaches that build on and expand this work.

We see these actions as key to ensuring a vibrant future for the Commonwealth's natural heritage as well as sustaining its ability to build other aspects of its economy and stature.

## Actions

- Invest in the Infrastructure of Our Wildlife Sanctuaries
- Advance Universal Accessibility at Our Sites
- Ensure that Environmental Education is Included in School-based Curriculum
- Leverage Our Camps to Further Engage Children in Our Mission
- Lead in the Nature-based Preschool Movement
- Expand Efforts to Build Lifelong Conservation Leaders



## What this means

- Enhancing facilities and customer service at all sanctuaries to provide the highest quality of visitor experiences and promote increased membership and participation.
- Ensuring that our nature centers are accessible and that all staffed sanctuaries will have universally accessible trails.
- Expanding our outreach with urban audiences through community-based environmental education programming.
- Expanding nature preschool programming at our sanctuaries that both nurture children and serve as a model for like-minded organizations.
- Engaging curious students, committed volunteers, and experts alike in meaningful citizen science initiatives that enhance people's understanding of the natural world.



# STRATEGIC GOAL 2

*Protect and Care for Land and Habitats of Significance*



*All of the work you do at Mass Audubon helps protect the things that make life wonderful. I want to thank you for the education programs that you're running. I want to thank you for the open space that you're protecting. I want to thank you for the beautiful wetlands. This is where I learned to love the natural world.*

Gina McCarthy  
Administrator, United States Environmental Protection Agency



**B**uilding on Mass Audubon's respected leadership role in land conservation in Massachusetts, we have an ambitious agenda to increase the pace and quality of land conservation in the state. We will do this through direct conservation, by partnering with private and public entities, and through our advocacy initiatives. Specifically, we will protect and care for land and habitats of environmental significance by using scientifically based land protection strategies, one of our historic strengths.

Our work will integrate the critical aspects of saving important lands and vulnerable habitats and species, building resilience to the impacts of climate change throughout the state, and expanding our wildlife sanctuary network through connections with other protected land. We acknowledge that acquisition of land is just the first step in protecting the Commonwealth's biodiversity and value for wildlife. Therefore we will continue to play an exemplary role within the national land conservation community by stewarding over 35,000 acres we now protect to ensure that they are conserved in perpetuity for the benefit of people and wildlife.

Through our strategic initiatives we also affirm our enduring commitment to bird conservation. Guided by our previous successes, we will vigorously implement the highest priority recommendations for the protection of coastal, forest, shrubland, and grassland birds identified in Mass Audubon's *State of the Birds* reports.

Overall, our ambitious agenda for statewide leadership embraces a collaborative landscape-scale response to preserving and stewarding significant wildlife habitat, for the benefit of the entire Commonwealth.

## Actions

- Strategically Acquire High-Quality Conservation Lands
- Manage Habitat to Better Protect Priority Bird Species
- Expand the Use and Understanding of State-of-the-Art Conservation Tools and Technology
- Restore and Enhance the Habitats We Protect
- Support Sustainable Land Use
- Deepen Our Collaboration with Conservation Partners



## What this means

- Partnering with others to increase the pace of land conservation throughout the state with a long-term goal of having 50 percent of the Commonwealth preserved.
- Identifying and completing several high-priority land protection projects to make our sanctuaries more resilient to climate change.
- Developing habitat- and species-specific action plans for priority species identified in the *State of the Birds* reports and sharing our expertise with other key landowners and managers.
- Maintaining our Coastal Waterbird Program as a cornerstone of regional bird conservation.
- Partnering with communities in the most rapidly developing regions to advance smart growth practices and targeted land conservation initiatives.



# STRATEGIC GOAL

# 3

*Address the Challenges of Climate Change in Massachusetts*



*Our first grandchild was born in March of 2015. By the time he grows up, under the best-case scenario, the New England that I love will be diminished by climate change. So I ask myself, “How can I explain to him the compromised environment he inherits?” One thing I can do is follow Mass Audubon’s lead, reduce my own carbon footprint, and support the organization’s work to effect real change.*

Len Fishman, Director of the Gerontology Institute  
UMass Boston

In response to the growing body of science projecting environmental alteration in the northeastern United States as a result of climate change, we will leverage our significant expertise in conservation, education, and advocacy to further support the biodiversity of our wildlife sanctuary system. Additionally, we have identified ambitious actions needed to protect and manage Massachusetts' lands and waters from the effects of climate change. These actions include creating resilient buffers against encroachments caused by sea-level rise, floods, droughts, and catastrophic storms.

At the same time, we will promote climate literacy to a broad audience via our environmental education programs, which are among the strongest in New England. Organizations such as ours can have a transformative impact through site-based, experiential lessons about the natural environment and our changing climate. We will continue to reduce our own carbon footprint and promote awareness and personal actions that are needed to address climate change in Massachusetts. Finally, we will employ our substantive influence at the local, state, and federal levels to advocate for improved legislative initiatives, policy development, and community response.

Through coordinated approaches and integrated efforts, we will address the impacts of climate change throughout the Commonwealth and beyond.

## Actions

- Use Our Wildlife Sanctuaries as Climate Change Resource Centers
- Advocate for the Implementation of Climate Change Science Standards in Public Schools
- Expand Habitat-based Research and Management on Our Sanctuaries
- Advocate for State Legislation for Climate Change Adaptation Planning and Initiatives
- Lead by Example in Reduction of Energy Use



## What this means

- Developing a climate change literacy “toolbox” of resources for each staffed sanctuary.
- Identifying and supporting sanctuaries as living laboratories for adaptation planning and climate resilient management strategies.
- Advocating for comprehensive greenhouse gas reductions through meaningful policy changes, incentives for green energy, and creation of new technology for smarter energy use.
- Advocating for a statewide adaptation plan that helps improve the resiliency of the Commonwealth's built and natural environment in the face of climate change.
- Reducing Mass Audubon's own carbon footprint and inspiring personal and public reduction of energy use.



# ENSURING SUCCESS

*Our Strategic Plan is inspirational and ambitious. It is also grounded in reality by five key imperatives that will guide our efforts. These imperatives will help define context for our work and provide a lens through which we will weigh the opportunities—and address the challenges—before us.*



***Strengthen Financial Sustainability.*** The goals of our Strategic Plan are exciting and compelling, and have been enthusiastically endorsed by our stakeholders. However, we know their implementation will require significant additional and sustainable resources. We must work to expand our fundraising capacity in partnership with our members and donors.



***Expand Visibility and Comprehension.*** Even with Mass Audubon's substantial name brand recognition, we need to maximize strategic opportunities for engagement with others including expanding our value to diverse stakeholder communities.

***Embrace Diversity.*** We must continue to adapt our operations and activities to ensure that Mass Audubon respectfully reflects the growing cultural diversity of the Commonwealth. This includes increasing the diversity of our Board, staff, and volunteers, and ensuring that everyone feels that our work is relevant and meaningful.



***Measure Our Impact.*** We must continue to develop and implement tools that allow us to evaluate and refine our efforts to be sure that our work leads to direct, positive, and measurable results.

***Enhance Integration and Collaboration.***

Internally, we must leverage our unique core competencies to ensure that we are maximizing efficiency, best practices, innovation, and collaboration within our statewide sanctuary network. Externally, we must increase and enhance mutually beneficial and sustainable partnerships to leverage expertise and resources.



*Mass Audubon's Strategic Plan was developed with the help, consultation, and input from our Board of Directors, Mass Audubon Council, staff, members, volunteers, donors, partners, and thought leaders across the country. We are grateful for their meaningful insight and look forward to implementing this plan with their enthusiasm and support.*



*To join, volunteer, or donate, please visit [massaudubon.org](http://massaudubon.org), or call 1-800-AUDUBON*

***Conservation***  
Protect and partner.



***Education***  
Teach and inspire.



## Advocacy

Inform and act.



## Science

Study and apply.



## Wildlife Sanctuaries

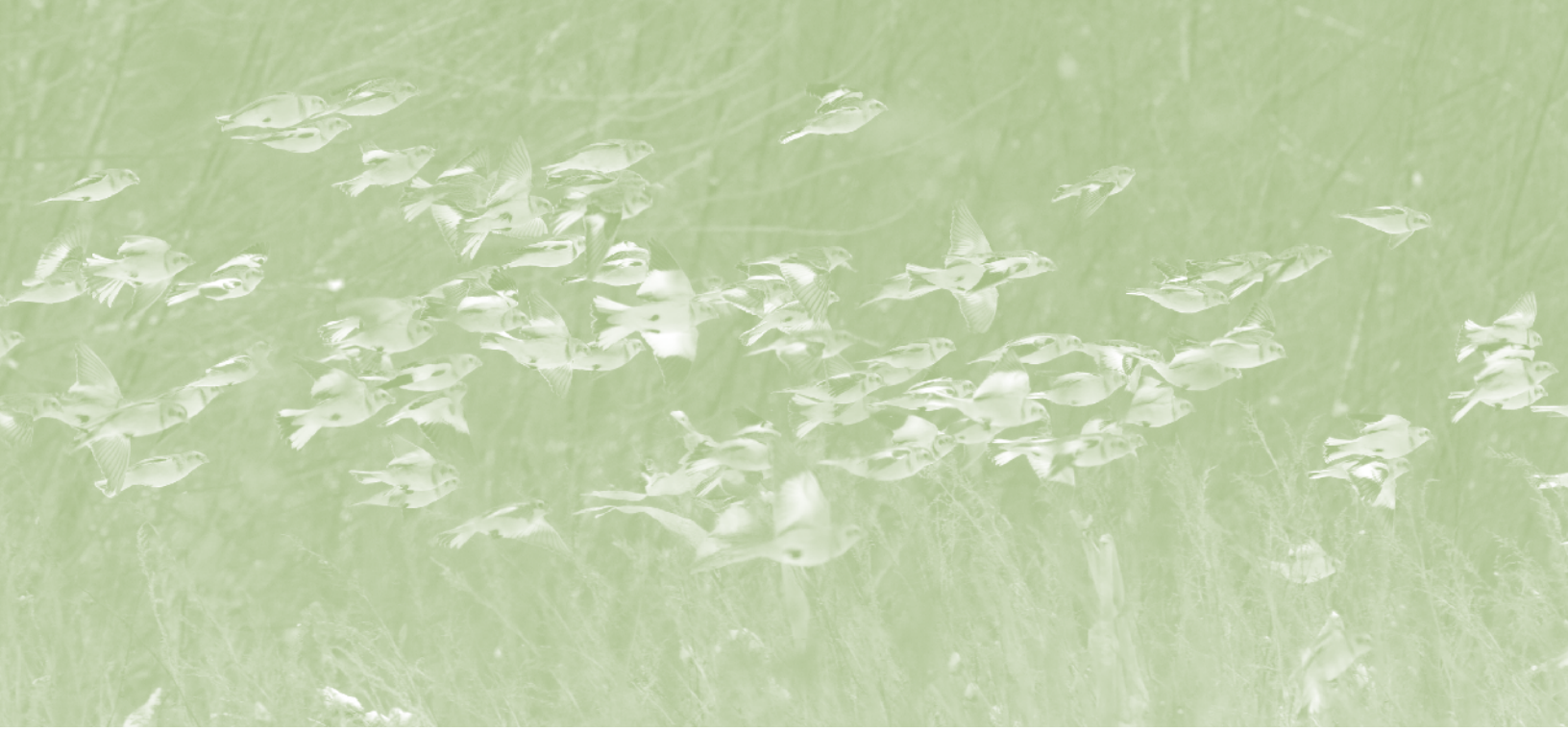
Welcome and engage.

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