



**ASSOCIATION OF  
PARTNERS  
FOR PUBLIC LANDS  
STRATEGIC PLAN  
December 20, 2004 Draft**

## INTRODUCTION

The Association of Partners for Public Lands (APPL), through its member organizations and its partnerships with public lands agencies, is dedicated to public understanding, appreciation, and stewardship of America's natural and cultural heritage. Over the course of more than twenty-five years the Association has facilitated the development of quality not-for-profit organizations that work in harmony with public lands agencies to achieve mutual goals. Beginning with the National Park Service, these partnerships now extend to all federal land agencies and their state counterparts.

In 2003, APPL's board of directors endorsed the need for a new strategic plan and began a process of surveying its members and partners, examining critical issues and external trends, and engaging its members in helping to determine future directions for the association. The objective was to provide a clear mission and set of strategies to ensure the Association's continued relevancy and sustainability over the next three to five years.

A secondary goal was to model sound planning for the membership and to introduce new tools and techniques to assist members in developing or updating their own strategic plans. An open invitation to all members was extended to participate in a planning forum held in October 2005 in Mesa, Arizona. Representatives from twenty-three member organizations participated in this forum, using data gathered over the course of the past year to develop scenarios for the future of APPL.

This was followed by meetings of APPL's board of directors and staff to draft this strategic plan, providing a road map for APPL's future. It provides a clear and simplified mission, further defined by five functional areas of focus. These areas provide both direction and flexibility, so that APPL can respond to today's rapidly changing environment without losing sight of its core purpose and functions.

## APPL HISTORY

Established in 1977 as the Conference of National Park Cooperating Associations (CNPCA), the association changed its name in 1997 to the Association of Partners for Public Lands (APPL), becoming a more inclusive umbrella organization serving nonprofit partners of all public land management agencies. APPL is a 501(c)(3) organization, national in scope, and governed by a board of directors with knowledge, experience and skills representative of the mission and scope of APPL and its membership. APPL is headquartered in Wheaton, Maryland in the Washington, DC metropolitan area. Our federal agency partners include the National Park Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Bureau of Land Management, Reclamation, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, USDA Forest Service, and U.S. Geological Survey.

APPL's members are not-for-profit organizations with both IRS 501(c)(3) status and agreements with one or more public lands agencies. These organizations engage the public with our nation's natural, cultural and historic sites by providing interpretive programs and services, membership programs, volunteer activities, and opportunities to contribute philanthropically. This support allows the managing public agencies to provide a much higher level of service than would be possible only with government funding. Traditionally these member organizations have been defined as cooperating associations, interpretive associations, or friends groups. However, the breadth and type of APPL member organizations continues to evolve.

From a charter membership of thirteen associations in 1977, APPL has grown at the time of this document to become an organization of nearly 80 members, supporting more than 630 of our nation's finest natural and cultural areas. Cumulatively, our members contribute nearly \$30 million per year in financial and in-kind support to their agency partners. APPL provides

information, facilitates communication, and delivers training to build the capacity of these organizations and their agency partners to deliver the highest quality programs, products, and visitor services. APPL is recognized as a strong voice for the value of not-for-profit partnerships in helping the public to understand, enjoy and protect our nation's vast natural and cultural resources. Annual training programs and conventions engage nearly 700 people annually from the public and private sectors.

## **APPL BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

Charles Money, President	Alaska Natural History Association
Tracey Chavis, Vice President	Mesa Verde Museum Association
Carolyn Mollers, Secretary	Mount Rushmore History Association
Mary Gearheart, Treasurer	Redwood Park Association
David Grove, Planning Chair	Jefferson National Parks Association
Curt Buchholtz	Rocky Mountain Nature Association
Michael Lamp	Intermountain Natural History Association
Lisa Madsen	Public Lands Interpretive Association
Jackson Ramsey	Red Rock Canyon Interpretive Association
Donna Asbury (ex officio)	Association of Partners for Public Lands

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### ORGANIZATIONAL MISSION:

The Association of Partners for Public Lands (APPL) fosters stewardship and appreciation of public lands and historic sites through effective partnerships.

This is achieved through five functional areas of focus that include:

- Capacity Building
- Collective Representation
- Information Sharing and Dialogue
- Marketing and Public Awareness
- Membership, Operations and Governance

The following describes each of these functional areas and their overall goals.

### CAPACITY BUILDING

**Purpose:** enhance the capabilities of APPL's not-for-profit member organizations and public lands agency partners to achieve mutual missions through training, mentoring, and educational resources.

**Overall Goal:** APPL will provide each member organization with access to the tools and the resources to achieve peak performance. As a result, APPL members will carry out their work in productive relationships that are characterized by a high degree of mutual understanding, shared goals, and effective communication.

### COLLECTIVE REPRESENTATION

**Purpose:** provide timely input to key decision makers on policies and practices that impact APPL members' abilities to achieve organizational and agency missions.

**Overall Goal:** APPL will be a viable and recognized advocate for the value, benefit, and sustainability of not-for-profit partnerships in achieving public lands agency missions. APPL members will become engaged in and benefit from representational efforts focused to their purpose and functions. Agencies will seek APPL input on policies and practices regarding partnerships with not-for-profit organizations.

### INFORMATION SHARING AND DIALOGUE

**Purpose:** provide current and directed communications with APPL stakeholders, including members, agency partners, vendors, and other like-mission organizations.

**Overall Goal:** APPL provides its membership and agency partners with up-to-date, factual, and useful information; and engages its membership in productive dialogue with one another and with partners at the decision-making level. APPL members are informed and meaningfully engaged in discussions and decision-making. Agencies look to APPL as an informed resource, providing a not-for-profit partner's perspective.

## MARKETING AND PUBLIC AWARENESS

**Purpose:** broaden awareness of the scope and value of APPL and its member organizations, while advancing public interest in and stewardship of public lands.

**Overall Goal:** APPL members will receive increased recognition and visibility for their efforts at the national level, agencies will recognize APPL and its members as significant partners in achieving their public engagement missions, and the public will place an increasingly high priority on their connection to public lands.

## MEMBERSHIP, OPERATIONS AND GOVERNANCE

**Purpose:** manage APPL in a manner that is mission-based, fiscally sound, and responsive to member needs and changing forces in the environment in which the association operates.

**Overall Goal:** APPL has a strong and stable membership that recognizes value from their involvement in the association. APPL is managed and governed in a manner that models high standards, is fiscally sound, and sustainable.

Each functional area of APPL's plan has a set of strategies through which the association will accomplish its goals. These strategies support objectives, which are ongoing, short term, and long term in nature. Together the strategies and objectives form the basis from which annual action plans are derived.

## **FUNCTION: CAPACITY BUILDING**

APPL provides training, consultation, tools, services and opportunities for professional development to members and their agency partners that support mutual understanding, productivity, and achievement of mission within their partnerships.

Within this context, APPL will focus its efforts to:

- Address members' needs with regard to content, skill levels, scope, access, costs, emerging trends, and technology
- Provide various venues and formats for members and agency partners to acquire training and build competencies
- Base its training and curriculum on proven practices, current research and data, adult learning methods, and professional development principles
- Reference, complement, or partner with other established training programs and resources, to provide capacity building opportunities of the highest caliber

## **OVERALL GOAL**

APPL will provide each member organization with access to the tools and resources to achieve peak performance. As a result, APPL members will carry out their work in productive relationships that are characterized by a high degree of mutual understanding, shared goals and effective communication.

## **STRATEGIES**

APPL will accomplish its goal for capacity building by:

- Developing standards for best practices for members in not-for-profit governance, ethics, business practices, management, and accountability.
- Implementing a certification program for its members based upon the standards.
- Providing member training to achieve the standards set forth in the certification program.
- Establishing and administering a formal operational review process, to include both self-assessment tools and external peer review procedures.
- Surveying members and developing benchmarks for member performance.
- Delivering specialized training through a variety of venues including the annual convention, based upon member needs, emerging trends, and issues.
- Fostering mentoring relationships between experienced and newly developing member organizations.
- Building and maintaining an APPL Training Corps with expertise, skills, and capabilities to deliver standardized and customized training sessions.
- Maintaining an up-to-date core curriculum upon which APPL training is based
- Contracting with outside specialists, speakers, and presenters as needed to bring new skills and capabilities to APPL's training offerings.
- Providing access to new and innovative products, services, and suppliers via the annual trade show.

## CAPACITY BUILDING OBJECTIVES

Ongoing	Short Term	Long Term
APPL annual convention in-depth seminars, keynoters, concurrent educational sessions and trade show.	Review for distribution APPL salary and benefits survey developed by APPL member Sequoia NHA by December 2004, and review/distribute the summarized results by February 2005.	Meaningfully engage each member organization annually in at least one task force, forum, presentation, or dialogue at a level appropriate to that member's interests and abilities.
Review and updating of APPL core curriculum, resources, and educational tools.	Introduce new APPL Training Corps members at March 2005 convention. Determine training priorities, elements of core curriculum to support priorities, and method for updating/maintaining curriculum. Hold a Corps training retreat by September 2005.	Implement a "standards of excellence" member certification program, with successful completion by the majority of APPL members by September 2007.
Environmental scanning and research on emerging trends and issues.	Draft APPL standards of excellence for introduction at the March 2006 APPL convention.	Complete and promote APPL self-assessment and peer review products, and pilot with at least three organizations by March 2007.
Provide training calendar, resources, and capacity-building information to members via APPL web site, listserv, and <i>NewsWire</i> .	Develop interim external review processes, standards, and self-assessment tools to assist members in need of such guidance by March 2006.	Offer two regional or topic-specific trainings for members and their partners per year beginning in September 2006.
Recognize excellence through APPL awards and sharing of case studies/success stories.	Provide training to membership on new standardized reporting form at March 2005 convention. Continue to steward approval process for the form across all agencies.	Pilot a minimum of two distance-learning opportunities for APPL members and their partners by September 2007.
Provide scholarships to support member participation in the APPL convention and other training.	Deliver training and consultation under current agreements with NPS, BLM, and USFWS through September 2005. Inform APPL members of opportunities to participate in these programs, and add new training materials developed to APPL core curriculum.	Expand APPL Training Corps to a cadre of 20 members who conduct a minimum of two trainings per year, by September 2007.
	Co-develop and deliver an NPS "Tapping Grants and Funding Sources through Partnerships" TEL course in August 2005, and encourage participation by APPL members.	Offer an annual catalog of APPL fee-for-service training programs, with established learning objectives, course content, and fee structure by September 2007.
	Work with NPS Interpretation Office to develop a pilot course on cooperating association partnerships for agency staff and their partners, by September 2005.	Create an association/friends board member orientation. Determine best format for delivery, i.e. booklet, CD, distance learning, or training and offer by March 2007.

## BACKGROUND FOR CAPACITY BUILDING OBJECTIVES

APPL was formed in 1977 as the Conference of National Park Cooperating Associations (CNPCA) to increase the capacity of its member associations to provide quality interpretive products and

services to the National Park Service. This was accomplished through training in such areas as management and operations, publishing and product development, retail sales and customer service. As APPL grew and established credibility, both the national office and individual member associations were called upon by agency and other member/potential member organizations to help deliver training to agency staff, association staff, and board members.

APPL has developed a strong core curriculum and expertise unique to the public lands community that is recognized for its value by our members and the agencies with whom they partner. Content is based on more than 25 years of experience working within the public lands community.

Public lands agencies continue to encourage the development and enhancement of not-for-profit partner relationships to achieve their missions. Thus, it is imperative that APPL provide training that serves both the agencies and its members so that there is consistency in message, competency building, and desired outcomes. Thus, APPL's capacity building objective serves both its membership and public lands agency partners.

## **FUNCTION: COLLECTIVE REPRESENTATION**

APPL members rely upon APPL to provide timely communications and vehicles for member input on policies and practices that impact their ability to achieve organizational and agency missions.

In this context, representation as defined by APPL has five basic components:

- Relationship-building with key decision makers
- Responding to topical, urgent issues
- Identifying and pro-actively initiating action on policy and practice within one or across agencies
- Being a resource for members on speaking with agency representatives and members of Congress regarding important issues
- Being a resource for agencies on non-profit partnerships

## **OVERALL GOAL**

APPL will be a viable and recognized advocate for the value, benefit, and sustainability of not-for-profit partnerships in achieving public lands agency missions. APPL members will become engaged in and benefit from representational efforts focused to their purpose and functions. Agencies will seek APPL input on policies and practices regarding partnerships with not-for-profit organizations.

## **STRATEGIES**

APPL will accomplish its representation goal by:

- Creating real-time mechanisms for addressing representation issues, to include: call-in briefings with agency staff and APPL members; issue or stakeholder based e-mail alerts on topical issues; and electronic linkages to additional information on the Internet.
- Building relationships and maintaining contact with national office representatives of federal land agencies, national lands agency committees, and related national not-for-profit organizations engaged in like-mission work – and supporting effective communications with lands agencies at the regional level.
- Developing and supporting affinity task forces of APPL members to work on particular issues or agency affiliations.
- Writing papers with explanations of key issues and talking points to assist APPL members in speaking with agency representatives and members of Congress.
- Providing a list of Congressional representatives on committees important to our work, and orchestrating and tracking APPL member communication with these representatives and their staffs.

## COLLECTIVE REPRESENTATION OBJECTIVES

Ongoing	Short Term	Long Term
Ensure a minimum of quarterly communication with national agency staff leads, by telephone or in person.	Identify structure for APPL affinity task forces (by agency or by issue/policy area), role/function of the task forces, and mechanisms to support timely two-way communication with these member groups. Pilot at least two such task forces by September 2005.	Build and maintain an up-to-date, relational database of agency, congressional, and national non-profit key leadership — and identify/track APPL member affiliations with these leaders by September 2006.
Hold twice annual Washington, DC visits between APPL leadership and key department, agency, and Congressional staff.	Pilot and conduct four APPL-hosted call-in briefings with key agency leaders by September 2005.	Develop an APPL white paper with talking points for membership on key APPL concepts by September 2006.
Monitor agency websites, information, and policy review/development related to APPL member missions and not-for-profit partnerships.	Provide timely APPL response to revised NPS DO 21 (fund raising policy) and provide input to NPS DO 32 (cooperating association policy) according to agency time table.	Conduct facilitated quarterly APPL hosted call-in briefings with key agency leaders, to become a recognized benefit of APPL membership by September 2006.
Participate in national or regional meetings, conferences, forums, receptions, and committees directly related to APPL's mission and member functions.	Track status of USDAFS partnership legislation, brief APPL members, and support development of authorities for the FS to fully engage in partnership activities, including development of an interpretive association handbook.	Support a minimum of four APPL affinity task forces (agency or issue-based) annually, with mechanisms for timely updates and two-way communication via monitored Internet dialogues, annual meetings at APPL conventions, and annual "white papers" or summaries by September 2006.
Maintain and continuously improve agency update sections of APPL <i>NewsWire</i> and APPL web site.	Provide an in-depth training session at the March 2005 APPL convention on "Advocacy, Representation, Lobbying and the Law."	Partner with NPS and/or interagency task forces to develop curriculum, resources, training, and other appropriate capacity building initiatives, and pilot such initiatives through September 2007.
Maintain national agreements between APPL and the federal lands agencies with which it partners.	Revamp APPL Ambassador Call format to address member representation interests, and identify issues. Pilot new call format in December 2005.	

## BACKGROUND FOR COLLECTIVE REPRESENTATION OBJECTIVES

As APPL has expanded to build relationships with all land agencies and to represent varied member interests, it has become critical that timely, two-way communications are needed to inform the representation process. APPL members must become equipped and engaged in providing a consistent voice for the value and benefits of not-for-profit partnerships. APPL will focus its representation efforts at the national level, build communication strategies to support regional levels, and build the capacity of its members to represent their interests with local decision makers.

## **FUNCTION: INFORMATION SHARING & DIALOGUE**

Information sharing and dialogue are integral to all aspects of APPL's strategic plan. APPL's information strategy will be specific to the parties with whom the Association wants to communicate, building the message and delivery with the audience in mind.

APPL recognizes that to be effective, the Association must foster communication that is:

- Focused to the intended audience
- Periodic and timely
- Credible
- Two-way
- Issue-based
- Technology-supported

While the membership is the primary focus of this function, communication with partners and other external audiences is also critical to APPL accomplishing its mission and goals.

## **OVERALL GOAL**

APPL provides its membership and agency partners with up-to-date, factual, and useful information; and engages its membership in productive dialogue with one another and with partners at the decision-making level. APPL members are informed and meaningfully engaged in discussions and decision-making. Agencies look to APPL as an informed resource, providing a not-for-profit partner's perspective.

## **STRATEGIES**

APPL will achieve its information sharing and dialogue function by:

- Responding to member inquiries.
- Fostering and monitoring electronic discussion groups among the membership to stimulate dialogue on important issues, task forces, and topical areas.
- Facilitating teleconferences, on-line forums, or videoconferences with members and agency leaders.
- Utilizing APPL Board Ambassador calls and teleconferences as focused two-way communication vehicles to update and engage members on current topics of importance.
- Developing the APPL web site to become the portal of information for APPL members, with information links to agencies, members' web sites, and other pertinent resources and tools
- Utilizing the monthly publication *NewsWire* to provide quick and timely information, in a user-friendly format, with links to additional information.
- Holding forums to bring APPL members together with their agency partners at the regional level.
- Scanning the environment to provide up-to-date information for members on developing external forces and trends that may affect their operations and those of their agency partners.

## INFORMATION SHARING & DIALOGUE OBJECTIVES

Ongoing	Short Term	Long Term
Upgrading of APPL's technical infrastructure and competencies.	Develop an APPL communications technology plan and budget to support operations by August 2005.	Hire or contract technological expertise to manage more sophisticated communications and volume by December 2006.
Monthly newsletter, <i>NewsWire</i> .	Improve <i>NewsWire</i> to include editorial comments, or alerts on the first page with links to full articles or web sources, by June 2005.	Develop and deliver constituent-focused electronic newsletters with relevant information geared to audiences such as board members, executive directors, or buyers. Pilot first such product in 2006.
Scanning of external driving forces shared with members via <i>NewsWire</i> and APPL web site.	Revise the APPL web site format to provide more information, resources, and tools for members by March 2005.	Establish structure for multiple on-line discussion groups to form, share information, address issues, and communicate real-time feedback to APPL. Introduce by June 2006.
APPL board ambassador calls, focused to topical issues and areas.	Develop an agenda for each round of board ambassador calls to address key areas of APPL's strategic plan or high priority agency/operational issues and pilot by December 2005.	Explore video and on-line conferencing and implement these new technologies based upon feasibility, cost, and value to membership.
APPL annual report to membership presented at each APPL convention.	Draft APPL strategic plan by December 2004, share with membership for feedback, and finalize by February 2005.	
Member directory.	Promote and facilitate four call-in sessions with agency leaders (see representation strategy) by winter 2005.	

## BACKGROUND FOR INFORMATION SHARING & DIALOGUE OBJECTIVES

In today's technological age, APPL members are both in need of timely focused information, and flooded with vast amounts of communications and data from a wide variety of sources. They seek pertinent clear and concise messages with opportunities to obtain more in-depth information or have two-way dialogue on topics of particular importance to their operations.

Information sharing and dialogue must come from both the APPL national office to the membership and agency partners, as well as from the membership and agency partners to APPL. While individual personalized communication will always remain important, APPL must increase its technological capacity to deliver real-time, relevant, two-way communication accessible to all its members.

## **FUNCTION: MARKETING & PUBLIC AWARENESS**

APPL's members serve an important role as partners with public lands agencies. They help illustrate what is culturally and naturally significant about each public land and historic site, and they build citizen constituents who connect with and care for these resources. APPL supports its members in their role of ensuring the public is:

- Aware and informed of the value and importance of public lands
- Learning about, visiting, and enjoying their connection with this nation's natural, cultural, and historic heritage
- Stewarding these resources now and for generations to come

APPL's role is to support its members in this function, market this message in its external communications, and develop greater agency, partner, and public awareness of the association and its membership.

## **OVERALL GOAL**

APPL members will receive increased recognition and visibility for their efforts at the national level, agencies will recognize APPL and its members as significant partners in achieving their public engagement missions, and the public will place an increasingly high priority on their connection to public lands.

## **STRATEGIES**

APPL will accomplish its marketing and public awareness goal by:

- Engaging the membership in development of unified themes and messages that illustrate the value of public lands, and the unique role our members play in connecting the public to these lands.
- Promoting these themes and messages throughout all APPL communication vehicles, including the web site, publications, and other media.
- Developing and promoting programs and products, such as reciprocal discounts, that benefit member organizations while encouraging the public to purchase from, or become involved with these organizations.
- Building the expertise of APPL's membership in reaching out to and involving new, previously under-served constituencies.

## MARKETING & PUBLIC AWARENESS OBJECTIVES

Ongoing	Short Term	Long Term
Strengthen visibility and encourage individual donations through participation in Combined Federal Campaign (Conservation & Preservation Charities of America).	Form a task force by March 2005 to develop unifying APPL themes and key messages. Test these ideas with the membership, and solicit additional ideas by June 2005.	Engage external marketing expertise to refine themes and key messages by June 2006, especially with regard to new and previously underserved audiences.
APPL annual report highlighting value and benefit of the association and its membership.	Identify vendors, volunteers, and potential sponsors to assist in developing a marketing plan by August 2005.	Identify low-cost advertising and promotional opportunities through trade publications, member organizations, and volunteer societies. Test market by September 2006.
Environmental and demographic scanning to recognize trends in public interest, visitation, lifestyles, etc. that impact members and agency partners.	Provide support materials and list of participants for APPL reciprocal discount program by March 2005.	Determine additional marketing/awareness, capacity building, representation and information sharing/dialogue objectives that support outreach, stewardship and appreciation of public lands.
Marketing of APPL convention to first-time and returning participants in ways that relate to their own roles and interests in the public lands community.	Hold an in-depth training on Marketing on a Low Budget, an in-depth session on Outreach Programming to Diverse Audiences, and two keynotes on building constituencies for public lands at the March 2005 APPL convention to stimulate further dialogue and action in this area.	

## BACKGROUND FOR MARKETING & PUBLIC AWARENESS OBJECTIVES

APPL's stakeholder surveys, research on external driving forces, and participants in the October 2004 planning forum all recognized a growing need for new messages, programs, and practices to expand and maintain public outreach and involvement with our nation's parks, forests, lakes, monuments, cultural and historic sites. Given the decline in public lands agency budgets, especially in the areas of interpretation, education, volunteer management, and recreation – there is a viable and necessary role for APPL members to help build current and future constituents who value and support public lands.

Demographics and trends provide clear challenges and opportunities for new forms of public engagement, and for changes in marketing and outreach messages. For example:

- By the year 2020, the percentage of population by ethnic group will change as follows: Anglo-Americans from 76% to 50%, African Americans from 12% to 15%, Hispanic Americans from 9 to 21%, and Asian Americans from 4% to 11%.
- Great disparity exists among racial and ethnic groups, age groups, and urban versus rural dwellers in their participation in outdoor recreation and other forms of leisure activity. Travelers to NPS and other public land sites currently tend to be mostly white middle class.
- Technology is greatly influencing people's leisure choices and their expectations for services and experiences on public lands.

- Agency and association services, interpretation, and outreach have not kept pace with these changes. New resources, and new ways of doing business, will be necessary in most cases to help make this change.
- People who volunteer as youth are twice as likely to volunteer and contribute as adults.
- The Baby Boom generation represents the largest untapped pool of potential volunteers for the nonprofit community in recent history.

APPL's marketing and public awareness function supports the goal of fostering stewardship and appreciation of public lands and historic sites. APPL's role in accomplishing this end result is one of empowerment of its members, providing the information, tools, and resources to be proactive in working with their agency partners and engaging the public. This is newer ground for APPL and its members, and will take additional time, input and reflection to determine the most focused and viable courses of action.

## **FUNCTION: MEMBERSHIP, OPERATIONS & GOVERNANCE**

APPL is a membership-based association, comprised of not-for-profit organizations that partner with public lands agencies to advance stewardship and appreciation of natural, cultural, and historic sites.

To effectively serve its members and achieve its mission, APPL will function in the following manner:

- APPL's operations and governance will reflect the highest standards of performance and accountability
- APPL's financial structure will be sound, and its revenue base and operational management will provide both the sustainability and flexibility to meet uncertain demands of the future
- APPL will model a partnership culture, in which input from its membership, public land agencies, volunteers and staff is valued, and accomplishments are the result of teamwork

## **OVERALL GOAL**

APPL has a strong and stable membership that recognizes value from their involvement in the association. APPL is managed and governed in a manner that models high standards, is fiscally sound, and sustainable.

## **STRATEGIES**

APPL will accomplish its membership, operations, and governance goals by:

- Expanding full, voting, membership to all not-for-profit partners with formal agreements with one or more public lands agencies, with applications approved by the board of directors.
- Opening affiliate, non-voting, membership to organizations and individuals who support APPL's mission and commitment to public lands but who do not qualify for full membership, with approval of the board of directors.
- Ensuring meaningful ways for the membership to engage in and benefit from the work of the organization, recognizing both the diversity and commonalities of their purposes and functions.
- Analyzing APPL dues structure to recognize costs and value of services delivered, diversity of membership, and effects of inflation.
- Governing the association by a board of directors with knowledge, experience and skills representative of the mission and scope of APPL and its membership. APPL's governance would evolve from an elected board to a self-perpetuating board structure with a minimum of 11 board members and term limits.
- Continuing to diversify revenue sources, increasing non-dues and non-convention income through a variety of mission-based products and services available to members, non-members, and agency partners.
- Modeling the highest standards of accountability, ethics, governance, operations, and management.

## MEMBERSHIP, OPERATIONS AND GOVERNANCE OBJECTIVES

Ongoing	Short Term	Long Term
Member renewals and new member acquisition programs.	Analyze potential impacts of a change in membership structure, discuss with membership, and place before the membership for a vote by May 2005.	Update APPL's dues structure, based upon size and range of memberships, services provided, benchmarking, and inflation.
Vendor Support Program renewals and acquisition of new Benefactors and Sponsors.	Develop the case for a new board structure, discuss with membership, and place before the membership for a vote by May 2005.	Develop an annual base of general philanthropic support or revenue generating agency agreements.
Manage annual APPL convention promotion, participant registration, trade show registration, sponsorships, and special events to deliver a quality product with a positive return on investment.	Conduct a financial analysis of APPL's fee for service programs to determine optimal pricing structures for various types of training and services. Complete the analysis by August 2005.	Analyze services that meet needs of the membership and provide positive revenue to APPL. This may include brokered insurance, coordinated online and wholesale sales, coordinated marketing, etc.
Hold three board meetings per year, with interim committee meetings and conference calls.	Develop an APPL case for support by January 2005, and develop proposals for consideration by at least three funding sources by June 2005. Match the board of directors' contributions toward APPL's capacity building efforts.	Develop a long-term financial plan for APPL that sets targeted ratios of membership, earned, program and philanthropic revenue.
Maintain accurate, up-to-date financial records using accepted accounting principles.	Gain the Maryland Nonprofits Standards of Excellence certification for APPL by October 2005.	
Professional development of APPL staff and board, through participation in selected training programs, based on annual organizational needs.	Explore new opportunities for partnership training and services through cooperative agreements with agencies.	
Annually revise and update the objectives set forth in APPL's strategic plan to reflect the organization's needs.	Develop a committee structure that reflects the strategic plan by May 2005.	

## BACKGROUND FOR MEMBERSHIP, OPERATIONS & GOVERNANCE OBJECTIVES

**Membership:** When the last APPL strategic plan was written in 1996, the Association considered opening up full membership to friends groups. Again in 2004, feedback from APPL's spring surveys and from planning forum participants suggested that APPL broaden its membership, expanding full membership to friends groups and providing new categories of membership to other mission-related organizations and to individuals.

During the October 2004 planning forum, when participants were asked to develop the future for APPL using four different scenarios of what the external environment might become, all envisioned a future in which full membership in APPL would no longer be restricted to cooperating associations. The rationale included the knowledge that friends groups and similar types of public lands support organizations are expanding, while the numbers of cooperating associations have remained constant. The distinctions between the types of organizations have become less clear over time, there are now more commonalities than differences, and there is potential for greater combined strength in representation.

Among planning forum participants, there was general agreement that APPL explore potential affiliate membership categories for other groups, including other like-minded organizations, vendors, and individuals.

Changes in membership structure as described require a bylaws change and a majority vote of the membership.

**Dues Revenue:** APPL's percentage of revenue from dues has declined from 60% of total revenues in 1994-95 to 20% of total revenues in 2004. The dues reduction that was initiated in 2001 resulted in an annual decrease in dues revenue to the Association of over \$100,000 per year.

In making the decision to reduce dues, the board of directors and membership consciously chose to draw from the Association's reserves while it took time to build and diversify its revenue base. Staff members spend more time generating revenue than in the past. APPL is now moving into its fifth year of dues with no inflation adjustment or any other type of increase.

**Non-Dues Revenue:** APPL earns 70% to 80% of its revenues through its annual convention and trade show; fee-for-service educational activities; and philanthropy. APPL members contribute to the Association primarily in support of the convention, and through the APPL auction. They also are the primary registrants for the convention, bringing both staff and board members for the training and networking experiences. Consultation and training for agency partners has provided the greatest increase in fee-for-service revenue. At FY 2004 year-end, for the first time in five years, APPL generated a positive bottom line.

**Governance:** A board of directors elected from within the membership does not always provide the particular skill set or external perspective needed at any given time to advance the organization's objectives. During the October 2004 planning forum, each of the planning scenario groups recommended that APPL have the flexibility to bring external, non-member representatives onto the board of directors. The majority of participants further recommended that APPL consider a larger board, with term limits, that is self-perpetuating (recommended by a nominating committee and endorsed by the board) rather than elected.

Changes in board structure and selection process require a bylaws change and majority vote of the membership.