

# CRANES

CAPITAL REGION ADVOCACY NETWORK  
FOR ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY



## *Organizational Partnership Proposal*

v04FEB2010

## OVERVIEW

This Proposal contains information about a new partnership organization that is presently looking to expand its operations in the Capital region. We would like your organization to consider joining this partnership for the environment.

The Proposal will briefly share a vision, mission and rationale. It will explore what it could mean to be a CRANES partner, including potential benefits from a partnership as well as some mutual commitments that might be useful to organizations that join.

The Proposal closes by offering some ideas for going forward, together, in partnership. That section is followed by a draft form, which could be used by an organization to subscribe to the Partnership.

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## ADDENDUM

### *A Call for New Action* from CRANES President Gary Werner

A complementary document that aims to provide a broad overview of how global problems are causing local problems, creating urgent opportunities for a multi-county partnership of environmental organizations.

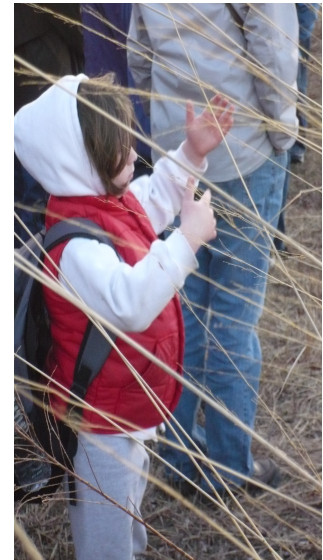
## *Capital Region Advocacy Network for Environmental Sustainability* **Vision, Mission, & Rationale**

### **VISION**

The Capital area's environment, including water, land, and air resources, will be conserved or restored to ensure the region's quality of life and the beauty of this special place, for all who live or visit here, now and in the future.

### **MISSION**

The *Capital Region Advocacy Network for Environmental Sustainability* (CRANES), on behalf of its member organizations and individuals, advocates collaboratively for the environment of the South Central Wisconsin region toward a high quality of life; an ecologically sustainable and just culture; and the celebration of the beauty of this place, both natural and built. Through education and by its own example, CRANES inspires individuals in the region to lead their personal, professional, and civic lives in ways that are just and sustainable for the region's eco-community. CRANES works to ensure that these environmental values have the support of elected governments and related agencies, with programs, laws, and policies that protect or restore the natural environment, for the benefit of all living things.



### **RATIONALE**

Partnership will bring political strength, allowing the voice of the environmental community to be better heard. Our organizations, sharing the same values for the outdoors, will be much more effective if we work collaboratively toward desirable public policies and practices. Together we stand a greater chance of enhancing land, water, and air decisions being made in the multi-county Capital area.

**Advocacy Emphasis** First and foremost, people with a particular interest in our Capital area's land, air and water resources are convinced that the conservation and protection of these resources can be accomplished most effectively by enhancing policies and practices. A partnership can better make positive contributions to the public decision-making process, including educational efforts, and engagement with elected and appointed officials as well as our fellow citizens.

**Regional Emphasis** We intend to focus on collaborative advocacy efforts that influence public policy and programs in the Capital area. Land, air, and water resources—as well as human activities and infrastructure—span city, county, and town boundaries. Among the plethora of conservation and environmental organizations headquartered in the Capital area, most have a focus either statewide or local; sometimes the focus is on special interest, such as birds, fish, or trails, or on a local resource such as a stream, a marsh, or a lake. The existing agencies that do operate at a county regional level are focused primarily on land protection or education; while these are important tasks, they would benefit from the public hearing the unified voice of the environmental community speaking to policy issues.

**Communication Emphasis** The work of each of our organizations would benefit from the capacity to share information about potential impacts to the Capital area's air, land and water resources. Besides traditional tools, a well designed website would help the partnership become an information clearinghouse for our organizations, as well as an educational resource for county, city, and town governments.

Recent developments have provided a challenge and an environmental opportunity unlike any in our history. Both here in the Capital region and worldwide, there has been flooding as well as other weather-related disasters, higher fossil fuel prices, and unsustainable economic decisions. Many of these problems are related in some way to global warming. All these problems have made it clear that “business as usual” is not in our best interest. With future generations in mind, it is most important at this time to rethink and reconstruct our relationship to the natural systems that sustain us.



Please read the “Call for New Action” from CRANES President Gary Werner that complements this Proposal (see Addendum please). Gary writes of his hope that, by working together, our organizations can build on early CRANES success in enhancing the *Capital Area Regional Planning Commission*, while also expanding our activities to other policy areas such as water quality and quantity, transit, and so forth.

## Why Be a CRANES Partner? OR Why Work Together, When I'm, Already Overworked?

### Local Groups Sometimes Reach Limits

Often a local group organizes because of interest in something: Bicyclists want to talk about bike trails, rod-and-reel folks want to talk about fishing, and so forth. If there is an advocacy at all by the group, it is usually focused on this special interest.

Or, a "friends" group organizes in response to a local threat, such as an ill-conceived or overly ambitious development. The organizers may not immediately be aware of the governmental processes involved, or have access to the knowledge already gained by other local groups that have faced similar threats. Moreover, with a broader approach to public advocacy, the development might never have been proposed in the first place, if appropriate policies had already be put in place. Sometimes the necessary response to the threat requires an advocacy more robust than the local group can muster on its own, or feels comfortable pursuing. Successful advocacy sometimes means challenging government agencies that also are crucial to the local group's successful future. That can be awkward!

After a time, some of the initial organizers become convinced that, to succeed in the long term, the local group must turn its attention to incorporating and developing programs. Time to build a website, incorporate, and fundraise! Advocacy, which can be contentious, drops in importance, as the list of other activities, perhaps more attractive to most new members, grows. We've all been there!

### Existing County or Regional Groups Sometimes Choose Limits

An organization such as a regional land trust can be active in a multicounty area but, whether because of its mission or because of relevant laws, the trust is unable to pursue full-throated advocacy of public policy. Other region-oriented organizations may choose to work on grassroots educational programs, or to focus on preservation, protection and restoration of natural spaces. Advocacy or education toward broad public policy and programs is a different emphasis, although one that will certainly support these other regional or multi-county efforts.

### Overcoming Limits: A History of Successes from Working Together

On several occasions, the Capital area environmental community has united around key regional issues. Some examples follow.

*Greenbelt Network Leads to Dane County Parks and Open Space Plan* Environmentalists formed the *Greenbelt Network* to advocate for the *Dane County Greenspace Plan* that eventually passed the Dane County Board in 1992 after a long and bitter struggle. The resulting *Dane County Parks and Open Space Plan* was the first to recognize the need to preserve large areas around the metropolitan area of Dane County for recreation, wildlife, water protection and community separation, while linking together these large preserves and smaller parks through a network of resource corridors.

*\$30 Million Conservation Fund Approved By County Referendum* In 1999, many of the environmental organizations of Dane County worked together with newly elected County Executive Kathleen Falk to establish a \$30 million mandate for the *Dane County Conservation Fund*. The countywide referendum we worked together to support eventually gained the approval of 76% of the voters. The *Conservation Fund* has been used to purchase land for parks, conservancy areas, lake and stream protection, and trails.

*Elected Leaders Meet Regularly With Environmental Coalition* For over ten years, members of environmental groups have held monthly meetings in the Dane County Executive's conference room to coordinate their efforts on regional Smart Growth issues. In 2009, CRANES added regular meetings with the Mayor of Madison, discussing urban environmental policy.

*CRANES Play Major Role in Regional Land Use Planning* More recently, the founding of CRANES has focused efforts on monitoring of and advocacy to the newly formed *Capital Area Regional Planning Commission* (CARPC). CRANES successfully supported the adoption of more protective criteria for Urban Service Area (USA) extensions. Then CRANES promoted increased public participation and improved review USA applications. Most recently, CRANES played a role in the rejection of a water-polluting Mazomanie development. This last success was voted (twice) by a majority of CARPC and sustained by Wisconsin DNR.

We environmentalists have been successful in advocating for important "big picture" programs and policies within Dane County. We have every reason to expect that we can enhance that effort, while expanding its scope to the multi-county region in the future.

## Partnership: The Benefits of Mutual Commitment

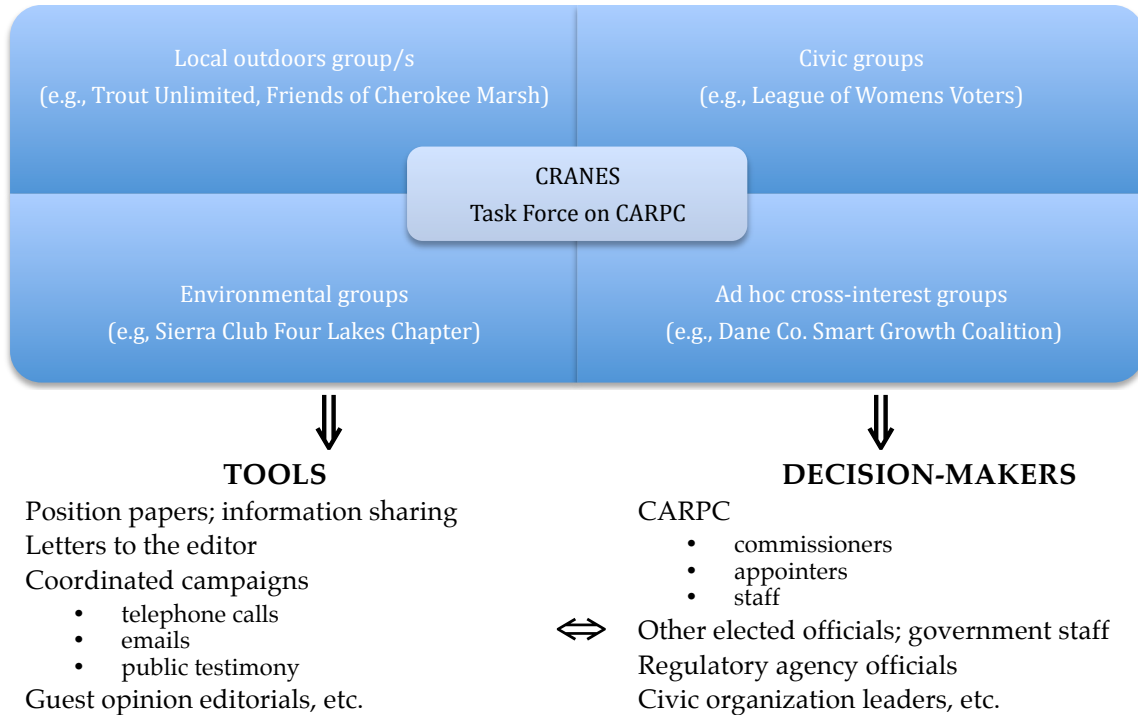
Far more than any lone voice, a union of conservationists, outdoors enthusiasts, land trusts and environmentalists working cooperatively is far more likely to reach the public's ear and the minds of elected and appointed officials. We don't want to overpromise but, for your consideration, here are some benefits that might be had from a mutual commitment to each other, as CRANES partners.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS
<b>Improve Networking / Communication within the Community and the Public</b>
Share Partner information with other conservation leaders: get messages out to larger audience; post meetings and events
Collaboratively build website as a central info source and clearinghouse (e.g., searchable archive of key media and reports)
Provide Partnership capacity for support of website construction; ready-made template and storage space for Partner Orgs
Utilize password-protected areas of website for distribution of sensitive Partnership documents (e.g, internal strategy, etc.)
<b>Capacity Building Services</b>
Cast local issues in larger context
Jointly develop education pieces
Increase research capacity through task force efforts; technical assistance for analysis and fact-checking
Create development or planning support
Craft effective messages and surveys; how-to templates for LTEs, press releases, alerts, events; visuals and maps
Develop phone trees and Email listserves tailored to issue areas
Thumbnail descriptions of, and links to, Capital area institutions
<b>Develop strategy</b>
Participate in annual goal discussion and prioritizing; opportunity to propose specific campaigns
Vote to clarify overarching goals
Participate in Task Force(s) of your choice for each goal/campaign
Jointly develop and implement outreach, e.g. media , meetings, rallies
Implement on-going education campaign
Coordinate overall goals and individual campaign strategies
Timely progress reports on campaigns, including vote charts on votes of public bodies
Recognize individual and group efforts; celebrate successes
<b>Outcomes</b>
Accomplish Partner advocacy goals
Advocate through a more powerful organization
Provide a legacy for our children and their children
POTENTIAL COMMITMENTS
<b>Participation</b>
Participate in the task force of your choice
Help select goals and campaigns; present local issues with regional impacts, for adoption as a campaign
Bring your organization's perspective and expertise to discussions and analysis of local and regional issues.
Contribute to the work of an issue specific Task Force that develops a policy position.
Respond in a timely manner whether or not your organization concurs in Partnership position, i.e. Opt-In/Out of position.
Authorize your organization's name to appear on co-signed joint position statements.
Use the joint position in preparing testimony, appearing at a public hearing to take the same or similar position, submitting on letterhead Partnership position as modified for your organization's goals and interests.
<b>Contribution</b>
Make available (for in-kind or for nominal fee) color copier, large-format printer, storage area, meeting space, supplies, etc.
Co-sponsor grant applications
Contribute annual dues: many approaches are used, e.g., \$1 per Partner organization member; min. \$100, max. \$2500
Share data, expertise, fact-checking and other resources normally required for issue analysis.
<b>Member Involvement</b>
Provide access to members on agreed basis: E.g., 1x/quarter, Partnership action-appeal forwarded to members by email
Distribute appropriate CRANES position papers and articles to members through organization's website
Identify members authorized to act on behalf of your organization
<b>Promotion</b>
Identify your organization as CRANES Partner in communications and on website, incl. link to <a href="http://www.CRANESinc.org">www.CRANESinc.org</a>

## Toward CRANES as an Organizational Partnership: Thoughts on Structure, Procedure and Governance

For the past two years the CRANES Interim Steering Group (ISG) has often operated as a “task force” for an “action or campaign coalition.” In consultation with Capital area environmentalists, elected leaders, appointed officials, and others, the ISG has typically formulated policy and program initiatives, or developed public stances on issues, then coordinated efforts to provide elected or appointed officials with the information they need to make decisions that enhance the region’s environmental sustainability.

A primary focus has been an effort to enhance and influence the *Capital Area Regional Planning Commission* (CARPC):



The existing approach has worked well enough for the past two years, when CRANES has been focused almost entirely on monitoring and enhancing CARPC. The Interim Steering Group believes that this approach can be of continued usefulness for the remainder of 2010 and into 2011, perhaps while also adding 1-3 additional county or regional policy areas (e.g., global warming or transportation have been discussed internally, each having major Capital area policy developments on the horizon).

The ISG has also talked about tackling different levels of policy, such as county, regional or even state (e.g., what if the 1920s state statutes creating the Drainage Commission, including its taxation authority, were repurposed to empower “Watershed Commissions” having the environment as the first priority?).

In essence, the existing CARPC effort could become one of several CRANES task forces. A more complex program such as this would, we think, need to be supported with sufficient resources to allow the partnership to contract a project manager for the short term. As CRANES grows, and perhaps as early as 2011, employed staffing would be considered.

Additionally, we hope to find the necessary resources to allow upgrading our current “interim” website to a more powerful database-driven, network-friendly, and advocacy-supporting website. The CRANES website would allow Partners to input and share their own information, such as meetings and important dates. There could also be a password-protected secure section for sharing of the partnership’s sensitive budget, policy, and strategy documents. The website could even provide ready-made space and templates for new Organizational Partners who want to build a website more quickly and economically.

## What Happens After March 6?

Much depends on your response to this call-to-action, but here's how we think we might proceed.

### *Joining the Partnership*

After the March 6<sup>th</sup> event, the CRANES Organizational Partnership Proposal and Document will be revised and finalized, then shared with all those who participated.

The next step will be your organization's decision to become a CRANES Partner through 2011. Each delegate to the March 6 event will be asked to seek authorization by the organization's board or other leadership group to join CRANES, using the Organizational Partner Document (OPD, last page, below).

Authorization to become a Partner will signal your organization's agreement to the Benefits and Commitments identified as desirable or acceptable on March 6. Again, the agreement will be operative for a trial period, through 2011, after which policies and practices will be open to mutual reconsideration by the partners (within previously agreed upon provisions, e.g., four weeks mutual notice).



### *Announcing the Partnership*

To allow announcement of the working CRANES Partnership around the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Earth Day, 22 April 2010, at a public event, the OPD will need to be signed and returned by April 8. Return of additional OPDs after April 8 can be acknowledged with press releases, and on the CRANES website.

### *Activating the Partnership*

We also propose that the CRANES Partners convene an Assembly before the end of the year.

One purpose of the Assembly will be to begin work on identification of public policy initiatives and programs that can be successfully pursued with existing resources. In other words, CRANES Partners would have the opportunity to choose what if anything is added to the CRANES work program for 2011, in addition to the good work all ready underway with CARPC.

### *Sustaining the Partnership*

The Assembly will also be an opportunity to begin collaborative planning for the long-term structure and operations of CRANES. During the first Assembly, Partners could create a governance model that provides the ability to execute strategies efficiently and powerfully.

At the first Assembly, the Partners may also decide to hold regularly occurring Assemblies in the future, as well as other policy formation and planning procedures.