

# **Native Plant Society of Texas: Strategic Goals & Objectives for 2009-2012**

## **Executive Summary by Ed Conroy, Consultant**

This document is the result of two planning discussions held in June and July 2008 with members of the NPSOT Planning Committee and other leaders of the organization who participated in the second meeting. This plan sets goals and objectives for the organization for the period of 2009 to 2012 and is divided into three sections:

- Advocacy Goals and Objectives,
- Chapter-Level Organizational Goals and Objectives, and
- State-Level Organizational Goals and Objectives.

The goals are articulated in a numbered order. The objectives follow each goal in a bulleted, indented manner. They follow the priorities reflected in the discussion by the participants in both meetings. In thinking about the plan, it is important to simply remember that goals are the desired outcomes of planning work, and the objectives are activities to be undertaken to achieve the goals. A listing of the goals accompanies this summary to provide a convenient overview of the work outlined by the plan. This plan has been through an extensive review by all of the members of the Planning Committee and other participants, guided by president Carol Feldman and immediate past president Melissa Miller.

The planning process was successful in articulating many goals and objectives that would, when implemented, provide the organization with considerable effectiveness and enlarged capacity, influence and membership. Because of lengthy discussions about the goals and objectives themselves, it was not possible to put time lines or cost estimates (for which funds would have to be raised) on all the goals, with the exception of the goal to hire an executive director. It appears there is a consensus that s/he should be hired in 2010, if possible, but there is also agreement that the organization should have sufficient

funds raised or pledged for at least two years of salary, benefits and additional “cushion” cash—a goal that would be at least \$100,000 or more, depending upon the salary and benefits to be paid.

That goal is difficult to accomplish without obtaining major grant support and also a diversified range of corporate and foundation supporters. Adopting and implementing a fundraising plan therefore emerges strongly as a goal in this plan.

The goal of increased advocacy work was enthusiastically embraced by the entire group participating in this process, but there is so much that is being recommended to be undertaken the adopted goals will clearly take more than three years to be fully achieved. I highly recommend that the leadership of NPSOT create a specific, year-by-year plan for achieving the goals and objectives of the advocacy work, in order to be effective.

Likewise, the goals for the chapters and the improvement of communication between the state office and the local chapters did not receive specific time lines, but it may be assumed that the intention of all present was to begin this process now and continually develop it in the years to come.

The goals and objectives dealing with building the organization's capacity are among the most detailed of the plan, and will require the most attention from leadership to realize. In particular, the plan now includes a summary of elements of fund raising practices which were discussed in the second meeting and in an e-mail exchange among participants a little later in the week after that meeting. It is a feature of the NPSOT that at present it does little fund raising and grant writing at the state level, but it has become so well organized on a volunteer level that there is no doubt that NPSOT could now attract more business and foundation support for its programs at the state and local levels. The one element that is missing from this aspect of the plan, however, is a designation of who will undertake responsibility for this initiative. I propose that it be placed under the aegis of the VP of Finance and the Finance Committee, if they are willing to take on some of this work. Of course, if someone else in a VP position is more

amenable to doing the work, then that person should by all means do so. It may be advisable, as well, to hire independent fund raising counsel to guide the writing of the plan and set up the systems for fund raising at the state level until the executive director can be hired.

The importance of a fund raising plan as the next step after the strategic plan cannot be stressed too much. Although a detailed plan is outside the scope of this project, in the second planning meeting participants discussed a number of specific objectives that are included here and become the skeleton of a fundraising plan which can serve until such time as a formal plan may be developed. The level of specificity one obtains with a fundraising plan, however, is to set fundraising goals and identify prospective donors for each part of the operations of the organization that may require support over and above that provided by regular revenues. Many of the goals and objectives stated in this plan will need to have their revenue needs established by the next president and coordinator, and by the executive director, when s/he starts work. You will see specific recommendations for funding for the executive director position, a recommendation that the organization start seeking more corporate underwriting for the Symposium, plus the suggestion that the state level solicit support from members each year through an Annual Fund drive that gives members with more disposable income the opportunity to give to the support of the special initiatives of the organization. I believe that NPSOT leaders will be able to generate that support if they explain the importance of the advocacy, education and organizational growth initiatives outlined in this plan.

Before concluding this introduction, I wish to point out that there is an inherent connection between the work of building collaborative relationships with sister organizations and the growth of an effective Development Board. The work of establishing relationships between the NPSOT leadership and the leaders of the organizations with which NPSOT desires to collaborate will reveal certain individuals who would make excellent candidates for the Development Board. While some will have their first loyalties to the organization with which they are

primarily affiliated, others will be freer to provide advice to NPSOT. The process of collaboration, therefore, should be seen as useful not only to the delivery of program services to members and others, but also as useful to the growth of the organization through attracting new, high-level, talented people who can bring resources, prestige and new contacts to the organization as a whole.

The direction given to the website in this process was rather minimal. Perhaps that is due to the fact that work is already underway on a major revamping of the website. In any case, the strategic importance of the website as the place of “first impression” for most prospective members and funders cannot be over-emphasized. With many younger people now utilizing software such as Facebook to build their social lives, the organization needs to realize that websites build social communities in definite ways. One goal for the NPSOT website I would recommend, therefore, is that it be attractive to the widest possible group of people, and that it should serve as a magnet for the development of social networking among members, and among potential members in related groups. The objectives for such goals require input from those people currently working on the website, and I invite their comments in this regard.

Some words about Vice Presidents and Committees: This plan recommends the creation of a new position for Vice President of Advocacy and an Advocacy Committee; a new Executive Committee with executive powers for the board, composed of all elected officers and all VPs; a new Finance Committee under the VP of Finance into which the current Audit Committee would be folded, and a new Education Committee under the VP of Education. The president and immediate past president have weighed in with their opinions on the length of terms of these positions, and the number of committee members who will serve on each of these committees. I expect there may still be some discussion on those points, but I think the current recommendations are good. In addition, further thoughts about defining the responsibilities of each committee are welcome.

Regarding membership growth, it seems pretty clear that the main work of building membership will have to be at the local level, although the state level

could support it by raising funds to cover membership promotional costs at the local level. This is now reflected in the plan, and I invite your comments.

In conclusion, this document is a faithful reflection of the planning discussions and the desires of those present for the organization, combined with my advice based upon 17 years of experience in the administration and development of non-profit organizations. And it has been emailed for comment to the NPSOT board, including chapter presidents. It is my hope that this plan will be a useful guide to the Native Plant Society of Texas in becoming ever more effective and increasing its capacity to fulfill its mission.

## Key Goals of NPSOT Strategic Plan 2009-2012 (Objectives follow goals in complete plan.)

### I. Advocacy Goals and Objectives

1. Advocate for the needs of native plants, native plant communities and their habitats with elected officials and other government officials.
2. Work with counties and cities to adopt native plant ordinances and to promote public landscaping practices that benefit native plants, their habitats and their communities.
3. The VP of Advocacy and the Advocacy Committee will work pro-actively with state agencies that affect plants statewide and become the preferred resource for information about roadside management.
4. Be more effective with communicating native plant advocacy messages in the public media.
5. Be an advocate for native plants within the education system.

### II. Chapter-Level Organizational Goals and Objectives

1. Improve Chapter Liaison work so as to build the organization's capacity.
2. Provide reliable information about NPSOT-recommended chapter activities, and encourage NPSOT chapters to continue being very engaged in their own development and growth.
3. Strengthen the capacity of each chapter to engage in education, outreach and example.
4. Encourage activities for building membership growth to 2200 by 2011.

### III. State-Level Organizational Goals and Objectives

#### A. Collaborations

1. Cultivate active partnerships with other organization and agencies over the next three years that would further our goals seven key organizations:
2. Create complimentary annual newsletter subscription, delivered with a letter from the NPSOT president and environmental liaison to the presidents of each of such organizations, to establish potential collaborations in the future.
3. Re-invigorate the work of the Environmental Liaison and create a new Environmental Committee.
4. Explore institutional relationships with youth groups and develop program services to families with children.

## **B. Organizational Capacity-Building Goals**

1. Hire full time executive director within three years to develop organizational capacity.
2. Improve effectiveness of Board of Directors.
3. Establish a NPSOT Development Board to increase fund raising ability and public profile.
4. Undertake fund raising and grant writing to support organizational development.
5. Promote better use of the website.
6. Encourage activities for building membership growth to 2200 by 2011.