

Friends of Dyken Pond Complete Strategic Plan

The Friends' recent acquisition of the Newcomb 2 parcel was its latest successful land protection project in the last several years. With a significant set of lands around the Center now protected, the Friends' Board of Directors asked themselves, "Where do we go from here?" The Board decided it was the right time to focus on other ways to support the Dyken Pond Center. With input from an online survey of our members and interviews with Center visitors, and after a day-long retreat at the Center and a few follow-up meetings, and with much advice and prodding from Jim Prazak, our volunteer facilitator, we have developed a strategic plan that we call Moving Ahead with Vision and Action. This plan will guide our activities and focus our efforts for the next three years.

In setting the context of the plan, the Board defined a vision of "the people of Rensselaer County and the surrounding region engaged with their natural environment, being informed and enlightened land stewards, and participating in affordable environmental activities."

The Board affirmed that the Friends' mission in realizing this vision is to "foster ecological literacy and land stewardship by promoting experiential natural science education, supporting the Dyken Pond Environmental Education Center's programs and protecting the natural resources at and around the Center through financial and volunteer support."

The plan presents five major strategic priorities, and associated tactics, for the Friends to achieve its mission of supporting the Dyken Pond Center over the next three years:

- Enhance the environmental education activities at the Center: while continuing sponsorship of SOLA camp and Forest Conservation Corps, expand number of camp and field trip scholarships, and work to increase staffing at the Center.
- Upgrade the physical assets at the Center: maintain current facilities while exploring funding for a new building, and develop new trails on our most recently acquired land.
- Strengthen the partnership with Rensselaer County: enter into a formal agreement for increased collaboration with the County, and explore offering overnight stays at the Center.
- Build the Board's capacity: strengthen the Board's skill sets and increase its effectiveness, and increase roles of volunteers.
- Strengthen the financial viability of the Friends: fundraising, membership development, grant writing, and financial management.

The Strategic Plan will be posted on the Dyken Pond website soon. The Board gives special thanks to Jim Prazak for his patience and his many hours of writing, leading discussions, and providing expertise – we wouldn't have finished the plan without him!