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*Saguaro cactus, Kofa NWR, Arizona*

# Mission and Vision

## Mission, goals and objectives

Establishing your organization requires that you think through what the purpose of your group will be: What is its mission and how will you translate that mission into action? Your mission statement will define your group. Once you have a mission, you'll develop a list of goals and objectives to help you achieve your mission.

The mission statement says who you are. It gives your group its identity. It is a single consistent statement that communicates to the public and members what your group represents – why it exists, what greater goals it hopes to accomplish. It also guides decision making, since each project your group works on should help to achieve its mission.

Understanding what you can do to help the refuge will help your group decide on a mission and a vision. Spend plenty of time talking with the refuge manager and staff to decide on a general role for your group. Once your

group has decided what it can do for the refuge, you will be ready to develop the group's mission and vision.

Often it takes time, perhaps many meetings to develop your mission statement. Don't get hung up on the language or exact wording. Good leadership can prevent this from happening. There is no one format your statement must take. Your goal is to come up with consensus from the group for a statement that best describes your purpose.

The process of forming a mission statement is almost as important as having one. Through this process, your group will form a commitment to the organization. Your group gets a chance to openly express and discuss their visions and concerns for the future of the organization.

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### sample mission statements

*For the public good, preserve and enhance the integrity of the National Wildlife Refuge System as the nation's most important network of diverse and strategically located habitats set aside primarily for the benefit of fish, wildlife, and plants.*

National Wildlife Refuge Association

*The Ding Darling Wildlife Society will promote a better understanding and appreciation of the natural environment of south-west Florida, and, in particular, the J.N. Ding Darling NWR.*

Ding Darling Wildlife Society,  
Sanibel, FL,  
J.N. Ding Darling NWR

*Instill reverence, respect and sense of value for our wild creatures and habitats. -Facilitate education of others in the ways of the wilds. - Interpret the sensations of nature ... so others can marvel in her magnificence while learning to respect her fragility. Ours is a mission of service most humble yet of the highest order.*

Tensas River Refuge Association, Winnsboro, LA,  
Tensas River NWR

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A group's mission is dynamic, not static. Friends groups are dynamic organizations. While it is important to develop a mission and vision that works well today, the needs of the group and /or the refuge may change. As you develop, your group may find it wants to accomplish things that were not part of the original vision. Remember, the mission is not set in stone. It can and should be revisited and revised as needed. Try not to get "bogged down" in philosophical discussions that take energy away from the group. At some point, everyone needs to agree on the group's mission and move on. The mission can be revisited at some point to make sure it works for the group.

### **A Mission Statement Is . . .**

- Based on an understanding of the mission of the local refuge.
- Based on an understanding of the purpose and mission of Refuge System (and the FWS).
- A shared vision defined together, with citizens and refuge manager.
- Designed around a list of goals identifying several that can be accomplished first.
- Simply stated, clear and able to inspire people to action.

## sample mission statements

*To add to the Refuge all wetlands remaining on the Bay, to protect each from degradation until it can be acquired, and to lobby for funds for purchase.*

Citizens to Complete the Refuge, Palo Alto, CA  
Don Edwards San Francisco Bay NWR, San Francisco Bay NWR Complex

*To support environmental educational, recreational activities and programs; to increase public understanding of the history and environment of Bombay Hook and Prime Hook Refuges, the Allee House, and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service.*

Friends Of Bombay Hook, Smyrna, DE, Bombay Hook & Prime Hook Refuges

*Promote better understanding and appreciation of the natural history and natural environment of the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, and in particular, the Seney NWR.*

Seney Natural History Association, Seney, MI, Seney NWR

### Tools to help your group build a mission

- Pull together a meeting of Friends and Refuge staff to brainstorm about the vision and mission.
- Consider all ideas during the “visioning” and brainstorming.
- Be realistic, but be visionary.
- Have the refuge manager conduct a tour and introduction session to the specific refuge and the FWS.
- Identify someone in the community with training in vision writing to facilitate a meeting.
- Get copies of other Friends groups’ mission statements.
- Understand that your mission may change over time, be prepared to rework it as needed.
- Don’t be overly concerned whether you call your document a mission statement, a vision or a purpose.

### sample mission statements

*The purpose of the Merritt Island Wildlife Assoc. is to promote conservation, awareness, and appreciation of the Merritt Island NWR and to provide assistance to Refuge programs.*

Merritt Island Wildlife Association, Titusville, FL, Merritt Island NWR

*The Friends of Seal Beach NWR are committed to community stewardship of the Seal Beach NWR through preservation, restoration, and education.*

Friends of Seal Beach NWR, Seal Beach, CA, Seal Beach NWR

*The purchase and protection of salt marsh estuarine systems and their adjacent upland areas and watersheds from Kittery to Cape Elizabeth, ME.*

Friends of Rachel Carson NWR, Wells, ME, Rachel Carson NWR

## Goals vs. Objectives

The mission statement – a short statement of a group’s purpose – doesn’t tell the whole story about what your group is doing. How is your group going to accomplish its mission?

Once your group creates its mission, you’ll want to translate it into action. This is done by setting goals and objectives. These will define how you will go about doing your organization’s business. Your group will use its mission, goals and objectives in many ways – for nonprofit filing, membership development, program decisions and fundraising. Be realistic, but be visionary. Plan to revisit your goals and objectives annually.

**Goals** are general statements about what you want to accomplish and objectives are specific statements about how you plan to do it. Goals are also called strategies or strategic initiatives. Examples of goal statements might be: “to educate the public about the refuge”; or “to raise money for the refuge”; or “to increase membership”; or “to increase public outreach in various media.”

**Objectives** are specific, measurable, verifiable activities your group will do to carry out your strategy. To educate the public, you might decide to build a new display in the refuge’s visitor center, organize nature walks to teach people about wildlife and the refuge’s role in preserving it, or go into the schools with a specific curriculum.

To raise money, your group might sponsor annual festivals, road races or other events and seek a specific sum of money to be raised.

Outreach may include publishing ten articles in the local newspaper, and may require getting acquainted with the editorial staffs of all local publications; the group might also decide to publish a brochure.

### Excerpt from Friends of Minnesota Valley NWR’s strategic plan, 1994-1995\*

#### ■ Goals:

*Conserve the integrity of the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge.*

*Provide education to residents of communities adjacent to the Valley towards wildlife conservation goals.*

*Provide wildlife conservation and environmental education to governmental agencies concerned with the Valley.*

*Work to complete land acquisition in the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge.*

*Provide advocacy for the Refuge as needed.*

Committees were formed to meet these goals. They developed objectives and a plan of action. A sampling from the outreach committee plan follows:

#### ■ Objective:

*Expand membership to 300 by December, 1995*

##### **Action Items:**

- *Contact members who do not renew their memberships.*
- *Increase number and variety of Friends member events to at least four per year.*

#### ■ Objective:

*Begin a program of outreach to community groups.*

##### **Action items:**

- *Develop a Friends presentation and present to the Board for input in February, 1995.*
- *Conduct 6 presentations to city councils, committees, and local business leaders by December, 1995.*

\* see appendix for entire strategic plan



## Mission and Vision Checklist

You may consider getting a facilitator to help with the mission statement and goal setting process.	
Both Friends and Refuge staff are involved in creating a mission that is clear and simply stated and will inspire people to action.	
Be bold in your vision, but be realistic too.	
The mission is be based on an understanding of the Refuge mission.	
The mission serves as a focus for the group and will help to identify which projects to undertake.	
Translate the mission into action by setting goals and objectives to carry it out.	
Be willing to periodically re-evaluate your mission, goals and objectives.	

