

Summit Soil and Water Conservation District
2025-2029
STRATEGIC PLAN

Developed by Members of the Strategic Planning Committee
Adopted by the Board of Supervisors on September 17, 2024



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Introduction

Summit SWCD staff developed and distributed surveys to the general public and stakeholders. The information collected was used to identify local natural resource concerns and assist the district in developing the strategic plan, annual plan of operation, and natural resource initiatives. A small subset of the Strategic Planning Committee met to outline committee goals and schedule. The full Strategic Planning Committee convened in April and May to begin developing the 2025–2029 Strategic Plan.

The Strategic Planning Committee consisted of:

- Sarah Barrow (Watershed, SSWCD)
- Natalie Schroder (Outreach, SSWCD)
- Brandon Andresen (Stormwater, SSWCD)
- Brian Prunty (Administration, SSWCD)
- Ana Burns (SSWCD Board, Davey Resource Group)
- Brad Kosco (City of Hudson)
- Rob Curtis (SSWCD Board, Summit Metro Parks)
- Chuck Hauber (Summit County Engineer’s Office)
- Denny Stoiber (Supervisor, SSWCD)

During the meeting the Strategic Planning Committee conducted the following steps:

1. Review and revise the Mission Statement
2. Review and revise the Vision Statement
3. Review and revised the Core Values
4. Identify and analyze SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) elements

Following the Committee meetings, the district staff met in July to conduct the following:

1. Review and complete the SWOT analysis
2. Identify strategic goals and objectives
3. Draft the 2025-2029 strategic plan

An executive report updating the Committee’s progress-to-date and draft was submitted to the Board on August 20, 2024. Comments and revisions were completed based on the Board’s review. The final draft of the plan was provided to the Board for adoption at the September 17th board meeting.

The Committee completed its work at its final meeting. The Strategic Plan was submitted to the Board and adopted on September 17, 2024.

This Strategic Plan will guide the development of the Annual Plan of Operation (APO) for the next 5 years. Staff and Board members will use this document, along with the outlined categories and objectives, to create the action items for the Annual Plan of Operation (APO).

Our Mission Statement

Summit Soil and Water Conservation District provides leadership and advocates for the stewardship of our natural resources and responsible land use through education, technical assistance, and partnerships.

Our Vision Statement

Summit Soil and Water Conservation District aspires to be a trusted leader in engaging the community to foster a sustainable, natural environment and practice responsible land use for future generations.

Our Statement of Core Values

Summit Soil and Water Conservation District's Core Values are:

1. **Sustainability:** Maintaining healthy soils, water and habitat promotes responsible land use and is crucial for the continued viability of our community.
2. **Leadership:** Continuous advancement through sound science and innovative practices is the cornerstone of being the trusted educational and technical experts in the fields of natural resource stewardship and responsible land use.
3. **Service:** Integrity through professional communication, utilizing proactive outreach strategies, responsive technical assistance, and innovative problem solving is essential to serving our community.
4. **Teamwork:** Successful results fostered through collaboration, open communication, mutual respect, and support empowers our team and stakeholders to build strong relationships and achieve shared goals.
5. **Equity:** Dedication to cultivating a community founded on fairness, justice, and inclusion ensures equal access to opportunity, resources, and rights for all.

SWOT Assessment

Strengths

- Team oriented and motivated staff
- Good network connections with other SWCDs and organizations
- Professional, progressive, and supportive board
- Diversity in Revenue Sources and State Match
- Adaptable programming
- County support and resources (office, administration)
- Administrative support (Ohio Department of Agriculture, Div of Soil and Water)
- Power of enforcement
- Historic value of District (circa 1946)
- Non-profit status and cheaper than consultants
- Large, diverse staff
- Expanded services in Stormwater, Watershed, and Outreach program areas
- Partnerships and collaboration with several conservation organizations and stakeholders' support
- Locally driven and focused mission
- Surface Water Management District & Stormwater Utility
- Office culture
- Social media presence
- Trusted and respected by the community, conservation partners and stakeholders

Weaknesses

- No acknowledgement of importance or protection of virgin soils or naturally eroding soils (Category #1)
- Services expanded faster than staffing and program organization (Category #2)
- Lack of competitive salaries vs. other government organizations (City, County, State, Federal) (Category #6)
- Limited staff experience who lacks community relationships, historical knowledge of the district, and reduced consistent messaging and expected high quality customer service (Category #1)
- Inconsistent staff communication and lack of leadership within program areas (Category #4)
- Program areas are siloed (Category #4)
- Limited easy access of public space for indoor and outdoor programming at Pry building (Category #3)
- Organization is still mostly unknown to the public (Category #3)
- Young Watershed program (Category #1)

- Turnover of public officials resulting in lost historical knowledge about Summit SWCD, our programs and requires rebuilding relationships (Category #3)
- Teleworking challenges of lost communication both internally and externally (Category #1)
- Limited payment options. (Category #1)
- Need to maximize Beehive program and database to become more efficient and track success (Category #1)
- Lack of Agricultural assistance and relationships (Category #3)

Opportunities

- Promote the State Match (Category #5)
- Expansion of education and training services (Category #3)
- Expansion of MS4 program services to our communities and the SWMD and meet with operators following audits (Category #1)
- Conservation easement administration and protection (Category #4)
- Watershed management services (Category #2)
- Investigate additional funding sources such as grants and other revenue sources (Category #5)
- Marketing, branding, technology, videos and social media (Category #3)
- Expanding the volunteer program beyond stream monitoring (Category #3)
- Develop program area standard operating procedures to assist employees and new hires (Category #4)
- H2Ohio funding for agricultural assistance and watershed projects (Categories #1 & 5)
- Demonstrate our leadership through collaborating on research and demonstration projects (Category #2)

Threats

- Complaints/political pressures
- Loss of staff to retirement or departure
- Market competition for our programs or services
- State and Federal Deregulation

Strategic Goals

The strategic goals are organized into the following six categories:

- **Enhance Program Delivery and Customer Service**
- **Strengthen Organizational Capacity**
- **Enhance External Relations and Community Engagement**
- **Expand and Diversify Funding Sources**
- **Fostering a Positive and Collaborative Work Environment**
- **Mitigate Threats and Ensure Long-Term Stability**

Within each category, objectives were established based on the SWOT analysis. The aim of these objectives was to amplify our strengths, minimize our weaknesses, exploit our opportunities, and mitigate our threats.

Category 1: Enhance Program Delivery and Customer Service

Objective 1.1 Enhance protection and management of virgin and naturally eroding soils

Objective 1.2 Strengthen program delivery by encouraging external relationships, building institutional knowledge of the district, ensuring consistent messaging and maintaining high-quality service standards

Objective 1.3 Strengthen and expand the watershed program to effectively engage and educate the community and enhance service deliverables

Objective 1.4 Improve communication strategies to address the challenges of teleworking, ensuring seamless internal collaboration and enhanced external customer service

Objective 1.5 Expand and diversify payment options to improve convenience and accessibility for our customers

Objective 1.5 Optimize the Beehive program and database to enhance efficiency in tracking accomplishments

Objective 1.6 Proactively engage with stakeholders of the MS4 program and the Surface Water Management District (SWMD) by conducting meetings following audits, to ensure alignment with community needs

Objective 1.7 Leverage H2Ohio funding to enhance agricultural assistance and watershed projects

Category 2: Strengthen Organizational Capacity

Objective 2.1 Align staffing levels and program organization with the pace of service expansion to ensure effective management and sustainability

Objective 2.2 Clarify and define the services offered by the watershed program to ensure a clear understanding of its purpose

Objective 2.3 Demonstrate our leadership through collaborating on research and demonstration projects

Category 3: Enhance External Relations and Community Engagement

Objective 3.1 Improve accessibility and utilization of public spaces at the Pry Building or an alternative location to enhance opportunities for indoor and outdoor programming

Objective 3.2 Increase public awareness and recognition of the organization

Objective 3.3 Mitigate the impact of public official turnover by preserving historical knowledge of Summit SWCD programs and proactively rebuilding and maintaining strong relationships with new officials

Objective 3.4 Establish and strengthen relationships with local agricultural producers by providing targeted agricultural assistance, programming and support

Objective 3.5 Expand education and training services in program areas to strengthen external relationships and increase community engagement

Objective 3.6 leverage marketing, branding, technology, videos, and social media strategies into program areas and services

Objective 3.7 Expand the volunteer program beyond stream monitoring

Category 4: Fostering a Positive and Collaborative Work Environment

Objective 4.1 Improve staff communication and leadership within program areas to foster a positive and collaborative work environment

Objective 4.2 Break down program silos to foster a positive and collaborative work environment internally

Objective 4.3 Encourage the conservation and protection of sensitive areas through conservation easement administration and collaborations through external partnerships

Objective 4.4 Establish and implement standard operating procedures within the program area to support employees and new hires

Category 5: Expand and Diversify Funding Sources

Objective 5.1 Advocate for the utilization of state matching funds to enhance and diversify local revenue streams

Objective 5.2 Investigate additional funding sources

Objective 5.3 Secure and utilize H2Ohio funding from ODA, ODNR or OEPA for agricultural assistance and watershed projects

Category 6: Mitigate Threats and Ensure Long-Term Stability

Objective 6.1 Increase employee retention and ensure long-term organizational stability by aligning our salaries with competitive rates offered by other government organizations (City, County, State, Federal)

Objective 6.2 Effectively address complaints and manage political pressure

Objective 6.3 Acknowledge market competition for our programs and services and promote our strengths and quality of service

Objective 6.4 Develop and implement strategies in response to potential state and federal deregulations of environmental regulations