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**Stakeholder Interview Participants**

- Jane Ann. . . . . Neighbor, former board member
- Dave Eisen. . . . . Mishawaka Lion’s Club member
- Mike Faulkner. . . . . Superintendent of Mishawaka Parks & Recreation
- Diana Graham. . . . . Member of United Methodist Church
- Janet Hoke. . . . . Mishawaka teacher
- Evie Kirkwood. . . . . Director, St. Joseph County Parks & Recreation
- Maureen Koscielski. . . . . Campfire USA



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**Stakeholder Interview Participants *continued...***

April Kwiatkowski. . . . . Children’s dispensary, Camp Millhouse  
Chuck Lehman. . . . . Local Landscape Architect  
Jim Lietzen. . . . . Cub Master Pack 404, Survey department manager for DLZ  
Elaine Mick. . . . . Mishawaka Resident  
Bill O’Dell. . . . . Director of Youth Ministry at Little Flower Catholic Church  
Sharlene Potterbaum. . . . . Board member  
Jeff Re. . . . . Mayor  
Naomi Rea. . . . . Wife of former board president  
Elaine Veeveite. . . . . Campfire USA  
Barb Waggle. . . . . Campfire USA Board, Tri-Kappa President

Photography Courtesy of Amy Crosson



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# Mishawaka Res

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## OVERVIEW

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### Mission Statement

The Res is dedicated to the preservation of a natural place where outdoor education and recreation work side by side to establish an outdoor ethic in our youth and to enhance the appreciation of the wonders of nature in us all.

### Goals

1. Ensure financial stability by optimizing all revenue generation opportunities
2. Strengthen and diversify partnerships with other organizations that enhance the use and programs of Mishawaka Res
3. Build and provide a diversified nature education programming capability that is responsive to current standards and trends
4. Expand, improve, and maintain buildings and grounds
5. Grow membership and build awareness of Mishawaka Res in the community

### Contents

**Overview . . . . . 3**

**Introduction . . . . . 4**

**Stakeholder Interview. . . . . 5**

**Goals & Objectives . . . . . 8**

**Strategic Action Plan . . . . . 10**

**Action Plan Timeline . . . . . 10**



## Introduction

The Eppley Institute for Parks and Public Lands was contracted to complete a strategic action plan for the Mishawaka Res. Originally a Boy Scout camp, the property was purchased in the 1970s by a group of concerned citizens when the Boy Scouts could no longer afford to maintain it. The Preservation of the Res, Inc. (Res) was formed for this purpose and is a nonprofit organization that owns and operates the property. Due to current funding issues, a decline in use, and the possibility of changes to the property, there is a need for the Res to develop a long-term strategic plan for the property and facilities to ensure its future.

With assistance from the Res rangers and board members, the Eppley Institute created a list of stakeholders, which included current and past board members, county officials, community leaders, and neighbors. Interviews were conducted at the Res by the Eppley Institute project team. Additional research analyzed the bylaws, use of the property, and the financial status of the organization. Using the information gathered in the twenty-five stakeholder interviews and the additional research, the Eppley Institute project team formulated a list of future options for the Res which were presented in a report in February 2007.

The Strategic Action Plan is based on the results of two strategic planning sessions held in August and September 2007. The results of the stakeholder interviews informed the design and focus of these sessions. During the first session, the mission statement of the Res was reviewed and determined to be still pertinent. The committee then worked in small groups to brainstorm goals and objectives. These goals were grouped under five main themes. From these main themes, five major goals were drafted. At the second strategic planning session, work groups defined actions to pursue the goals. The groups then voted on the actions to assign priority and timelines.

This strategic action plan represents the needs, opinions, and vision of many people from the local community. It is a document that provides a framework for the preservation of the Res, the maintenance and improvement of its facilities, and the programming that will benefit many future generations of children and adults. This strategic action plan must be reviewed by the board of directors annually to ensure its goals, objectives, and actions are up to date with current circumstances on the property, in the community, and in the world in general; it should be formally updated at least every five years.



## Stakeholder Interview Results

Results from stakeholder interviews compiled in the February 2007 report identified nine areas of importance to consider in planning the future of the property.

### 1. Purpose of the Res

According to the results of the stakeholder interviews, the purpose of the Res is threefold. Most stakeholders believe the purpose of the Res is to serve youth, especially scouting groups, and provide them with an outdoor experience, while some participants felt that the Res is an asset to the entire community and believe it is to serve all people. Also, some participants have a sentimental connection to the Res. They came to the Res when they were younger and like the fact that it has not changed over the years.

### 2. Facilities and grounds

Participants like the non commercial and natural setting of the Res, think the creek and trails are the favorite attractions, and describe the Res as “beautiful,” “tranquil,” “centering,” “calming,” “relaxing,” “serene,” and “peaceful.” The Res is unique compared to other area parks and is seen as an “island,” “oasis,” or “refuge” in the middle of an urban area. Lack of parking was most frequently mentioned as a problem.

### 3. Finances

Financial troubles were mentioned in almost all interviews. Several solutions were offered: selling assets such as charter memberships, harvesting mature trees, and a fundraising campaign with commemorative bricks for a new walkway. The majority of participants felt the public would pay a fee but that programs or services would be needed. The participants do not want to see a flat fee for admission.

### 4. Increasing the use of the property

Many participants are satisfied with programs and do not want to see current programs discontinued. Many feel the Res is underused and suggested expanding existing programs to include schools, more service clubs and churches, more involvement of local colleges, community nature programs, local businesses, and other youth or environmental organizations.

### 5. Fundraising

Participants suggested ways to increase funding: traditional fundraising vehicles (such as grants, bequests, community foundation funding, corporate donors, annual appeals), selling of charter memberships, special events to raise money and awareness, and increasing the board’s active role and leadership in a fundraising campaign.



## 6. Increasing public awareness

Participants felt that few people know about the Res. They felt there is a lack of communication and involvement in the community and that promotion of the property and programs could boost revenue. Specific ways to increase public awareness, such as advertising and marketing through local newspaper, television and radio, were suggested. Community outreach was also suggested; however, there was concern for overuse, and some participants pointed out that “Bigger is not always better.”

## 7. Planning

Participants felt that long-range planning is necessary in the next five years and should include facilities and interpretation. Some participants stated that moving forward or expanding without a long-range plan is difficult.

## 8. Partnership opportunities

Participants want to see continuation of their work with current groups. It was frequently mentioned that partnering with the City of Mishawaka Parks and Recreation Department was a natural fit because the Res is unique and different from other City parks and because the Res could provide a location for camps. Not all participants agreed with this idea and expressed caution in choosing partnerships to avoid a loss of identity.

## 9. Capital Avenue Expressway expansion

Participants identified potential benefits and threats relating to the Capital Avenue Expressway expansion. Benefits included the acquisition of land, increased visibility, and a new entrance. Threats included noise, damage to the ecosystem, and creating a barrier to wildlife and to park access by people.

Three additional issues were researched by the Eppley Institute to aid the Res in long term planning.

### 1. Charter memberships

Several stakeholders indicated there were many charter memberships held by people who have permanently moved from the area or are deceased. They suggested that in order to increase revenue and solicit new members, the charter memberships could be resold. After review of the original by-laws, it was discovered that this was indeed possible and recommended that an attorney be contacted to advise the board on how to carry out these actions.

### 2. Use and capacity of property

The largest source of revenue for the Res is rental fees. Many participants discussed increasing use of the property either through existing



or new programs and services. Research conducted by the Eppley Institute indicates that the Res is not being used to capacity. This raises the question of how much the Res could increase usage without decreasing the visitor experience.

### 3. Financial summary

Additional research concluded that the Res has operated at a loss for the past three fiscal years. The majority of expenses are operational, and the majority of revenue (66.1%) comes from user fees. Some basic calculations indicate that should the Res continue to operate in a similar manner, without an increase in revenue, it will spend its endowment fund's principle in about three years.

Chart 1 displays the revenue by category for 2005-06.

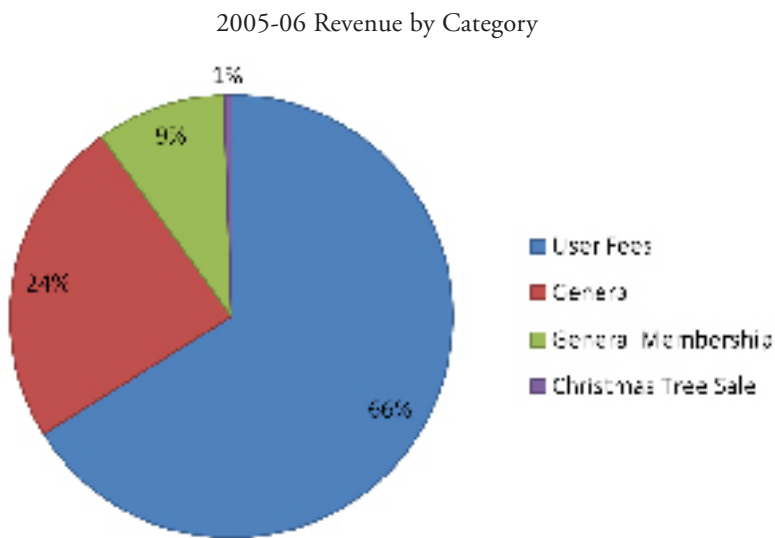
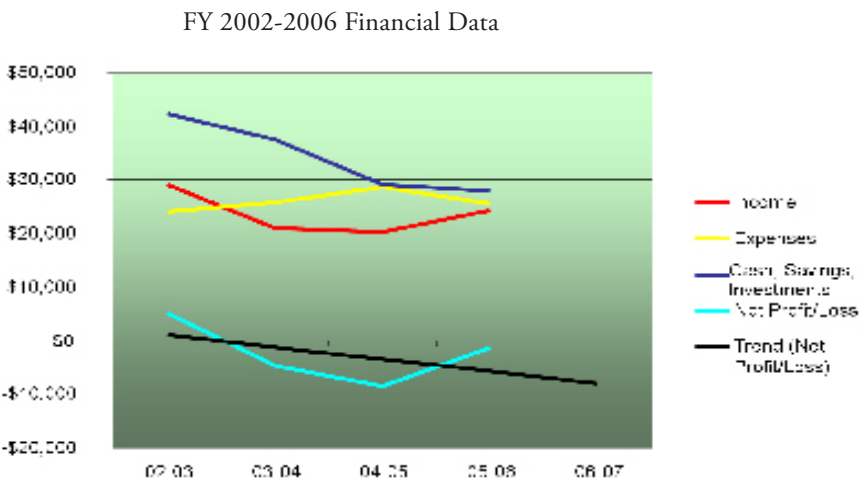


Chart 2 displays the change in income, expenses, cash, savings, and investments as well as the overall trend for net profit/loss.





## Goals & Objectives

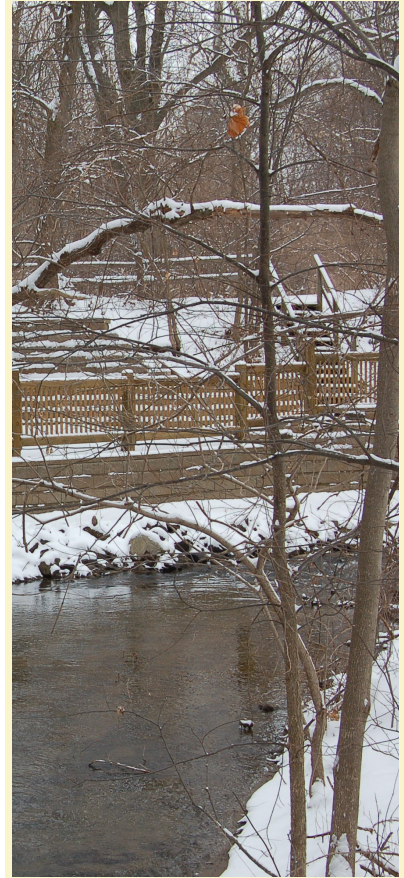
- 1. Ensure financial stability by optimizing all revenue generation opportunities**
  - Expand fundraising activities with ultimate goal of funding 50% of operating costs
  - Increase user fees in a sustainable manner to cover all costs of operation
  - Secure donations for capital improvement, an endowment, an environmental education scholarship, etc.
  - Secure grant funding
  - Revive and resell charter memberships
- 2. Strengthen and diversify partnerships with other organizations that enhance the use and programs of Mishawaka Res**
  - Become national, regional, state, and local draw for youth through expansion of partnerships with scouting organizations, clubs, nature-related organizations, religious groups, etc.
- 3. Build and provide a diversified nature education programming capability that is responsive to current standards and trends**
  - Develop a nature education center with programming
  - Create an expansion board and committees to plan for, initiate, and oversee the nature education center and programming
  - Create a full-time paid ranger position within five to ten years to carry out nature education programming
  - Establish a board committee and increase staffing to recruit, train, and maintain a volunteer base
- 4. Expand, improve, and maintain buildings and grounds**
  - Develop and implement a long-term maintenance plan
  - Improve the sewer and water systems
  - Acquire the wetlands property
  - Expand the volunteer base and provide organized volunteer opportunities in maintenance, education programming, etc.



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## 5. Grow membership and build awareness of Mishawaka Res in the community

- Create a membership drive to recruit organizations, corporations, and individuals
- Create varying levels of membership
- Cultivate active, supporting members who can assist with promotion of programming, volunteer opportunities, fundraising, and other events
- Develop and implement a marketing plan with a goal of creating broader awareness in the community of the Res and its programs



## Strategic Action Plan

The Strategic Action Plan presents the goals, objectives, and actions that will guide the Res for the next five or more years. The purpose of this Strategic Action Plan is to provide a foundation of accountability to the board of directors. It should be used at every board meeting to set agendas and to check in with committees on their progress in completing action items listed. It should be distributed to potential donors, community leaders, and others who may help influence and contribute to the successful completion of these strategic actions.

This Strategic Action Plan was created by the collective mind of people who care deeply about the success and preservation of the Res and the benefits it offers to the community. It is a document to be taken seriously and to be acted on so the visions embedded within can become reality.

## Action Plan Timeline

The Action Plan is derived from the goals and objectives. Each action corresponds with one of the goals. The strategic planning work group listed the actions under their corresponding goals and then used a voting method to indicate priorities and timeframe for completion of each action item. The entire list of actions was then sorted according to the voting results so that the highest priority items to occur in the shortest timeframe are listed first. For each timeframe the board of directors should work to complete the priority one items first, and then as time permits move to the lower priority items.

If all items are not completed or nearing completion when the end of the 1-2 year timeframe approaches, the board must decide if the incomplete items should be moved into the 3-4 year timeframe with a high, low, or medium priority or whether they should be left incomplete until the action plan is formally reviewed.

	Priority	Timeframe <i>Reference: October 2007</i>
Create a concert in the meadow	1	1-2 years
Continue Walk on the Wildside	1	1-2 years
Publish a weekly Res/ranger newspaper column	1	1-2 years
Adopt endowment program	1	1-2 years
Develop corporate business retreats and sponsorships	1	1-2 years
Create events to bring people to the Res for recreation	2	1-2 years
Grow membership and awareness through personal contact	3	1-2 years
Deliver yearly reports to each organization that sponsors buildings about repairs and cost	3	1-2 years
Develop "Buy a brick" fundraiser	3	1-2 years
Develop youth "extreme" triathlon	3	1-2 years
Establish board programming committee	3	1-2 years
Develop silent auction fundraiser	3	1-2 years
Establish public relations strategy and campaign	3	1-2 years



	<b>Priority</b>	<b>Timeframe</b> <i>Reference: October 2007</i>
Develop partnerships and activities such as morning bird walks with Audubon and other local conservation groups	3	1-2 years
Perform a yearly inspection of each structure and prioritize a list of needed maintenance tasks	3	1-2 years
Develop partnership with the Junior League and create volunteer opportunities	3	1-2 years
Develop partnership with Hacienda	3	1-2 years
Develop partnerships with organizations that have their own programming	1	3-5 years
Identify projects for grants	1	3-5 years
Update membership list and issue membership cards	1	3-5 years
Work with local media and identify public relations opportunities	1	3-5 years
Increase educational programming	2	3-5 years
Create and maintain a website	2	3-5 years
Maintain active membership list (database) and protocol for maintaining it	2	3-5 years
Restart nature center	2	3-5 years
Acquire new sewer and water systems, new septic	2	3-5 years
Create a regular, well-designed newsletter	3	3-5 years
Make programming available	3	3-5 years
Improve parking facilities	3	3-5 years
Secure education and programming grants	3	3-5 years
Revisit and revise user fees on a regular basis	3	3-5 years
Build on and diversify partnerships	1	5+ years
Develop wetland filtration for the Res	2	5+ years
Hire paid staff to maintain membership, establish Public Relations committee	3	5+ years
Acquire the wetlands property	3	5+ years

