



**Lacawac Sanctuary Foundation**

# **Strategic Plan**

## **2025-2027**

Approved by the Board of Trustees on:

# I. Introduction:

## 1. Mission

The Mission of Lacawac Sanctuary is Research, Education, and Preservation.

- To preserve and maintain the natural resources of Lake Lacawac, its watershed, our surrounding woodlands, and the inhabitants.
- To provide an educational venue for students at all levels, as well as for the public, regarding issues affecting our environment and the conservation of natural resources; and
- To provide world-class research opportunities for scientists, researchers, and students.

## 2. Situational Analysis

Lacawac's primary work as a nonprofit is to preserve the natural beauty of Lake Lacawac, its watershed, and surrounding lands and conduct long-term research on natural ecosystems as part of a global effort to understand and protect the Earth's biodiversity. Lacawac seeks to increase the appreciation of these efforts through innovative, field-based educational programs for students, teachers, and the community.

Nestled on five hundred fifty acres near the shores of Lake Wallenpaupack in Northern Poconos, Lacawac Sanctuary is an environmental education center, nature center, and biological field station.

Visitors can enjoy a rich outdoor education and exposure to a blend of diverse habitats, including wetlands, open fields, forests, and lakes.

To fulfill our mission of Research, Education, and Preservation, Lacawac offers environmental education and public programs to the community, educating environmental stewards by communicating the core values of environmental responsibility, citizenship, inclusiveness, and the pursuit of knowledge.

### **RESEARCH**

Due to the nature of its protected watershed, Lake Lacawac has drawn scientific researchers since the 1950's. Lacawac has a decades-long water quality record. The protected, pristine, dystrophic, glacial lake remains a unique and rare ecosystem that will draw researchers and collegiate educators.

Lacawac is also fortunate to have a strong, dedicated group of researchers and college faculty who use the field station and are committed to its success. These include faculty with long-term funded projects, faculty from primarily undergraduate institutions conducting smaller-scale research, and faculty who use Lacawac as part of their college courses.

In 2017 Lacawac established the PLEON or Pocono Lakes Ecological Observatory Network. The Pocono Lake Ecological Observatory Network is a regional lake monitoring program focused on educating the public and lake associations on water quality and lake management. The program's goals include: 1. Empower the public to better understand and manage their fresh waters, 2. Create a community of scientists, students, environmental educators, and landowners to work together in improving the ecological state of Pennsylvania's lake ecosystems and 3. Provide ongoing monitoring data on lakes and ensuring that landowners fully understand the advantages and limitations of different lake management approaches.

## **EDUCATION**

As a living laboratory, Lacawac is ideal for experiential learning for all ages. Field trips are available to public and private schools, scouts, daycare centers, home school groups, and after school programs. Trained environmental educators lead each class/group on trails through diverse habitats as students participate in hands-on, minds-on activities. All environmental education field trip programs align with the Pennsylvania Department of Education Science Curriculum Framework focusing on STEAM (Science Technology Engineering Art and Mathematics) content.

Lacawac is the only environmental education center in Wayne County and has a strong science and research foundation that attracts higher-level educational opportunities. Its diverse habitats make Lacawac an ideal location for outdoor, environmental education.

In 2024, Lacawac dedicated and opened the William E. Chatlos Environmental Education Center. When the son of Lacawac founder Arthur Watres decided to sell the home to Lacawac that he inherited from his father, it was an opportunity to for Lacawac Sanctuary to advance a major element of its 2009 Master Site Development Plan (MSDP) for the campus – to adaptively re-use the former residence as an environmental education facility. The Lacawac Board Trustees and staff maintain the original vision expressed in its 2009 Master Site Plan to adapt the residence to include improvements, a conference meeting space, classroom space, and environmental education teaching space to education various groups including but not limited to PreK - 12 grades, boy and girl scouts, civic groups and science organizations.

In 2022, Lacawac began renovations of the former Watres home and broke ground for a 3,000 square foot addition in the summer of 2023. The education center has multiple meeting and programming spaces including conference meeting space for up to 100 people in the Great Room, a teaching laboratory, two smaller classroom spaces, a conference room, exhibit hall (education display area), kitchen and a wildlife observation deck. The building is also ADA accessible.

## **PRESERVATION AND PUBLIC USE**

Lacawac preserves 550-acres, including a mature second-growth forest, Lake Lacawac, two ponds, several wetlands, and over a mile of shoreline along Lake Wallenpaupack. The highlight of the Sanctuary's natural resources is the 52-acre, pristine glacial lake, which sits roughly in the middle of the property. The kidney-shaped lake is one of the southernmost glacial lakes in the United States and has remained nearly pristine and protected. In contrast, many similar lakes in the Northeastern United States have been impacted or otherwise affected by human hands.

Lacawac's infrastructure was established at the turn of the 20th century and today stands as a historically significant estate. The suite of buildings includes the main house or Lodge, an Icehouse, coachman's house, pump house, and a carriage house. The Lodge, the Icehouse, and the Carriage House are all on the National Register of Historic Places (listed in 1979). Lake Lacawac was listed as a National Natural Landmark in 1968.

Since 2022, Lacawac Sanctuary acquired three new preserves/sanctuaries: The Mark and Courtney Peterson Preserve in Hawley, Pike County; the Price Simpson Wetland Sanctuary in Lake Ariel, Wayne County; and the Browning Beaver Meadow Sanctuary in Equinunk, Wayne County.

Lacawac Sanctuary believes that everyone, regardless of race, ethnicity, or family income, deserves the opportunity to connect with nature. Lacawac hopes that access to its sanctuaries and preserves will help build Earth stewardship by understanding the interconnections between nature and humans through hands on experiences and interaction.

This document aims to create a three-year strategic plan for Lacawac Sanctuary Foundation and its board of trustee committees.

# 1. Top Strategic Priorities

## Priority 1: Create an effective set of brand standards

Lacawac re-branded its logo approximately 10 years ago and since then has had minor revisions to the logo. With our growth – building a new education center and acquiring additional sanctuaries and preserves, Lacawac’s marketing committee has deemed it necessary to establish branding standards. Brand guidelines, also known as brand guides or style guides, are essential to establishing the unique identity and character of Lacawac. This style guide helps ensure that Lacawac’s leaders, partners, employees, and associates are aware of our brand assets and understand how they should be applied.

<b>Committee Responsibility:</b>	<b>Marketing &amp; Special Events Committee</b>
<b>Budget:</b>	<b>\$5,000.00</b>
<b>Completion Goal:</b>	<b>December 2025</b>

---

## Priority 2: Design and build a new website

<b>Committee Responsibility:</b>	<b>Marketing &amp; Special Events Committee</b>
<b>Budget:</b>	<b>\$12,000</b>
<b>Completion Goal:</b>	<b>December 2026</b>

In the digital age, Lacawac’s website is the online face of our work and mission, often making the first impression on potential program participants, visitors and donors. Lacawac updated its website 11 years ago but currently it is not keeping pace with Lacawac’s growth.

Lacawac’s goal is to rebuild its website to breathe new life into our brand and improve user experience, making Lacawac more appealing and accessible to our audience. The rebuilding will include revamping the content to better meet the needs of our audience, updating the branding to better reflect Lacawac’s mission and reworking the site’s theme or template to improve usability and accessibility.

---

## Priority 3: Increase the capacity to house individuals visiting Lacawac.

<b>Committee Responsibility:</b>	<b>Preservation Committee</b>
<b>Budget:</b>	<b>A-Frame Cabin Construction: \$15,000</b> <b>Permanent Dormitories: \$350,000</b>
<b>Completion Goal:</b>	<b>A-Frame Cabin December 2025</b> <b>Dormitories: December 2027</b>

The Watres Lodge and Icehouse are on the National Registry of Historic Places. Because of the sensitive nature of these landmarks, Lacawac would like to provide additional housing for both short and long-term residents at Lacawac. Lacawac establish this goal as a priority in the 2022-2024 Strategic Plan. Due to lack of funding from several grant funding sources, Lacawac was not able to secure additional structures for housing.

In 2024, Lacawac received a \$15,000 grant to construct simple A-frame cabins near the lodge. Each cabin costs approximately \$6,500. The cabins have been constructed. A third cabin is planned for 2025.

The priority for 2025-2027 is to increase permanent and seasonal housing by an additional 20 beds. Ongoing discussions on housing include the construction of modular dormitory units. The addition of these residential units will allow greater participation by various groups and will give the organization the capacity to serve various groups at the same time.

---

## **Priority 4: Develop a Master Site Plan for the 87-acre Mark and Courtney Peterson Nature Preserve and a Conceptual Plan for the Entire Peterson Property.**

<b>Committee Responsibility:</b>	<b>Peterson Preserve Planning Committee:</b>
<b>Budget:</b>	<b>\$15,000.00</b>
<b>Completion Goal:</b>	<b>December 2027</b>

In December of 2022, Mark and Courtney Peterson donated 87 acres of their land to Lacawac Sanctuary Foundation to be conserved and used for education and ecological research. This large natural area is dedicated to conservation, passive recreation, and the outdoors for the surrounding region; effectively limiting the beautiful grounds from commercial development. The Peterson Preserve and the parcels currently owned by Peterson's are located along the Lackawaxen River, Little Blooming Grove Creek, State Route 590, and Towpath Road, near the center of Pike County.

To plan for the future of the Peterson Preserve, Lacawac will first develop a site plan for the 87 acres donated by the Petersons. This will be the first step that will allow for the professional planning, environmental assessment, and creation of a publicly supported long term master plan for the Peterson Preserve, complete with a written electronic report describing the project's process, inventory and analysis, public engagement, a developed vision, and final design selections.

# Committee Priorities & Action Items

## 1. Science Committee

**Goal 1:** Lacawac will continue to grow and support the PLEON program, including lake monitoring, Lake School, Wallenpaupack community-led water quality monitoring, and HABs monitoring and education.

Objective 1.1: Invest in staffing

Action Item 1.1.1: Fully support two internships with equitable stipends (12 weeks, 20 hours/week, \$10 per hour = \$2,400 per intern).

Objective 1.2: Increase visibility of the research program at Lacawac.

Action Item 1.2.1: Professionalize website

Objective 1.3: Develop collaboration to increase HABs awareness within Wallenpaupack Community

Action Item 1.3.1: Work with Lake Wallenpaupack Watershed Management District to build and utilize HABs trailer

**Goal 2:** Lacawac will increase its visibility and accessibility to regional colleges and universities, with an emphasis on PUI institutions and community colleges.

Objective 2.1: Facilitate field trip planning and development for collegiate faculty

Action Item 5.1.1: Develop Lacawac-centered teaching resources for faculty, including easily accessible datasets, species lists, field protocols, scientific literature, and curriculum.

Action Item 5.1.2: Redesign Lacawac's website to feature field and virtual teaching materials.

Action Item 5.1.3: Develop "ready made" field trips led and equipped by Lacawac.

Objective 2.2: Explore partnerships with regional institutions to offer for-credit summer classes at Lacawac.

Objective 2.3: Facilitate research opportunities for current and potential researchers.

Action Item 2.3.1: Increase research awards funding to offer \$10-20,000 for the Moeller award(s) and \$5,000 for Watres award(s). These awards will attract faculty from undergraduate institutions who rely heavily on student-supported research.

Action Item 2.3.2: Redesign Lacawac's website with an emphasis on easily accessing species lists, maps, data, etc.

Action Item 2.3.3: Streamline research application process

Action Item 2.3.4: Develop Researcher Code of Conduct, Field Safety Plan, other documents.

Objective 2.4: Invest in the collection, management, and accessibility of Lacawac datasets.

Objective 2.5: Recruiting goal of adding 3-5 community colleges and/or local satellite campuses of large universities that don't have their own research facilities.

Objective 2.6: Invest in the collection, management, and accessibility of Lacawac datasets.

**Goal 3: Lacawac will work to more effectively integrate research into K-12 programs**

Objective 2.1: Work with education staff to incorporate research techniques, data findings etc. into field trip curriculums.

## **2. Education Committee**

**Goal 1: Expand and Revise K – 12 programming**

Objective 1.1: Expand programming to new school districts by meeting with administrative teams to see how Lacawac can better provide programs suited to their individual needs.

Action Item 1.1.1: Revise current program offerings and create new programs to diversify Lacawac's school program offerings.

Action Item 1.1.2: Revive the PIER program, use grant funding to provide programming to local school districts for women in STEAM

Objective 1.2: Work on ways for better student immersion into Lacawac and their sense of place, such as longer field trips or overnight stays.

Objective 1.3: Partner with local universities RTPM and Environmental Studies/Science programs to provide EE Instructor Internships outside of the summer months.

**Goal 2: Increase community engagement**

Objective 2.1: Participate in local engagement opportunities such as local events and festivals

Objective 2.2: Partner with local organizations such as DCNR, Fish and Boat, and the Conservation Districts .

**Goal 3: Increase Professional Development**

Objective 3.1: Annual participation with the Pennsylvania Association of Environmental Educators conference for Professional Development.

Objective 3.2: Host professional development training courses at Lacawac for local educators.

**Goal 4: Develop the structure and program components for the At Ease Veteran Program**

Objective 4.1: The program director, education staff and other volunteers will meet to establish the program components. Activities may include hiking, fishing, wildlife observation, and guided nature walks, as well as wellness workshops covering topics like outdoor survival skills, environmental education, and the benefits of nature on mental health.

### **3. Preservation Committee**

**Goal 1: Complete upgrades to Browning Beaver Meadow Sanctuary**

Objective 1.1: Develop new trailhead signage and construct a new welcome kiosk near the new visitor parking spaces.

Objective 1.2: Develop, produce and install educational signage along the various trails.

**Goal 2: Construct viewing platforms at the Price Simpson Sanctuary and Lake Lacawac (old dock area).**

Objective 2.1: Raise funds to purchase supplies to design and construct parking spaces and a observation platform at the Price Simpson Sanctuary

Objective 2.2: Design and construct a new observation platform in the former location of the old dock on Lake Lacawac.

**Goal 3: Repair the Lower Great Camp Trail**

Objective 3.1: Replace old and deteriorating culvert piping to allow appropriate drainage and prevent trail erosion.

**Goal 4: Increase Volunteer Engagement and Retention**

Objective 4.1: Continue to host monthly volunteer meetings, encourage feedback from volunteers, and aim to improve strategies for successful volunteerism.

Objective 4.2: Establish appreciation incentives based on volunteer hours logged.

Objective 4.3: Provide yearly trainings for various volunteering areas: trails, education, native garden, Adopt-A-Trail, and public programs.

Objective 4.4: Implement easy to use volunteer management system and software to track hours and tasks.

## 4. Finance Committee

**Goal 1: Increase Lacawac's General Endowment balance and establish an endowment fundraising campaign**

Objective 1.1: Establish protocols and procedures for allowing donors and members to include Lacawac Sanctuary in their planning giving and their wills/estate planning.

Objective 1.2: Continue to maintain a no-draw policy on the principle of Lacawac's endowments.

**Goal 2: Establish a plan to pay off Lacawac's remaining capital debit from the building of the environmental education center.**

**Goal 3: Continue to operate with a balanced budget.**

## 5. Marketing and Special Events Committee

**Goal 1: The committee will lead the management role of Priorities #1 and #2 of this Strategic plan**

**Goal 2: Develop a plan to increase community engagement and increase memberships.**

Objective 2.1: Increase the number of memberships at Lacawac by engaging various demographics.

Objective 2.2: Increase community awareness through social media posts. Posts will highlight the organization's accomplishments.

**Goal 3: Assess Lacawac's fundraising events for effectiveness (expenses and time spent verses overall profit)**

Objective 3.1: Annual review of Lacawac's fundraising events by the marketing/fundraising committee and the financial committee. Recommendations made to the board

# Strategic Plan Timeline 2025-2027

Project/Goal	Status	2025 (Year 1)	2026 (Year 2)	2027 (Year 3)
<b>TOP PRIORITIES</b>				
Create an effective set of brand standards		December 2025		
Design and build a new website			December 2026	
Increase the capacity to house individuals visiting Lacawac.		A-Frames December 2025		December 2027
Develop a 5-year Master Site Plan for the 87- Acre Mark and Courtney Peterson Nature Preserve				December 2027
<b>SCIENCE</b>				
Fully support two internships with stipends				December 2027
Increase invisibility of research program by professionalize website			December 2026	
Develop collaboration to increase HAB's awareness				
Work with LWWMD to build a HABs trailer		December 2025		
Develop Lacawac-centered teaching resources				December 2027
Redesign Lacawac's website to feature field and			December 2026	

virtual teaching materials				
Develop ready made field trips			December 2026	
Explore partnerships with regional institutions to offer for-credit summer classes				December 2027
Redesign website with emphasis on easily accessing data			December 2026	
Streamline research application process		September 2025		
Develop researcher code of conduct, field safety plan		September 2025		
Add 3-5 community colleges				December 2027
Invest in data management		December 2025 (ongoing)		
Work with education staff to incorporate research techniques, findings into field trip curriculums.				December 2027
<b>EDUCATION</b>				
Expand programming to new school districts	Ongoing			
Better student immersion	Ongoing			
Partner with local colleges to provide internships			January 2026	
Participate in local events and festivals	Ongoing			
Partners with local conservation organizations	Ongoing			

Annual participation in PAEE conference			January 2026	
Host professional development training courses		August 2025		
Develop At Ease Program components		December 2025		
<b>PRESERVATION</b>				
Develop new signage and welcome kiosk at BBM		November 2025		
Install new signage on trails at BBM		November 2025		
Raise funds and construct a viewing platform at Price Simpson		Planning by December 2025	October 2026	
Construct new viewing platform on Lake Lacawac		November 2025		
Replace culvert piping on Big Lake Trail		October 2025		
Host monthly volunteer meetings	Ongoing			
Establish appreciation incentives for volunteers	Ongoing			
Provide yearly volunteer trainings	Ongoing			
Implement a volunteer management system		December 2026		
<b>FINANCE</b>				
Establish protocols and procedures for planned giving			May 2026	
Pay off Lacawac's capital debt			November 2026	

<b>MARKETING AND SPECIAL EVENTS</b>				
Increase number of memberships	Ongoing			
Increase community awareness through social media	Ongoing			
Annual review of Lacawac's fundraising events.		December 2025	December 2026	December 2027