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UGA RIVER BASIN CENTER STRATEGIC PLAN

GOAL

The goal of the RBC is the sustainable management of aquatic resources and ecosystems.

MISSION

The mission of the RBC is to produce and disseminate the knowledge and tools for sustainable management of aquatic resources and ecosystems through applied scientific and policy research, and by training the next generation of managers and researchers.

STRATEGY

Our strategy for achieving our mission is to:

- Engage in scientific and policy research leading to innovative tools and proactive strategies, with an emphasis on responding to the needs of decision makers and stakeholders;
- Facilitate and promote water research and outreach by the Water Faculty across campus;
- Foster interdisciplinary, collaborative, creative approaches to solving problems related to aquatic resources and ecosystems;
- Host synthesis workshops and working groups to facilitate collaboration and advance aquatic science and policy;
- Disseminate results of research projects and policy analyses to academic audiences, managers and policy makers, and the general public;
- Conduct training workshops for government officials, lawyers, conservation practitioners, educators, and the general public;
- Conduct experiential learning courses that engage students in projects that meet real-world needs;
- Recruit and engage graduate students, undergraduates and postdoctoral scholars in research on applied conservation and policy problems;
- Work collaboratively within the University of Georgia and with all levels of government, citizen groups, nongovernmental organizations, schools, and industry and establish partnerships to make effective use of resources;
- Work principally in the Southeast, but work nationally and internationally on subject areas where we have particular expertise;
- Maintain ongoing interactions with alumni to promote reciprocal learning opportunities;
- Expand the RBC endowment to provide sustained funding to achieve our mission;
- Expand core RBC personnel (faculty and staff) from the present 5.5 (Fowler, Wenger, Sheehan, Hagler, and a half-time administrative position) to eight by adding a communications and outreach specialist, an applied conservation professional, a postdoctoral fellow, and full funding for the administrative position. Expand the RBC affiliate faculty to include all interested UGA faculty members who share this mission and wish to work with the RBC to advance it.

ORGANIZATIONAL VALUES

The River Basin Center:

- Takes a science-based approach to meeting water and related land use challenges;
- Recognizes the importance of a wide range of perspectives and expertise;
- Maintains integrity in its dealings with people inside and outside the organization;
- Brings the highest scientific and academic standards to each endeavor; and
- Actively seeks creative, innovative solutions to problems.

MEASURES OF SUCCESS

- On-the-ground conservation actions, such as land preserved, as a result of projects conducted by the River Basin Center;
- Adoption and implementation of techniques, tools, and products in the state, nation, and internationally;
- Contributions to scientific understanding of water and related land use resources issues through professional publications and presentations;
- Contributions to development of public policy through draft legislation, white papers and guidance documents;
- Faculty/staff appointments to national, state, and local boards dealing with water issues and land management;
- Creation and effective distribution of tools and information via the web and printed materials as part of public outreach efforts;
- Presentation of results and products to the public, stakeholders and clients;
- Extramural grants received for interdisciplinary research, outreach, and education;
- Well-capitalized endowment;
- Ongoing support for graduate students, post doctoral students, and undergraduates;
- Recruitment and retention of talented faculty and staff;
- Successful relationships with state and national organizations which are involved with water resource utilization and management;
- Interdisciplinary collaboration across appropriate social and natural sciences with other universities, colleges and academic units;
- Success in placing graduates in jobs that meet their goals.

PROJECT AREAS

To fulfill its mission, the River Basin Center will pursue projects that fall into three broad categories:

A. Conservation Ecology of Aquatic Ecosystems

This category covers applied scientific research projects geared toward increasing the understanding of imperiled species and their relationships to their environment. It also covers research to develop improved tools for studying species and their environment. Examples include fish movement studies, spawning studies and development of population estimation techniques.

B. Applied Research on Aquatic System Stressors and Development of Management Tools

This category includes research projects conducted in response to a policy or management question and that include both a scientific research and a policy or management component.

C. Policy Development and Outreach

This includes projects that are primarily policy outreach in nature, such as the development of appropriate policy solutions adapted to the needs of individual communities and regions, as well as entirely new policies.

FOCAL SUBJECT AREAS FOR 2015-2019

These are areas where the RBC will seek actively funding opportunities. This is provisional, and is subject to periodic review and revision by the advisory board.

- Institutional options for managing scarce water resources.
- Instream flow science and policy.
- Conservation planning.
- Sustainable coastal land use and wastewater management.
- The effectiveness of current management strategies, such as stream restoration, widespread use of progressive stormwater management, and green infrastructure: what works, what doesn't, and why?
- Understanding and management of nutrients in freshwater.
- Understanding and management of urban stream ecosystems.
- Increasing land trust capacity to protect water resources.
- Water-associated diseases.

Finalized 30 July 2014

Updated 3 April 2015 to add conservation planning as a focal area.