



THE RIDGES SANCTUARY MASTER PLAN

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

May 2023

WHY THIS PLAN, WHY NOW?

For decades, The Ridges Sanctuary (TRS) has been committed to protecting the Sanctuary and inspiring others to conserve nature for future generations. Through educational experiences, land protection and ecological research, TRS has worked diligently to merge an impactful visitor experience with the preservation of one of the most biodiverse ecosystems in the Midwest.

In 2021, TRS acted on a once in a lifetime opportunity to purchase Ridges Inn and Suites. Recognizing the magnitude of this undertaking, we knew our best path forward was one informed by our community. We also recognized the need to focus on the strategic and sustainable growth of the organization, as demand for TRS programming has never been greater. With input from our Board, staff, members, donors, volunteers and neighbors, we developed this plan as an inspirational roadmap outlining a vision for the next 20 years. At its core, the plan seeks to preserve The Ridges that we know and love, while allowing for changes to buildings and programs to sustainably grow the organization.

This plan serves as a comprehensive blueprint for the future and ensures we continue to deliver on our mission. In order for us to be successful, we need YOU. Just like this plan was informed by your input, implementation will only be made possible through your support.

AN INCLUSIVE PROCESS

TRS committed to a process responsive to our members and visitors who have been foundational to our success since the earliest days of the organization. Many voices make up the TRS community, and it was critical to deploy an inclusive and transparent process with the flexibility to engage participants both locally based and regionally dispersed. To obtain input from such a diverse community, a series of focused workshops and other means of engagement were offered that included early listening sessions, discussions of current offerings, and the analysis of programming and planning concepts. All of the information that was gathered was ultimately considered during the development of the final master plan.

HOW TO USE THE MASTER PLAN DOCUMENT

The master plan is structured as an overall report document that summarizes the planning process, program and facility improvements, and implementation strategy. Several appendices provide greater detail on technical components and document feedback received during the planning process.

KEY ELEMENTS OF THE MASTER PLAN

A Campus Approach to The Ridges Sanctuary Facilities:

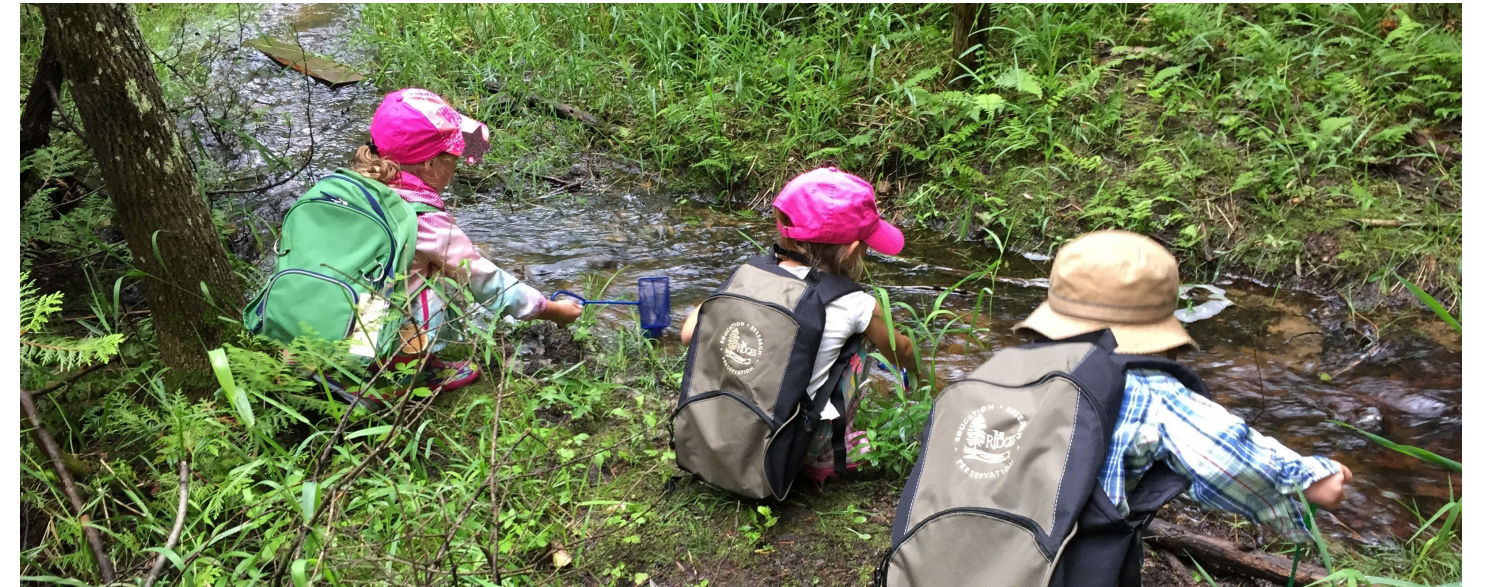
- **Community Campus** - Reconfiguration of the Cook-Albert Fuller Nature Center to create a larger community space and relocate administration.
- **Research Campus** - Research Stations to house both institutional research and citizen science through adaptive reuse of the Ridges Inn, and a consolidated administration building to gather staff in a collaborative space.
- **Education Campus** - Learning facilities to serve expanded educational programming, with an indoor/outdoor classroom for year-round education at the North Campus and the Family Discovery Station creating facilities to promote safe and functional use of the Family Discovery Trail.

Enhancement of Core Trails and Outlying Properties:

- Boardwalk replacement and wayfinding upgrades for the rustic trails in the Heart of the Ridges.
- New visitor contact station at Logan Creek to allow for educational programming.
- Trailhead improvements and trail modifications at Appel's Bluff.

Sustainable Organization Management

- Land Management Plan
- Climate Resiliency Plan
- Business and Operations Plan
- Market Analysis and Communications Plan
- Strategic Action Plan



VISION, MISSION, AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Through this process, the vision and mission statements were extensively scrutinized and revised to clearly communicate the organization's purpose in order to attract more support and resources for TRS to do its work.

VISION

Inspiring the conservation of Nature.

MISSION

The Ridges Sanctuary promotes positive environmental behaviors through impactful educational experiences, land protection and management, and ecological research.



GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Heritage:

We honor our land and our heritage. Our lands are a unique place, a sanctuary, upon which all our actions are based. Our organizational heritage is recognized as well as the cultural histories of all those who lived on these lands before us.

Inclusivity:

All persons are welcome at The Ridges, are treated equally and with respect. We are dedicated to inclusiveness and accessibility. The Sanctuary is a place for all that supports personal reflection and wellness.

Commitment to Science:

We work as a reliable partner and voice for conservation action based on science. We proceed with integrity, honesty and objectivity rooted in the scientific process.

Community:

Board, staff, members, donors, volunteers, neighbors, partners, and visitors are all part of The Ridges family. We recognize the contributions of all people and work in a collaborative manner to achieve the vision of The Ridges. Through responsible stewardship, educational experiences, and ecological research, we build strong connections between nature and the community.

Accountability:

We are accountable to our community and our heritage. We innovate to deliver on our mission for future generations.



A CAMPUS APPROACH

The Ridges Inn purchase allows TRS to create three distinct yet connected campus experiences in Baileys Harbor that align the pillars of research and education, as well as TRS' role as a community partner and voice for preservation. Each campus functions independently while contributing to the comprehensive mission of TRS. At the same time, the plan balances between recommended repair and enhancement of core trails in the Heart of the Ridges and expanded facilities at the outlying properties of Logan Creek and Appel's Bluff.

HEART OF THE RIDGES

The rustic trails in the Heart of the Ridges will retain their natural surface character. Aging boardwalks will be replaced, wayfinding upgraded and improved, and the canopy along the Range Light corridor will be thinned for the Dwarf Lake Iris restoration project.

LOGAN CREEK

The plan creates a visitor contact station with seasonal restrooms and an adjacent flexible lawn area to allow for additional educational programming opportunities.

APPEL'S BLUFF

Trailhead improvements include gateway signage, reconfigured parking, and a portable toilet. Also, trail changes will modify flow to two-way traffic and add another loop to interpret the quarry reclamation.

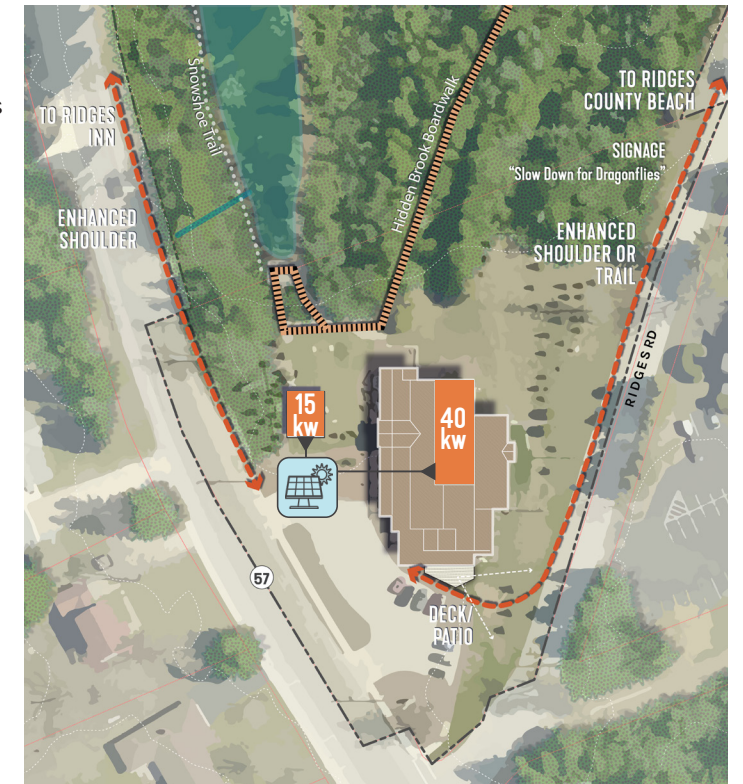


Guided hikes explore the diversity of TRS' habitats | Logan Creek

COMMUNITY CAMPUS

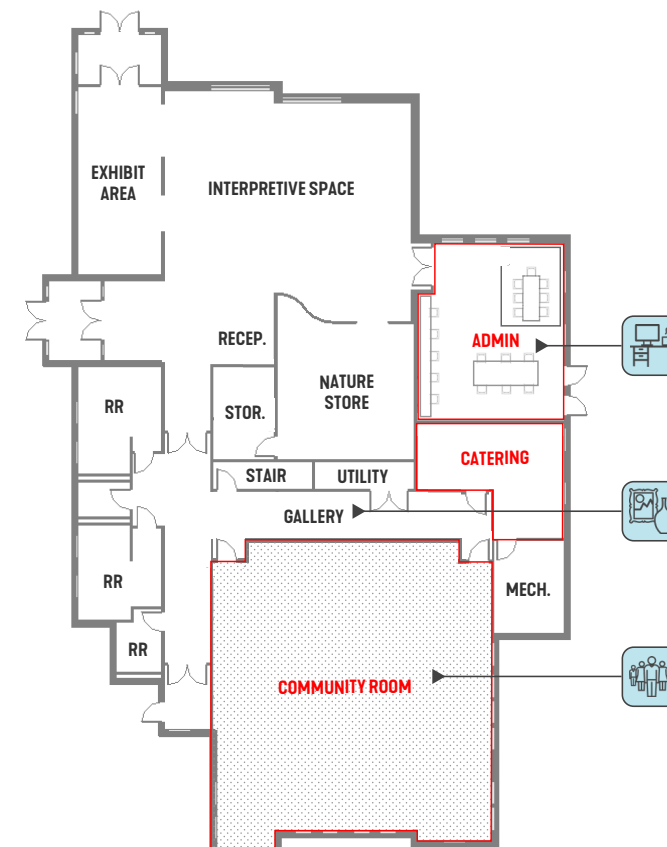
As space requirements for staff and educational programs have increased since the Nature Center was built in 2015, the master plan reinforces the building's community function by being a gateway to the Sanctuary. By relocating office space to the Research Campus, TRS will have the opportunity to better utilize the Nature Center for community engagement.

The Community Campus includes reconfiguring the Nature Center's multipurpose meeting room and common area for flexibility in offering the wide range of programs and events hosted by TRS, as well as the addition of an adjacent open-air shelter that offers a space to organize groups for guided hikes as well as a community portal when the Center is closed. Sustainability enhancements include adding solar arrays to reach net zero energy and operable windows for natural ventilation.



RENOVATED FLOOR PLAN

- Shared community space
- Flexible Office Space
- Rotating Gallery



- Photovoltaic Array



The Nature Center serves as the gateway to the Sanctuary | TRS



Multipurpose Community Engagement Space | Children's Museum of Phoenix

RESEARCH CAMPUS

ADMINISTRATION BUILDING



-  Rainwater cistern
-  Indoor/Outdoor Connection
-  Shared community space
-  Constructed Wetland
-  Flexible Office Space

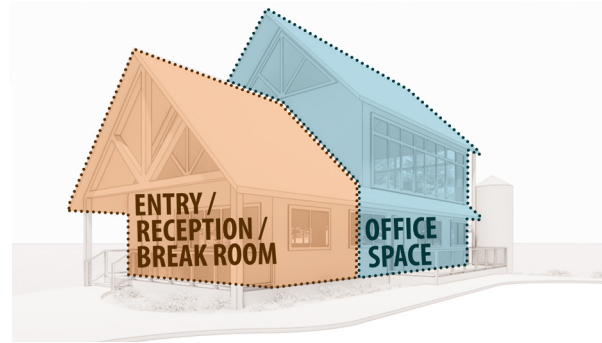
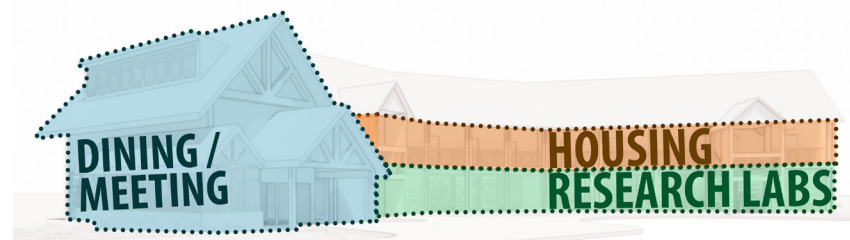
The recent purchase of the Ridges Inn property creates a unique opportunity for a consolidated Research Campus befitting TRS' orchid research program, in addition to providing a permanent base for citizen science and housing the majority of TRS staff not associated with daily operation of the Nature Center.

COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH SPACE

The renovated main lodge building includes office, lab, and support space for existing research programs, and the potential for cooperative research-in-residence programs with regional partners and institutions utilizing renovated, on-site lodging.

CITIZEN SCIENCE

A permanent base for citizen science is established in the remodeled Juniper-Birchwood Cottage, with driveway access to load supplies.



A NEW HOME FOR ADMINISTRATION

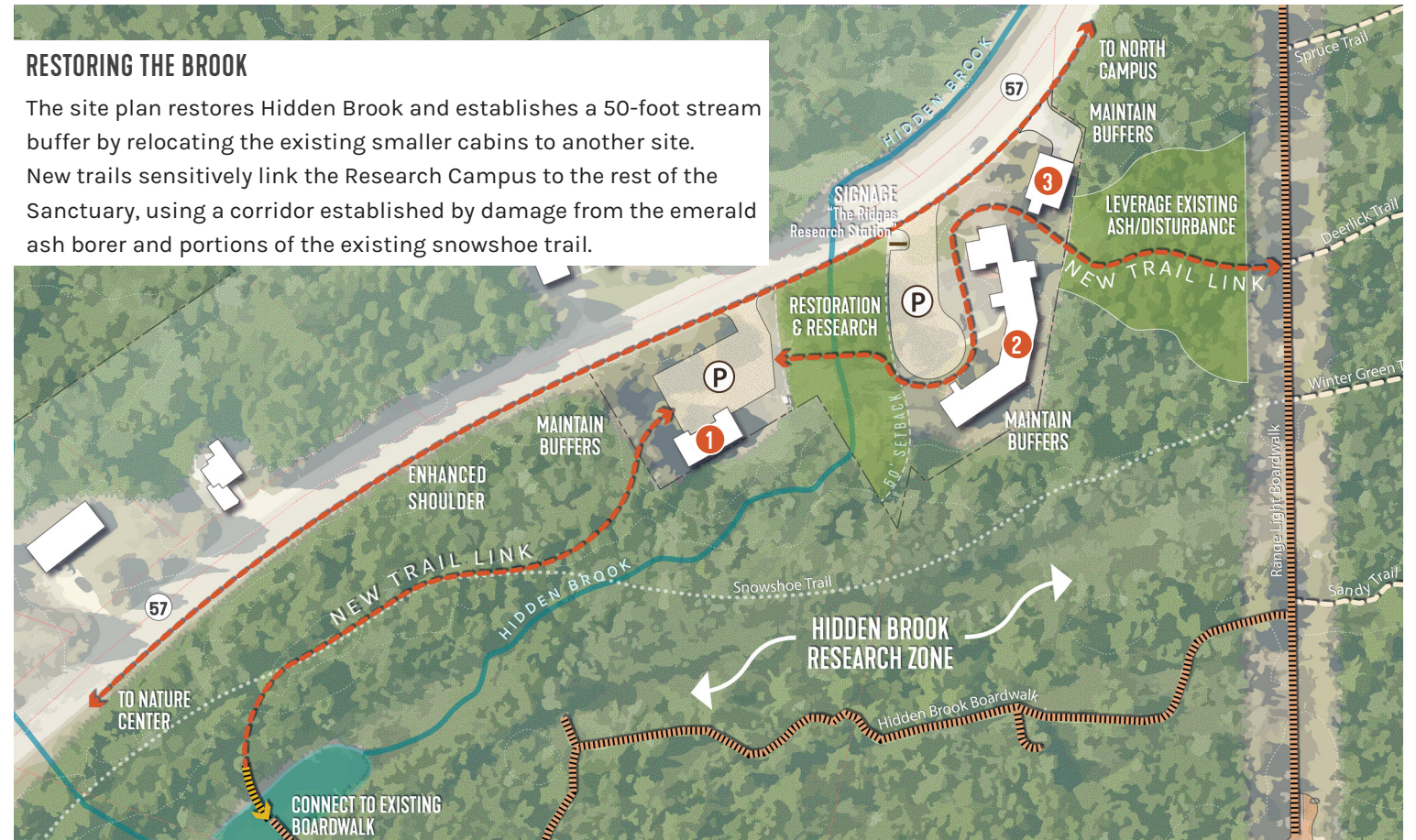
The existing Guesthouse will be transformed and expanded to provide needed space for administrative staff, allowing offices to be relocated from the Nature Center. Building design will complement the aesthetics of the adjacent lodge.

FACILITY DESIGN FOR A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

The renovation of the Ridges Inn will be a model for regenerative design, which goes beyond doing less harm and instead crafts building solutions that repair natural and human systems, creating restorative, net-positive impacts that result in improved social and environmental conditions.

RESTORING THE BROOK

The site plan restores Hidden Brook and establishes a 50-foot stream buffer by relocating the existing smaller cabins to another site. New trails sensitively link the Research Campus to the rest of the Sanctuary, using a corridor established by damage from the emerald ash borer and portions of the existing snowshoe trail.



1 Administration Building 2 Research Station 3 Citizen Science

RESEARCH STATION



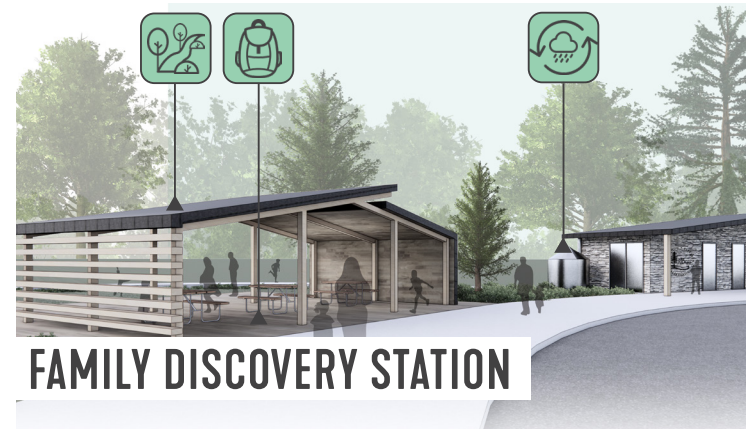
EDUCATION CAMPUS

The Education Campus creates a series of self-sufficient sites and support amenities, improving the quality of TRS' educational experience.

FAMILY DISCOVERY STATION

Changes in the configuration of the Family Discovery Trail will make youth camps more successful and safer. By locating a seasonal educational pavilion, coupled with toilets, storage, drop-off and parking area, the station functions independently without the need to constantly cross Highway 57 for basic operational needs.

-  Indoor/Outdoor Connection
-  Educational Programming
-  Rainwater cistern



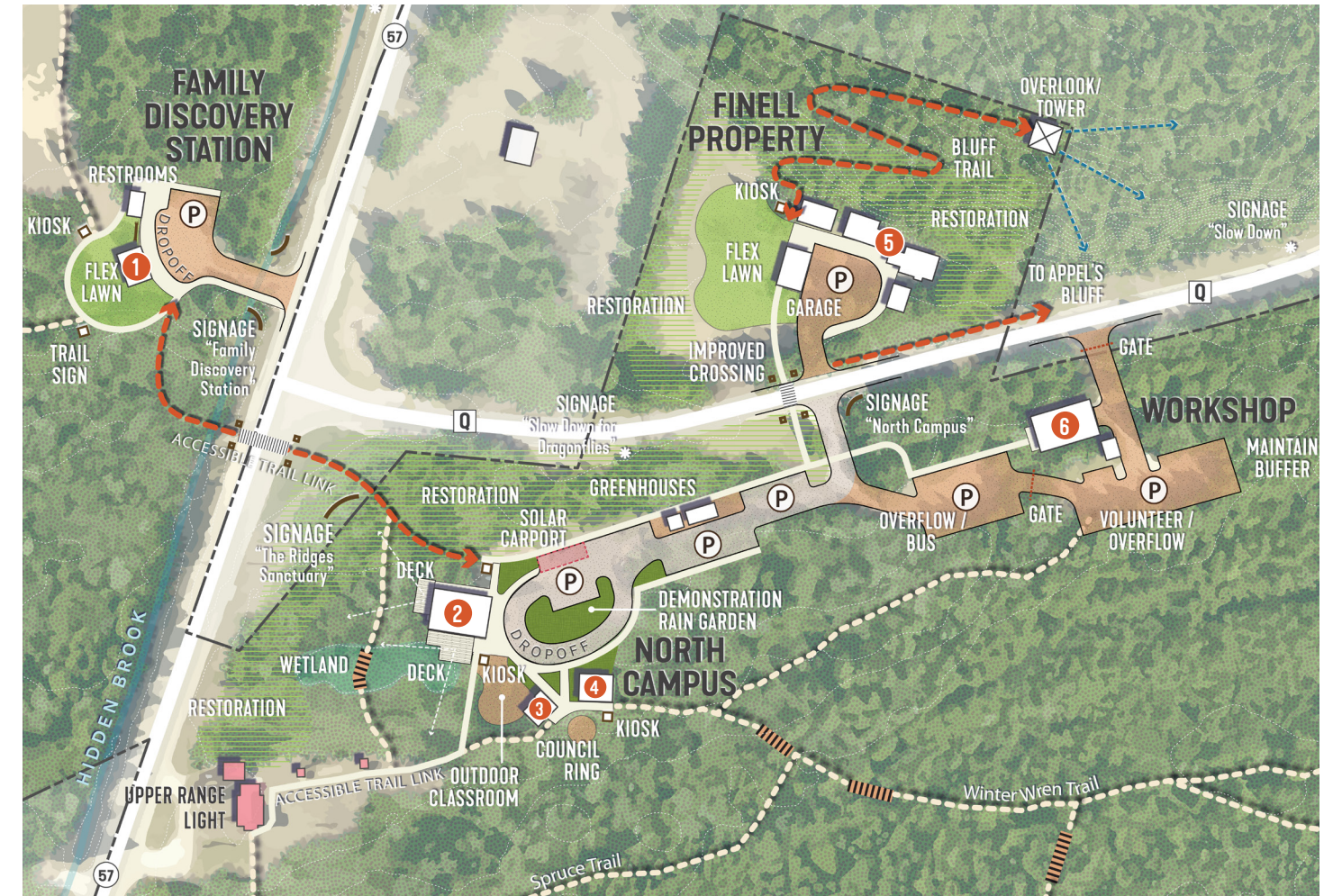
FAMILY DISCOVERY STATION

NORTH CAMPUS

An improved campus setting is created around the Marshall and Kaye cabins with a new flexible classroom and events pavilion, by reconfiguring the existing parking and relocating the workshop to the east end of the parking lots. The new pavilion provides classroom space, storage, and year-round toilets, with the ability to flex in warmer seasons to accommodate larger groups complementing offerings at the Nature Center. The historic cabins will remain, and will be repaired with minor upgrades to lighting and windows. Accessible trail connections link to the Family Discovery Trail, the Upper Range Light and the Finell property.



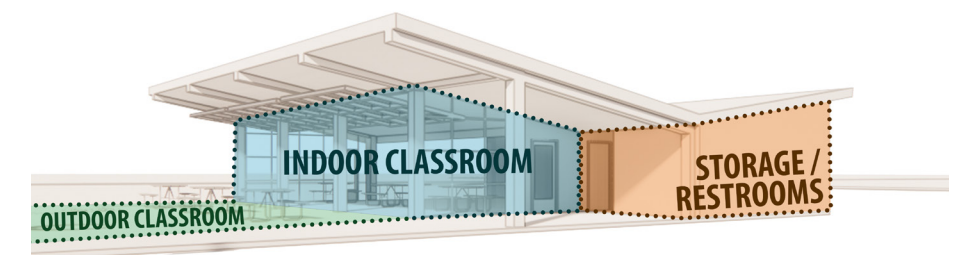
Hands-on activities allow a deeper connection to nature | TRS



- 1** Open-Air Pavilion
- 2** Flexible Classroom
- 3** Marshall Cabin
- 4** Kaye Cabin
- 5** Employee Housing/Programming
- 6** Workshop

FINELL PROPERTY

A residence may further support research programs and provide much needed seasonal employee housing for TRS staff. Also, a new trailhead and bluff trails on the property allow hikers to experience escarpment ecosystems not readily offered elsewhere at TRS, with the potential for overlooks or a viewing tower to visually connect with the ridges, swales, and shoreline below. Storage for maintenance equipment and materials is located on the property, including garage space for larger vehicles and chemical storage.



NORTH CAMPUS CLASSROOM

APPENDICES

A key feature of this 20-year master plan is its comprehensive nature. In order to support the capital improvements identified throughout the plan, we knew we needed to establish a robust outline for ongoing management of the Sanctuary. Together with our stakeholders, we have developed five important plans focusing on land management, business operations, marketing and communications, strategic action, and climate resiliency. These plans will allow for The Ridges Sanctuary to evolve sustainably while ensuring that we continue to deliver on our mission to promote positive environmental behaviors through impactful educational experiences, land protection and management, and ecological research.

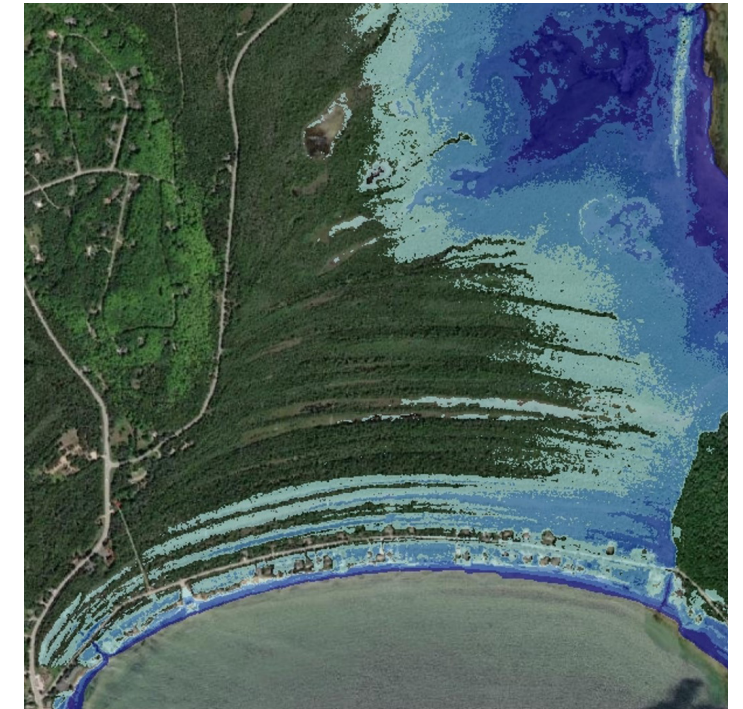


CLIMATE RESILIENCY PLAN

Although Earth's climate has varied throughout history, today's unprecedented rate of change threatens human health, infrastructure, and the global economy, as well as the survival of both individual species and natural systems. TRS is committed to renewable and sustainable practices that minimize our impact on the environment and our natural resources. At the same time, we recognize that we need to respond and adapt to climate impacts that have and will continue to occur, including severe storms, increased temperatures, and species migration.

To meet this concern, TRS developed a Climate Resiliency Plan, which acknowledges the risks that climate change poses to the unique boreal habitat of the Sanctuary, identifies specific current and future vulnerabilities, and lays out strategies to mitigate impacts on biodiversity while also reducing the energy use and embodied carbon of our constructed facilities. The Climate Resiliency Plan is included in Appendix B.

Source: 2018 FEMA Lidar: WI 3 County (Door, Marquette, Outagamie Counties)



Areas flooded by lake level rise of 1 to 3 feet above historic high water.

LAND MANAGEMENT PLAN



As part of the master planning process, a Land Management Plan was developed to formally establish TRS policies for land management and acquisition. To preserve and improve the Sanctuary's natural resources, the plan establishes practical strategies which are expected to adapt over time in response to new opportunities or threats, including the following topics:

- State Natural Area Management Plan
- Land Management Zones
- Survey and Monitoring Protocols
- Research and Citizen Science
- Vegetation Management
- Trail and Maintenance Access
- Land Acquisition Strategy

The Land Management Plan is included in Appendix A, and provides the Land Committee with a roadmap to develop adaptive strategies for preserving TRS' unique habitats and rare species into the future.

BUSINESS OPERATIONS, MARKET ANALYSIS, AND COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

Programs and educational experiences are integral to TRS' mission, allowing TRS to amplify its impact, add volunteers, increase membership, and strengthen relevancy within the region. Appendix C outlines the Business and Operations Plan, which analyzes the core programs and services, provides a management and governance plan, and outlines a financial strategy for achieving the goals outlined in the master plan.

Appendix D provides a Market Analysis and Communications Plan, featuring an in-depth analysis of TRS' current market position. This plan identifies geographic locations with similar populations of targeted visitors and members where TRS could broaden its impact, and recommends TRS create a Brand Guide for communications and an annual outreach plan.



LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

The Ridges Sanctuary is at a critical inflection point in its 86-year history. Our founders laid a solid foundation from which we've been building upon for decades. In 1941, just four years after the formation of The Ridges, Jens Jensen wrote to approximately 200 members, "The Ridges Sanctuary is passing through its first crisis, that of making its true purpose understood." In many ways we are exploring that very same question - what is the purpose of The Ridges? How do we effectively deliver on our mission? What can we do to inspire the next generation of leaders? This plan answers these questions and will ensure that we proceed with strength. In order for this plan to be successful, **we need YOU**. Just like this plan was informed by your input, implementation will only be made possible through your support.

We cannot wait to continue onward with YOU!

Thank you!

Katie Krouse
katie@ridgessanctuary.org
920-839-2802 x 101

Andy Gill
andy@ridgessanctuary.org
920-839-2802 x 107

