

A business case in support of a single unified Walloon Lake Association and Walloon Lake Trust and Conservancy organization

The mission of the Walloon Lake Association (WLA) is “*preserve, protect and defend* the quality, safety and natural beauty of Walloon Lake and its watershed; to work with and exchange data with other environmental organizations and local and state governmental units whose interests are consistent with our goals; and to provide timely information pertaining to the preceding, including educational information to our members and the public.”

The mission of the Walloon Lake Trust and Conservancy (WLTC) is “to conserve, care for and connect people to the lands, lakes and streams within the Walloon Lake watershed now and for future generations.”

At their core, the goal of both organizations is to protect and conserve the environment of Walloon Lake and its watershed for the benefit of everyone, now and forever.

The proposed mission of the single unified organization, the Walloon Lake Association and Conservancy (WLAC) will be “to conserve and care for Walloon Lake and its watershed while enhancing the connection of people to Walloon, now and forever.”

The WLA and WLTC currently exist as two separate organizations with separate boards that share a common staff.

Some of the issues, challenges and observations that have motivated this exploration include:

- **Public and brand confusion:** There is ambiguity about the identity of the two organizations and redundant communication. There is confusion among both organizations’ partners, constituents and the public regarding programs, priorities activities and resources.
- **Operational overlap:** There is a growing awareness and acknowledgement of the way the organizations are managed and there is significant overlap in office administration activities as well as program and service delivery. This has contributed to inefficiencies in staff utilization, assignments and the allocation of personnel resources along with inefficiencies and lack of transparency in the use and allocation of financial resources.
- **Mission alignment and overlap:** The two organizations’ missions include similar intentions and strive for similar impacts. Despite this overlap, there is a lack of coordination of priorities between the two organizations.
 - With independent priorities, the two organizations can appear to be competing with one another.
 - The WLA does not always have the financial resources to pursue its priorities to completion.
 - The WLTC does not have direct organizational contact with the members of the WLA, complicating the achievement of both organization’s financial needs and philanthropic goals.

- While the boards of the two organizations currently work together to complement activities and programs, remaining two separate organizations creates the potential that such cooperation may not always occur.

Combining the two organizations would:

Provide streamlined governance and enhance community impact: A unified mission and strategic direction and a more streamlined governance structure will result in more effective decision-making and resource allocation for programs and services. The new structure would make better, more efficient use of staff and other resources, provide greater transparency and better utilization of financial resources as well as streamline decision-making and provide clearer accountability.

Enable clear communication with our community: A unified communications program would enhance the new organization's ability to understand and represent the interest of members and constituents, partners, local governments, and the public, resulting in deeper and more meaningful relationships. Restructuring into a single organization would provide an opportunity for clearer messaging and branding and enhance the ability to acquire the resources to meet land water preservation and stewardship goals. It would eliminate the confusion that exists today regarding the identity of the two organizations.

Foster more effective relationship-building and engagement: An integrated approach to connecting with people who care about the lake and mission will inform both membership development and donor engagement and outreach. Aligned and consistent branding and coordinated public and stakeholder communication will result in less confusion and deeper relationships.

Support the implementation of stronger, more aligned programs: Programs that currently live under two different organizational umbrellas could function more strongly as aligned services under a single organization and more effectively demonstrate the connections between land and water programs. A collective determination of priorities and coordinated implementation will maximize positive impacts and public benefits.

Combine talents and leveraging strengths: The combined resources of talented and committed board members and staff will result in a stronger delivery of programs and services. It will provide the opportunity to create an organization that continues all governance and legacy functions of the WLA and WLTC by continuing and better utilizing the volunteer resources of both current directors and trustees and community volunteers which will provide the new organization with greater strength and stability.

At this time, we have found no known legal or contractual impediments to completing the combination of the WLA and WLTC.