

[The Natural Step](#) is a framework* adopted by many communities and organizations in the United States and around the world to guide the journey towards sustainable practices. Several gateway communities near Apostle Islands National Lakeshore (park) have adopted resolutions declaring themselves “EcoMunicipalities” and committing to sustainable development. The park continues to be a significant player in these and other local efforts towards sustainability. Accordingly, park management and staff hereby commit to all reasonable efforts to implement sustainable practices in policy development, planning, management decisions, and operations as consistent with The Natural Step. The principles of The Natural Step are translated and expressed as guiding principles for the park as follows:

Natural Step System Condition (“In the sustainable society...”)	Representative Icons	APIS Guiding Principles
Nature is not subject to systematically increasing concentrations of substances extracted from the earth’s crust.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eliminate the use of non-renewable energy sources. • Re-use and recycle non-renewable natural resources.
Nature is not subject to systematically increasing concentrations of substances produced by society.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eliminate the use of toxic substances harmful to our environment and community. • Reduce dependence upon synthetic materials that do not break down to harmless substances.
Nature is not subject to systematically increasing degradation by physical means.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manage the land, water, soil, wildlife, and other natural resources under the stewardship of APIS in ways that improve their condition and mimics or restores natural conditions.
and, in that society, people are not subject to conditions that systemically undermine their capacity to meet their needs		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthen our staff and local community members by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Honoring their diversity and culture; ○ Assuring safe practices and facilities for their use; and ○ Providing opportunities for all to access and be inspired by park resources. • Encourage full and fair civic engagement in park affairs by all community members and encourage park staff to be active in community civic affairs.

[Read an explanation of the Natural Step Four System Conditions](#)

Park Management and staff will consider these principles in park planning and operations and strive, to the degree possible, to match our actions to these principles. These principles are reflected in future visions described in the Integrated Environmental Plan. Each future vision embodies the ideal environmental performance level that park staff collectively desire to achieve over a period of years (e.g., carbon neutral operations). Goals, objectives, and targets are established annually as part of the planning process that ensures that the park as a whole will steadily progress toward each future vision.

* [“The Natural Step Framework”](#) – is a comprehensive model for planning in complex systems. It is openly published and free for all to use. The Natural Step Framework has helped hundreds of different organizations around the world integrate sustainable development into their strategic planning and create long lasting transformative change. It is constantly being used, tested, refined and developed.