

Frequently Asked Questions

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NANPA is Doing OK Now So Why Change?

NANPA is proud of its history, what it stands for, and all of the programming and communications it provides its members. NANPA operates with a very lean staff and a tight budget that has allowed it to operate at a relatively break-even level and over time, build a reserve fund.

So why change?

Unfortunately, NANPA also faces real challenges that must be addressed if NANPA is to survive and thrive into the future. As detailed further below, NANPA faces issues with its staffing structure, its decreasing revenue, increasing external costs and a large number of competitive headwinds that it cannot ignore. All this is not sustainable.

Joining forces with ASMP was a difficult decision, not made lightly, but with both the short and long-term interests of NANPA in mind. We assessed several options, and sharing operational and programmatic resources with another photography organization through a carefully crafted agreement was our best option for future growth.

Financial and Membership Trends

NANPA almost went out of business after the 2008 recession. With a lot of work by a lot of dedicated people, NANPA rebounded. It has greatly expanded its communication and social media reach, the scope and breadth of its programs, and its voice as a leader on nature photography issues.

Those efforts have helped NANPA maintain a relatively stable membership that has bounced between between 2200 and 2500 members over the last 10 years. Unfortunately it has not been able to achieve sustained membership growth past those levels. At the same time, its overall revenues are slowly dropping and its costs to operate are increasing.

Because of its budgetary constraints, NANPA has not been able to invest the money and resources needed to advertise or outreach to attract new members or expand its programming and communication systems.

Thus while NANPA is stable, it faces serious issues in the long-term that it had to address.

Staffing Realities

To keep within budget, NANPA has used independent contractors working part-time. The downside is that this has left NANPA susceptible to high turnover rates as part-time contractors leave for better paying jobs and those disruptions have made it difficult to maintain its momentum and consistency.

Unfortunately, NANPA does not have enough revenue to hire all the positions it needs on a more full-time basis while maintaining and growing its programs and communications without breaking its budget or depleting its reserve fund.

Long Term Headwinds

NANPA also faces long-term headwinds that cannot be ignored.

All membership groups today face the same problem — its memberships are aging and younger members are less likely to join. NANPA faces this issue on a daily basis as it struggles to attract new membership outside its own aging demographics.

Attracting new members is especially difficult as NANPA has intense and constantly increasing competition from every direction, including internet content, social media networking and image sharing, other trade associations, regional photo groups and camera clubs, local photography meetup groups, photo contests, photography festivals, etc.

NANPA has also had difficulty attracting and servicing members who need advice about business, tax, insurance, licensing, copyright, permitting, land access and other similar issues. Developing and providing such resources and a dedicated lawyer who can personally work with members has been well beyond NANPA's budget. These are all services that our members have continually asked for in our annual membership survey.

At the same time, the cost to provide membership services has increased, causing many similar associations to cut costs and services to survive. Simply raising dues above the current \$100 level is not a great option for NANPA given how many members who drop their memberships cite cost as a primary reason. Our last membership survey included a question about dues and services. Members wanted more services but were very clear that they did not want a dues increase.

One way that membership groups like NANPA will survive these headwinds is to diversify its revenue. NANPA has tried to do that with revenue-generating programming such as regional events and expanding its social media and newsletter reach to help attract sponsors. Unfortunately, NANPA's relatively small size made it difficult to attract the type of corporate sponsorship and advertising it needs to create a diverse revenue stream.

And while the quality and value of the NANPA Summit is better than ever, NANPA can no longer count on the Summit to generate large profits and a poorly attended Summit can be financially disastrous. An optimistic budget for the Summit this year, based on past trends and current costs, has us basically breaking even. Having a huge additional pool of potential Summit attendees from ASMP – an organization with hundreds of nature photographers – is a huge benefit for the Summit, as is a larger audience to attract corporate sponsors, something ASMP has proven it can successfully do and that has also proven a struggle for NANPA.

What Options Did the NANPA Board Consider?

The NANPA Board has long been aware of these headwinds and has worked hard to address them. In the last year and a half, the Board dedicated itself to finding a management structure that will ensure both its short and long-term success.

The Board looked at many different options, including different staffing structures or hiring an association management company to help reduce costs and provide stability. ASMP approached NANPA in the spring of 2022. A non-disclosure agreement was signed not long thereafter enabling the two organizations to share private information back and forth and hold frank discussions about how an agreement would work.

All of these the options were assessed for costs, viability, ease of implementation, which would deliver the most for our members short and long term. All have pros and cons. After carefully considering and comparing all of its choices, the NANPA Board decided that the ASMP option gives NANPA the best chance to not only survive but thrive long into the future. The ASMP option offers administrative cost savings plus immediate and long-term benefits and growth opportunities that NANPA would never be able to afford with the other options.

Isn't ASMP Just for Professionals?

Not anymore. ASMP faces the same challenges that all membership associations face today, and in the last few years has begun to rapidly evolve its own model.

The definition of a “professional” is no longer as clear as it once was, and future growth depends on attracting anyone with a passion for making images and videos, regardless of the platforms they use, and whether they are traditional professionals, enthusiasts, or somewhere in between. This is the future.

To help ensure that NANPA's benefits and programs are available to everyone, NANPA asked ASMP to add a new, base member level that incorporates all of NANPA's existing member benefits and programs at the \$100 level. ASMP's intent is not to ignore enthusiast photographers but to actively market to all photographers, all of whom importantly share certain common business interests like copyright protection and maintaining core standards or practice, with NANPA as a key reason for them to join.

It is also important to note that the IRS regulations that govern our non-profit status *require* us to be professionally-focused around a set of common *business* interests. This doesn't mean we can't have members with a variety of interests, but complying with this rule is imperative to protect our 501(c)(6) non-profit status, and the arrangement with ASMP addresses that. As NANPA existed before this agreement with ASMP, both in NANPA's majority-enthusiast membership base and programming, it stood in serious risk of losing that status, which if taken away would literally destroy NANPA's ability to operate.

Is this a Merger where NANPA is Going Away?

Absolutely not. The NANPA Board made it very clear to ASMP that it would only consider an arrangement where NANPA and its brand essentially continued in mission, programming and communications, with minimal disruption to its existing members, with a significant degree of control and ways to hold ASMP accountable if its promises were not met.

The result is not a "merger" but rather a unique arrangement in which some of NANPA's assets are acquired by ASMP in return for managing and expanding programming for NANPA members within the ASMP framework, but where NANPA retains the rights to, ownership and ultimate control of all of the majority of its financial reserves, its existing history, content, trademark, name, logo, branding, social media and other intellectual property, along with other core assets. All of this content is simply licensed to ASMP, and ASMP is contractually required to use it for all nature photography-related programming and communications. ASMP is also contractually required to maintain NANPA's existing programming and communications, key committees, adopt its mission statement and commitment to ethics and conservation, etc.

How Will NANPA Operate Within ASMP?

The NANPA Board insisted that NANPA have a meaningful degree of autonomy within the broader ASMP network and negotiated protections that will operate much like NANPA does today.

- A NANPA Board of Trustees will monitor and help run NANPA programs and committees and communicate with the ASMP Board about NANPA-related issues. The Board of Trustees will also have control over financial decisions concerning the NANPA financial reserves.
- A dedicated NANPA Program Coordinator will manage all NANPA programs, communications, and committees, and report to both the NANPA Board of Trustees and to the ASMP Board and staff.
- The 12-member ASMP Board will start with two NANPA appointed board members, and as positions become vacant more NANPA members can run and be elected over time.

Who Will Be on the NANPA Board of Trustees?

The Board of Trustees will consist of up to 15 people with a charter to be finalized as its first priority. The intent is for the Board of Trustees to be composed of a diverse range of people who

are truly devoted to NANPA and its mission. The initial members will include the current NANPA Board with their terms matching their current terms.

What Happens if ASMP Breaks its Promises?

ASMP is fully committed to helping grow NANPA into a nationally recognized force in the nature photography field. But if the unexpected happens and it does break its agreement, NANPA is protected. The NANPA Foundation controls the license between NANPA and ASMP for use of the NANPA trademark and other related assets such as logo, websites, existing content etc. If ASMP breaches, the NANPA Foundation can trigger action to revoke the license agreement and restart NANPA independently from ASMP.

Why Wasn't There a Member Vote?

In order to enter discussions, NANPA and ASMP had to mutually sign a “non-disclosure agreement” (or “NDA”) in which both parties pledged not to make those discussions public until a mutually agreed upon time. The NDA allowed NANPA and ASMP to exchange sensitive financial and operational information and planning before entering serious negotiations about how an arrangement might work. ASMP also was in discussions with major corporate sponsors. The NDA was not meant to keep the process secret but to make it possible to determine whether the arrangement would work and to be able to talk freely back and forth with a limited number of negotiators.

A member vote is not required under NANPA's Bylaws, which by Article IV dictate that “NANPA's governing body is the Board, which has authority and responsibility for the supervision, control and direction of NANPA”. A member vote was an option the Board intended to consider once the general terms of the agreement with ASMP were in place. Unfortunately, the negotiations were leaked and then inaccurately reported to such an extent that a member vote would have been difficult to conduct fairly, especially given how few NANPA members ever vote on any issue. The Board members hold a fiduciary duty and responsibility to make the kind of hard, complicated, long-term decisions like this with the best interests of all NANPA members in mind, and thus decided to enter the agreement with ASMP.

The subsequent referendum petition submitted by some members, while certainly well intentioned, came after NANPA had entered its agreement with ASMP. The petition was based on the incorrect assumption that NANPA was simply going to legally merge into ASMP and disappear, which is not the case.

What are some of the benefits for NANPA from Joining Forces with ASMP?

NANPA will benefit from joining forces with ASMP as explained above in a variety of ways both in the short and long term. Here are some of the highlights:

- Shared staffing and systems means that administrative costs will decrease from the greater efficiency, freeing up money for additional NANPA programming and outreach.
- NANPA members get all the benefits they receive now plus 2+ years of ASMP Professional level benefits for their same \$100 membership fee, including full access to the ASMP Academy content and promotion, business, tax, insurance, licensing, copyright, permitting, and other similar issues. That includes personal meeting time with the ASMP Chief Legal Officer on any such issues and access to a network of professionals who can help with legal needs.
- A combined membership of approximately 6500 people will greatly help in attracting grants, corporate sponsorships, advertising money, etc. It will also provide much more bargaining power to obtain better member benefits.
- NANPA will have access to ASMP's broader PR networks and extensive media connections to help promote events such as the Summit, Showcase, College Program, Regional Events, etc.
- NANPA will immediately have more participation from current ASMP members, as well as access to many more professionals with expertise to share.
- NANPA will also benefit from ASMP efforts to attract members generally, including enthusiasts, who can participate in many NANPA programs like Summits, Regionals, Showcase, Conservation, Ethics, College Program, etc. and help those programs grow.
- NANPA will be able to access ASMP's content delivery systems and IT networks that are far beyond what NANPA can afford to develop on its own.
- NANPA will have dedicated legal counsel and professional lobbyists to help achieve changes in laws and regulations it needs on issues like copyright, permitting, land access, etc.
- NANPA can access ASMP's 39 local chapters to help enable more NANPA programming and member engagement at local levels.

What's in it for ASMP?

This question has come up several times. Why does ASMP view NANPA as a good future partner?

- ASMP has a large nature membership base.
- ASMP recognizes that NANPA has the experience and is the leader in nature photography.
- ASMP members gain NANPA expertise and access to NANPA's programs such as regional events, the Summit, our newsletters, webinars, etc.
- Sharing staffing and operational expenses with NANPA also saves money for ASMP, money that can be reinvested in programming that will benefit the members of both organizations.

What is Next? Do I Have to Do Anything?

The average NANPA member will see very little change, other than the option to access more benefits from ASMP and the improvements we believe will result for all of NANPA's communications and programming.

NANPA's website will continue as is (with continual improvements), as will all of its newsletters, social media, programs, communications, and key committees. Members will soon be able to access all of their benefits, including their ASMP benefits, either through NANPA.org or ASMP.org using their existing login username and password.

You will have the option to receive only NANPA Communications, if that is all you want to see. If you want to add all or select ASMP communications, you will be able to do so at your option.