



State Wildlife Action Plans: Defining a Vision for Conservation Success

In order to make the best use of the federal funds provided through the Wildlife Conservation and Restoration Program and the State Wildlife Grants Program, Congress charged each state and territory with developing a statewide wildlife action plan. These proactive plans, known technically as “comprehensive wildlife conservation strategies,” will help conserve wildlife and vital natural areas before they become more rare and more costly to protect. As our communities grow, the wildlife action plans will help us fulfill our responsibility to conserve wildlife and the lands and waters where they live for future generations.

Who developed the wildlife action plans?

Primary responsibility for wildlife management has always rested with the states, so they have had the formal authority for developing and implementing the wildlife action plans. State fish and wildlife agencies have developed these strategic action plans by working with a broad array of partners, including scientists, sportsmen, conservationists and members of the community. Working together, with input from the public, these diverse coalitions have reached agreement on what needs to be done for the full array of wildlife in every state.

What do the wildlife action plans look like?

The wildlife action plans are all required to assess the condition of each state’s wildlife and habitats, identify the problems they face, and outline the actions that are needed to be conserve them over the long term. By drawing together all of the scientific data, the wildlife action plans identify what needs to be done in each state to conserve wildlife and the natural lands and waters where they live—with benefits for both wildlife and people. Each wildlife action plan reflects a different set of local issues, management needs, and priorities, so no two look alike. However, the states have been working together and with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to ensure nationwide coordination.

What kinds of actions are in the wildlife action plans?

The wildlife action plans identify a variety of actions aimed at preventing wildlife from declining to the point of becoming endangered. By focusing on conserving the natural lands and clean waters that provide habitat for wildlife, the plans have important benefits for wildlife and people. In addition to specific conservation projects and actions, the plans describe many ways we can educate the public and private landowners about effective conservation practices. Finally, the plans also identify the information we need in order to improve our knowledge about what kinds of wildlife are in trouble so we can decide what action to take.

Action plans with deliverable results

What makes the state wildlife action plans different from other plans that have been drafted over the years? A focus on *results* for *all wildlife* in *every state*. These plans are proactive and address the needs of all wildlife in every state. By outlining the steps that need to be taken now, the action plans can save us money over the long term. Taken together, they create – for the first time – a nationwide approach to keeping wildlife from becoming endangered.

Teaming with Wildlife

A coalition of more than 3,000 groups working together to prevent wildlife from becoming endangered.

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State Wildlife Conservation Strategies: Eight Required Elements

Congress identified eight required elements to be addressed in each state's wildlife conservation strategy. Congress also directed that the strategies must identify and be focused on the "species in greatest need of conservation," yet address the "full array of wildlife" and wildlife-related issues. The strategies must provide and make use of:

- (1) **Information on the distribution and abundance of species of wildlife**, including low and declining populations as the State fish and wildlife agency deems appropriate, that are indicative of the diversity and health of the State's wildlife; and,
- (2) **Descriptions of locations and relative condition of key habitats and community types** essential to conservation of species identified in (1); and,
- (3) **Descriptions of problems** which may adversely affect species identified in (1) or their habitats, **and priority research and survey efforts** needed to identify factors which may assist in restoration and improved conservation of these species and habitats; and,
- (4) **Descriptions of conservation actions** proposed to conserve the identified species and habitats and priorities for implementing such actions; and,
- (5) **Proposed plans for monitoring** species identified in (1) and their habitats, for monitoring the effectiveness of the conservation actions proposed in (4), and for adapting these conservation actions to respond appropriately to new information or changing conditions; and,
- (6) **Descriptions of procedures to review the strategy** at intervals not to exceed ten years; and,
- (7) Plans for **coordinating the development, implementation, review, and revision of the plan with Federal, State, and local agencies and Indian tribes** that manage significant land and water areas within the State or administer programs that significantly affect the conservation of identified species and habitats.
- (8) Congress also affirmed through this legislation that **broad public participation** is an essential element of developing and implementing these plans, the projects that are carried out while these plans are developed, and the Species in Greatest Need of Conservation that Congress has indicated such programs and projects are intended to emphasize.