



State Wildlife Action Plans Shared Threats & Conservation Actions

Project # 07-338

Background:

In 2005 each state and territorial Fish and Wildlife Agency completed a State Wildlife Action Plan designed to conserve at-risk fish and wildlife and their habitats. These historic plans were congressionally mandated, reviewed by a National Acceptance and Advisory Team and approved by the Director of the US Fish and Wildlife Service. The plans identified over 12,000 species of fish and wildlife and their habitats that are in greatest need of conservation. The plans also described key threats, conservation actions and needed monitoring and research. The plans were developed in partnership with federal, state and local agencies, tribes, private conservation organizations and the public and will be updated every 5-10 years.

Objective:

The objective of this project was to review State Wildlife Action Plans to identify key threats and conservation actions of national significance that are shared by the states and territories.

Summary of Approach:

With funding in part provided by the Legacy Program, a consultant was hired to conduct an analysis of the plans to determine priority threats and conservation actions. The length and detail of many of the plans (some more than 1,500 pages in length) did not allow for a comprehensive review of each plan. Instead summary information was used from the plans and a survey of state fish and wildlife agencies was conducted. The information was compiled, entered into a database and reviewed by the states. The findings were discussed with agency staff and results are summarized in a report.

Benefit:

Each state identified its priority threats and needed conservation actions. Since species' ranges often exceed individual state boundaries, regional and national collaboration will be required to meet the purpose of the plans which is to prevent future endangered species listings. A rollup of the critical threats and needed conservation actions can provide the conservation community and policy-makers with a national perspective that can be used to help direct existing and develop new conservation programming in the future.



"The Wildlife Action Plans collectively form a nationwide strategy to prevent wildlife from becoming endangered" **H. Dale Hall, Director of the US Fish & Wildlife Service John Cooper, Pres. of Assoc. of Fish & Wildlife Agencies**



Accomplishments:



Key National Threats

Ten key threats were identified. Direct habitat loss was the top ranked threat to fish and wildlife followed by ecosystem modification. Although not typically classified as threats, a lack of data and insufficient funding and capacity to carry out conservation work were identified as key barriers. Following is the list of common threats:

- *Habitat loss due to residential, commercial, and industrial development*
- *Habitat loss from ecosystems modifications, such as fire suppression*
- *Impaired water quality*
- *Habitat conversion for agriculture, aquaculture, forestry, and mining*
- *Data gaps*
- *Introduction and spread of invasive species*
- *Collection and illegal harvest*
- *Human intrusion and disturbance*
- *Climate change impacts on fish, wildlife, and their habitats*
- *Insufficient conservation funding and capacity*

Key Conservation Actions Needed

Five common conservation actions were identified. Four of the five top actions related to outreach and education. Since the plans are voluntary, technical assistance and collaboration were identified as primary needs and as time spent outdoors declines, there is a growing need to reconnect the public to wildlife and their habitats. Following is the list of common conservation actions.

- *Provide private landowners with technical assistance and incentives to voluntarily conserve species and their habitats.*
- *Disseminate information from state Wildlife Action Plans to land-use planners and other decision-makers at the local, state, and national levels, and provide expert advice on how to integrate the plans into new and existing programs.*
- *Prevent the introduction of new invasive, non-native species and track and control existing ones.*
- *Use partnerships that result in collaborative, stakeholder-based approaches to solving problems associated with fish, wildlife, and their habitats.*
- *Develop effective education and outreach programs that reconnect people with the natural world and engage them in active conservation of fish, wildlife, and their habitats.*

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