

Midwest Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies State Wildlife Action Plan Technical Working Committee Report

Meeting Time and Place – October 5-7, 2010
St. Joseph, Missouri

Attendance - 10 attendees representing 6 Midwest members states (see Appendix 1 for list of attendees)

Executive Summary – The third meeting of this technical working committee provided a valuable opportunity to discuss several topics of relevance to the region, including threats to State Wildlife Grant (SWG) funding, the effectiveness measures framework being developed for SWG by AFWA and several state representatives, the impending switch to the use of a system called Wildlife TRACs to report SWG programmatic information to the US Fish and Wildlife Service, and approaches to climate change adaptation (see Appendix 2 for meeting agenda). The meeting provided a forum for sharing information about wildlife action plan implementation, interstate collaboration, and to discuss issues related to effective action plan implementation.

Director Action Items – No actions by the directors are requested at this time

Director Information Items –

- The State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP) technical committee wishes to convey how critical State Wildlife Grants program is to implementation of SWAPs. In these times when budgets for state and federal government are experiencing reductions, SWG is a cost-effective, accountable program. This federal-state partnership program proactively protects species *before* they require the costly protection afforded by threatened and endangered status. Furthermore, an effectiveness framework has just been developed for SWG, which facilitates states' efforts to evaluate their programs and fosters continuous improvement of the program on a national scale. A few secondary points:
 - a. The match requirement was changed from 50:50 to 65:35 for the FY10 appropriation. This is a cost-free way for the federal government to assist the states make the most effective use of their allocation. Some states have very limited sources of funding to use for meeting a 50:50 match. We support keeping the match ratio at 65:35.
 - b. In recent years, a portion of the SWG apportionment has been used for a nationally competitive grant program. This committee feels that the competitive portion of SWG funding should remain a small proportion of the overall funding level for the program. An increase in the proportion of money set aside for a competitive program is not desirable because it lessens the amount of funds available to appropriate to states by formula, and with limited staff it is difficult to develop the proposals.

- By requiring states to develop State Wildlife Action Plans, and by implementing a ten year minimum revision timeline, Congress established SWG in a way that is both transparent in its design and responsible in its required evaluation. The annual appropriation process does not really support adequate implementation of such an accountable program. The current budget realities threaten the first evaluation and revision of the plans. Due to the unprecedented design of the SWG program, it will be critical for Congress to follow through with funds for one complete cycle, (one cycle = ten years after the plans were approved and the completion of the evaluations and revisions).
- The SWG funds and the Action Plan process promote cooperation and coordination between many of the conservation efforts Congress funds and makes them all more efficient. This committee asks that the directors keep the stage set for seeking dedicated, stable funding for conservation of fish and wildlife diversity.
- The committee emphasizes the importance of State Wildlife Action Plans to the US Fish and Wildlife Service's Landscape Conservation Cooperatives (LCCs). Appendix 3 highlights the linkages between the SWAPs and the landscape-level conservation which the LCCs were established to foster.

Time and Place of Next Meeting – Members of the SWAP Technical Working Committee met briefly at a breakout session of the National Wildlife Diversity Program Managers/Plan Coordinators meeting on January 28, 2011 in New Orleans, LA. Due to travel restrictions in many member states, and the fact that travel to New Orleans will preclude attendance at a regional meeting for some members, it is uncertain whether we will be able to have a face-to-face meeting in 2011. If we do, the location will likely be St. Joseph MO again. If we cannot meet in person, we will meet via conference call.

Appendix 1

Attendance List:

Katy Reeder (IA)

Dennis Figg (MO)

Gene Gardner (MO)

Amy Buechler (Conservation Federation of MO)

Rick Schneider (NE)

Danna Baxley (KY)

Amy Derosier (MI)

Ken Brunson (KS)

Mike Sweet (USFWS-R3)

Mark Humpert (AFWA)

Appendix 2



Midwest Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies State Wildlife Action Plan Technical Workgroup *Meeting Logistics & Agenda-Draft*



DATE: Oct 5-7, 2010

PLACE: Remington Nature Center, St. Joseph MO
MDC Northwest Regional Office

START TIME: 1:00pm (CST, Oct 5)

ADJOURN: 1:00pm (CST, Oct 7th)

DIRECTIONS:

Directions to the Holiday Inn Riverside Hotel, 102 South Third St: From I-229N, exit on Edmonds St. From I-229S, exit on Felix St. From HWY 36, Take I-229N to Edmonds St.

Directions to Remington Nature Center: I-29 to I-229, exit on Highland Avenue (Exit 7). Go west on Highland Avenue. Right on MacArthur Drive.

Directions to MDC Northwest Regional Office: 701 James McCarthy Dr. on the Missouri Western State University Campus. **NOTE:** This used to be called NE College Ave; Mapquest and Google maps haven't picked up the change, so use 701 NE College Ave to print out a map.

From the Holiday Inn Riverside hotel, head south on S 3rd St to enter I-229 South. Take Exit 4B, US 36 east towards Cameron. Exit 36 at MO-AC (S. Riverside Rd) and turn left to head north on S. Riverside for about 1.5 miles. Turn left at Faraon St, and then left onto James McCarthy Dr.

CONTACT INFORMATION: For questions about meeting content, contact Katy Reeder at (515) 281-8396 or Katy.Reeder@dnr.iowa.gov

For questions about meeting location and travel logistics, contact Dennis Figg at 573-522-4115 x3309

Dennis.Figg@mdc.mo.gov

Or Linda Martin at 573-522-4115 x3153 Linda.martin@mdc.mo.gov

LODGING: We recommend that meeting participants stay at St. Joseph Holiday Inn the **Holiday Inn Riverfront hotel, the Holiday Inn** is the premier full-service hotel located in St. Joseph, MO, in historic downtown, conveniently located off I-229 just 40 miles north of **Kansas City International Airport**. The Holiday Inn sits on the historic site of the first Pony Express weigh station responsible for delivering and receiving mail from the California coast.

You can make reservations by calling Hotel Front Desk: 816-279-8000, or use the following

http://www.holidayinn.com/hotels/us/en/st.-joseph/sjrmo/hoteldetail?sicreative=6013132033&siccontent=0&sitrackingid=61146927&cm_mmc=Google-PS-HolidayInn--G+B-AmericasWest--MO-St%252BJoseph--holiday+inn+saint+joseph&siclientid=1952

MEALS: Breakfast and dinners are on your own. We will order lunch to be delivered as a group but be prepared (bring cash) to pay for lunches individually.

OTHER LOGISTICS: For more information about the Remington Nature Center of St Joseph www.stjoenaturecenter.info

For more information about the location of the MDC Northwest Regional Office,

<http://mdc.mo.gov/regions/northwest/st-joseph-regional-office-and-interpretive-center>

STATE REPORTS: Each state will be asked to provide a brief written report on the status of their wildlife action plan. State reports will be included in the report to the MAFWA Executive Committee.

NOTE: If you would like to help with facilitation or note taking or have questions or concerns contact Katy Reeder (Katy.Reeder@dnr.iowa.gov) or Dennis Figg (Dennis.Figg@mdc.mo.gov)

Meeting Purpose: ¹

To facilitate program priorities and common objectives identified in the Wildlife Action Plans, activity that will result in coordinated conservation actions and recommendations to MAFWA on wildlife and fish diversity from the member states.

Meeting Objectives: ¹

1. Provide a forum for the discussion of organizational structure, policy, delivery systems and effectiveness of member states programs that are designed to improve wildlife diversity and to address the needs of species of greatest conservation need (SGCN) as identified in their State Wildlife Action Plan.
2. Define common priorities, develop coordinated programs and projects, and seek multi-state grants to solve problems that are impacting SGCN in member states as identified in their State Wildlife Action Plan.
3. Stimulate an exchange of information among member states on legislation, administrative rules, program implementation, education, funding and research related to wildlife diversity and State Wildlife Action Plans.
4. Ensure coordination and cooperation among member states and federal agencies in dealing with programs to improve the status of SGCN.
5. Work closely with the AFWA's Teaming With Wildlife Committee, other regional committees, institutions, organizations and groups working to implement State Wildlife Action Plans.
6. Stay up-to-date on issues that impact SGCN population and habitat status and inform/advise the Midwest Association of Fish and Wildlife Agency directors on pertinent issues and solutions.

¹Source: Organizational guidelines for the MAFWA Wildlife Action Plan Technical Work Group.

Note: A report from the workgroup is due to MAFWA within 30 days after the meeting.

AGENDA

Tuesday, Oct 5, 2010

Time	Agenda Item	Speaker/Discussion Leader
11:30 am	Picnic Lunch	Dennis Figg and Amy Buechler
1:00pm	Welcome	Dennis Figg (MO) and Katy Reeder (IA)
1:15pm	Introductions (who are you, what do you do, what you hope to accomplish)	All
1:45pm	State Reports: Implementation Successes/Challenges (10 minutes each)	All – Amy Buechler moderate
3:00pm	--BREAK--	
3:15pm	State Reports: Implementation Successes/Challenges (10 minutes each)	All - Amy Buechler moderate
4:00pm	Effectiveness Measures Framework	Mark Humpert (AFWA)
5:15pm	Adjourn	
6:30pm	Dinner at	TBD
8:00pm	Social & Informal Discussions @ Hotel	Interested participants
Wednesday, Oct 6, 2010		
Time	Agenda Item	Speaker/Discussion Leader
8:00am	Welcome/Review Agenda/Housekeeping	Katy Reeder (IA), Dennis Figg (MO)
8:15am	Climate Change Adaptation/Vulnerability	

	Assessments	
	• Nebraska's approach	Rick Schneider (NE)
	• Kansas's approach	Ken Brunson (KS)
	• Group Discussion	Katy Reeder (IA)
10:15am	--BREAK--	
10:30am	Landscape Conservation Cooperatives	Dennis Figg
11:30am	Brainstorm Ideas for WDP Managers National Meeting in January in Louisiana	Mark Humpert (AFWA)
12:00pm	LUNCH (Delivered to Office)	
1:00pm	Legislative Issues and TWW Fly-In Questions/Issues for USFWS	Mark Humpert (AFWA) Mike Sweet (Region 3)
2:00pm	Heinz Center Project – Monitoring Progress on Conservation Goals Using SWAPs (TENTATIVE)	Caroline Sweedo (Heinz Center)
3:00pm	--BREAK--	
3:15pm	Wildlife TRACs	Dennis Figg (MO) and Amy Derosier (MI)
4:30	Coordinated Monitoring Strategies/Regional Priorities and SWG-C	Katy Reeder (IA)
5:00	Adjourn	
6:30pm	Dinner (Place to be selected by group)	
8:00pm	Working Sessions ?? (To be determined by group)	
Thursday Oct 7, 2010		
Time	Agenda Item	Speaker/Discussion Leader
8:00am	Review Progress on Action Items from Boulder meeting	ALL
9:00am	Revisit and Develop Regional Priorities List	ALL
10:00am	--BREAK--	
10:15am-12:00pm	Business Meeting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Discuss Organizational Guidelines/Recommendations for Changes ➤ Discuss Term Length/Elect New Officers ➤ Discuss contents of Workgroup Report ➤ Approve Recommendations to MAFWA Exec. Comm. ➤ Approve Resolutions (sent to Chair of Resolutions Comm.) ➤ Other New Business ➤ Discuss Next Meeting Date/Location ➤ Adjourn 	Katy Reeder (IA) & Dennis Figg (MO)
<i>Thanks for Coming-Have a Safe Drive/Flight Home</i>		

Appendix 3

Working Together for Wildlife: State Wildlife Action Plans provide information on priority for species, habitats, conservation actions, and identify collaborations that should be integral to the development of Landscape Conservation Cooperatives (LCCs)

It was only 5 years ago that leaders of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) and the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (AFWA) championed the development of state wildlife action plans (SWAPs) for each state and territory. Leaders from FWS and AFWA proclaimed,

“The wildlife action plans collectively form a nationwide strategy to prevent wildlife from becoming endangered. The state wildlife action plans (SWAPs) stand out from many prior conservation plans because of the broad participation and open planning process. By working with stakeholders and other members of the community, wildlife agencies translated pressing conservation needs into practical actions. This resulted in wildlife action plans that are firmly grounded in science and successfully balance differing interests in how we use the lands and waters that are home to wildlife.”

More recently, the US Fish and Wildlife Service announced a commitment to organize conservation collaborations at landscape scale, largely in recognition that climate change will require communication and conservation planning in different forms than we have used in the past. **“LCCs will engage in biological planning, conservation design, inventory and monitoring program design, and other types of conservation-based scientific research, planning and coordination.”** Landscape Conservation Cooperatives (LCCs) are applied conservation science partnerships that will drive success at landscape scales. They are partnerships between the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the broad conservation community. The FWS has provided assurance that states will be essential partners.

This is familiar territory for state fish and wildlife agencies and their partners who developed and are now implementing SWAPs. The vision for LCCs is ambitious and structures for success are organizing at a rapid pace. Recognizing that the pace of implementation will make collaboration challenging, state fish and wildlife agencies offer the following guidance on how to build connectivity with State Wildlife Action Plans.

“Working Together for Wildlife” will be on the right track if we build on the existing plans, processes and conservation actions identified in the state wildlife action plans that were developed with and approved by the US Fish and Wildlife Service.

State Wildlife Action Plans include information on the distribution and abundance of wildlife. State plans have already used expert processes and identified animals (and sometimes plants) that are species of greatest concern need (SGCN). Many of these species will be further affected by climate change. A compilation of these state lists, by LCC geography, is an obvious place to start to compile lists of “focal species” for strategic habitat conservation within the LCC. Although states used different methods to generate lists of SGCN, a compilation of SGCN by LCC geography, or sub-unit, along with FWS trust species, and species that are economically and recreationally important should form the starting point for conservation planning in each LCC.

Action Item 1. Develop a list that compiles and integrates SGCN, FWS trust species, and other important species by LCC geography.

Result - The conservation community within each LCC will be working from the same base list of SGCN. Through collaborative participation, the LCC geography list would be

a useful reference to evaluate regional priorities, particularly as it relates to identifying species that rank high for vulnerability assessments.

Action Item 2. Develop a database that assigns integrated lists of SGCN, FWS trust species and other important species by habitat type, in each LCC. These data will support a collaborative process to identify a set of “focal species” that represent groups of species (plants and animals) that can be used in strategic habitat conservation.

Result - The conservation community within each LCC will be working from the same “core framework” of habitats and associated species that represent conservation concern in the face of climate change.

Additional Benefit: State fish and wildlife agencies, as they wish, will consider this LCC list (with state level additions) a revision to Required Element 1. States and other conservation partners would always be welcome to add to the list at the state, local, or project level.

State Wildlife Action Plans describe locations and relative conditions of habitats essential to conservation. State plans have identified habitats essential to SGCN. While different planning methodologies were used in different states, building on these existing habitat priorities would provide a defensible framework of LCC priority habitats. In addition, many states identified priority places, which have already been compiled by the broad conservation community into a representative framework for conservation action. Because “LCCs will comprise a seamless national network focused on helping conservation agencies and organizations maintain landscapes capable of sustaining abundant, diverse and healthy populations of fish, wildlife and plants”, there is every reason to evaluate and build upon the existing framework. There are gaps in the existing framework it is not seamless but the priority places already identified by SWAP-supported conservation collaborations is an existing reference for guiding LCC priorities.

Action Item 3 – Develop maps and products that represent the existing framework of “priority places” identified by SWAPs, by LCC geography using a common mapping system.

Result - The LCC conservation collaboration can utilize the existing habitat conservation framework that was developed in cooperation with partners, to guide conservation while LCC conservation plans are developed.

Action Item 4 – Support and guide the development of a consistent habitat mapping across the LCCs utilizing the most recent satellite and other remote sensing imagery. These maps will support models relating population objectives for focal species to existing and future habitat.

Result – Strategic habitat conservation within the LCC will benefit from a consistent mapping and conservation planning methodology. States with existing “priority places” will be able to build additional support when those geographies are recognized within a regional framework. States that have been unable to develop geographically specific “priority places” will be able to participate in conservation planning and use the regional priorities to the degree desirable.

Additional Benefit: State fish and wildlife agencies that participate in conservation planning to identify priority habitats and priority places for conservation action can consider this regional framework of priority habitats (with state level additions) a revision to Required Element 2. States and partners would be encouraged to build on the “priority places framework” at the state, local, or project level.

Action Item 5. Develop projections of future climate conditions and response models to estimate how the habitats will change under various climate scenarios and from other stressors.

Result – This information will support vulnerability assessments and scenario planning in support of adaptation planning for climate change. The conservation community can

evaluate their conservation actions in light of climate change and the projected gains or losses of habitats.

State Wildlife Action Plans describe the conservation actions proposed to conserve species and habitats. State plans have identified conservation actions that will conserve SGCN by reducing threats and restoring habitat. Some state action plans contain so many actions that setting priorities is difficult. Which conservation actions are the most important for immediate and near term funding? Strategic habitat conservation implemented cooperatively within an LCC could inform the actions of partners and other interested parties in their delivery of on-the-ground conservation.

Action Item 6 – Support strategic habitat conservation planning that develops proposed conservation actions based on models that relate these actions to population objectives for focal species. This will assist conservation partners in setting priorities and allocating resources. This also will assist in identification of assumption-based research to improve conservation planning and delivery.

Result - Implementing conservation actions for focal species based on strategic habitat planning should make conservation more effective and efficient by allocating resources to the most important actions in the most important places.

State Wildlife Action Plansincluded broad public participation through ambitious coordination with federal and local agencies as well as Indian tribes. A desired outcome is that “LCCs will play an important role in helping partners establish common goals and priorities, so they can be more efficient and effective in targeting the right science in the right places”. State plans were developed through broad public participation and extensive coordination from the conservation community. Many states have established implementation committees or other state-level coordinating organizations with developed administrative structures and processes to support collaborations that are integral to implementation of conservation. Building connectivity with and supporting these existing collaborative structures will enhance implementation of LCC conservation plans at state and local levels.

Action Item 7 – Incorporate existing state action plan implementation and coordinating organizations and structures into the implementation of conservation actions in the LCC.

Result – The existing structures can help to speed up implementation through the collaborations already in place and working.

State Wildlife Action Plansincluded plans for monitoring wildlife as well as monitoring the effectiveness of the conservation actions and for adapting these conservation actions to respond to new information. States identified plans for monitoring species and habitats. However, most states are still struggling with full implementation of monitoring (MON), measuring management effectiveness (MEE), and collecting and sharing information that makes adaptive thinking and structured decision making possible. Lack of monitoring is partly from lack of agreement on protocols, although adequate funds and staff time is probably the biggest obstacle. Some states are further along with MON and MEE than others, but the experiences of selected states would inform the developing LCC of recent progress and plans.

Action Item – Develop and implement multi-agency monitoring plans to inform adaptive implementation of conservation actions in State Wildlife Action Plans and within the LCC.

Result – Multi-agency collaboration in monitoring using protocols and systems developed by partners will be critical to obtaining information to support adaptive management that is essential to successful implementation of state wildlife action plans and strategic habitat conservation.

How can future SWAP revisions contribute to the vision for conservation science partnerships that inform on-the-ground conservation efforts?

Action Item – States must revise their State Wildlife Action Plans by 2015. However, many states planned to revise their action plans after five years and have already begun the revisions. LCCs and the conservation planning products developed by LCCs will be important in revising state wildlife action plans especially for climate change.

Implementation: Conservation actions would be implemented by the partners within the LCC. Funding for implementation is expected to come from a variety of sources including federal, state, and local agencies and non-governmental agencies.