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	Director Liaison		Committee Vice Chair
	Committee Chair		Committee Recorder

Meeting Details

Meeting Date(s) and Location(s): *List dates of all meetings held in the past year. *500 Character Limit*

Executive Summary

Information contained in this section provides an overall summary of the committee meeting including a judgment of the meeting's success compared to previous meetings. Photos or other additional documents that help convey the work of the committee in this past year should be noted in the text but added to the end of this document as an attachment to the Annual Report PDF.

**3700 Character Limit*



Director Information Items

*Information in this section should highlight the committee's progress to goals and objectives identified in the Technical Working Committee Charter, identify challenges or risks (perceived or realized) and include any other updates from Midwest state's or relative business discussed. *3600 Character Limit*



Committee Workgroups

Identify workgroups that are associated with this TWC. Provide a brief 2-3 sentence summary of work accomplished in the past year. A workgroup is a smaller team that supports the goals and objectives of the TWC and is necessary and needed to help accomplish the work. It may include additional members not in the TWC but must be lead by a member of the TWC.

**650 Character Limit*

Workgroup Name (1)

States Member Lead

Workgroup Name (2)

States Member Lead

Requests for Action

List below any accompanying documents attached to the annual report. Note: All formal requests for action by the MAFWA Board of Directors must complete the appropriate forms with approvals by MAFWA Executive Committee prior to the Annual Board Meeting. Ex. Committee Charter, Request and Risk Assessment. See page 12 of the TWC Guidelines Manual for timelines and details.

**1300 Character Limit*

Proposed Meeting Dates/Times/Location

Dates and times the TWC will meet in the upcoming year.



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Annual Report

Agenda

*Provide meeting information from the past year in the space below. If additional supporting documents are needed, please combine into a single PDF and use the space below to document what is attached. Before final submission to the MAFWA Executive Secretary. *4000 Character Limit*

Attachment 1

Attachment for the MAFWA Wildlife Diversity Technical Working Committee 2025 Annual Report for Directors. This includes meeting minutes from each meeting between August 2024 and May 2025.

Quarterly Call

August 3, 2024

Notes compiled from Claire Beck (MLI), Leon Hinz (IL), and Elizabeth Mabee (IN)

ATTENDEES: Elizabeth Mabee (IN, chair); Leon Hinz (IL), Michelle Bloomquist (IL), Theresa Bordenkecher (IN), Katy Fullin (IA), Karen Kinkead (IA), Daren Riedle (KS), Tony Henahan (MI), Kristin Hall (MN), Shelby Timm (MO), Patrick Isakson (ND), Eileen Dowd Stukel (SD), Shari Koslowsky (WI); Claire Beck (MLI), Lorisa Smith (MLI), Olivia LeDee (MW CASC), Hugh Ratcliffe (MW CASC), Jessica Piispanen (OCI)

Welcome & Introductions of new members

- Shelby Timm (MDC)—Habitat Conservation Coordinator
- Hugh Radcliffe & Olivia LeDee (USGS)-- Midwest Climate Adaptation Science Center

Updates from MLI (15 minutes)

- **General MLI Update for the Technical Committee:**
 - Upcoming webinar:
 - Join us for an hour of learning and discussion about several recent resources developed by the Midwest Landscape Initiative to support the development and implementation of SWAPs and conservation of Species of Greatest Conservation Need. In this webinar we will share information and ideas for improving new tools that facilitate collaboration between and within states and enhance SWAP revision and implementation, including:
 - New products to support use of the Regional SGCN database, including fact sheets and updated online resources.
 - Tools for regionally relevant habitat classification systems for both terrestrial and aquatic habitats.
 - A new lexicon and voluntary best practices document with resources for Midwest SWAPs meeting the 8 Essential Elements.
 - Prototype demonstration and next steps for a regional SWAP data visualization tool.
 - Link to register is below and please share this invitation with your networks! Questions? Contact Claire Beck at claire.beck@dnr.ohio.gov
 - [https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZMtc-qhrzwoHtBkk1-iQLsRRanzeMww_MDj](https://us02web.zoom.us/join/zoom-join?from=invitation&join_url=https://us02web.zoom.us/join/zoom-join?from=invitation&join_url=https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZMtc-qhrzwoHtBkk1-iQLsRRanzeMww_MDj)
- **At-Risk Species Working Group:**
 - At-Risk group recently revisited their action plan and talked through how to prioritize actions for RSGCN species
 - No longer focusing on listing workplan species, as a pilot project to pre-fill SSA data has been completed and passed along to the Ecological Services staff in Region 3
- Group is now embarking on a new process modeled after one taken in the Northeast, which includes the following steps:
 - Develop smaller regional At-Risk Species list collaboratively with states and multiple FWS programs (based on RSGCN list)
 - Use RSGCN database and other information sources to ID high priority actions/needs for these species

- Use existing information sources to ID actions already occurring for these species
- Use the gap between existing work and priority actions for each species to catalyze priority projects and efforts in the region
- Tony asked about the rapid assessment work. Claire indicated this has been passed to USFWS Ecological Services and they have asked for feedback.
 - Tony – We should continue to push this with USFWS
 - Claire – indicated this would be discussed at the upcoming R3 T&E+ Coordinators meeting next month in Illinois

Communications and Engagement Working Group:

- C&E group has recently focused on reviewing potential updates to the MLI website focused on increasing access to our resources. This includes the addition of a video page with webinar recordings, a link to the success stories StoryMap, and a page detailing the what and how of MLI support.
 - Check out the [Story Map](#)
- Group has also assisted MLI staff in brainstorming new audiences for engagement and targeted webinars.

Grasslands Summit:

- Invitations are out and final planning is underway for the Midwest Grasslands Summit, to be held August 27-29 in Des Moines, IA. Hosts for the event include Iowa DNR, MLI, UMGL JV and MAFWA; sponsors include Pheasants Forever and Ducks Unlimited. The purpose of the summit will be to:
 - Shape a unified vision for native and surrogate tallgrass habitats across the Midwest that focuses on collective impact of all partners and organizations.
 - Build an active coalition of people invested in increasing grasslands on the landscape.
 - Identify collaborative actions (policy, funding, management, etc.) to pursue as next steps moving forward to realize the vision of this effort.
 - We have been working with colleagues from across the region for months to develop an agenda and approach and are now working with our facilitator (Kearns & West) and core planning team to publish the agenda and introduce our plenary speakers. We have limited invitations to ensure we have broad and inclusive representation while managing location capacity requirements. We are working to provide virtual options for portions of the meeting, like the plenaries, and to allow people not at the meeting to share their ideas or interests. More information is available on the [MLI website](#).
- **Habitat Working Group:**
 - Blueprint updates are full steam ahead as the group works towards the goal of releasing a 2024 version of the blueprint this fall. At the last couple meetings, the team has made progress on:
 - Reviewing all public feedback comments received from our app and using the comments to help identify which data layers to focus on for updates.
 - Identifying specific improvements to be made to our input data layers.
 - Some next steps for the team include identifying improvements to our data portal and online mapper, plus finalizing and submitting the scientific manuscript detailing the creation of the blueprint.

- **Midwest Pollinator Conservation Team**
 - Working towards finalizing the first version of our regional focal species list as pretty much the same as the RSGCN list of pollinators
 - This list will be revisited after finalization of states' 2025 SGCN lists
 - Next focus area is outlining a Midwest Pollinator Conservation Action plan and developing a strategy and small teams to produce this resource
- **SWAPs and Landscapes Team / SWAP Data Viewing Tools:**
 - SWAPs and Landscapes team recently wrapped up work on the SWAP lexicon and best practices document and will next be reviewing a monitoring program synthesis for the Midwest
 - This group is moving to quarterly meetings rather than monthly as most of the planned work has been completed
 - Data viewing tools sub-group is currently working on developing a data framework for a multi-regional SWAP database
 - This framework is being developed using the SWAP dashboard prototype as well as the regional SWAP database from the Northeast region
- **Wind Group:**
 - The group has moved to quarterly meetings and has no report at this time.
 - Moving toward a community of practice model than a standard Working Group.
- Elizabeth asked Claire to resend the call for monitoring protocol

MAFWA Wildlife Diversity Committee Organization (30 minutes)

- Set dates for future meetings in November, February, and Spring (?) meeting
 - ACTION ITEM: Elizabeth to set meetings for November and February
 - Spring meeting
 - ACTION ITEM: Elizabeth to refresh our memory about deadlines to get the report to Ollie in time in order to set dates for spring meeting.
 - Tony – Are we still planning to have a joint-meeting again
 - Elizabeth – Indiana is planning to have a joint-meeting in 2025.
 - Can we formalize the idea of having a joint meeting if this will be a regular thing?
 - Shari – we should talk about the advantages and disadvantages about joint meetings.
 - Elizabeth – Do we always meet in person? Should we talk about these things at our next meeting?
 - Karen – We should chime in about what we want to get done at the in-person meeting to see if it is useful to have a joint meeting.
 - Katy -- Public and Private Lands have met together for many years.
 - Karen-- We shouldn't be told what to do by other committees. If we don't feel comfortable having meetings with the other committees we don't need to.
 - Eileen – talk about this with Greg Link too.
- Do we need to update the Organizational Guidelines at some point in time?
 - Responsibilities of the Chair: order alphabetically (rather than vote),
 - Responsibilities of the Vice-Chair: how to select, do we need one.

- Kristin – like the idea of having the next up as Vice-Chair, last-chair as advisory role, Chair
 - Shari – easy to have someone from the same state be the Vice-chair if the Chair cannot be present.
 - Katy – Use the Vice-chair to train up the next chair
 - Eileen – Should we run this past Greg before doing too much work?
 - Elizabeth – let's take note of the things we want to change or update.
 - Katy – let's huddle and identify potential changes. We can fix these problems ... scope and organizational changes.
 - Karen – waiting for further direction on the Committee structure.
- ACTION ITEM: Elizabeth and Katy to follow up with Greg Link (MAFWA Director Liaison) to talk about upcoming changes to MAFWA Committees, weigh whether we can fix the scope and organizational changes now or should wait until the 2025-2026 term, and learn more about joint meetings with Public and Private Lands.
 - EM to send out updated email and contact information to the group—this was sent out ahead of the meeting.

Discussion: Regal Fritillary Federal Listing Proposed Rule (10 minutes)

- How have states been trying to prepare for the 4d rule and what it means?
 - Leon—nothing, have to do incidental take permissions separately. None of the allowed activities are allowed under state law. Concerning because if someone wants to do these activities and goes through the process Federally, they often forget about the state permissions. This species has a broad distribution in Illinois. These activities are common management practices and would require a permit every time these are completed.
 - Eileen—State T&E law has authorized purposes for take, but incidental take isn't one of them. Probably wouldn't add RF to state law; low support for listing invertebrates in the past. Would fall under the scientific collecting permit, would evaluate on a case by case basis. How will Section 7 compliance go on Public Lands given the new guidance—immediate need to deal with this question.
 - Karen—still digesting the information. State law doesn't automatically list Federally listed species. State law doesn't issue permits for incidental take.
- Is the comment on the Regal Fritillary listing and the 4(d) rule worth the time investment? Or is it a done deal?
 - Leon—rarely comments. Unsure of how a listing would impact what Illinois does because of the state law. It does affect Section 7, but not permitting of other entities.
 - Shari—will provide comments; lots of parallels with Illinois. RF is state-endangered in WI. WI always comments because we do section 7 with grants. If there's a conflict with the current management practices, we'd comment on that for the listing. It would be better to know when the Feds would issue a permit for a species because then WI would know/coordinate when the state issues a permit.
- ACTION ITEM: Elizabeth to ask Owen Boyle to send email see if interest in submitting a letter for MAFWA in September
- Katy – Is WAFWA doing something with this?
- Eileen – Not sure how WAFWA is working on this. Focus is mainly on s the Federal Work Plan.
- Daren – WAFWA T&E Committee does not seem to be doing much on invertebrates.

Discussion: How are states preparing for the anticipated listing of the Monarch Butterfly? (20 minutes)

- Regal Fritillary (eastern and western subspecies); Monarchs have eastern and western populations, but not subspecies.
- Leon--Is this a model for the Monarch listing?
 - Karen—not heard anything about the Monarch from the USFWS.
- Leon--Because of the wide distribution of Monarchs, the listing of Monarchs has significant implications.
- How might the public be impacted by Monarch listing?
 - Captive rearing would need a permit in Illinois (classrooms, at home rearing, etc.)
 - Illinois' current interpretation of managing milkweed—ok to remove milkweed (not listed), but not ok to harm the larva.

State updates

- Eileen: Draft SGCN list out for public comment, also out to key agencies and Tribes—30 day comment period, due August 30. Used standard practices, including a news release, and also compiled a list of contacts from the Relevancy survey to send out an announcement that the draft list was available. There will be a separate comment period for the plan.
- Daren: Kansas Non-game wildlife council—30-40 small conservation ngos around the state. Will meet around the state to discuss the revisions for the SWAP. Alligator Snapping Turtle release mid-September (last record 30 years ago). A part of aquatic recovery program that's newly funded.
- Kristin: SGCN list work to divide between State Listed species and the SGCN list. Trying to communicate the difference in processes between the listing development and the SGCN list development. MN Governor was chosen as the VP; a proponent of RAWA.

Meeting adjourned at 11:39 am CT.

MAFWA WD Call 11.7.2024

Notes from Katy Fullin

Thursday, November 7, 2024

10:04 AM

Change in Indiana Status:

Theresa Bordenkecher (Science Supervisor for IN, directs the nongame research leads) asked Elizabeth's former supervisor about what the plan was for taking over this role. Elizabeth had communicated with the Public and Private Lands work groups and they did plan to meet together.

Karen Kinkead (IA) is already planning to attend the IN Directors meeting in 2025.

When are we going to see all the new procedures developed as part of the MAFWA Director's Strategic Planning Process? They are now on the website. Biggest thing is the new forms.

People can send agenda items for the Feb 4th meeting to Theresa and she will share it out to everyone.

One Health

Tricia Fry - Fish & Wildlife Health Coordinator for MAFWA

- At the Peoria in-person meeting, she said that she'd be preparing a brief document for use in SWAPs to incorporate One Health into the SWAP. She's completed that and will share it out. She is willing to help us one on one if we want to adapt it.
- There are similar docs prepared for SEAFWA and NEAFWA, the 3 coords worked together on it.
- AFWA has stood up a One Health committee and MAFWA has a One Health resolution.

Karen Kinkead - Turtle Headstarting, BPZ asked us to join the Turtle Safe program - has anyone else done that?

- Sounds like nobody on the call knows much about it

Karen - AFWA's WDCF Committee is reviewing the WDP Functional Model

- Group that reviews the Functional model - Kelly Rezac is on that group. Might be more of a Best Practices document than a review.
- Smaller group doing a Visioning Process. Karen is serving on that group for MAFWA.
 - As part of that, there will be a survey of states. Partly it's about how we're structured, partly about how we envision the future, what resources are needed? What's the future of this work?
 - Mark is also hoping that some retired WDPs will write a true history of the programs. Naomi is maybe tied into that as well. She may also have a separate history going of the history of the TWW initiative.
 - Karen would also like to do a shorter survey that goes to WDP staff across the states, rather than coordinators.

Kate Parsons – USFWS MLI

- The new version of the Midwest Conservation Blueprint is available.
- Claire Beck (MAFWA) couldn't make it today but wanted to talk about C-SWG. Regional SWAP database - the Northeast is doing this with DJ Case.
- Claire is happy to help facilitate a proposal effort.

All - C-SWG ideas discussion

The hope is that the NOFO will come out in the next 3-5 business days, Jess Piispanen will share. Rough closing date will be 2/25/2025.

OH might look at doing Wood Rat project with eastern states. (Currently working on Blanding's with MI that got funded in last round.)

ND, NE, and MT - applied to work on MOTUS towers and they might go for that again.

MN/IL/WI Mussel project potentially in the works? Maybe a fish project on Miss River? Also continued Bee Atlas work.

WI - talked to MN and MI about fall tracking of cave bats to dial in on regulatory buffers around hibernacula. Also maybe a hibernacula protection through ATB.

IA/IL/WI EMR genetics.

National Messaging:

RAWA messaging from AFWA coordinators call - messaging may need to shift to something more pragmatic - avoidance of regulatory burden to private industry and State Agency authority rather than SGCN and rare species conservation.

February In-person meeting agenda:

MAFWA Public Lands, Private Lands, & Wildlife Diversity Working Groups Meeting

February 11-13, 2025

Monroe Convention Center & Affiliated Courtyard by Marriott, Bloomington, Indiana

MONDAY 2/10/2025	
TRAVEL TO BLOOMINGTON, IN	
MEALS ON YOUR OWN & PROSPECTIVE INFORMAL SOCIAL AT CONFERENCE HOTEL	
TUESDAY 2/11/2025	
<i>Registration Open 7:00 – 9:00am</i>	
BREAKFAST AT CONVENTION CENTER	7:30-9:00
WELCOME	9:00-9:10
INDIANA DIVISION OF FISH & WILDLIFE HISTORY & OVERVIEW:	9:10-10:00
<i>Amanda Wuestefeld, IN Division of Fish & Wildlife Director</i>	
BREAK WITH REFRESHMENTS	10:00-10:15
PUBLIC LANDS KEYNOTE PRESENTATION:	10:15-11:00
<i>Kalli Dunn, Goose Pond FWA Overview & Kevin Shettle, Chinook Coal Fire</i>	
PRIVATE LANDS KEYNOTE PRESENTATION:	11:00-11:45
<i>Trevor Laureys, Indiana Conservation Partnership & Indiana NRCS Program Highlights</i>	
WILDLIFE DIVERSITY KEYNOTE PRESENTATION: <i>Like Sands through the Hourglass - A Conservation Journey at Kankakee Sands</i>	11:45-12:30
<i>Cassie Hauswald, The Nature Conservancy - Indiana</i>	
LUNCH AT CONVENTION CENTER	12:30-1:20
BREAKOUT TO WORKING GROUPS	1:20-1:30
WORKING GROUP BREAKOUTS	1:30-4:30
<i>Informal Breaks with Refreshments</i>	
DINNER AT CONVENTION CENTER	5:30-7:00
WEDNESDAY 2/12/2025	
BREAKFAST AT CONVENTION CENTER	7:30-9:00
PUBLIC & PRIVATE LANDS TOURS & BIRDING OPPORTUNITY	9:00-6:00
<i>Box Lunch and Refreshments Provided</i>	
DINNER AT CONVENTION CENTER	6:00-7:00
THURSDAY 2/13/2025	
BREAKFAST AT CONVENTION CENTER	7:30-9:00
PUBLIC LANDS, PRIVATE LANDS, & WILDLIFE DIVERSITY BREAKOUTS: DEVELOP ACTION ITEMS FOR DIRECTORS' REPORT	9:00-12:00
<i>Break with Refreshments</i>	
ADJOURN	12:00

MAFWA Wildlife Diversity Working Group Breakout

February 11-13, 2025

Monroe Convention Center & Affiliated Courtyard by Marriott, Bloomington, Indiana

TUESDAY 2/11/2025	1:30-4:30
WELCOME	
ANDREA HUNTINGTON, INDIANA LAND PROTECTION ALLIANCE (<i>Private Conservation Groups and Diversity</i>)	1:30-2:00
DR. ROBERT JEAN, ENVIRONMENTAL SOLUTIONS INC. (<i>Bees and Pollinators</i>)	2:00-2:30
WYATT WILLIAMS, INDIANA NATURAL HERITAGE DATA CENTER (<i>Plant Diversity</i>)	2:30-3:00
BREAK	3:00-3:15
BRAD WESTRICH, INDIANA DNR FISH & WILDLIFE (<i>Franklin's Ground Squirrel</i>)	3:15-3:45
NATURESERVE (<i>Conservation Tools</i>)	3:45-4:15
THURSDAY 2/13/2025	9:00-12:00
MONARCH JOINT VENTURE (<i>Monarchs Protection and Projects</i>)	9:00-10:00
MONARCH DISCUSSION & DEVELOP ACTION ITEMS FOR DIRECTORS' REPORT	10:00-10:30
<i>Break</i>	10:30-10:45
CONTINUED DISCUSSION AND ACTION ITEMS & ADJOURNMENT	10:45-12:00

Discussion Notes

Monarch Joint Venture

- Not part of FWS
- Does monarch surveys on DOD lands to help inform their management
- Already 34,180 comments submitted for monarch listing. Only 71 were submitted for regal fritillary.
- Lots of partners involved, including many nonprofits dedicated solely to monarchs
- Claire Beck is working on MAFWA comments
 - For MLI Pollinator WG? Or for MAFWA?
- Exemption 2: Implementation of comprehensive conservation plans where they meet specific criteria
 - One thing not spelled out clearly is that both the State agency and the FWS need to sign off on these plans. FWS clarified that to MJV in a call.
 - Model off the Monarch CCAA – meets all these criteria
 - What kinds of plans count?
 - The Monarch CCAA doesn't actually count b/c its multi state but not coordinated with all the State agencies
 - SWAPs wouldn't count unless they meet all the criteria
- Will we add monarch to checklist? We are thinking we won't. How will that effect Environmental Review? If not an SOCC, won't come up in reviews. Should it? Depends on whether there are exemptions for development. Conversion of grassland?
- MJV Science Program
 - Facilitate collaborative conservation.
 - Bring opportunities to engage with monarch conservation to new audiences.
 - Nationwide monarch research programs

- Integrated Monarch Monitoring Program – designed in 2016 to monitor breeding habitat and monarch activity at over 2,100 sites. Data from this project have been used in at least 8 peer reviewed pubs.
 - Monarch Larva Monitoring Project – citizen science garden monitoring, has been running about 30 years. Now have 5,200 sites, data used in 37 peer reviewed pubs and other pseudo-research.
 - Remote sensing via UAVs:
 - Currently working on algorithm development; surveys on federal conservation lands, CRP, roadsides, solar. Comparing to field surveys to inform algorithm for quantifying milkweed. Currently detects milkweeds with 93% precision.
 - Also working on vegetative index algorithm, quantifying type of vegetation on landscape from UAV imagery.
 - Training others to use remote sensing via UAVs. Guiding a user interface and its outputs. Can create maps of landcover at detailed scale to share with landowners, land managers – showing presence of milkweeds, invasive species, forbs...
 - Help landowners target herbicide application to patches of invasive species, and avoid milkweeds and other forbs
 - Expanding application of the tech (e.g., invasive species detection, habitat indices?)
- MJV collaborative conservation:
 - reviews monarch literature and develops summary documents (peer review papers).
 - communicates research priorities, in collaboration with MJV partners on a working group.
- Reaching new audiences
 - Monarch Connections: MJV serves on collaboratives (state, regional, local, federal) Translates resources to speak to a wide range of users.
 - Connections with landowners
- MJV Program Services:
 - Contracts out Pollinator habitat field surveys, pollinator field surveys, remote sensing surveys
 - Provides specialized presentations and trainings
- MJV Eastern Habitat Program
 - Provides Pollinator habitat technical assistance to landowners and conservation professionals
 - Provides financial assistance: grant writing, project support, has funding for plant materials (seeds, plugs)
 - Provides habitat outreach/education
 - Supports science and monitoring efforts
 - Heart of the corn belt is also the heart of monarch reproductive range
 - MJV helps find practical solutions for row crop producers.
 - Works with growers to convert marginal, ROI-negative acres to monarch and pollinator habitat
 - Promote flowering cover crops and cash crops, rotation diversification
 - Like oilseed crops that benefit pollinators because they flower so early

- Have had good success in flowering cover crop trials implemented by a variety of systems across NE, IA, MO and MN. Works great in grazing pastures during rests between cattle grazing, and cattle love grazing it when let in.
- Build better grasslands
 - Addressing woody encroachment through early detection
 - Addressing grass-dominated pasture and range by promoting forb diversity
 - Supporting RxB
- Case against Grazon (broadleaf herbicide used in pastures to kill milkweed)
 - Cattle heavily graze common/showy milkweed in May – July
 - Cattle appear to graze common / showing MW at least as much as surrounding grass
 - MW abundance always at least 34-fold lower in patch-burn-grazed grassland units vs. ungrazed
 - Demonstrate that it doesn't pay to spray pastures to remove milkweed
- Case for adaptive management
 - Support further research to generate BMPs for optimizing diversity in grazing systems. Project launching 2025 in MN with DU and FWS

ITEMS FOR DIRECTORS REPORT

- Directors report
 - Ensure we coordinate with Claire on monarch comments. Is Claire providing comments for MAFWA or for MLI?
 - Request Directors to continue supporting Claire Beck's position if FWS funding is cut?
 - WDC will meet again next week. Additional opportunity to discuss items for Directors report.
 - Its primarily budget requests that need to be submitted to Directors early.
- WDC Procedure, positions
 - Iowa will be chair starting now
 - Next will move to Kansas, which should serve as vice chair (Daren)
 - Other committees have a Director Liaison assigned. It was Greg Link (ND) but he has retired, so we have a vacancy now. Need to request a new one.
 - Iowa's Director is current president (Pete) so Katy will ask him about assigning a Director liaison.
 - Director Liaison could present our report at the MAFWA Directors meeting if no one from Indiana on our WDC is available to do so.

February 18, 2025

MAFWA Wildlife Diversity Technical Working Group

Present: Theresa Bordenkecher (IN), Eileen Dowd-Stukel (SD), Tara Bergeson (WI), Jennifer Kleitsch (MI), Leon Hinz (IL), Lindsey Kemp (MN - listed spp program coordinator), Erin Hazelton (OH), Alison Cariveau (MN), Claire Beck (MAFWA, MLI), John Navarro (OH), Owen Boyle (WI), Hugh Ratcliffe (Midwest Climate Adaptation Science Center), Tony Henehan (MI), Karen Kinkead (IA), Katy Fullin (IA)

In-person meeting report out:

- Low attendance in Indiana – Katy (IA), Kelly (MO), Patrick (ND), Theresa (IN)
- Some frustration was expressed about lack of follow-up on Project Ideas identified during our 2023 Joint Meeting in Wisconsin.
- Greg Link retiring so our Committee needs a new Director's Liaison.
- Presentation given about Franklin's Ground Squirrel translocation via soft release in Indiana (Kankakee Sands area).

Midwest Native Bee Conservation Working Group (Claire)

- Group is working to inform the revision of the RSGCN and focused on increasing the number of native bees considered RSGCN.
- Discussion occurred about the RSGCN identification process, who should be deciding on RSGCN (Academic Experts or States), potentially updating the selection process

Monarch Joint Venture Discussion

- MAFWA and MLI are not coordinating comments on the Monarch listing.
- Discussion on the implications of a proposed 4(d) rule including covering stewardship work, managing naturalized habitat, lack of inclusion of pesticide use, commercial allowances and restrictions on wild individuals.

Director's Report – Notes

- Recommend financial support for Claire's position with MLI
- Consider indicating support for Climate Adaptation Science Centers
- Federal Budget News – Claire on 2 year contract through September 2026
- Express concern about the loss of Federal Funding to support State Programs
- Highlight the importance of this Working Group to promote cooperation and coordination
- Working Group functions to support STWG/RAWA, facilitating work (MLI), Relevancy, implementing ESA, Bird Conservation initiatives

May 22, 2025 MAFWA Wildlife Diversity Working Group
1:30-3:30 PM CST

Attendance: Karen Kinkead (IA), Katy Fullin (IA), Alison Cariveau (MN), Claire Beck (MAFWA), Owen Boyle (WI), Daren Riedle (KS), Brett Andersen (NE), Erin Hazelton (OH), (Greg ND - gpschonert not Greg Link but newly hired Staff), Hugh Ratcliffe (USGS), Jennifer Kleitch (MI), Kristin Hall (MN), Lindsey Kemp (MN), Lorisa Smith (MO), Malissa Briggler (MO), John Navarro (OH), Olivia Ledee (USGS), Patrick Isakson (ND), Theresa Bordenkecher (IN), Shari Koslowsky (WI), Leon Hinz (IL) - attendance (21)

Ron Hellmich and Theresa B - Indiana

- Ron H can probably give the report in Indiana as Iowa can only send Director now.

Agenda & Notes:

1. MLI Remarks - Claire Beck (MAFWA)
 - All staff still here - Lorisa and Claire agreements in place until Sept 2026
 - FWS staff have been moved but still in FWS and doing MLI although unsure how much time they can devote going forward
 - Kate Parsons - ES; Rachel Carlberg - CI; Alex Wright - UMGLJV; Kelly Van Beek back to previous position in Migratory birds
 - Habitat working group is updating Midwest Conservation Blueprint and adding an at-risk species layer - probably GAP species richness models of 60+ vertebrate species from RSGCN list
 - Are working to start expanding blueprint to near shore waters of the Great Lakes
 - Revisiting the visions, goals, and missions
 - Creating a business plan (Lorisa working on this)
2. Regional SWAP Database - Claire Beck (MAFWA)
 - Small team was working on this but its on pause due to SWAP updates
 - General feedback is that people/state agencies are supportive but not able to contribute until after SWAPs are finished so will reengage at the end of this calendar year.
 - Will ask Northeast to present on their project.

Question - SWAP dashboard/database - was there an effort to do a regional one or am I thinking of some other SWAP tool, but wasn't there regional work done? Claire - I have talked about this a few times, so maybe that is what you are thinking about? We had started drafting a framework but that's what's on pause.

National SWAP Dashboard effort is almost complete and that will be available soon and includes 2015 SWAP data.

Question - Can you give us a description of the difference between the national and MLI dashboards? The difference is that the national dashboard uses 2015-2020 SWAPs, MLI and in the Northeast (NE) will focus on bringing in current SWAPs. The NE and MLI will be more state driven although there was state effort into the national effort too, it was mostly FWS effort.

3. Climate Assessment Report - Hugh Ratcliffe (USGS)
 - Rolling out reports for climate change integration into SWAPs
 - Up-to-date review of stress and projections
 - Literature review of direct and indirect effects of climate change

- Product - 7 peer reviewed reports
- Structured around habitats - 77 in the midwest
- We (this group) decided on which habitats to focus on
 - 22 - with 2 per ecoregion
 - Span broad variety of habitat types and midwest
- Was going to do one chapter per ecoregion but decided instead to focus on these habitats as similar system types - so seven chapters
 - Temperate Flooded and Swamp Forest
 - Appalachian interior.....
 - Each chapter has focal wildlife examples
 - Aquatic examples - 1 system per region
- Each chapter formatted the same way
- Flooding will become more dynamic in future
- Drought models
- Impacts by Habitat - and species likely to be affected
- 2 of 7 chapters have been published with one in the final stages of review and another in review now.
- Chapter 1 - https://mwcasc.umn.edu/sites/mwcasc.umn.edu/files/2025-03/Temperate%20Flooded%20and%20Swamp%20Forest_Final.pdf
- Chapter 2 - https://mwcasc.umn.edu/sites/mwcasc.umn.edu/files/2025-05/USGS_MW%20CASC_Appalachian%20Interior%20Northeastern%20Forest.pdf

Question - I understand the connection between the ecoregion and the habitat now!

4. Update on AFWA Visioning Project - Karen Kinkead (IA)
 - I have the slides that were presented at the AFWA meeting in Alabama - but they are now out of date and all but 1 state has responded to the survey (at the AL meeting not all states had responded)
 - Questions ranged from what are you called, how many staff, how are you funded? To What do you do that you should keep doing; what don't you do that you should do, what would you like to stop doing; what do you not want to do?
 - Strength in the report will be to capture the things we all have in common that each program does but also to address how states do things differently.
 - Example of nuisance wildlife - this is critical for one State to show relevancy to public, the rest of us are not likely to do this. It would be good to capture that so each of us have something to reference and someone to ask more questions of if that topic comes up in our State.
- What are you all thinking about the name diversity?
 - IN doesn't have a WDP anymore with nongame/game monitoring research being combined we changed
 - Wildlife Research now
 - Have asked about Diversity being on so many meetings and calendar appts and was told not to worry about it.
 - OH - not getting pushback here yet and I'm hoping that this too shall pass. Could we ask the **Directors not for a name change but that if we need to start from scratch on funding next year, what does that look like?** To get real, dedicated funding?
 - Katy - some of this naming push isn't because of the administration, it started before that. Yes, a retired WDP Manager attended a WDP meeting 2 years ago and AFWA got to thinking about

how things have changed, and in Iowa, younger staff weren't seeing how their work fit into the WDP Functional Model, so Karen was pushing Mark to revisit that 1990s document. In addition, the public doesn't understand what "Wildlife Diversity" is so we've been looking for some other phrasing - nongame resonates with the public but can set up a dichotomy within a State Agency which we want to avoid.

- Nebraska - upper admin is nonchalant about it at this point but we aren't opposed to rebranding
 - Legacy Plan in NE instead of SWAP - we wondered should NE revert to SWAP? but we decided to leave it as Legacy as people in NE really like it.
- ND - we don't use Diversity here - Conservation Program instead (3 people)
 - Went as nongame for a while but rebranded to conservation 5-10 years ago.
- KS - mirror ND, my position is called WDP Coordinator but we fall under Ecological Services Division, so diversity as a word doesn't jump out.
- WI - doesn't use Diversity in our name, but are actively removing the no-go words from applications and correspondence - not removing from the SWAP yet.
 - Public understands game/nongame the most but it creates a problem for us as it doesn't work quite that way.
 - 13 years ago we hired a consultant and did market research - at the time we were endangered resources and wanted to capture that we do more. But no appetite for identifying ourselves as nongame.
 - Vast majority of public don't understand game versus nongame as most don't hunt/fish anymore. Bigger problem is our size and that we don't have enough staff and are seen as what could be cut first due to the funding model. We didn't adopt WDP in WI because that's not how we operate - WDP is just one tiny little part of what we do with permitting and other functions. It's a nice idea but our states are so different how does it fit?
- MO - that's how we used to be but we were split up and we are scattered throughout the department now
- IL - agree with WI, most of the public sees us as more relevant than game and fish managers, something we need to do is improve our messaging and marketing to all our stakeholders. WDP - our work is relevant to every person in the state - would like more messaging. **Maybe some national messaging?**
 - OH - can we offer that recommendation to the Directors?

5. Short discussion of potential dates for 2026 Meeting

- Recognize that our group is its own entity and can meet when we want but over the past few years since WI hosted a few years ago, we've met with Public Lands and Private Lands Tech Committees.
- Report and action asks are now needed to be turned in earlier (March if money involved)
 - Well, report still due in May
 - We have quarterly calls but Pubic/private haven't traditionally done quarterly calls.
 - ND - move meeting to spring but realize we have to have on-line meetings to get report and asks set
 - Or warmer time of year
- WI - but when your last thing is to do the report and give the report, you are in the best position to answer questions and do the presentation.
 - WI, MI, IA, IN all facing reduced travel
- Director president of MAFWA doesn't have to be the host Director meeting state
- OH - like the idea of meeting in fall as the first thing incoming does

- MI FY starts in October but Sept likely better to meet this year.
 - But ESA Reg 3 is in Mo in Sept
 - Heritage is in MI in Sept
 - AFWA is in AZ in Sept
 - October would be ok for MI too, just not as certain of approval.
 - Like the idea of fall meeting too.
 - Owen can't do fall but maybe Shari could attend
 - Doesn't want to compete with ESA Reg 3 meeting
 - Meeting with other groups primarily benefits monetarily - we haven't had actionable items come from the joint meetings like we expected would happen.
 - IL - has a limit on the number of people that can attend an out of state meeting. - we can send 2 at most. So that's a drawback with joint meetings.
6. Do we have any action items for the Director's June Meeting?
- a. Resolution for Directors to support SWG, SWAPs, how critical they are to the states
 - i. List everything that would stop if SWG went away, it would raise eyebrows. Everyone will send a list to Karen by May 30.
 - ii. Shari - we have to talk about the amount of money that does not go to contractors that work with us because people may not care about bumblebees but they do care about the people that are employed by those contracts
 - iii. Don't make such a narrow list - just remind them what we do with SWG money. We can switch people to other funding but those grants will run out, its a crap shoot at best as to what we can sustain and not fire everyone.
 - iv. People making decisions don't care about losing staff but they do care about losing money.
 - v. How working grasslands ties into cattle production.
 - vi. Frame it keeping that in mind.
 - vii. But audience is our own directors - are we asking them to do a resolution? Take an action? Write a letter? Or is it an information item?
 1. I think we did a resolution of support or they signed a letter about RAWA - where is that letter?
 2. Even if we are too late for a resolution, an information item of the things that would be lost would be impactful and might make a strong case to them on how important it is on each of our states.
 - b. MAFWA resolutions https://mafwa.org/?page_id=226
 - i. Include not just projects but number of positions SWGs funds

Attachment 2

State Specific Responses to the Request for Information on Projects, Functions or Staff that could be Impacted by a Loss of State Wildlife Grants. There was a fast turn around time on this request so not all States had a chance to respond. Some States had already prepared briefing documents for their Directors, most had not and that difference is apparent below. All Program Leads could provide the same level of detailed information if requested by their Director to do so.

Illinois

Summary – Projects

Section 6 – There are currently 24 state-listed Threatened or Endangered mussel species in Illinois with 12 of these also being federally-listed. At this time the Illinois DNR does not have the capacity or capability to conduct mussel surveys on large rivers (that require diving). Since 2020 we have initiated six Projects focused on identifying the occurrence of threatened and endangered mussel species within key reaches of four large rivers (i.e., Wabash River, Kankakee River, Vermilion River, Upper Illinois River). Most of the over 100 reaches included had not been surveyed within the past 20 years and many had no previous survey information. These efforts have confirmed the presence of federally-listed mussel species within 59 surveyed locations. **Without this source of Federal funding these mussel surveys would not occur reducing our ability to assess, conserve, recover, or regulate these species in Illinois.**

State Wildlife Grants - We have 12 active Formula SWG and 2 active Competitive SWG Projects along with 3 F-SWG and 2 C-SWG under review by USFWS OCI at this time (plus 1 approved F-SWG Project starting later this year). Collectively these Projects support survey, monitoring and research efforts for Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN) amphibians, bats, birds, fishes, insects, snakes, turtles, and mussels (in wadeable streams) that would not otherwise occur in Illinois. These surveys allow us to conduct conservation assessments to inform state and federal listing decisions under the Illinois Endangered Species Protection Act and the Federal Endangered Species Act. They also assist with developing species management and recovery strategies and planning for land stewardship and other activities that avoids or minimizes “take” of Threatened or Endangered Species. **Without this source of Federal funding information to rigorously assess the conservation status of at-risk species that are not state-listed would not be obtained in Illinois.**

State Wildlife Grant Projects also provide contractual funds for managing Natural Areas including high-quality Natural Communities and specific suitable habitats for state-listed endangered and threatened species. These activities are designed to maintain, enhance, or restore landscape features that provide habitat for SGCN primarily on public land managed by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources and on lands protected in programs of the Illinois Nature Preserves Commission. **Without this source of Federal funding stewardship of these critical habitats would decrease by approximately 20% in Illinois.**

We were asked recently by our Fiscal staff to identify the number of our staff that are paid using Federal Funding (including SWG and Section 6). The Table below contains some of the information for SWG Projects that are currently active and under review from that effort.

SWG Project	Function	People*
Stewardship Support for Public Lands	Maintain High-Quality Natural Communities (habitat for SGCN)	14
Evaluating Mussel Community Recovery	Identify expected recovery after natural resource damage event	1
Inventory of SGCN at Pyramid State Park	Conservation Assessment of SGCN, evaluate site importance	0
Characterizing Large River Fish Assemblages	Improved survey methods and conservation assessments	0
Stewardship Support for Barrens, Glades, Woodlands	Maintain rare natural community features	5
Program Support for Recovery of E&T species	Conservation assessment, planning, and management of E&T species	5
Implementing Pyramid SRA Grassland Management Plan	Management and restoration of large publicly owned grassland	8
Assessment of SGCN Herpetofauna	Conservation Assessments of amphibian and reptile SGCN	0
Habitat Enhancement for SGCN	Management of habitats to directly benefit T&E species	0
Status Assessment for mussel SGCN	Surveys and conservation assessments of mussel SGCN	0
Wellness in Herptile SGCN	Tracking wildlife disease dynamics in wild populations	0
Stewardship Support for Natural Communities	Maintain and enhance Natural Community features	0
Multi-metric Stream Assessment Index	Improvements to assessments of stream health	0
Full Annual Cycle Bird Conservation**	Breeding, Migration, Overwintering condition of Illinois Birds	0
Hill Prairie Conservation Initiative**	Conservation Assessment, surveys, and management of grasslands	10
Wetland Conservation Initiative (Marshes)**	Conservation Assessment, surveys, and management of wetlands	10
Blanding's Turtle Conservation in Iowa and Illinois	Conservation Assessment and Management of Blanding's Turtles	0
Bat Conservation in Iowa and Illinois, 2025-2027	Improved monitoring, assessment, and habitat for at-risk Bats	0
Priority Monitoring, Research and Habitat Management Activities to Conserve the Eastern Massasauga Rattlesnake, Timber Rattlesnake, and plain-bellied Watersnake**	Implementation of portions of the EMR Recovery Plan in the Western Conservation Region and assessment of Timber Rattlesnake and Plain-bellied Watersnake in IL, IA, WI	0
Regional Status Assessments and Conservation Action Areas for Mussel RSGCN in the Upper Mississippi River Basin**	Status assessments of mussel species in the Upper Mississippi River Basin.	0

“*” = indicates the approximate number of people partially funded (<5%) by this project within the Illinois Department of Natural Resources. None of these people would lose their employment if SWG funds were lost their salary would simply be shifted to a different funding source.

“**” = indicates projects that are currently under review by USFWS/OCI.

Summary – Functions

State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP) Implementation

Survey, monitoring, assessment, and research actions for SGCN are largely conducted contractually using a combination of Federal and State funds. While some work on birds, mammals, and fish is provided through PR and DJ funding the vast majority of Illinois SGCN including 11 Amphibians, 23 Reptiles, 206 insects, and 37 mollusks are not eligible through those funding programs. Therefore surveys, conservation assessments, and research for most SGCN is funded through the State Wildlife Grant Program. **The loss of these funds would severely limit our ability to assess the status of these species since existing capacity is limited and focused on Endangered and Threatened Species.** (See Endangered and Threatened Species Program below)

A major focus of the Illinois SWAP is to maintain, enhance, and restore habitats to improve the viability of SGCN populations. This work is primarily focused at sites that have been identified on the Illinois Natural Areas Inventory which includes high-quality natural communities and specific suitable habitats for endangered and threatened species. Existing resources from the State of Illinois are insufficient to maintain many of these Natural Areas due to stresses from invasive species, altered disturbance regimes, and other threats. Federal Funds from the State Wildlife Grant Program have been used over the past several years to supplement available state stewardship funding and expand our management footprint. **Losing SWG funds would reduce these efforts by over 20%.** (See Natural Areas Program below)

Endangered and Threatened Species Program

The Endangered Species Program is responsible for implementing the Illinois Endangered Species Protection Act (ESPA) through regulation and an active Conservation Program focused on actions necessary to bring listed species to the point where measures within the ESPA are no longer needed. Changes to the 2025 Endangered and Threatened Species List bring the number of State-listed species to 501 (including 329 plant species). All Illinois T&E species are included as SGCN in the SWAP including nearly 40% of all wildlife SGCN (172 of 448 species). Projects currently funded through the SWG Program provide information and/or habitat management to 58 state-listed species. **The loss of these funds would immediately reduce the ability of the Endangered and Threatened Species Program to provide conservation benefit to 58 species.**

Natural Areas Program

The Natural Areas Program is focused on maintaining and updating information in the Illinois Natural Areas Inventory and using it to promote the conservation of Natural Heritage Features across the Illinois landscape. Natural Heritage Features include examples of high-quality natural communities, specific suitable habitat of endangered and/or threatened species, and unusual concentrations of flora and/or fauna. Conservation of these features occurs through acquisition, protection, and management actions designed to maintain or enhance their quality. Since 2021 SWG Projects have provided nearly \$4,000,000 in funding to support management actions in support of Natural Heritage Features. **The loss of these funds would reduce our capacity to conduct stewardship of Natural Areas by over \$550,000 per year (>20% to total available funding).**

Summary – People (up to 20 staff)

Some of the SWG Projects provide a small fraction (<5%) of the salaries of approximately 20 staff within the Division of Natural Heritage. Please note that the Division of Natural Heritage does not depend upon Federal funding for staff salaries so no staff are paid 100% of their salaries with these Federal Funds. Our practice has been to develop Federal funding requests that align with our ongoing State

funded work and use the Federal funds to supplement and expand the amount of work that we can accomplish (usually through contractual services agreements). Federal requests for staff time have been included in these Projects primarily only when we were requested to do so from outside of the Office of Resource Conservation.

Indiana

Indiana funds our ornithology, mammalogy, herpetology, nongame fish, aquatic mollusk, and plant programs primarily through SWG funds. If SWG funds are no longer available, each of these programs will shrink - in both projects undertaken and number of staff. We will need to fund these smaller programs by decreasing the amount of money we spend on traditional fish and wildlife management and research. Therefore, all programs conducting wildlife, fish, and plant monitoring or research will be impacted.

Iowa

Iowa has 2 Full Time Staff on SWGF funding. Their tasks include implementation of the Wildlife Action Plan and technical assistance and training to the Multiple Species Inventory and Monitoring Program (MSIM). We have full time contract employee positions at Iowa State University who implement the MSIM Program and hire approximately 25 6-month employees to collect the data each year. The rest of our SWGF funds are spent on either research projects at Universities or Contractual habitat management for State-owned lands.

We are rather successful in acquiring SWGC funds and are usually opposed to efforts to move the SWGC funding into the SWGF allotment as Iowa typically loses money under that scenario (we might not be opposed if SWGF were to fall to 50% of recent funding levels though). SWGF is also periodically used in Iowa to contribute to land protection. Current SWGC Projects include the Bumble Bee Atlas which engages with members of the public to collect data, Bat surveys (again utilizing volunteers to set up acoustic monitoring units or drive the routes) and habitat management for bats on private lands (matching funds from habitat on public lands), a MSIM Mapping project to create predictive habitat models for our SGCN based on the Multiple Species Inventory and Monitoring Program Data, a project evaluating habitat in urban yards enrolled in an NGO's backyard habitat program compared to yards in the same neighborhoods that are not enrolled in such a program and interviewing homeowners, landscape companies, and city officials to determine if there are other things needed to encourage habitat for pollinators in city limits, and a project to continue installing Motus towers and tag Wood thrush while implementing habitat management (invasive species removal and replacement with native shrubs) on public and private lands.

Traditional Section 6 funding is used to conduct White-nose Syndrome surveys, acoustic bat surveys, eastern massasauga telemetry, Bumble bee surveys and other contractual projects. Competitive Section 6 funding has contributed to several land protection projects, particularly to protect areas that support listed bat species.

Kansas

Information not provided

Kentucky

Information not provided

Michigan

In 2024, Michigan received ~\$1.5 million from SWG funding; Michigan uses this funding to help recover state and federal endangered and threatened wildlife. This funding is annually appropriated, and so is more at risk of being cut. Michigan also relies on the competitive SWG program, and we have been extremely successful in working with partners to bring additional funding to Michigan. These funding sources have been around since 2002 and have had bi-partisan support for the life of the State Wildlife Grants program.

Over the past couple of years, the DNR has used SWG funding to:

- Restore over 12,500 acres of habitat for rare and common wildlife.
- Survey and monitor grassland, coastal, and interior wetland birds, as well as rare butterflies/pollinators.
- Develop proactive strategies and partnerships for the conservation of species of greatest conservation need, including 7 federally listed species.
- Maintain the state's Natural Heritage Database to provide up-to-date information on rare wildlife to support effective decision-making.
- Build and maintain a multitude of partnerships across Michigan that get work done on the ground; these partners include: land conservancies, zoos, universities, private landowners, and industry.

cSWG grants have offered the DNR an opportunity to augment our efforts for rare wildlife; projects from the past couple of years have included:

- Working with states across the Midwest and local partners on the conservation of rare turtles such as Blanding's, spotted, and wood turtles.
- Conducting surveys across the state for rare pollinators.
- Developing tools for the entire Midwest to support the proactive conservation actions.
- Surveying rare peatlands across the upper Midwest to examine their health; healthy peatlands can support carbon sequestration.

Traditional Section 6 (endangered species) funds (~\$75-90K annually) were used to restore and maintain approximately 640 acres of oak savanna habitat for Karner blue butterfly populations and to monitor Karner blue populations and habitat conditions on 220 acres of potential and occupied habitat at the Allegan SGA in 2024. These habitats are also important for deer, turkey, and other more common wildlife.

Competitive Section 6 funds were used for a partnership with Southwest Michigan Land Conservancy (SWMLC) for SWMLC to acquire, protect, and maintain approximately 447 acres of Eastern massasauga habitat, including 110 acres of eastern prairie fringed orchid habitat, in Cass County in 2024.

Minnesota

Projects: Native Fish research, Mussel distribution and reintroduction efforts, upper Midwest turtle conservation, peatland rare insect inventory, Bee atlas, achieving timber rattlesnake recovery plan goals...

Functions: SWAP coordination with partners and implementation of conservation projects to benefit SGCN, Biological Survey (Natural Heritage Inventory including zoologists and data managers), habitat enhancement for SGCN and connectivity, response monitoring (spp and habitat response to management), SGCN data analysis and application, Species status evaluation and updates (sRanking and writing species accounts), outreach and engagement regarding vulnerable species conservation.

Missouri

Information not provided

Nebraska

SUMMARY

In President Trump's proposed budget for FY26, important funding sources for at-risk species (State Wildlife Grants [SWG], Section 6, Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Fund, and North American Wetland Conservation Act [NAWCA]) are currently cut from the proposed budget. Because each state's nongame programs use these funds differently, the MAFWA Wildlife Diversity Technical Committee requested each state to compile the list of projects/work that would either be lost or need to be funded through alternative means if these funding programs no longer exist. This list will be summarized and presented at the Director's meeting in June.

In Nebraska, we use Formula and State Wildlife Grant dollars to fund 17 positions, conduct research projects on at-risk species (16 active projects), provide cost share and technical assistance on habitat projects, and maintain two tools aimed at streamlining processes and tracking records of at-risk species. If this program was lost, this work would need to either be funded through alternative methods or lost entirely. This assessment does not include temporary positions, research projects, and habitat work that could be funded with future federal nongame conservation funds.

POSITIONS

Currently, Nebraska funds or partially funds 17 positions (7 staff, 10 partner) using State Wildlife Grant Dollars.

ADMINISTRATIVE PROGRAMS OFFICER

NGPC Fulltime Permanent (partially funded with SWG)

Duties: Oversees the financial accounting of numerous grant programs including SWG.

BAT BIOLOGIST

NGPC Fulltime Temporary (100% SWG funded)

Duties: Coordinates and facilitates the North American Bat Monitoring Program for Nebraska.

COORDINATING WILDLIFE BIOLOGIST (9 POSITIONS)

Fulltime Partner Positions [Northern Prairies Land Trust, Pheasants Forever, Bird Conservancy of the Rockies] (partially funded with SWG)

Duties: Based in or near Biologically Unique Landscapes, our state's conservation opportunity areas, to meet with and provide technical assistance to private landowners interested in managing their land to benefit wildlife populations.

DATA HERITAGE SPECIALIST

NGPC Fulltime Permanent (100% SWG funded)

Duties: This position maintains and files data requests for the Natural Heritage Database, the database containing all element occurrences of species of greatest conservation need.

FEDERAL AID ADMINISTRATOR

NGPC Fulltime Permanent (partially funded with SWG)

Duties: Oversees and reviews federal grant applications to ensure their compliance with federal regulations and serves as a liaison between the state and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

HERITAGE DATA TECHNICIAN

NGPC Fulltime Permanent (100% SWG funded)

Duties: This position collects and enters data for the Natural Heritage Database.

NONGAME BIRD BIOLOGIST

Audubon Fulltime (mostly funded with SWG)

Duties: Assists in the development and interpretation of nongame bird research projects across the state.

PIPING PLOVER BIOLOGIST

NGPC part-time (100% Section 6 funded)

Duties: Monitor Piping Plovers and Least Terns, compile and manage data, prepare annual reports and conducts sophisticated demographic analyses using long-term mark-recapture dataset.

POLLINATOR BIOLOGIST

NGPC Fulltime Permanent (mostly funded with SWG)

Duties: Oversees numerous community science programs including the Monarch and Regal Fritillary surveys, Nebraska Bumble Bee Atlas, and Nebraska Big Butterfly Count.

WILDLIFE DIVERSITY BIOLOGIST

NGPC Fulltime Permanent (100% SWG funded)

Duties: This position assists with the development, implementation, and promotion of the Nebraska Natural Legacy Project, our State Wildlife Action Plan.

RESEARCH PROJECTS

Nebraska uses some of the state's formula State Wildlife Grant apportionment to conduct various research projects. The state has also been very successful in applying for Competitive State Wildlife Grants to fund at-risk wildlife research; these funds provide opportunities to collaborate with

neighboring states to conduct research at larger scales. Below is a list of projects currently funded by these grant programs.

BIRD AND BAT MIGRATION STUDY

Competitive State Wildlife Grant

Partners: University of Nebraska at Omaha, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, Iowa State University, Northern Prairies Land Trust

Description: This project will deploy eight Motus stations along the Missouri River to evaluate migratory timing and behavior of at-risk birds and bats. These stations will contribute to a larger Motus network of over 2,000 stations in 34 countries.

DECISION MAKING TOOL FOR AT-RISK FISH CONSERVATION

Formula State Wildlife Grant

Partners: University of Wisconsin La Crosse

Description: This project is developing a decision-making tool for making informed conservation decisions to benefit at-risk species. This tool is currently being developed for Plains Topminnow, an at-risk fish species in Nebraska.

FISH DISTRIBUTION MODELING USING EDNA

Competitive State Wildlife Grant

Partners: University of Nebraska – Lincoln

Description: This project uses novel techniques (environmental DNA analysis) to survey for the presence of at-risk fish species in the state. If proven effective, this process could revolutionize stream fish monitoring in Nebraska.

FRESHWATER MUSSEL PROPAGATION AND MONITORING

Competitive State Wildlife Grant

Partners: University of Nebraska – Lincoln, Wyoming Game and Fish Department, South Dakota Game, Fish, and Parks, University of South Dakota, South Dakota State University

Description: Beginning in 2016, Nebraska began propagating and reintroducing freshwater mussels. This project continues these propagation efforts, evaluates the success of previous reintroductions, and assesses the current distribution of freshwater mussels across Nebraska, South Dakota, and eastern Wyoming.

HABITAT NEEDS OF STREAM FISH IN THE NEBRASKA SANDHILLS

Formula State Wildlife Grant

Partners: University of Nebraska – Lincoln

Description: This project surveyed the current distribution of at-risk fish in the Sandhills and is using occupancy modeling to determine fish-habitat relationships.

HERPETOFAUNA SURVEYS

Formula State Wildlife Grant

Description: Statewide herpetofauna surveys have been conducted in recent years to evaluate the status and trends of amphibian and reptile populations in the state.

IMPACTS OF BARRIERS ON PRAIRIE STREAM FISH

Formula State Wildlife Grant

Partners: University of Nebraska – Lincoln

Description: This study evaluated the impacts of anthropogenic barriers (i.e., culverts) on at-risk fish movement. In 2025, Nebraska submitted a competitive SWG application to expand on these efforts to compare fish movement patterns in channelized and unchannelized systems. The availability of funding from that grant program for FY25 is unknown.

LONG-BILLED CURLEW SURVEYS

Formula State Wildlife Grant

Description: Surveys are conducted every 5-10 years to monitor Long-billed Curlew populations.

LONGSPUR SURVEYS

Formula State Wildlife Grant

Description: Using a conservation strategy developed in 2022, this project involved nest surveys and banding of longspurs. Information from this study will be used to identify small-scale habitat preferences of and potential threats to these species.

MONARCH AND REGAL FRITILLARY SURVEYS

Formula State Wildlife Grant

Description: Beginning in 2016 and revised in 2020, this community science project has been used to monitor populations of Monarchs and Regal Fritillaries across eastern Nebraska.

NEBRASKA BIG BUTTERFLY COUNT SURVEYS

Formula State Wildlife Grant

Partners: Nebraska Master Naturalists

Description: This community science project began in 2024 to monitor butterfly populations across the state.

NEBRASKA BUMBLE BEE ATLAS SURVEYS

Competitive State Wildlife Grant

Partners: Xerces Society, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, Iowa State University, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, University of Minnesota, Missouri Department of Conservation

Description: Continuing the Nebraska Bumble Bee Atlas which began in 2019, this community science project monitors bumble bee populations across four states. The partnership submitted a competitive state wildlife grant in 2025 to continue these efforts and analyze the data to produce a management plan for these species; however, the availability of funding from that grant program for FY25 is unknown.

NORTH AMERICAN BAT MONITORING PROGRAM

Formula State Wildlife Grant

Description: This community science supported project monitors bat populations across Nebraska as they continue to decline from various threats.

PINYON JAY MONITORING

Formula State Wildlife Grant

Description: This project aims to monitor Pinyon Jay populations in western Nebraska to identify key habitats for conservation.

SPOTTED SKUNK SURVEYS

Formula State Wildlife Grant

Partners: University of Nebraska at Omaha

Description: This study surveys for declining populations of Plains Spotted Skunks across Nebraska.

WESTERN NEBRASKA BIRD SURVEYS

Formula State Wildlife Grant

Description: A variety of surveys from Breeding Bird Survey routes and Raptor nest surveys are being conducted to assess bird populations in an understudied part of the state.

CAPTIVE REARING AND REINTRODUCTION PROGRAM FOR SALT CREEK TIGER BEETLE

Section 6

Partners: University of Nebraska - Lincoln, Henry Doorly Zoo, Lincoln Children's Zoo, Topeka Zoo, City of Lincoln, Lower Platte South Natural Resources District

Description: The project aims to produce 700 lab-reared SCTB for reintroduction, survey site conditions and monitor introduced SCTB, conduct annual census of known wild SCTB populations.

PIPING PLOVER RESEARCH PROJECT

Section 6

Partners: University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Tern and Plover Conservation Partnership, various sand and gravel companies and lakeshore housing developments.

Description: A few small Section 6 grants have funded Piping Plover monitoring and various analyses that have resulted in peer-reviewed publications (including at least two still in review).

HABITAT WORK

Nebraska has taken the approach that conserving habitat will protect the largest suite of at-risk wildlife populations in the state. Because Nebraska is over 97% privately owned, collaborations with private landowners are necessary for conservation to be successful. Most of this work is made possible through Public/Private partnerships (state, federal, NGOs) and by leveraging funding to help complete habitat work. Because habitat alterations can be expensive, the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission uses a combination of federal and state funding (including State Wildlife grants) to provide cost-share and technical assistance on private lands habitat projects. Through these efforts, land management practices benefit both working lands and wildlife populations and, since 2005, over 500,000 acres have been managed using nongame funding.

NORTH AMERICAN WETLAND CONSERVATION ACT FUNDING

Ducks Unlimited has used NAWCA funds to complete over 100,000 acres of habitat work in wetlands and uplands across Nebraska. DU also has over 8,000 acres of conservation easements along the North Platte River and has completed restoration projects on all of these properties and more. Additionally, they have two NAWCA grants awaiting award that would cover an additional 8,900 acres.

TOOLS

CONSERVATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW TOOL (CERT)

Formula State Wildlife Grant

The CERT was developed to streamline the environmental review, a required process due to the Nebraska Nongame and Endangered Species Conservation Act. Approximately 2,000 projects are reviewed through the tool each year to assess the need for additional consultation. This tool has

been enhanced with competitive state wildlife grant funds and maintained through formula state wildlife grant funds. Loss of this streamlined process would require manual review by a limited number of staff, resulting in delays to numerous projects across the state. These projects include those by state agency staff and conservation partners along with the Department of Transportation, private industry, landowners, and others.

NATURAL HERITAGE DATABASE

Formula State Wildlife Grant

The Natural Heritage Database maintains a comprehensive list of over 26,000 element occurrences of at-risk species and natural communities identified in the Nebraska Natural Legacy Project. This database is managed by the Natural Heritage Program through a subscription with Biotics, funded by formula state wildlife grants.

Land Acquisition

SALT CREEK TIGER BEETLE PROPERTY IN LANCASTER COUNTY

With Section 6 funding, the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission assisted with the acquisition of a 154-acre property north of the city of Lincoln. This acquisition includes 85 acres of wetland/floodplain conservation for the federally endangered Salt Creek Tiger Beetle. An additional 1,147 acres have been acquired since 2004 using Section 6 funding. Many of these acres are active working lands for cattle grazing. A developing project intends to use Section 6 funds to assess the impacts of grazing on Salt Creek Tiger Beetle habitat; such a project will not be possible without these funds.

RECOVERY LAND ACQUISITION FOR WETLAND HABITAT CONSERVATION IN KANSAS AND NEBRASKA

Using Section 6 funding, Ducks Unlimited is acquiring 292 acres of land to support Whooping Crane and Black Rail recovery efforts.

North Dakota

SWG

- funding for 2 full time positions that manage SWG funds
- 1-2 SWAP related research projects a year
- 1-2 Habitat Management Projects for SWAP species each year

Section 6

- 50-100k of funding for T&E species research in ND yearly

*These two programs are responsible for the vast majority of the nongame conservation program for the North Dakota Game and Fish Dept.

Specific projects over the last five years include:

SWG

Freshwater Mussel Surveys
American Toad Surveys
Grassland Protection Program Development
Grassland Bird Response to Livestock Grazing

Section 6

Bat Use of Bridges and Culverts
Dakota Skippers and other Butterfly Surveys
White-nose Syndrome Surveys
Pollinator and Associated Habitat Surveys

Small Mammal Survey of Turtle Mountains
Amphibian Surveys of WMAs
Long Billed Curlew Surveys
Riparian Habitat Protection Agreements

Ohio

Ohio doesn't have dedicated state funding for conservation of non-game wildlife. So, the majority of Ohio's SWG apportionment funds an ongoing research partnership at Ohio State University. Projects include captive breeding and population augmentation for rare species such as the Blanding's turtle, spotted turtle, hellbender, and plains gartersnake. These species are under review by FWS for listing so improving their survivorship is critical for keeping them off the federal list. This funding essentially provides capacity for the Ohio Division of Wildlife as we don't have a herpetologist on staff. If SWG is unfunded, this long-term partnership will dissolve leaving conservation work undone.

South Dakota

Information not provided

Wisconsin

1. Wisconsin's Formula State Wildlife Grant

1.1 Funding and Staffing

- The current FSWG runs through SFY24/25, consisting of \$1,056,326 in state match and \$1,961,741 in federal funds. Our SFY26/27 proposed budget consists of \$1,076,625 in state match and \$1,990,161 in federal funds.
- FSWG supports nine full-time equivalent (FTE) employees in our Field Operations Section. In addition, approximately 30 Limited Term Employees (LTE) and 13 other FTEs contribute to FSWG-funded projects summarized below, meaning that *2/3 of the Wisconsin DNR Natural Heritage Conservation staff are funded in-part by FSWG*.
- FSWG supports 8 Citizen-based Monitoring (CBM) projects where staff recruit, train and retain volunteers to collect observation data on various taxonomic groups including the majority of WI's SGCN. Thousands of members of the public are engaged and donate tens of thousands of hours of their time every year, creating an active, engaged and supportive public that provides orders of magnitude more quality data than staff have the capacity to collect on their own.
- In addition to providing critical support for staff and volunteers, approximately 20% of the total FSWG budget (i.e., federal plus state match), goes directly to the private sector through contracted services (e.g., grassland mowing) and supply purchases.
- Wisconsin's FSWG projects are implemented in all eight of the state's Congressional Districts.

- Without FSWG funds 2/3 of this work would not be possible and staff cuts would be required because no equivalent alternative source of funds exists. The department would lose relevancy and public engagement.

1.2 Projects Carried Out through FSWG

Aquatic invertebrate inventory and monitoring

- Targets: mussels, dragonflies and beetles
- Description: 2 types of surveys and 1 CBM project
- CBM project: [WI Mussel Monitoring Program](#)
- Benefit: Mussels help to maintain water quality. Aquatic insects are prey for all fish.

Reptile and amphibian inventory and monitoring

- Targets: eastern massasauga rattlesnake, wood turtle, Blanchard's cricket frog, ornate box turtle, wood turtle, snakes, river turtles, herptile disease
- Description: 7 types of surveys, wood turtle nest site protection and 3 CBM projects
- CBM Projects: [WI Frog and Toad Survey](#), [WI Turtle Conservation Program](#), WI Salamander Survey (coming soon)
- Benefit: Reptiles and amphibians serve as both predators and prey and help to control insect and other potential pest populations.

Mammal inventory and monitoring

- Targets: bats, small mammals, American marten
- Description: 4 types of bat acoustic and hibernacula surveys, bat white-nose syndrome monitoring, 1 type of small mammal surveys (mice, shrews and voles) in habitats with no or little prior surveys, 2 CBM projects
- CBM Projects: [WI Acoustic Bat Monitoring](#), [WI Summer Bat Roost Monitoring](#)
- Benefit: Bats are important consumers for agricultural, forestry and human pest insects. It is estimated that bats in Wisconsin save farmers up to \$658 million every year in the form of pest control services. Small mammals play a significant ecological role by serving as a vital food source for a wide range of predators, including snakes, hawks, owls, and other carnivores. They also contribute to nutrient cycling, seed dispersal and soil aeration.

Terrestrial invertebrate inventory and monitoring

- Targets: native butterflies, moths and bumble bees
- Description: Surveys to monitor existing populations and at sites with little or no prior information, 2 CBM projects
- CBM projects: [WI Bumble Bee Brigade](#), [WI Karner Volunteer Monitoring Program](#)
- Benefits: Increased knowledge; timber and food production.

Habitat restoration

- Targets: prairie, oak woodland, oak savanna, oak and pine barrens (i.e. fire-dependent ecosystems)
- Description: vegetation management, invasive species control and native seeding of at least 500 acres on State Natural Areas where traditional habitat management funding is not available.

- Benefits: State natural areas (SNAs) protect outstanding examples of Wisconsin's native landscape of natural communities, significant geological formations and archeological sites. Wisconsin's natural areas are valuable for research and education, recreation and tourism, the preservation of genetic and biological variation and for determining the impact of land management.

Data and web support

- Description: maintenance and operation of three databases and applications that include Natural Heritage Inventory (NHI) database and application for rare species, Aquatic and Terrestrial Resource Inventory (ATRI) that is the repository for some CBM projects; and other CBM databases: reptiles, amphibians, and aquatic invertebrates.
- Benefits: The Natural Heritage Inventory (NHI) database is the only comprehensive source of rare species data for Wisconsin and is mandated by state statute. These data are used for research, land management, state land master planning, community planning, conservation planning, review of public and private activities across the state and conservation of SGCN and their habitats. The NHI Portal is available to DNR staff and certified reviewers outside the DNR.

Technical Consultation

- Description: Provide technical assistance, training, review to public and private sector individuals, landowners, organizations and businesses to assist with conservation decisions, habitat and species planning and management.
- Benefits: Private and public sector customers make better decisions and experience more successful outcomes that directly and indirectly benefit Wisconsin's native species and habitats. Annual assistance to at least 200 individuals; 60 projects; 6 organizations and 4 conservation plans.

2. Wisconsin's Competitive State Wildlife Grants

Wisconsin has successfully competed for many CSWGs. Examples from the last five years are summarized below. CSWG projects in our state are of two general types: filling information needs and habitat restoration for species of greatest conservation need. All current CSWGs involve at least one partner state.

Wisconsin Landowner Incentive Program. Wisconsin's Landowner Incentive Program has been supported through CSWG grants for the last 10 years, providing technical and financial assistance to individual private landowners and land trusts.

A Watershed Approach to Population Research and Augmentation of Declining Mussels in the Fox River Watershed of Illinois and Wisconsin (Federal \$149,245 State \$52,225). 65% for external subrecipient or contracted services and supplies.

Upper Midwest Turtle Conservation (Federal \$191,742 State \$68,353). 9% for external subrecipient or contracted services and supplies

Peatland Rare Insect Surveys: Targeting Pollinators and other SGCN Insects Across Minnesota, Wisconsin and Michigan (Federal \$247,077 State \$82,361). 5% for external subrecipient or contracted services and supplies

Improving Open Landscapes to Benefit SGCN in Southeastern Wisconsin and Northeastern Illinois
(Federal \$250,000 State \$84,950). 84% for external subrecipient or contracted services and supplies

Habitat Enhancement for Species of Greatest Conservation Need in Conservation Areas of Minnesota and Wisconsin (Federal \$250,000 State \$83,334). 100% for external subrecipient or contracted services and supplies

Sending this document through WordClouds.com provided a summary of 1,135 words with State being the most common, followed by Species, Conservation, Wildlife, and Projects. The output is shown as a turtle below:

