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Early Efforts

Public involvement in the development of Arkansas' Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy

Congress identified eight required elements to be addressed in the comprehensive wildlife conservation strategy (CWCS). The strategy must identify and be focused on the “species in greatest need of conservation,” yet address the “full array of wildlife” and wildlife-related issues. Congress also affirmed in legislation that broad public participation is an essential element of developing and implementing these plans, the projects that are carried out while these plans are developed, and the Species in Greatest Need of Conservation that Congress has indicated such programs and projects are intended to emphasize. This section describes how Arkansas has involved the public in the development of its strategy and summarizes public input.

Public involvement goals

The broad goals for involving the public in the planning process are threefold:

- To produce a set of conservation priorities for Arkansas that will serve as a blueprint for strategic investments and activities that reflect the public interest regarding conservation.
- To build partnerships with agencies, organizations and businesses with an interest in and capacity to conserve wildlife and habitat, in order to improve the quality of the strategy and increase the level of commitment to and ownership of the implementation.
- To inform the public about the planning process and provide opportunities for them to share ideas in order to recruit new constituencies for conservation actions.

The goal is not to reach consensus on every plan element within the limited time available for the process. The most important outcome will be for planners to understand different perspectives, allay fears where possible, and build broad-based public support. Building relationships and bringing diverse constituencies together to gain mutual understanding is a sound investment in establishing trust that will pay off in streamlining future decisions.

The early communications efforts included news releases (pages 1616-23), a brochure (pages 1624-25), a website (pages 1626-27) and a powerpoint presentation (Appendix 5.2, pages 1851-1880).



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Lincoln speaks in favor of conservation funding



Sen. Blanche Lincoln

WASHINGTON D.C. - As the 108th Congress convenes, funding for conservation programs is at the top of the list for Sen. Blanche Lincoln, D-Ark. Lincoln said last week that increased funding provides states with the resources critically needed for wildlife conservation and restoration efforts.


Congress is debating whether to reduce funding for conservation programs. If passed, the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission could lose some grant money, compared to last year's funding level, under the FY 2003 Interior Department appropriations bill headed for a vote in the U.S. Senate.

The Senate bill would cut the state wildlife grants to \$45 million this year, down from the \$100 million included in the Senate's original version of the legislation and the \$85 million actually appropriated in FY 2002.

On the floor of the Senate, Lincoln said the loss of the funds would endanger many programs. "These funds will enable the states to proactively plan and implement their wildlife management strategies for game and nongame species in cooperation with landowners to their mutual benefit," she said. Lincoln added that she would ask the managers of the bill "to give serious consideration to significantly increase the funding for this critical program."

In Arkansas, the proposed funding amount would be less than half from a year ago, according to the AGFC's grants administrator Kris Rutherford. "Basically, this would mean that Arkansas would receive an apportionment of about \$450,000 out of this round of grants. This is half of last year's \$906,000 out of state wildlife grants and even less than our Wildlife Conservation and Restoration Program apportionment of \$565,000 from two years ago," Rutherford said.

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The bill under consideration does not allow education or recreation-related projects, so the AGFC may have severe federal funding cuts to research and habitat restoration projects. This would include those species that do not normally receive funding consideration under traditional federal aid programs.

A few examples of AGFC projects that were funded with last year's grant money that could be affected by the reduced funding include studies on habitat change on the Arkansas and White Rivers, an endangered bat monitoring project and a study of songbirds.

The state wildlife grant program was part of a compromise measure Congress authorized in 2001, in what at the time was called a compromise for not passing the Conservation and Reinvestment Act (CARA) that would have guaranteed annual conservation funding of \$2 billion, the majority of it flowing directly to the states and local communities.

#



Arkansas OUTDOORS

News from the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission

June 11, 2003

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Lincoln champions state wildlife grant funding



Blanche Lincoln accepting an award from "Teaming with Wildlife"


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WASHINGTON, D.C. - Senator Blanche Lincoln has again championed full funding for State Wildlife Grants.

She joined Senator Warner (D-VT) and Representatives Jim Saxton (R-NJ) and Mike Thompson (D-CA), in initiating "dear colleague" letters that attracted bipartisan support by 32 Senate members and 73 House members for a \$125 million FY04 appropriation for State Wildlife Grants.

Senator Mark Pryor signed on to the Lincoln-Warner letter and Representatives Vic Snyder, Faye Boozman and Mike Ross signed on the Saxton-Thompson letter. This important new funding is in addition to that for game species and sport fish, and would amount to nearly \$1 million to the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission for nongame species.

Senator Lincoln, along with the other leaders, received an award at a recent Teaming With Wildlife Summit in Washington, DC. AGFC deputy director David Goad attended and presented information on Arkansas' use of State Wildlife Grants funding.



A lifelong proponent of wildlife conservation, Senator Lincoln said “State-based conservation is important because it helps preserve wildlife and the outdoors for our children and our children’s children. I’m pleased to work each year on behalf of the many wildlife conservation programs that depend on these vital U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service funds.”

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Congress gives boost to state's wildlife programs



Sen. Blanche Lincoln

LITTLE ROCK - New federal funds amounting to \$718,409 will flow into Arkansas as its 2004 share of State Wildlife Grants, the nation's core program for preventing wildlife from becoming endangered.


The funding is within the Interior Appropriations Bill, signed by President Bush on Nov. 10, according to Sen. Blanche Lincoln. "As an advocate for the outdoors and an avid sportswoman myself, I recognize the importance of promoting and preserving wildlife along with Arkansas' rich tradition of outdoor recreation," Lincoln said. "Wildlife and our nation's lands and waters are the foundation for our outdoor recreation as well as the ecosystems in which we survive. These important grants will protect our ability to hunt,

fish, and pursue outdoor activities for years to come," she added.

"We're grateful for the efforts of our Congressional delegation and our many supporters in securing a victory for wildlife during these difficult budget times," said Scott Henderson, AGFC Director. "Putting these dollars to work now will save taxpayers money in the future. It's much cheaper and more successful to keep wildlife off the Endangered Species List," he explained.

Congress awarded \$70 million to State Wildlife Grants, a \$10 million increase above the President's budget request and \$5 million above the 2003 allocation.

Seventy-three members of the House of Representatives and 33 Senators signed letters seeking a substantial increase in funding. Congressmen Boozman, Ross and Snyder supported full funding for State Wildlife Grants (as an appropriator Congressman Berry typically does not sign on to funding initiatives). Senators Lincoln and Pryor supported full funding for State Wildlife Grants and the Conservation Trust Fund, with Senator Lincoln again championing State Wildlife Grants by co-authoring a Dear Colleague letter with Senator Warner (R-VA).



A coalition of 3000 groups called Teaming With Wildlife has been instrumental in gaining key bipartisan support for State Wildlife Grants. Coalition members range from sportsmen and women to birdwatchers and outdoor-related businesses.

Only in its fourth year, State Wildlife Grants are providing critical funding for hundreds of species in Arkansas not hunted or fished for. Like most states, the AGFC was funded chiefly through sportsmen and women's dollars from hunting and fishing license sales and excise taxes on gear—not enough to safeguard the full spectrum of wildlife and the habitats they depend on. With passage of the 1/8 cent Conservation Sales Tax, and funding from State Wildlife Grants AGFC can focus additional effort on species of greatest conservation need.

The new funds for conserving declining species require a match that stretches federal taxpayer dollars and in Arkansas has led to a growing number of partnerships with Arkansas Natural Heritage Commission, US Forest Service, Arkansas Nature Conservancy and others.

Projects funded so far include wildlife viewing blinds and brochures, a new book on Arkansas herpetology, Quail/Pine Blue Stem ecosystem research, nesting and habitat use by Swallow-Tailed Kites, and identification of Arkansas crayfish.

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Arkansas OUTDOORS

News from the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission

May 5, 2004

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Arkansas' congressional leaders take a stand for state's wildlife




Sen. Blanche Lincoln, Rep. Vic Snyder, Rep. Mike Ross, Sen. Mark Pryor

WASHINGTON, D.C. - In a strong show of support for America's wildlife, Sen. Blanche Lincoln, Sen. Mark Pryor, Rep. Vic Snyder, and Rep. Mike Ross joined a bipartisan group of 111 members of the U.S. House of Representatives and 52 senators in signing letters to key congressional leaders urging a substantial increase in funding for wildlife conservation. The letters, to the Chairman and Ranking Member of the Interior Appropriations Committee in both the House and Senate, support a funding level of \$100 million for the State Wildlife Grants Program in Fiscal Year 2005. Last year the program secured \$70 million in funding. The President's Fiscal Year 2005 budget proposed increasing the program to \$80 million. This letter by members of Congress recognizes the need is even greater by requesting an even greater increase. Created by Congress in 2001, the State Wildlife Grants program is the nation's core program for preventing wildlife from becoming endangered in every state. By making early strategic investments to conserve wildlife and habitat, the program helps states recover declining wildlife, saving both wildlife and taxpayer dollars and reducing costs and conflicts over endangered species listings. A matching requirement leverages federal funding from state and private sources, often doubling the impact of every dollar of federal funding. In its first few years, the program has already helped restore degraded habitat, reintroduce native species, and encourage the effective stewardship of private lands.

"We are extremely grateful to our Representatives and Senators who have joined together in this strong show of support for wildlife conservation. In a tight budget year, this bipartisan group of leaders is standing up for a program that works," Arkansas Game and Fish Commission director Scott Henderson said. "These conservation leaders have demonstrated that they are true champions for America's fish and wildlife," he added.

[Search Website](#)



The campaign for the letters was led by a bipartisan group of congressional leaders from across the nation. In the Senate, the letter was led by Senator Blanche Lincoln (D-Arkansas) and Senator John Warner (R-Virginia). In the House of Representatives by Rep. Mike Thompson (D-California), Rep. Jim Saxton (R-New Jersey), Rep. Ron Kind (D-Wisconsin) and Rep. Robin Hayes (R-North Carolina). Senator Lincoln and Representatives Thompson and Hayes are co-chairs of the Congressional Sportsmen’s Caucus, a bipartisan group of members of Congress who support hunting, fishing and conservation. This caucus, the largest in Congress, includes Representatives Kind and Saxton, Senator Warner, and many other supporters of the State Wildlife Grants letter. Teaming With Wildlife, a national coalition of more than 3000 groups representing sportsmen, environmentalists, wildlife management professionals, and outdoor-related businesses, supports the State Wildlife Grants program. Copies of the final House and Senate letters, along with additional information on the State Wildlife Grants program and the Teaming With Wildlife campaign is available at www.teaming.com.

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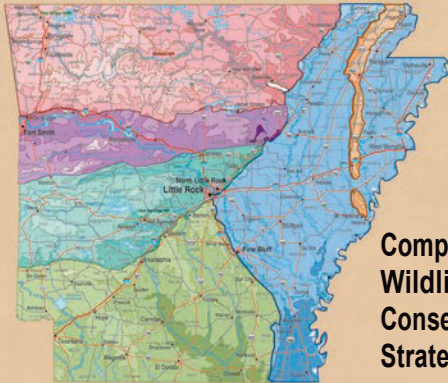
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SWG website (first version)	1626

Putting the Pieces Together for the Next Generation of Conservation

Each state strategy will create a dynamic vision for the future of wildlife conservation. To get America's wildlife on sure-footing the strategy will...

- Address the broad array of wildlife.
- Be fiscally responsible by proactively conserving



Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy

wildlife, saving taxpayer dollars, and spurring strategic investments into conservation.

- Create partnerships, so the strategy's broad perspective works through local actions and builds on past efforts for the benefit of all wildlife.
- Not introduce new regulations or constraints.
- Have the long-term goal of keeping common species common for the benefit of all Americans.

How Do I Get Involved?

This is your opportunity to shape the direction of current and future wildlife conservation efforts. State wildlife agencies will coordinate the best thinking about wildlife for their design – yet they will need your help. Your experience, expertise, and ideas are important and you should consult with your state so that your interests have been considered.

For more information

- Visit the Teaming with Wildlife at www.teaming.com. or
- Arkansas Game and Fish Commission at www.agfc.com



Marbled Salamander



Louisiana Waterthrush

On the cover
Top photo:
Rough Green Snake
Bottom photo:
Bald Eagle

This page Bottom
right: Crayfish
(*Fallicambarus*)



Red-eared Slider



Arkansas Game and Fish Commission
2 Natural Resources Drive
Little Rock, AR 72205
501-223-6300 • www.agfc.com



Designing a Future for America's Wildlife



Some Species of America's Wildlife are on Shaky Ground

More and more, there are stories about our rare animals, the troubles facing fish and wildlife, and the increasing loss of their habitat. What about in your own neighborhood or community? Have you seen a change in the landscape, fewer trees and wetlands, more houses and fewer places for wildlife?

If you have, you're not alone. Despite our efforts, America's wildlife is declining – today there are more than 6,000 wildlife species at risk of extinction.

Many Arkansans are concerned about our wildlife and recognize the need to close the gaps in wildlife conservation.



Prothonotary Warbler

We Need to Keep Common Species Common

Conservation efforts, made possible by our state's sportsmen and women, and the federal government have done much, but more needs to be done. Much has been learned from the successes and the challenges of these efforts. We now know to prevent further wildlife declines and endangerment, proactive conservation efforts built upon existing efforts are needed for the broad array of wildlife.

We Need Cost-effective Prevention of Wildlife Declines

Recovery of imperiled species is expensive and often controversial. It is more cost effective and practical to prevent their decline in the first place.



Barred Owl

We Need Innovation and Efficiency through Partnerships Working on Common Goals

Through decades of trial and error government agencies, conservation organizations, local businesses and individuals have learned that conservation cannot be achieved alone. With partnerships and cooperation, resources can be pooled and creative solutions forged to confront the complex challenges facing wildlife.

A strategy is needed for long-term wildlife conservation that articulates a clear vision for the future, while remaining locally driven, proactive, flexible, and integrated with the work of others. Today there is a unique opportunity before us to do just this...

Putting America's Wildlife on Sure-footing

The U.S. Congress has responded to the problem facing America's wildlife by enacting a visionary program to keep common species common and chart a future for wildlife conservation – State Wildlife Grants. This is the solution to America's wildlife woes, creating a new way of doing conservation business complementing the strengths of previous and ongoing efforts.

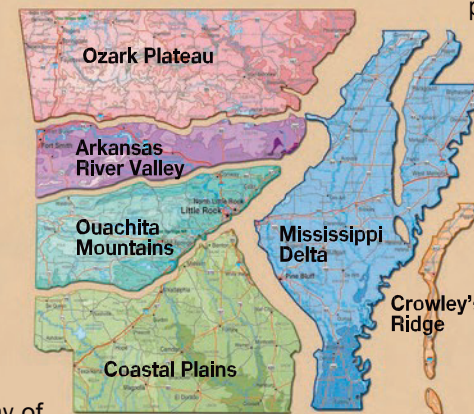
- The Arkansas Game and Fish Commission, along with all other state fish and wildlife agencies will produce a comprehensive wildlife conservation vision or strategy for their state by October 2005.

American Alligator



The intent is to focus on those wildlife species in each state with the greatest conservation need and their habitats.

- These strategies, designed uniquely for each state and eco-region, will address the threats facing the broad array of wildlife nationally with flexible and meaningful solutions. Specific actions with measurable results will be identified by each state.
- Through matching grants, federal state and private resources will be leveraged to focus on local challenges.
- Partnerships will be crucial to these strategies, so the past efforts and plans of agencies and conservation organizations can be integrated to work together and create new efficiencies. For example, the strategies will coordinate on-the-ground conservation from diverse funding sources, including State Wildlife Grants, the Farm Bill, and other programs.



Where do you fit in?

Partnerships and your input are essential to Arkansas' vision for the future conservation of your wildlife. Together these pieces form a complete picture that is the strategy.

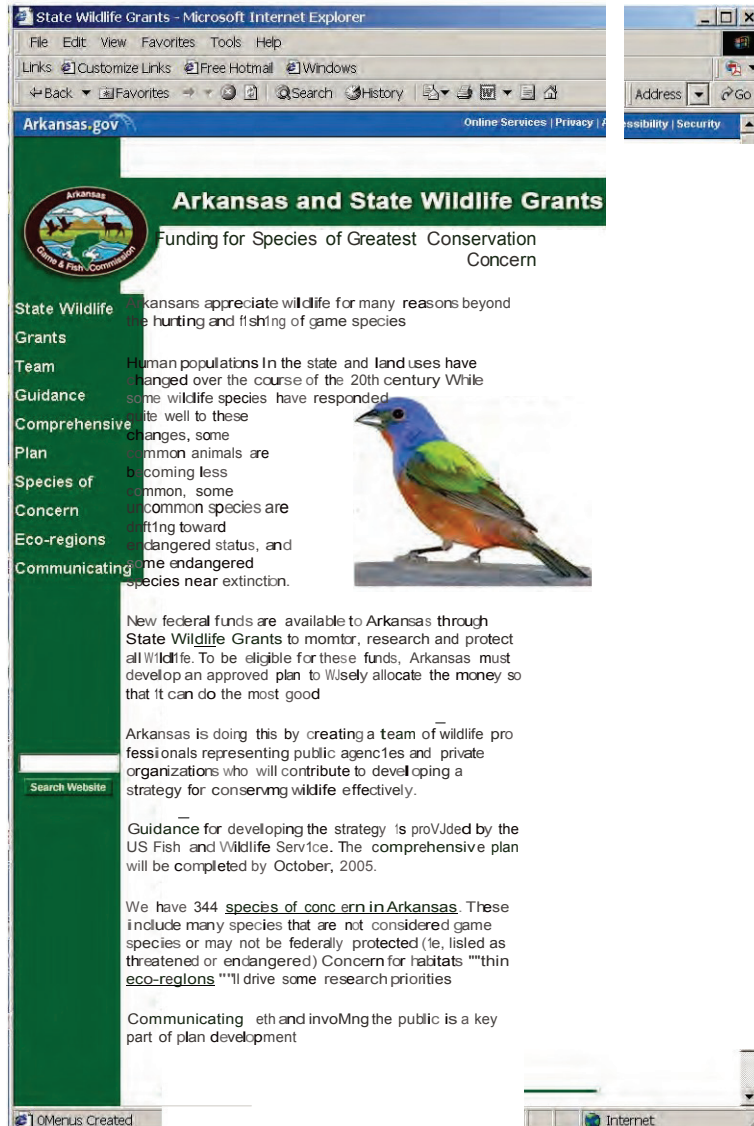
- Information: The distribution and abundance of wildlife, the condition of their habitats, the threats facing them.
- Funding: Federal, state, and private funding, including a state and private match.
- Partnerships: Federal, state, and local agencies, conservation organizations, businesses, and individuals should be involved in the development and implementation of the strategy.

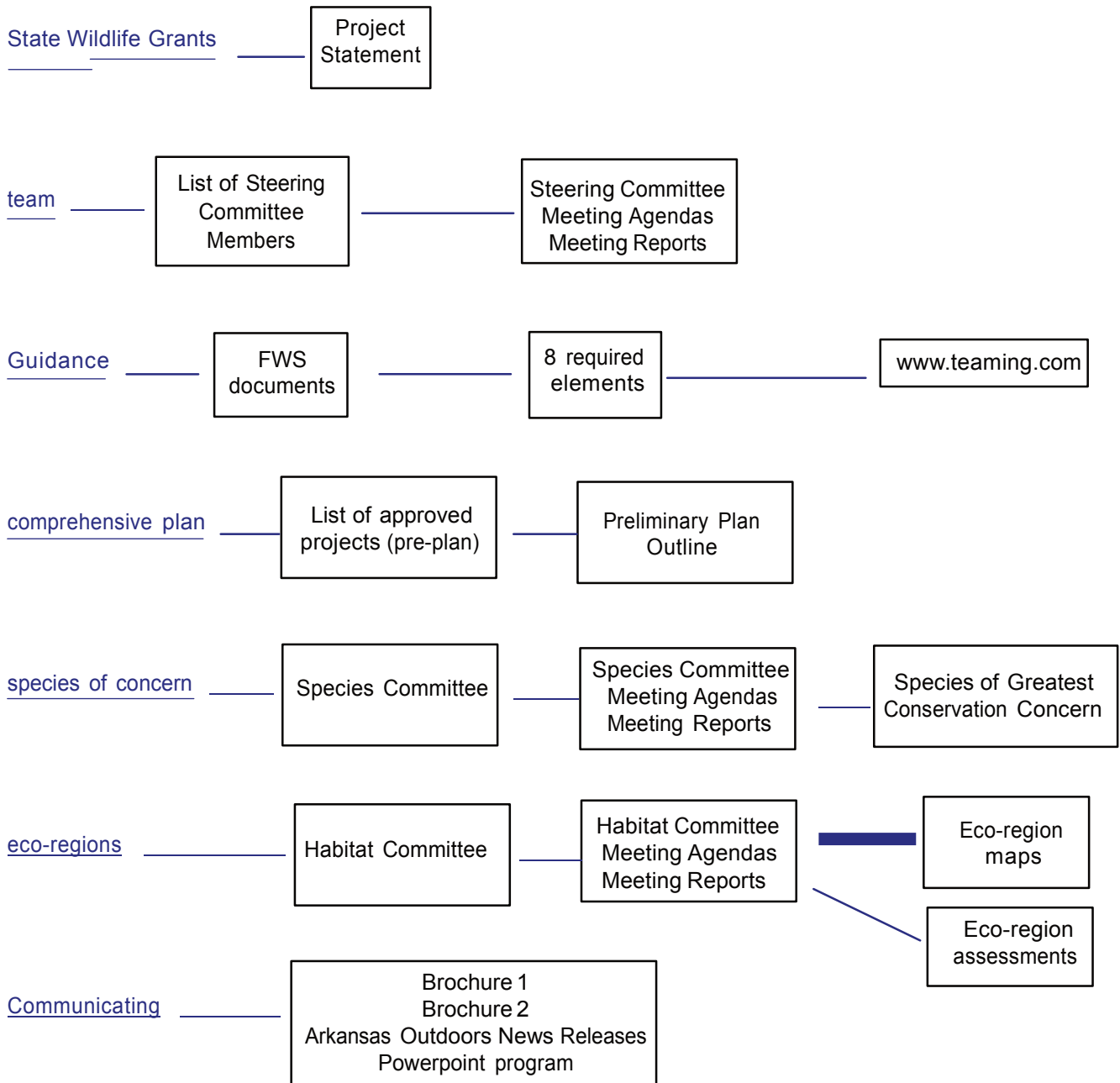


Wood Frog

Informational Website (early versions)

Arkansas maintained an informational website during the stages of strategy development. This served as an adaptable means to inform partners and public about the processes involved in creating the Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy.

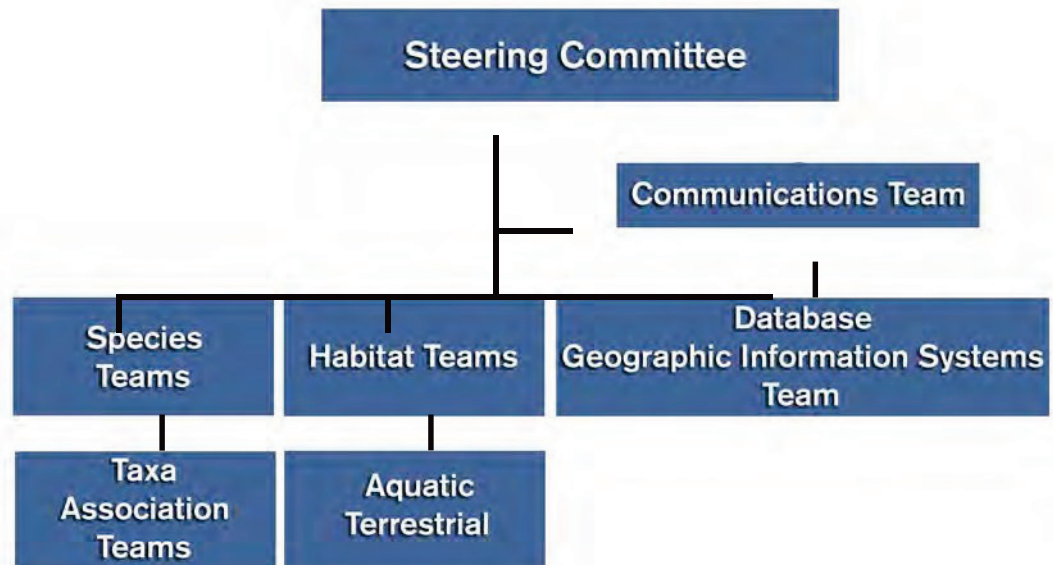




Reaching Out to the Scientific Community

Arkansas Game and Fish Commission is the lead agency for development of the Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy. Arkansas Game and Fish Commission (AGFC) began its public involvement from the outset, reaching out to agency and nonprofit partners to form a broadly representative steering committee. This steering committee in turn reached out to additional partners to create working teams of scientists and technical experts. Figure 6.1 shows the relationship of the organization of the steering committee and its work teams. Tables 6.1 and 6.2 list members of the steering committee and scientific expert teams.

Figure 6.1. CWCS Steering Committee and Work Teams.



The species and habitat teams recruited 79 scientists representing 21 institutions to review the species, ecoregion, ecobasin and habitat reports, significantly expanding both individual and institutional partnerships to carry out wildlife conservation in the decades ahead.

Table 6.1. Members of the Original Steering Committee, Species Teams and Habitat Teams.

CWCS Steering Committee Team Members

Allan Mueller	US Fish and Wildlife Service
Ken Smith	Audubon Arkansas
Bill Holimon	Arkansas Natural Heritage Commission
Doyle Shook	Arkansas Game and Fish Commission
Lucy Moreland	Arkansas Game and Fish Commission
Steve Filipek	Arkansas Game and Fish Commission
Kris Rutherford	Arkansas Game and Fish Commission
Mike Fuhr	The Nature Conservancy
Lane Patterson	The Nature Conservancy
Kay McQueen	The Nature Conservancy
Betty Crump	US Forest Service and Arkansas Academy of Sciences
Jim Baker	Natural Resources Conservation Service
John Sunderland	Arkansas Game and Fish Commission
Jeff Johnston	Arkansas Game and Fish Commission
Jane Anderson	Arkansas Game and Fish Commission

CWCS Species Team

Bill Holimon (Team Leader)	Arkansas Natural Heritage Commission
Michael Warriner	Arkansas Natural Heritage Commission
Catherine Rideout	Arkansas Game and Fish Commission
Mike Fuhr	The Nature Conservancy
Blake Sasse	Arkansas Game and Fish Commission
Kelly Irwin	Arkansas Game and Fish Commission
Bill Posey	Arkansas Game and Fish Commission
Brian Wagner	Arkansas Game and Fish Commission
Steve Filipek	Arkansas Game and Fish Commission

CWCS Habitat Team

Steve Filipek (Team Leader)	Arkansas Game and Fish Commission
Jeff Holmes	Conservation Southeast
Betty Crump	US Forest Service
Ken Smith	Audubon Arkansas
Tom Foti	Arkansas Natural Heritage Commission
Mike Fuhr	The Nature Conservancy
Bill Keith	Arkansas Department of Environmental Quality
Elizabeth Murray	Multi-Agency Wetland Planning Team

Jeff Quinn	Arkansas Game and Fish Commission
Doyle Shook	Arkansas Game and Fish Commission
Allen Clingenpeel	US Forest Service
Doug Zollner	The Nature Conservancy
Don Catenzaro	FTN Associates

CWCS Database Team

Jeff Johnston (Team Leader)	Arkansas Game and Fish Commission
Cindy Osborne	Arkansas Natural Heritage Commission
Lane Patterson	The Nature Conservancy
Kaushik Mysorekar	The Nature Conservancy
Sagar Mysorekar	The Nature Conservancy

Table 6.2. Members of Taxa Association Teams during AWAP formation.

Bird Taxa Association Team	
ANHC	Bill Holimon
USFS	Steve Duzan
USFWS	Allan Mueller
AGFC	Catherine Rideout
AGFC	Karen Rowe
Audubon Arkansas	Dan Scheiman

Mammal Taxa Association Team	
AGFC	Blake Sasse
UALR	Bob Sikes
UAM	Don White
UALR	Gary Heidt
ASU	J. D. Wilhide
HSU	Renn Tumilson
ATU	Tom Nupp
ASU	Thomas Risch
USFS	David Saugey
ASU	Stephen Brandenbura

Mussel Taxa Association Team	
AGFC	Bill Posey
USFWS-ES	Chris Davidson
ASU	Alan Christian
TNC	Doug Zollner
AHTD/ASU	John Harris

Crayfish Taxa Association Team	
AGFC	Brian Wagner

Reptile and Amphibian Taxa Association Team	
ASU	Stan Trauth
AGFC	Kelly Irwin

Fish Taxa Association Team	
AGFC	Steve Filipek
SAU	Henry Robison
UA/Ft. Smith	Tom Buchanan
AGFC	Jeff Quinn
AGFC	Brian Wagner
AGFC	Bill Posey
USFS	Betty Crump

ADEQ	Jim Wise
USFS	Alan Clingenpeel

Invertebrate Taxa Association Team

ANHC	Michael Warriner
------	------------------

Karst Species SubTeam

TNC	Tim Snell
TNC	Michael Slay
TNC	Ethan Inlander
AGFC	Brian Wagner

Reaching Out To the Public

Developing a working partnership with the Cooperative Extension Service:

In 2004, AGFC formed a working partnership with the University of Arkansas, Cooperative Extension Service to plan and implement a comprehensive public involvement strategy. The goal was to reach out to private landowners through Extension's network of 75 county offices to build state outreach capacity that would carry over into future implementation. The Cooperative Extension Service retained ComMetrics, Inc., a consulting firm with experience in leading public involvement processes, to assist in the effort. With this partnership in place, a communications team was recruited to lead the public involvement process (Table 6.3)

Table 6.3. CWCS Communications Team.

Becky McPeake	University of Arkansas, Cooperative Extension Service
Sandra Miller	ComMetrics, Inc.
Jane Anderson	Arkansas Game and Fish Commission
Elizabeth Murray	Multi-Agency Wetland Planning Team
Arlene Green	Arkansas Game and Fish Commission
Nancy Ledbetter	Arkansas Game and Fish Commission
Ellen Fennell	Audubon Arkansas
Steve Filipek	Arkansas Game and Fish Commission
Lucy Moreland	Arkansas Game and Fish Commission
Cindy Boland	University of Arkansas at Little Rock
Karen Ballard	University of Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service

Gauging Perceptions of Rural Landowners and the General Public¹

Public Opinion Survey Summary

To begin the process of engaging the public in the CWCS planning process, the communications team retained the University of Arkansas at Little Rock, Institute of Government, to conduct a public opinion survey. The objective of this survey was to gain a better understanding of two different groups' perceptions and values on species and habitat conservation, conservation practices and comprehensive planning.

Two groups were surveyed: the general population of adults over the age of 18 years and rural landowners with more than five acres. The methodology is described in the introduction to this report. The bullets below provide a quick overview of the most relevant findings. The survey instrument and report can be found in Appendix 6.2 (pages 1881-1910) or at:

<http://www.WildlifeArkansas.com/materials/cwcsfinalreport.pdf>

The majority of respondents are very interested in wild animals that live in Arkansas. Rural landowners (64%) were significantly more interested in the state's wild animals than statewide respondents (49%). When asked how important it is for Arkansans to maintain healthy populations of nongame wildlife, support remains high. Fifty-six percent of rural landowners and 60% of the general public find it very important that Arkansans maintain healthy populations of nongame wildlife, a finding that validates Congressional support for the State Wildlife Grants program.

➤ When respondents were asked how much effort should be invested in maintaining healthy populations of specific types of nongame wildlife, support varied. Birds, such as songbirds and owls, received the highest level of support with 78% of both rural landowners and the general population indicating that a lot of effort is warranted. While mammals, such as bats and field mice, received the lowest level of support, 30% of rural landowners and 35% of the general public support a lot of effort to conserve mammals. Perhaps surprisingly, support for maintaining healthy populations of insects such as butterflies and dragonflies was higher than expected with 63% of rural landowners and 61% of the general public stating that a lot of effort should be invested in maintaining healthy populations. Broad support for bird conservation sets the stage for effective public discussion of the need to coordinate conservation efforts among states up and down the Mississippi River flyway. Support for charismatic insects, such as butterflies and dragonflies, creates a firm foundation on which to build support for bees and other pollinators. Lackluster support for mammal conservation suggests the need for increased education.

➤ Respondents were asked a similar series of questions about how much effort should be invested in conserving different types of habitats. Support for a lot of effort varied from 90% of rural landowners and 89% of the general public supporting a lot of effort to maintain rivers, streams and lakes to 67% of rural landowners and 64% of the general public supporting a lot of

effort to maintain pastures, fencerows, and other agricultural lands as habitat for wildlife.

➤ Respondents were asked about the acceptability of two illustrative management practices to gauge support for different types of conservation action, prescribed burning and selective thinning of timber. Altogether, 89% of rural landowners and 88% of the general public find controlled fires to be an acceptable practice for improving wildlife habitat. Just over half of both groups find this practice to be very acceptable. Eighty percent of both groups think thinning timber tracts is an acceptable way to make wildlife habitat more suitable while not quite half — 44% of rural landowners and 39% of the general public — find thinning very acceptable. Three-quarters of both groups find it acceptable to pay private landowners to engage in practices to improve habitat.

➤ Respondents in both groups tend to be only somewhat concerned about the impact of human activities on nongame wildlife. Fifty-three percent of rural landowners and 51% of the general population are somewhat concerned. More than a third of each group is very concerned with 35% of rural landowners and 38% of the general population very concerned. These findings may disappoint some and encourage others. To be sure, they highlight the need for all of us to make the connection between our lifestyles and their impact on wildlife and critical habitats and suggest a need to find creative ways to identify practices that lessen our human footprint without reducing our quality of life.

➤ A majority of both groups of respondents, 83% of both rural landowners and the general population, support Arkansas seeking federal funding for wildlife conservation efforts and activities through the State Wildlife Grant program. However, 16% of rural landowners and 17% of the general population either oppose or are unsure about whether Arkansas should seek federal funding to conserve nongame wildlife and their habitats. A clear majority of both groups, 86% of rural landowners and 89% of the general population of adults, support efforts of the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission and its partners to develop an action plan to manage nongame wildlife with public input. About half, 50% of rural landowners and 53% of the general public, strongly support these planning efforts.

With the survey clearly demonstrating that the vast majority of Arkansans in general and rural landowners in specific supported taking action to conserve species and their habitats, the communications team moved forward to involve the public in a dialogue.

¹Survey Conducted by Survey Research Center for CWCS Institute of Government
University of Arkansas at Little Rock
2801 South University Avenue
Little Rock Arkansas 72204
Release Date: February 2005

Informing and Engaging

The communications team employed a multi-pronged, integrated strategy to inform and engage the general public, scientific peers, targeted special interest and professional groups and landowners.

“Designing A Future For Arkansas Wildlife” Website

A website was developed as a central clearinghouse for posting and soliciting public and peer comment on the draft strategy, registering the public for stakeholder meetings, and providing background information. The website was purposefully designed to meet the needs of the general public as well as scientists and technical reviewers. The website can be found at: www.WildlifeArkansas.com or through a link at the AGFC website.

Designing A Future For Arkansas Wildlife - Microsoft Internet Explorer

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Arkansas.gov KARE - Katrina Assistance Relief Effort Online Services | Privacy | Accessibility | Security

DESIGNING A FUTURE for Arkansas Wildlife

WILDLIFE CONSERVATION STRATEGY

New federal funds are available to Arkansas through [State Wildlife Grants](#) to monitor, research and protect the needs of wildlife not addressed by funding available for game species or endangered species. To be eligible for these funds, Arkansas must develop an approved strategy to wisely allocate the money.

A team of wildlife professionals representing public agencies and private organizations are contributing to the development of a strategy for conserving wildlife effectively. Guidance for developing the strategy is provided by the US Fish and Wildlife Service. The comprehensive plan will be completed by October, 2005. For meetings and events leading up to the final plan, [visit announcements](#). We have 371 species of greatest conservation need in Arkansas. These species are mostly nongame species that are not listed as endangered species, although both game species and endangered species appear on the list.

Concern for habitats within eco-regions will drive some research priorities. See also [eight Required Elements](#) and [SWG Guiding Principles](#).

You are invited to comment on the draft Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy. The draft will be posted in segments as they become available. Currently, you will find the draft list of species of greatest conservation need and a list of 45 wildlife habitats found in Arkansas. If you would like to be notified when additional sections are posted, [click here](#).

Arkansas Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Plan Outline

- [Draft Strategy Update History](#)
- [Peer Reviewer's Guide to Reports](#)

I. **Foreword** – message from Governor and DirectorA. Dedication to Blanche Lincoln

II. **Table of Contents** – plan element guide (icon and color coded)

III. **Executive Summary**

IV. **Major CWCS Database**

http://www.wildlifearkansas.com/database.html

Contacting leaders of interested organizations

A letter was sent under the signature of Scott Henderson, Director, Arkansas Game and Fish Commission to leaders of 107 key intermediary organizations that represent or provide information to individuals and landowners with an interest in species and habitat conservation. The letter introduced these key leaders to the CWCS process and invited them to submit names of individuals who could ably represent their interests in a series of stakeholder meetings. A list of the organizations who received this letter follows.

- Agricultural Council of Arkansas
- American Bass Association, Arkansas Chapter
- American Fisheries Society, Arkansas Chapter
- Arkansas Assn. of Conservation Districts
- Arkansas Cattlemen's Association
- Arkansas Chapter, Associated General Contractors
- Arkansas Dairy Cooperative Association
- Arkansas Delta Byways
- Arkansas Dept. of Environmental Quality
- Arkansas Dept. of Parks and Tourism
- Arkansas Environmental Federation
- Arkansas Farm Bureau
- Arkansas Fly Fishers
- Arkansas Forestry Association
- Arkansas Forestry Commission
- Arkansas Geological Commission
- Arkansas Great Southwest Association
- Arkansas Highway and Transportation Department
- Arkansas Home Builders Association
- Arkansas Horse Council
- Arkansas Hospitality Association
- Arkansas Land of Legends Travel Association
- Arkansas Municipal League
- Arkansas Natural Heritage Commission
- Arkansas Office of the Governor
- Arkansas Oil and Gas Commission
- Arkansas Pork Producers Association
- Arkansas Public Policy Panel
- Arkansas Rice Council
- Arkansas Rice Producers Group
- Arkansas River Valley RCandD Council
- Arkansas River Valley Tri-Peaks Region
- Arkansas Rural Water Association
- Arkansas Soil and Water Conservation Commission
- Arkansas South Tourism Association
- Arkansas State Plant Board
- Arkansas State University
- Arkansas Tech University

- Arkansas Travel Council
- Arkansas Water Resource Center
- Arkansas Wildlife Federation
- Association of Arkansas Counties
- Audubon Arkansas
- Bayou Bartholomew Alliance
- Beaver Lake Watershed Partnership
- Cache River Watershed Partnership
- Central Arkansas Planning and Development District
- Central Arkansas RCandD Council
- Central Arkansas Water
- Diamond Lakes Association
- Ducks Unlimited
- East Arkansas Planning and Development District
- East Arkansas RCandD Council
- Farm Service Agency
- Friends of North Fork/White River
- Green Bay Packaging
- Greers Ferry Lake/Little Red River Association
- Heart of Arkansas Travel Association
- Kings River Watershed Group
- Lake Fayetteville Watershed Partnership
- L'Anguille River Watershed Coalition
- Leatherwood Creek Watershed
- Little Red River Action Team
- Livestock and Poultry Commission
- Lower Little River Watershed Coalition
- National Park Service
- National Wild Turkey Federation
- Northwest Arkansas Economic Development District
- Northwest Arkansas RCandD Council
- Northwest Arkansas Tourism Association
- Ouachita Society of American Foresters
- Ouachita Watch League
- Ozark Foothills RCandD Council
- Ozark Gateway Tourist Council
- Ozark Mountain Region
- Plum Creek Timber Company
- Potlatch Corporation
- Quail Unlimited
- Razorback Chapter Soil and Water Conservation Society
- Scott County Organization to Protect the Environment
- Sierra Club, Arkansas Chapter
- Southeast Arkansas RCandD Council
- Southern Arkansas University
- Southwest Arkansas Planning and Development District
- Southwest Arkansas RCandD Council

- Soybean Promotion Board
- Strawberry River Watershed Group
- The Nature Conservancy
- The Poultry Federation
- The Wildlife Society, Arkansas Chapter
- Trout Unlimited
- University of Arkansas
- University of Arkansas at Monticello
- University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff
- University of Arkansas, Cooperative Extension Service
- Upper White River Basin Foundation
- US Fish and Wildlife Service
- US Geological Survey
- USDA Forest Service
- USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service
- West Central Arkansas Planning and Development District
- West Fork - White River Watershed
- Western Arkansas Mountain Frontier
- Western Arkansas Planning and Development District
- Weyerhaeuser
- White County Conservation District
- White River Planning and Development District
- Wildlife Management Institute

Additional contact methods

CWCS informational brochure

A general informational brochure was developed to inform rural landowners and the general public about the CWCS process, its relationship to the State Wildlife Grants program and to promote public involvement through the website. Five thousand copies of the brochure have been distributed.

Developing a mailing list of key opinion leaders

The organizations listed above, communications team and county extension agents submitted names and addresses of individuals and key opinion leaders with a stake in how habitats and wildlife are managed. These were compiled into a segmented mailing list of some 3,700 individuals.

Informational mailing to landowners

An informational mailing was sent to 2,600+ individuals, primarily landowners and members of hunting clubs who participate in the Acres for Wildlife program. This mailing included the informational brochure, an invitation to register online for one of five stakeholder meetings, and links to the website.

Invitation to participate in stakeholder meetings

Individualized letters were sent under the signature of Scott Henderson to 1100+ key opinion leaders inviting them to participate in the stakeholder meetings. These letters included the informational brochure, website address and a mail-in response card.

Email distribution list

Email addresses were collected from the website, response to the stakeholder meeting invitation and other sources to develop an email distribution list. The email distribution list was used to confirm meeting registration, send email reminders, notify individuals of updates to the website and conduct a meeting evaluation after the stakeholder meeting. The email distribution list currently includes 250 individuals.

Native American contact

Although there are no recognized tribes in the state of Arkansas, we have a rich heritage shaped by the cultural mores of the many tribes that occurred in the state and whose members still live here. A letter was sent to recognized tribes in adjoining Oklahoma.

Poster for professional meetings

For a poster session at the Partners In Flight regional meeting (or similar meetings), we created a 4 ft. x 5 ft. poster that described the CWCS planning process and relationships of scientific information to the database.

Engaging staff of key institutional partners

Institutional partnerships are most effective when county staff from different agencies decide to work together to leverage resources and coordinate technical assistance. Recognizing this, a significant component of the public involvement process was “in-reach” to local field staff of key institutional partners. To accomplish this goal, about 40 local staff from three key agencies was recruited to facilitate, record, host and staff the registration table. Staff included NRCS district conservationists, county Extension agents, and AGFC wildlife biologists and Stream Team coordinators. These individuals participated in a special briefing before the stakeholder meetings and received additional briefing materials by email.

Completing the information cycle

Feedback from the website, public meetings, public surveys and public comment was provided to the Taxa Association Teams, Habitat Teams and Peer Reviewers for their use in revising the later drafts of the CWCS database.

Following pages:

CWCS Informational Brochure	1612
Letter to leaders of organizations	1614
Informational mailing to landowner	1615
Invitation to stakeholder meeting	1616

Putting the Pieces Together for the Next Generation of Conservation

Each state strategy will create a dynamic vision for the future of wildlife conservation. To get America's wildlife on sure-footing, the strategy will...

- Address a wide variety of wildlife.
- Be fiscally responsible by proactively conserving wildlife, saving taxpayer dollars, and spurring strategic investments into conservation.
- Create partnerships, so the strategy's broad perspective works through local voluntary actions and builds on past efforts for the benefit of all wildlife.
- Have the long-term goal of keeping common species common for the benefit of all.

How Do I Get Involved?

This is your opportunity to shape the direction of current and future wildlife conservation efforts. State wildlife agencies are coordinating the best thinking about wildlife for their design and they will need your help. Your experience, expertise, and ideas are important.

For information and updates:
www.WildlifeArkansas.com

White River population of Black Bears (Rick Eastridge)



Diana Butterfly (Herschel Raney)



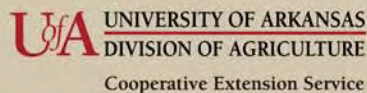
Eastern Spadefoot Toad (Suzanne L. Collins)



Designing a Future for Arkansas Wildlife

Arkansas Game and Fish Commission • 2 Natural Resources Drive • Little Rock, AR 72205
 501-223-6300 • www.agfc.com

Partners



Ivory-billed Woodpecker, by George M. Sutton/Cornell Lab of Ornithology



Arkansans Value Wildlife

Many Arkansans are concerned about our wildlife and recognize the need to close the gaps in wildlife conservation. While some wildlife species in Arkansas are prospering, such as white-tailed deer and wild turkey, many others are declining.

Have you seen a change in the landscape, fewer trees and wetlands, more houses and fewer places for wildlife to live? If you have, you're not alone.

This partnership to develop a comprehensive wildlife conservation strategy for Arkansas is seeking to achieve a balanced and practical approach to conserving our natural resources..

We Need to Prevent the Decline of our Wildlife

Conservation efforts, made possible by our state's sportsmen and women, and the federal government have done much, but more needs to be done. Much has been learned from the successes and the challenges of these efforts. We now know to prevent further wildlife declines and endangerment, proactive conservation efforts built upon existing efforts are needed for the broad array of wildlife.

We need Voluntary Actions and Cost-effective Measures

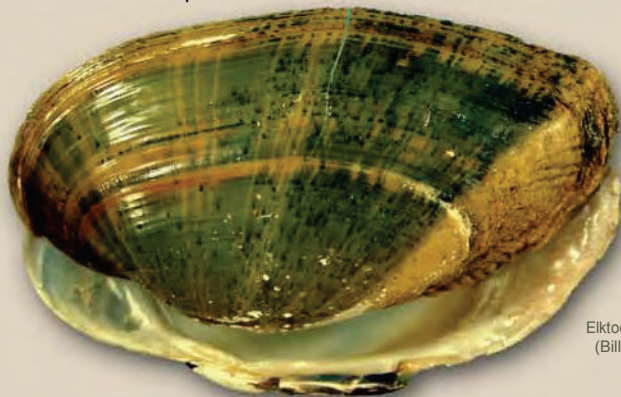
Recovery of imperiled species is expensive and often controversial. It is more cost effective and practical to prevent their decline in the first place.



Ornate box turtle
(Suzanne L. Collins)



Ozark Cave Amphipod
(Jason Gunter)



Elktoe mussel
(Bill Posey)



Rusty Blackbird
(US Fish and Wildlife Service)



Goldstripe Darter
(G.W. Sneegas)

Innovation and Efficiency through Partnerships Working Together

Through decades of trial and error government agencies, conservation organizations, local businesses and individuals have learned that conservation cannot be achieved alone. With partnerships and cooperation, resources can be pooled and creative solutions forged to confront the complex challenges facing wildlife.

A strategy is needed for long-term wildlife conservation that articulates a clear vision for the future, while remaining locally driven, proactive, flexible, and integrated with the work of others. Today there is a unique opportunity before us to do just this...

Putting America's Wildlife on Sure Footing

The U.S. Congress has responded to the problem facing America's wildlife by enacting a visionary program to keep common species common and chart a future for wildlife conservation – **State Wildlife Grants**. This is one solution to America's wildlife woes, creating a new way of doing conservation business building on the strengths of previous and ongoing efforts.

- The Arkansas Game and Fish Commission, along with its partner agencies and organizations, will produce a comprehensive wildlife conservation strategy by October 2005.

Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy

The intent is to focus on those wildlife species with the greatest conservation need and their habitats.

- The strategy, designed uniquely for Arkansas and its ecoregions, will address the problems facing wildlife with flexible and meaningful solutions. Specific actions with measurable results will be identified.
- Through matching grants, federal state and private resources will be leveraged to focus on local solutions to problems.
- Partnerships will be crucial to these strategies, so the past efforts and plans of agencies and conservation organizations can be integrated to work together and create new efficiencies. For example, the strategies will coordinate on-the-ground conservation research and work from diverse funding sources, including State Wildlife Grants, the Farm Bill and other programs.



Mississippi Valley
Loess Plains

Where do you fit in?

Partnerships and your input are essential to Arkansas' vision for the future conservation of your wildlife. Together these pieces form a complete picture that is the strategy.

- **Information:** The distribution and abundance of wildlife, the condition of their habitats, the problems facing them.
- **Funding:** Federal, state, and private funding, including a state and private match.
- **Partnerships:** Federal, state, and local agencies, conservation organizations, businesses, and individuals will be involved in the development and implementation of the strategy.

A letter was sent under the signature of Scott Henderson, Director, Arkansas Game and Fish Commission to leaders of 107 key intermediary organizations that represent or provide information to individuals and landowners with an interest in species and conservation.

Name>
<Organization>
<Address>
<City>, <STATE> <Zip>
Dear <Name>:

As a leader in your community and a representative of <organization>, I am writing today to invite you to participate in a regional stakeholder meeting where we will discuss *Designing A Future for Arkansas Wildlife*. The meeting will be held <date> at <place, address>. Registration will start at 5:00 p.m. A light buffet dinner will be served. The meeting will start at 6:00 p.m. and end at 8:30 p.m.

Registration will be limited to 60 participants. In order to participate, please return the enclosed response card or email Sandra.miller@conwaycorp.net or call 501-327-5898. If you call or email, leave a message with your name, full contact information and the location of the meeting you will attend.

Many species of nongame wildlife are declining in Arkansas and every state across the country. Recognizing this, Congress has created the *State Wildlife Grants Program* to provide states with funds for conserving "species of greatest conservation need." To be eligible for these funds, states are developing *Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategies* to fund research and conservation efforts. Arkansas is in line to receive nearly a million federal dollars a year from the *State Wildlife Grants Program* if we prepare a strategy approved by the Fish and Wildlife Service.

The Arkansas Game and Fish Commission is the lead in pulling together the Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy. Our partners in this effort include U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Nature Conservancy, Audubon Society, Cooperative Extension Service, U.S. Forest Service, Natural Heritage Commission and others. We are requesting your participation in this meeting to incorporate your review and suggestions in the strategy.

These groups are determining ways to promote voluntary conservation strategies that maintain or restore habitats where 'species of greatest conservation need' live. In the meantime, we want to share our draft strategy with stakeholders in a series of regional meetings and get input from you about what conservation actions make the most sense-and what will be needed to get private landowners to implement them.

Enclosed you will find a brochure with more information. You can also go to www.wildlifearkansas.org for more information.

We hope you will be able to join us on <date>.

Sincerely,

Scott Henderson
Director

An informational mailing was sent to 2,600+ individuals, primarily landowners and members of hunting clubs who participate in the Acres for Wildlife program.

May 2005

Dear Acres for Wildlife Participant:

As a participant in the Acres for Wildlife program, you know firsthand how simple voluntary conservation actions can help improve wildlife habitat. We need your input to help develop a statewide plan for conservation of non-game wildlife. Let me explain.

Recognizing the effectiveness of Acres for Wildlife and other voluntary efforts, Congress has created the State Wildlife Grants Program to provide states with funds for conserving species of greatest conservation need. Arkansas is in line to receive nearly a million federal dollars a year for research and designing conservation actions. To be eligible for these funds, states must submit a Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy to the federal government for approval by October 1 this year.

There are two ways you can participate in this planning process. You can share your thoughts online by going to www.wildlifearkansas.com or you can participate in one of five regional stakeholder meetings.

Regional stakeholder meetings are scheduled: June 7 in **Hope**, June 9 in **Jonesboro**, June 14 in **Fayetteville**, June 20 in **Lake Village**, and June 30 in **Little Rock**. At these meetings, we will share the draft strategy. Working in small groups, participants will discuss ways to promote voluntary conservation strategies that maintain or restore habitats where "species of greatest conservation need" live, sharing ideas about what conservation actions make the most sense in the context of today's complex production practices and what efforts will be needed to get private landowners to implement them.

If you would like to attend a regional stakeholder meeting, go to www.WildlifeArkansas.com. Click on "news & announcements" and "attend a stakeholder meeting." Tell us which meeting you want to attend and your name, mailing address, and telephone number so we can get in touch with you! If you don't have internet access, contact your local county Extension office and provide them the website information, so they can sign you up. Registration will be limited to 60 participants so let us know soon if you want to participate. Advance registration is required.

I encourage you to read the enclosed brochure or go to the Designing A Future for Arkansas Wildlife website at www.WildlifeArkansas.com to learn more. Your input is important.

Sincerely,



Scott Henderson
Director

Individualized letters were sent under the signature of Scott Henderson to 1100+ key opinion leaders inviting them to participate in the stakeholder meetings. These letters included the informational brochure, website address and a mail-in response card.

May 19, 2005

«MM» «FirstName» «LastName»
«Organization»
«Address» «Address_2»
«City», «State» «Zip»

Dear Friend:

As someone with an interest in how Arkansas wildlife is managed, you know firsthand how voluntary conservation actions can help improve wildlife habitat. Recognizing the effectiveness of voluntary conservation measures, Congress has created the State Wildlife Grants Program to provide states with funds for conserving species of greatest conservation need. Arkansas can receive nearly a million federal dollars a year for research and designing conservation actions. To be eligible for these funds, states must submit a Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy to the federal government by October 1. We need your input in developing this action plan.

You are invited to participate in a regional stakeholder meeting where we will share the draft strategy prepared by the Arkansas Game & Fish Commission and its partners. Working in small groups, participants will discuss ways to promote voluntary conservation strategies that maintain or restore habitats where wildlife live, sharing ideas about what conservation actions make the most sense and what efforts will be needed to get private landowners to implement them voluntarily.

Whether someone from your organization has already talked to you about participating or this is the first you've heard about it, we hope you will participate in one of the following meetings.

June 7 University of Arkansas Community College, 2500 South Main, **Hope**
June 9 Forrest L. Wood Crowley's Ridge Nature Center, 600 E. Lawson Rd, **Jonesboro**
June 14 University of Arkansas Center for Continuing Education, 2 East Center St., **Fayetteville**
June 20 Lakeside High School Commons, Hwy 82 West, **Lake Village**
June 30 University of Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service, 2301 S. University, **Little Rock**

A light buffet dinner will be served at 5:00 p.m. The meeting will start at 6:00 p.m. and end at 8:00 p.m. Meeting participation is limited to 60 participants so advance registration is required. To register, return the enclosed response card or register online at www.WildlifeArkansas.com. Click on "news & announcements" and "attend a stakeholder meeting." Tell us which meeting you will attend and your name, mailing address, and telephone number.

To learn more, read the enclosed brochure or go to the **Designing A Future For Arkansas Wildlife** website at www.WildlifeArkansas.com. Your input is important to us.

Sincerely,



Scott Henderson
Director

Stakeholder Meeting Agenda

Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy

Schedule of Meetings

June 7	Hope
June 9	Jonesboro
June 14	Fayetteville
June 20	Lake Village
June 30	Morrilton

Meeting Agenda

5:00 p.m.	Registration
5:30 p.m.	Light Buffet Dinner
6:00 p.m.	Welcome Local Host, County Extension Agent

Recalling Our Connection To Wildlife

An interactive exercise

6:35	Why Are We Here? A PowerPoint Presentation that explains the goal of the Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy, the planning process laid out by Congress, and a concise summary of where we are in the process.
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7:05 **Small Group Discussions**

What do you think about the list of species of greatest conservation need? What is missing? What should be removed? Why?

What conservation practices will be most attractive to private landowners? Why are they attractive?

What prevents landowners from implementing conservation practices that benefit wildlife? Why?

7:50	Where Do We Go From Here?
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8:00	Adjourn
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Stakeholder Meetings



Registration at the meeting in Hope

Nearly 250 individuals attended five evening stakeholder meetings in Hope, Jonesboro, Fayetteville, Lake Village and Little Rock in June 2005. To start each meeting, a local host told a story about a species and/or habitat that hold special childhood memories that children of today are less likely to experience. Participants were asked to add species that they used to see but rarely see today to the list.



Local Jonesboro host and storyteller, Jodi Morris, collects names of species from participants

Presentation

In addition to the informal survey, the stakeholder meeting included a PowerPoint presentation (Appendix 6.3, pages 1911-1962) on the federal requirements for the Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy and the current status of the planning process in Arkansas.



John Sunderland presents illustrated talk about CWCS in Fayetteville.

Small Discussion Groups

During the stakeholder meetings, facilitated small group discussions were held, giving participants an opportunity to discuss what they had just heard about the scope and direction of the Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation. Participants were asked to discuss three questions. Recorders captured the range of participant perspectives and suggestions. The three discussion questions were:

- What do you think about the list of species of greatest conservation need? Why?
- What conservation practices will be most attractive to private landowners? Why are they attractive?
- What prevents landowners from implementing conservation practices that benefit wildlife? Why?



Small group discussion in Lake Village, Arkansas

A summary of the types of comments collected from the small group discussions can be found below. This summary is meant to provide a general sense of the range of ideas and common themes expressed by participants. The steering committee and work teams have used input from these stakeholder meetings to revise and refine the CWCS. This feedback will provide a framework to help guide and evaluate how Arkansas presents species and habitat information to the public and how it promotes voluntary conservation actions.



Lively discussion preceded ...



... and followed each meeting.

Summary of Small Group Discussions

The goal of the small group discussions was to surface the range of opinions, not to come to consensus. Ideas are grouped into general themes, some themes also have sub-themes. In many instances, ideas and suggestions conflict, which reflects the range of opinions expressed in small group discussions. Quotations that capture the essence of the discussion are included in *italic*, where appropriate.

While discussions were organized by region, regional differences in the group discussions were minimal and largely reflected the predominant land uses of the region. Urban development was more of an issue in Fayetteville and Little Rock. Row crop agriculture was a focus of discussion in Jonesboro and Lake Village. Animal agriculture was discussed in Fayetteville and Hope. Industrial forestry was discussed at Hope and Lake Village. Participants in Fayetteville and Hope talked about the need to change eligibility requirements for cost-share programs to increase participation of livestock and poultry farmers. Participants in Lake Village and Jonesboro made suggestions about tweaking cost-share programs to make them more attractive to row crop farmers.

The content of discussions also varied based on who participated. More academics participated in Fayetteville and Jonesboro. Landowners predominated in Hope and Lake Village. Land managers with industrial forestry firms participated in the discussions at Hope and Lake Village. While federal and state agencies, industry groups and environmental organizations were represented at all of the stakeholder meetings, they predominated at the Little Rock meeting. With notable exceptions, all participants were more likely to offer suggestions about what others could/should do to conserve wildlife and habitats rather than identifying things that they can/will do.

The following questions and comments summarize participant responses during the stakeholder meetings.

Question #1: What do you think about the list of species of greatest conservation need? Why?

Theme #1: The list of species of greatest conservation need coupled with the overall strategy will enrich environmental outreach and education programs.

- Many participants commented that the list was almost overwhelming due to the number of species included.
- Need to explore ways to package the information in ways that reduce the complexity and make the information more user-friendly. Suggestions include:
 - Pick “poster-child” species that create hold special feelings for the general public. Use these species to generate interest in and understanding of the concepts (e.g., Bobwhite Quail).
 - Organize species by habitat.
 - Develop a series of habitat posters that illustrate the species that live in the habitat and their relationships to each other.
 - Organize species by conservation actions (e.g., pick a conservation action and list all of the species/habitats that will benefit from that conservation action)
 - Start education in the early elementary grades. Involve 4-H, Scouts, and other youth programs in conservation education and hands-on projects (e.g., build a salamander pond). The list creates the opportunity for expanded partnerships with educators.
 - The *Designing A Future For Arkansas Wildlife* website provides useful information on individual species and habitats.
 - “I didn’t know there were so many types of mussels.” “How do we know how many of a species makes a healthy population?” “Why is fill-in-the-blank on the list?” “Why are coral snakes, mice, bats, (or some other species that some people feel are unwanted) on they list?” “Too much emphasis on birds, once again.” These kinds of responses create teachable moments for conservation education.

Theme #2: The list and strategy will provide information to support and improve planning by industry, nonprofit, local, county state and federal groups.

- While nearly all participants acknowledged the value of the list for planning and decision-making, some expressed concern that the list might generate pockets of fear of new regulation and erosion of private property rights. Suggestions offered to allay such fears included:

When communicating with the public about species of greatest conservation need, stress that the list will only be used to allocate funding for the State Wildlife Grants program and has no other purpose

To foster trust, continually remind public and private land owners and land managers that the State Wildlife Grant program calls for *voluntary* conservation. It is not a regulatory program.

Some expressed concern that managing habitats to protect species on the list of species of greatest conservation need might affect how habitat for game species are managed (e.g., ivory billed woodpecker was found in duck habitat) or result in limitations on hunting and fishing.

- Linking species and habitats in the CWCS database to specific conservation actions (e.g., NRCS Technical Manual) will provide a practical tool to promote implementation of best management practices (BMPs).
- Threats to a species may differ in different ecoregions. Species reports could identify where specific threats are an issue.
- Explain to the public how the list was developed, including who was involved, what sources of information were used, the criteria for selecting species to be included.
- Consider adding endangered plants that are critical to habitat restoration to the list.
- Landowners need a dynamic website where they can point to the location of their land and get a list of habitats, species of greatest conservation need and specific conservation practices that they should consider based on information they enter about their current land uses and practices,

Theme #3: The list of species of greatest conservation need and related information (in the database) can improve natural resource management by providing information for application by resource professionals in industry, public and non-profit organizations.

- The list will help managers more effectively manage natural resources in several ways:

By helping to set priorities for conservation actions (e.g., land acquisition, management projects, inventory needs).

By helping fill gaps or make connections between projects and work already underway.

By supporting habitat restoration.

By providing information that enhances funding applications (to the extent that funders and cost-share providers consider the list in making funding decisions).

- The list will help groups compete for additional funds for stream work.

Theme #4: The list of species of greatest conservation need is a flexible list that will change over time as new information is obtained.

- Many participants suggested species to be added or deleted. These suggestions were forwarded to the taxa teams and peer reviewers for consideration.

- Consider making the list shorter in order to more effectively focus resources.
- Consider adding some additional game species to the list that will generate popular interest, such as Mottled Duck, Fulvis Whistling Duck, and Black-bellied Whistling Duck.
- Questions were raised about why species on the edge of their historic range are included on the Arkansas list. Some thought the list should focus on species currently found in Arkansas while others believed the list should also include species that were plentiful in this part of their historic range.
- Consider dividing the list of species of greatest conservation need between species with declining populations and species where little is known about their population trends.
- Consider adding indicator species to the list even if their population is not declining.
- Consider including invasive species like zebra mussels, fire ants, feral dogs and cats, brown algae, and other invasive species that will need to be managed to protect desirable species on the list.
- Consider excluding species that are common in other states but rare in Arkansas.
- Some participants want the list to only include native species while others recommend including desirable non native species, such as trout.
- Some participants laud the breadth of the list while others question why insects and other invertebrates are included.
- Some participants want to exclude migratory species while others want to include migratory species.
- The list needs to be consistent with other programs/regulations. How can you have species on the list that are hunted, for example, purple gallinule and American woodcock? Some of the species on the list are also on depredation permits (e.g., double breasted cormorant).
- There will need to be a formal process for adding/deleting species from the list. The website should provide for continuous comment so that the public can easily suggest species to add or delete anytime.
- Some participants expressed concern at the number of species on the list. They wondered whether it wouldn't be more effective to focus on 5, 10 or 50 priority species in order to more effectively target scarce resources and capture the hearts and minds of a sometimes fickle public.
- Some participants raised concern about the number and complexity of terrestrial habitats. They wondered whether our ability to identify habitats at this level of specificity matched our ability to describe them.

Theme #5: The critical question is “how will the list be prioritized for practical use?”

- Some participants asked how prioritization would balance scientific analysis and public perception in prioritization and who would be setting priorities.
- As we prioritize, we shouldn't get caught up with individual species; rather we should promote biodiversity within habitats.
- We need to find balance between species and habitats. Too much emphasis on the list of species may inadvertently trivialize the importance of habitats.
- Stakeholders want to be involved in selecting the criteria for how the list will be prioritized and which conservation actions will be promoted (much the way the forest industry was involved in developing best management practice guidelines for water quality).
- Participants identified particular habitats in which species are at particular risk and should be given high priority, stating “Aquatic species are most at risk. Most streams in central and Northwest Arkansas have been impacted by urban sprawl.” “Another group of species that are at risk are grassland dependent birds.” Early successional species also are at risk.”

“We don't need a shotgun approach! We need to find and focus on the sweet spots where our actions can make the most difference.”

Question #2: What conservation practices will be most attractive to private landowners? Why are they attractive?

Theme #1: It's all about managing habitats. Habitat affects everything.

- When it comes to habitats, quality matters. Resources should be directed toward promoting quality habitat.
- We should decide on the scale and outcomes we desire and then set goals for restoring whole systems (e.g., restoration of bottomland hardwood forests encompasses water quality, species diversity of plants and wildlife, wetland hydrology, and other considerations).
- Farm bill funds set aside for habitat restoration should be targeted to carefully targeted goals instead of distributed scatter-shot in order to establish corridors or restore systems.
- Organizing technical assistance and education strategies around habitats reduces the complexity of the species list and will make the strategy more understandable to landowners and the general public.

- If we have to choose between spending State Wildlife Grants (SWG) funds on population studies or habitat restoration, Arkansas needs to focus on habitat restoration.
- Need to measure the net loss/gain of habitat. One new development or hardwood timber harvest or new pasture can destroy more habitat than WRP or CRP restores in a year.
- In rapidly urbanizing areas, we will need to manage land development more effectively in order to slow habitat loss (e.g., incorporate mitigation as an integral part of development projects such as Mud Creek in Fayetteville where quail and great blue heron can be seen in 18 mitigated wetlands behind Wal-Mart, Home Depot and other commercial developments).
- Develop education programs that are targeted not only by ecoregion but also by landownership patterns (e.g., there are many landowners in Northwest Arkansas with 40 acres who do not farm. These landowners may be more amenable to planting food plots without expectation of cost share if approached effectively).

“If you bring back the quail population, you will clean up the water and increase the amphibians. Everything is connected to everything else in the ecosystem.”

Theme #2: Many landowners are interested in “simple” actions they can take, such as prescribed burning, buffers and food plots, recognizing that even seemingly simple conservation actions may not be so simple to implement.

- Few private landowners know how to do prescribed burning. There is no where they can go to learn how to do prescribed burning. They are not sure who to hire to do prescribed burning for them. They are concerned about liability with respect to their neighbors. So while there is a desire to do prescribed burning, few landowners actually do prescribed burning.

Increase the supply of private vendors who can provide services to private landowners (e.g., prescribed burning).

Provide a directory of private vendors who can provide services to private landowners.

- Cost share for alternative water sources for pastured livestock would create more interest in establishing riparian buffers.
- Many landowners want “clean” fencerows and “cleared” land down to the water’s edge because “messy” or “weedy” looking buffers may lead neighbors and others to view them as poor managers. Implement a creative broad-based public awareness campaigns to re-shape public values
- Identify or develop sources of low-cost native seed and plant stock accessible to the public (e.g., native shrub/tree bundles that provide berries and nuts with instructions for developing a food plot and examples of species likely to visit the food plot).

- Identify conservation practices that can easily be incorporated into existing management systems for different size landowners.
- Provide access to equipment for planting food plots or other “simple” conservation actions will help promote voluntary action, particularly among “weekend” and “hobby” farmers.
- Plant native grasses for pasture, rather than introduced species.
- Eradicate Bermuda grass and fescue.
- Take floodplains out of crop production and restore riparian buffers.
- Replant mixed species of bottomland hardwoods.
- Re-establish shelterbelts and fencerows.
- Increase conservation tillage and implementation of other practices that reduce soil erosion and stormwater runoff.
- Provide ponds for wildlife watering.
- Let fields lie fallow.
- Manage forests for multiple benefits, including wildlife (e.g., create small openings, species diversity, etc)

Theme #3: Tie conservation recommendations to popular or widely accepted goals.

“I have to go to Texas to quail hunt, I would much rather go out my back door. If I leave a strip and then start seeing quail and Baltimore Orioles, I would do that. But there has to be somebody to personally contact people like me.”

- Promote habitat restoration for quail. By focusing on a popular game species, landowners will restore habitats for other upland wildlife species of conservation need.
- Promote protection of water quality in order to restore riparian buffers and streambank restoration. Since nearly all citizens value clean water, landowners will be more likely to implement wildlife conservation measures that improve water quality.
- Focus on one or two “poster child” species that affect a large number of other species in the most vulnerable habitats.

Theme #4: Landowners don’t always know what conservation actions to take to generate the desired outcomes.

- Identify conservation actions that do not greatly restrict use or potential use of the land.
- Identify conservation actions that could enhance revenue for the private landowner (e.g., seasonal flooding for duck hunting, bird-watching, butterflies).
- For landowners who have never implemented a wildlife conservation project, provide a list of simple projects to get them started.
- Identify conservation practices that benefit multiple species.

- Pesticide education is needed. Landowners do not realize the impact of pesticides on nesting bird eggs and invertebrates and other aquatic species.
- Differentiate annual and permanent conservation practices. Identify practices that have relatively small labor requirements. Promote practices that achieve multiple purposes.
- Identify conservation practices that landowners with small holdings can take to benefit wildlife to dispel the notion that only landowners with large holdings can make a difference.

“The problem is if I don’t know what it takes to attract a chimney sweep, how can I implement the plan? Certain kinds of foliage attract certain kinds of birds. How do we get over that hump – of persons not knowing what to do?”

Theme #5: Don’t limit education and programs to rural landowners. Work with urban landowners, developers, county officials and others to promote voluntary conservation actions.

- In Northwest Arkansas and Central Arkansas, land values are rising. Developers are buying up land adjacent to urban centers. Developers are not focused on wildlife. Arkansas needs to engage developers in wildlife conservation.
- Develop education programs that engage urban landowners (e.g., promote butterfly weed and other native plants, distribute the Building Backyard Habitat book by the National Wildlife Federation, etc)
- Bring back the Bird Sanctuary program where neighborhoods can declare their neighborhood or subdivision as a bird sanctuary and get assistance from AGFC.
- Work with county road crews and developers to ensure adequate maintenance and stormwater management on unpaved roads.
- Need incentives for cities to implement effective wildlife conservation practices, establish greenways, plan for open space.
- Establish conservation partnerships. Involve volunteers, churches and civic groups. Organize urban constituency for wildlife conservation.

Question #3: What prevents landowners from implementing conservation practices that benefit wildlife? Why?

Theme #1: Most landowners expect cost share in order to implement voluntary conservation actions. Arkansas needs a strategy to invest cost-share in a way that achieves the most with limited resources.

- Many conservation actions are expensive, not only in terms of monetary costs for implementation and maintenance but also the time and complexity involved in management.
- More money is needed for cost-sharing.
- Cost-sharing needs to be adequate (e.g., a landowner may not be motivated if cost share is 25% but if cost share is 75% they will be more willing to implement conservation practices).
- If technical assistance providers place more emphasis on the benefits of conservation practices to the landowner (e.g., “what’s in it for me?”), landowners may not require as much cost share to implement conservation practices.
- The period over which cost share subsidies are provided often is too short to make a meaningful difference.
- Some landowners are unwilling to sign long contracts because of worries about giving up property rights. Consider using shorter contracts in some situations.
- Requirements to fence out livestock make farmers reluctant to apply for cost share to implement some conservation practices.
- Recommended conservation practices need to be cost-effective and fit into the landowners’ operations.
- The volume of reporting and paperwork associated with cost-share can be a disincentive.
- Promote creative use of existing programs, not only WHIP but also wetland reserve program, 319(h), Environmental Quality Improvement Program, Forestland Enhancement Program, Grassland Reserve Program, etc.

Theme #2: Fragmentation and non-local land ownership create special challenges for implementing meaningful conservation practices for some species, particularly those that require large areas of contiguous habitat.

- Species differ in the scale of the land area that must be managed to reverse declining populations. Species reports could identify the relevant size of the land area that will need to be managed and whether the land area must be contiguous in order to make improvements.
- Give priority in allocating cost share and technical assistance to creating corridors and contiguous tracts of habitat. Funding currently gives preference to small projects.

- Develop special pools of cost share for landowners that hold/manage large tracts of land to promote conservation of carefully selected priority species and/or habitats.
- Priority for Farm Bill funds should be given to groups of landowners working together to implement conservation measures on a larger scale (e.g., landscape or watershed). This would give small landowners confidence that their individual actions can add up to some relevant, effective scale.
- We need to negotiate more land swaps in order to aggregate contiguous land at a relevant scale.
- Allow in-kind services as cost-share in order to provide incentive for more projects.
- Develop mechanisms to reach non-resident landowners who lease their land.

“We have to identify the ‘sweet spots’ where there are multiple species in vulnerable habitats. Landowners will respond more positively if they know that the work they do will benefit many species.”

Theme #3: More technical assistance is needed to develop wildlife management plans for privately owned lands.

- Improve coordination of technical assistance and education programs across state and federal agencies to reduce confusion and mixed messages to landowners.
- Some landowners fear letting a professional develop a wildlife management plan because of what they might find (e.g., a threatened or endangered species).
- Increase the number of private lands biologists.
- Expand the acres managed under conservation easements so that private lands can be managed by professional resource managers.
- Help landowners identify what species can be adapted to current habitat and what habitat can be added to attract other species.
- Identify mechanisms to enforce provisions of voluntary conservation agreements.
- Go to farmers and landowners with practical suggestions rather than waiting for them to ask for a wildlife conservation plan.
- Technical assistance should help farmers maximize points on cost share applications by addressing multiple goals.
- Focus plans on species that fit into current land use, rather than trying to conserve species that may have been historically present but are no more (e.g., don't promote quail in rice production areas).
- Many farmers reluctant to invest the time required to complete applications for cost share because denial rates are so high.

- Changing farming practices are affecting migratory waterfowl. Today's combines are more efficient so less food for migratory waterfowl. Hunting leaseholders complain about reduced number of birds. Winter wheat provides higher returns than hunting leases so some farmers no longer winter flooding fields to create habitat for migratory waterfowl.

“It’s difficult for landowners to learn about all of the programs out there. A one-stop ‘shopping experience’ where landowners could talk to one person about all of the programs would make conservation more attractive.”

Theme #4: Landowners are more likely to implement conservation practices when the benefits are explained in terms of things the landowner values.

- Use landowner interest in game species as entrée to benefit species on the list of greatest conservation need and their habitats.
- Use public concern for drinking water quality as entrée for education and technical assistance aimed at increasing implementation of conservation measures.
- Present recommended conservation actions in terms of how they will impact the landowners’ bottom line. Focus on soil erosion, water quality, hunting and fishing, whatever the landowner cares about.
- Involve landowners in the evaluation of conservation actions before promoting them in order to foster a sense of ownership.
- One of the most effective and lowest cost mechanisms to influence landowners to implement conservation practices is peer pressure. To create peer pressure, technical assistance providers and educators should work together to set up contests, offer rewards and prizes, give public recognition to landowners who implement wildlife conservation practices. “When landowners realize that they are drinking the water they are protecting then they begin to understand “what’s in it for me?”

“We have to show the landowner the bottom line. Show them the positive effects of a practice that will benefit these species. Don’t tell them about saving a bird. Tell them about how much erosion they will stop, how much soil they will save. Tell them how much better the water quality will be.”

Theme #5: Effective, coordinated education is critical. It matters how education is delivered, who delivers the education and how education is integrated with technical assistance.

- Education should inform landowners not only what can be done but also how it will benefit both the habitat and species of greatest conservation need as well as social and economic benefits to landowners.
- Education is most likely to be acted on when it is delivered by local institutions landowners trust.
- Education should target specific audiences with specific messages (e.g., realtors and developers would benefit from education on the role of riparian buffer strips)
- Integrate education across agencies and disciplines (e.g., the educator providing information about pasture management also can provide information about vegetative buffers, agencies hold joint meetings at the local level)
- Involve people of all ages and walks of life in implementing conservation actions (e.g., Stream Team program) in order to increase knowledge and build constituency.
- Use trusted spokespersons and mass media (e.g., television and radio) to deliver simple educational messages to general population
- Coordination and collaboration among technical assistance providers and educators is critical. When landowners don't know where to go to get information or they get conflicting advice from different providers, landowners often decide that the best course of action is to do nothing.
- Educate the public about conservation easements, transfer of development rights, purchase of development rights and other creative mechanisms to compensate landowners for voluntary conservation.
- Educate the public by involving them in action-oriented projects, including monitoring (e.g., nature mapping) or streambank restoration (e.g., stream teams).
- Educate landowners through local and regional demonstration projects.
- Target education where it will have the greatest impact (e.g., specific landowners in a particularly vulnerable habitat where targeted conservation actions can effect multiple species).
- Integrate wildlife conservation education into existing programs (e.g., 4-H, stream teams, Master Gardeners, Urban*A*Syst)
- Consider developing a Master Conservationist program for rural landowners, patterned after the Master Gardener program.
- Use more demonstration and more testimonials to show landowners the benefits of implementing wildlife conservation actions.
- Many species are seeing population increases after years of decline. Promote these successes to give landowners and the public a sense that their actions can make a difference. Give private landowners credit for what they are already doing to dispel landowners' perception that they are always taking blame.
- Don't rely on websites to convey information to landowners. Strategies are needed to do proactive outreach to landowners.

- Consider targeting education and technical assistance to the younger generation of landowners.

“If we all preached the same sermon, we could get a lot done. Right now, it is very difficult to figure out who’s doing what where.”

Theme #6: In some cases, public policy may need to be changed in order to expand voluntary implementation of conservation measures.

- State employees cannot do prescribed burning on private lands. Private landowners would be willing to pay for this service if state employees could do prescribed burning to reduce the fuel load on their private lands.
- It might be beneficial if State Wildlife Grant implementation funds could be spent for education.
- Implement tax incentives for land taken out of production for habitat protection.
- Consider using a tax on tourism to increase funds available for cost share for voluntary conservation actions.
- Local ordinances are needed in rapidly urbanizing areas requiring developers mitigate damage to habitats (e.g., zoning, required set aside for green space).
- Evaluate existing ordinances that may inadvertently negatively affect wildlife conservation (e.g., requirements that lawns be mowed to a certain height)
- Consider enacting “right to burn” laws that limit liability of landowners who do prescribed burning in some specific situations.
- Consider property tax relief for landowners that implement voluntary conservation actions.
- Consider increasing USDA funding for Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (WHIP).
- Expand the Grassland Reserve Program to upland farmers with pasture.
- Arkansas should find the match to participate fully in all federal conservation programs (e.g., CREP).
- Cumbersome regulations concerning landlord/renter participation need to be simplified.
- Indemnify landowners against the effect of changes in regulations and cost-share program requirements.
- Improve mechanisms for interstate cooperation to conserve migratory birds.
- Change funding criteria and funding formulas for cost-share programs to distribute funds more equitably between farmers of different sizes, increase funding for smaller scale projects, and between regions of the state.

Theme #7: Some landowners are afraid to participate in voluntary conservation programs for fear of increased regulation, erosion of property rights or loss of privacy.

- Address landowners' fear of regulation and loss of property rights through education and demonstration projects. Education should proactively assure farmers that species can be helped without shutting down their operations.
- Develop a mechanism so that landowners can report finding species of greatest conservation need on their land without fear of media coverage or loss of privacy.
- Some landowners unwilling to participate in cost-share programs that require them to open their lands to public use.
- Clarify the relationship between threatened and endangered species relative to the list of species of greatest conservation need to alleviate fears.
- Encourage landowners who participate in cost-share programs to share their success stories with other landowners to ease fears of government programs and build trust.
- Partner with local institutions that landowners trust to promote wildlife conservation (e.g., Cooperative Extension Service).

“I only have a small acreage, but what if the [Ivory-billed] woodpecker turned up on my land? It makes me concerned.”

Continuing Efforts for Informing and Engaging the Public

Since the approval of the first version of the Wildlife Action Plan, Arkansas has continued to foster public and scientific community involvement in planning and implementation in a number of ways.

Engaging the Scientific Community

Continued Representation by Partners on the Steering Committee, Implementation Committee, and Taxa Teams. The process of developing the Arkansas Wildlife Action Plan resulted in strong partner relationships and support for implementing the plan. Partners from various agencies continue to serve on committees and taxa teams that determine the highest priority actions and projects for state wildlife grant funding. In addition, these partners were heavily involved in the revision and update of the Plan.

Biennial Wildlife Action Plan Symposium.

Since 2006, a Wildlife Action Plan Symposium has been held every 2 years to bring together partners. At the Symposium, results from state wildlife grant funded projects are presented. Also, the taxa teams and habitat teams meet to review the top needs for species and habitats. They select the highest conservation actions, research, and monitoring priorities to be funded with state wildlife grant dollars. Attendance at the symposium has increased each time and a number of partners from state and federal agencies, non-governmental organizations, and universities are represented.



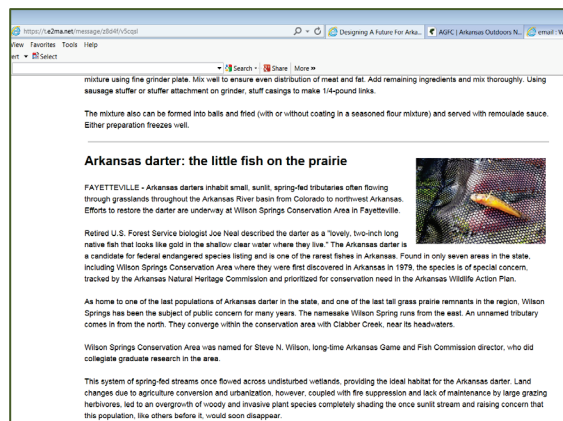
2014 AWAP Symposium

Wildlife Arkansas Website. The website continues to serve as the primary clearinghouse for wildlife action plan information and news. State wildlife grant apportionment amounts and requests for proposals are available on the website. Final reports from state wildlife grant funded projects are also distributed on the website. In addition, digital versions of the Wildlife Action Plan and AWAP database are available for download.



Engaging the Public

Use of Media. Every opportunity to relay information on species of greatest conservation need to the public is taken. Presentations on SGCN have been given to Boy Scout and school groups. Success stories for SGCN as a result of state wildlife grants are disseminated as often as possible, typically through AGFC’s weekly Arkansas Outdoors newsletter.



Arkansas Outdoors newsletter story on successful SWG project

2015 AWAP Revision Public Input. As part of the required public input process for the revision of the Plan, a draft of the updated plan was made available to the public. A notice of the review/comment period was disseminated via newspaper notice, the AGFC website, and the AGFC Arkansas Outdoors newsletter. In addition, an email to partner organizations with a link to the draft plan was sent out. A period of 30 days was given for the public to provide suggestions and comments for the Plan.