

Arkansas Wildlife Action Plan

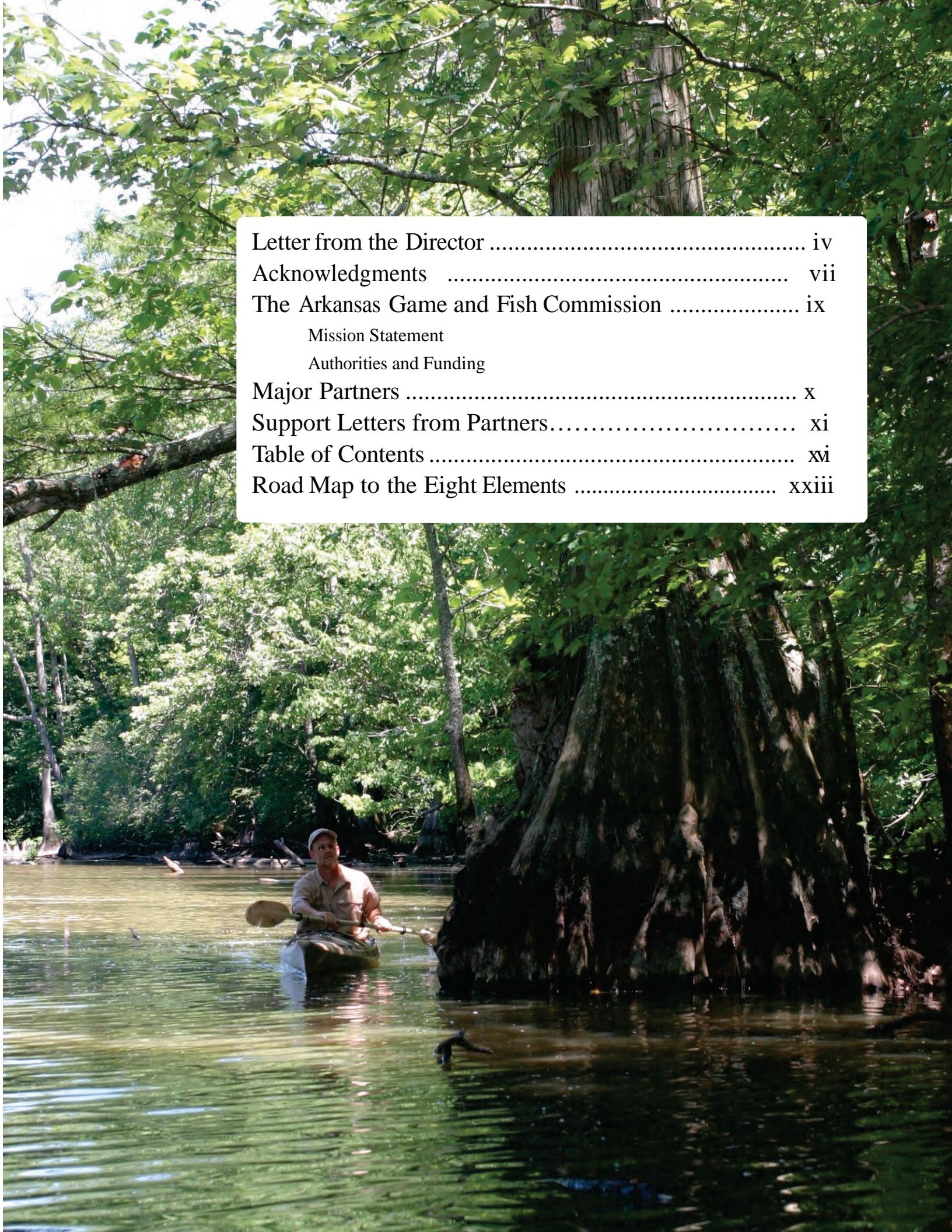
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DESIGNING

A FUTURE for Arkansas Wildlife

www.WildlifeArkansas.com

The Arkansas Wildlife Action Plan
©Arkansas Game and Fish Commission, 2005
Revised, October 2006,
October 2015



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Arkansas Game and Fish Commission

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Little Rock, Arkansas 72205

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Dr. Kim Smith (Ex-Officio)
University of Arkansas
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September 22, 2005

Emily Jo Williams
Assistant Regional Director for Migratory Birds and State Programs
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
1875 Century Blvd, Suite 240
Atlanta, GA, 30345

Dear E.J.:

In the accompanying package, you will find two copies of Arkansas' Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy along with the same information on CD. A CD is also being sent to the Washington, D.C. federal aid office.

I can't tell you how pleased I am to be taking this step along with the other state directors. It has been more than two decades since we initiated efforts in the regional associations to secure nongame federal funding. We would not be here without the leadership shown by the IAFWA and the USFWS. Surely these state strategies will demonstrate to Congress the need for dedicated funding and the ability of the states to wisely target that funding to species of greatest conservation need.

Our CWCS is intended to be a useful planning tool for both professional and citizen conservationists in Arkansas. We involved our major partners from the beginning. Their response has been more than gratifying – it's been heroic, given the scope of the work. I am also struck by the receptivity of Arkansas citizens to this initiative. They have demonstrated again support for the broad array of wildlife and seem supportive of our agency for assembling the scientific underpinnings for sound decision making.

I also want to recognize the assistance my staff received from the IAFWA staff, the Teaming With Wildlife committee, The Wildlife Diversity Program Managers and the FWS federal assistance staff. Some very visionary, hard working people have made a difference in fish and wildlife conservation.

We are only pausing to submit our CWCS as a snapshot in time. It will be continually updated as we learn more and take effective conservation actions. We will be receptive to any suggestions for improving it and are already identifying features to assist implementation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Scott Henderson".

Scott Henderson
Director

Cc: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Division of Federal Assistance
Attn: Genevieve Pullis LaRouche
4401 N. Fairfax Drive
MBSP-4020
Arlington, VA 22203



Mike Knoedl

Director

Jeff Crow

Chief of Staff and
Deputy Director

Andrew Bass
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Ricky Chastain
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Arkansas Game and Fish Commission

1 October 2015

Mike Piccirilli

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Division of Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program

1875 Century Blvd., Suite 240

Atlanta, GA 30345

Dear Mr. Piccirilli,

Nearly eight years have passed since the original Arkansas Wildlife Action Plan (AWAP) was approved. In that time, the state has received over \$10 million dollars in state wildlife grant funding to implement the Plan. We have made many accomplishments as a result, including expanding our knowledge on the status and life history of many species and putting much needed habitat on the ground.

Over the past 3 years, we have worked diligently with our conservation partners to review and update the required elements within the Plan. The largest change is an update to the NatureServe state ranks for many species. The revised Plan includes 377 species of greatest conservation need (SGCN) for which all information has been updated.

We feel that the AWAP remains useful and relevant and is an important document, not only for our agency, but for all conservation agencies in the state. This is evidenced by the continued support and involvement of our conservation partners in updating the plan, serving on committees, and implementing the Plan.

Enclosed you will find a summary of the major changes to the Plan, two hard copies of the revised Plan for the regional review team, and a thumb drive with electronic copies of the Plan and the AWAP database. Should you have any questions, please contact Allison Fowler, Wildlife Diversity Program Coordinator, at 501-223-6366.

We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Mike Knoedl, Director

2 Natural Resources Drive • Little Rock, AR 72205 • www.agfc.com
Phone (800) 364-4263 • (501) 223-6300 • Fax (501) 223-6448

The Arkansas Game and Fish Commission's mission is to conserve and enhance Arkansas's fish and wildlife and their habitats while promoting sustainable use, public understanding and support.

Purpose

The Arkansas Wildlife Action Plan (AWAP), formerly known as the comprehensive wildlife conservation strategy (CWCS), serves as a guiding document for the conservation community in identifying those species that are at risk of becoming further imperiled and the actions needed to conserve those species.

Acknowledgments

The preparation of Arkansas' original AWAP involved the input and participation of a wide variety of individuals, including staff within multiple divisions of the Commission, as well as from other state and federal agencies, conservation organizations, private industry, and academia. The 2015 revision of the Plan involved many of those same partner organizations, a testament to the continued strength of conservation partnerships within Arkansas.

We extend our warmest thanks to everyone who has contributed their support, knowledge, time and energy in the development of the Plan.

Champions

Sen. Blanche Lincoln, Gov. Mike Huckabee, Sen. Mark Pryor, Rep. Vic Snyder, Rep. Mike Ross, Director Scott Henderson and Deputy Director David Goad.

Served on teams and committees:

Alan Christian, Alan Clingenpeel, Allan Mueller, Arlene Green, Becky McPeake, Betty Crump, Bill Holimon, Bill Keith, Bill Posey, Blake Sasse, Bob Sikes, Brian Wagner, Catherine Rideout, Chris Davidson, Cindy Boland, Cindy Osborne, Dan Scheiman, David Saugey, Don Catenzaro, Don White, Doug Zollner, Doyle Shook, Elizabeth Murray, Ellen Fennell, Ethan Inlander, Gary Heidt, Henry Robison, J. D. Wilhide, Jeff Holmes, Jeff Quinn, Jim Baker, Jim Wise, John Harris, Karen Ballard, Karen Rowe, Kaushik Mysorekar, Kay McQueen, Kelly Irwin, Ken Smith, Kris Rutherford, Lane Patterson, Lucy Moreland, Michael Slay, Michael Warriner, Mike Fuhr, Nancy Ledbetter, Renn Tumlison, Sagar Mysorekar, Sandra Miller, Stan Trauth, Stephen Brandenburg, Steve Duzan, Steve Filipek, Thomas Risch, Tim Snell, Tom Buchanan, Tom Foti and Tom Nupp.

Assisted with public meetings:

Karen Ballard, Mike Benton, Allan Beuerman, Brad Carner, David Covington, Betty Crump, Kyle Cunningham, Richard Davies, Ellen Fennell, Tom Harrington, Scott Henderson, Becky McPeake, Sandra Miller, Stephen O'Neal, Beth Phelps, Karen Rowe, Blake Sasse, Melony Wilson, Gerald Alexander, Mark Barbee, Ruth Ann Chapman, Nelson Childers, Randy Chlaapecka, Steve Culp, Garrick Dugger, David Evans, Steve Filipek, Rhonda Foster, Steven Fowler, David Fowlkes, Dave Freeze, Che Gordon, Caroll Guffey, Johnny Gunsaulis, Gwen Handcock, Carl Hayden, Janie Hipp,

Bryan Hollis, Mark Hooks, Doug Hunter, Brian Infield, Matthew Irvin, Steve Kelley, Wes Kirkpatrick, Berni Kurtz, Reggie Liddell, David Long, Gregg Mathis, Brian McKinzie, Roger Milligan, Jodi Morris, John Payne, Jeff Quinn, Rex Roberg, Laura Rogers, CharleS elf, Eley Talley, Fran Tomerlin, Kalven Trice, John Benjamin and Kim Smith.

We are grateful to Angela Browner for creating the CWCS logo and Bruce Cook for aiding with production. We would also like to thank the participants of our June 2005 stakeholder meetings.

We are also especially thankful for the following individuals for their efforts toward the revision of the plan: Dr. Bill Baltosser, Wes Cleland, Cindy Osbourne, Tony Davis, Tom Foti, Bill Holimon, Kelly Irwin, Scott Lane, Allan Mueller, Bill Posey, Jeff Quinn, Kory Roberts, Karen Rowe, Blake Sasse, Samantha Scheiman, Don Shepard, Jason Throneberry, Brian Wagner, and Doug Zollner.

Arkansas Game and Fish Commission

Mission

The mission of the Arkansas Game & Fish Commission is to wisely manage all the fish and wildlife resources of Arkansas while providing maximum enjoyment for the people.

Authorities

“The control, management, restoration, conservation, and regulation of birds, fish, game and wildlife resources of the State, including hatcheries, sanctuaries, refuges, reservations and all property now used for said purposes and the acquisition and establishment of same, the administration of the laws now and/or hereafter pertaining thereto” is vested in the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission by Amendment 35 to the Arkansas Constitution, approved in the general election of November 7, 1944.

Funding

Amendment 35 to the Arkansas Constitution establishes the Game Protection Fund as the depository of all Commission revenues and restricts appropriation to the purposes defined above. It also contains specific authority for the Commission to “spend such monies as are necessary to match federal grants under the Pittman- Robertson or similar acts for the propagation, conservation, and restoration” of wildlife.

In the 1996 general election, Arkansans approved Amendment 75 to the Arkansas Constitution, finding that “fish, wildlife, parks, tourism and natural heritage constitute a major economic and natural resource of the State and they desire to provide additional funds to the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission, the Department of Parks and Tourism, the Department of Heritage and Keep Arkansas Beautiful.” Forty-five percent of all monies collected from an additional excise tax of one-eighth of one percent on taxable sales of property and services is credited to the Game Protection Fund established by Amendment 35 for exclusive use by the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission, as appropriated by the General Assembly.

To make the case for revenue expansion, the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission prepared the Plan For Conservation – a vision document reflecting the agency’s planned resource allocation among broad programmatic areas (e.g., fish and wildlife management, enforcement, nongame and threatened species management, conservation education, etc.). These allocations were developed using historic allocations as a baseline, but with prioritization of new Conservation Sales Tax funding relying heavily on public input. Since the passage of Amendment 75, Plan For Conservation has guided agency budgeting and helped us keep our promises to Arkansans.

Major AWAP Partners

Arkansas constructed its Wildlife Action Plan with key partners who served on the Steering Committee from the beginning. Aiding the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission were The Nature Conservancy, Audubon Arkansas, U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U. S. Forest Service and Arkansas Natural Heritage Commission. As the work on the Plan progressed, additional members joined: The Arkansas Academy of Science, the Cooperative Extension Service and Natural Resources Conservation Service. Letters from partners in support of the Arkansas Wildlife Action Plan are provided on the following pages.

Through numerous meetings during the development phases, the Steering Committee's role was to make key decisions to direct the cooperative effort that forms the structure of the AWAP.

Since the approval of the Plan, the members of the Steering Committee have remained involved in the implementation of the Plan, by participating in the state wildlife grant process. Specifically, the steering committee is charged with helping to determine the highest priority research and monitoring needs and conservation actions for Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN) and their habitats.



The Nature Conservancy
Arkansas Field Office
601 North University Avenue
Little Rock, AR 72205

tel [501] 663.6699
fax [501] 663.8332
nature.org

September 16, 2005

Mr. Scott Henderson, Director
Arkansas Game and Fish Commission
2 Natural Resources Drive
Little Rock, AR 72205

Dear Mr. Henderson:

The Nature Conservancy has dedicated itself to the long-term survival of all viable native species and community types through conservation activities that restore and conserve ecological processes needed to ensure their long-term persistence. To accomplish this vision, TNC staff is charged with identifying the species, communities, and ecological systems that will serve as targets for conservation action in ecoregions of the United States. The CWCS SWG program has provided support to TNC in accomplishing our goal of site conservation planning and in determining conservation data gaps.

Further, CWCS administered through Arkansas Game and Fish Commission has provided a coordinated approach that has pooled the resources of a larger group of conservation partners to fund research and improvements for “species of greatest conservation need.”

Thank you to the AGFC for your key efforts in working towards meeting the goals and objectives of the CWCS.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kay McQueen".

Kay McQueen
Director of Conservation Programs



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

Ouachita National Forest

P.O. Box 1270
Hot Springs, AR 71901

File Code: 1500

Date: September 15, 2005

Dear Scott Henderson, Arkansas Game and Fish Commission Director

You and your Staff are to be commended for your leadership in developing the Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy (CWCS). The Arkansas CWCS is a unique tool that represents all wildlife species, not just demand species, and I believe it represents an ideological shift to comprehensive management for ecosystem health.

Native ecological communities across the Southern Region are increasingly threatened by fragmented land ownership and development, disrupted natural disturbance regimes, and non-native invasive species. In response to these threats, conservation agencies and organizations have been devoting considerable resources to developing a consistent framework for conservation plans. These plans include the Ecoregional Conservation Plans of The Nature Conservancy, Physiographic Area Conservation Plans by Partners in Flight, Revised National Forest Land and Resource Management Plans, and Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategies (CWCS) of State agencies.

The Arkansas Game and Fish Commission (AGFC) has demonstrated a high level of commitment to this effort by providing leadership in the CWCS initiative. As a result of partnership efforts, conservation targets, key factors, and measurable ecological indicators, have been developed for habitat relative to over 370 aquatic and terrestrial wildlife species. The AGFC Staff and key partners including the Arkansas Natural Heritage Commission, the Arkansas Chapter of the Nature Conservancy, the Audubon Society, Conservation Southeast, Inc., Natural Resource Conservation Service, USDA Cooperative Extension Service, USDI Fish and Wildlife Service, the Ouachita and Ozark-St. Francis National Forests, as well as many local academic scientific experts throughout the State, have cooperatively developed and populated this database.

The process and database developed through this partnership have spread beyond this original application and are currently being utilized in plan development and revisions in other national forests, as well as by other agencies. The Forest Services appreciates and commends the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission's dedication and commitment to the Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy. Together, all who have contributed have helped craft a balanced strategic plan appropriate to the times and the challenges in managing lands for the benefit of all.

Sincerely,

/s/ Alan G. Newman
ALAN G. NEWMAN
Forest Supervisor



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The Department of
Arkansas
Heritage

Mike Huckabee, Governor
Cathie Matthews, Director

Arkansas Arts Council

"
Arkansas Historic
Preservation Program

"
Delta Cultural Center

"
Historic Arkansas Museum

"
Mosaic Templars
Cultural Center

"
Old State House Museum



Arkansas Natural
Heritage Commission

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<http://naturalheritage.com>

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September 19, 2005

Scott Henderson
Arkansas Game and Fish Commission
2 Natural Resources Drive
Little Rock, AR 72205

Dear Mr. Henderson,

The Arkansas Natural Heritage Commission would like to thank you for the opportunity to assist in the development of the Arkansas Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy. We appreciate the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission for providing the leadership for this extensive, cooperative vision for conserving the wildlife species in greatest need of conservation in Arkansas.

The Arkansas Natural Heritage Commission is committed to providing additional assistance as needed. We look forward to working with you and other partners in the execution of this important strategy.

Sincerely,

Thomas Foti

Tom Foti
Research Chief



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Little Rock, AR 72201
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Fax: 501-244-2231
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September 21, 2005

Scott Henderson
Director
Arkansas Game and Fish Commission
#2 Natural Resources Drive
Little Rock, AR 72205

Dear Scott:

I am writing in support of the Comprehensive State Conservation Wildlife Strategy (CSCWS) program as implemented in Arkansas. The Arkansas CSCWS is making possible today a wildlife program that was only a dream two decades ago. With the exception of excellent hunting and fishing programs designed to manage game species, no intentional effort was made to study, to protect, and to manage non-game species, unless those species were listed as endangered or threatened by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The state conservation tax brought greater equity to wildlife management, but the State Wildlife Grants (SWG) available through the CSCWS has finally brought full equity for all animal species in the state.

Not only is the health of smallmouth populations closely watched, but now stream darters and mussels are accorded status and valued as indicators of aquatic habitat health. Not only are ducks and geese monitored, but raptors and warblers are counted each year with great interest and precision. Indeed, it's feels like a new day has arrived in the Natural State.

In closing, I wish to call attention to the exceptional people you have gathered to guide the CSCWS program. John Sunderland, Doyle Shook, Jane Anderson, and David Goad are outstanding and a credit to the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission. I have total confidence in their management and administrative abilities.

I sincerely hope this program survives the budget axe in Washington, D.C. The future health of our nation depends on healthy ecosystems and a balance between the built and natural communities. The CSCWS helps to assure that balance. Thank you for this opportunity to write in support of the CSCWS.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ken Smith".

Kenneth L. Smith
State Director

cc: John Sunderland
Jane Anderson



September 26, 2005

Scott Henderson, Director
Arkansas Game and Fish Commission
2 Natural Resources Drive
Little Rock, AR 72205

Dear Mr. Henderson:

The University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture Cooperative Extension Service was pleased to partner with Arkansas Game and Fish Commission to fulfill the requirements for public involvement as part of the Arkansas Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy (CWCS).

Our county Extension agents and specialists were engaged in facilitating the five regional meetings with farmers and private landowners held throughout the state. The input reported from the meetings, the website, and the statewide survey not only contributed to the CWCS plan, but also benefited our natural resource program. In our 2005 strategic plan, one objective was to aid citizens, farmers, and natural resource managers with understanding the complex of natural resource interests and management alternatives. The CWCS provided a perfect venue for addressing that need.

We look forward to continued opportunities to work with your agency in developing an informed constituency regarding our wildlife resources in Arkansas.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ivory W. Lyles".

Dr. Ivory Lyles
Associate Vice President of Agriculture
Cooperative Extension Service
University of Arkansas

Cc: Milo Shult, Tom Riley, Becky McPeake

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University of Arkansas, United States Department of Agriculture and County Governments Cooperating
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Road Map to the Eight Elements

Congress identified eight required elements to be addressed in these wildlife conservation plans. Further, the plan must identify and focus on the “species in greatest need of conservation,” yet address the “full array of wildlife” and wildlife-related issues. They must provide and make use of:

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

The following section is a guide to how Arkansas addressed the eight required elements.

Element 1. Information on the distribution and abundance of species of wildlife, including low and declining populations as the State fish and wildlife agency deems appropriate, that are indicative of the diversity and health of the State's wildlife;

Locations: The methodology of selecting, scoring and ranking **species that are indicative of the diversity and health of the State's wildlife** is provided in Section 2. Species of Greatest Conservation Need on pages 2-8.

Lists of SGCN presented by taxa group and ranked by Species Priority Score are provided in Section 2. Species of Greatest Conservation Need on pages 9-23.

Each SGCN has an individual Species Report located on pages 44-1120. Refer to this for Species Priority Score. Species Priority Scores reflect the **abundance** and population trend of the SGCN.

Refer to Species Reports on pages 44-1120 for occurrence data mapping for SGCN. Occurrence Maps are located on the first page of each Species Report. Occurrence data mapping reflects the **distribution** of the SGCN.

Refer to Species Reports on pages 44-1120 for ecoregions, ecobasins, terrestrial and aquatic habitats associated with SGCN. The ecoregions and habitats associated with SGCN represent **distribution**.

The entire list of SGCN is listed by Species Priority Score in Appendix 2.1 (pages 1659-1668).

Element 2: Descriptions of locations and relative condition of key habitats and community types essential to conservation of species identified in (1);

Locations: Refer to Section 3. The Ecoregions of Arkansas on pages 1121-1230. Within each ecoregion description is an **ecoregion map, description, associated SGCN and associated habitats**. Ecoregions are ranked by conservation priority based on overall importance to SGCN.

Section 4. Terrestrial Habitat, pages 1231-1542, has **descriptions, locations, key factors and indicators**, and, where available, **relative condition** of terrestrial habitats. Each terrestrial habitat is ranked according to its overall importance to SGCN associated with it.

Section 5. Aquatic Habitats, pages 1543-1582, has **descriptions, maps and indicators of aquatic condition**. Each aquatic habitat is ranked according to its overall importance to SGCN associated with it.

Descriptions of relative condition of key habitats and community types essential to conservation of species are discussed in Appendices 3.1, 3.2 and 3.3 (TNC's Ecoregional Assessments), pages 1677-1824.

Element 3: Descriptions of problems which may adversely affect species identified in (1) or their habitats, and priority research and survey efforts needed to identify factors which may assist in restoration and improved conservation of these species and habitats;

Locations: Refer to Section 2. Species of Greatest Conservation Need in the Species Reports, pages 44-1120, for data gaps or research needs associated with each SGCN. This is **research needed to identify factors which may assist in restoration and improved conservation of these species and habitats.**

Refer to the Species Reports, pages 44-1120. Each Species Report lists **problems (threats and sources) which may adversely affect each SGCN.**

Refer to Section 3. The Ecoregions of Arkansas, pages 1121-1230, for tables that summarize and rank the **problems faced.** Problems faced by SGCN are presented in each ecoregion section.

Element 4: Descriptions of conservation actions proposed to conserve the identified species and habitats and priorities for implementing such actions;

Locations: Refer to the Species Reports, pages 44-1120. Each Species Report has a section which lists **conservation actions associated with each SGCN.**

Refer to Section 3. The Ecoregions of Arkansas, pages 1121-1230, **Conservation Actions** ranked to provide guidance for prioritizing the implementation of such actions. Each ecoregion has a list of Conservation Action categories associated with it.

Element 5: Proposed plans for monitoring species identified in (1) and their habitats, for monitoring the effectiveness of the conservation actions proposed in (4), and for adapting these conservation actions to respond appropriately to new information or changing conditions;

Locations: Refer to Section 1. **Wildlife Action Plan** on pages xxvi - xxxi.

Refer to Section 2. Species Reports, pages 44-1120, for a list of **species-specific monitoring actions.**

Refer to Section 4. Terrestrial Habitats, page 1236, for **monitoring associated with conservation actions.**

Refer to Section 5. Aquatic Habitat, page 1577, for **monitoring associated with conservation actions.**

Element 6: Descriptions of procedures to review the plan at intervals not to exceed ten years;

Location: Refer to Section 1. **Wildlife Action Plan**, page xxxiv.

Element 7: Plans for coordinating the development, implementation, review, and revision of the plan with Federal, State, and local agencies and Indian tribes that manage significant land and water areas within the State or administer programs that significantly affect the conservation of identified species and habitats.

Location: Refer to “Major partners,” page viii for a discussion of teams and partnerships involved in producing the AWAP.

Refer to Section 6. Informing and engaging the public on pages 1636-1637 for description of website.

Refer to Section 6. Reaching out to the scientific community, pages 1599-1603; 1636.

Refer to Section 6. Native American contact, page 1629.

Element 8: Congress also affirmed through this legislation, that broad public participation is an essential element of developing and implementing these plans, the projects that are carried out while these plans are developed, and the Species in Greatest Need of Conservation that Congress has indicated such programs and projects are intended to emphasize.

Location: Section 6. Informing and engaging the public (pages 1584-1638) documents outreach and public participation.
