

State Wildlife Action Plan Revision FAQs - WSFR

State Wildlife Action Plan Revision

Frequently Asked Questions

Updated October 17, 2014

1. What are the “eight elements” that must be addressed in the State Wildlife Action Plans (Plans)?

As attached to the *Guidance for Wildlife Action Plan Review and Revisions* (2007), complete Plans must contain the following information.

1. The distribution and abundance of species of wildlife, including low and declining populations as each State fish and wildlife agency deems appropriate, that are indicative of the diversity and health of wildlife of the State (these species are now referred to as Species of Greatest Conservation Need or SGCN);
2. The location and relative condition of key habitats and community types essential to the conservation of each State's SGCN;
3. The problems which may adversely affect SGCN or their habitats, and priority research and surveys needed to identify factors which may assist in restoration and improved conservation of SGCN and their habitats;
4. The actions necessary to conserve SGCN and their habitats and priorities for implementing such conservation actions;
5. The provisions for periodic monitoring of SGCN and their habitats, for monitoring the effectiveness of conservation actions, and for adapting conservation actions as appropriate to respond to new information or changing conditions;
6. Each State's provisions to review its Strategy at intervals not to exceed ten years;
7. Each State's provisions for coordination during the development, implementation, review, and revision of its Strategy with Federal, State, and local agencies and Indian
8. Tribes that manage significant areas of land or water within the State, or administer programs that significantly affect the conservation of species or their habitats; and
9. Each State's provisions to provide the necessary public participation in the development, revision, and implementation of its Strategy.

Additional guidance developed jointly by the Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration (WSFR) Program and the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (AFWA) is available in the “sub-elements”; however, States are not required to address each of the sub-elements in the State Wildlife Action Plans.

2. Should the Plan revisions be submitted with an official letter?

Yes. A letter, signed by the Director of the State fish and wildlife agency responsible for the submission, should accompany the Plan.

3. Should the State identify significant changes made to the Plan and how the revised Plan continues to address the eight elements (see *Guidance for Wildlife Action Plan Review and Revisions, 2007*)?

Yes. The 2007 Guidance describes specific requirements for additional information that must be submitted along with the updated Plan:

- A summary of any significant changes, where in the Plan those changes are to be found, and documentation describing how the current version of the Action Plan adequately addresses the required eight elements, including an up-to-date public review process specified in elements 7 and 8;
- A “Road map” that provides a summary of the location of the elements in the Plan, so reviewers to locate revisions in Action Plan.

This information may be submitted as a single document with clearly labeled sections, or as separate documents.

4. How should the State submit interactive web features or databases that accompany the revised Plan?

The State may include a web-based tool along with their Plan, and include a printed example of the tool with an explanation and instructions showing how to access it. Access may be provided to the Regional Review Team (RRT) through a website or with an accompanying CD. Access to any web database will be the State's responsibility and it must be readily accessible to the RRT to be considered part of the Plan. Electronic resources may accompany but cannot take the place of the submitted hard copy.

5. Should the revised Plan address all species groups, even those outside the State fish and wildlife agency's jurisdiction, such as insects?

Yes. Congress intended that the revised Plans be comprehensive documents for all wildlife in a State, regardless of jurisdiction. However, the criteria used to designate Species of Greatest Conservation Need are determined by each State in conjunction with stakeholders and partners. Therefore, a smaller subset of wildlife in a state may be designated as Species of Greatest Conservation Need, with specific conservation actions designed to address the threats to those species. If limited information about a species group is available, a State may include a description of how they are collecting and identifying this information for future revisions of the Plan. Existing species management plans, particularly for species that may be under the jurisdiction of another government entity, may be incorporated by reference with a brief summary included in the Plan.

6. Should the revised Plan include a list of species of greatest conservation need (SGCN)?

Yes. The list of SGCN will meet the requirements of the first element (see Q&A #1).

7. May the Plan include game species that are also species of greatest conservation need?

Yes. Species that are hunted or fished and are in great need of conservation may be included on a State's species list. For requirements relating to public review of additional species to be added to the list of SGCN, see Q&A #12.

8. May the Plan include plants?

Congress' definition of "wildlife" in the legislation did not include plants; however, a State may choose to incorporate plants in the development of the Plan (see Q&A #9 for related guidance).

9. May the Plan include conservation actions, such as wildlife education, recreation, and law enforcement that are not eligible for funding under the State Wildlife Grants program?

Yes. A State may include other needs beyond the required eight elements. However, funding for these actions with State Wildlife Grant funds is restricted to eligible activities identified in the Service's [policy](#).

10. May the Plan include conservation actions that cannot be conducted by the State agency alone?

Yes. The Plan's conservation actions are not intended to be for the State fish and wildlife agency only to carry out. They include all the actions that need to be taken to conserve SGCN and their habitats. A variety of non-State conservation partners may contribute to implementing the identified actions.

11. Should the revised Plan be developed with input from agencies other than the State fish and wildlife agency?

Yes. As required in element 7, the State fish and wildlife agency must describe how it gathered input from Federal, State, and local agencies and Indian tribes that manage significant land and water areas.

12. What must a State do to demonstrate adequate public involvement in the revision of a Plan?

The State must ensure that the general public has an opportunity to review and comment on the revised Plan and should provide written description of this process as part of the revision. At a minimum, the State should inform the public that a draft Plan is available for review and request comments over a reasonable period of time (e.g., 30 days). Notifying the public of the State's intent to revise its Plan early in the revision process is also considered a best practice.

13. Are State Plans required to address coordination with adjoining States in revising their Plans?

No. States are encouraged to coordinate, but they are not required to address this coordination with neighboring States in their revised Plans. Many States have worked together on common wildlife conservation issues, including sharing of species lists and comparing drafts to look for commonality and consistency.

14. To what degree should States bordering Canada and Mexico coordinate with these countries?

Describing collaboration with adjacent countries is not part of a required element. However, if species of conservation need and their habitats are shared with these countries, the Plans would benefit from this information and any identified joint conservation actions.

15. What are the minimum requirements for Plan review prior to October 1, 2015?

States must review their Plans by October 1, 2015, or by the date specified in their original approved Plan (if before this date). The updated Plan and summary documentation submitted prior by this deadline must demonstrate, at a minimum, that the entire Plan was examined and that all of the required eight elements were met, including an up-to-date public review as specified in elements 7 and 8. If no changes were made, the State must document and explain why none were necessary and identify the process used to make that determination.

16. What are the consequences if a State does not submit the comprehensive review of its Plan by October 1, 2015, or the date identified in the State's currently approved Plan when a full review or revision is scheduled for completion?

The State is not entitled to receive newly apportioned funds from the SWG program until the reviewed Plan is submitted.

17. What are the Regional Review Teams (RRTs) and how do they function in the State Wildlife Action Plan approval process?

The RRTs were an integral part of the original Plan evaluation process, and are the entity which accepts and reviews updated Plans submitted by the States. The RRTs consist of two members: the Assistant Regional Director, or the Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration (WSFR) Chief or a designee, and a State Director. RRTs are responsible for ensuring that submitted Plans meet all requirements described in the [Guidance for Wildlife Action Plan Review and Revisions](#) (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 2007), including the Congressionally-defined "eight elements."

18. In what format should the revised Plan be submitted and where should it be sent?

The State should consult with its RRT members for requirements regarding submission format (electronic or hard copy, number of copies, etc.). See the Table, below, for RRT members and Service contact information. You may send your revised Plan to your Service Region at the address given in the Table; Service staff will forward copies to the RRT members.

19. Once a final Plan is submitted, when will the RRT and Director provide a decision to the State?

The RRT is committed to providing as timely a review as possible. The RRT intends to do a thorough job in reviewing each Plan and providing a recommendation to the Director. The Director will in turn send a letter to each State with his decision. The RRT will work with States to accommodate specific timing/scheduling issues. WSFR encourages States to submit Plans earlier rather than later, to avoid a backlog in 2015.

20. Can a draft Plan be submitted to the RRT for review and comment?

No. There is no formal review of working drafts by the RRT; however, states may ask their Regional WSFR office for informal feedback prior to submission. Once the State has finalized the document, it should be submitted in final form to the WSFR office for distribution to the RRT members. See Q&A #18 for more information.

21. What happens when the revised Plan is formally submitted to the RRT?

The RRT will review the revised Plan. After requesting any clarifications and revisions as necessary, the RRT will make a recommendation to the Service Director to approve, disapprove or conditionally approve the Plan.

22. What is conditional approval and what happens if the revised Plan is conditionally approved by the Service Director?

If a revised Plan is conditionally approved, the State will receive a letter from the Fish and Wildlife Service Director summarizing additional required information. The State will then have six months after receipt of the Fish and Wildlife Service Director's letter to resubmit a revised Plan for approval. During those six months, the State is eligible to receive State Wildlife Grants Program funds. However, activities of new grants must be based on the priorities of the existing Plan or be documented as emerging issues, as described in the Service's [policy](#).

23. What happens if the Plan is disapproved by the Director?

If a State fails to meet the requirements of a conditional approval, the Plan is disapproved and the State is no longer entitled to receive newly apportioned funds from the State Wildlife Grants Program. Should the State elect to submit a revised Plan in the future, it may do so but, until a Plan is approved, the State will not be entitled to receive any new SWG funds.

24. If a State submits a revised Plan prior to October 1, 2015, when must it submit the next comprehensive review of its Plan?

The next comprehensive review of Plans will be due 10 years after the date of approval following the first review, or October 1, 2025, whichever is sooner.

25. Will the State Director on the RRT review his/her State's Plan?

No. That State's Plan will be submitted to a different RRT to complete the review process. The RRT may or may not be from the submitting State's Region.

Table 1. RRT Members and Contact Information by Service Region.

States, Commonwealths, the District of Columbia, and Territories by U.S Fish and Wildlife Service Region	RRT Members and Service Contact Information
<p>Region 1: American Samoa, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Guam, Hawaii, Idaho, Oregon, and Washington</p>	<p>Service RRT Member: Acting WSFR Chief</p> <p>State RRT Member(s): Virgil Moore (ID), Tony Wasley (NV)</p> <p>Mailing Address:</p> <p>U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Office of Migratory Birds & State Programs Wildlife & Sport Fish Restoration 911 N.E. 11th Avenue Portland, Oregon 97232-4181</p> <p>Contact Person:</p> <p>Karla Drewsen</p> <p>503-231-2389</p> <p>karla_drewsen@fws.gov</p>

Region 2: Arizona, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas

Service RRT Member: Cliff Schleusner

State RRT Member(s): Larry Voyles (AZ)

Mailing Address:

Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
P.O. Box 1306
Albuquerque, NM 87103-1306

Contact Person:

Vanessa Martinez

505-248-7452

vanessa_martinez@fws.gov

Region 3: Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Ohio, and Wisconsin

Service RRT Member: Dave Scott

State RRT Member(s): Mark Reiter (IN), William Moritz (MI)

Mailing Address:

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service - Region 3
Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program
5600 American Blvd. West, Suite 990
Bloomington, MN 55437-1458

Contact Person: Jessica Piispanen

612-713-5142

jessica_piispanen@fws.gov

Region 4: Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, South Carolina, Tennessee, and the U.S. Virgin Islands

Service RRT Member: Mike Piccirilli

State RRT Member(s): Dan Forster (GA)

Mailing Address:

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
Division of Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program
1875 Century Blvd., Suite 240
Atlanta, GA 30345

Contact Person: Diana Swan

404-679-7058

diana_swan@fws.gov

Region 5: Connecticut, Delaware, the District of Columbia, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, Virginia, and West Virginia

Service RRT Member: Acting WSFR Chief

State RRT Member(s): Patricia Riexinger (NY)

Mailing Address:

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
Wildlife & Sport Fish Restoration Program , Region 5
300 Westgate Center Drive, Hadley, MA 01035

Contact Person: Dee Blanton

413-253-8513

dee_blanton@fws.gov

Region 6: Colorado, Kansas, Nebraska, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Utah, and Wyoming

Service RRT Member: Clint Riley

State RRT Member(s): James Douglas (NE)

Mailing Address:

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
Wildlife & Sport Fish Restoration Program , Region 6
P.O. Box 25486

Denver, CO 80225

Contact Person: Amanda Horvath

303-236-4414

amanda_horvath@fws.gov

Region 7: Alaska

Service RRT Member: Pete Probasco

State RRT Member(s): Virgil Moore (ID), Tony Wasley (NV)

Mailing Address:

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
Wildlife & Sport Fish Restoration Program , Region 7

1011 East Tudor Road, MS 261
Anchorage, Alaska 99503

Contact Person: vacant, TBD

Region 8: California and Nevada

Service RRT Member: Eric Davis

State RRT Member(s): Virgil Moore (ID), Tony Wasley (NV), Bruce Dale (AK)

Mailing Address:

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Pacific Southwest Region
Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program
2800 Cottage Way, W-1729
Sacramento, CA 95825

Contact Person: Bart Prose

(916) 978-6152

bart_prose@fws.gov

Notes/References

1. Please see *Best Practices for State Wildlife Action Plans*, Chapter 5, (<http://teaming.com/sites/default/files/SWAP%20Best%20Practices%20Report%20Nov%202012.pdf>) for further guidance on working with your RRT during the comprehensive review process (Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, Teaming With Wildlife Committee, State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP) Best Practices Working Group. 2012. *Best Practices for State Wildlife Action Plans—Voluntary Guidance to States for Revision and Implementation*. Washington, D.C.: Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies. 80 pages). Page 27 of the *Best Practices* document includes a handy checklist of required information.
2. Please see *Best Practices for State Wildlife Action Plans* (<http://teaming.com/sites/default/files/SWAP%20Best%20Practices%20Report%20Nov%202012.pdf>), pg. 10, for recommended taxonomic standards. You may also wish to consider the taxonomy used by TRACS and/or the USGS Species Conservation Analysis Tool. Also see <http://teaming.com/sites/default/files/SWAP%20Pollinator%20Report%20FINAL%204-2013.pdf> for voluntary guidance on incorporating pollinators (The Heinz Center. 2013. *Pollinators and the State Wildlife Action Plans: Voluntary Guidance for State Wildlife Agencies*. Washington, D.C., 20 pp).
3. Please see *Hidden in Plain Sight* (<http://www.natureserve.org/biodiversity-science/publications/hidden-plain-sight-role-plants-state-wildlife-action-plans>) for additional guidance on incorporating plants.
4. Please see *Best Practices for State Wildlife Action Plans* (<http://teaming.com/sites/default/files/SWAP%20Best%20Practices%20Report%20Nov%202012.pdf>) for further guidance on coordinating with outside agencies.
5. Please see *Best Practices for State Wildlife Action Plans* (<http://teaming.com/sites/default/files/SWAP%20Best%20Practices%20Report%20Nov%202012.pdf>) for further guidance on creating consistency across states.
6. Please see <http://teaming.com/tool/incorporating-international-conservation-swaps-updated-october-2013> for further guidance on incorporating international conservation.