



Statement of Purpose State Wildlife Action Plan 2025 Revision

Since 2001, when U.S. Congress first funded the State and Tribal Wildlife Grants (SWG) Program, each state, territory, and the District of Columbia has been required to develop comprehensive plans to guide the conservation of nongame species. The SWG Program addresses important wildlife issues that have traditionally been underfunded, and it is now the nation's core program for preventing endangered species listings. To receive funds, each state and territory must develop a "Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy," better known as a State Wildlife Action Plan or SWAP.

In 2005, each state submitted its first State Wildlife Action Plan to Congress. State plans addressed eight elements required by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to receive SWG Program funds. Plans are revised and updated on a 10-year cycle to explore and implement the most innovative approaches and to reflect changing conditions.

Tennessee's SWAP is a collaborative, living guide, intended for use by all Tennesseans to conserve, protect, and manage wildlife, fish, and plant species of Greatest Conservation Need (GCN) and the ecological communities they need to survive. A systematic analysis of observational data and conditions across the state drives each 10-year revision. After identifying species and habitats most in need of protection and/or restoration, stressors affecting those species and habitats are assessed for mitigation. Lastly, through the evaluation of partner priorities and resources, the revision team stacks the resulting data layers to reveal Conservation Opportunity Areas (COAs), in which stewardship projects can be anticipated to attain maximum impact.

The strategies outlined and described within the SWAP are guided by leading scientists, conservationists, private landowners, and other stakeholders to protect and address the decline of GCN species and their habitats. Federal, state, and local governments, private organizations, and individuals are engaged during SWAP development to prioritize, plan for, and fund conservation across Tennessee.

By engaging conservation-focused governmental agencies and private organizations during the SWAP development process, we seek to maximize project efficiency and achieve the following outcomes through the 2025 SWAP revision:

- Identify conservation priorities and goals shared between partners,
- Leverage resources through accountable collaboration
- Cooperatively monitor environmental and disease stressors,
- Assess priority conservation areas of opportunity, and
- Work together to plan and guide future conservation successes across Tennessee.

This revision includes critical updates to species status and needs, monitoring guidelines, and disease surveillance. Additionally, due to the increasing rate of land development, urban sprawl, and associated impacts on native species, we are incorporating a new chapter on Private Lands to highlight conservation resources available to private landowners. By involving more partners, we focus Tennessee’s conservation objectives and strategies and enhance collaboration in the protection and recovery of GCN species. Lastly, the 2025 revision will include analyses of species and habitat

conservation priorities shared between Tennessee and neighboring states in the Southeast Region to foster collaboration and improved results, and to avoid unnecessary duplication of effort.

The Eight Required Elements

Congress identified eight required elements to be addressed in these wildlife conservation plans. Further, the plan must identify and be focused 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.