

NCSE WILDLIFE HABITAT POLICY RESEARCH PROGRAM
Project Overview
Research Project 1A

A Distributed Graduate Seminar to Analyze the Priorities, Obstacles and Opportunities for Implementing U.S. State Wildlife Action Plans

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To be eligible to receive funds from the State Wildlife Grants Program created by Congress in 2000, every U.S. state and territory was required to develop a comprehensive wildlife conservation strategy, also known as a state wildlife action plan. Most of these plans represent the first statewide synthesis of information on wildlife species, habitats, threats, conservation priorities and opportunities.

Key Issue

Policy makers and conservation organizations desired a national synthesis of the state wildlife action plans and their initial implementation to document:

- impacts of the plans on conservation activities
- current challenges to implementation
- enabling mechanisms that have accelerated conservation progress in some states.

Project Objective

The objective was to assess conservation impacts, challenges, and enabling mechanisms during initial implementation of state wildlife action plans across the United States.

Approach

In the fall of 2007, the project team conducted a graduate seminar distributed across eight universities to analyze state wildlife action plans and their initial implementation. They used a five-step process:

1. project planning
2. pilot seminars and background research
3. distributed graduate seminars
4. synthesis
5. communication and outreach.

Key Findings

There were high expectations that collectively the state plans would define a national wildlife conservation strategy. In practice, variability among the plans limits our ability to aggregate them to regional or national levels.

The state wildlife action plans have invigorated state-level conservation planning for wildlife species.

Inadequate funding is the single greatest challenge to implementing the conservation strategies. A second challenge is engaging private landowners and local governments in planning and implementation efforts

The short history of the wildlife action plans and their implementation includes an impressive range of activities and progress in wildlife habitat conservation, but there are great differences among states in the pace and effectiveness of plan implementation.

Investments that should strengthen the role of the state programs in wildlife habitat conservation include:

- investing in capacity building and training of state wildlife diversity program staff and their partners in areas such as data integration, analysis and synthesis; conservation effectiveness monitoring; spatial planning support systems; grant writing; and education and outreach
- investing in projects with a strong participatory component and clear alignment of public and private interests
- targeting efforts that engage county and local governments, particularly those that build and maintain relationships and enable coordinated assessment and planning
- supporting programs and research in conservation incentive programs
- hosting a forum to inform the next cycle of state wildlife conservation strategy planning that would include other partners as well as agency coordinators.

Deliverables

A [project web site](http://www.biogeog.ucsb.edu/SWAP/SWAP-home2.html) <<http://www.biogeog.ucsb.edu/SWAP/SWAP-home2.html>> includes project information, a final report and state and regional reports.

The final report will be condensed into a summary for policy makers.

Three papers are being prepared for peer-reviewed journals, and seminar participants are expected to produce other journal articles.

Presentations are being made to agency staff and to wildlife habitat conservation policymakers, managers and practitioners at conferences and NGO board meetings.