

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

Analysis of U.S. State and Local Policies

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To be eligible to receive federal funds from the State Wildlife Grants Program created by Congress in 2000, every U.S. state and territory was required to develop a state wildlife action plan. These plans offer unprecedented opportunities for state agencies to coordinate wildlife conservation efforts, and [they](#) also provide opportunities for other organizations to conserve wildlife.

Key Issue

Most agencies and organizations whose mission is to conserve wildlife through land acquisition, hunting regulations and habitat conservation agreements don't control sufficient funds or command enough national attention to meet the nation's wildlife conservation needs. However, many public and private organizations whose primary focus is not on wildlife are well positioned to practice effective wildlife conservation.

Project Objective

The primary objective was to identify high-value opportunities to make state wildlife action plans more effective by identifying key characteristics of existing state and local public and private land-use and land-management activities that could make use of these plans.

Approach

The investigators set out to identify factors that promote success in wildlife habitat conservation efforts that are:

- led by local governments
- achieved as secondary benefits of locally implemented state and federal government programs that aren't primarily focused on habitat
- realized through private land-development investments.

They conducted nine case studies of organizations that have made habitat conservation an important secondary objective. The studies included:

- local government land-use planning and growth management actions that support habitat conservation
- infrastructure programs with other goals that can generate wildlife habitat benefits

- private land developments that incorporate habitat conservation in ways that meet regional habitat needs.

Key Findings

The following characteristics contribute to successful wildlife habitat conservation as a product of a program or project:

- When wildlife habitat is a secondary objective, it is important to create and sustain an external independent entity that is primarily concerned with wildlife habitat.
- The program or project must maintain continuing access to conservation science.
- Commitment to habitat elements of a program or project must be stated often as part of the brand identity.
- It is important to connect conserved habitat regionally with other lands and to influence the actions of entities beyond the project participants.
- Projects and programs must educate the public and surrounding community about native wildlife and habitats.
- Recognition by a certification program can provide accountability and continuity, help to validate the brand as habitat-friendly, and reinforce the habitat goals.

Deliverables

Deliverables include:

- a book featuring the case studies and key elements of successful integration of habitat conservation (R. Kihlsinger and J. McElfish, *Nature Friendly Land Use Practices at Multiple Scales*, Environmental Law Institute, Washington, DC, in press)
- presentations at the 2008 meetings of the Wildlife Society and the American Planning Association
- continuing communication with planners, developers, academics, state agencies, and state wildlife managers through dissemination of the book and briefing materials and presentations at planning and wildlife conferences.

Information about the project is available on ELI's Land and Biodiversity website at:

<http://www.eli.org/Program_areas/land_biodiversity.cfm>.