

Chapter Nine

Plan Review, Coordination, and Implementation

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

Required Element #7: Plans for coordinating the development, implementation, review, and revision of the plan with federal, state, and local conservation agencies and Indian 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.

Wildlife Action Plan Review and Revision

Comprehensive review/revision is required at least every ten years. In addition, more frequent and/or less comprehensive revisions can be conducted at any time. Too-frequent revision cycles can stress the capacity of the Implementation Committee and its working groups, but changing conditions may necessitate updates to the Plan at points between required ten-year revisions. Between 2005 and 2015, this Plan underwent one major revision (2012), and one comprehensive review and revision (2015). The meaning of these terms is explained below:

Comprehensive Reviews –

- Required ten years from date of last approved comprehensive review,
- States must demonstrate evidence that the entire plan, including all Eight Required Elements, was assessed by the State Fish & Wildlife Agency, stakeholders, and the public,
- Any decision not to revise certain sections should be based on a review and resulting agreement that the section(s) remain current and relevant to the revised sections.

Major Modifications –

- May occur at any time and does not re-set the ten-year timeline,
- No requirement for review of entire plan or all Eight Required Elements,
- States must demonstrate evidence of coordination among relevant agencies during the revision, and that the revised portion(s) of the Plan was reviewed by the public.

2015 Comprehensive Review and Revision Process

Work on the 2015 comprehensive review began in the fall of 2012, when DNR notified the USFWS of its intent to review and revise the IWAP, and the Implementation Committee gathered for a revision kickoff meeting. In 2013, surveys of conservation partners both internal and external to DNR were conducted to gather input on which portions of the Plan needed the most attention during the revision process. Respondents were also queried about their desired level of involvement in Plan development and/or implementation.

Survey Results

The two issues most frequently identified as “very important” issues to address for the revision were updating the list of SGCN and setting goals for protection and restoration of habitats. When asked to rank the Eight Required Elements in terms of which needed the most attention during the revision process, respondents prioritized Element 1 (species distribution and abundance), Element 4 (conservation actions), and Element 7 (coordination with partners).

External partners were asked whether the Plan still resonates within their organization. Responses were generally positive, with 75% responding “yes,” and 6% responding “somewhat.” Sample comments received include:

“The plan is useful and pertinent.”

“Yes, it is still relevant and used in identifying resources of concern, along with other documents.”

External partners were asked “What are the benefits to your organization from being engaged in the IWAP?” Sample responses include:

“Helps us identify where we implement practices/habitat for certain species.”

“Partnering to share information and strategies in protecting and restoring wildlife species.”

External partners were also asked “what other benefits would your organization hope to gain from involvement, that have yet to be realized?” Sample responses include:

“Bringing Natural Resources importance more to the forefront of Iowans.”

“I think refinement and clearer strategies would be desirable.”

New Approaches Used in 2015 Revision

The 2015 revision instituted a process to assess the conservation status of all native, extant species (see Chapter 3). This work was conducted by the taxonomic subcommittees of the Wildlife Working Group. This process was lengthy, requiring 2-5 meetings for each subcommittee and could not have been accomplished without the dedication and hard work of individuals and organizations volunteering their time and expertise. The process was beneficial in ensuring that the same suite of criteria were applied to each species within each taxonomic group, as well as identifying which specific factors were associated with inclusion of a species on the list of SGCN.

These subcommittees also participated in the process of evaluating the threats to wildlife, described in (Chapter 5). This process was different than the original threat assessment because it separated the scope from the severity of each threat, and categorized threats based on a standardized hierarchy developed by Salafsky et al. (2008). Compiling the resulting information and updating the maps and text was handled by DNR for the most part, with input provided by conservation partners outside the agency on a frequent basis.

Coordination

No single entity – government conservation agency, private conservation organization or research institution – can implement all conservation actions in this Plan even if full funding is achieved. To access all the energy, expertise and enthusiasm that will be needed, an IWAP Implementation Committee with representatives from all stakeholder organizations was formed.

The first version of this Plan identified the need for such an Implementation team, and further recommended:

- Responsibility for identifying an Implementation Team chairperson, solicitation of team members and coordination of its activities should be vested in DNR as the statutory agency responsible for managing the state’s wildlife resources.

- Team members should represent state, Federal, county and local government wildlife and land management agencies and conservation organizations.
- Team members should have sufficient authority to speak for their agency or organization and be able to commit resources to carry out agreed-upon actions.

These recommendations were carried out. In addition, subsequent recommendations made by the Implementation Committee with regards to committee structure have been executed. Members of the Implementation Committee as of 2015 are identified in Appendix 1, as is the list of Working Groups and Subcommittees which complete the Implementation Committee structure.

Coordination during Development of Original Version of IWAP

Consultation was held with numerous government and private conservation organizations in the development of the IWAP - directly through their participation in the planning or review process or indirectly through review of wildlife conservation plans they had developed that included Iowa's SGCN. Participants the Advisory Group are listed in Appendix 2.

Guidance on Plan content and preparation was received from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, and the National Advisory Acceptance Team (NAAT). National Plan coordination meetings were attended by Iowa DNR staff in 2003 (Mesa, AZ and Madison, WI). The One Year Out conference held in Nebraska in 2004 was especially helpful. An interstate coordination meeting between representatives from Iowa, Missouri and Kansas was held early in the planning process to help identify interstate implementation efforts. A Plan status meeting with USFWS staff in February of 2005 and an early review of a Plan draft by USFWS staff also helped focus development of the final Plan.

Coordination during Plan Implementation and Comprehensive Review and Revision

The purpose of the Implementation Committee is to coordinate to the extent possible the many actions of government agencies at all levels that impact wildlife and its habitats in Iowa. A list of those agencies that have had input into Plan development or should be included in Plan implementation is provided below. Creation of the Implementation Committee is not intended to add another layer of bureaucracy or usurp the statutory authority, budget authority, or mission of any agency or NGO that seeks to improve the status of Iowa's wildlife. Cooperation with the IWAP is and should remain completely voluntary.

The mission of the Implementation Committee is to identify common priorities and interests, solidify working agreements, and focus members on conservation actions that meet the goals of the IWAP in the most financially efficient and timely manner possible. The Committee and its Working Groups also review progress toward IWAP visions, goals, and actions; identify barriers to progress and seek solutions that cross agency and organization lines.

Working Groups and their Subcommittees provide the level of deliberation and expertise necessary to develop operational plans to fulfill the goals and visions of the IWAP. Members should continue to include wildlife, recreation and outdoor education scientists; land and water managers, and experts in implementing programs in these fields. Working Group members should continue to have the technical expertise to:

- Review and explore program and planning options;
- Develop conceptual operational plans for conservation agencies, NGOs and private citizens to participate in;
- Develop and critically review technical proposals;
- Provide peer review for cooperating agencies operating plans;

- Develop conservation action and funding priorities for the Implementation Committee to consider;
- Identify strategic and operational plan shortcomings and recommend improvements.

Interagency Cooperation

Cooperation between agencies and organizations that manage public conservation lands in Iowa is essential to the successful implementation of IWAP. Federal, State, and local agencies which manage significant conservation land and water areas within Iowa include Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR), Iowa County Conservation Boards (CCBs), US Army Corps of Engineers (USACOE), and US Fish Wildlife Service (USFWS). All have working relationships at both the state and local levels.

Many of the recommended conservation actions must be carried out on private land. The US Department of Agriculture (USDA) provides funding and technical assistance to landowners for land conservation projects through its Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) and Farm Services Agency (FSA). Farm conservation programs and projects in Iowa are often delivered through partnerships involving agencies such as USDA, DNR, Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship (IDALS), Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs), as well as non-profit organizations such as Pheasants Forever. DNR has permanent positions on Iowa's USDA State Technical Committee and subcommittees that provide input into wildlife-friendly programs like WRE, CRP, and EQIP. Traditionally, NRCS and DNR have jointly funded DNR's Private Lands Program, which uses USDA funding to establish wildlife habitat on private land. DNR Private Lands Wildlife Biologists are co-located in NRCS offices to promote close interaction between the DNR, USDA staff and private landowners. All of these avenues should continue to be utilized to promote the concepts and management recommendations identified in this Plan.

Iowa has four US Army Corps of Engineers Reservoirs in the state. These reservoirs not only hold back flood waters but also comprise of thousands of acres of habitat including lake, upland and wetlands. Both the DNR wildlife and fisheries staff work with the USACOE to manage not only the water habitat for fish but also through long term leases to develop the habitat in the upper limits of the reservoirs for wildlife.

Iowa's eastern and western borders are defined by major river systems. DNR fisheries and wildlife staff are heavily involved with cooperative projects that involve the border rivers - Upper Mississippi River Conservation Committee (UMRCC), Mississippi Interstate Cooperative Resource Association (MICRA), MICRA Paddlefish/Sturgeon Recovery Work Group, Fish and Wildlife Work Group, Fish and Wildlife Interagency Committee, Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge and Port Louisa National Wildlife Refuge Comprehensive Conservation Plans (CCP), Upper Mississippi River Restoration Program (UMRR): including Upper Mississippi River Restoration Coordinating Committee (UMRR-CC), Long Term Monitoring (UMRR- LTRM), Habitat Rehabilitation and Enhancement Projects (UMRR-HREP), and Analysis team. Water Level Management Task Force, and Mississippi River Mussel Coordination Team.

DNR fisheries personnel are involved with the Missouri River Natural Resources Committee (MRNRC), the MRNRC Fish Technical Committee, Missouri River Mitigation Committee, Master Manual Review Committee, MICRA, MICRA Paddlefish/Sturgeon Recovery Work Group, USFWS Fish Passage Grants, and USACE Missouri River Recovery Program. They also coordinate fisheries issues with the eight MRB states to develop Missouri River recovery and ecosystem restoration plans.

Iowa DNR fisheries research personnel are coordinating shallow lakes management investigations with Minnesota DNR and Wisconsin DNR. Iowa DNR fisheries culture personnel work with drug (fish disease) issues with many state

and federal agencies. Iowa DNR staff is represented on the Topeka shiner recovery team that includes representatives from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Park Service, SDGFP, Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks, Minnesota DNR, Missouri Department of Conservation, South Dakota State University, University of Minnesota, and private consultants. Fisheries biologists with Topeka shiner populations in their management areas in Iowa work with the USFWS on critical habitat and habitat restoration on private land.

Aquatic nuisance species (ANS) issues are addressed by Iowa DNR fisheries personnel with support from several partnerships including the ANS Task Force, AFWA Invasive Species Committee, Mississippi River Basin Panel on ANS, Missouri River ANS Work Group, Midwest Invasive Plant Network, and Upper Mississippi River Asian Carp Coordination Team.

DNR staff also serves on a number of national and regional committees including:

- Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies and associated Committees
- Flyway Councils
 - The Mississippi Flyway Council
 - Mississippi Flyway Council Technical Section
 - Mississippi Flyway Council Nongame Technical Section
- Joint Ventures
 - Prairie Pothole Joint Venture Technical Committee and Board,
 - The Upper Mississippi River and Great Lakes Region Joint Venture Board,
- Landscape Conservation Cooperatives (LCCs)
 - Upper Midwest & Great Lakes LCC Steering Committee and Work Groups
 - Eastern Tallgrass Prairie and Big Rivers LCC Steering Committee and Topic Groups
 - Plains & Prairie Pothole LCC
- Midwest Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (MAFWA) Technical Working Committees
 - Midwest Deer and Turkey Study Group
 - Midwest Furbearer Group
 - Midwest Private Lands Working Group
 - Midwest Public Lands Working Group
 - Midwest Pheasant Study Group
 - Midwest Wildlife and Fish Health Committee
 - Midwest Climate Change Technical Committee
 - Midwest State Wildlife Action Plan Technical Committee
 - Midwest Aquatic Habitat Conservation Committee
 - MAFWA Hunter & Angler Recruitment & Retention Committee
- Midwest Coordinated Bird Monitoring Partnership
- National Bobwhite Conservation Initiative

All provide opportunities for review of plan activities and integration of conservation actions in other wildlife programs.

References Cited in Chapter Nine

Salafsky, N, D Salzer, AJ Stattersfield, C Hilton-Taylor, R Neugarten, SHM Butchart, B Collen, N Cox, LL Master, S O'Connor, and D Wilkie. 2008. A standard lexicon for biodiversity conservation: unified classifications of threats and actions. *Conservation Biology* 22:897-911.