

ARKANSAS
Wildlife Action
PLAN

2010 Executive Summary



Executive Summary

What is the Arkansas Wildlife Action Plan?

The Arkansas Wildlife Action Plan is a dynamic compendium of knowledge that is used to prioritize the research, monitoring and conservation actions required to address the conservation needs of 369 species of greatest conservation need in the context of 45 terrestrial habitats and 18 aquatic habitats in 7 ecoregions in Arkansas. It provides the essential scientific foundation and direction for actions and decisions to benefit wildlife conservation and an opportunity for state agencies, federal agencies and other conservation partners to fit together individual and coordinated roles in conservation efforts across the state.

Why did we create the Wildlife Action Plan?

Arkansas was required by Congress to prepare and submit a Wildlife Action Plan in order to retain funds provided by the State Wildlife Grants program and to be eligible for future funds.

Congress identified eight required elements to be addressed in 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.

Who is involved in creating and maintaining the Arkansas Wildlife Action Plan?

In addition to representatives of the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission, the Arkansas Natural Heritage Commission, Audubon Arkansas, The Nature Conservancy, U.S. Forest Service, The Arkansas Academy of Science, University of Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, several Arkansas Universities and private citizens. See Table 1.

Was Arkansas' plan approved?

Our plan was approved by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on January 17, 2007.

Where can I see a copy of the Wildlife Action Plan?

The 2,028-page document is available online at www.WildlifeArkansas.com. The database associated with it is updated as conservation actions are completed and additional information becomes available.

What if an issue arises after the AWAP was approved?

The Plan is intended to be flexible enough to address emerging issues. To date, Arkansas has received approval to add four emerging issues as fundable topics:

1. Climate change effects on Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN);
2. Wind energy development effects on mammalian and avian species of concern;
3. Effects of Fayetteville shale gas exploration and extraction on SGCN; and
4. White Nose Syndrome in bats.

Does the AWAP affect other programs?

Reports from Congress to the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies indicate that they are pleased with the targeted results that have occurred as a result of using Wildlife Action Plans to focus efforts. In the past two years, we have seen many millions of dollars come to Arkansas as a result of using conservation priorities developed in the AWAP that were incorporated into Farm Bill programs.

In 2008, Congress passed the Farm Bill which directed states to develop long term statewide assessments and strategies for forest resources. The Arkansas Forestry Commission is currently in the process of developing a statewide assessment and strategies plan that will fulfill both state and federal legislative mandates. The target date for completion is June 18, 2010, when it will be submitted to the Secretary of Agriculture. Our AWAP provides significant input into the process.

Currently, several Climate Change bills before Congress have proposed significant additional funding for habitat protection with important consequences for Arkansas using conservation priorities derived from the Arkansas Wildlife Action Plan.

What are State Wildlife Grants?

Federal funds are available to Arkansas through State Wildlife Grants to monitor, research and implement conservation action to address the needs of wildlife not addressed by funding available for game species or endangered species.

What must the funds be used for?

Congress intends that State Wildlife Grants should be used to address the species and their habitats identified in state Wildlife Action Plans. SWG funds must be used to address conservation needs, such as research, surveys, species and habitat management, and monitoring, identified within each state's plan.

Are matching funds from applicants required?

Yes. Applicants are required to provide 50 percent matching funds (ie., for a \$20,000 project, the applicant provides \$10,000 in cash or in-kind contribution). For Fiscal Year 2010, the match rate was reduced to a 35% match requirement to 65% in grant funds. Federal funds may not be used as match. Match can be "in-kind" effort or other value provided documentation of such meets federal approval.

On what criteria are proposals evaluated?

Each year, proposals are evaluated on the basis of the following criteria:

- 1) is feasible and practical in 2-3 year time period;
- 2) demonstrates cost-effectiveness;
- 3) addresses the priorities identified in the annual Request for Proposals; and
- 4) is within qualifications and abilities of organization/individuals proposing the project.

Who decides where the money goes?

The Arkansas Game and Fish Commission is responsible for administering State Wildlife Grants to support the implementation of the Arkansas Wildlife Action Plan. The process of determining funding priorities is described in Table 1.

How much money has Arkansas gotten from State Wildlife Grants so far?

FY 2001	\$ 566,536	FY 2006	\$ 695,695
FY 2002	\$ 906,478	FY 2007	\$ 695,695
FY 2003	\$ 673,699	FY 2008	\$ 706,832
FY 2004	\$ 714,925	FY 2009	\$ 711,348
FY 2005	\$ 713,115	FY 2010	\$ 892,097

Who's who and who does what?

There are 12 **Science Teams**. Taxa association teams include: Bird, Mammal, Fish, Insect, Crayfish, Mussel, Amphibian, Reptile, Invertebrates - other. Habitat Teams include: Karst habitat, Aquatic Habitat and Terrestrial Habitat. Professional specialists from agencies, organizations and universities assemble in a specialty group and participate in workshops to determine priority conservation actions and review resulting actions.

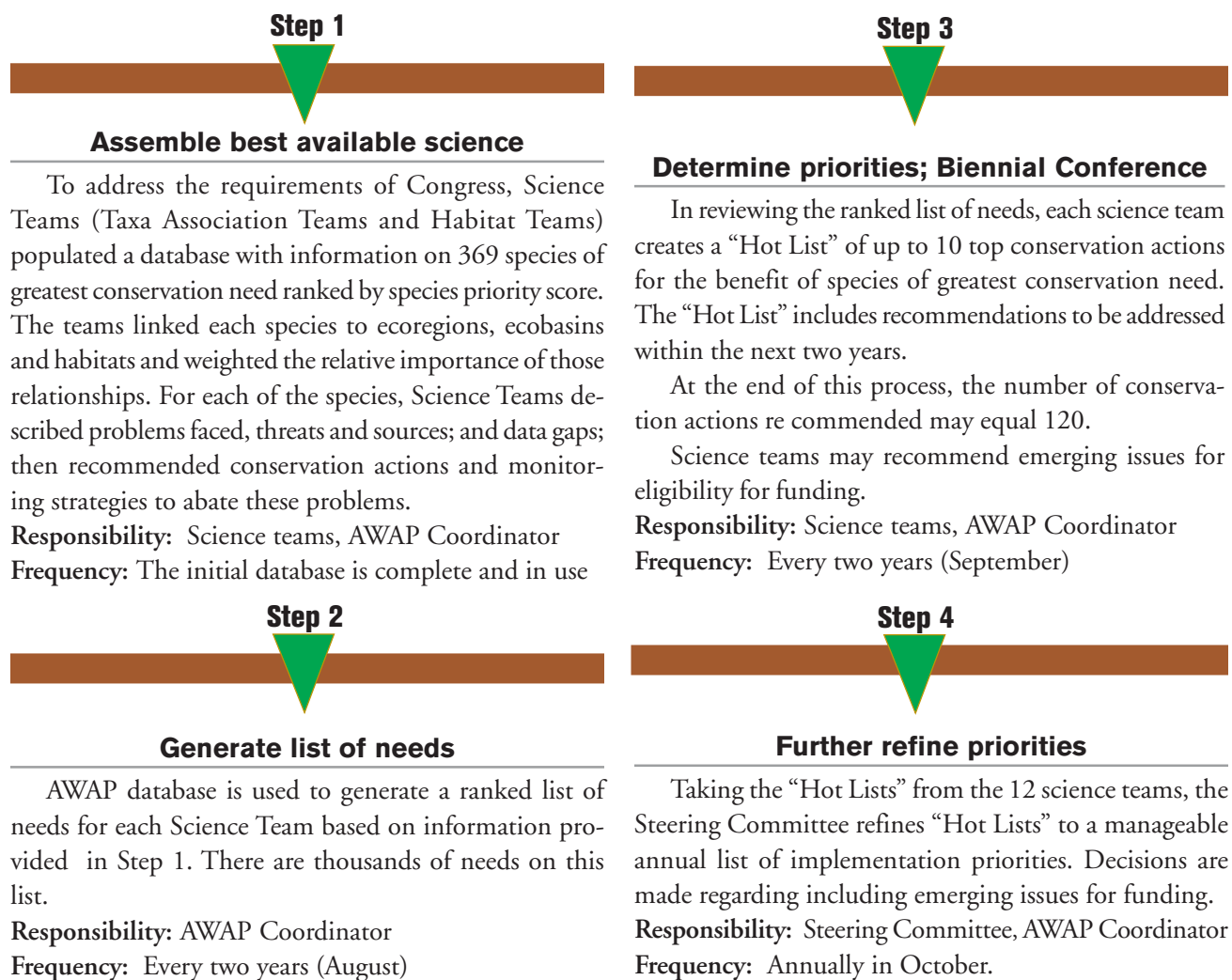
Steering Committee: A select group of generalist biologist/administrators who take the work of the science teams and pare their priorities down to an annual request for proposals. The Steering Committee reviews, discusses and decides over-arching AWAP policy and process as directives to the AWAP Coordinator. This group meets once

annually, although communication by means of email happens more frequently.

Implementation Team: AGFC Assistant Director for Conservation, AGFC Wildlife Management Chief, AGFC Fisheries Chief and administrative leaders of two partner organizations on a rotation. The Implementation Team meets once a year to review pre-proposals that have been provided to them and select projects for funding. This group may recommend changes to projects. Their directives are carried out by the AWAP Coordinator.

AWAP Coordinator: Currently this position is unfilled. Duties are being handled by Assistant Chief of Wildlife Management Division.

Table 1. Science - based decision making process



Step 5

Request project pre-proposals

Projects are solicited that address the priorities selected by the Steering Committee in Step 4.

Responsibility: AWAP Coordinator

Frequency: Annually in November.

Step 6

Request reviews of pre-proposals

Any interested party, including science teams and the public, is invited to review pre-proposals and provide comments about the submitted pre-proposals. These comments are used by the Implementation Team for Step 7.

Responsibility: Science Teams

Frequency: Annually in January

Step 7

Select projects for funding

Implementation Team selects projects for funding from the array of pre-proposals submitted. The Team may ask for adaptations to some pre-proposals.

Responsibility: Implementation Team

Frequency: Annually in February, prior to AGFC budget deadlines.

Step 8

Full proposals; budget and grant approvals

Request full proposals with alterations requested by Implementation Team for selected projects; submit budget to AGFC Budget Committee; if approved, create grant proposal and submit to US Fish and Wildlife Service; if approved, execute contracts with successful subgrantees.

Responsibility: AWAP Coordinator

Frequency: New projects (10 - 20) each year.

Step 9

Implement projects, monitor and report

These usually 2 - 3 years in duration. Each project is required to provide an annual progress report and, upon completion, a full report. Provisions in the contract require communication of results to Science Teams; appropriate communication to the public and other stakeholders, spatial details reported to and mapped on the Conservation Registry, monitoring results reported to the Natural Resources Monitoring Partnership database and website, and participation in the biennial AWAP conference.

Responsibility: Subgrantees, AWAP Coordinator

Frequency: Continually

Step 10

Review project reports. Update database

The database is updated as data gaps are filled and conservation actions are completed. With each update, the status of species of greatest conservation need and the relationships between species, habitats and conservation actions can be reexamined in an efficient manner to demonstrate progress over time.

Science Teams are scheduling database updates in summer, 2010 after a review of completed projects.

Responsibility: Science Teams, AWAP Coordinator

Frequency: Biennially prior to AWAP Conference

Each Science Team reports to the larger group about progress attained while grantees present project results.

Then return to Step 3 to determine priorities and repeat process until 2015 when a new Arkansas Wildlife Action Plan will be due.