

## Coordination and Outreach Efforts Associated with the Creation of the CWCS

**ELEMENT 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.*

**ELEMENT 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 targeted species in greatest need of conservation which Congress has indicated such programs and projects are intended to emphasize.*

These elements are required to ensure that the resources used in developing and implementing the CWCS are best used and directed as the program continues and to ensure that the public is kept informed about these programs and their results. The elements require that the information that is used to develop the species list and the recommended strategies receives the most rigorous and broadest review in order that the strategies are as effective as they can be.

The seventh and eighth elements direct the development of the strategy to particularly include outreach to as broad a community of public interests as possible. They direct broad review and participation with government agencies and Indian tribes at all levels to best allow for the implementation of strategies that involve management of land and water areas. To accomplish this element the DEC has, from the beginning of the development of the CWCS, worked to keep government agencies and tribal authorities at all levels informed about the program, and facilitated the review of comments and concerns that they have expressed.

### ***Species List Development and Species Experts***

In 2003, a species list was developed for the State Wildlife Grants Program in New York by the Department's Division of Fish, Wildlife, and Marine Resources. The list includes mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, fishes, mollusks, crustaceans, beetles, mayflies, stoneflies, moths and butterflies. The specific species from each of these categories are those that were judged to be rare, declining, at risk, or of unknown status, and for which some conservation need or opportunity was evident. The basis for the selections was systematic assessments made by Division of Fish, Wildlife and Marine Resources staff. This list was shared with the public as well as experts and interested citizens that were well known to the designated species group project leaders. The Department provided a form on the web for interested citizens to submit comments regarding the species list. The result of this activity was the eventual receipt of over 300 comments from the public regarding the proposed species list. The comments also included information that has been useful in developing implementation strategies. The comments were summarized into a single document for staff review and the final determination as

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to the species to be included on the list of species of greatest conservation need (SGCN).

To continue to facilitate and coordinate the development of species specific data and strategies, the Division of Fish, Wildlife and Marine Resources has appointed central contacts for taxonomic groups. The following list designates the staff assigned and the taxonomic group(s) for which they are responsible.

Bryan Swift - Birds  
Shaun Keeler - Freshwater Fish  
Kim McKown - Marine Fish and Crustacea  
Kathleen O'Brien - Butterflies, Moths and Freshwater Mollusks  
Paul Novak - All Other Insects  
Alan Hicks - Mammals  
Debbie Barnes - Marine Mollusks  
Alvin Breisch - Amphibians and Reptiles

## ***Species Group Meetings and Outreach***

The species group experts remained in contact with the groups of individuals that had provided comments and review of the species lists. In some case the groups held meeting to review and discuss the information being developed. Meetings were held with various bird species experts throughout the state on June 9, 2004 and October 6, 2004 to discuss the bird species list, overall goals for species groups, prioritization of actions, and objectives for species conservation. A meeting was held on June 9, 2004 with freshwater fish experts to discuss the species list, overall goals for species groups, prioritization of actions, and objectives for species conservation.

Other groups remained in contact sharing information regarding the various species and issues through the use of e-mail, telephone, and mail. These individuals will continue to be updated through implementation phase of the program. Lists of the species group participants and their affiliations are in Appendix F.

## ***Steering Committee***

DEC Division of Fish, Wildlife and Marine Resources developed an internal steering committee in 2002 to develop the initial list of SGCN and to select and develop projects for funding under the SWG program. This steering committee was later expanded to include staff from DEC Division of Lands and Forests; Division of Public Affairs and Education; New York State Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation; and New York Department of State. This steering committee worked with the program coordinator to develop the CWCS document analysis approach and outline. This information was, in turn, shared with other divisions and programs within DEC, and with the Partnership Group as outlined below.

## ***Watershed Review Team Meetings***

Each of the watershed chapters were drafted by DEC staff in Albany. Each of the drafts was circulated to a local review team made up of DEC regional staff, other agency staff, and representatives from conservation groups. These teams were responsible for reviewing and revising the watershed chapters based on a team

consensus. A list of review team members for each watershed is available in Appendix F.

## ***Meetings with Partnership Group***

In order to broaden the public review and participation the Department established a Partnership Group, including representatives of statewide species advocacy organizations, local governments, tribal organizations, state and federal agencies, non-profit conservation organizations, research and academic organizations, and other interested parties. The first meeting of this group was held on May 6, 2004. Letters of invitation were sent to over 300 individuals and organizations. 30 individuals participated in the meeting, held at the DEC Headquarters at 625 Broadway in Albany. The meeting participants received updates on the status of the SWG Program and the process that would be used in the continued development of the CWCS. Participants were encouraged to continue their involvement and to provide other contacts to continue to broaden the outreach program.

Another meeting of the partnership group was held on September 22, 2004. This meeting was held at DEC Headquarters at 625 Broadway in Albany. Updates were provided regarding the SWG and CWCS and the plans for continued progress and citizen participation.

Department staff remained available at the end of both meetings for discussions with interested participants.

The Department will continue to convene the Partnership group for meetings as necessary as the program continues to develop to share information and implementation strategies. The next meeting of the group will be in late 2005 after the submission of the Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy.

The Partnership group mailing list is included in Appendix F.

## ***Review of Draft CWCS***

The draft Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy was available for public review during late summer 2005. Copies of the draft were sent to individuals and groups that participated in the Strategy's development. A press release announced availability of the draft for review. The document was available for download from the DEC website and hard copies were available at DEC regional offices.

## ***Meeting with New York State Association of Environmental Management Councils***

On October 13, 2004, the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, met with the New York State Association of Environmental Management Councils (NYSAEMC). NYSAEMC is an umbrella organization which brings together county environmental management councils (EMC) from around the state to discuss common interests and issues. The membership of each council is made up of representatives from municipal citizen conservation councils and boards, representatives from county government, members-at-large appointed for their special interest or qualifications, Soil and Water Conservation District Boards of Directors, and representatives from the county board of legislators.

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During the meeting, the Department outlined the purpose of the State Wildlife Grants Program and explained how the EMCs could participate in the development of the Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy.

EMCs are a focal point of the citizen environmental advisory role in county government. The duties of the county councils are to provide environmental information, advice, assistance, and training; review and comment on pending actions within the county which have environmental implications; advise county government on environmental protection policies and sound use of natural resources. They are established under Article 47 of the NYS Environmental Conservation Law.

The EMCs will be kept updated as the process of CWCS development continues. The Department typically provides an update meeting to the EMCs in June of each year at the DEC Headquarters in Albany. The Department also participates in the EMC Association Annual Meeting in the fall of each year.

## ***State Wildlife Grants Program Web Pages***

The DEC Web Page has been used to make information regarding the State Wildlife Grants Program since 2002. The Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy Additional information and updates regarding the State Wildlife Grants program, including available drafts of the CWCS, proposed plan, proposed studies, species lists, meeting announcements, and other information can be found on the Department's website at the following address:

<http://www.dec.state.ny.us/website/dfwmr/wildlife/wilddiv/swg/>.

The draft Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy was available for review and comment on the DEC website for 30 days. Overall there were 20 comment submissions from non-governmental organizations, 15 from private citizens, 2 from federal agencies, and 6 internal to DEC.

## ***Conservationist Magazine***

An article about the State Wildlife Grants program was published in the October 2004 issue of *Conservationist* magazine. An additional article about the State Wildlife Grants program is planned for the February 2005 issue. The State Wildlife Grants article gives an overview of the program and encourages interested parties to participate or comment on the draft strategy.

## ***Newsletter Article***

An article describing the State Wildlife Grants program and opportunities for public participation was distributed to several organizations whose members may have interest in the program. The organizations were asked to run the article and supplied images in their member newsletters. A list of organizations that were provided with the article is in the Appendix F.

## ***Fact Sheets***

Fact sheets describing the State Wildlife Grants program have been produced and made available to interested citizens.

## Overview of Planned CWCS Updates

The DEC will continue to inform the public regarding the work being accomplished with the State Wildlife Grant funding by regular updates of the Department's website. The Partnership Group will be convened annually to provide updates and the species experts will be kept informed as to the program's activities. The input received from these forums will be used to update the CWCS at regular intervals, as the DEC determines it is needed. At this time DEC anticipates annual reports on grant program initiatives, a 5 year progress report and SGCN list update, and a 10 year complete revision of the CWCS. We will continue to develop program initiatives in cooperation with partners.

## Five Year Outlook

During the next five years, DEC will be developing a State Wildlife Grants Program within the Division of Fish, Wildlife and Marine Resources. New staff associated with this program will develop stepped-down, watershed level operational plans that will specify objectives for conserving SGCN and their habitats as well as needed actions for achieving these objectives. These staff will collaborate with watershed partners, similar to the watershed review teams convened during the initial statewide draft of the CWCS.

At the same time, DEC staff along with partners including, but not limited to, the NYS Education Department, other state agencies, universities, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Geological Survey, New York State Biodiversity Research Institute, and the American Museum of Natural History, will develop a comprehensive statewide monitoring program. As discussed in the Monitoring section, the building of this proposed program and its eventual success will depend on the available funding, partners, and staff to implement this enormous undertaking. This monitoring program will be focused on measuring progress towards the objectives specified in the watershed operational plans.

Both the proposed monitoring program and watershed plans will be used to develop a 5-year update to the CWCS and the proposed 10-year revision.

## Emergency Species Actions

There may be instances when emergency action regarding species of greatest conservation need is warranted. The status of a species not currently included in the program may become compromised between revisions of the CWCS and attendant list of species of greatest conservation need. Such a species would be reviewed by the SWG steering committee and relevant experts to place it on the list "off-cycle." An emergency situation may include a disease event, catastrophic habitat loss or alteration due to storms or fire, or introduction of an aggressive invasive species. These are only examples and the SWG steering committee will react to proposed emergency changes as they are presented to the SWG program coordinator.

## Proposed Revision Process

DEC proposes to gather input from species experts, researchers, non-governmental organizations, and other state and federal agencies in support of

revisions of the CWCS. We hope that over the next 10 years we have strengthened partnerships and public awareness of the program and strategy in order to have even more collaboration at the 5- and 10-year milestones. The proposed new staff positions will be working closely with partners in their watersheds of responsibility to increase our understanding of SGCN and the threats to their health and survival.