

Development of Model Guidelines for Assisting Local Planning Boards

Conservation of Species of Greatest Conservation Need and their Key Habitats through Local Land Use Planning



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As conservationists, how do we ensure that protection of wildlife and habitat are a priority in planning? In order to address wildlife conservation, decision-makers must be able to readily address not only questions such as: “what wildlife species and habitat is of concern in my jurisdiction?” and “where it is located?”, but also “how can we ensure that wildlife and habitat are conserved?”



Is wildlife information used for planning?

A survey of wildlife program staff in the northeast revealed that although wildlife information is used for land use planning, it was underutilized. A common theme voiced in responses is that lack of funding and personnel to interpret information and to interact with planners is a significant obstacle to use and application of wildlife information.

What resources do planning boards need?

Environmental Law Institute’s survey of planners revealed that two major barriers to conservation are “competition between conservation and development interests” and

“lack of political will”. Planners need help in making the case for conservation to local decision makers. Many of the respondents voiced a need for a diverse toolbox, including funding sources

for acquisitions, and other conservation mechanisms. Strong land use regulation combined with land acquisition was thought to be the most powerful means to stemming loss of wildlife and habitat.



Demonstration Toolkit

NatureServe entered into a partnership with Defenders of Wildlife, Environmental Law Institute, Pennsylvania Natural Heritage Program, and the Virginia Division of Natural Heritage to develop a conservation toolkit. Major products are an overview of wildlife and conservation



information available from a national / regional and state level, as well as detailed natural history information; best management practices;

training and education sources; maps and GIS data; case studies of integrating biodiversity conservation into planning in Virginia and Pennsylvania; legal conservation



frameworks for each state; funding sources for conservation by state; and links to a demonstration toolkit

for three states (Virginia, Pennsylvania, and New Hampshire) on NatureServe’s LandScope America.

Recommendations for an improved and expanded toolkit

Testing the accessibility of information in the demonstration toolkit by planners and local decision makers would be the most effective means to determining an optimal design, as well as additional content. Improved navigation and content organization may be considered for two potential ways a planner may reach the site. In one scenario, direct outreach to planners could include information on the site, its description, a link, and brief, to-the-point guidance for its use.

Examples of Conservation Resources

Pace University Law School’s Gaining Ground database is an on-line research library of innovative land use laws and practices: <http://www.landuse.law.pace.edu/SPT--Home.php>; University of New Hampshire Cooperative Extension’s Preparing a Conservation Plan: http://extension.unh.edu/resources/files/Resource001227_Rep1568.pdf are two broadly applicable resources.

Conclusion



To ensure that wildlife Species of Greatest Conservation Need and the habitats they depend on are protected, it is critical that planners and those making decisions about land use have

access to tools they can access easily and navigate intuitively. The toolkit should include communications materials that are easily adaptable, are persuasive, are based on the best available science, and can demonstrate the great benefits communities will derive from preservation of wildlife.

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