

Northeast State Wildlife Action Plans: Database Framework for Common Elements

BACKGROUND and NEED

The Northeast Region has a long and productive history of collaboration and coordination for the protection and management of natural resources. This partnership has been enhanced in recent years through the collaboration of the Northeast Fish and Wildlife Diversity Technical Committee, the Regional Conservation Needs program and the Landscape Conservation Cooperatives (e.g., North Atlantic, Appalachian). Despite this extensive collaboration, it is difficult to compile and compare information among State Wildlife Action Plans (SWAPS).

Of the SWAPs under the jurisdiction of the NEAFWA states, there exists broad commonality resulting from the eight required elements, including species of greatest conservation need, habitats, issues, and actions. At the same time, there are also substantial differences among SWAPs because states used different organizational structures for their plans, different criteria for defining SGCN, different habitat classification systems, and different ways to describe issues and actions. Most are lengthy documents that are difficult to search, making it excessively difficult and time consuming, if not impossible, to determine common priorities across the region or sub-regions.

To ensure limited resources are most effectively and efficiently targeted toward the highest priorities across the region, states need a *shared database framework* that brings consistency to the various ways states fulfilled the required SWAP elements. *A common web-accessible and searchable database framework will allow states, LCCs and other partners to view SWAPs across state lines and allow plan users to perform cross-state queries, searches, compilations and comparisons.*

This need was recognized at the June 2011, Albany II regional workshop which produced the following charge:

“[Support] development of SWAP database to promote consistency in the next generation of SWAPs, allow easy state rollout, guide revisions, and improve accessibility.”

The proposed SWAP database framework will facilitate the development of multi-state, regional proposals and make it more likely that other partners will implement SWAP actions. This product will help address a common need for states to determine:

1. How will the work of each state align and contribute to regional priorities?
2. How will the regional context help inform state work?

OBJECTIVES

To create a web-accessible database framework that will be populated with the required elements from each state's SWAP, and will allow states, LCCs and other partners to roll-up SWAP contents and extract common elements at any desired scale across the region.

APPROACH

This project will result in a web-accessible and searchable *SWAP database framework that will function as the planning complement* to the USFWS "TRACS" project-reporting database expected to debut this fall. This framework will increase the accessibility of SWAPs by states and partners, and realize the full potential of the SWAPs. The database will include common SWAP data elements. The SWAP database can be hosted through the LCC web portal.

- **SGCN** – Database will include individual state criteria as well as the species themselves. Vulnerability assessment information will also be supported.
- **Habitats** – Database will include the Northeast terrestrial and aquatic habitat classification systems, and support the ability to cross-walk state habitat classification systems to the Northeast systems. GIS data/maps and vulnerability assessment information will also be supported and incorporated via the work of the NALCC-complementary effort to compile and synthesize spatial data from RCN and LCC-supported projects.
- **Issues and Actions** – Database will include the modified IUCN categories used in TRACS and support the ability to cross-walk to state descriptions used for these elements.

The framework will be created through the following steps:

1. Enlist a database development contractor to work with a steering committee comprised of Northeast SWAP coordinators, LCCs and major NGO partners.
2. Develop consensus input on the essential queries that states and partners need, including spatial information.
3. Define common data elements and data relationships, including text and spatial attributes.
4. Ensure that WAP database platform is capable of integrating other ongoing LCC and RCN database development efforts identified at Albany 2, including regional compilation and synthesis of RCN and other spatial data and that it will provide access to spatial data and synthesized WAP content for each state via a common web portal.
5. Develop a functional prototype/template and "ground-truth" with steering committee.
6. Present to NEAFWA for adoption and implementation.

Work will be accomplished by a contractor with overall responsibility for producing the functional prototype of a web-accessible SWAP database ready for implementation by states as they prepare their SWAP revisions. State Agency Directors will need to provide clear

direction to state agency staff to ensure that assistance and requested information are made available to the Project Coordinator, in support of this synthesis.

A Steering committee will be convened with the responsibility for providing direction and overseeing a person dedicated to this project. The Steering Committee will provide guidance and feedback on draft materials and final approval of completed documents.

TIMELINE and MEASURES OF PROGRESS

This synthesis process would be initiated as soon as practicable after the NEAFWA Conference in April 2012, with a target completion date and presentation of results at the NEAFWA Conference in April 2013. The project Steering Committee will meet, as needed, throughout the year, via webinar, conference call, and occasionally in person. Draft results will be presented to the Northeast Fish and Wildlife Diversity Technical Committee meeting in September 2012 and to the Northeast Directors and North Atlantic LCC Steering Committee in November 2012. ***Time is of the essence and is expected to allow completion of the initial components to inform and be incorporated into the SWAP updates in the Northeast Region.*** The effectiveness measure for this framework will be an increase in the number of agencies and organizations that use the SWAPs to inform their individual conservation actions.

BUDGET:

Justification:

1. This funding will provide services of a contractor (noted above), including interstate coordination, data/information compilation and quality assurance/quality control, development of a web-based Graphic User Interface (GUI) and database for access to the information.

Estimated: \$110,000

2. Travel for State Representatives to attend up to 3 meetings for this project.

Estimated: \$10,000