



# State Wildlife Action Plan E-Newsletter

Wyoming Game and Fish Department

MAY 2009



## Public Involvement in Wyoming's State Wildlife Action Plan

Public involvement is an important component of the development and implementation of Wyoming's State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP). This newsletter is intended to enhance awareness about plans to revise Wyoming's SWAP and facilitate public input. Newsletters will be sent quarterly.

Individuals and organizations can sign up to receive a copy of the SWAP newsletter, or be removed from the mailing list. To be added to the mailing list, send an e-mail to [join-swapenews@ewyoming.gov](mailto:join-swapenews@ewyoming.gov) from the e-mail account at which you would like to receive the newsletter. You may unsubscribe by sending an e-mail to [leave-swapenews@ewyoming.gov](mailto:leave-swapenews@ewyoming.gov). To subscribe or unsubscribe, leave the subject line and body of email blank,

including signature lines.

In the future, in addition to SWAP newsletters, there will be postings of drafts SWAP on the Wyoming Game and Fish Department's website and public meetings to receive comment. Glenn Pauley is the Department's State Wildlife Action Plan Coordinator. As Coordinator, Glenn is responsible for organizing SWAP revisions and assisting with the plan's future implementation. Questions or comments about the SWAP or this newsletter can be forwarded to:

Glenn Pauley  
State Wildlife Action Plan Coordinator  
Wyoming Game and Fish Department  
5400 Bishop Boulevard  
Cheyenne, WY 82006  
Phone: (307) 777-4637  
Fax: (307) 777-4699  
Email: [glenn.pauley@wgf.state.wy.us](mailto:glenn.pauley@wgf.state.wy.us)

## Background on State Wildlife Action Plan

State Wildlife Action Plans (SWAP), also known as Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategies, are created as part of the US Fish and Wildlife Service's State Wildlife Grants Program. SWAPs are designed as long-term strategies to maintain the health and diversity of wildlife within a state. This includes developing proactive approaches to conserving wildlife before it becomes endangered, thereby avoiding expensive, last-ditch recovery efforts. SWAPs focus on conservation actions that are cooperative, voluntary, and incentive based. Nationally, every state and territory has created a SWAP.

Wyoming's first SWAP was completed in

2005. A copy of Wyoming's 2005 SWAP can be viewed at:  
<http://gf.state.wy.us/wildlife/CompConvStrategy/index.asp>

The Wyoming Game and Fish Department is revising its SWAP. Revisions will be completed by July 2010. As with all SWAPs, Wyoming's revised plan will address eight elements:

1. Information on the distribution and abundance of wildlife, including low and declining populations, that describes the diversity and health of the state's wildlife.
2. Descriptions of locations and



SWAPs are designed as proactive strategies to avoid future listings under the Endangered Species Act.

## Background on State Wildlife Action Plan *cont'd*

- relative conditions of habitats essential to species in need of conservation.
  - 3. Descriptions of problems that may adversely affect species or their habitats, and priority research and survey efforts.
  - 4. Descriptions of conservation actions proposed to conserve the identified species and habitats.
  - 5. Plans for monitoring species and habitats, and plans for monitoring the effectiveness of the conservation actions and for adapting these conservation actions to respond to new information.
  - 6. Descriptions of procedures to review the plan at intervals not to exceed 10 years. The Wyoming Game and Fish Department is currently on a 5-year schedule to review Wyoming's SWAP.
  - 7. Coordination with federal, state, and local agencies and Indian tribes in developing and implementing the wildlife action plan.
  - 8. Broad public participation in developing and implementing the wildlife action plan.
- Although state wildlife conservation agencies are responsible for coordinating the development of SWAPs, plans are approved by the US Fish and Wildlife Service.

## State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP) 2010 Revision Timetable

Activity	Date
First quarterly SWAP stakeholder newsletter.	May 2009
Articles and press releases about the Wyoming Game and Fish Department initiating the SWAP revision process.	May – July 2009
Meetings to updated range maps for Species of Greatest Conservation Need.	September 2009
Meeting with conservation partners to refine priority areas.	November 2009
Draft SWAP submitted for internal Wyoming Game and Fish Department comment.	March 2010
Draft SWAP posted on Wyoming Game and Fish Department website.	March 2010
Public meetings to receive comments on SWAP.	April 2010
Draft SWAP submitted to Regional US Fish and Wildlife Service.	May 2010
Final Wyoming Game and Fish Department approval.	June 2010
Wyoming Game and Fish Commission approval.	July 2010
Final SWAP submitted to US Fish and Wildlife Service	October 1, 2010

# Goals for Wyoming's 2010 State Wildlife Action Plans

Wyoming's first State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP) was written in 2005. The task of creating the first SWAP was considerable and few precedents existed for such a plan in Wyoming or other states. Since 2005, there has been time to evaluate Wyoming's first SWAP as well as review plans from around the country. In addition, new information has become available about the status of species, habitats, and conservation challenges in Wyoming. In planning for the 2010 revision of the SWAP, the Wyoming Game and Fish Department, in consultation with other wildlife conservation organizations and agencies, has established the following goals:

1. The Wyoming Game and Fish Department will continue its commitment to conserving Wyoming's diversity of wildlife species and recovering species whose populations are in decline.
2. The name of the plan will be changed from Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy to State Wildlife Action Plan to correspond to the name by which such plans are now most commonly referred.
3. The 2010 SWAP will include a section that clearly articulates the approach to achieving a goal as large as conserving the diversity of wildlife in Wyoming. For the 2010 plan, a three-tiered conservation strategy at the statewide, habitat, and species levels is being pursued. Statewide issues will be organized around the leading challenges that are facing wildlife within the state. These changes have been identified as: 1) rural subdivision, 2) energy development, 3) invasive species, 4) climate change, 5) and disruption of natural disturbance regimes such as fire and flooding. Listing these challenges is not an indictment of any, but rather a realization of the need to develop broadly coordinated, long-term strategies if the state's current diversity of wildlife is to be maintained. Similarly, the challenges listed are not intended to be all-inclusive of the issues facing wildlife in Wyoming. Prioritization is a part of all planning processes. Other challenges such as disease, increasing and sometimes conflicting outdoor recreational demands, and environmental contamination are important issues; however, these issues are often linked to one of the five listed challenges or are not perceived as likely to have the same level of impact.
4. Wyoming's 2010 SWAP will have a greater habitat focus to increase the number of species that benefit from conservation activities and improve the proactive focus of the plan. Habitats will be grouped according to those most frequently used in wildlife conservation decision making such as sagebrush, grasslands, and riparian areas. In the revised plan, list of species, threats, information gaps, conservation actions, priority areas, and future monitoring plans will be organized by habitat type. Organizing habitat types in this manner is intended to enhance the integration of existing Department and non-department conservation initiatives into the SWAP, such as the Wyoming Game and Fish Department's Strategic Habitat Plan. Similarly, such groupings will result in habitat types for which the public can easily understand and identify. Aquatic habitats will be organized around basins.
5. Species level conservation efforts will be addressed within species accounts in the 2010 SWAP. Species accounts provide an overview of the status, habitat, threats, conservation actions, needed research, and monitoring work for all Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SCGN) species. All species accounts include a map showing known occurrences and suitable habitat for the species within Wyoming. Species accounts will be cross-referenced to the appropriate habitat level section of the plan. The Wyoming Game and Fish Department is creating a database to store species accounts. The database



*SWAPs are coordinated with federal, state and local agencies, non-profit organizations and industries.*



*Revisions to Wyoming's SWAP will be completed in the fall of 2010.*



*SWAPs not only address species in decline, but also focus on maintaining the state's overall diversity of wildlife.*

## Goals for Wyoming's Action Plan *Cont'd*

will make information easier to update, transfer, and search. The database will provide electronic links to supporting documents.

6. The 2010 SWAP will have a system to place species of conservation interest into tiers to further convey their status and priority. SWAP plans are required to identify species that are considered to have low or declining populations or which are indicative of the health and diversity of the state's wildlife. Species that have these attributes are termed Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN). In 2005, 279 species received the SGCN designation. Of these, 235 were listed solely or in part because of a lack of data to assess their conservation status. SGCN species were designated, by in large, through the Wyoming Game and Fish Department's Native Species Status Matrix which evaluates population and habitat variables affecting the species. A list of SGCN species, which the Wyoming Game and Fish Department currently uses for SWAP purposes, can be found at <http://gf.state.wy.us/wildlife/CompConvStrategy/Species/index.asp>.

The SGCN designation for species will be reevaluated as part of the 2010 SWAP revision process. Items taken into consideration include twenty-two ongoing research projects to improve knowledge about population numbers and distribution of SGCN species in Wyoming. Additionally, in 2008, the Wyoming Game and Fish Department's Native Species Status Matrix was revised and expanded to include non-habitat related threats and to be more suitable to evaluate the conservation status of aquatic species.

The new system of placing SGCN species into tiers will take into account variables, in addition to a species' Native Species Status ranking, in order to provide additional information to advance the species' conservation.

While the final set of variables to create the tiered system have yet to be decided, they may include items such as the species' population health nationally or internationally, Endangered Species Act (ESA) status, ability to implement effective conservation actions, level of existing funding, and economic impact to the state (either listed or unlisted under the ESA).

Further describing a species' status in this manner will not only help to better target the Wyoming Game and Fish Department's conservation work, but also provide greater direction to other natural resource conservation agencies, non-profit organizations, and industries that are looking to the SWAP for guidance in managing their sensitive species activities.

7. In addition to Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN), species of high conservation significance will be listed within each habitat type. Variables for designating species of significance may include the species role as an indicator species<sup>1</sup>, keystone species<sup>1</sup>, its uniqueness to Wyoming or habitat, or level of public interest. The purpose of adopting this approach is not to diminish priority or funding for SGCN species, but rather to further enable the SWAP to clearly describe the assemblages of species associated with habitat types, convey how SGCN work benefits other species, and support the State Wildlife Grants Program's mandate to maintain the health and diversity of the state's wildlife.
8. A new system for prioritizing future SWAP funding will be created based on the revised plan and preceding goals.

<sup>1</sup> Indicator Species are those species whose population status is a good indicator of the overall health of the habitat in occupies

<sup>2</sup> A keystone species is a species that plays a significant role shaping and defining the habitat in which it lives. Prairie dogs would be considered a keystone species because of the large colonies they create and the number of species that are dependent upon prairie dog colonies for their habitat.

# State Wildlife Action Plan Interagency Advisory Team

An Interagency Advisory Team has been established to assist the 2010 revision of Wyoming's State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP). The advisory team makes recommendations for enhancing the plan's overall effectiveness and facilitating coordination among wildlife and natural resource agencies. The Wyoming Game and Fish Department retains final responsibility for the plan's overall development and implementation.

Wyoming's wildlife occupies habitats that cross land ownership boundaries and jurisdictional authorities as well as supporting multiple of often competing land uses. The Wyoming Game and Fish Department is unable to accomplish a goal as broad as conserving the diversity of Wyoming's wildlife acting alone. For example, lands owned by the Wyoming Game and Fish Commission total only 0.26% of Wyoming. The majority of habitats in Wyoming are on private land (42%), or under the federal (42.3%), state (5.9%), or tribal jurisdiction (3.5%). Additionally, other agencies and non-profit organizations possess independent wildlife expertise and have significant resources, including dollars, to invest in wildlife and habitat conservation projects. Most federal natural resource agencies have received internal instruction to support the SWAP.

Advisory Team members were selected as those entities that could contribute significantly to the success of the plan's development and future implementation.

Additionally, for the 2010 revision, the SWAP Advisory Team's size was limited and focused on government agencies to assist the Team in establishing itself and gaining momentum.

Principal roles for the SWAP Interagency Advisory Team members include:

1. Communicating agency expertise, opportunities, and concerns regarding the SWAP;
2. Minimizing duplicating efforts;
3. Facilitating information sharing;
4. Identifying common priorities; and
5. Communicating SWAP issues and activities to agency employees and constituencies.

The establishment of the SWAP Interagency Advisory Team does not limit non-member participation in the revision and future implementation of the SWAP. There will be numerous occasions for involvement in the plan through quarterly e-newsletters, web postings, public meetings, and conservation project funding opportunities. If you have an interest in a particular aspect of the SWAP, please contact Glenn Pauley, Wyoming Game and Fish Department State Wildlife Action Plan Coordinator, by email [glenn.pauley@wgf.state.wy.us](mailto:glenn.pauley@wgf.state.wy.us) or phone (307) 777-4637.

Wyoming Game and Fish  
Department

## 2009 SWAP ADVISORY TEAM MEMBERS

DR. GARY BEAUVAIS  
WYOMING NATURAL  
DIVERSITY DATABASE

TOM BLICKENSDEFER  
WYOMING GOVERNOR'S  
OFFICE

SUSAN CHILDS  
WYOMING OFFICE OF  
STATE LANDS AND  
INVESTMENTS

DR. PAT DEIBERT  
US FISH AND WILDLIFE  
SERVICE

JOHN KECK  
NATIONAL PARKS  
SERVICE

ALAN WILLIAMSON  
US FOREST SERVICE

PAUL OBERT  
NATURAL RESOURCE  
CONSERVATION  
SERVICE

DENNIS SAVILLE  
BUREAU OF LAND  
MANAGEMENT

JUSTIN WILLIAMS  
WYOMING DEPARTMENT  
OF AGRICULTURE

We're on the Web!

See us at:

<http://gf.state.wy.us/>