



# WYOMING

Game And Fish Department

## STRATEGIC HABITAT PLAN

August 2015



Conserving Wildlife,  
Serving People

## **Introduction**

Maintaining sustainable fish and wildlife populations in the face of complex and competing demands is a fundamental challenge facing the Wyoming Game and Fish Commission (WGFC) and the Wyoming Game and Fish Department (WGFD). Biologists, conservationists, land managers and private landowners have long recognized that habitat is one of the keys to answering this challenge. This Strategic Habitat Plan (SHP) defines how the WGFD will strive to meet its mission of *Conserving Wildlife and Serving People* by working together with external partners to conserve and improve habitat. Internally, within the WGFD, the SHP provides a single unified roadmap defining how several Fish, Services, and Wildlife Division programs with complementary and sometimes overlapping responsibilities will work together to accomplish habitat protection and enhancement goals.

The WGFD's first Strategic Habitat Plan (SHP) was completed and approved by the WGFC in 2001 and revised and updated in 2008-2009. It is once again time to update the SHP to reflect additional information on wildlife and fish populations, distributions and habitat. In particular, updates are needed to reflect activities under the current State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP), changes in WGFD programmatic structure, and new conditions of habitat and wildlife populations since 2008.

Title 23, the legislation that established the Wyoming Game and Fish Commission, states that the Commission was created to "provide an adequate and flexible system for control, propagation, management, protection, and regulation of all Wyoming wildlife" (23-1-103). Except for ownership and management of WGFC- held lands, there is no statutory authority for the WGFC or WGFD to protect, restore or enhance wildlife habitat. The management of wildlife is inseparable from the habitat that sustains it and WGFD's ability to sustain quality wildlife habitat is contingent upon working in partnership with private landowners and public land managers; conservation organizations; local, state, and federal governmental agencies; and the public. These partnerships are key to implementing the SHP and maintaining abundant wildlife now and into the future. Maintaining habitat values and addressing key habitat issues will require careful consideration, collaboration and planning followed by bold action under this plan.

The purpose of this Strategic Habitat Plan update is to:

- 1) Provide current guidance on prioritizing Department habitat actions and areas,
- 2) Identify habitat goals, objectives, strategies and actions for 2015 - 2020
- 3) Identify how proposed habitat projects will be reviewed and ranked for funding from the Game and Fish Wildlife Trust fund and other funding sources,
- 4) Clarify how the SHP relates to other planning efforts,
- 5) Identify how various Department sections and personnel work together to accomplish habitat goals.

## **Habitat Vision**

*The Wyoming Game and Fish Department is the steward of all Wyoming's wildlife, dedicated to the conservation of sustainable, functional ecosystems capable of supporting wildlife populations at least as healthy, abundant and diverse as they were at the dawn of the 21st century. The WGFDD will promote a holistic approach to habitat management, integrating management and various land uses through collaborative efforts with the general public, conservation partners, private landowners and land management agencies. The WGFDD will increase public awareness of the need for managing for quality wildlife habitat today to help ensure healthy and abundant wildlife populations in the future. Wyoming Game and Fish Commission lands will be managed to emphasize and maintain wildlife habitat and public access values for which they were obtained.*

## **Mission**

*Promote and maintain the availability of high quality habitat to sustain and enhance wildlife populations in the future.*

## **Goals**

- Goal 1. Conserve and manage wildlife habitats that are crucial for maintaining terrestrial and aquatic wildlife populations for the present and future.
- Goal 2. Enhance, improve and manage priority wildlife habitats that have been degraded.
- Goal 3. Increase wildlife-based recreation through habitat enhancements that maintain or increase productivity of wildlife.
- Goal 4. Increase public awareness of wildlife habitat issues and the critical connection between healthy habitat and abundant wildlife populations.
- Goal 5. Promote collaborative habitat management efforts with the general public, conservation partners, private landowners and land management agencies.

## WGFD Habitat Functions and Organization

The responsibility for implementing habitat work across the Department is distributed among several programs across all Department Divisions (Figure 1). The Aquatic Habitat, Statewide Wildlife and Habitat Management, Regional Terrestrial Habitat, and Habitat and Access Sections have primary and direct responsibility. The Office of the Director provides policy-level support by implementing the policies and decisions of the WGFC regarding wildlife and wildlife habitat management, including scientific data collection, research, and habitat conservation and enhancement. A Communications and Outreach Section oversees the communication of habitat information and publications related to all department activities including habitat work

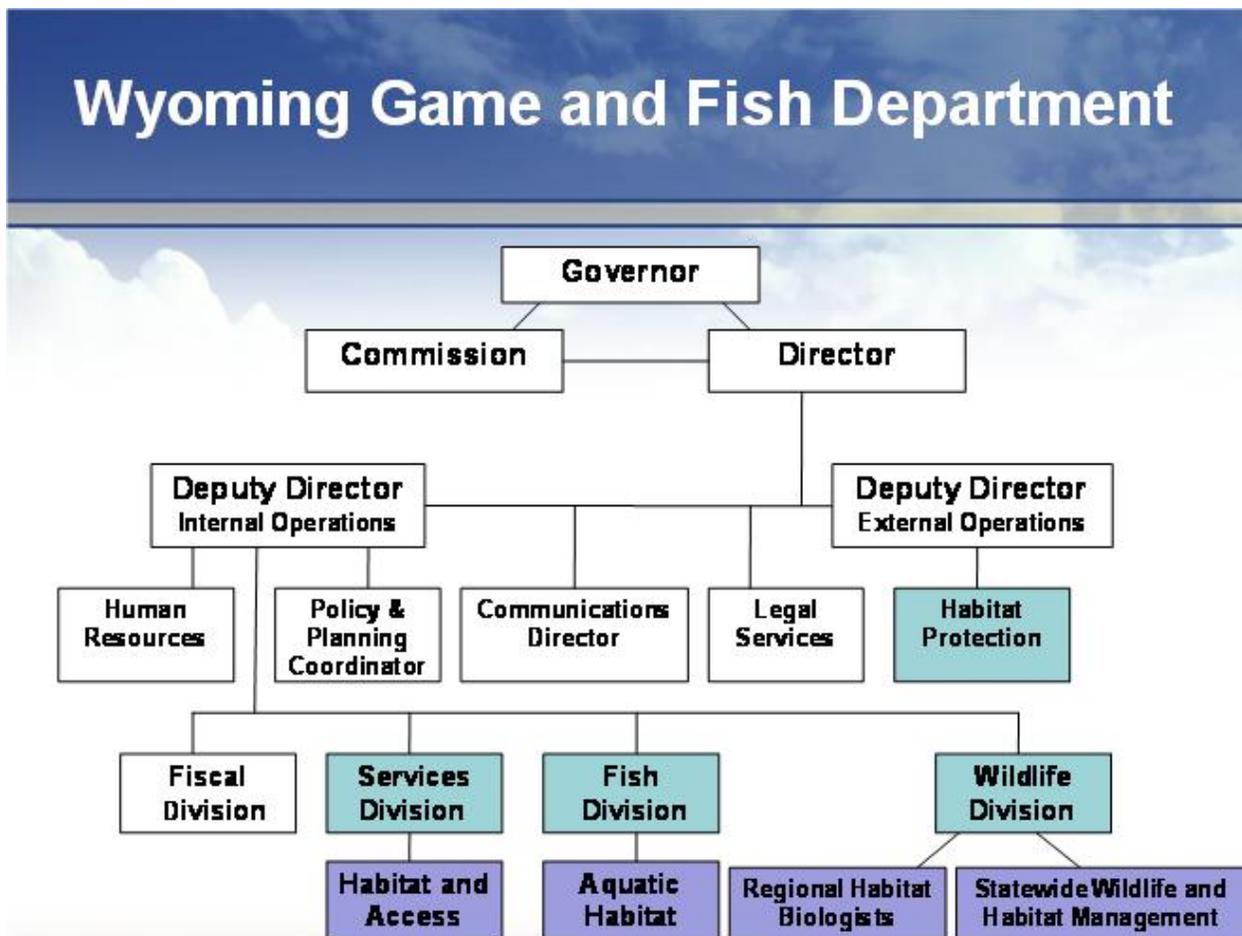


Figure 1. Organizational chart depicting Department work units with primarily habitat responsibilities.

The Habitat Protection Section, under the Director's Office (Figure 1), coordinates WGFD review and evaluation of land use plans, projects, policies, and activities that affect fish, wildlife and their habitats, and makes recommendations consistent with Department and Commission

policies, position statements, and strategies. This section coordinates WGFD input into planning and implementation of energy development, federal land use plans (Forest Plans, BLM Resource Management Plans, and others), and individual local habitat and land management projects throughout the state. These plans and projects, in total, influence the amount, type, and intensity of land use changes that occur in Wyoming. The SHP serves as one of several reference documents used as a basis for WGFD recommendations and negotiations to maximize benefits and minimize harms to crucial habitats.

The Fiscal Division oversees all financial operations of the WGFD, including budget development, financial reporting, accounts payable, purchasing, asset management, federal funds (grant) management, contract management, revenue collection and licensing.

The Services Division includes the Lands Administration Section which monitors property rights for WGFC-owned and administered lands and acquires property rights to restore and conserve habitat to enhance and sustain wildlife populations. Engineering and surveying staff assist on fish passage projects, habitat developments and many efforts on commission held properties.

Habitat is fundamental to management efforts at all levels within the WGFD (Figure 1). Fish Division fishery managers, water management biologists and aquatic habitat biologists all have a stake in conserving and enhancing all aquatic wildlife, reptiles, amphibians and their habitats for current and future generations. Likewise, Wildlife Division programs at the state, regional or section levels are responsible for conserving and enhancing terrestrial wildlife and their habitats and include: Statewide Wildlife and Habitat Management, law enforcement, Wildlife Management Coordinators, Terrestrial Habitat and Wildlife Biologists, Private Lands/Public Wildlife Program, and Large Carnivore Section, and Pinedale Oil and Gas Coordinator among others. Information and Education staff publicize a broad range of news and information including habitat-related stories.

Two WGFD committees were formed in 2006 to help address the complexity and far-reaching scope of habitat issues facing the WGFD. The Habitat Policy Group (HPG) consists of the WGFD Deputy Director and Assistant Division Chiefs and provides oversight of the Habitat and Technical Advisory Group (HTAG), consisting of program managers. The HPG and HTAG, with input and assistance from regional WGFD personnel, are tasked with revising and updating the SHP to provide oversight and direction for all habitat issues within the WGFD.

## **Strategic Habitat Plan Revision**

This revision seeks to improve the 2009 SHP by incorporating more recent information on species distribution and seasonal habitat delineation, primarily for crucial big game winter range and sage grouse core areas, improving linkages between the written SHP and priority areas, clarifying how proposed habitat projects will be ranked relative to priority areas and opportunities, and incorporating species of greatest conservation need (SGCN) as identified in the 2010 State Wildlife Action Plan.

Revision of priority areas under this SHP primarily involved adjustment of polygon boundaries to reflect current big game ranges and to reflect updated sage grouse core areas. The previous SHP included over 200 crucial and enhancement priority areas as polygon shape files. Following review and updating, this SHP contains 107 aquatic priority areas, 17 combined priority areas, and 73 terrestrial priority areas. Regional personnel identified areas with the highest wildlife habitat values and most urgent issues. Narratives describing the location, boundaries, values, issues, species, and solutions/actions were prepared and are available at the web site <http://gf.state.wy.us/habitat>. In 2014, regional biologists modified existing or added priority areas to create crucial priority areas entitled “Sage Grouse Core Area” and “Big Game Crucial Habitats.” In some cases, previous priority areas went away or were modified as these new areas were defined. Regional personnel were prompted to create no more priority area than had been previously defined. Updated narrative templates were used to capture land area and ownership within each polygon as well as a listing of tier I SWAP species. In some cases, regional personnel identified new priority areas.

Priority area boundaries were delineated in several ways, including Hydrologic Unit Code (HUC) basins, overlapping big game crucial ranges, and stream and riparian corridors. All WGFC’s Wildlife Habitat Management Areas were defined as both crucial and enhancement areas by default, which differs from the previous interpretation as either a crucial or an enhancement area. Priority areas were not identified in Yellowstone National Park and the Wind River Reservation where the WGFD does not have wildlife management authority. The two exceptions are the inclusion of sage grouse core areas within the Wind River Reservation and WGFC-owned properties part of the Spence and Moriarity WMA.

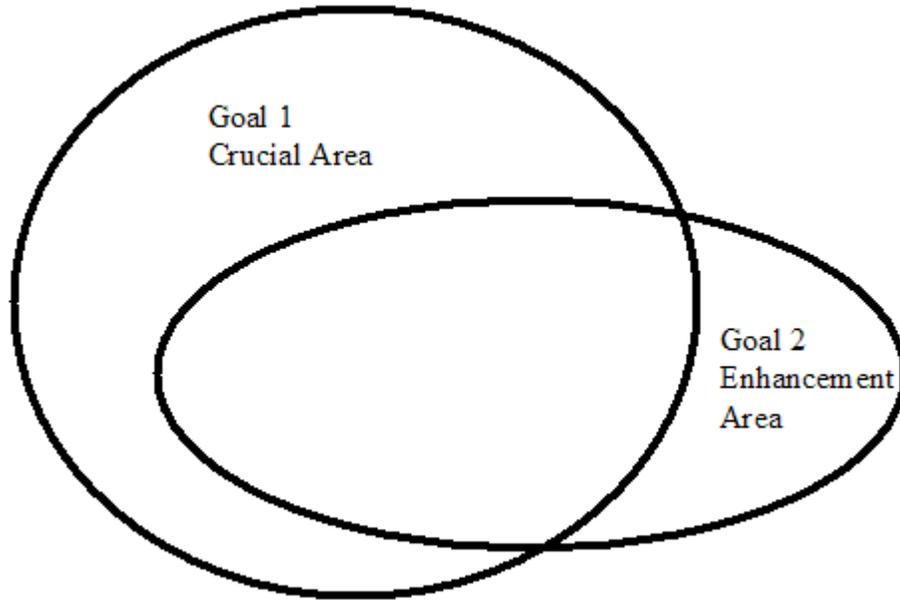
## **Goal 1 Crucial Areas And Goal 2 Enhancement Areas**

Under the SHP, a fundamental distinction is made between wildlife habitats that are “crucial” for wildlife and those habitats that have been degraded and have potential for “enhancement”. This distinction between crucial and enhancement areas is captured in Goals 1 and 2. Key wildlife habitat areas are delineated as crucial under Goal 1 to communicate their value to WGFD partners and public constituents. Likewise, by identifying enhancement areas under Goal 2, the WGFD is signaling its intent to focus resources on issues where the highest likelihood of success and most meaningful effect on habitats in the next several years is believed possible. The definition of Goal 1 and Goal 2 areas and the distinctions between them are vital for understanding the SHP and are further discussed below.

Priority habitats delineated under Goal 1 are designated as crucial to conserving and maintaining populations of terrestrial and aquatic wildlife for the present and future. Successful holistic habitat management within these areas will require a strong conservation component and partnership with private landowners, land management agencies, land users and conservation organizations. Crucial Habitat Areas are based on significant biological and ecological values including habitats that support important life stages needed for maintaining game species, sensitive native non-game species, unique species assemblages and ecologically important species or communities. These include habitats that need to be maintained as well as habitats that have deteriorated and should be enhanced or restored. The key consideration in selecting these areas was the identification and use of “Habitat Values”. Some values used to identify crucial habitats include: big game crucial winter range, sage grouse core habitats, cutthroat trout populations, SGCN diversity and uniqueness, quality and condition of vegetative communities, movement corridors, quality of watershed hydrologic function, quantity of stream flow, quality and condition of riparian vegetative communities, lateral and longitudinal hydrologic connectivity and physical access by fish populations to all habitats necessary to persist. Goal 1 areas include places where natural disturbance regimes continue to sustain the long-term health and diversity of vegetation.

Goal 2 habitat enhancement priorities are important wildlife areas that can or should be actively enhanced or improved by WGFD and partners. The key consideration in selecting these areas was “Habitat Issues”. Habitat issues considered were loss of aspen communities, vegetative succession, habitat fragmentation, energy development, loss of connectivity, water quality and quantity limitations, conifer beetle kill, invasive species, lack of fish passage, loss of fish to diversions (entrainment), degraded habitat, incompatible grazing management practices and excessive stream channel instability (degradation, aggradation, lateral migration). Another important factor is the ability or opportunity for successful work in such areas. These habitat enhancement areas were selected because there is realistic potential to address wildlife habitat issues in them and to improve, enhance or restore wildlife. They are areas where natural or man-caused habitat degradation is occurring or has occurred and where the WGFD can work with cooperating partners to improve habitat condition. The status of the wildlife species present, habitat abundance, habitat conditions, habitat connectivity, activities resulting in habitat loss, potential improvements and opportunity for partnering were all considered when delineating

these enhancement areas. Habitat enhancement areas may overlap crucial habitat areas. Delineation of these areas will be valuable when prioritizing work force and resources and when communicating with partners interested in implementing habitat enhancement or management work. The relationship between Goal 1 and Goal 2 areas is shown in Figure 1.



**Figure 1.** Schematic example showing goal 1 “crucial areas” and goal 2 “enhancement areas.” The areas commonly overlap as shown or may be distinct. Maintenance conservation approaches would be pursued throughout crucial areas recognizing that enhancement work will also be needed (represented by the overlap region) in portions of crucial areas. Some enhancement projects will also be needed to address issues outside crucial areas.

The degree to which proposed habitat work protects or improves important habitat types for wildlife diversity and productivity provides another perspective for sorting and ranking proposals. Important terrestrial habitat types are: aspen, mixed mountain shrub, sagebrush, grassland, riparian, and wetland habitats. Important aquatic habitats are defined as SWAP conservation priority areas within the six Wyoming basins identified in the SWAP (Bear River, Northeastern Missouri, Northwestern Missouri, Platte River, Snake/Salt River, and upper Colorado River). Conservation priority areas are sub-watersheds within the broader basins determined to be especially important for perpetuating native fish, crustaceans and mollusks. The conservation priority areas identified in the 2010 SWAP comprise from 20% (North Platte Basin) to 100% (Bear River Basin) of the basin area.

## **Habitat Project Development and Funding**

A Wildlife Trust Account was established by the Commission in 1986 recognizing that habitat is the single most important factor contributing to the abundance and diversity of wildlife in Wyoming. From interest generated by this trust, the Department has appropriated approximately \$500,000 to \$1.2 million dollars annually for habitat and information and education projects. In addition, habitat funding is available from a variety of external sources, and the WGFD is consulted regularly regarding partnering with other entities on habitat projects and asked for advice on prioritizing habitat work other entities are considering. A project ranking system is employed to allocate these funds to projects that will result in significant and long-term habitat conservation and management. A systematic project ranking approach ensures that project proponents are aware of how proposals will be evaluated and contributes to providing consistency and objectivity in the selection process. The approach below (Table 1) will be used to assign ranks to proposed habitat projects (e.g., WGFD Trust Fund, Wyoming Wildlife and Natural Resource Trust (WWNRT) account and other habitat funding sources as appropriate).

Project development, submittal and evaluation will occur twice annually to: 1) accommodate the July 1 fiscal year beginning and corresponding to the commission meeting cycle, and to 2) align with the August 30 Wyoming Wildlife Natural Resource Trust application deadline. The bulk of habitat projects will be developed and submitted for review by late fall/early winter, reviewed and ranked by regional teams by early January, reviewed and ranked by the HTAG and HPG in January-February, presented in draft form to the Commission in March and finalized by July. For proposals applying for \$200,000 or more of WWNRT funding, or proposals that require funding before July 1 of the following fiscal year, applications will be reviewed and ranked in July and August. These timelines and review processes will occur for all habitat project proposals to ensure that, to the extent possible, projects are evaluated together and relative to one another and so that funding sources can be effectively leveraged.

The HTAG chair will annually work with the HPG to set and publish due dates. Each WGFD region, through their Regional Coordination Team, will provide ranked or prioritized project proposals along with explanations of significant discussion points pertaining to proposed projects. Aquatic and Terrestrial Habitat Section Managers will lead the HTAG in reviewing all regional and statewide project proposals and supplement regional rankings with rankings from the prioritization scheme in Tables 1 and 2 to provide a statewide prioritization. Additional means of sorting and evaluating proposals may be used to apportion limited funding. The HTAG chair will present HTAG funding recommendations to the HPG.

A five-point scale will be used to assign relative importance to habitat project proposals with the highest priority projects assigned lower numbered values (Table 1). Thus a project scored as “1” will be more important to fund and pursue than a project scored as “5”.

**Table 1.** *Prioritization of habitat projects.*

Priority	Score	Description
High	1	Highest priority for funding, pursuing, and supporting
Medium – High	2	
Medium	3	
Medium – Low	4	
Low	5	Lowest priority for funding, pursuing, and supporting

The process for ranking a Goal 1 project is outlined in Table 2. Goal 1 projects typically propose to protect crucial wildlife habitat resources through land acquisitions, conservation easements, or other land deals. Assigning a SHP rank starts with considering whether the proposed protection will occur in an area identified as a crucial area and proceeds to an initial rank after consideration of whether the project will protect values as identified in the priority area narrative. A final ranking is assigned after additional consideration of project merits such as whether the project includes enhanced sportsmen access, includes a commitment to beneficial management actions, etc. To illustrate, a conservation easement may be proposed in an area that is not a crucial area. Initially this proposal starts out as a “4.” However, the proposal may include significant values for wildlife such as protecting portions of a mule deer migration corridor. Project reviewers might be inclined to assign this proposal the next higher priority of a “3” based on those wildlife habitat values. Furthermore, the land parcel may contain valuable aspen and riparian habitats and the landowners may be receptive to including perpetual public access. Under this set of circumstances, project merits would propel this proposal to a medium-high rank of “2”.

**Table 2.** *Strategic Habitat Plan ranking for a project that proposes to protect wildlife habitat resources (Goal 1). This ranking scheme is for projects under Goal 1 where the emphasis is on protecting existing high quality habitat. Initial ranks are assigned based off location and whether values are addressed and final ranking is determined by considering additional project merits like access, management agreements, etc.*

Project location	Does the project address values identified in a crucial area narrative?	Initial Ranking (Score)	Max Final Ranking (Score)
Within a crucial area	Yes	High (1)	High (1)
	No	Medium - Low (4)	Medium-High (2)
Not within a crucial area	NA	Medium - Low (4)	Medium-High (2)

Project proposals dealing primarily with enhancing existing conditions and addressing habitat issues (Goal 2 or 3), will follow the ranking process outlined in Table 3. Assigning a SHP rank starts with considering whether the proposed work will occur in an area identified as an enhancement area and proceeds to an initial rank after consideration of whether the project will address issues as identified in the priority area narrative. A final ranking is assigned after additional consideration of project merits such as whether the project will benefit key terrestrial habitats (aspen, mixed mountain shrub, sagebrush, grassland, riparian, and wetlands) or aquatic habitats (SWAP conservation priority areas within the six Wyoming basins in the SWAP) or SWAP issues. To illustrate use of the ranking table, a stream restoration may be proposed in an area outside any enhancement priority areas. Under line 2 in Table 2, the “No” response would yield an initial ranking of “4”. However, if the restoration project yielded wetland benefits or provided ecological benefits in one of the SWAP priority conservation areas, the ranking could rise to a “3”.

**Table 3.** *Strategic Habitat Plan ranking for a project that proposes to enhance wildlife habitat resources (Goals 2 or 3). Projects are evaluated by proceeding down the table to select the row corresponding to the project location. Initial ranking is assigned based on the values and issues described in the project proposal. Evaluate project merits to determine final ranking.*

Project location		Does the project address issues identified in an enhancement area narrative?	Initial Ranking (Score)	Max Final Ranking (Score)
1	Within a Crucial Habitat Area <u>and</u> a Habitat Enhancement Area	Yes	Medium (3)	High (1)
		No	Low (5)	Medium (3)
2	Within a Habitat Enhancement Area (includes combined Enhancement areas)	Yes	Medium- (3)	Medium – High (2)
		No	Medium - Low (4)	Medium (3)
4	Goal 3 project (Increase wildlife-based recreation through habitat enhancements that maintain or increase productivity of wildlife) regardless of whether it is in or outside of a habitat priority area (proximity to population centers and partner involvement more important for these projects)		Medium – Low (4)	Medium (3)
5	Not within a Crucial Habitat Area or Habitat Enhancement Area, and does not address Goal 3. However, it does address an important habitat type		Medium - Low (4)	Medium - High (2)
6	Not within a Crucial Habitat Area, Habitat Enhancement Area, nor an important habitat type and does not address Goal 3		Low (5)	Medium – Low (4)

The ranking schemes are intended to encourage development of projects in a strategic, targeted manner toward areas on the landscape needing the most work, while not overly disadvantaging opportunities as they arise in areas outside priority areas.

The HPG and HTAG will review progress implementing the SHP periodically. The success and progress in implementing actions will be reported in an annual report. This report will be published on the WGFD website and presented to the WGFC. Annual work planning efforts within the terrestrial and aquatic habitat programs will be consistent with and drawn from the SHP. Many other programs will draw heavily on the SHP as they develop annual work planning (e.g., Habitat and Access, Property Rights, Publications and Information and Education, and Habitat Protection).

## Goals and Actions

Under this SHP, the following actions will be pursued over the next five year period ending December 2020. These actions are relatively specific and can be readily evaluated as to whether they were completed or not. Appendix 1 also contains these actions along with a more comprehensive listing of additional, less-specific actions and operating guidelines.

### Goal 1. Conserve and manage wildlife habitats that are crucial for maintaining terrestrial and aquatic wildlife populations for the present and future.

- Reinststate WGFD funding for property acquisition to a level commensurate with historic levels to acquire property rights and management agreements.
- Complete 12 instream flow filings.
- Identify watersheds with existing high levels of connectivity that allow aquatic wildlife upstream and downstream passage.
- Identify important wildlife movement corridors and stopover areas.

### Goal 2. Enhance, improve and manage priority wildlife habitats that have been degraded.

- Use habitat biologists, contractors and other resources to inventory, assess and prepare management recommendations within areas selected for regional mule deer initiatives.
- Statewide, collect at least two reference reach data sets from B, C and E stream types for determining departure from stable stream form and for designing stream channel restorations.
- Populate a Rivermorph file with reference reach data sets and share among stream restoration practitioners.
- Collect and summarize long-term annual water temperature records on two streams per region.
- Collect fish passage data at man-made obstructions on streams throughout the Green River and Bear River drainages.
- Populate and share the Fish Passage database with internal and external partners.
- Use the fish passage database to identify priority barriers and connectivity issues.
- Refine protocols for vegetation monitoring within important habitats.
- Ensure that agency funding for habitat projects through the Department's Wildlife Trust Fund is maintained at least at the historic level of \$1.2 million annually.
- Assign personnel and resources to fully implement this plan.
- Ensure at least one Department employee attends each WVNRT meeting and shares notes with pertinent Department employees.
- Maintain the WGFD - NRCS MOA through annual meetings and coordination.
- Utilize the Wyoming Migration Initiative to prioritize big game migration corridors regionally and statewide.
- Remove barriers to wildlife movement.
- Assess beaver restoration options in the Green River drainage utilizing the Beaver Restoration Assessment Tool (BRAT).
- Apply BRAT statewide as appropriate.

- Prioritize cheatgrass infestations statewide for treatment.

Goal 3. Increase wildlife-based recreation through habitat enhancements that maintain or increase productivity of wildlife.

- Develop or enhance three to five new community fishery ponds.
- Increase habitat complexity and provide local fish cover by adding used Christmas trees to Boysen and Ocean Lakes.

Goal 4. Increase public awareness of wildlife habitat issues and the critical connection between healthy habitat and abundant wildlife populations.

- Provide an annual report for the commission, partners and constituents highlighting major habitat accomplishments completed by WGFD and partners. Provide the report to media and post it on the WGFD web site.
- Promote at least three habitat improvement projects in each region through internal and external publications, including news releases and e-newsletter, and field tours with local media and citizens.
- Include at least one aquatic habitat-related news item in annual angler newsletters.
- Promote the X-Stream Angler Program to achieve 100 applications for certificates.

Goal 5. Promote collaborative habitat management efforts with the general public, conservation partners, private landowners and land management agencies.

- Utilize Mule Deer Initiative participants and interested members of the public to plant key shrub species in important habitats.

Objectives Common to Multiple Goals:

- Review crucial habitat values and crucial habitat areas and narratives in each region and revise as necessary to focus habitat conservation and restoration efforts.
- Review habitat issues and enhancement areas and narratives in each region and revise as necessary to focus habitat conservation and restoration efforts.
- Review and update Strategic Habitat Plan goals, objectives, strategies, and actions.
- Refine and update Management Land and Access Summaries (MLAS) for all WHMA's based on regional and administrative team input by December 2020.
- Implement the Spence and Moriarty 10-year management plan.
- Hold annual section meetings among habitat personnel to share technical information and provide training opportunities.
- Update Habitat Extension Bulletin 47 "Grazing Management for Streamside Areas."
- Update Habitat Extension Bulletin 38 "The Role of Beaver in Riparian Habitat Management."
- Develop and distribute information on downy brome

## **Strategic Habitat Plan and Other Plans**

One role of this SHP is clarifying how this planning effort relates to the array of other WGFD plans, efforts and reports. Appendix 2 contains descriptions of other WGFD plans and how they relate to the SHP. The State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP) is described below, because it is easily confused with the SHP and plays an especially vital role.

The 2010 SWAP for Wyoming is an action plan developed by WGFD in cooperation with a number of conservation partners and other interested parties, including agencies, academia, conservation organizations and the general public. It is a plan intended to direct the state's effort to conserve Species of Greatest Conservation Need wildlife and to allow the state to maintain eligibility for U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service administered State Wildlife Grant funding. Since the 2008 SHP, Wyoming published its most recent State Wildlife Action Plan in 2010. The initial SWAP was completed in 2005.

The WGFD has had a SHP for many years, pre-dating the SWAP. While the two plans overlap in several regards, the SHP is distinctly a Department document to guide internal WGFD actions and priorities. Both plans provide direction for department actions: the SWAP emphasizes individual species and the habitat actions needed to ensure their future; the SHP emphasizes habitat communities and identifies how actions that perpetuate vital habitats benefit communities of wildlife. The SHP further includes a strong perspective toward habitat actions to benefit game species but through its emphasis on functioning landscapes and watersheds it strives to maintain a broad perspective that pursues protecting and improving entire wildlife communities.

The SWAP identifies 5 major challenges facing species of greatest conservation need and for maintaining fish and wildlife diversity across the State. These 5 challenges are: 1) rural subdivisions and development; 2) energy development; 3) invasive species; 4) climate change; and 5) disruption of historic disturbance regimes. In addition to identifying SGCN, the SWAP also identifies important habitats for those species; with portions of many of these habitats included as crucial and enhancement priority habitat areas in the SHP. The priority areas identified in this revision to the SHP were based on the needs of all wildlife. The narratives associated with each priority area include a list of the primary and secondary species impacted by the habitat conditions in that priority area. In most cases this will meet the conservation needs of one or more SGCN, while in other cases some important habitats for SGCN may not be incorporated into a priority habitat area. The SWAP assesses the needs of species assemblages and individual species and accounts for those that are not covered by a priority habitat area.

## **Appendix 1. Goals, Objectives, Strategies and Actions**

The following outline highlights the goals, objectives and strategies that will be pursued to address the habitat values and the habitat issues facing Wyoming's wildlife. This is a comprehensive and hierarchical list of activities that includes generic as well as specific actions. More specific and time-bound actions were listed earlier in this document and are repeated here to illustrate where they fit within the SHP goals.

### **Goal 1. Conserve and manage wildlife habitats that are crucial for maintaining terrestrial and aquatic wildlife populations for the present and future.**

Objective A) Maintain existing habitat values within crucial habitat areas.

- Strategy I) Pursue conservation easements and other land stewardship agreements to conserve migration corridors, functioning diverse ecosystems, open spaces and other crucial habitats.
  - Action a) Share priorities and collaborate with land trusts, conservation groups, landowners, land management agencies and other partners to identify conservation opportunities.
  - Action b) Pursue conservation easements and other land stewardship agreements.
  - Action c) Enlarge and diversify funding sources by pursuing and using non-traditional funding sources to augment traditional funding sources.
  - Action d) Restore funding for property acquisition to a level commensurate with historic levels to acquire property rights and management agreements.
  - Action e) Monitor and manage easements and agreements.
- Strategy II) Provide professional habitat input into land management permitting, planning and review processes (e.g., Resource Management Plans, Forest Plans, Environmental Impact Statements, Allotment Management Plans, Wildlife Environmental Reviews).
  - Action a) Maintain the WISDOM database to provide current wildlife and wildlife habitat data to the Governor's Office, State and Federal land management agencies, the USFWS and other partners to foster better management decisions.
  - Action b) Assign WGFD leads for land management and water planning, permitting and review processes and provide sufficient time for them to participate meaningfully in land management planning and review processes.

- Strategy III) Protect important fishery resources with instream flow water rights.
- Action a) Maintain a water management plan that identifies instream flow water right priorities and develop annual plans to focus work activities on in-stream flow priorities.
  - Action b) Complete 12 instream flow filings.
  - Action c) Work with partners and legislators to find and implement water management solutions like short or long-term leases or voluntary conversions of water rights to instream flows.
- Strategy IV) Protect and maintain river systems and watersheds with existing high levels of connectivity for aquatic wildlife.
- Action a) Identify watersheds with existing high levels of connectivity that allow aquatic wildlife upstream and downstream passage.
  - Action b) Provide comments on development proposals to minimize threats to aquatic connectivity.
  - Action c) Implement management actions to protect and maintain watersheds and waterways with existing high levels of connectivity for aquatic wildlife.
- Strategy V) Protect and maintain big game migration routes and stopover areas as well as other important areas of wildlife movement.
- Action a) Identify important wildlife movement corridors.
  - Action b) Coordinate and collaborate with the Wyoming Migration Initiative to share data and improve information on big game migration patterns
  - Action c) Maintain wildlife migration corridors through avoidance and mitigation measures.
  - Action d) Collaborate with the Wyoming Department of Transportation, Office of State Lands and Investments, and non-governmental organizations to assist with migration corridor maintenance.
  - Action e) Identify and map sage-grouse winter concentration areas
  - Action f) Protect identified corridors through the use of conservation easements or stipulations in land management planning documents.
  - Action g) Support the Wyoming Migration Initiative by providing technical, funding, and personnel assistance.
- Strategy VI) Minimize impacts of energy and other human actions on wildlife habitat.
- Action a) Provide input and actively participate in land management and project planning, process review, environmental commenting

efforts and decision records as directed by the WGFC Mitigation Policy.

- Action b) Work with the State Cooperator's Group and the Governor's Office to actively integrate sustainable aquatic and wildlife habitat components into land management planning documents.
- Action c) Use the WGFD's WISDOM System to facilitate project review and commenting.
- Action d) Maintain up-to-date standardized comments and recommendations (e.g., fencing specifications, mitigation requirements for oil and gas development, pipeline stream crossing recommendations); provide them to land management agencies, other decision makers and project proponents; and use them in WGFD reviews of projects, where applicable.

**Goal 2. Enhance, improve and manage priority wildlife habitats that have been degraded.**

Objective A) Inventory and assess wildlife habitat using an integrated watershed or landscape approach to identify issues, limiting factors and habitat management needs and opportunities.

Strategy I) Inventory and evaluate wildlife habitat using standardized inventory techniques (e.g., *Wyoming Habitat Assessment Methodology*, *Ecological Site Inventory*, *Cooperative Sage-Grouse Habitat Assessments*, *WGFD Moose and Mule Deer Habitat Assessment Techniques*, etc.).

- Action a) Use habitat biologists, contractors and other resources to inventory, assess and prepare management recommendations within areas selected for regional mule deer initiatives.
- Action b) Collect WHAM data on watersheds with limited information or possible habitat limitations.
- Action c) Statewide, collect at least two reference reach data sets from B, C and E stream types for determining departure from stable stream form and for designing stream channel restorations.
- Action d) Populate a Rivermorph file with reference reach data sets and share among stream restoration practitioners.
- Action e) Collect and summarize long-term annual water temperature records on at least 2 streams per region.
- Action f) Collect fish passage data at man-made obstructions on streams throughout the Green River and Bear River drainage.
- Action g) Populate and share the Fish Passage database with internal and external partners.
- Action h) Use the fish passage database to identify priority barriers and connectivity issues.

- Action i) Refine protocols for vegetation monitoring within important habitats.
  - Action j) Collect, analyze and report vegetation data in a format that informs population management decisions.
  - Action k) Utilize remote sensing technology (NDVI, PRISM, etc.) as recommended by the Department JCR monitoring committee.
  - Action l) Annually engage multiple Wildlife Division work units in systematically collecting vegetation data.
- Objective B) Implement projects to address and reduce habitat issues and enhance wildlife habitat.
- Strategy I) Maintain agency funding for habitat work.
    - Action a) Ensure that agency funding for habitat projects through the Department's Wildlife Trust Fund is maintained at least at the historic level of 1.2 million annually.
    - Action b) Use the habitat ranking process to rank and fund project proposals that address WGFD priorities.
  - Strategy II) Increase staffing levels to more effectively enhance wildlife habitats
    - Action a) Assign personnel and resources to fully implement this plan.
  - Strategy III) Collect, review and prioritize Department habitat proposals.
    - Action a) Maintain Habitat Technical Advisory Group and Habitat Policy Group for review and approval process.
    - Action b) Use SHP priority area maps and narratives to guide where projects are developed and how they are ranked.
    - Action c) Use the habitat ranking process to rank and fund project proposals that address WGFD priorities.
  - Strategy IV) Develop coalitions, partnerships, and other relationships to acquire funding and support for projects.
    - Action a) Continue liaisons and coordination with conservation organizations and foster new relationships with groups that promote wildlife habitat enhancements and sustainable natural resource management.
    - Action b) Ensure at least one Department employee attends each WWNRT meeting and shares notes with pertinent Department employees.
    - Action c) Train employees and maintain staff needed to ensure accurate and timely contractual and financial operations occur with funding entities.

- Action d) Maintain the WGFD - NRCS MOA through annual meetings and coordination
- Strategy V) Emphasize implementation of watershed/landscape scale habitat projects.
  - Action a) Use watershed/landscape level habitat inventories that provide the information needed to support larger scale habitat enhancements.
  - Action b) Emphasize landscape scale habitat enhancements when developing work schedules and prioritizing projects.
  - Action c) Work with WLCI and the Pinedale Area Project Office (PAPO) to identify and capitalize on opportunities to work at a landscape scale.
- Strategy VI) Increase movement opportunities for all wildlife.
  - Action a) Utilize the Wyoming Migration Initiative to prioritize big game migration corridors regionally and statewide.
  - Action b) Remove barriers to wildlife movement.
  - Action c) Increase movement opportunities for fish and other aquatic organisms.
  - Action d) Reduce fish loss to irrigation diversions.
- Strategy VII) Promote sound riparian habitat with functioning riparian communities.
  - Action a) Assess beaver restoration options in the Green River drainage utilizing the Beaver Restoration Assessment Tool (BRAT).
  - Action b) Apply BRAT statewide as appropriate.
  - Action c) Work with land managers and landowners to transplant and restore beaver to historical and suitable unoccupied habitat.
  - Action d) Work with land managers and landowners to resolve sediment and other water quality issues related to riparian management.
  - Action e) Work with land managers and landowners on grazing management that mutually benefits livestock and wildlife resources.
  - Action f) Work with land managers and others to promote wise human development of riparian areas including roads, structures, agriculture and other activities.
- Strategy VIII) Promote functioning stream channels that maintain natural processes and aquatic habitat.
  - Action a) Work with land managers, private land owners and conservation organizations to enhance or restore stream channels.

- Action b) Work with city government, conservation groups and others to enhance or restore stream channels and habitat within and around Wyoming Communities.
- Strategy IX) Educate private landowners about habitat and wildlife issues associated with pond development.
  - Action a) Work with landowners, land managers and conservation organizations to locate and design ponds that reduce the cumulative landscape and ecosystem impacts of illegally introduced species, aquatic nuisance species and thermal and nutrient issues.
  - Action b) Inform landowners, land managers, and conservation organizations about relationships between pond development introduced species and water quality impacts.
  - Action c) Provide information to pond developers to incorporate natural and sustainable designs that benefit the broad community of native species.
- Strategy X) Mimic natural disturbance regimes using fire, mechanical, biological and chemical methods.
  - Action a) Coordinate and plan with federal and state agencies to promote natural fire (“let burn”) management that promotes and enhances natural processes and habitat.
  - Action b) Use prescribed fire, mechanical, biological or chemical as tools to enhance wildlife habitat and natural processes.
  - Action c) Inform and educate land managers, landowners and the public about the benefits of fire for managing certain vegetation communities.
- Strategy XI) Work with landowners, land managers and conservation organizations on grazing management programs that enhance sustainability of rangelands and wildlife habitat.
  - Action a) Pursue and develop habitat treatments that mutually benefit wildlife and livestock.
  - Action b) Develop and use partnership funding sources and long-term agreements that provide infrastructure and incentives to facilitate grazing management that sustains wildlife habitat.
  - Action c) Pursue and develop forage reserves and grass banks that provide rest and rotation for livestock grazing strategies.
  - Action d) Use livestock grazing expertise and science to provide workshops and technical support that promotes sustainability of rangelands and wildlife habitat.

- Strategy XII) Manage aspen, cottonwood, willow, woody draw, and mixed mountain shrub communities for sustainability.
- Action a) Develop projects that enhance aspen communities.
  - Action b) Develop projects that enhance cottonwood and willow communities.
  - Action c) Develop projects that enhance woody draw communities to support species such as chokecherry, plum, serviceberry, hawthorn, mahogany, etc
  - Action d) Develop projects that enhance mixed mountain shrub communities.
  - Action e) Manage wildlife and livestock numbers to maintain vigorous, healthy and sustainable woody plant communities.
  - Action f) Work with landowners to facilitate access agreements designed to allow an adequate harvest of female big game in order to maintain or enhance these habitat types.
- Strategy XIII) Reduce prevalence of non-native vegetation and emphasize native perennial plants and plant community diversity and sustainability.
- Action a) Actively seek partnerships and relationships to maintain WGFD awareness of the incidence and status of invasive species and options for their control.
  - Action b) Use proven habitat manipulation techniques to manage invasive salt cedar and Russian olive and to restore native cottonwood and willow complexes.
  - Action c) Use proven habitat manipulation techniques to manage cheatgrass and other annual invasive plant species.
  - Action d) Manage big game wildlife and livestock numbers to maintain vigorous, healthy and sustainable landscapes.
  - Action e) Prioritize cheatgrass infestations statewide for treatment.
  - Action f) Explore new approaches for treating cheatgrass infestations.
- Strategy XIV) Mitigate impacts of energy and other human impacts on habitat.
- Action a) Research, develop and implement successful active/post development reclamation techniques.
  - Action b) Stress the need and requirement for mitigation as specified under the appropriate state and federal laws as well as the Commission's Mitigation Policy in environmental commenting.
  - Action c) Advocate and incorporate avoidance, then minimization, then mitigation of impacts during participation in land management and project planning, process review and environmental commenting.

- Action d) Work with the Wyoming Landscape Conservation Initiative, PAPO, Platte Valley Habitat Partnership (PVHP) and others to identify and capitalize upon opportunities to conserve landscapes and open space in SW Wyoming.
- Action e) Evaluate required mitigation monitoring data to improve mitigation standards and stipulations.
- Objective C) Monitor effectiveness of habitat projects in reducing habitat issues and enhancing wildlife habitat.
  - Strategy I) Collaborate with land managers, landowners and other partners to monitor the effectiveness of habitat enhancements.
    - Action a) Use repeatable before and after photos to record and evaluate effectiveness of habitat enhancements over time.
    - Action b) Use WGFD and other agency permanent reference sites and monitoring stations located within or near habitat enhancements for comparison and monitoring.
    - Action c) Communicate monitoring results among WGFD regions and with federal and county partners for future improvement of management practices.
    - Action d) When monitoring is not practical, use proven habitat enhancement techniques that provide consistent and reliable results and that have a demonstrated record of enhancing wildlife habitat.
    - Action e) Work with University scientists to research the effectiveness of mitigation efforts on target and nontarget wildlife.

**Goal 3. Increase wildlife-based recreation through habitat enhancements that maintain or increase productivity of wildlife.**

- Objective A) Implement wildlife habitat enhancements directed at specialized needs.
  - Strategy I) Focus habitat enhancements on smaller scale areas to target specific species or assemblages of wildlife or to target life stages or seasonal needs of wildlife.
    - Action a) Implement habitat enhancements that increase wildlife-based recreation as appropriate and that are complementary to other goals and objectives.
    - Action b) Work with landowners and public and state land management agencies to implement habitat enhancements that demonstrate the effectiveness of partnerships and wildlife stewardship.
    - Action c) Identify options for developing community fishery ponds.
    - Action d) Develop at least one new community fishery pond in each region.

- Action e) Increase habitat complexity and provide local fish cover by adding used Christmas trees to Boysen and Ocean Lakes.
- Objective B) Monitor effectiveness of enhancements.
  - Strategy I) Establish measurable recreation-based goals for each project
    - Action a) Assess whether projects have met the goals.

**Goal 4. Increase public awareness of wildlife habitat issues and the critical connection between healthy habitat and abundant wildlife populations.**

- Objective A) Raise awareness among key audiences about the value of healthy wildlife habitats for Wyoming's wildlife and people.
  - Strategy I) Develop an annual comprehensive outreach plan promoting the value of healthy habitat in Wyoming, using a variety of outreach tools, including internal and external publications. The outreach plan should identify key messages and could include, but will not be limited to, actions listed below.
    - Action a) Pursue human dimensions information regarding the public's perception and knowledge of habitat conditions in Wyoming and how habitat relates to wildlife population and hunting opportunity.
    - Action b) Provide an annual report for the commission, partners and constituents highlighting major habitat accomplishments completed by WGFD and partners. Provide the report to media and post it on the WGFD website.
    - Action c) Promote at least three habitat improvement projects in each region through internal and external publications, including news releases and e-newsletter and field tours with local media and citizens.
    - Action d) Investigate opportunity and tools to promote the connection between healthy habitat and hunting and fishing opportunity.
    - Action e) Include at least one aquatic habitat-related news item in annual angler newsletters.
    - Action f) Promote the X-Stream Angler Program to achieve 100 applications for certificates.
  - Strategy II) Foster understanding of components of healthy habitat through educational programs and activities.
    - Action a) Use Educator Resource lesson plans and work units to help educators incorporate habitat components into teaching material.
    - Action b) Explore partnership opportunities with conservation education partners such as Wyoming Ag in the Classroom, The Nature Conservancy, etc. to promote habitat knowledge and awareness.

Action c) Support Trout Unlimited's Adopt-A-Trout Program through participation of WGFD biologists.

Strategy III) Foster appreciation of the benefits of healthy habitat for supporting diverse recreational uses.

Action a) Emphasize positive aspects of healthy habitat for all recreationists including wildlife viewers and other non-consumptive users during public outreach efforts including presentations and publications.

**Goal 5. Promote collaborative habitat management efforts with the general public, conservation partners, private landowners and land management agencies.**

Objective A) Develop and maintain effective relationships with partners that have the ability to influence wildlife habitat.

Strategy I) Work with private landowners, other agencies and conservation groups to understand issues and communicate habitat goals.

Action a) Meet at least annually to coordinate habitat management with federal partners.

Action b) Make this Strategic Habitat Plan and WGFD habitat priorities available to the Governor's Office, State and Federal agencies, private landowners, conservation districts and groups and the public.

Strategy II) Work with legislators to achieve laws that benefit both people and wildlife habitat.

Action a) Respond to information requests promptly and completely regarding the influence of proposed legislation on wildlife habitat.

Action b) Encourage water management legislation that improves aquatic resources and serves the public interest.

**Objectives Common to Multiple Goals.**

Objective A) Keep this SHP and associated priority areas current and relevant.

Strategy I) Review and update documents by the end of December 2020

Action a) Review crucial habitat values and crucial habitat areas and narratives in each region and revise as necessary to focus habitat conservation and restoration efforts.

Action b) Review habitat issues and enhancement areas and narratives in each region and revise as necessary to focus habitat conservation and restoration efforts.

Action c) Review and update Strategic Habitat Plan goals, objectives, strategies, and actions.

Objective B) Administer Wildlife Habitat Management Areas (WHMA) according to WGFC regulation and policy, Fish and Wildlife Service Federal Aid guidelines, purpose of acquisition and other legal requirements. Manage the habitat and other natural resources in an appropriate ecological manner to meet wildlife objectives while allowing for compatible wildlife-oriented recreation.

Strategy I) Manage the WHMAs according to the Managed Land and Access Summary (MLAS) developed for each WHMA.

Action a) Use regional and administrative teams to assist with the administration and management of the WHMAs.

Action b) Refine and update the MLAS for all WHMA's based on regional and administrative team input by December 2020.

Action c) Develop a means for the public to provide input into the MLAS.

Action d) Educate WGFD personnel and the public on guidelines, policies and legal restraints of WHMAs.

Strategy II) Meet objectives for ecological conditions, wildlife habitat and wildlife as outlined within the MLAS.

Action a) Monitor habitat on WHMAs with vegetation transects, riparian greenlines, photo points, stream temperature, etc.

Action b) Using input from regional and administrative teams, improve or develop wildlife habitat as required to meet the objectives of the MLAS.

Action c) Monitor and control invasive species on WHMAs with a proactive, integrated and coordinated approach.

Action d) Use WHMAs as forage reserves when livestock grazing will benefit or improve wildlife habitat on the WHMA providing it is consistent with the MLAS, regulations, policies and guidelines and does not impact wildlife-oriented recreation.

Action e) Conduct wildlife habitat research consistent with the MLAS, regulations, policies and guidelines while avoiding impacts to recreation.

Action f) Implement Spence Moriarty 10-year management plan by December 2020.

Strategy III) Meet objectives for wildlife-oriented recreation and education as outlined within the MLAS.

Action a) Improve or develop traditional (hunting & fishing) and non-traditional (wildlife watching, nature trails, etc.) wildlife-oriented recreational opportunities on the WHMAs.

- Action b) Maintain a balance between habitat conservation and wildlife-oriented recreation on WHMAs.
- Objective C) Maintain the appropriate resources to effectively and efficiently implement the strategic habitat plan (SHP).
  - Strategy I) Maintain the appropriate workforce, equipment and funding to effectively and efficiently address and meet the goals and objectives of the SHP.
    - Action a) Continually evaluate staffing, equipment needs and funding and work with WGFD administrators to address these needs relative to the complexity of habitat issues and challenges addressed in the SHP.
    - Action b) Investigate alternative funding sources to help pay for personnel and equipment to address the SHP.
    - Action c) Seek to incorporate technological solutions that increase efficiency.
  - Strategy II) Maintain a highly trained, effective and professional workforce by offering and supporting relevant training.
    - Action a) Utilize the available resources within the SHP work units to cross train and educate other personnel within these work units.
    - Action b) Hold annual section meetings among habitat personnel to share technical information and provide training opportunities.
    - Action c) Determine and provide for the necessary training that is required for personnel within the SHP work units to effectively complete their job.
  - Strategy III) Develop guidelines for land managers for restoring, enhancing and managing wildlife habitat.
    - Action a) Update Habitat Extension Bulletin 47 “Grazing Management for Streamside Areas.”
    - Action b) Update Habitat Extension Bulletin 38 “The Role of Beaver in Riparian Habitat Management.”
    - Action c) Develop new habitat technical bulletins that will benefit land managers.
    - Action d) Develop and distribute information on downy brome.

## **Appendix 2. Other habitat-related plans used by WGFD**

### **WYOMING LANDSCAPE CONSERVATION INITIATIVE (WLCI)**

The WLCI is an interagency working group of partners collaborating on a long-term, science-based effort to enhance wildlife habitats at a landscape scale in southwest Wyoming, while facilitating responsible development. In 2014, WLCI completed its *WLCI Conservation Action Plan* to summarize conservation priorities and issues and to provide detailed information on past, current, and proposed conservation actions. The habitat priorities and geographic priority areas identified under the SHP are reflected in the WLCI conservation plan. Easement and habitat leasing proposals for conservation refer to crucial areas identified under the SHP.

### **WGFC MITIGATION POLICY**

The mitigation policy was established by the WGFC in recognition that growth, development, and land use changes will continue to occur in Wyoming, and when adverse impacts to wildlife or their habitat is unavoidable, it directs the WGFD to develop and promote further mitigation that best protects wildlife. It also outlines mitigation approaches and provides mitigation categories for species and/or their habitats, including species of greatest conservation need (SGCN) identified in the SWAP for Wyoming.

### **FISH DIVISION PLANS**

The Fish Division produces an annual work plan, an annual progress report as well as basin management plans. These are linked by a common set of basin or water-specific goals and objectives. Annual work plans include both aquatic habitat and population efforts. The annual progress report describes activities for the year and progress towards meeting these objectives and is necessary to meet federal aid reporting requirements. The SHP is at the base of this scheme by defining the habitat goals, objectives, strategies and priority areas that may be incorporated into annual work plans or basin management plans. The SHP provides the overall direction for aquatic habitat efforts, and this direction should be reflected in the three other documents. Aquatic habitat biologists annually report highlights of major accomplishments in a Strategic Habitat Plan Report. The basin management plans provide a general description of habitat conditions and issues in basins where they have been completed – further details on issues and values are provided in the SHP Priority Area Narratives for parts of some basins.

Additional Fish Division plans relate to the SHP. The Water Management Plan describes the goals and objectives for pursuing instream flow water rights and other water management activities. This plan was revised in 2010 and has been updated annually since then. Efforts described in that plan are largely consistent with the priorities and efforts developed in this revised SHP and consistency can be further increased during future revisions. There are also numerous fish species conservation plans and agreements that contain habitat maintenance or improvement provisions. Examples include Conservation agreements for Colorado River Cutthroat and Bonneville Cutthroat trout. Administrative reports are produced periodically and

provide detailed aquatic wildlife and habitat assessments. Often, habitat recommendations developed in these reports provide the basis for future efforts. A myriad of other Fish Division plans and collaborative efforts include significant habitat components. Examples include the National Fish Habitat Action Plan and the Western Native Trout Initiative.

### WILDLIFE DIVISION PLANS

Wildlife biologist and game warden management recommendations rely on habitat production and utilization surveys, as well as other population and habitat studies and descriptions of habitat treatments. In addition to the various forms of data collection for big game and game birds, surveys are conducted for migratory game birds, nongame birds and nongame mammals. These species categories have management objectives, and in some cases, especially for waterfowl, there is habitat monitoring (e.g., pond counts and vegetation assessments).

Terrestrial Habitat personnel develop goals to meet habitat requirements and, like the Aquatic Habitat Section, produce an annual work schedule to address the issues in the SHP. Progress toward meeting these annual goals and priorities is reported in the annual SHP Accomplishment Report.

The following are some of the primary terrestrial wildlife planning documents that are directly related to the Strategic Habitat Plan:

- Big and trophy game management objectives in annual Job Completion Reports
- South Wind River Mule Deer Herd Habitat Management Plan
- Wyoming Greater Sage-grouse Conservation Plan
- Eight Wyoming regional (local working group) Greater Sage-grouse conservation plans
- Wyoming Green River Basin Trumpeter Swan Habitat
- Wyoming Range Mule Deer Initiative and Habitat Management Plan
- Platte Valley Mule Deer Initiative and Platte Valley Habitat Partnership Habitat Plan
- Recommendations for Managing Mule Deer Habitat in Wyoming

There are a large number of other plans ( $\geq 40$ ), specific to individual species or groups of species, at the state, region, national, and international levels, that are in some way relevant to the SHP. Examples include: *A Conservation Plan for Bats in Wyoming*, *Conservation Assessment and Conservation Strategy for the Swift Fox in the United States*, *Partners In Flight North American Landbird Conservation Plan*, *Wyoming regional Mule Deer Initiative*, and *The Northern Great Plains Joint Venture Implementation Plan*. On June 2, 2011, Wyoming Governor Matt Mead issued Executive Order 2011-5 that revised the "Core Area Population Strategy" developed by his Sage Grouse Implementation Team. The Core Area Population Strategy specifies a sage grouse core area management concept incorporating a set of stipulations and processes that are biologically and legally supportable. Executive Order 2011-5 directs state agencies to focus on maintenance and enhancement of habitats within Core Population Areas. These core population areas are included in the crucial areas for this SHP.

## SERVICES DIVISION PLANS

Services Division coordinates management of WGFC owned and administered lands according to WGFC regulations (Chapter 23), WGFC policy, Fish and Wildlife Service Federal Aid regulations and guidelines per Managed Land and Access Summaries (MLAS). The MLAS include the specific goals, objectives and strategies for each WHMA. In addition to the MLAS, there are five-year development and management plans for invasive plants, wetlands and irrigated meadows. The strategies of the MLAS and management plans are incorporated into annual work plans as actions. Included within the annual work plans are the past years completion, Fish and Wildlife Service Federal Aid Assistance and other required management reports. Services Division oversees the Publication Program. This work unit produces annual work plans based on established statewide and regional priorities, which include a variety of habitat-related activities. One of the major overall goals of the Publication work unit is to raise awareness among key audiences about the value of healthy wildlife habitats for Wyoming's wildlife and people.