CT'S STATE WILDLIFE ACTION PLAN REVISION

Presented by: Brian Hess, Acting Director, Wildlife Division
Bureau of Natural Resources

AGENDA FOR THIS WORKSHOP

State Wildlife Action Plan Basics

The Revision Process

How to Get Involved

How can this help you and your commission?

SWAP Basics

A BIT OF HISTORY

Tentpoles of wildlife conservation

The nonharvested pole

Funding – State Wildlife Grants!

The first SWAP

Wildlife Conservation Takes a Giant Step Forward in Connecticut

Written by Karen Terwilliger, of Terwilliger Consulting, Inc.

Wildlife conservation has a long and strong history in the United States. With its serious beginnings in the early 1900s, we have witnessed nearly a century of impressive wildlife restoration efforts. History has shown that major advancements in conservation have resulted from a combination of science, a deep commitment, and a stewardship ethic. This is exemplified by great conservation programs under the leadership of such notables as Aldo Leopold and Theodore Roosevelt. We again stand at the threshold of an unparalleled opportunity for comprehensive wildlife conservation at the national and state level as all 50 states are poised to develop their own Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy (CWCS).

Members of the Connecticut Invertebrate Species Scientific Advisory Committee discuss habitat issues and long-term conservation concerns at a recent CWCS meeting at the Wildlife Division's Sessions Woods office.

Paving the Way

The conservation of wildlife can be viewed as much an art as a science. It requires a multifaceted approach and talents to address the changing landscape that we, the burgeoning human population, have sculpted. Changes in the amount, patterns, and structure of forests, fields, and wetlands have placed wildlife species in a new setting and context, one seldom far from encroaching human populations. This creates additional stressors and challenges to our native wildlife, as well as to the government agencies charged with the responsibility to conserve it. Adding to the complexity of this scenario, wildlife conservation tends to be on the short end of funding and attention. Federal and state agencies have done amazingly well with small budgets and few resources.

Historically, conservation efforts have been targeted at certain categories of wildlife. For example, the early and highly successful game and sport fish restoration programs of the Pittman-Robertson and Dingell-Johnson /Wallop Breaux Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Acts provided for the successful restoration of many species. The establishment of the Wildlife Refuge System, Migratory Bird (Hunting Stamp) Act, and other important wetland legislation provided for the conservation of significant wetlands and wetland birds. The passage of the federal Endangered Species Act (as well as other important environmental legislation in the 1970s) established protection for the most critically endangered species.

And the story goes on….each piece of new legislation responding to a need or gap in the grand scheme of conservation, resulting in a new program with a new focused emphasis. As time goes on, the gaps narrow and the pieces start to come together. Although fragmented and piecemeal by default, wildlife conservation programs have come far and been carried by enthusiasm and commitment to this greater cause of natural resource stewardship.

Each program, targeted to address a piece of the broad spectrum of conservation, has made great strides forward but has seldom provided the funding and resources to effect holistic conservation. The term "unfunded mandates" certainly has had its place in wildlife conservation. Even though adequate funding hasn't been there, each piece of legislation provided an additional tool for the conservation toolbox.

Then, in 1980, came a big tool with a broader scope, but still no funding. This was the visionary Forsythe-Chaffee Act, commonly referred to as the Nongame Act. This legislation paved the way for more holistic conservation--one that would fill the biggest gap yet. The intent of this program was proactive and preventative: to keep common species common and, most importantly, to keep them from becoming endangered. What a great new approach for broad-based conservation.

But states were struggling to deliver such comprehensive conservation with limited resources. As a result, the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), like most other state conservation agencies, has struggled to deliver comprehensive wildlife conservation for its citizens. The DEP has done a remarkably good job considering all the aforementioned hurdles and the shocking fact that

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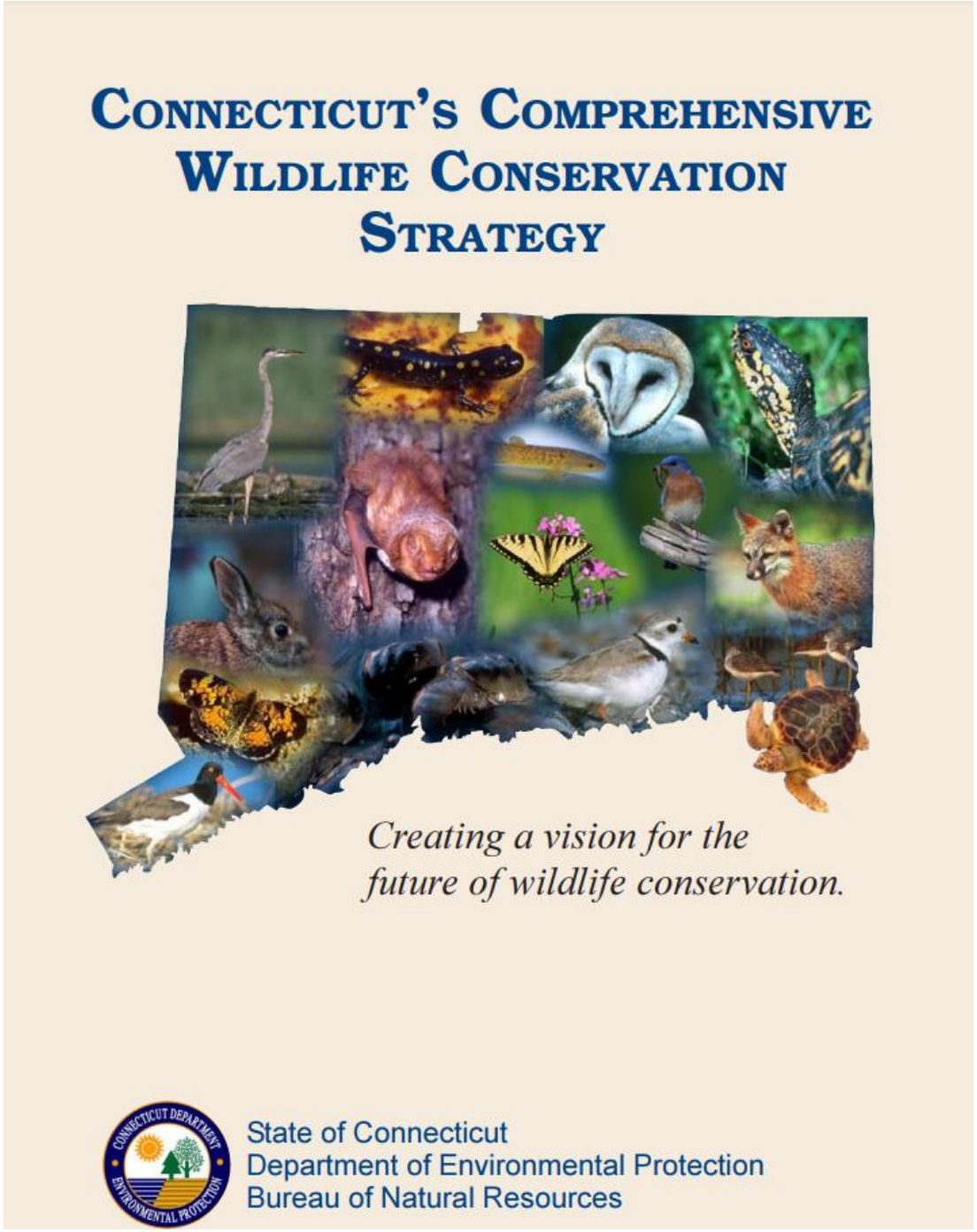
THE ELEMENTS

Eight required elements

Congressionally mandated

Further, the plan must identify and be focused on the "species in greatest need of conservation," yet address the "full array of wildlife" and wildlife-related issues.



SPECIES OF GREATEST CONSERVATION NEED

Information on the distribution and abundance of species of wildlife, including low and declining populations as the State fish and wildlife agency deems appropriate, that are indicative of the diversity and health of the State's wildlife

As defined by the regional Lexicon

Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN) – Defined by each state fish or wildlife agency in its Wildlife Action Plan, typically a native species with declining populations, or vulnerabilities expected to benefit from strategic conservation attention.

SGCN 2015

TABLE 1.7: SUMMARY OF CONNECTICUT'S GCN SPECIES

Taxa	Most Important	Very Important	Important	Total
Mammals	12	6	8	26
Birds	22	38	35	95
Herpetofauna	6	13	12	31
Fish	17	14	42	73
Invertebrates	36	58	148	242
Plants	6	8	86	100
Total	99	137	331	567

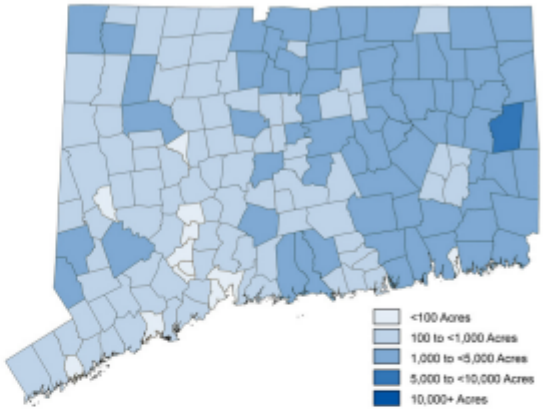
KEY HABITATS

Descriptions of locations and relative condition of key habitats and community types essential to conservation of species identified

Tend to be coarse resolution

Forested Inland Wetlands

Forested inland wetland habitats are characterized by hydric soils with evergreen and/or deciduous trees forming 60 to 100 percent of the canopy cover. Forested swamps are topographical basins that contain deposits of decomposed peats and mucks and slow-moving or stagnant water. Floodplain forests are more dynamic systems governed by annual flooding regimes along major rivers. Connecticut has approximately 100,000 acres of forested wetlands, with red maple forests being the most common.



There are five sub-habitats of the Forested Inland Wetland Key Habitat group (Table 2.5) ranging in condition rank from poor to good. Examples of Forested Wetlands include Chester Cedar Swamp National Natural Landmark in Chester (Atlantic White Cedar Swamp), Holleran Swamp in Colebrook (Red Spruce Swamp), and Wangunk Meadows Wildlife Management Area in Portland (Floodplain Forest).

TABLE 2.5: SUB-HABITATS OF THE FORESTED INLAND WETLAND KEY HABITAT GROUP.

Sub-habitat	Condition
Red Maple Swamps	Good
Atlantic White Cedar Swamps	Poor
Northern White Cedar Swamps	Poor
Red/Black Spruce Swamps	Unknown
Floodplain Forests	Fair-Good

THREATS

Descriptions of problems which may adversel affect species identified in (1) or their habitat and priority research and survey efforts needed to identify factors which may assist ir restoration and improved conservation of the species and habitats

Top threats in 2015:

- Residential and Commercial Development
- Administrative Challenges
- Education / Outreach Challenges
- Invasive Species, Genes, and Disease
- Natural Systems Modification

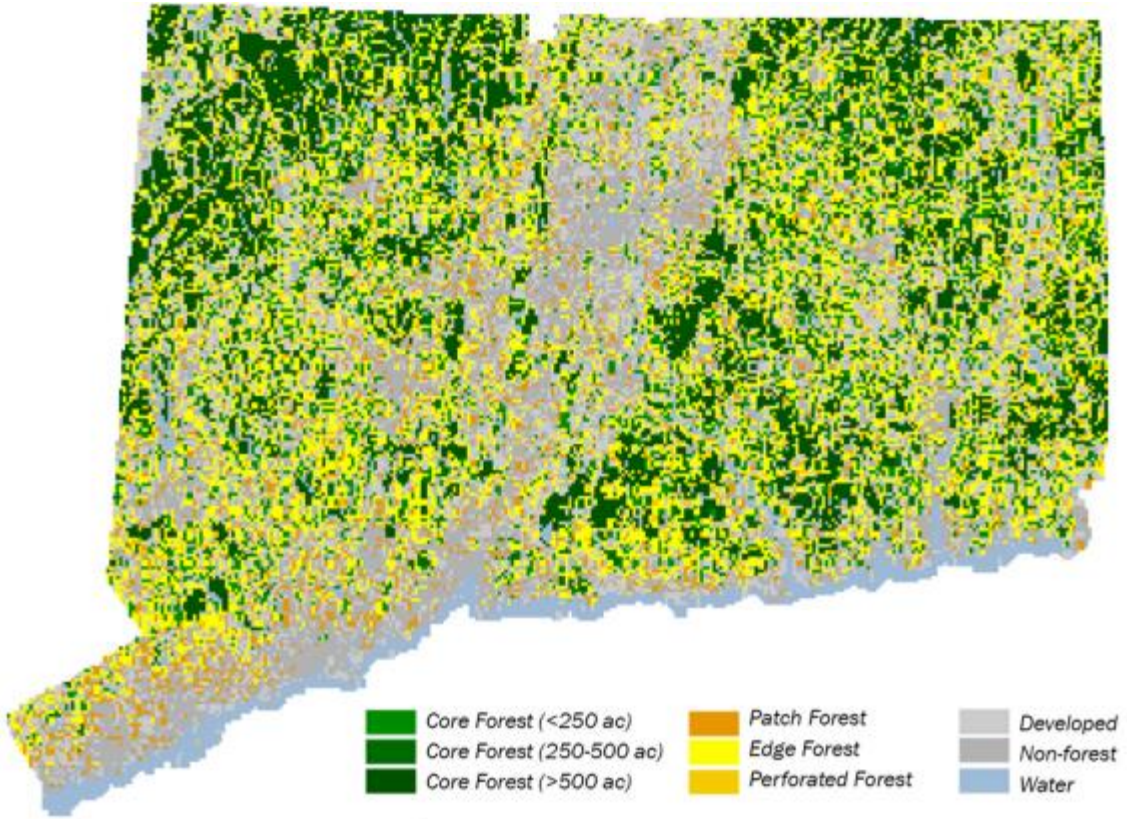


FIGURE 3.1: FOREST FRAGMENTATION IN CONNECTICUT. (SOURCE: CLEAR 2009)

ACTIONS

Descriptions of conservation actions proposed to conserve the identified species and habitats and priorities for implementing such actions

Identification of Conservation Opportunity Areas (COAs)

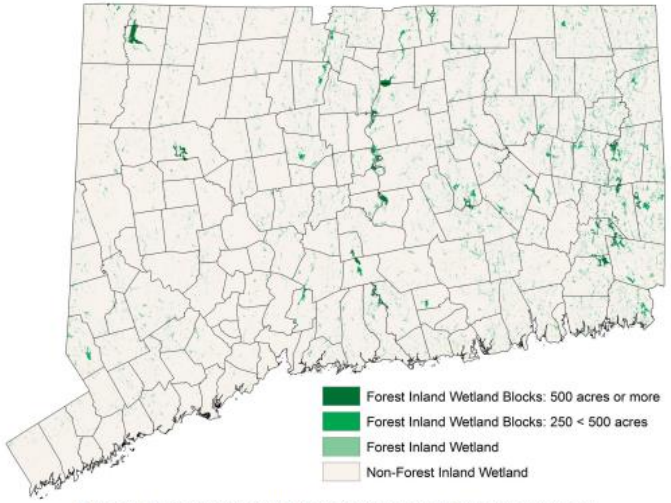


FIGURE 4.4: FOREST INLAND WETLAND CONSERVATION OPPORTUNITY AREAS.

Highest Priority Actions Listed by Associated Threat

For each of these actions, the response of the GCN species and their habitat would be measured to determine if the outcomes were achieved. If not, adaptive management would be applied.

Threat: Insufficient scientific knowledge regarding wildlife, fish, and their habitats.
Sub-habitats affected: All

- Action: Locate, map, and protect surface springs, seeps, and thermal refuges for GCN species.
  Measure: Number of surface springs, seeps, and thermal refuges identified, mapped, and protected.

Threat: Habitat fragmentation from transportation and utility corridors.
Sub-habitats affected: All

- Action: Work with DOT and utility companies to minimize habitat fragmentation from transportation and utility corridors.
  Measure: Number of corridor projects for which DEEP provides input on ways to minimize fragmentation.

Threat: Insufficient or inappropriate habitat management or modification on public and private lands.
Sub-habitats affected: All

- Action: Provide Best Management Practices to benefit GCN species and their habitats to state, municipal, and local landowners and provide guidance on their use.
  Measure: Number of Best Management Practices benefiting GCN species provided to state, municipal, and local landowners along with education on implementing them.
- Action: Implement wetland restoration and enhancement projects that benefit GCN species.
  Measure: Number of acres of key wetland habitat restored or enhanced that benefit GCN species.

MONITORING

Proposed plans for monitoring species identified in (1) and their habitats, for monitoring the effectiveness of the conservation actions proposed in (4), and for adapting these conservation actions to respond appropriately to new information or changing conditions

TABLE 5.2: SPECIES, GUILD (SPECIES GROUPS), AND HABITAT MONITORING PROGRAMS IN CONNECTICUT.

Monitoring Program or Action	Implementation Lead	Target(s)	Level of Monitoring		
			Species	Guild	Habitat
New England marine mammal, sea turtle and seabird survey	NOAA	Marine mammals, sea turtles, seabirds	X		
NOAA Restoration Center Programs	NOAA, CT DEEP	Oil spill and contaminant release response and restoration	X	X	X
Freshwater mussel, snails and crayfish surveys (various locations)	Biodrawversity LLC	Mussels, snails, crayfish	X		X
Christmas Bird Counts	Audubon Connecticut	Birds	X	X	
American Shad studies	CT DEEP, USFWS	American shad	X		X
White Memorial Fish and Wildlife Monitoring Programs	White Memorial Foundation	Birds, amphibians, reptiles, invertebrates, fish	X	X	X
National Audubon Society Birdathons	Audubon Connecticut and chapters	Birds	X	X	
BioBlitz Surveys	UConn	Faunal inventories	X		
Long Island Sound Trawl Survey	CT DEEP	Fin fish, squid and crustaceans	X	X	X
Shorebird Monitoring Survey	CT DEEP	Shorebirds	X	X	
Summer Canada Geese Program	CT DEEP	Canada Geese	X		
Monitoring Avian Productivity and Survivorship (MAPS)	Institute for Bird Populations volunteers	Migratory birds	X	X	
BirdSource (national monitoring program)	National Audubon Society and Cornell Lab of Ornithology	Birds		X	
School Yard Habitat Program	Audubon Connecticut, USFWS	Habitat, birds, bees	X	X	X
Forest Bird Initiative	Audubon Connecticut, Ferruci & Walicki LLC, Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station	Songbirds	X	X	X
Osprey Nation	Connecticut Audubon Society, CT DEEP	Ospreys	X		X
Stream and River Survey	CT DEEP	Fish	X	X	
Diadromous Fisheries Assessment and Restoration Program	CT DEEP, USFWS	Diadromous fish	X		X
Eight Mile River Sampling (water quality)	Three Rivers Community College	Water quality monitoring		X	X
Rapid Bioassessment Monitoring Stream Surveys	CT DEEP	Macroinvertebrates		X	X
Oceanology Programs in Little Narragansett Bay and Pawcatuck River estuaries	Pine Point School	Benthic surveys, water quality monitoring		X	X
Long Island Sound Water Quality Survey	CT DEEP	Water quality monitoring			X

REVISION

Descriptions of procedures to review the plan at intervals not to exceed ten years

CHAPTER 6
REVIEW AND REVISION OF CONNECTICUT'S WILDLIFE ACTION PLAN

REVIEW AND REVISION PROCESS

This chapter describes the process that Connecticut will use to review, revise, and update its wildlife action plan and addresses Element 6. Connecticut will use the annual performance report requirement for State Wildlife Grant funded projects as a basis for an annual assessment of progress toward achieving plan objectives.

Internal review and revision will be conducted on a biennial basis to coincide with renewal of the federal grant agreement. This will allow the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) to address species or habitat responses relating to management activities that occur within a relatively short time period. Evaluations of survey data and project needs at the beginning of each grant agreement period will allow staff to incorporate new information needs or specific projects as priorities or conditions change.

Reviews of the Wildlife Action Plan (WAP), focusing on the status of Greatest Conservation Need (GCN) species, will be coordinated with DEEP's statutorily mandated five-year updates of species listed under the Connecticut Endangered Species Act. Listed species reviews and updates are conducted using biologists and the Endangered Species Scientific Advisory Committees, the same group of experts used to designate GCN species in this plan. The most recent update was completed in 2015 and will be evaluated and updated again in 2020. In its priority list of actions, Connecticut's original 2005 WAP identified the need for a framework to streamline the simultaneous review of both GCN and state-listed species. As a result, the most recent listings under the Connecticut Endangered Species Act and WAP updates have been coordinated and are conducted at five-year intervals.

A comprehensive review of the entire WAP and creation of a new updated document will be completed in 2025. Input from conservation partners and the public will be sought using methods similar to those used in the development of this plan, which are described in detail in Chapter 8.

Many other existing conservation and management plans in Connecticut are adaptive in nature and have regularly scheduled reviews. The need to revisit conservation plans periodically, updating them to reflect new information, additional programs, and changing conditions, is recognized and practiced in these as well as in the Connecticut Wildlife Action Plan. Appendix 1 [illegible] ision. These same plans will be used in the biennial review and revision process and the comprehensive revision in 2025.

AGENCY AND TRIBAL INVOLVEMENT

Plans for coordinating the development, implementation, review, and revision of the plan with Federal, State, and local agencies and Indian tribes that manage significant land and water areas within the State or administer programs that significantly affect the conservation of identified species and habitats.

USDA Forest Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

EPA United States Environmental Protection Agency

USGS science for a changing world

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Congress also affirmed through this legislation, that broad public participation is an essential element of developing and implementing these plans, the projects that are carried out while these plans are developed, and the Species in Greatest Need of Conservation that Congress has indicated such programs and projects are intended to emphasize.

REGIONAL CONTEXT

Northeast Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies

Participate in Regional Consistency

Regional Species of Greatest Conservation Need

Regional Conservation Needs Grants

Landscape-Level Conservation

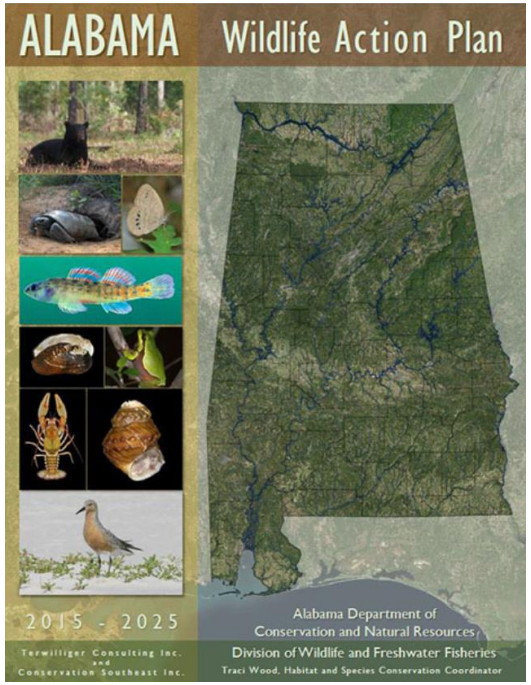
NATIONAL CONTEXT

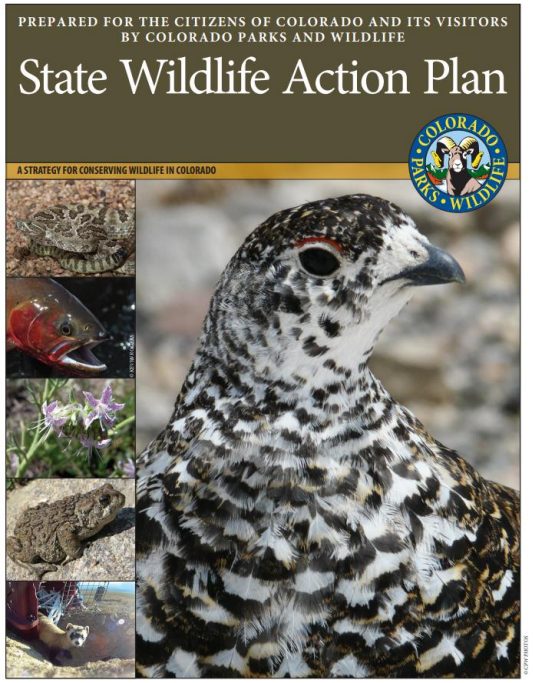
ASSOCIATION of FISH & WILDLIFE AGENCIES

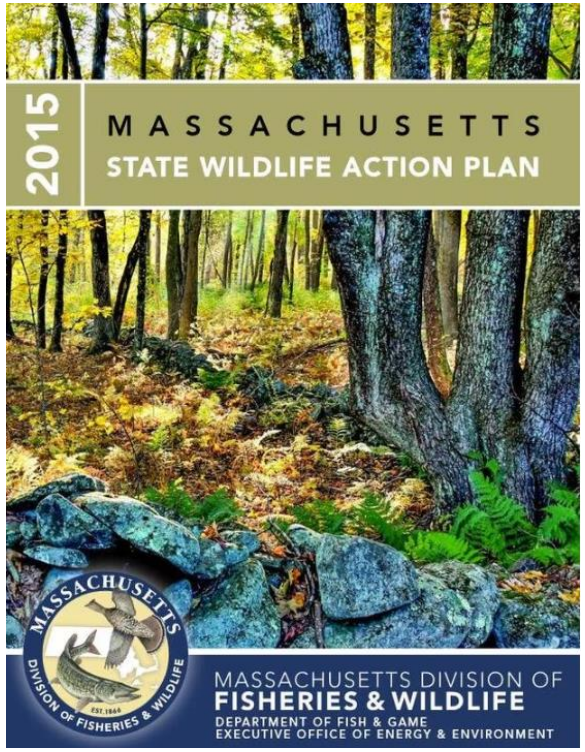
Advocacy for additional funding

Innovation in the conservation of biological diversity

A common tool for implementation







The Revision Process

REVISION GOALS

1. **Engage more, diverse partners**
2. **Produce a plan focused on implementation through collaboration**

Plan goals:

- Addresses the broad array of all fish, mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, plants, and invertebrate species.
- Addresses the species in greatest need of conservation and their habitats.
- Identifies actions needed to maintain species diversity and keep common species common.
- Builds upon past efforts to help wildlife species.
- Encourages participation and partnerships with conservation organizations at local, state, and regional levels to enhance opportunities for implementation of actions to help wildlife.

SCOPE OF CHANGES

Revisiting all of the elements

Updating with new information

Updating terminology to the most recent regional lexicon

Focusing prioritization

Producing more useful products for implementation

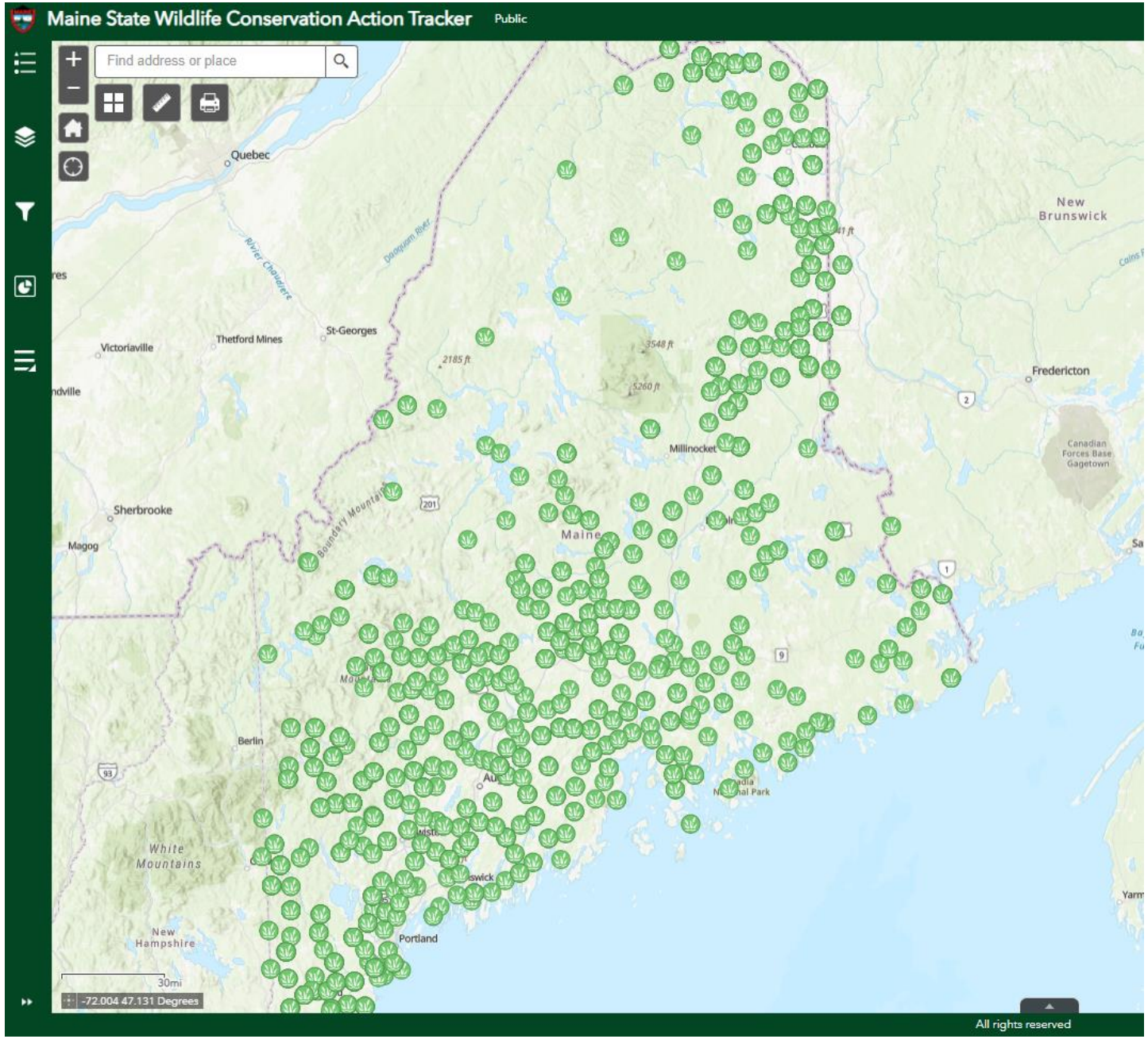
ACTION TRACKER

Help publicize partner actions

Help tell conservation stories

Help build collaborations

Help develop future plans



TAXA TEAMS

Groups of taxonomic experts reviewing data in the plan

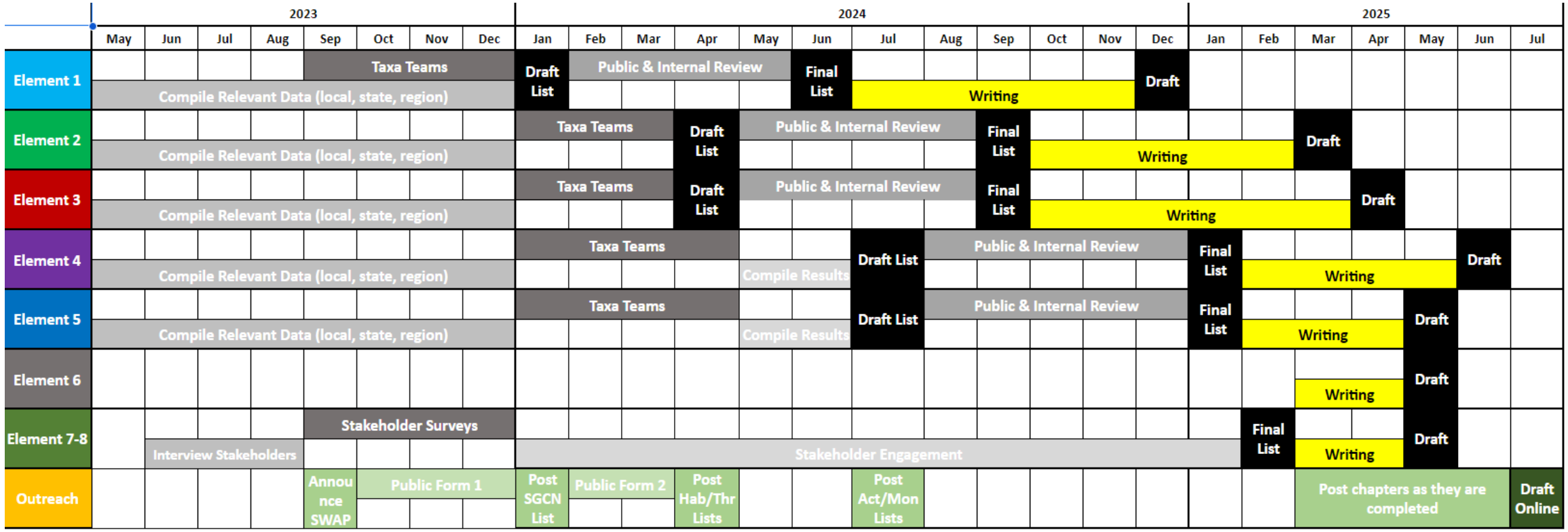
- Increasing / Decreasing
- Vulnerable to Climate

Draft SGCN lists in December / January

Assigning habitats, threats, and actions for SGCN in the spring.

		2015 SGCN				Draft T&E 2022			
Taxa	# Species CT in database	Most Important	Very Important	Important	Percent Species SGCN in 2015	E	T	SC	Percent Listed Species 2022
Birds	301	21	43	64	42.5%	18	11	20	16.3%
Herps	61	8	13	11	52.5%	8	5	10	37.7%
Mammals	64	12	6	7	39.1%	6	0	9	23.4%
Fish	126	21	18	41	63.5%	5	0	9	11.1%
Plants	2338	5	6	75	3.7%	131	42	135	13.2%
Inverts	1288	30	47	141	16.9%	31	41	115	14.5%

TIMELINE


2023
2024
2025
May Jun Jul Aug Sep Oct Nov Dec Jan Feb Mar Apr May Jun Jul Aug Sep Oct Nov Dec Jan Feb Mar Apr May Jun Jul
Element 1
Taxa Teams
Compile Relevant Data (local, state, region)
Draft List
Public & Internal Review
Final List
Writing
Draft
Element 2
Taxa Teams
Compile Relevant Data (local, state, region)
Draft List
Public & Internal Review
Final List
Writing
Draft
Element 3
Taxa Teams
Compile Relevant Data (local, state, region)
Draft List
Public & Internal Review
Final List
Writing
Draft
Element 4
Taxa Teams
Compile Relevant Data (local, state, region)
Draft List
Compile Results
Public & Internal Review
Final List
Writing
Draft
Element 5
Taxa Teams
Compile Relevant Data (local, state, region)
Draft List
Compile Results
Public & Internal Review
Final List
Writing
Draft
Element 6
Writing
Draft
Element 7-8
Stakeholder Surveys
Interview Stakeholders
Stakeholder Engagement
Final List
Writing
Draft
Outreach
Announce SWAP
Public Form 1
Post SGCN List
Public Form 2
Post Hab/Thr Lists
Post Act/Mon Lists
Post chapters as they are completed
Draft Online

PARTNER ENGAGEMENT

- Interviews
- Survey
- Reviewing Drafts

How to Help

SURVEY

Please have someone in your organization take our partners survey

This will help us know what parts of the SWAP are important to you

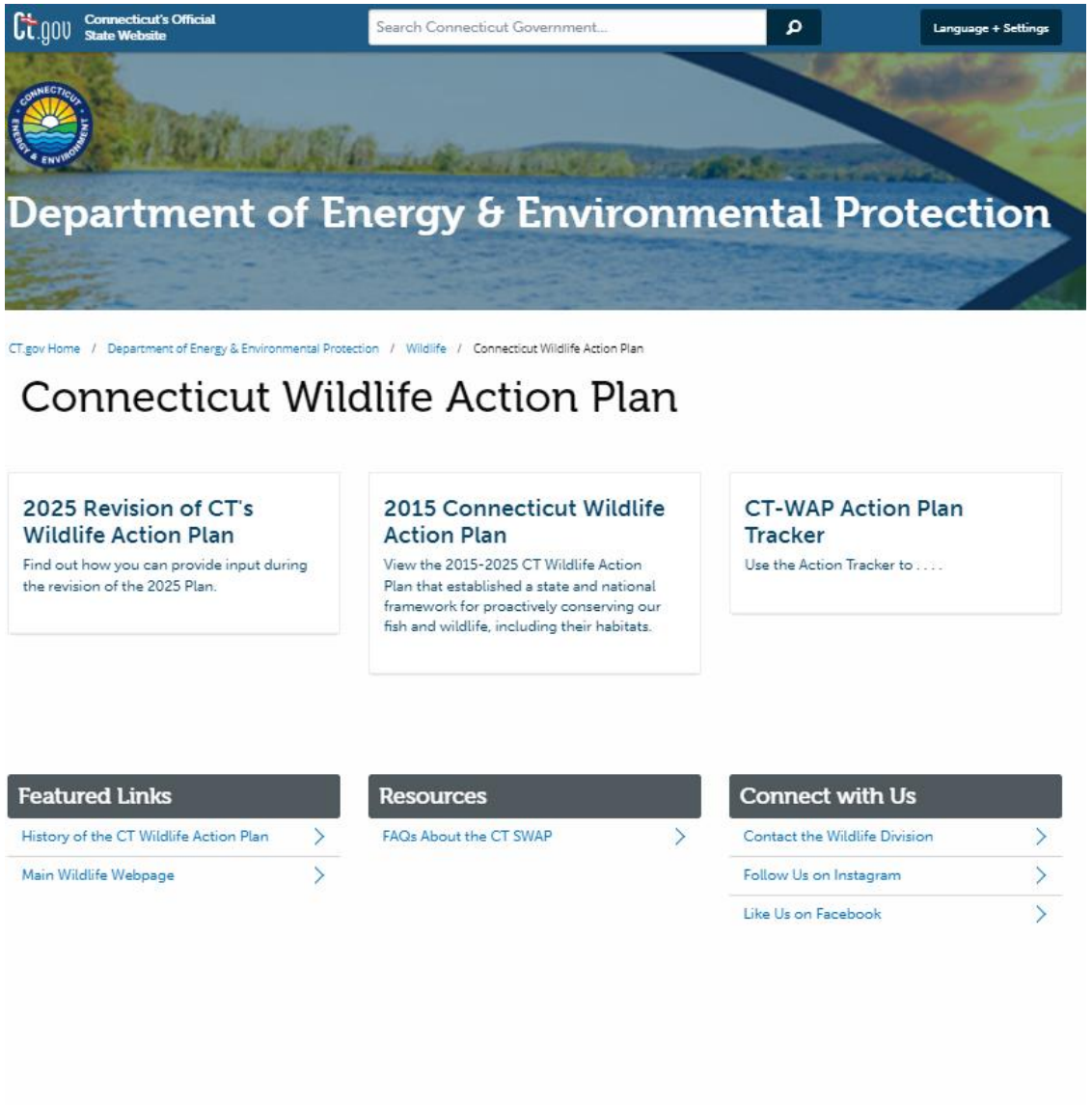
How to make it more useful

How to build a useful action tracker

OPPORTUNITIES FOR FEEDBACK

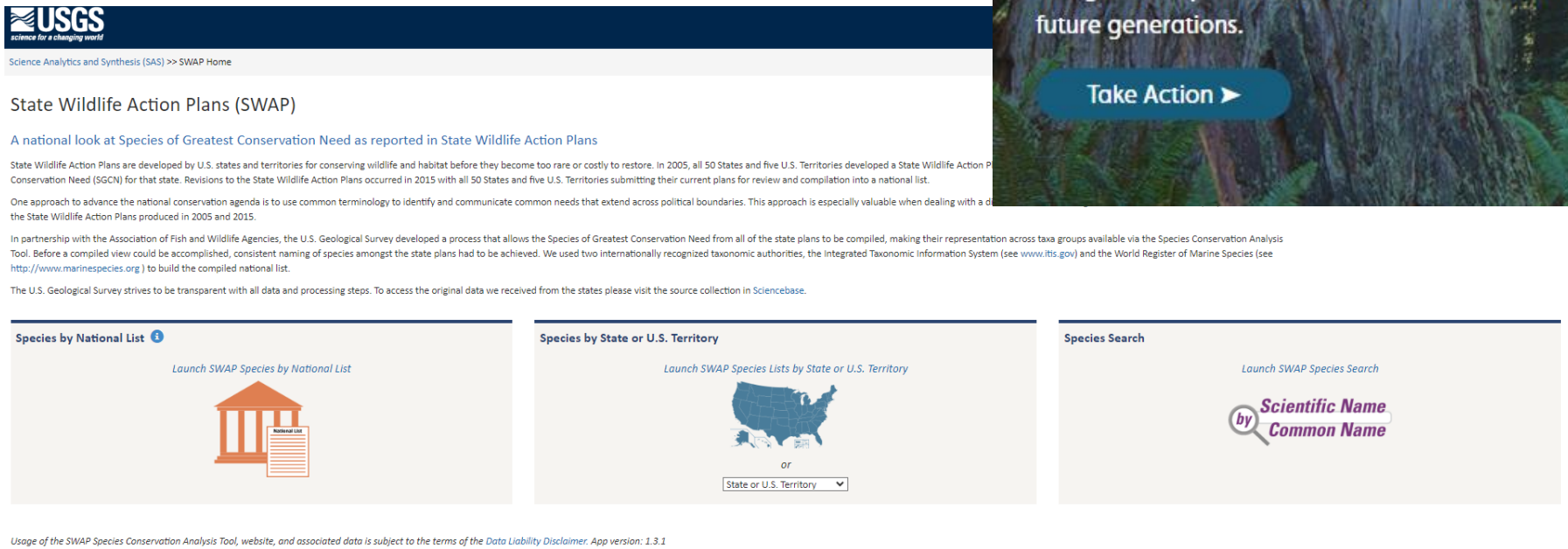
Public Comment Forms

Draft lists and Chapters



MAXIMIZING THE PLAN

- Set Priorities
- Species Lists
- Apply for funding
- Search for partners and resources
- A communication tool



BUILDING THE TRACKER

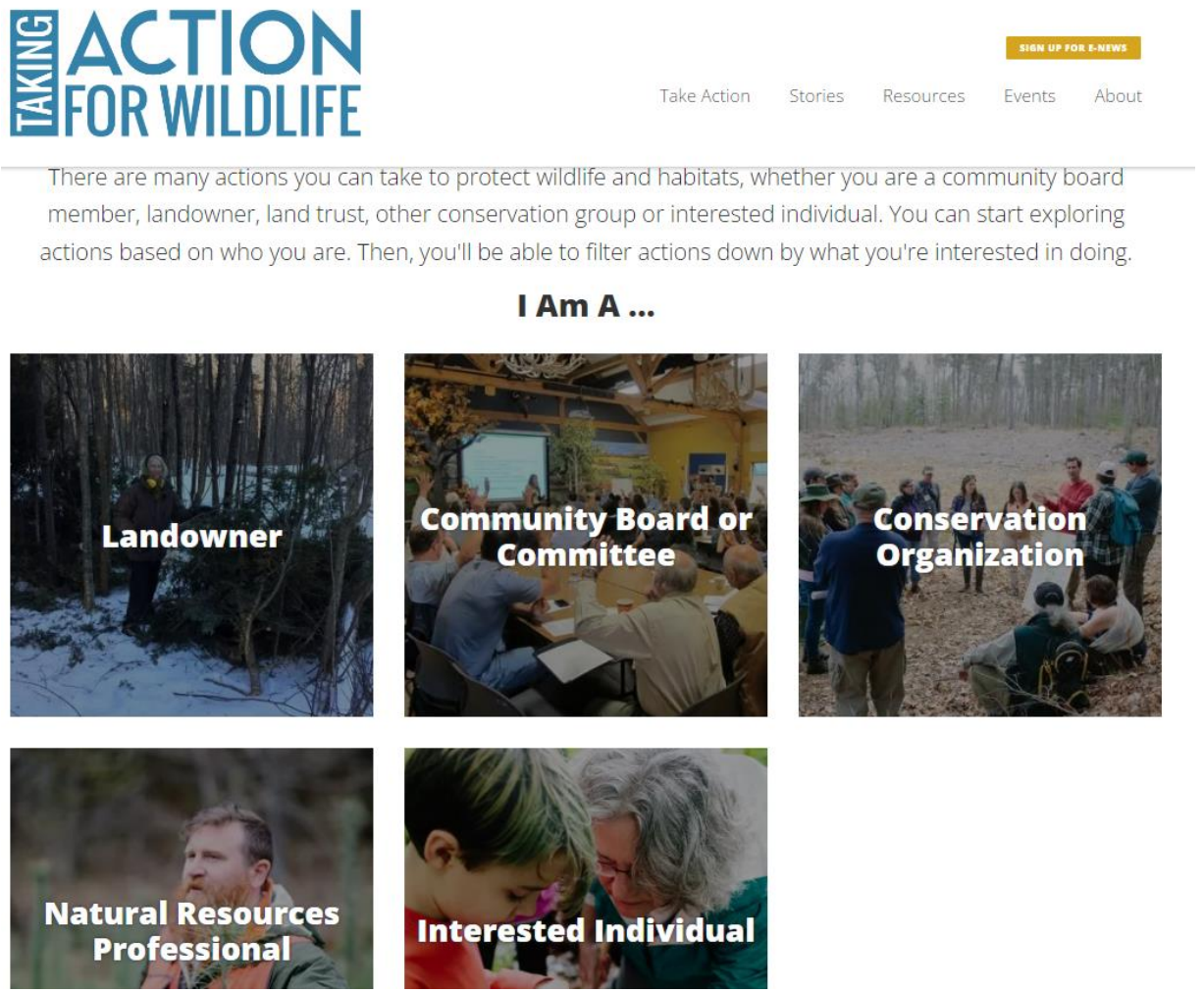
Only good if people use it

What would be useful to you?

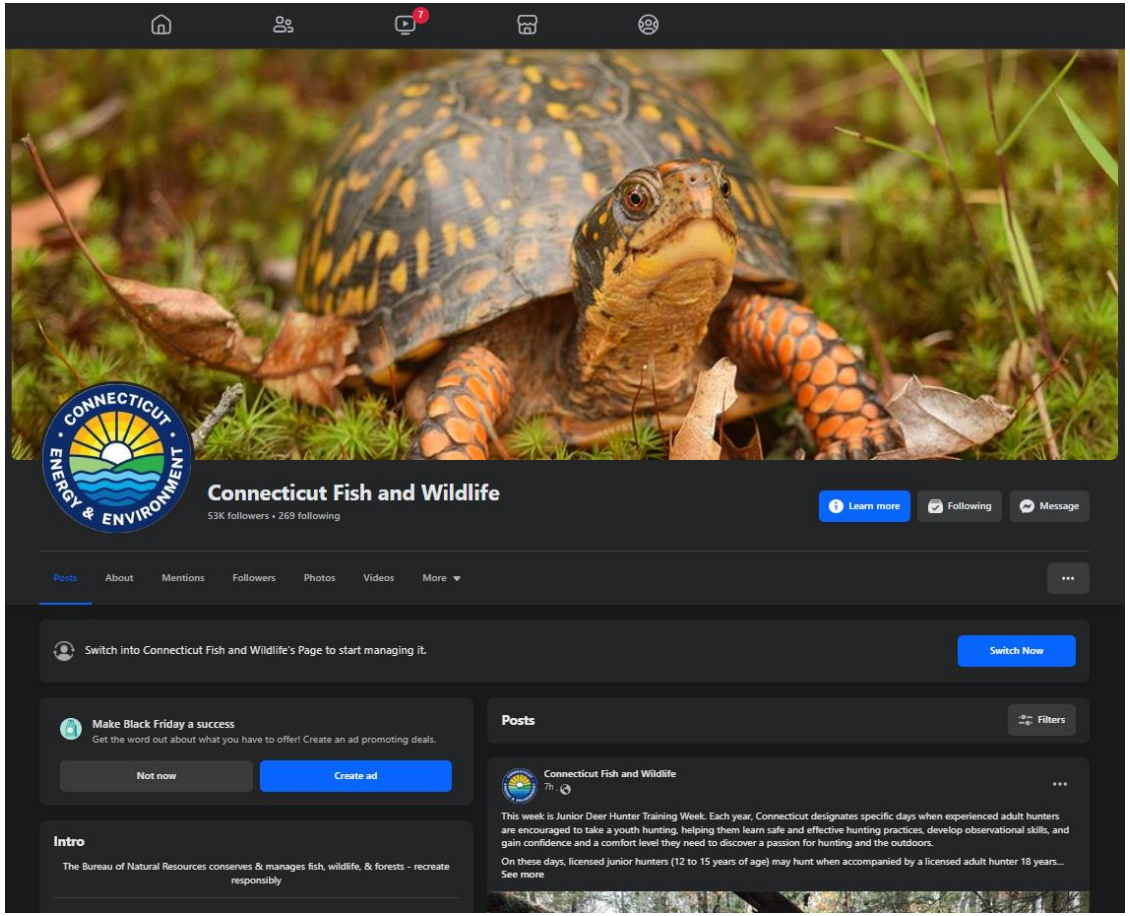
DEVELOPING STRATEGIES FOR IMPLEMENTATION

You are a key part of implementing conservation actions statewide

How can we package the Plan to make it as easy as possible?



WHERE TO FIND UPDATES



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Connecticut Wildlife Action Plan

2025 Revision of CT's Wildlife Action Plan
Find out how you can provide input during the revision of the 2025 Plan.

2015 Connecticut Wildlife Action Plan
View the 2015-2025 CT Wildlife Action Plan that established a state and national framework for proactively conserving our fish and wildlife, including their habitats.

CT-WAP Action Plan Tracker
Use the Action Tracker to . . . .

Featured Links
- History of the CT Wildlife Action Plan
- Main Wildlife Webpage

Resources
- FAQs About the CT SWAP

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CONTACT INFO AND LINKS

CT SWAP 2025
CONNECTICUT STATE WILDLIFE ACTION PLAN

CT SWAP Website

Maine Tracker

SWAPs Nationwide

Partner Survey

Northeast Resources

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