



# Rhode Island's 2015 Wildlife Action Plan Revision

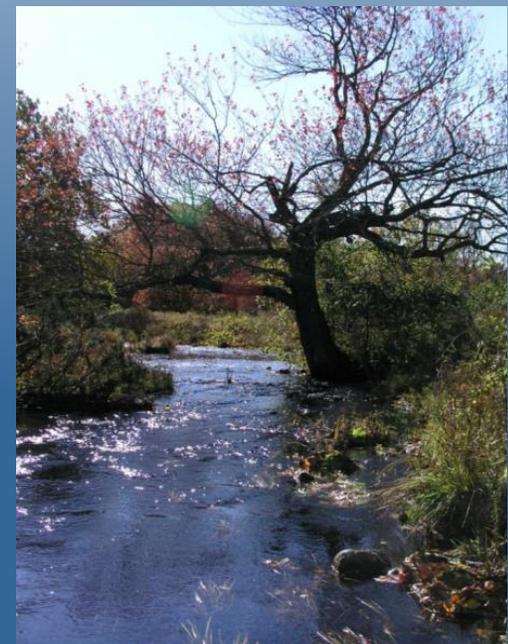


# 2015 RI Wildlife Action Plan



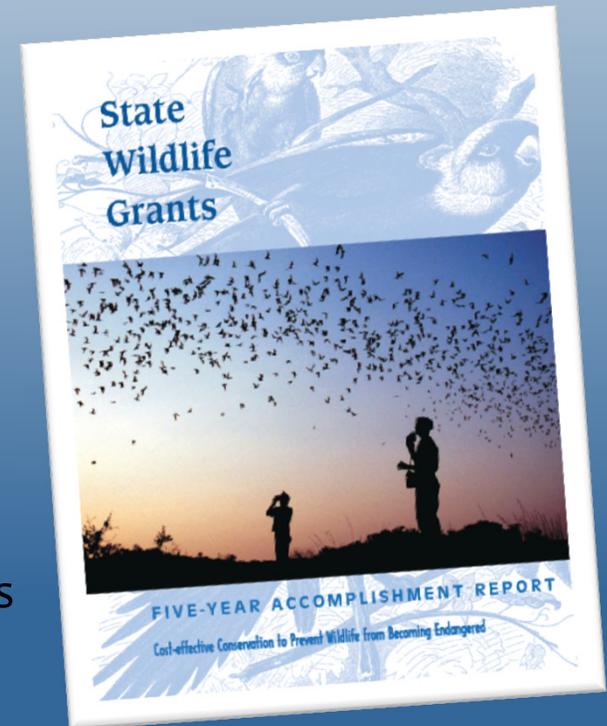
- Although it is the smallest state in the nation with the second highest population density, *Rhode Island supports a remarkable diversity of wildlife.*

- Roughly 900 vertebrate wildlife species and 20,000 invertebrates living in a landscape that stretches from the scenic coastline of Narragansett Bay to the upland and wetland forests typical of the New England region.
- Included in this natural diversity are a suite of mammal, bird, reptile and amphibian, fish and invertebrate **species that the State has identified as in greatest conservation need.**



# 2015 RI Wildlife Action Plan

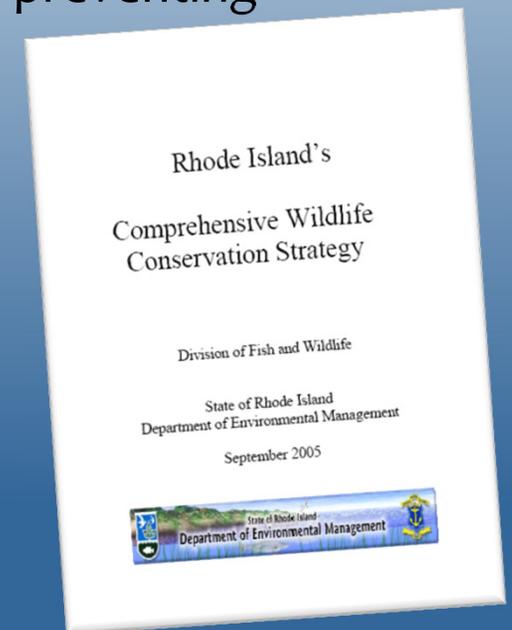
- **State and Tribal Wildlife Grants Program (SWG)** is the Nation's core program for preventing endangered species listings.
  - SWG is the primary funding source for conservation of non-game species & their habitats.
  - Millions of \$ in matching funds to State Wildlife Agencies.
- For states to receive SWG funding, they must develop a **Wildlife Action Plan (WAP)**
  - Rhode Island's original WAP (formerly CWCS) was completed in Oct. 2005.
- ***RI's Wildlife Action Plan must be revised and updated by October 2015.***



# 2015 RI Wildlife Action Plan

## What is a Wildlife Action Plan?

- Part of a national framework of similar plans developed by each State that together create a *national action agenda* for preventing wildlife from becoming endangered.
  - Identifies **species of greatest conservation need** & their **habitats**
  - Identifies the **threats** affecting wildlife & habitats
  - Develops **conservation actions** to address & mitigate these threats
- RI DEM staff and partners are reviewing these elements and will make recommendations informed by the status of species and key habitats in RI.



# 2015 RI Wildlife Action Plan

## What the Wildlife Action Plan Means for Rhode Island....

Built upon the ***solid foundation*** of the original 2005 plan, the revised Wildlife Action Plan will:

- Provide a ***renewed vision and direction*** for wildlife conservation in Rhode Island for the next decade.
- ***Enhance coordination*** with the conservation community and local land-use planners.
- ***Provide tangible guidance for wildlife conservation*** and effective stewardship of the natural environment upon which we all depend.



# 2015 RI Wildlife Action Plan

## Getting it off the ground. . .

RI DEM has initiated the process of revising the WAP by assembling a core team of conservation planners, ecologists, and wildlife & fisheries biologists.

A comprehensive revision of the WAP will involve addressing each of the **8 required elements** of the original plan.



# 2015 RI Wildlife Action Plan

## 8 Required Elements

**Element 1**

**Species of Greatest Conservation Need**

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**Element 2**

**Key Habitats**

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**Element 3**

**Threats**

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**Element 4**

**Conservation Actions (*prioritized*)**

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**Element 5**

**Monitoring & Adaptive Management**

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**Element 6**

**Plans for Future Revisions and Review**

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**Element 7**

**Coordination with Partners**

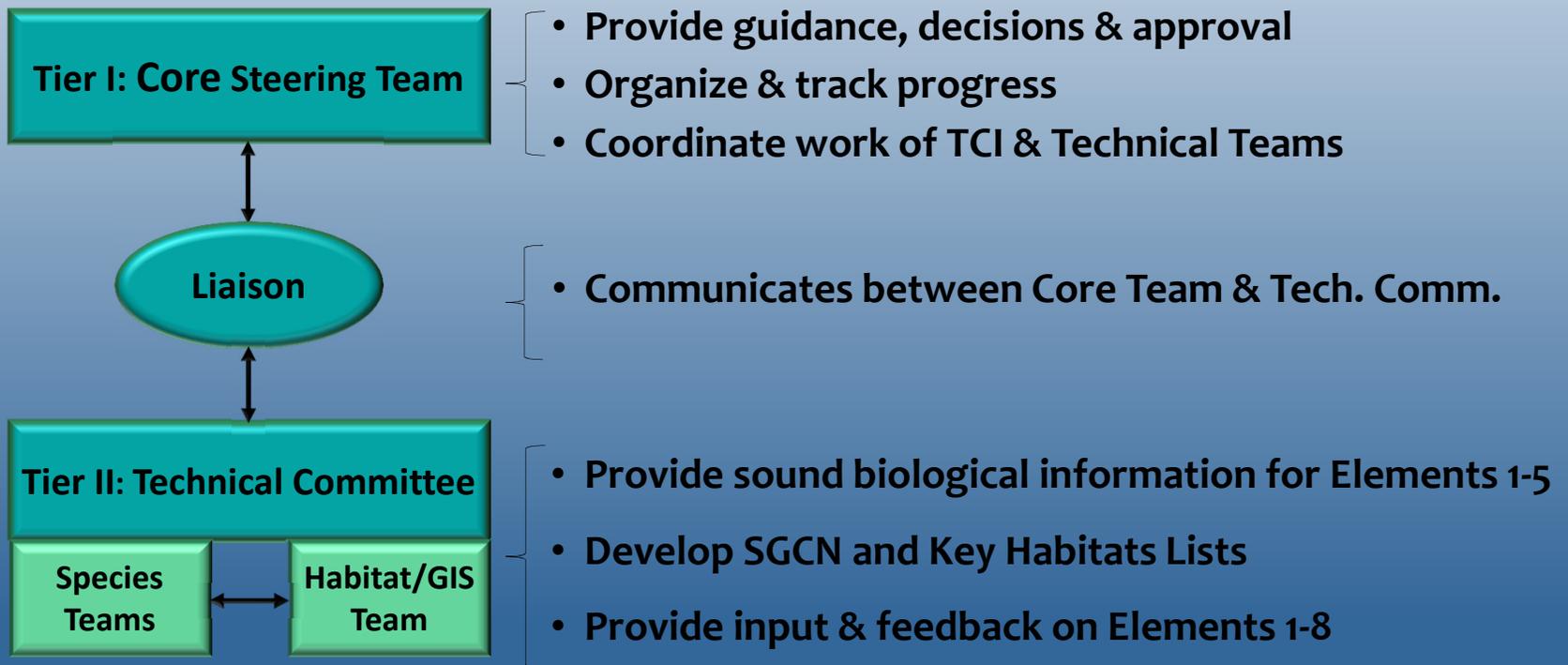
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**Element 8**

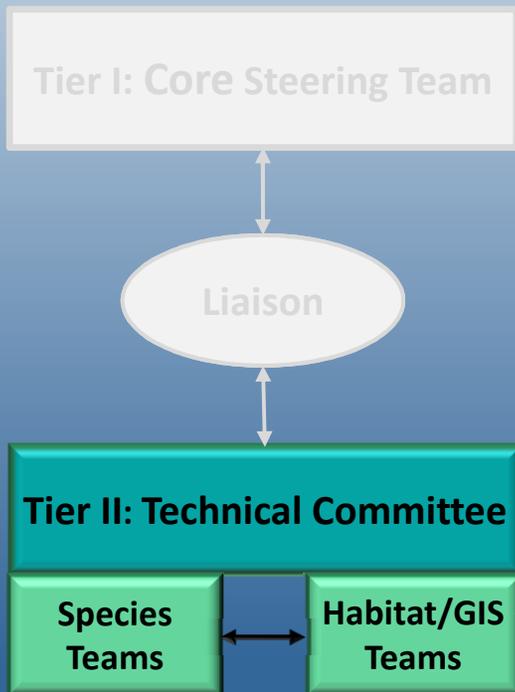
**Public Participation**

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## 2015 RI Wildlife Action Plan Organizational Structure



## 2015 RI Wildlife Action Plan Organizational Structure



- **5 Species/Taxa Teams**

- Amphibians & Reptiles
- Birds
- Fish
- Invertebrates
- Mammals

- **1 Habitat & 1 GIS Team**

- **30+ experts lending their valuable time and expertise!**



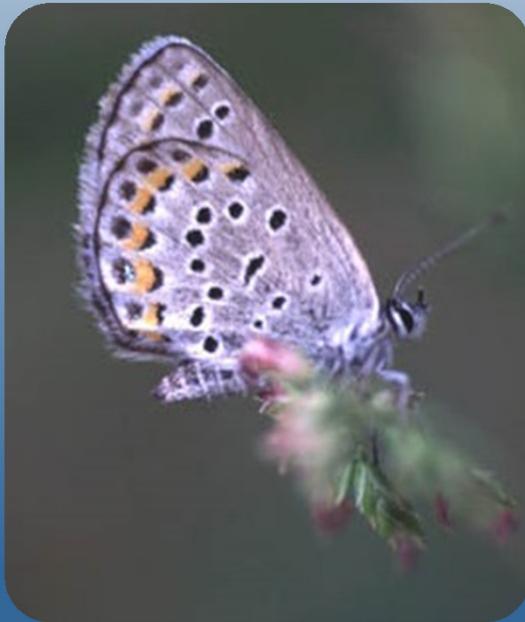
## 2015 RI Wildlife Action Plan A Partnership Approach

- **Strong and unique partnership** formed between RI DEM & The Nature Conservancy for RI WAP:
  - Leverage financial resources
  - Collective staff expertise
- University of Rhode Island also providing project planning and technical assistance as key member of core team.
- Engaging partners up front in the revision process:
  - Fosters an inclusive and transparent process, ownership, and buy-in.
  - Promotes future support from partners in RI WAP implementation and funding.



# 2015 RI Wildlife Action Plan

## Going Above and Beyond. . .



RI DEM recognizes the need to put the WAP into **action** in communities where conservation and land use decisions are made every day.

To address this need the RI DEM, in cooperation with The Nature Conservancy and RI Natural History Survey, will hire a community liaison to help **implement the RI WAP on a local level.**

In addition, a condensed version of the WAP will be developed to put in the hands of local planners and conservation decision makers.

The goal is to provide a **functional guidance document** that people will refer to and use in making sound decisions about land use and development.

## 2015 RI Wildlife Action Plan Public and Stakeholder Participation

- **Engaging stakeholders & the public is a priority, to:**
  - Foster an inclusive and transparent process
  - Create shared ownership of the plan
  - Produce a plan that reflect their values
- Input will be solicited from key local, state & regional entities & the public, including:
  - Scientific Review workshops to solicit technical expertise
  - Meetings with local planners, municipalities, conservation groups & land trusts
  - Opportunities for public feedback on the draft report.
- **YOUR PARTICIPATION IN VALUABLE TO THE PROCESS!**  
Comments on the RI WAP can be sent to: [riwildlifeactionplan@yahoo.com](mailto:riwildlifeactionplan@yahoo.com)



# 2015 RI Wildlife Action Plan

## Working in a Regional Context. . .

Advances in regional habitat mapping provide the opportunity to put RI habitats into the context of the northeast landscape.



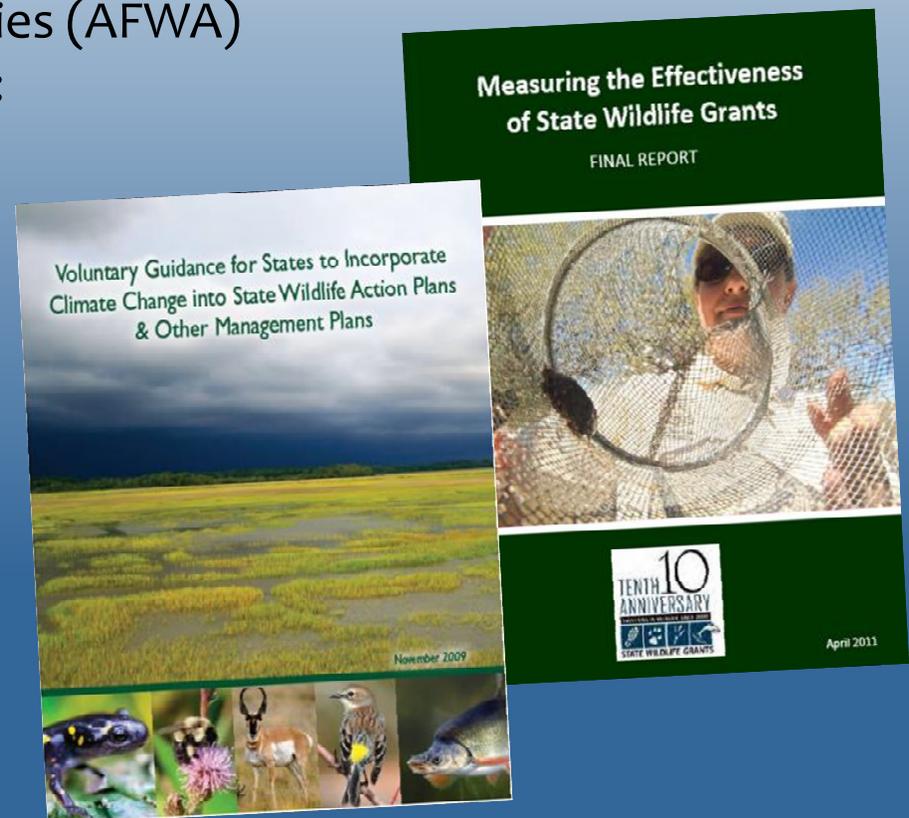
## 2015 RI Wildlife Action Plan Guidance Documents

### National Guidance

In addition to the 8 required elements, the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (AFWA) has developed voluntary guidance for:

- Applying Best Practices
- Incorporating Climate Change
- Measuring Effectiveness

RI DEM will continue to work closely with the US Fish & Wildlife Service to keep abreast of any new developments or guidance.



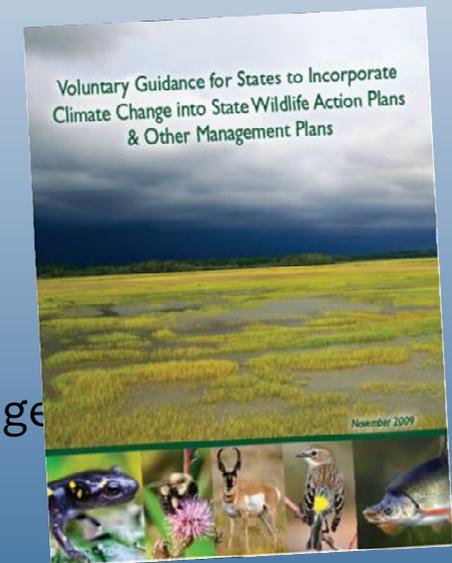
## 2015 RI Wildlife Action Plan Incorporating Best Practices



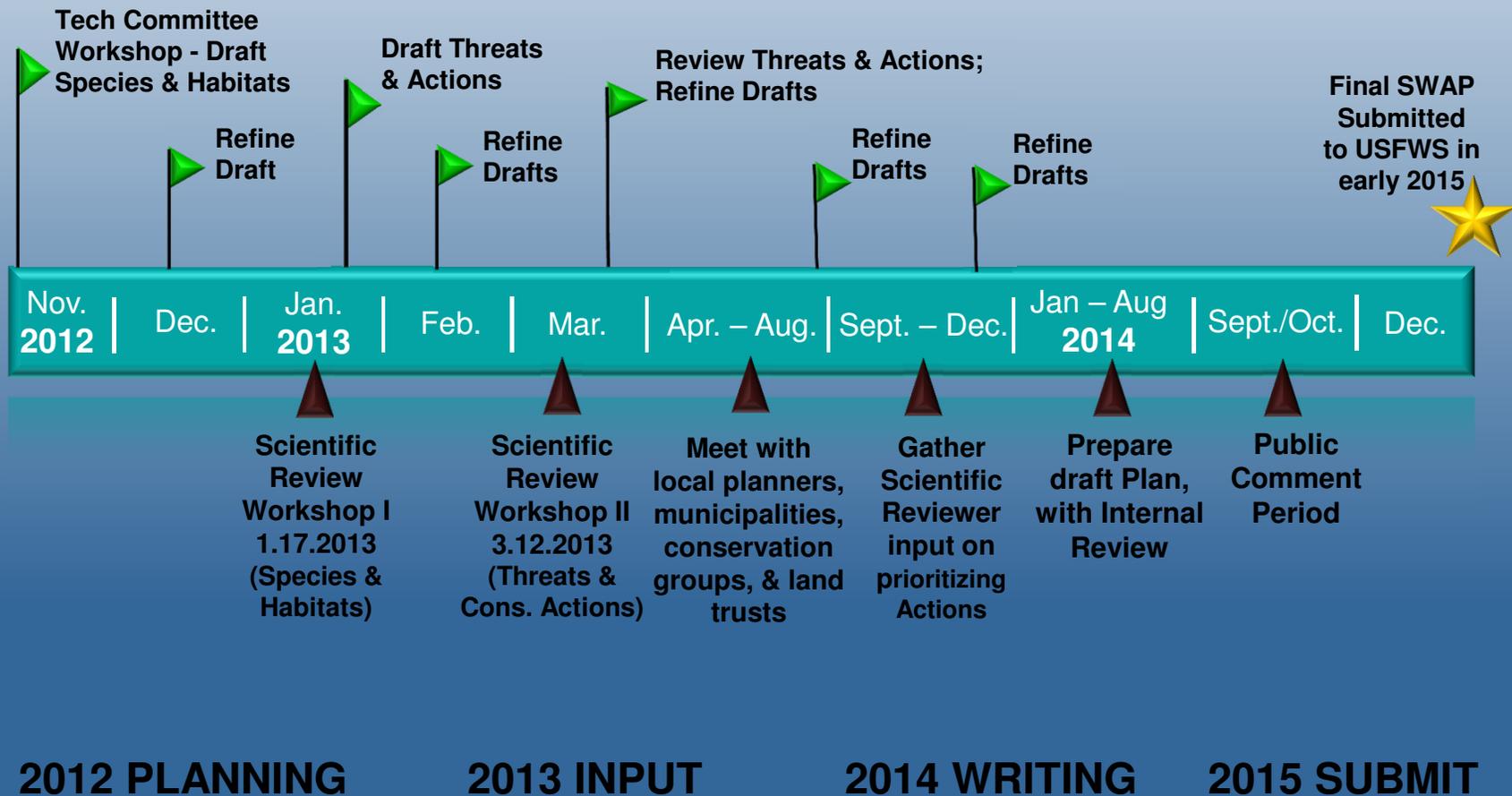
- To aid states in the SWAP revisions, the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (AFWA) released a **Best Practices Guide** in November 2012.
- Compiled innovations and lessons learned with SWAP Coordinators and the broader conservation community.

## 2015 RI Wildlife Action Plan Incorporating Climate Change

- AFWA developed **voluntary guidance** for incorporating **Climate Change** into SWAPs.
- Suggestions:
  - *Species* – Use vulnerability assessments to support rationale, changes in distribution & abundance.
  - *Habitats* – Assess how habitat & species ranges may change (temporally/spatially); adaptive mgmt.
- Decide on **clear goals and objectives**
  - e.g., Increase resistance? promote resilience? enable ecosystem responses? or realign activities to reflect changing conditions?
- Should not diminish **need to deal with threats independent of climate change** (e.g., habitat loss).



# 2015 RI Wildlife Action Plan Timeline





# 2015 RI Wildlife Action Plan

**For more information please visit. . .**

***[www.dem.ri.gov/riwap](http://www.dem.ri.gov/riwap)***

**Thank you and we look forward to your input!**