



# 2015 Rhode Island State Wildlife Action Plan

## OVERVIEW

The *Forsythe-Chafee Non-Game Act of 1980* stated that there was a need to establish new Federal funding sources for state wildlife conservation to complement the successful Sport Fish and Wildlife Restoration programs.

The *State and Tribal Wildlife Grants (SWG)* program was created by Congress in 2000 to address this longstanding need to fund actions to conserve declining fish and wildlife species before they become threatened or endangered. It is the core federal program for preventing future endangered species listings.

In accordance with the SWG legislation, each state must complete a *State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP)* every 10 years to be eligible for matching grants. RI's original 2005 SWAP will be revised by 2015.



## 8 REQUIRED ELEMENTS OF THE RI SWAP

- 1) Information on the distribution and abundance of wildlife species, including low and declining populations that are indicative of the diversity and health of the state's wildlife.
- 2) Location and relative condition of key habitats and community types which are essential to species conservation.
- 3) Problems / threats that may adversely affect species or their habitats, and priority research and survey efforts needed to identify factors which may assist in restoration and improved conservation of these species and habitats.
- 4) Conservation actions proposed to conserve the identified species, habitats, and priorities for implementing such actions.
- 5) Plans for monitoring species and their habitats, as well as determining the effectiveness of the conservation actions, and adapting these conservation actions to respond to new information.
- 6) Procedures to review the State Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Plan.
- 7) Plans for coordinating the development, implementation, review, and revision of the State Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Plan with Federal, State, and Local agencies as well as Native Americans. Also, coordinate with those programs and administrations that significantly affect the conservation of identified species and habitats.
- 8) Broad public and stakeholder involvement and support.

## BENEFITS TO RHODE ISLAND

- ✓ MILLIONS OF \$ IN MATCHING FUNDS FOR RESEARCH GRANTS SUPPORTING CONSERVATION OF NON-GAME SPECIES & THEIR HABITATS.
- ✓ NEW LOCAL AND REGIONAL PARTNERSHIPS
- ✓ NEW LOCAL AND REGIONAL SUPPORT
- ✓ A COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH TO WILDLIFE CONSERVATION

## ACTION PLAN FOR RI

- Meet with Rhode Island DEM Division of Fish and Wildlife staff and partners to identify issues, plan process and priorities.
- Research other conservation planning efforts in the State and region, as well as existing species and habitat databases and mapping tools.
- Inventory status of existing data/map programs with information on species and habitat data, available tools (GAP, GIS), threats to the resources, as well as stakeholders and partners.
- Develop criteria and process to identify conservation priorities: solicit expert/stakeholder input, and develop priorities of species, habitat, community and conservation actions.
- Write plan: adaptation, review, and evaluation based on Federal requirements

## FORMAT AND CONTENT

- Identify knowledge gaps to help focus future efforts to improve understanding and planning.
- Make spatially explicit GIS and other maps, figures, and graphics
- Use "threats analysis," "risk factors and stress assessments," and other techniques to help set priorities for goals, objectives, strategies, and activities.
- Address factors that can have a substantial impact on wildlife conservation, such as management of invasive species, climate change, education, law enforcement, and outdoor recreation.



## THE CHALLENGE

- Base plan on "best science," "best management practices," and "adaptive management."
- Address the broad range of wildlife and associated habitats with appropriate priority placement on those species of greatest conservation need.
- Address wildlife-related issues statewide by jurisdiction and interests.
- Combine landscape/ecosystem/habitat-based approaches with smaller-scale approaches (e.g. focal, keystone, and/or indicator species; guilds; species of special concern).
- Make the Comprehensive Plan an effective, long-lasting blueprint for conservation which provides broad visions and priorities so that various organizations (including other government agencies) can participate in the vision.

## WORKING TOGETHER

- Involve multiple staff levels within each agency and any broad public-private partnerships to develop and implement the Plan.
- Involve partners that have the authority necessary to ensure the Plan addresses the full range of issues at hand.
- Build capacity for collaboration among all partners engaged in the effort, and make sure the collaboration is productive so trust and confidence can grow and organizational and interpersonal relationships strengthen the Plan.
- Share responsibility and credit for planning and implementation among all partners who collectively share responsibility for the success of the plan.



# ...History in the Making