

# Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN)

A State Wildlife Action Plan Element

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Foundations

# **A STATE WILDLIFE ACTION PLAN (SWAP) ELEMENT**

# State Wildlife Action Plan for Washington

2001 Congress: annual appropriation for State Wildlife Grants Program (SWG) and Competitive SWG (C-SWG)

SWG Purpose: conserve wildlife and habitat before they become too rare or costly to restore, primarily nongame

Eligibility: State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP)

2005 first SWAPs, update every 10 years

US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (AFWA) frame and revise required **'Eight Elements' for all SWAPs'**

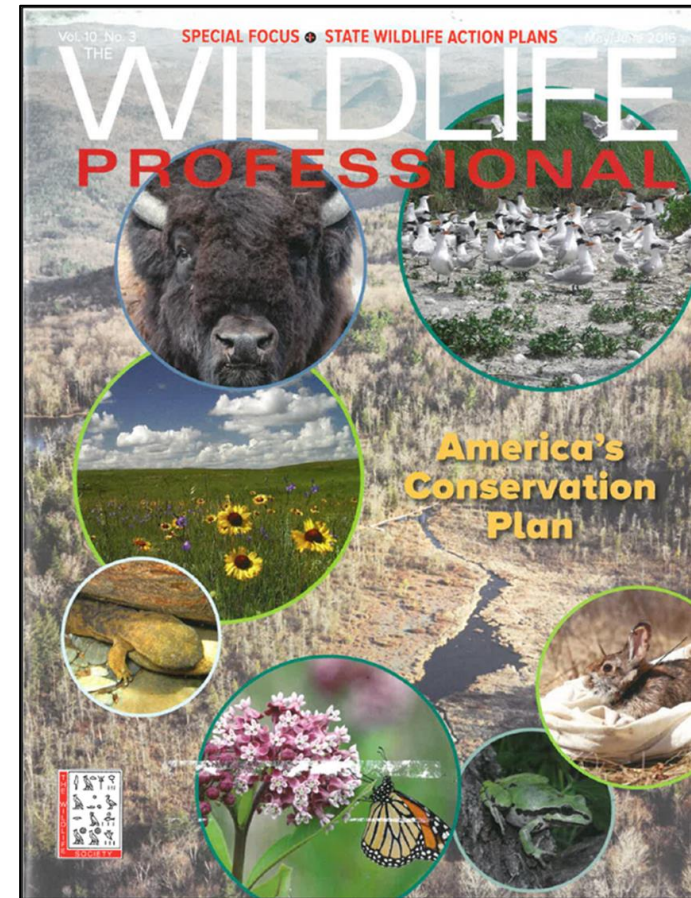


Image: The Wildlife Society



# Eight Required Elements

- Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN)
- Related habitats and systems
- Threats and issues
- Conservation actions
- Monitoring and adaptive management
- Plan review and update
- Agency, tribe, and organization coordination
- Public engagement



Image: Fisher, WDFW



# SGCN Lists

Access all lists through U.S. Geological Survey  
USGS State Wildlife Action Plans (SWAP)  
Species of Greatest Conservation Need  
(SGCN) National List

[https://www1.usgs.gov/csas/swap/national\\_list.html](https://www1.usgs.gov/csas/swap/national_list.html)

Search by

- Species
- State(s)
- Groups
- See how many states reported any species (shared conservation priority)



SGCN is not a regulatory term, does not carry legal status or convey 'rarity'

## **LABELS AND SGCN**

# Washington's SWAP 2015

268 SGCN

Wildlife, fish,  
invertebrates

<https://wdfw.wa.gov/species-habitats/at-risk/swap>



# Washington Criteria to Select SGCN

## 2015 Criteria

**ESA “plus”** Endangered, Threatened, Candidate, Species of Concern

**State listed:** Endangered, Threatened, Candidate, or Sensitive species

**NatureServe:** S1, S2, G1, or G2

**2005 SGCN process:** rank of “high” threat/vulnerability by WDFW biologists

**Technical Team** applied secondary criteria to either remove or add species

## 2025 Draft Criteria

**ESA** Endangered, Threatened, Candidate

**State listed:** Endangered, Threatened, Sensitive, or Candidate species

**NatureServe:** S1, S2, G1, or G2

### **Best Available Science**

**WAC 365-195-905** to identify populations in danger of failing, declining, or are vulnerable within the foreseeable future due to threats

(Additional review ... possible)





# SGCN: what's in **this** label for WDFW?

Agency-applied to serve SWAP purposes:

- direct federal SWG and C-SWG funding
- communicate conservation need at the species scale
- identify species indicators for at-risk habitats or conservation concepts
- share information

Not regulatory

Not "status" or "classification" in itself



# Layering Labels

**Tools:** authorities, laws, policies, information, status, partnership

**Influences:** management, regulation, protection, guidance, partnership

Examples – Pygmy Rabbit, Pacific Fisher, Pygmy Horned Lizard, Bighorn Sheep



Yes ...

**HUNTED, FISHED, AND FORAGED  
SPECIES CAN BE SGCN**

# Commission Classifications

RCW 77.08 - many definitions

Several managed and conserved by WDFW for recreation, commercial, or food opportunities

Based on best available science presented in staff recommendations, other agencies' health and harvest recommendations, and public interest



# 'Take' and SGCN

'Take' applies to a lot of different actions

- Hunting
- Fishing
- Foraging (seaweed)
- Research
- Rehabilitation
- Falconry

Actions may be Commission-set seasonal take, Department-issued permits, and Director-set seasons



Image: Northwestern Pond Turtle, Bergh



# Hunted, Fished, and Foraged SGCN

Nationally, many SWAPs include game-classified birds, mammals, and fishes in their SGCN list.

Several game birds, game animals, fur-bearers, and game fish are in the Washington SGCN list.



Images: bighorn sheep, Woodall; salmon, Riedesel



# What's in a Name?

SGCN are identified to bring attention to not only the species or its status.

That label is agency-applied in the SWAP to identify one element that can drive specific funding sources to species or conservation issues of importance.

The label does not inherently convey rarity and is not regulatory, so other labels (classified and unclassified) may apply.



# Thank you for your interest!

## Questions?

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Communication is the fuel  
that keeps the fire of your  
relationship burning, without  
it your relationship goes cold.

– William Paisley

Image: Wendy Connally

